

**2007 Regional Award for Volunteer Service to the  
American Chemical Society**

**Ruth Woodall  
Nashville Section, ACS**

Fifteen years ago I was asked to join the American Chemical Society in Memphis Tennessee so I could be the Public Relations chair for the local section. I gladly accepted the invitation because it involved a trip to the Belmont Conference Center to be trained in Public Relations by the ACS staff and the chance to serve on the local section Board of Directors. For a High School chemistry teacher in the early 1990's that was a real honor. Little did I know how my life was about to change.

After a three day training I came back to Memphis energized with the knowledge about the ACS and communicating with the media that I needed to help me be a successful Volunteer in Public Outreach. The ACS staff in Washington gave me the support, the tools, the encouragement, and a hotline for help when I needed it. Taking my roll seriously, I began to find ways to network and volunteer in the community. The more I volunteered as a member of the local section, the more other members started joining me and the more our membership began to grow. We began to get publicity and the public began to notice the Memphis section of the ACS. We volunteered to do activities during NCW, at the museums, at schools, at the park, at the Kids Korral at the Mid South Fair, on TV shows, at community functions and special events, at churches, professional development for teachers, at ST. Jude, at malls, at Universities, and we developed an experts list that was used for media. The size of section doubled in Membership in 4 years.

In 1998 I moved to Nashville and immediately took on the roll of National Chemistry Week Coordinator in the Nashville Section. In Nashville the pattern continued as volunteers were mobilized to start the volunteerism and build the membership. Nashville has since won Outstanding Section and many NCW awards for its involvement.

I have a full time job now that encourages high school students to do Community Service as part of the requirements for a "Scholars" initiative. I firmly believe that by volunteering to serve you learn a lot about yourself, your profession, and others. I love Chemistry. I am constantly trying to find ways to teach others about chemistry in their everyday lives. I love to watch as kids or adults say "wow" or "that is so cool" or "How does that do that?" I love it when they ask me the question "How does that work?" I then get to explain the chemistry behind the demonstration or activity I am working with. I am constantly thinking of ways to get chemistry into the minds of the public and have been known to think out side the box many times.

I enjoyed my 20 years of teaching High School Chemistry and now I am enjoying a new career as Director of a Statewide Initiative called "Tennessee Scholars". This initiative allows me to go all over Tennessee telling my story to kids and adults of how a kid growing up without a chemistry background became a chemistry teacher and made a successful career as chemistry professional. I am able to teach them that hard work, taking the right classes, and community service pays off in the future. My volunteer work has helped me professionally as well as personally and will continue as long as I am able to walk and talk.

A special "Thank you" to all of the staff and former staff of the ACS who gave me their training, knowledge, and resources to help me with my volunteer efforts.