

Volunteer of the Year: Linda Moineau



It began with a moment of kismet.

Longtime Acton and Boxborough resident Linda Moineau called the Acton-Boxborough United Way office to get details for a Senior Center event she had signed up for as a volunteer. Executive Director Griet Dehandschutter answered the phone. After exchanging the necessary information, Linda, who had been wanting to get more involved with A-B United Way, asked “Is there anything

else I can help with?” Griet mentioned a couple of volunteer needs and then said “What we REALLY need is someone to help us convert our data.” “I can do that,” Linda said.

A simple answer with huge implications. Griet was facing the challenge of raising thousands of dollars to hire a company to do the work, and now Linda appeared at just the right moment with the highest level of expertise and a desire to help her community thrive.

A-B United Way’s contact database was outdated. It was housed on a computer at the office and could only be accessed one person at a time. To use it and other programs, the staff had to plug their laptops into the computer tower. “We call the wires plugged into that terminal the umbilical cords, because we’ve been totally dependent on that one desktop,” Griet said.

Database conversion is complex and requires many strategic decisions. As residents continue moving online, using services like Uber, Netflix, and Amazon, nonprofits of all sizes have to adapt and become digital. United Way Worldwide strongly encourages local United Ways to invest in cloud-based solutions and shared services. Also, to be good stewards of funds entrusted, we need efficient operations. Donors expect rapid processing of gifts and acknowledgments. Databases are essential to interact with volunteers, board members, grantees, community partners and much more.

Linda Moineau, unusually, received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Computer Science, a concentration that typically yields a Bachelor of Science degree, and she is a trained facilitator. With this background, she is able not only to understand emerging technologies, but also to analyze, assess, and think critically. Linda is a consultant who counts major corporations including Pepsi, Gillette, Raytheon, the Broad Institute and Keurig Green Mountain among her clients or former employers.

Linda’s work with clients is a story of extremes. “First I focus on the high-level strategy, and then pivot and get down and dirty with the details,” she said. For example, at Keurig Green Mountain, Linda began by establishing data governance around the products they sell and all the materials that are needed to create those products, such as boxes, K-Cups, and coffee. Then, she

established a language about the data so the company could efficiently and effectively manufacture and sell their products using consistent information at each step.

While on a much smaller scale, Linda's work with A-B United Way similarly began with questions, such as how they want to use the data and what they want to achieve. Griet wanted a system that could turn raw data into information that could help make decisions. Linda and Griet met at length to formulate a methodical approach to using information as a decision-making tool.

"And then of course is the drudgery part," said Linda. She "went a little rogue," and culled through the information to find duplicates, inconsistencies, two different names for the same person, etc. "We had to roll up our sleeves and dig in," she said, which of course translates into many long, arduous hours.

Linda equated this part of the process to moving to a new residence. When you move, you don't just take all of your possessions to the new home. Instead, you carefully assess what is important to take and useful, what to leave behind, and what new things you need to acquire. For A-B United Way, the result of a strategic data conversion is being able to place a single contact into multiple categories of participation -- donor, volunteer, service recipient -- as well as to understand households and distinguish between members. As a result, A-B United Way will be able to track volunteer hours, as one example.

Shortly after the conversion began, the pandemic hit. The decision was made to move from Exceed Basic, the platform they had started to use, to Bloomerang, an affordable user-friendly, cloud-based database solution for nonprofits. While the conversion of historic data is still underway, the day will come soon when A-B United Way can cut the umbilical cord and easily access data in the cloud. Thousands of dollars have been saved, and A-B United Way is poised to have a data system that aligns with its goals. "I honestly think a higher power brought me and Linda together," said Griet. "She's been our angel."

Thanks to that one phone call, Linda is fulfilling her goal of participating in her community in a meaningful way. She was originally drawn to A-B United Way because it is a local nonprofit, and it has clear goals with focused results. "Now more than ever, it is imperative that locally, we find ways to unite in Acton and Boxborough and to work toward creating a culture where we share common goals, rather than being divided," said Linda.

Linda brings that same bold strategic thinking and hands-on attitude to A-B United Way's Outreach Committee. As an active member, she boldly questions the status-quo, helps think outwardly, and is ready to jump in wherever needed, whether during A-B United Way's Day of Caring, Mount Calvary Community Supper or setting up for an Evening of Storytelling.

Congratulations to Linda Moineau for earning the A-B United Way Volunteer of the Year Award!