



BHC-MSS 0156

## Guide to the Records of the School Volunteers Association of Bridgeport

By Meg Rinn

June 2021

### **Descriptive Summary**

**Creator:** School Volunteers Association of Bridgeport

**Title:** School Volunteers Association of Bridgeport

**Dates:** 1964-2021

**Quantity:** 2 record cartons, 2 manuscript boxes, 2 oversize boxes; 3 linear feet

**Abstract:** One of the very first organizations of its kind in the United States, the School Volunteers Association of Bridgeport can trace its history back to 1964. Originally called Y.O.U. – Youth Opportunities Unlimited – the organization was born out of a pilot program of the local Junior League to respond to a lack of pre-kindergarten programs, library, guidance counselor, and social worker in Bridgeport’s Waltersville School. Well over a thousand volunteers cycled through the programs that SVA became known for, including Read Aloud Day, mentoring, library support, tutoring, the creation of business, school, and community partnerships which helped to add more volunteers to the organization, and other forms of support and enrichment for students in Bridgeport. The records reflect the organization’s early days, as well as activities from the 1990s until 2021 when SVA was forced to dissolve.

**Language:** English

**Repository:** Bridgeport History Center

### **Biographical History:**

One of the very first organizations of its kind in the United States, the School Volunteers Association of Bridgeport can trace its history back to 1964. Originally called Y.O.U. – Youth Opportunities Unlimited – the organization was born out of a pilot program of the local Junior League to respond to a lack of pre-kindergarten programs, library, guidance counselor, and social worker in Bridgeport’s Waltersville School. The program was created over a course of 18 months in order to pull from the best research and information about what would be needed for both students and volunteers. It lasted for two years at the school. In addition to pr-k support, it included enrichment for students, career programs for teenagers, and began to increase parent involvement in the schools.

The success of founders Virginia Rider’s and Helen Wasserman’s program saw the interim program begin in 1967 under the name of Y.O.U.R.S. – Youth Opportunities Unlimited Revised Services – which continued the programs established through Y.O.U. The name School Volunteers Association of Bridgeport came into being in 1969 and continued to be used by the organization until it dissolved in 2021.

Well over a thousand volunteers cycled through the programs that SVA became known for, including Read Aloud Day, mentoring, library support, tutoring, the creation of business, school, and community partnerships which helped to add more volunteers to the organization, and other forms

of support and enrichment for students in Bridgeport. Support for the organization was always popular, with the 40<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations attracting much fanfare and noteworthy speakers – including Henry Winkler (the Fonz in *Happy Days*) at the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2007.

Funding for the organization was through a public-private partnership. The City of Bridgeport Board of Education used a portion of its budget to pay for the organization's staff, whereas the SVA raised funds for other aspects of operation such as books and other supplies. This arrangement was the primary factor in the SVA's eventual dissolution, as the budget for the organization was eliminated in the 2018-2019 school year by the Board of Education. The organization persevered for two more years through endowments and cash reserves, but by 2021, it was clear that this was not sustainable in the long term and the School Volunteers Association of Bridgeport made the difficult decision to dissolve itself. Those involved with the organization have urged volunteers to remain in touch with the classrooms and teachers they worked with in order to keep the programs that the SVA helped to establish and run for 54 years remain in place and can continue to help students in Bridgeport.

The report of final dissolution was reported by [the Connecticut Post on June 23, 2021](#), the same day that the organization's records entered the Bridgeport History Center.

**Scope and Content note:**

The material in this collection primarily represent the 1990s-2010s, with an emphasis on board minutes, subject files, and clippings and PR. The minutes and subject files help to demonstrate the inner workings of the SVA during that time period, whereas the clippings represent the activities and outreach that the organization managed. Also well represented are the volunteer awards of the 1990s, and the major anniversaries that the SVA celebrated. Of note is the material from the 40th anniversary, with extensive photographs of members and Henry Winkler.

Also included is early material from Y.O.U. - the SVA's pilot program - and Y.O.U.R.S. - the interim name for the organization beginning in 1967 and lasting until 1969. They mostly include reports and internal memos, offering insight into the early days and work of the SVA.

Photographs, the audio/video material, and other series provide supplementary insight into these major categories. See arrangement note for more.

**Arrangement Note:**

Series I and II, reports and board minutes, are both arranged chronologically. Series III, which contains documentation for Y.O.U. and Y.O.U.R. is arranged chronologically by folder title. Note that these historic documents were generally only labeled by the organization name upon time of donation.

Series IV, grants and series V, outstanding volunteer awards, are also arranged chronologically. Series VI, subject files, are arranged alphabetically with photographs also arranged alphabetically by events. All remaining series onward arranged chronologically.

**Administrative information:**

**Provenance:** 2021. Donation of Anne Gribbon

**Preferred Citation:**

Records of the School Volunteers Association of Bridgeport (BHC-MSS 0156), Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library.

**Names and Subject Tracings**

*Personal names*

Winkler, Henry, 1945-| n50015898  
Gribbon, Anne

*Corporate names*

Youth Opportunities Unlimited  
School Volunteer Association of Bridgeport  
City of Bridgeport. Board of Education

**Subject tracings**

Education equity  
Volunteer programs  
Literacy programs|sh88001413  
Literacy|sh85077482  
Volunteer workers in education|sh85144352

**Detailed box/folder listing**

Box 1

Series I, Reports

1. Annual reports, 2007-2020
2. Annual reports, 2018-2019
3. Business, school, and community partnership reports, 2004-2020
4. Reports, 1974-1977

Series II, Board

5. Board lists, 1964-2020
6. Board minutes, 1964-1969
7. Board minutes, 1966-1997
8. Board minutes, 1997-1998
9. Board minutes, 1998-1999; 2021  
Board policies, 2010s

Series III, Y.O.U. and Y.O.U.R.

10. Y.O.U. booklet, 1964
11. Executive committee information kit, 1964-1966
12. Y.O.U., 1964-1966
13. Y.O.U., 1964-1966
14. Y.O.U.R.S., 1964

15. Y.O.U. Steering committee, 1965-1969
16. Y.O.U.R.S fall conference, 1966

#### Series IV, Grants

17. Connecticut Commission on the Arts, 1992-1999
18. Bridgeport Rotary grants, 1997-2018
19. Fund/Linkage program grant awards, 1991-2001

#### Series V, Outstanding volunteer awards

20. Outstanding Volunteers nominations and awards, 1993
21. Outstanding Volunteers nominations and awards, 1994-1995
22. Outstanding Volunteers nominations and awards, 1995
23. Outstanding Volunteers nominations and awards, 1995-1996
24. Outstanding Volunteers nominations and awards, 1996-1998

#### Series VI, Subject files

25. Adopt-A-School program, 1984-1993
26. Adopt-A-School program, 1984-1993
27. 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1984
28. 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 1997
29. 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 2007
30. 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 2007
31. 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 2017
32. Black History read aloud, 2018
33. CATCH letters, 1993-1995
34. Cities in Schools, 1987
35. Events, 1982-2009

#### Box 2

1. Flyers and brochures, 1996-2006
2. Founders and chairmen, 2002
3. General activities, 1967-1969
4. General activities, 1971-1972
5. General activities, 1966-1969
6. General activities, 1966-1993
7. Manuals for volunteers, undated
8. Mentoring, 1996
9. Mr. Luck cruise trip, 1993
10. Other, 1996-1994
11. Newsletter, 1986-2001
12. Parent participation, 1969-1985
13. Read Aloud day 2001-2019
14. Clippings and PR, 1990-1995
15. Clippings and PR, 1990-1995

16. Clippings and PR, 1993-1994
17. Clippings and PR, 1996-1998
18. Clippings and PR, 1996-1998
19. Clippings and PR, 1999-2001
20. Clippings and PR, 2002-2003
21. Clippings and PR, 1976-2021
22. Clippings and PR, 1976-2021
23. History scrapbook, 1990
24. History scrapbook, 2002

### Box 3

#### Series VII, Photographs

1. Photo album, 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with Henry Winkler, 2007
2. C.A.T.C.H., 1992?
3. Meeting, 2000
4. Meeting, June 2002
5. Mentor bowling, 2005
6. Mentor bowling, 2006
7. Principal for a day, March 21, 2005
8. Read Aloud Day, 2005
9. Reading event, 2000
10. Roosevelt and Read Aloud Day, 2005
11. Unidentified group, 2008
12. Unidentified group, 2008
13. Volunteer celebration/mentor banquet, 2005
14. Volunteer workshop, 2005
15. Unidentified, undated
16. SVA magnets, undated
17. SVA buttons, undated
18. Awards and citations, 1970s-2010s
19. Tote bag, undated

### Box 4

#### Series VIII, Audio/video material

1. Fall conference – understanding multiculturalization, October 2, 1992
2. Information video, undated
3. Read aloud day, 1992
4. Reading aloud to children, undated
5. WEE deliver, undated
6. WEE deliver, undated
7. Untitled, undated
8. Untitled, undated
9. Untitled, undated

10. BAVA volunteers administrator program by Phyllis Gustafson, 1982 – six slide carriers from presentation
11. BAVA volunteers administrator program by Phyllis Gustafson, 1982- cassette for presentation.

Box 5

1. Loose scrapbook pages, 1980
2. Scrapbook, 1981-1992
3. Award from Literary Volunteers of America Inc., undated
4. Award from Negro Business and Professional Women's Club Inc., 1982
5. Plaque of emeritus board members, 2005
6. Plaque of those with 15 or more years of service, undated

Box 6

1. MAGNA awards, 2007
2. Awards and citations, 1970s-2010s
3. Scrapbook/40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 2007