



Power Booster

DuPage Association of Volunteer Administration
www.dava-il.org

Cultivating Short-Term Volunteers

Now is the time of year when we think of May flowers, planting seeds and cultivating our gardens. Similarly we can think of Volunteer Coordinators as gardeners who *cultivate* volunteers and *plant the seeds* of future volunteerism.

The Potential in Short-Term Volunteers

Short-term volunteers are very valuable to organizations that need manpower for large events or projects. These “attractor” events bring in large numbers of volunteers who, with minimal training, complete needed work and in the process are exposed to the message of the organization. Short-term volunteers are often characterized as people with limited availability but with a desire to help at an event that is fun, that makes a tangible difference to their community and that provides them with a rewarding experience. The challenge for the Volunteer Coordinator is to identify and cultivate those who might become longer-term volunteers.

Tips for Cultivating Volunteers

Prepare the environment

- Make volunteers feel welcome (nametags, signage, food, breaks, etc)
- Make them feel needed (explain the event and its impact on your clients)
- Prepare volunteers (give directions/training, pair them up with experienced volunteers, etc)
- Capture volunteer contact information so you can follow up
- Allow for socialization (make introductions and encourage meeting others, schedule breaks)
- Make volunteers feel appreciated (recognition, photos, personal contact, etc)
- Ask for their suggestions and feedback

Plant the seeds of volunteerism

- Assign current volunteers to work with the newcomers not only to manage the work but also
 - to talk about why they volunteer and like your organization
 - to identify for you possible candidates for future long term volunteers
- Provide information about your organization (a take-home packet of information, free pass)
- Provide information about future opportunities (displays, flyers, handouts, etc)
- Provide a sign-up sheet for the next event and/or for your email/e-newsletter

Nurture the volunteers

- Make personal contact with them during the event and introduce them to staff
- Try to have varying work available in an ascending scale of responsibility
- Offer more responsibility during the event to anyone you think has the potential
- For volunteers who have helped before, for a recurring event, ask for their feedback
- Follow up after the event to thank them and then periodically to let them know about future opportunities or events. Keep the relationship going as it may take multiple contacts before they respond.

