

# FIELD NOTES



## THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

In our busy and sometimes over-scheduled lives, time is a priceless commodity. So when a volunteer gives their time to your organization, are you doing all you can to recognize this great gift? In addition to their time, many volunteers are also your best advocates. How can you motivate them to spread the good word about your organization and earn their continued support?

### POLITICAL ADVICE

As Andy Sernovitz points out in [Word of Mouth Marketing](#), a good political campaign is savvy at using and engaging volunteers. Some of his tips:

- 1. Always say 'yes'.** You can walk into any political campaign without an appointment, offer to volunteer and there will always be a project waiting for you.
- 2. Make them feel important.** A political candidate shakes as many hands in the office as they do on the campaign trail. Make volunteers feel like insiders.
- 3. Make it fun.** Throw good parties.

### BUT WE DON'T HAVE THE MONEY

Recognizing volunteers doesn't have to cost a dime. Volunteer recognition is a state of mind. It's realizing that everyone makes a contribution to your mission and everyone is part of the same team. Volunteer recognition means you accept people for who they are, you understand and value what they offer and – most

importantly – you match their unique talents, strengths and interests with the volunteer opportunity that allows them to be most successful.



From 139 Ways to Say Thank You and Recognize Volunteers from Ohio State University Extension's Ken Culp III, Ph.D. Vicki J. Schwartz, M. Ed. I. Joseph Campbell, M.S., here are a few free or inexpensive ways to recognize your volunteers:

- Track and recognize their contributed hours.
- Ask a volunteer to speak on behalf of the program to an outside agency.
- Ask effective volunteers to recruit another volunteer who is "just like them."
- Provide useful and effective orientation for each volunteer role.
- Use another volunteer to help!
- Nominate volunteers for community awards.
- Send a note of congratulations on professional achievements or promotions.
- Send a thank-you note to the volunteer's spouse to thank him/ her

for sharing his/her spouse's time and talents with the organization.

- Send a thank-you note to the volunteer's employer, noting the impact and contribution the volunteer has made.
- Have reserved seating at any event.
- Make sure that each volunteer is a "good fit" with his or her volunteer role.
- Provide special interest materials to targeted volunteers.
- Encourage program participants to send a thank-you note.
- Ask a volunteer for their input or opinion.
- Organize an Open House for your volunteers (with the sole purpose of saying thanks)!
- Tell them thank you: sincerely and often.

### TALKING HEADS

While your volunteers are giving their time, they are getting more connected to your organization. The opinions and affinity created will result in some of the best word-of-mouth marketing for your mission. Your volunteers will spread the good word about your programs, share stories and enthusiasm with potential donors, and talk about your case to key influencers. Definitely worth the work to treat a volunteer right!

