



The award-winning Long Beach Fire Ambassador Program began in 1991 and enhances existing community relations efforts through the use of older adult volunteers. The program was replicated by request for the Long Beach Water Department within the same year, followed by a request from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The Long Beach Fire Safety House "... is a valuable community project in teaching Home Fire Burn Safety ... We sometimes say that we are "fire proofing" them. The lesson which they learn could well save their lives or another's life. Our goal is to instill these basics which will become theirs forever."

Robert Ellis, Charter Long Beach Fire Ambassador, January 24, 2012



Where the Ambassadors really help is when we do, say, promotional, ceremonial-type things ... [like] Recruit class graduations, or awards lunches, or the Fire Safety House, going out to the schools ... Otherwise it would cost me a ton of money to facilitate it without their help ... There's no one better to facilitate the Fire Safety House.

Command Staff Respondent 1

Older Adult VOLUNTEER VALUE

in the Workplace

... Voices of Experience with the Long Beach Fire Ambassador Program

by Donna M. Griggs, Master of Science Gerontology

Focus: Management & service delivery impact on existing community relations efforts & employee morale from the Long Beach Fire Department Command Staff perspective

Seven themes emerged from qualitative interviews

Based on 76 years of Command Staff participant experience dating back to 1991

Supporting community relations

Supporting employee morale (all ranks)

Appreciation (increased with each promotion)

Extended family

Pride

Purpose

Significance

"They're volunteering their time to go out and share a very important message with a very vulnerable group ... All those functions they perform ... save us a ton of money ... and it helps keep them engaged with the fire family that they're a part of ... I think they're great. They invest a lot of time with us ... It leaves a very powerful message, especially with our younger firefighters.

Command Staff Respondent 1

"The Ambassador Program has freed up resources, including our personnel, our equipment, and our time—three of our big management resource tools ... more so now than ever ..."

Command Staff Respondent 2

Working side-by-side with the Fire Ambassadors (e.g., at a school), Firefighters and Paramedics can respond to emergency calls, the lesson continues, "... and they [Ambassadors] pick up where we leave off ... and our engine company or crews will come back after they clear the [emergency] call and continue with the presentation or educational piece. So it has definitely improved our service delivery, in that respect, where we can actually maintain our emergency resources available to respond to 9-1-1 calls ... [as] every piece of resource out there is crucial to maintain in the areas that they are located."

Command Staff Respondent 3



Older adult volunteers

- ▶ Uniquely have much to offer
- ▶ Increasingly vital role in the workplace



Left: A Fire Ambassador carefully prepares the children to escape from an upstairs smoke-filled room. Lower Left: Long Beach Firefighters watch and listen for their part to help children recognize them in full turnout gear and escape safely—stay low, and go (feet first in case you need to quickly climb back up the stairs to find another way out!)

Key study implications

- ▲ Workplace participation of older adult volunteers may reduce ageism and promote awareness of successful aging.
- ▲ Research results imply greater utilization of older adult volunteers in creative new ways for organizational, volunteer, and community benefit, including disaster management and public health.



Since 1991

TOP: A Long Beach Fire Ambassador teaches Long Beach Fire Training visitors about the fire triangle before they enter the portable Fire Safety House—built by Long Beach Firefighters & the Junior League of Long Beach. Smoke simulation, a Firefighter in full gear, and home escape planning are part of each interactive life safety lesson.

ABOVE: Centennial trading card features Long Beach Fire Ambassadors in front of Fire Headquarters in 1997.



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Charter Long Beach Fire Ambassador Academy Graduation
October 5, 1991