



VOLUNTEER RETENTION

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DID YOU KNOW that recruiting volunteers is a challenge for any non-profit organization but retaining volunteers is an even bigger one?

Retaining volunteers is both an indicator of and a key to success in volunteer management. When volunteers keep coming back, it is a sign that the program is being managed in a reasonable way.

Simply stated “Volunteer retention is a matter of making volunteers feel good about their assignment and themselves.” If the experience is satisfying and rewarding, the volunteers will continue to want to participate. This is even more likely to be true if the assigned task boosts the volunteer’s self esteem. When this experience pervades the volunteer program, a positive, enthusiastic climate is created which, in turn, encourages people to continue to volunteer.

Research indicates that the top three factors most important in retaining volunteers are:

1. Appreciation,
2. Meaningful activities and personal development; and
3. Communicating, listening and responding.

Showing appreciation and respect for volunteers – Saying thank you and showing volunteers that they are valued on an ongoing basis is probably more important than holding a splashy event.

Provide Meaningful and varied volunteer experiences – Provide a chance for volunteers to try out different things within the organization in order to find their niche. Offer new and varied experiences and responsibilities that involve testing different skills and learning new things. Provide training and other means of personal development. Establish clear expectations at the outset and check in on these regularly.

Communicate with and be responsive to volunteers – Provide information through newsletters to involve volunteers in program and activity planning. Communication is key – volunteers should know exactly what is expected of them, share in the planning, understand the overall purpose of the activity, and have input into decision making.

MOST IMPORTANT AND ABOVE ALL IS TO PROVIDE VOLUNTEERS WITH MEANINGFUL TASKS THAT SUIT THEIR SKILLS AND MAKE THEM FEEL NEEDED, WANTED AND WELCOME.

Magazine seeks stories from Canadian volunteers - September 2, 2003

Canadian Living magazine is calling on Canadians to share their interesting stories about volunteering. Each month in its "**Heartbeats**" column, the magazine features short profiles about people who contribute their time to the voluntary sector. For more information, or to share your story, contact Cindy Barrett at cbarrett@magma.ca. Please copy Don Lapierre at National Office (e-mail: dlapierre@nhq.sja.ca).

Sources: “Recruiting, Retaining, and Reward Volunteers: What Volunteers Have to Say” published by Volunteer Canada, and Canadian Centre for Philanthropy

DID YOU KNOW?
AN INFORMATION SHEET FOR ST. JOHN AMBULANCE MEMBERS