

Sustainable Volunteer Recognition Programs

Presented by:

Diane Angeletti, Volunteer Manager
Habitat for Humanity ReStore, Appleton, WI
DianeA@fcRestore.org 920-967-8901

Questions You Should Consider

- ☐ Will your current volunteer recognition program still be sustainable if your volunteer base grows?
- ☐ How much growth will your current program allow?
- ☐ Are there other factors to consider
 - Are there upcoming organizational changes that will require more volunteers?
 - Do you recognize shorter term volunteers the same as you recognize longer term volunteers?
- ☐ Will your current volunteer recognition program still be sustainable if your volunteer base grows faster than you expected?
- ☐ What if you discover that your current volunteer recognition program will no longer be sustainable in
 - 5 years?
 - 10 years?
 - 20 years?

Changing or Creating a Sustainable Volunteer Recognition Program

- ☐ If you are in the midst of changing or creating a program, REMEMBER to continue thanking your volunteers while you are trying to “figure it out!”
- ☐ You can
 - Verbally thank every volunteer on a regular basis.
 - Include a thank you in your newsletter
 - Write a thank you note
 - Thanks for volunteering today
 - We really appreciate you sharing your time and talents today
 - Thanks for making a difference today
 - Remind them how they helped to achieve the agency’s mission
- ☐ Create a focus group that encompasses the diverse volunteer population of your agency
 - Include volunteers that fully understand the mission of your agency
 - Include volunteers who have volunteered for a long time as well as newer volunteers
 - Include volunteers who like appreciation gifts as well as those who don’t necessarily want any type of public recognition
- ☐ Explain why the current program is not sustainable.
- ☐ Have the focus group discuss possible options among themselves
- ☐ Have the focus group and staff get together to determine the best plan for your agency
- ☐ Your sustainable recognition program should include a variety of ways to thank volunteers
- ☐ It is up to YOU...the Volunteer Manager...to figure out how each of your volunteers like to be recognized
- ☐ You may find out that you need to be more flexible with your delivery!

- ▣ Some like you to say it
- ▣ Some like you to send it (mail, hand-written thank you, text or email)
- ▣ Some like a small gift
- ▣ Some want you to announce it to everyone

Change is Good

- ▣ Present them in a positive manner
- ▣ Recognize that change is needed to allow your agency to continue to appreciate volunteers in meaningful ways as it grows
- ▣ Be open to suggestions and comments. Be willing to discuss issues in private

Sustainable Ways to say Thank You

- ▣ Have young volunteers get involved by making treats or had made cards.
- ▣ Purchase thank you cards in bulk
- ▣ OCCASIONALLY bring food. VOLUNTEERS LOVE FOOD!
 - Donuts
 - An Occasional lunch
 - Have the staff do a potluck for the volunteers
- ▣ Be creative
 - For Thanksgiving, construct a turkey. Use construction paper feathers. On one side, put the volunteer's name, on the backside, write down something specific to that volunteer that you are thankful for. Have the volunteers find their name and read the back
 - Make a candy cane tree. Use a label and put their name on it. Use the label to stick the candy cane to the tree
 - Make cute cards
 - Make a volunteer board for everyone to see
- ▣ Other suggestions
 - Offer Free coffee/cocoa or soda to your volunteers
 - Have a staff member with a green thumb grow shamrocks in Dixie® Cups. Write on the cups "we're lucky to have you!"
 - Make a snack bag of Hershey Kisses® and insert a note that says, "Hugs and kisses for all your hard work"
 - Wrap a roll of Lifesavers with a note that says, "You're a Lifesaver"
 - Fill a see through container with M&M's® and put a little flower in it
 - See if your local stadium will block out a section and allow your volunteers to purchase discounted tickets in that section for a particular game
 - Have a potluck picnic
 - Buy paper treasure chests that you can assemble. Fill with gold chocolate coins and a note, "You're worth your weight in gold" or "You're a gem in our treasure chest of volunteers"
 - Smile and do it GENUINELY

- Stop to talk to your volunteers and get to know them
- Create a welcoming atmosphere for your volunteers
- Showing your volunteers that they are worth your time makes them feel important (and they are!)
- Send a special occasion/birthday card that the entire staff has signed/written in
- Thank them every time they come in for a shift
- Thank them every time they finish a shift
- Have fun and joke around with your volunteers
- Thank them in the newspaper
- Have an annual celebration
- Post something at your agency that recognizes long time volunteers
- Always greet your volunteers by name
- Be available to your volunteers
- Nominate them for other volunteer awards
- Highlight each volunteer in your newsletter
- Honor them for years of service or hours of service (Make sure that your method will continue to be sustainable for years to come)

Here's the Recap

- ▣ Create for the long haul
- ▣ Have a variety of ways to thank volunteers
- ▣ Be open to changes that allow growth
- ▣ Creating a sustainable volunteer program doesn't have to be a chore. MAKE IT FUN!

Websites for Inexpensive or Free Options

- ▣ www.orientaltrading.com
- ▣ www.baudville.com
- ▣ www.volunteergifts.com
- ▣ www.pinterest.com/volunteer-appreciation-gifts
- ▣ www.imprintplus.com