**VOLUNTEERS**

**PREPARING A VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION AND HANDBOOK**

-Think about your mission, goals, and a list of requirements and preferences for your volunteers

-What might motivate folks to volunteer for your program? What successes might convince people it is worth their contribution of time?

-Develop a series of volunteer job descriptions that includes: a description of the program and how volunteers help achieve its mission and goals, volunteer responsibilities and time commitments, eligibility requirements and preferences, what individuals might gain from volunteering, and the training and support your program provides.

-Create recruitment materials to get your message out. These might include flyers, posters, brochures, press releases, newsletter articles, videos, and web postings. Be sure to appeal to the particular groups you are trying to recruit. Be sure to reflect the diversity of your program and the volunteer base you are trying to recruit. Perhaps have a peer review of draft materials before distribution. You may need different types of outreach for different types of volunteer needs: events, tutoring, mentoring, coaching, classroom assistance, administrative assistance, etc.

-Develop a volunteer application and necessary volunteer paperwork. Be sure to include liability releases, photo releases, emergency contact information, background checks, and other important information necessary to protect both the program and the volunteer. Sometimes it helps to have a longer format for long-term volunteers and a shorter format for one-time only volunteers.

-Develop a volunteer handbook that includes information on program logistics, safety and emergency procedures, confidentiality, mandatory reporting, positive student management strategies, and the like. This may mirror your staff handbook, but adapted for volunteers.

**STRATEGIES FOR RECRUITMENT OUTREACH**

-Word-of-mouth is sometimes the most effective recruitment strategy. Have current volunteers, staff, and program allies talk up the benefits of volunteering to friends, relatives, neighbors, and coworkers.

-Parent outreach on bulletin boards, newsletters, school websites, and the like can also request outreach to friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, associations, and communities of faith.

-Presentations to community groups, organizations and businesses. Make the program come alive with slides, videos, photographs or testimonies from current volunteers. Make sure to talk about the difference that their time investment will make and benefits they may receive. Consider doing a brown bag lunch presentation at large local institutions.

-Brochures, flyers and posters can be left in prominent community locations such as libraries, barber shops, stores, restaurants, gyms, etc. Consider tabling community events.

-Contact local and community newspapers as well as contact local communities of faith, businesses, or other organizations to see if they would be willing to run a blurb or announcement in their normal communication tools distributed to their members.

-Develop relationships with local high schools and/or colleges who may have community service programs or need students to gain experience and skills.

-Utilize job training programs, senior service programs, and corporate-sponsored volunteer programs.

-Utilize on-line postings ( such as Craig's list, handsonportland.org, cnrg-portland.org, idealist.org.)

**INTERVIEW AND TRAIN YOUR VOLUNTEER APPLICANTS (as well as the staff who will utilize them)**

-Explore their interests, experience, why they want to volunteer, and skills they hope to develop. This is extremely important so that you set up a good match that will meet their needs. This helps with retention and making sure it is a positive experience for both parties.

-Explain SUN's goals, needs, and expectations.

-Complete required volunteer paperwork and coach on how to fill out required hours tracking and/or sign-in forms. Show them how to get their volunteer badges or whatever form of school identification that is needed.

-Provide the volunteer with a handbook, orientation, and training. This is really crucial for them feeling prepared for effective engagement, understanding their roles and responsibilities, and understanding program protocols/ school culture. Be sure to emphasize the importance of service consistency and establish procedures for informing SUN of any anticipated absences.

-During staff training, include a section and/or handout on how to ***best utilize volunteers***. Volunteers need to feel that their service is worthwhile and meaningful. Clarify both volunteer expectations and staff expectations in working with volunteers.

**PROVIDE REGULAR CHECK-INS AND APPRECIATIONS**

-You may want to have a location or listserv so that you can update volunteers and provide reminders to volunteers as well as give them encouragement and appreciation. Remember to remind them about upcoming school closure days as well as tracking deadlines.

-Make a point to have someone on your staff check-in regularly with volunteers about how they are feeling, how things are going, and any concerns or issues they would like to address. A heartfelt thank-you or recognition of a specific thing they have done well can go a long way in fostering satisfaction.

-Provide occasional appreciation "perks" (such as a handwritten notes or feedback, a plate of treats, letters of referral for schools or jobs, information about outcomes, invitations to participate in decision-making, etc.

-Consider a mid-term or mid-year survey asking about their experience and enjoyment levels and giving an opportunity for them to provide constructive feedback and ideas on how to make improvements.

-Prepare a volunteer appreciation event or some sort of recognition gift. These don't need to be costly, but you may want to recognize different levels of service. For example, differentiate by hours with someone less than 10 hours getting a thank-you card, 20 or less hours getting a small gift and a card, someone less than 30 hours getting a framed picture of them surrounded by the kids, and those above that level getting a small gift certificate (to a local store or restaurant for instance).

-There are also punny, easy volunteer recognitions that can be printed out and color-copied. A favorite of mine is "Thank-you for your commit-mint!(accompanied by a small chocolate mint)".

-You may want to consider "exit" interviews to gain information on how to improve volunteers' experiences.

-Be sure to let outstanding volunteers know that you would be happy to serve as a reference for future job or educational applications. You may want to have a filing system that records what they did and how many hours they contributed for these future requests.