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inside:

MOTD



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The Advanced Computing Systems Association &
The System Administrators Guild

motd

by Rob Kolstad

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Volunteering

I was really surprised recently to hear someone speak of volunteering his time as a “two hour/month effort, max.” He seemed to feel that his life was so full of activity that volunteering was way down on his list – and on everyone’s list, according to him. His career as a system administrator (presumably along with other, unspoken commitments) was consuming all of his time.

I have taken it upon myself to ask my friends and acquaintances about this notion that “no one volunteers any more, they are too busy.” Only a few agree with my correspondent, even though he felt that his views were relatively universal.

I have a different philosophy from the non-volunteer. It must be noted right away, though, that I lack the large time commitments of a wife and family. And, for that matter, a full-time job, though that has mostly changed the amount of time that various tasks get rather than the number of tasks.

I think it’s important to support science fairs (a typical judge, for example, has a four hour commitment to our science fair, plus transportation time), programming contests, publishing endeavors about caves, and various sundry “little” activities that I personally enjoy. I also think one should occasionally contribute toward one’s profession, whether it’s creating (or even just releasing) a software tool for the community, writing a paper, reviewing papers or books, writing articles, organizing a panel at a conference, that sort of thing.

While not an overwhelming feeling, I live in fear that some new societal norm will emerge while I, living in the hinterlands, don’t get to learn about it until late in the game. I hope this fellow’s comments on volunteering aren’t true!

That being said, the USENIX volunteer recruitment effort is going well. Many openings still exist, especially to edit this summer’s “Special Issue” of *;login:*.

I hope you will consider sharing your time and expertise occasionally. I think volunteering for various projects, whether trail maintenance for your local bicycle highways or contributing to your profession, is one of the things that really enriches both the society of the world at large and the people who volunteer.