

THIS HAS BEEN ALTERED

Can you outline a speech about being secretary? How about on volunteering?

volunteering is good for your health. Something about you thought you were doing these volunteer things for you, and that made it a burden...constantly trying to make it worth my while. But the truth is as soon as I stopped focusing on me and my needs and turned my attention to the others I was working with, the burden disappeared.

I'm not big on volunteering, never have been.

First of all, I'm anti-social, and was born an introvert. So the idea of deliberately going out and mixing with people for no reason other than to help them or to help them help other people, with whom I would probably have to socialize, frankly scared the bejesus out of me. What would be in it for me? A bunch of social anxiety!

This is how bad of an introvert I was - when I was born, I barely uttered a sound. What a good baby, everyone exclaimed! Well that just encouraged it, didn't it?

paragraph about networking

I really admire the folks who give willingly of their time to others, who go down to the mens shelter on Christmas and serve turkey dinners to the homeless, people who blame bla

Have you ever noticed it's the same folks who seem to be always volunteering for something? The PTA, Sunday School, kids field trips at school, the Kiwanis club, the shriners, the women's auxiliary, and the list goes on.

Nope, I've never been on any of those. The type of person that sees an opportunity to help others and dives right in without a second thought. I admire those people, but I'm not one of them.

I'm just not the volunteer type. Or am I?

Well I do have a couple experiences as a volunteer.

The first time was when I was living in California. Our dog had just passed away, and I wasn't sure we were ready to adopt another. We happened to be living in an area with an extreme problem of strays and somehow I met the woman who ran the local rescue group for stray dogs.

She asked me if I'd be interested in fostering. I hesitated. She said you can just give it a try, nothing to lose.

Just give it a try. Okay that sounded plausible to my non-diving-in mind. I'll just stick my toe in and see how I like it.

so she ends up keep the first dog she fosters - so much for not diving in.

I spent the next 5 years fostering dogs and had experiences ranging from a mom who tried to kill all her puppies, to a dog that nearly died from parvo but didn't after I took her to a very strange shaman-like medical intuitive, to the surprisingly parental experience of my dog having her puppies in our dining room and raising them until 8 weeks when they were adopted out.

Now I know you're thinking well there wasn't much socializing with people going on! Just dogs! Not quite true, it ended up being quite a tight-knit volunteer group at the rescue. Everyone had the same goal in mind - to save as many dogs as possible from euthanasia - and I guess that's the whole idea behind volunteering, isn't it? To come together with other people for a common cause. And to lead by example. I found a lot of my introversion leaving me during that time and it actually made me feel like a leader to tell my friends the latest stories about who was visiting that day or that week.

My next experience with volunteering was with Toastmasters. I was asked to join the executive committee of my home club. I thought well, I can just stick my toe in and be secretary for one term.

Now here was a volunteer role I could appreciate. Yes, there was a fair amount of socializing going on, but it was usually at someone's house and they usually served food and drinks. Ok I found my volunteer niche!

I ended up being secretary for 6 terms in a row, for two different clubs. So much for sticking my toe in again, I ended up swimming in secretarial duties.

Now I wish I could tell you that this story ends with me climbing the ranks and going on to kill it as a VP of Ed, serving as President going on to serve on the District and the Division. Nope, the story ends with me as secretary after a couple of brief stints at VP Ed and VP Public Relations. But you know what, that's ok! Secretary, I'll have you know is a very important role on a Toastmaster club.

name some of the important things they do.

One of the roles is to look for future secretaries. This takes a lot of visiting and sharing and talking about Toastmasters. And the idea of saying “Yes” when asked to do something. That builds trust and respect. By being secretary, and in Toastmasters in general, I’ve learned about leading by example, communicating a vision and also the ability to admit a mistake.

Another role is having a succession plan in place. Transitioning means at the very least having a chat with the person who is taking your place and mentoring that person, especially if they’ve never done it before.

The big thing I learned was that if I feel this thing is a burden, others I want to follow me will feel that and take that approach as well, and you don’t want that.

Now I’d like to be able to tell you that I’m completely cured of my introversion and I now have the sparkling personality of the joiners and go-getters I so admire. Sorry to say, not quite, I said volunteering was good for me, not a magic wand.

But here’s the thing - it’s not about me. It’s about those other folks that I worked with and showed the way to by example. So what did I learn from leading in my volunteer organizations? What leading really is, and that is focusing on other people, not me.

When I volunteered to foster dogs, I thought I was getting a way to spend some idle time and not be bored...or to avoid being with people? But instead I ended up spending a lot of time with people and guess what, it’s not so bad!

Focusing on them, not me took a huge weight off of volunteering. I forgot about it being a feather in my cap, or an alternative to socializing, or whatever else I thought I was going to get from it.

Focusing on what I could do for them was extremely freeing. A liberation, in fact! Now that I’ve made being club secretary sound almost irresistible, who is up to take my place next term? Let me know in the chat and I’ll set you up. Cheers