

# THE TENNESSEAN

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## NEWS ON YOUR CELL



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## TENNESSEE VOICES

# Nashville volunteers are poised to build on 2009's record

By **Lewis Lavine** and **Brian Williams**

Last year, Hands On Nashville set an agency record by connecting 34,000 volunteers with community service agencies. In a year when more people were struggling to make ends meet, it would have been understandable to see a decline in volunteerism. Instead, Hands On Nashville saw just the opposite.

This says something profound about our community. In a year when the need was at its peak and people were struggling with the economic meltdown, Nashvillians reached out to help each other.

With the creation of new opportunities for citizens' involvement, this year is shaping up to build on that record-breaking trend. In January, Nashville was awarded a



Lavine



Williams

"Cities of Service Leadership Grant" from the Rockefeller Foundation; the Mayor's Office announced a program that allows city employees to trade work hours for service in public schools; and the Attorney

General's Office released a new "Guidebook for Tennessee Nonprofits" for board members.

Hands On Nashville and the Center for Nonprofit Management are keeping the volunteerism trend rolling by launching OnBoard, an initiative that

connects prospective board members with nonprofits in need of their skills.

OnBoard gives individuals the opportunity to learn about the nonprofit sector and key topics and trends within it from the center's expert trainers. Participants will



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walk away from the training session understanding the purpose and leadership responsibilities of board members, the financial practices of nonprofits, and their roles in the community as spokesmen and fundraisers. Then, Hands On Nashville will work to place them with agencies in need of their specific skills as board members.

OnBoard keeps alive the spirit of this special year of service, and it meets a community need. Area nonprofits frequently tell us that they are searching for skilled board members of all ages and backgrounds to help guide their organizations in this unique volunteer capacity. OnBoard gets individuals ready for immediate service; it complements and supplements the work of the Young Leaders Council, which

prepares young adults for board service through extensive training and internship.

These volunteer programs and initiatives are all coming together because of the Middle Tennessee community's unique spirit. Hands On Nashville, the Center for Nonprofit Management, and the Mayor's Office all see what Nashville can become if we harness our energy to increase the community's vibrancy. Take advantage of the myriad of opportunities to give back, and help us make 2010 the Year of the Volunteer!

Lewis Lavine is president of the Center for Nonprofit Management, which seeks to build stronger communities by improving nonprofit and charitable agencies through training, consulting and evaluation services.

Brian Williams is executive director of Hands On Nashville, which creates and manages opportunities for adult families, teens, children and companies to transform their world through volunteer service. For more information on the OnBoard program, visit [www.cnm.org](http://www.cnm.org). For additional volunteer opportunities, visit [www.hon.org](http://www.hon.org).