

FIELD NOTES



VOLUNTEER WIN-WIN

From high-level policy volunteers to tireless community advocates and dedicated envelope stuffers, volunteers are the life-blood of successful community-based organizations.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

There is no question that well-trained volunteers are great assets. Volunteers at all levels provide knowledge, skills and abilities that help support the mission of the organization at little or no cost. While policy volunteers often provide professional guidance and expertise at the highest levels, all volunteers provide extra hands to accomplish needed tasks.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM?

Perhaps the greatest benefactor of a well-organized volunteer program is not the organization, but the volunteers themselves.

Why do people volunteer? To...

- Feel needed
- Share a skill
- Make a difference
- Give back
- Build a resume
- Make contacts
- Help others
- Be challenged
- Learn
- Be recognized
- Be inspired
- Join a team
- Explore
- Stay busy
- Earn credits
- Meet people

TAKE THE TEST

Some people approach the recruitment of volunteers with a level of guilt. The perception (or misperception) that people volunteer not only to help you, but to help themselves as well. Successful volunteers report extremely high levels of joy and satisfaction. In a study reported in USA Today, there is even evidence that people who volunteer live longer!

SUCCESSFUL CARE AND FEEDING OF VOLUNTEERS

Lead By Example Treat your volunteers with respect and clear direction. If you expect them to be punctual and prepared, you should be too.

Define Success Tell them what success looks like for this day or project or in this particular role. Whether it's cleaning out a storage closet cleaned or setting strategic direction for the next decade, just be clear, and provide adequate training and support.

Watch the Clock When you tell a volunteer you need two hours of their time, stick to it. If you're done early, send them home or find something else for them to do. Remember that they're fitting volunteer work in among all the other obligations in their lives.

Make It Fun A big part of the value of volunteering is the social connections it affords. It's a chance to meet new people who are interested in some of the same things you are. Make an effort to introduce and connect your volunteers to staff and to one another.

Say Thank You This should go without saying, but you can't say thanks enough. Don't just stop at "thanks," but remind people of all the good work they helped to make happen. And we aren't joking when we say "feed your volunteers." A hungry volunteer is an unhappy volunteer!

WIN-WIN

In many ways, a well-developed volunteer program is the perfect win-win. The organization is provided more "resources" to fulfill its mission and the volunteer is provided with the opportunity for personal growth and achievement.

Fall is a great time to evaluate your volunteer program and set goals for 2017.

Get more tips on recruiting, retaining and training volunteers **here**.

There you can read our blogs about volunteers from over the years and sign up to get more on this and other relevant topics!

