

Lighthouse Central Florida
Make a Difference Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast
Citrus Club, Orlando, FL
October 26, 2005

By David A. Odahowski, President
Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation, Inc

Good Morning Everyone!

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation, I want to and thank you for the privilege of joining you this chilly morning with the board, staff, and volunteers of Lighthouse Central Florida for this celebration of volunteerism. I knew we should have a good turnout today because cold weather always brings out warm hearts! “Making a difference” is a powerful theme for today’s breakfast because it resonates with the meaning of being a volunteer for Lighthouse Central Florida ... making a difference!

Today’s celebration comes after an eventful Saturday known across this county as National Make a Difference Day. Every fourth Saturday in October, USA Today Weekend Edition and the Points of Light Foundation team up to encourage the young and the young at heart all across this country to make a difference! You may have read about the 3 million people, neighbor helping neighbors, taking part in Make a Difference Day, or the 84 million Americans who volunteer throughout the year – to make a difference – just they way you do for Lighthouse Central Florida!

Alice Sandstrom, a Jefferson Award Winner said, “Volunteers polish the rough spots in our communities.” Today government cannot do it all, but it must do more. Businesses cannot succeed on Wall Street if there are problems on Main Street. Nonprofits are told to do more with less and accept less reimbursements, but do more! It is the volunteers of our community, like you all, who help polish the rough spots in our communities and help us understand that Volunteerism is the window through which others see the heart of our community.

Volunteerism is a dynamic expression of approval. When people vote with something as precious as their time, elected people, powerful people, sit up and take notice. Through your volunteerism at Lighthouse Central Florida, you tell the story of this agency better than the board or staff could ever do. Your volunteerism is an example to others that if we really want Orlando to be all it can be, people have to start thinking “we” and not just “me, me, me”. Volunteerism is also a great measure for accountability, because volunteers act as the eyes and ears of the community. Wherever there are volunteers, like Lighthouse of Central Florida, there is great work being done – that makes a difference!

If Orlando was to be featured in a VISA commercial, it might go something like this:

A new performing arts center: 250 million dollars; a new sports stadium: 500 million dollars; Volunteers at Lighthouse Central Florida: priceless! The single greatest resource this agency has is its volunteers. Volunteers can do many tasks: from being on the Board of Directors, to serving on committees, to reading to the children, or just answering the phones. No task is too small or too big for a volunteer. I want to add my sincere thanks to Lee Nashei and her staff. Their attention is on the clients not the clock. They could all make more money and spend less time at work in some other type of job, but the work they do and the clients they work with and the volunteers like you all, help them put in the long hours, many of those long hours make them volunteers, also!

Let me conclude by honoring all the volunteers here this morning with a little poem written by that very prolific writer, “anonymous” It is entitled *Volunteers*.

Volunteers

Where would we be without volunteers
Who quickly respond when a need appears?

This is the way you have chosen to serve;
What appreciation you deserve!

There are very many things to do
And YOUR time can only be given by YOU!

So without complaint and without demands
You offer the labor of your hands.

The world is a better place to live
When people like you are so willing to give.

With this attitude of love and of care
You will find a welcome anywhere.

You may not always know when someone
Is especially blessed by a kindness you've done:

As you freely share your hours and days,
May you also be blessed in many ways.

Thank you and God bless each and every one of you for the difference you make each day, every day at Lighthouse Central Florida.