***Why Volunteer?***

***This was written many years ago as I started my Presidency of another MPI chapter. Everything I wrote then is, in my mind, still relevant. . I used to have a poster on my wall from another organization that said:***

***“Maybe the reason you have not volunteered is that no one has asked you. I am asking you now.”***

Every morning I wake up and quickly think of my personal life, work life, MPI life and the commitments I have to other people and organizations. Sometimes I start thinking about all of it the night before, and occasionally in the middle of the night. I always think, “How is this all going to fit together today?”

Of course, within each of those areas there are other pieces. For example, in my work life I am trying to balance multiple clients’ needs along with the nuts and bolts of running the business. In my personal life, I am trying to fit my marriage, the operations of the household and of course, time for myself.

I see it all as a puzzle. There is one big puzzle, my life, with all those miniature puzzles within it. There are days I am tempted to throw away some (or all) of the pieces. There are also days when I throw pieces away accidentally. What ticks me off sometimes is that the size and shape of the pieces keep changing.

A number of years ago, my husband and I went on a cruise. There was a puzzle in one of the common areas for people to stop and work on. It was a tough one. It was neat to see people who you never met working on it together. Relationships were built and there was a sense of accomplishment as we overcame the tough spots and got close to getting it done.

When I ask you to be involved in MPI, I know I am asking a lot. How can you possibly fit one more thing in? How did you even find the time to read the newsletter, much less attend a meeting, and a committee… oh please!

As you get to know me, you will find one of my big themes is choice. I truly see the choices we make as the key to our lives. I believe we make choices as to how our lives will be; including the things we would like to hold other people responsible for. For the few things we did not choose to bring into our life, we can and do choose how we are going to react to them.

I, like most of you, have plenty of opportunities to be involved in organizations. The opportunities are everywhere: your place of worship, coaching kids sports, Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts, American Cancer Society, Habitat for Humanity, just to name a few. For each opportunity that is posed we must choose if it is right for us. When people I know learn that I have become president of our chapter, I receive such comments as “My condolences”, “I’m sorry” or blank stares implying “Why would you ever do that?” I tell them that I chose to take this path as the opportunities opened up, and that I am capable of saying no. At the same time, I will admit that becoming president of the chapter was not on my list of things to do a few years ago.

Priorities also change. Certain things that were extremely important to me even a couple of years ago, have moved down on the priority list so I could move other things up. I have learned that you can make time for anything that is truly important to you. However, everything cannot be at the top of the list at the same time.

MPI is a wonderful organization with a lot of opportunities to offer you through education, networking and developing skills through volunteering. As we offer you the pieces of MPI, pick up each piece and seriously examine it. It may not even look like it belongs to you. Is it one of those border or corner pieces? What opportunities is it offering you? Can you or should you choose to make it part of your puzzle? Don’t throw it away immediately because it doesn’t seem to fit. Sometimes we have to keep looking until we find the right place and purpose for it.

I hope you choose to become a piece of the MPI puzzle and it becomes a piece in your life puzzle. It is kind of like the common areas on the cruise ship- you walk by just planning to put a piece or two in place (which adds to the overall picture), or you end up staying a while because you discover you are getting something out of it. Both the puzzle and you benefit.

And for selfish reasons I hope you become part of my MPI puzzle. Yes I want you at the meetings, yes I would love to have you serve on a committee, but more important I know every person I meet makes a difference in my life. I’m choosing to have a great year and I want you to be a piece of my puzzle.