

Recognition for The Volunteer

Twice within the last few days, visitors in Grand Rapids have placed heavy emphasis on the importance of volunteer workers in social agencies. The latest to stress the extent to which such organizations depend on volunteers was Gen. Alfred M. Gruenther, president of the American Red Cross, who declared here Thursday that "our biggest asset is the volunteer." His organization now has 2,000,000 volunteers.

Earlier in the week Samuel Grais, who is affiliated with many social agencies in Minnesota, and Maurice Beck, executive director of the Michigan Welfare League, both speaking at the central states conference of the American Public Welfare Association here, paid tribute to the work of the volunteers in the entire field of social work, and urged their listeners to try to enroll even more volunteers.

Virtually every private hospital in the land is dependent in large measure on the work of volunteers, especially the members of their guilds, to perform many tasks and to raise funds for improvements, equipment and added services. And every hospital board, like the boards of most social agencies, both public and private, are composed of volunteers.

It is estimated that the United States boasts as many as 45,000,000 volunteer workers in the social agencies, hospitals and similar enterprises. That is roughly a quarter of all the people in the country. And though the figure may seem exaggerated, one has only to consider all of the types of volunteer services performed—including fund-raising—to realize that there is an astonishing degree of citizen participation in this area.

The value of enlisting citizens in volunteer efforts of this sort cannot be overestimated. Not only do they perform services of immense importance, they also become familiar with the operations of the agencies and hospitals and thus help greatly to promote understanding of such resources and general support for them. Needless to say, the volunteer worker is in the true American tradition.
