

Portland ranks No. 2, Oregon No. 13 for volunteering

BY ANDY GIEGERICH
BUSINESS JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

For as long as Brad Christiansen can remember, Oregonians have volunteered for worthy causes.

"Growing up, I always assumed that volunteering is a part of being in a community," said Christiansen, vice president for commercial realtor Colliers International Portland. "It was instilled in me. I can never remember my dad not being involved with Kiwanis or the church. Volunteering is a wonderful way to show your passion for a given mission."

Christiansen, a board member for the region's Young Life ecumenical youth mentoring program, typifies the area's commitment to lending a hand.

Among 51 larger cities studied by the Washington, D.C.-based Corporation for National & Community Service, Portland ranks second in the percentage of citizens who volunteer. The 36.7 percent rate ranks behind only the Minneapolis area, in which 38.4 percent of residents volunteer with a nonprofit or other community group.

Between 2006 and 2008:

- 653,300 Portland-area residents volunteered with nonprofits and other registered organizations.

- Local volunteers donated an average of 47.1 hours of time, ranking Portland fourth.

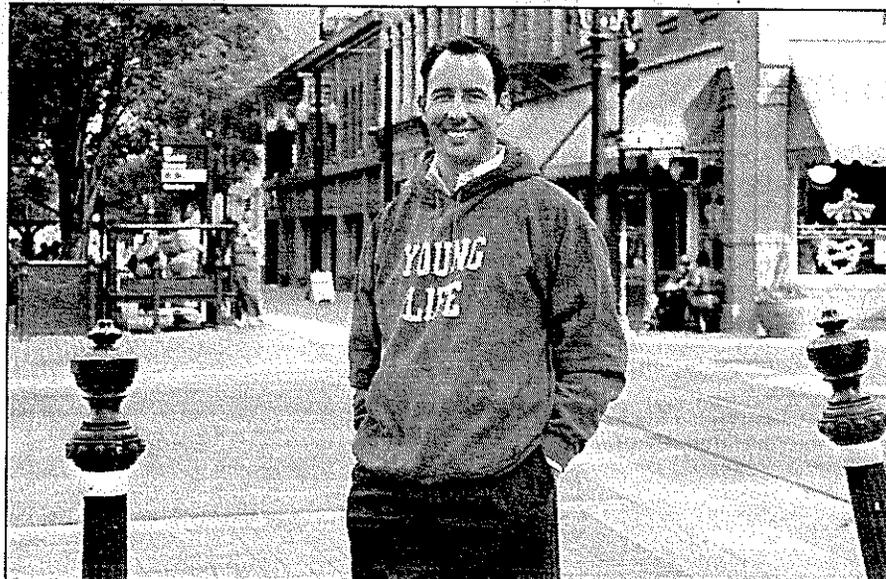
- Volunteers donated \$1.6 billion worth of time.

- Volunteers gave 75.1 million hours worth of service.

Portland's ratings fare better than Oregon's overall volunteer rate. Between 2006 and 2008, 980,900 volunteers, or 33.2 percent of the state's residents, gave up spare time for worthy causes.

That ranks Oregon No. 13 among all 50 states and Washington, D.C.

The 45.3 hours volunteer spent ranks sev-



CATHY CHENEY | PORTLAND BUSINESS JOURNAL

Nearly 37 percent of Portlanders volunteer for charities, including Colliers VP Brad Christiansen.

enth. Oregon volunteers provided 133.8 million hours of service, with that time accounting for \$2.8 billion in value.

Volunteerism has become more essential during the recent recession. According to the Glenview, Ill.-based researcher Giving USA, donations to charitable causes in the United States dropped by 2 percent, to \$307.6 billion, in 2008. The decline is the first since 1987 and only the second since the group began publishing annual reports in 1956.

Last year, 54 percent of human services charities said they needed more cash and volunteer resources, Giving USA reported.

In Portland, volunteers come in all shapes and ages. Jesuit High School juniors and seniors must log 60 hours of volunteer time before they graduate.

Yet in a down recession, volunteering can

provide unemployed adult workers ways to stay busy and network for future jobs, said Virginia Willard, executive director for the nonprofit Northwest Business for Culture & the Arts.

Arts organizations in particular need dozens of volunteers. Most boards work for free. Plus Willard's group enlists business professionals to lend expertise.

"Portland is a big volunteer city, and some of our companies are very committed to getting their employees involved as volunteers," Willard said.

Those companies include Becker Capital Management, a Portland money manager that regularly allows employees to take time off for volunteer activities.

Pat Becker Jr., the firm's principal and chief investment officer, will spend much

of the winter chairing the Portland American Heart Association's Heart Ball committee. The commitment will require about 10 hours of his time per week until about a month before the Feb. 20 event. During the weeks leading up to the gala, Becker and his wife Tabitha will effectively assume second full-time jobs.

Becker became more involved with the group after his father Pat Becker Sr.'s recent stroke. The elder Becker has recovered and returned to work.

"Given everything the association does for the state, we need to do everything we can to get it more money for research," said Pat Becker Jr.

Christiansen's Young Life duties have also become something of a second career. He became involved with the group as a college sophomore. Young Life, which had \$216 million in revenue in 2008, serves more than 100,000 children each year.

Christiansen spends several hours a week with Lake Oswego group members. He also spends his spare time raising money for the group, and helped organize the group's charity golf tournament with former NFL quarterback Neil Lomax.

He's also helped develop programs at the Young Life camp, which serves more than 1,000 kids each year near Antelope.

"It gives kids an opportunity to be real, enjoy themselves and have fun," Christiansen said. "What we give to it, it gives back to us 10 times."

Yet no matter how much time organizations receive, they can always use more help.

"We're always encouraging people to look at sites like Volunteermatch.com or Handsonportland.org to find something that's right for them," said Lauren Grube, volunteer services manager for American Red Cross Pacific Northwest Blood Services Region.