



EDITOR'S LETTER

The Volunteer Spirit

Lynne Johnson-Harris, LVT, RVT | Editor in Chief



What is volunteerism?

One definition is *the principle of donating time and energy for the benefit of other people in the community as a social responsibility rather than for any financial reward. Another is the policy or practice of volunteering one's time or talents for charitable, educational, or other worthwhile activities.*¹

For the past 15 years, my husband has volunteered to work on the construction crew at the Ironman Triathlon World Championship. I've now been involved for several years. This past



VOLUNTEERS offer encouragement to athletes at the 2017 Lavaman Triathlon. Courtesy of Hawaiiphotoman.com

April, we decided to add another event to our schedule, so we joined the volunteer construction crew for the Lavaman Triathlon on the Big Island of Hawaii.

Working construction, we work like dogs.

We get up before the sun every day and move massive amounts of material around town to create the route the athletes follow. Most days are long, hot, and busy. On race day, we are up at 1:00 am. The race starts at 7:00 am. The next time we see a pillow is 36 hours later. Even though we are in Hawaii, it's not a relaxing vacation.

So now you're probably asking yourself, why do we do it?

We stand at the finish line at midnight cheering on the last athletes coming in from a 2.4-mile swim in the ocean, a 112-mile bicycle ride in the wind, and a 26.2-mile run. The energy of the crowd, the families, the volunteers, and the athletes is uplifting. It gets my own heart pounding. For me, knowing that in a small way, I have helped all the athletes complete a grueling physical event and become an Ironman is an emotional reward beyond description.

Why am I bringing this up? The NAVC runs on a similar spirit. Without volunteers, the VMX (formerly the NAVC Conference) would grind to a halt. Our volunteers help monitor doors, direct traffic, answer questions, and stuff all those conference bags—just to name a few of their many tasks. They include Past Presidents of the NAVC Board of Directors as well as family members of NAVC staff. Our Board of Directors is made up of volunteer members. Even this journal (and its sister, *Today's Veterinary Practice*) runs on volunteers, as our authors and reviewers take time from their busy lives to contribute.

We all do it with tremendous enthusiasm, knowing we are providing outstanding, world-class education for all members of the veterinary healthcare team. Without our volunteers, the NAVC just wouldn't be the same, and I thank them all.

So whatever volunteer act you do that gets your heart racing, makes you smile, laugh, cry, clap, and jump for joy, keep doing it! Volunteering in any way brings a smile to the people you do it for every day. ■

Reference

1. Volunteerism. Dictionary.com Unabridged. dictionary.com. Accessed April 2017.

Do you have a story you'd like to share? Write me at ljohnson@navc.com.