



CELEBRATION AND RECOGNITION OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

Celebration and recognition are important to the closure of service projects. It can bring a sense of completion to the volunteers. It can also provide visibility for the service project or program, which helps build positive group identity and youth volunteers deserve it!

This Resource Packet highlights information on the importance of recognition and celebration for volunteer service and provides ideas for creative ways to incorporate these components into your programs. Also available is a Resource Packet entitled *Awards Programs Related to Youth Service*, which describes different recognition and awards programs available to young people and adults involved in youth service.

UNDERSTANDING THE NEED FOR RECOGNITION

The Points of Light Foundation developed handouts that give a brief overview of why recognition and celebration are important, who should be recognized, and tips for giving recognition and celebrating accomplishments.

Contact: The Points of Light Foundation
Youth & Family Outreach
1400 Eye Street, NW
Suite 800
Washington, DC 20005
202-729-8000
www.pointsoflight.org

An excerpt from the **How-to Guide for Recognition & Celebration** written by Harry Silcox for the National Service-Learning Cooperative and ServeAmerica K-12 Clearinghouse, 1994, presents an overview of the importance of recognition and a description of different types of activities that follow a recognition continuum. This continuum explains that for recognition to be successful, it must move beyond the perfunctory formal stage to systematic planned recognition.

Contact: Harry Silcox
Institute for Global Studies & Service-Learning
Philadelphia University
Henry Avenue & Schoolhouse Lane
Philadelphia, PA 19144
215-951-0343

RECOGNITION IDEAS

Vern Lake, volunteer services consultant for the Minnesota Department of Public Welfare, provides a list of “101 Ways to Give Recognition to Volunteers.”

The handout “More Ways To Celebrate and Recognize Youth Volunteers” was adapted from the Points of Light Foundation’s A Practical Guide for Developing Agency/School Partnerships for Service-Learning and the National Youth Leadership Council’s Learning by Giving.

Contact: National Youth Leadership Council
1910 West Country Road B
St. Paul, MN 55113
651-631-3672
www.nylc.org



WHY AND WHO YOU SHOULD RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE

Why recognition and celebration is important:

- ◆ Youth volunteers deserve it
- ◆ Provides visibility for service and program - conveys message to larger group; can help break stereotypes of youth
- ◆ Brings closure; it is an act of completion, a finalization
- ◆ Acts as a rite of passage
- ◆ Help strengthen self-esteem
- ◆ Builds positive group identity
- ◆ Keeps participants motivated and helps retain volunteers
- ◆ Attracts new volunteers (recruitment)

Who should you recognize?

- ◆ Youth volunteers
- ◆ Program coordinators
- ◆ Parents
- ◆ Teachers
- ◆ Administrators
- ◆ Agencies
- ◆ Program/project partners
- ◆ Funders



TIPS FOR GIVING RECOGNITION AND CELEBRATING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- You should plan for recognition and celebration
- Involve young people in designing and planning their own recognition
- Should be ongoing, not just at end; an immediate thank you can mean more than a certificate at the end.
- May have greatest impact on the heels of achievement
- Deliver recognition in personal and honest way
- Making it personal can increase impact
- Tailor your recognition to the unique needs of the participants involved
- Be sensitive to individual and cultural differences
- Don't give too often, it can seem insincere
- Deliver recognition in an open and public way - this can increase its effect and value
- Strive for clear, unambiguous and well communicated connection between accomplishments and rewards
- Recognize the people who recognize others
- It should be fun
- Vary how you recognize participants; some volunteers may be with you over time

RECOGNITION AND CELEBRATIONS

The service movement has a long history of relying upon recognition and celebration to motivate students. Recognition has been practiced on a continual basis and celebrations have been used to mark a year of service activity. However, most literature dealing with recognition and celebration is found in a number of different fields of study. Business research leads the way with numerous studies into the effects of recognition and celebration on employee motivation. Therefore, this module will rely on these business practices and current practices in the service-learning field to clarify the meaning and significance of recognition and celebration.

Celebrations and recognition are important to the closure of service projects. It is an act of completion, a finalization of the project, or a shouting to the world that "we are finished." Roscoe Wilson, Executive Director of the East Arkansas Wilderness Institute, speaks to this point when he tells of the daily routine of the incarcerated youth under his charge. "We're very big on the work ethic. Most of these kids have never finished anything in their lives." Self-directed projects are among the most satisfying events a human can experience. To start with an idea and develop it into some recognizable form or institution is among man's highest endeavors.

Recognition can be best understood as a powerful motivational force. An examination of practices in service celebrations and recognition produced six types of recognition currently in use. They range from least powerful to most powerful on a continuum chart. Examples of each type follow.

1. Perfunctory Formal Recognition (It can be a good activity since the individual can set his/her sights on being recognized by focusing on a specific award.)

San Diego Urban Corps

The UCO News is published throughout the year by the San Diego Urban Corps. The entire newsletter is devoted to recognizing and commending corps members. A significant portion of the newsletter is devoted to reflection by the corps members. Done in poetry these articles are sincere in quality, specific to accomplishments and all reflect incidents in the corps.

2. Informal Recognition (Given daily as part of a routine)

Philadelphia Youth Service Corps

As a standard practice, projects last no more than four to six weeks. Each individual who has a project done by the corps must be willing to meet with corps members after the project is completed and thank them for the service. Part of that message includes telling those who worked on the project the value of the work to the community. Projects are not accepted without such an agreement by the one accepting the service.

3. Recognition that consists of outside guests or political figures

Job Training for Beaver County, Inc.

The Valley Tribune North announced that youth from the summer job were visited by Lieutenant Governor Mark Singel. The youth set-up and cleaned-up a senior citizen picnic area in Beaver County. Also, the high school and college students from Beaver, Armstrong and Indiana counties were honored at Blue Spruce Park. As part of the event there was a softball game, canoeing in the man-made lake and eating hot dogs. The corps built bridges and hiking trails during the summer. Once a construction job is completed, a sign with the name of the youth corps' crew members is put on it.

4. Recognition that includes a party or event

Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission
The Mountaineer Herald-Edensburg, Pa.

Members of the Appalachian Youth Service Community Conservation Corps were honored at Dunman Park. Awards were made following a morning recap of five projects completed this summer and picnic cookout lunch. Some of the projects completed were:

Dunman Lake Park- construction of a 30 x 60 foot pavilion.

Cambria County- construction of a gazebo and eight park benches, park renovations and watershed improvement.

Edensburg Center- ground maintenance and construction of pavilions.

Edensburg- construction of a Wilderness Challenge Course, pavilion nature trail.

5. Recognition that includes a celebration of service by doing service for others

Olney High School Literacy Corps Celebration

Teacher Myra Olshansky, sponsor of the Olney High School Literacy Corps, arranged a uniquely different kind of celebration. Her corps members invited the elementary school teacher and the class that they tutored to Olney High School for a special morning program. These were all feeder schools to the high school. It began at 10:00 A.M. and contained some twelve elementary classrooms and teachers from ten different schools.

When I arrived it was not clear what was going to happen in the program. However, the atmosphere in the auditorium was warm and nurturing. I noticed one young man with what can best be called a “different hair cut” and rings in his nose and ears. He looked something like a youth straight out of a modern version of *West Side Story*. But his confidence and demeanor radiated positive feelings. When he walked over to a first grade class and shook the teacher’s hand, five children got out of their seats to hug his legs and cling to him. My personal curiosity led me over to the elementary teacher to question her about the young man. Her response was that he had worked with the class for a year and that he had been such a great help that she wondered how next year’s class would be without him. It was clear that initial appearances meant little. Nose rings don’t determine the character of the individual!

In all, there were ten elementary schools present that totaled some 300 first and second grade students. The senior high students arranged to have a corsage for each teacher they worked with over the year. The class applauded loudly for their teacher and the senior high student who had tutored them in the classroom. After these presentations the twelfth grade students preceded to put on a show to entertain the groups. Music, singing and dancing filled the stage to the enjoyment of the audience.

The singularly most important thing about this celebration was that the high school seniors celebrated their year of work with a group of elementary students by preparing a program for the teacher and children they had served. Celebrations and recognition’s aimed at someone else’s enjoyment has built within it the satisfaction of providing a special event for others. What better way to celebrate service than by doing service.

6. Systematic Recognition

that is:

- **Built in the design of the project**
- **Practiced daily through praise and promotion of dignity in the individual**
- **Celebrated by group participation in an activity at the end of the project**

National Youth Leadership Council Teacher Training- Wilder Forest

One of the most dramatic celebrations held each year is the National Youth Leadership Council’s closing exercises to a week long training session at Wilder Forest in Minnesota. The week is planned and conducted by Pam and Jim Toole, who rank among the best trainers in the country. Besides being trained in service-learning techniques the group is exposed to active-learning and a process in group dynamics that brings everyone together in a recognition of the unique differences and strengths of each individual.

Throughout the week planned activities and learning session were used to recognize the dignity and the skills of each individual by providing everyone with opportunities for expression and recognition. Groups were mixed and matched to encourage those at the conference to both respect and recognize the value of each individual to the group. This internal structuring of activities and events had as a major thrust the recognition of each group member.

The last activity of the group is a campfire ceremony in which each group must perform a skit. Each skit tells about the evolution of events and feelings of the group. The participants laugh with one another and share emotional experiences that go to the core of human understanding. The final portion of the evening is devoted to reflective testimonials about what the week meant to them. This is a voluntary event that is done only by those who choose to have their story told.

The basic strategy in this activity was to recognize as many people as possible and plan an event so that everyone will participate. The people in the group each provide energy and a spirit of humanity that gives one the everlasting reward of having known and worked with the finest group of teachers assembled. Recognition that includes everyone in the group has the greatest affect on promoting the goodwill of the group. Group memorials promote a community of feeling and a feeling of respect for life and the beauty of remembering.

Recognition Continuum Chart

Least Powerful			Most Powerful		
←-----			-----→		
1	2	3	4	5	6
Perfunctory	Informal	Recognition	Recognition	Recognition	Systematic
Formal	Recognition	that consists of	that includes	that includes	Recognition
Recognition		outside guests	a party or	a celebration	that includes
		or political	event	of service by	proper use of
		figures		doing service	praise,
				for others	reprimand, and
					celebration

The above recognition continuum chart is meant as a guide to those conducting **service-learning programs**. Its meaning is clear. All recognition techniques are valuable and useful to the service-learning field. However, the power of the event on participants increases when 1) there is planning that builds continuous recognition into the project, 2) when there is a process by which everyone can participate in the event, and 3) when service for others is part of the celebration. Recognition to be successful must move beyond the perfunctory formal stage to systematic planned recognition.

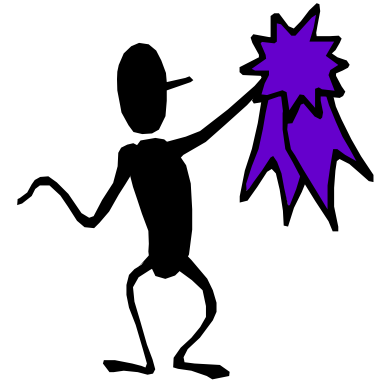
Taken from How-to Guide for Recognition and Celebration, Harry Silcox

101 WAYS TO GIVE RECOGNITION TO VOLUNTEERS

Continuously, but always inconclusively, the subject of recognition is discussed by directors and coordinators of volunteer programs. There is great agreement as to its importance but great diversity in its implementation.

Listed below are 101 possibilities gathered from hither and yon. The duplication at 1 and 101 is for emphasis. The blank at 102 is for the beginning of your own list.

I think it is important to remember that recognition is not so much something you do as it is something you are. It is a sensitivity to others as persons, not a strategy for discharging obligations.



1. Smile.
2. Put up a volunteer suggestion box.
3. Treat to a soda.
4. Reimburse assignment related expenses.
5. Ask for a report.
6. Send a birthday card.
7. Arrange for discounts.
8. Give service stripes.
9. Maintain a coffee bar.
10. Plan annual ceremonial occasions.
11. Invite to staff meeting.
12. Recognize personal needs and problems.
13. Accommodate personal needs and problems.
14. Be pleasant.
15. Use in an emergency situation.
16. Provide a baby sitter.
17. Post Honor Roll in reception area.
18. Send a Thanksgiving Day card to the volunteer's family.
19. Provide a nursery.
20. Say "Good Morning."
21. Greet by name.
22. Provide good pre-service training.
23. Help develop self-confidence.
24. Award plaques to sponsoring group.
25. Take time to explain.
26. Be verbal.
27. Motivate agency VIPs to converse with them.

28. Hold rap sessions.
29. Give additional responsibility.
30. Afford participation in team planning.
31. Respect sensitivities.
32. Enable to grow on the job.
33. Enable to grow out of the job.
34. Send newsworthy information to the media.
35. Have wine and cheese tasting parties.
36. Ask client-patient to evaluate their work-service.
37. Say "Good Afternoon."
38. Honor their preferences.
39. Create pleasant surroundings.
40. Welcome to staff coffee breaks.
41. Enlist to train other volunteers.
42. Respect their wishes.
43. Give informal teas.
44. Keep challenging them.
45. Have a public reception.
46. Take time to talk.
47. Defend against hostile or negative staff.
48. Make good plans.
49. Commend to supervisory staff.
50. Send a valentine.
51. Make thorough pre-arrangements.
52. Persuade "personnel" to equate volunteer experience with work experience.
53. Admit to partnership with paid staff.
54. Recommend to prospective employer.
55. Provide scholarships to volunteer conferences or workshops.
56. Offer advocacy roles.
57. Utilize as consultants.
58. Write them thank you notes.
59. Invite participation in policy formulation.
60. Surprise with coffee and cake.
61. Celebrate outstanding projects and achievements.
62. Nominate for volunteer awards.
63. Have a "Presidents Day" for new presidents of sponsoring groups.
64. Carefully match volunteer with job.
65. Praise them to their friends.
66. Provide substantive in-service training.

67. Provide useful tools in good working condition.
68. Say “Good Night.”
69. Plan staff and volunteer social events.
70. Be a *real* person.
71. Rent billboard space for public praise.
72. Accept their individuality.
73. Provide opportunities for conferences and evaluation.
74. Identify age groups.
75. Maintain meaningful file.
76. Send impromptu fun cards.
77. Plan occasional extravaganzas.
78. Instigate client planned surprises.
79. Utilize purchased newspaper space.
80. Promote a “Volunteer-of-the-Month” program.
81. Send a letter of appreciation to employer.
82. Plan a “Recognition Edition” of the agency newsletter.
83. Color code name tags to indicate particular achievements (hours, years, unit, etc.).
84. Send commendatory letters to prominent public figures.
85. Say “We missed you.”
86. Praise the sponsoring group or club.
87. Promote staff smiles.
88. Facilitate personal maturation.
89. Distinguish between group and individuals in the group.
90. Maintain safe working conditions.
91. Adequately orient.
92. Award special citations for extraordinary achievements.
93. Fully indoctrinate regarding the agency.
94. Send Holiday cards.
95. Be familiar with the details of the details of assignments.
96. Conduct community-wide, cooperative, inter-agency recognition events.
97. Plan a theater party.
98. Attend a sports event.
99. Have a picnic.
100. Say “Thank You.”
101. Smile.
102. ?????

By Vern Lake, Volunteer Services Consultant Minnesota Department of Public Welfare

MORE WAYS TO CELEBRATE AND RECOGNIZE YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

- ◆ Provide certificates commemorating their service.
- ◆ Write a letter to the editor commending youth volunteers.
- ◆ Send affirmation letters to the school administrators and families.
- ◆ Provide letter jackets for service just as they give letters for sports and music.
- ◆ Get coverage on television and in other media of the youth telling their own stories.
- ◆ Invite people who benefited from the service to write letters to the youth volunteers.
- ◆ With teachers, sponsor special school assemblies or breakfasts for the youth who serve.
- ◆ Make buttons or T-shirts the youth can wear to display their commitment to service.
- ◆ Hold a picnic or potluck in honor of the youth volunteers.
- ◆ Establish a community wide scholarship or awards program for youth who serve.
- ◆ Invite local journalist to develop feature stories highlighting youth achievements.
- ◆ Submit student records for special awards and scholarships whenever possible.
- ◆ Bestow honorary titles, special names, official gifts, songs, dances, or rights.

**Adapted from A Practical Guide for Developing Agency/School Partnerships for Service-Learning, Points of Light Foundation and Learning by Giving, National Youth Leadership Council*