



Finding Volunteers for Your Association

Often time's neighborhoods have far more activities and projects than active members and/or leaders of the neighborhood organization can accomplish alone. It is then that volunteers from the neighborhood are vital to the success of any project. However, it can be difficult to encourage volunteers to help out. The following tips will help you increase your number of volunteers and keep them coming back.

Quick Tips to Increase Volunteer Participation:

- Determine and research sources of potential volunteers in your community.
- Don't forget schools, churches, neighborhood groups, businesses, service organizations and clubs, youth groups, senior groups, media and grass roots groups.
- Define target groups to recruit. Ask current members why they volunteered, what continues to motivate them, and how they were recruited as you begin to map out your recruitment strategy.
- Get your message out there. Never underestimate the power of simply letting people know that you need their help. Try holding an annual appeal for volunteers, set up booths at local fairs, write letters to the editor, and ask current volunteers to make an appeal on your behalf to local civic clubs. Also consider posting notices at all the places community members regularly visit (grocery stores, post offices, the public library, etc.).
- Encourage diversity. Remember that promoting diversity within your organization will broaden the range of opinions and ideas to which your organization has access. Try highlighting the achievements of volunteers from different cultural groups in your local newspaper, offer families opportunities to volunteer together, and actively recruit a diverse paid staff.
- Welcome volunteers into your organization. Taking time up-front to make sure that volunteers feel genuinely welcome is the first step toward keeping them involved. Try pairing volunteers with paid staff. Encourage paid staff to take the time to answer volunteers' questions and get to know the person.
- Challenge volunteers. Brainstorm about the possible tasks volunteers could perform within your organization. Listen to volunteers' interests and assess their abilities. Then provide volunteers with opportunities that meet them where they are. Volunteers who feel successful and have an opportunity to stretch their abilities are more likely to hang around and to serve the organization well. With this approach, everybody wins!
- Appreciate and respect volunteers. Remember that volunteers are giving generously of their most precious resource-their time. Communicate your appreciation and respect by inviting volunteers to be part of the decision-making process when appropriate and honoring the constraints on their time.
- Celebrate! Make sure that your organization recognizes the invaluable work of volunteers by acknowledging the important contributions they make. Try an annual awards luncheon, feature volunteers in your organization's newsletter, or partner with the media to highlight the work of local community members in the newspaper on or television.