VSys One
by Bespoke Software

City of Sugar Land, TX
Case Study

Industry: Municipality

Challenge: Manage 1,000 active volunteers and interact with nearly 8,000 users annually

Solution: VSys One, VSys Live

Key words: paperless volunteer management, custom reporting, custom applications, partner coordination, expandable system, court-ordered reporting

Easy-to-use System Proves Effective and Expands Beyond Intended Use

Who   The City of Sugar Land, Texas serves 85,000 citizens within its limits plus 30,000 more in outlying areas. Each day, volunteers contribute their time and talents in nearly every city office, including the police and fire departments, senior center, animal shelter, municipal court, planning department, and parks department. Volunteers also make annual events like the Easter Egg Hunt and Christmas Tree Lighting possible. The city has a pool of nearly 8,000 people they communicate with; of those 1,000 are active volunteers. Sugar Land also tracks individuals who attend city-sponsored civics classes, work on task forces, and serve on commissions.

Challenge   The city had outgrown its paper-based system for tracking volunteers. Binders overflowed with applications so the staff set up an Access database. It provided adequate information management but they found they were spending too much time entering data manually. Assistant Director of Environmental and Neighborhood Services Melissa Hoffman sought **a solution that would track volunteers, expedite communication, and make reporting easy.**

Solution   Together, VSys One and VSys Live by Bespoke Software provide a set of adaptable tools that gives the City of Sugar Land the **flexibility to work with multiple departments and communicate with 1,000 volunteers from a single database**. Since installation in 2011, they've **customized VSys One** to manage volunteers and nonessential staff during emergency situations, as well as recruit community members to serve as advisors and task force members.

Results   "We didn't anticipate utilizing the system for multiple uses but its **flexibility has turned out to be a bonus for the city**," said Hoffman. "Our Emergency Management Team uses VSys to man the phone pool. It's more 'voluntold' than volunteer but it helps the city mobilize staff fast in situations where every moment is critical. We also utilize VSys to solicit applications for boards, committees and task forces. The apps come in to the system and in we turn them over to the city council to make their selection."

Expanded tracking also lets managers monitor city-sponsored civics classes, task forces, and commissions. With all uses, **Sugar Land interacts with 7,827 individuals through VSys One.**

ESSENTIAL FOR COMMUNICATION
Of course, VSys is still also used for its original volunteer management purpose. **VSys One's built-in communication tools quickly became essential** to city staff for communication internally and externally. Department supervisors now receive a report by e-mail each morning telling them which volunteers to expect and when. Volunteers receive email reminders. Plus, coordinators can communicate with volunteers individually, by targeted group, or all together.

> **"VSys is fabulous! They are Johnny-on-the spot and respond immediately."**
> **– Melissa Hoffman, Assistant Director of Environmental and Neighborhood Services**

The Sugar Land Animal Shelter partners year-round with PetSmart to place cats and dogs in permanent homes. The city recruits volunteers who provide daily care for the cats sheltered at the store and transport dogs to the animal adoption events held there every weekend. VSys Live provides the means to **send schedules, directions, and support documents to volunteers** for this offsite program. VSys Live makes it simple and fast for **volunteers to check in and out offsite.**

"The VSys Live interface with volunteers has proven to be of tremendous value," Hoffman said. **Volunteers can access the system remotely or at a kiosk** to sign up, see who else is volunteering, and change or even cancel a shift."

THE VALUE OF KIOSKS
Sugar Land uses VSys Live kiosks at three locations: the Animal Shelter, the Senior Center, and the Police Department. When volunteers arrive, they log in with their ID number and go about their assignments without delay.

"Having volunteers log in and out at the kiosks saves us from hand entering all those volunteer hours," Hoffman said. This frees up staff to direct time and energy to their primary responsibilities.

> **VSys Live saves staff from hand entering volunteer hours from 1,000 individuals.**

The kiosk system gives volunteer managers and volunteers an opportunity to communicate. It can be a message to all volunteers, those on a specific assignment, or an individual. Volunteers can also use the kiosk to send messages to city staff.

"For example," Hoffman said, "at the animal shelter, there could be a pop-up reminder to all those working with cats that there is a virus breakout and the cats are on lockdown. Or we might issue a message to all the dog walkers for a week to remember to hang up the leashes when they're done if that's been a problem."

If volunteers forgot to log out at their last visit, they can let volunteer managers know their actual hours via a message sent from the kiosk. At the end of their shifts, volunteers will often send messages about things that are not working or need attention which helps keep operations going smoothly.

Another benefit of having volunteers logging themselves in and out is safety. "If we need to do an emergency evacuation, the system can tell us who's logged in," Hoffman said.

CUSTOM REPORTING
VSys One **custom reporting goes beyond tracking** "what volunteers have done" to encourage them with "what they might do." This tool also helps coordinators make recommendations for specific opportunities. Seeing a person's full profile and all their interactions **helps the city put the right person in the right job.**

Some volunteers need a record of their hours for **court-ordered or school-required service hours.** VSys Live allows volunteers to print out their own reports as documentation, saving Sugar Land staff a tremendous amount of time. "We've set it up so it's all preformatted," Hoffman said. "The hours are auto-filled and the report gets emailed to the volunteer. It's a huge time saver."

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED
Hoffman cites the **continuous improvements as one of the top reasons she recommends VSys One** to others. "It continues to evolve and the team keeps me up to date with webinars or one-on-one sessions to show me how to get the most out of the system." She is also impressed with how receptive the development team to suggestions. "A lot of the time, I'll have an idea and if they're not already on it, they'll say, 'That's a good one,' and implement it."

> **VSys One is intuitive and easy to learn. New users pick it up with minimal guidance.**

The system is intuitive and easy to learn. "When our Volunteer Coordinator started six months ago, she found VSys One very easy to pick up," Hoffman said. "She jumped in with just a little guidance from me.

About Bespoke Software and VSys One

Bespoke Software was founded in 1998 to support the Special Olympics, and has grown since to help all manner of non-profit organizations. Our VSys One application is in use across the United States and in Canada, in organizations small and large. We are passionate about supporting our applications, with a knowledgeable US-based support team available for you to call, and we offer training both on-site and via the web.

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