

SCORE pitching in with advice

By [Carly Harrington](#)

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When existing and aspiring entrepreneurs need business advice, one resource they can turn to is SCORE. It's an all-volunteer organization that has more than 350 chapters across the country consisting of counselors with various business skills.

In fiscal year 2008, the greater Knoxville SCORE chapter ranked 37th out of 368 in the number of counseling sessions it held with clients. In April, it was 23rd out of 362 reporting chapters. (Its fiscal year starts in October.)

The group is slightly ahead of last year and Walt Williams, executive director of the local SCORE chapter, said the ranking can be attributed to one man - Chuck Christiansen. Volunteers are expected to serve about 10 hours per month, which can include meetings, workshops and counseling sessions. In February, Christiansen had 204 counseling sessions. Of those, about 75 were with new clients.

"I'm probably very unusual. I try to see people when they can be seen," he said. "Our office hours are limited. I do see people in the evenings on Saturday and Sunday afternoon because that's the only time they can meet. I feel strongly that if they need help, I will give it when I can give it."

The 78-year-old Christiansen has been a SCORE volunteer since 1998. He's one of 27 local active volunteers and 11,000 nationally. "I had spent a lot of time in the corporate world and realized I had learned some things I could share. This was an organization that allowed me to do that," he said.

Until 2006, Christiansen also served as a volunteer with the nonprofit economic development organization International Executive Service Corps, where he completed assignments in Macedonia, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. "We went every year for a period of three to seven months," said Christiansen, who went with his wife, Pauline.

Prior to his volunteer work, Christiansen was involved in manufacturing of all kinds of products, from automotive to furniture to appliances. He's worked for a Fortune 500 company and owned several small businesses, including a screw and washer assembly operation, a mail-order business, gift shop and a camping trailer distribution company.

In addition to his local clients, Christiansen also goes to Claiborne County twice a month to provide counseling services. He has attracted clients all over the world including Afghanistan and Zambia where he helps folks via e-mail and telephone.

Williams said the amount of work Christiansen does is extraordinary. "It's about the volunteer spirit and wanting to help," Williams said. SCORE is no longer limited to retired executives.

For more information on how to become a SCORE volunteer, visit www.scoreknox.org.

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