

Volunteer Profile: Rives McDow--Passion in Action



Rives McDow became a TPRF volunteer in 2003. He has served the Foundation in various roles since then, most recently in the area of materials distribution. Rives enthusiastically pursues many interests at work and play, as this interview reveals.

TPRF: Please describe your current volunteer role.

RM: I take care of distributing materials in electronic form. The materials mostly consist of TPRF videos and brochures used by volunteers to raise funds and awareness, and for translation into many languages.

TPRF: Can you share with us a little about your business background?

RM: I've done a lot of work in research and development, including work with copyrights and trademarks. Right now, I'm working as a business consultant to [renewable energy](#) utility companies, writing business and financial plans and arranging financing. I've used my trademark and copyright skills to assist TPRF in protecting its intellectual property rights.

TPRF: As someone who has been involved in TPRF for more than a decade, please give us your perspective on how the Foundation has grown.

RM: The major difference I see is a shift from the use of paid, independent contractors to an all-volunteer organization. This change happened in 2009. I've been both a paid contractor and a volunteer. I enjoy the [volunteer](#) work over the paid work, as I feel my volunteer efforts come from the heart, which is quite a different experience than paid work.

TPRF: What motivates you to volunteer for TPRF?

RM: There are several factors. I get a lot of enjoyment from my role in the distribution area. I can use many of the skills I've developed in business and my natural talents. I also find working as part of a team to be a stimulating and challenging growth experience.

For example, the team environment teaches me that maybe I don't know as much as I thought I knew in certain areas. Many times, I'm called upon to start a project. I enjoy challenges and I don't have a fear of failure, but sometimes I am a bit over-confident, which could be a bad thing if I didn't realize it.

Once the project gets rolling, people are attracted to join in areas where they have expertise. When this happens, I step aside and let the "expert" take over.

It's enjoyable to watch the team grow and take on a life of its own. I also enjoy learning from the other team members.

I feel it's very important for people to choose volunteer roles where they have skills and natural abilities. If you like a certain activity and are good at it, chances are you will enjoy doing it as a volunteer.

TPRF: How do you find time to be a [self-employed business consultant](#) and contribute eight to ten hours per week as a volunteer?

RM: I draw natural boundaries between my work and volunteer activities, and keep priorities in mind. I make sure to set aside enough time to accomplish whatever project I'm working on, and I keep distractions to a minimum. We have developed a very competent, worldwide TPRF volunteer team, and that helps the projects flow smoothly.

TPRF: Do you find time for hobbies?

RM: I enjoy ceramics (throwing pots and developing glazes), geology (and collecting rocks), woodworking (turning wooden bowls), and working in my machine shop (micro-machining small mechanical devices). Because I do so much mental work, I like physical activities that help me to get out of my head.

TPRF: Rives, I have to say you are truly an amazing person.

RM: Thanks, no comment.