



TIPS FOR RECRUITMENT OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

On-going recruitment is at the heart of any successful volunteer program. Effective recruitment involves knowing who your potential volunteers are, how to reach them, and what you need them to do. The recruitment of youth requires creativity, persistence, and flexibility, but the potential impact of youth volunteers on your organization can be substantial.

This Resource Packet contains resources compiled from several publications in the youth service field which give some basic tips for recruiting youth volunteers and offers different ideas for recruiting youth. Some additional resources are suggested for further information.

RESOURCES FOR RECRUITING YOUTH

The Points of Light Foundation has designed various tip sheets on recruitment “**Recruitment Ideas and Tips**”, “**Tips for designing a program which will retain young people’s involvement**”, and “**Creating a Recruitment Strategy.**” All the sheets serve as a starting point regarding recruitment of young volunteers, and recruitment strategies.

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

“**Reasons Young People Get Involved/They Don’t Get Involved**” Source unknown.

Pages 32-33 from **Youth Service: A Guidebook for Developing and Operating Effective Programs, Recruitment** outlines principles and approaches relevant to any effort to recruit young volunteers.

- **Contact:** Independent Sector
1828 L Street, NW, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20036
202-223-8100
www.independentsector.org

Pages 58-59 of **IDEALS, Creating and Managing Partnerships for Service-Learning Integration** explains three different recruitment strategies: specific; direct; and indirect.

- **Contact:** National Association of Partners in Education
209 Madison Street, Suite 401
Alexandria, VA 22314
703-836-4880

The Washington Youth Voice Project, an initiative of Project Service Leadership developed a tip sheet called **“Why Should I Care?”** to help young people understand why youth involvement in communities makes a big difference

- **Contact:** Washington Youth Voice Project
172 20th Ave.
Seattle, WA 98122
206-325-7922
www.youthvoice.org

OTHER RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Local Volunteer Center, if you do not know your Local Volunteer Center, call 1-800-VOLUNTEER for assistance.

Managing Volunteer Diversity: A Rainbow of Opportunities, edited by Sue Vineyard and Steve McCurley, available through the Volunteer Community Service Catalog, for more information call 800-272-8306.

Children as Volunteers, by Susan J. Ellis, Anne Weisbart, Katherine H. Noyes, available through the Volunteer Community Service Catalog, call 800-272-8306.

Recruitment Ideas and Tips

- Think about why a young person would want to get involved - this means including the benefits of youth involvement in your recruitment message.
- Reach young people through the organizations and institutions that they frequent or are already part of including, schools, churches and other faith based organizations, community/neighborhood centers, or the juvenile justice system
- Don't just recruit young people directly also recruit them through the adults in their lives including, parents, teachers, coaches, tutors, counselors, social workers and even other young people.
- Be specific and concrete in your recruitment message - its not just about joining and organization its about gaining new skills, making new friends, about going on trips etc...
- Don't think of recruitment as a one shot deal, instead view it as an ongoing process that you are constantly engaged in - e.g. think of the other things that you do as recruitment including press coverage of events or activities and recognition ceremonies.
- Recruit through local newspapers and newsletters. Don't forget school newspapers, PTA newsletters and agency newsletters.
- Use mediums which appeal to young people including video, slides and music.
- Set up a bulletin board in a high traffic area, such as a grocery store, community center, a library or school with ongoing descriptions of activities and events.
- Produce a printed brochure which share with young people and others why and how to get involved.
- Participate in large community events like local fairs, volunteer fairs, holiday events and share materials or talk to young people about why and to get involved.
- Involve young people already in your program in developing and implementing a recruitment campaign - peers or even role models can be the best recruiters.
- Recruit for specific activities and events - engaging a young person interested in a single activity can lead to their involvement in the overall program.
- Conduct group presentations to young people or adults at club meetings, in classrooms at civic organizations meetings etc...
- Develop posters that can be placed where young people collect including libraries, schools, arcades.

Tips for designing a program which will retain young people's involvement

- provide young people with opportunities to lead and grow in the program; this may include engaging young people in program leadership, research and planning, administrative and program support, training, supervision, development of new initiatives, program evaluation, organization governance
- engage young people in the design and implementation process of any program or project
- be partners with young people
- provide opportunities for open communication
- provide young people with the training and support they need to be successful
- provide opportunities for reflection
- treat young people with respect and expect the same from them
- engage young people in meaningful activities

Creating A Recruitment Strategy

What is the project?

How many can the project accommodate in meaningful service?

Am I expecting a low, medium, or high commitment from the young people?

How can I involve young people as recruiters?

What young people should I target?

Where do I recruit the young people?

When is the best time to recruit young people?

What medium will I use to recruit the young people?

REASONS YOUNG PEOPLE GET INVOLVED

- **Have concern for the issue**
- **Learn more about the issue**
- **Join friends who are members**
- **Gain skills in leadership**
- **Spend free time more productively**
- **Do something for the community**
- **Meet other teens**
- **Have seen family member helping others**
- **Desire to achieve success**
- **Prepare for future career**
- **Gain status among peers**
- **Know they can make a difference**

REASONS THEY DON'T GET INVOLVED

- **No one asked them**
- **Don't know how to become involved**
- **Lack of time**
- **Feel they can't make a commitment**
- **Family or job commitment**
- **Lack of education about the issue**
- **Uncomfortable with the issue**
- **Lack of interest in the issue**
- **Don't know what they will gain**
- **Don't feel needed**
- **Lack of transportation or other support**
- **Don't think it's cool**

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment of volunteers is a task faced by the leader of every youth service program- whether it is a club activity or a program in a school where service is required for graduation. While there will be differences in the degree of voluntariness, the level of commitment demanded, and the type of incentives that can be offered, there are certain principles and approaches that are relevant to any effort to recruit young volunteers.

Designing the Appeal

1. A good rule of thumb is to *be as concrete and specific as possible*. A few people may respond to the invitation to “Be a Volunteer,” and a few more may jump at the chance to “Help Make Someone’s Day.” But many more are likely to respond to a request to do a specific job.

One young man who had shown no interest in joining a volunteer group responded immediately to a request for someone to replace a broken lamp socket for an elderly woman. His only comment on why he never got involved before was: “I didn’t know you wanted lamps fixed.”

Of course you cannot always be as specific as that, but your recruiting message can at least provide examples of the kinds of things volunteers will do in the program.

Potential volunteers also should be told as soon and as plainly as possible how many hours they will be asked to put in, over what period of time, and what other requirements there may be (such as keeping a journal). The more informed the volunteer’s choice, the less likely it is that there will be complaints, problems, and dropouts later.

2. Try to convey that *community service is enjoyable*, that helping others needn’t be- and most often is not- a dull and dreary affair performed with long faces and heavy hearts. That story needs to be told, and it usually can be told most effectively by previous volunteers or shown through snapshots, slides, or videotapes.

Some activities are fun, and filled with promise of adventure (going horseback riding with retarded children for example). Most often the source of enjoyment is people: meeting new kinds, forming new friendships, being part of a close-knit and spirited group.

3. *Stress the challenge of tackling a tough job and the satisfaction of completing it creditably*. This is not a contradiction of the previous point. An activity can be good fun and hard work, and indeed in many ways the fact that it is hard makes it more rewarding.

Few young people will be scared off by a significant challenge, particularly if it is also made clear that they will have ample help and support in facing it.

A point to keep in mind when forming your own recruitment campaign is that your task is similar to that of a Madison Avenue executive designing an advertising campaign for teenagers. The secret of success is to know the customers’ interests and motives, and what it is about a product or organization that will appeal to them.

It is no accident that the recruiting messages of the armed services and fast-food chains both feature young people having a really great time taking on new challenges with the exuberant support of some wonderful new friends.

Making the Appeal

Successful recruitment is not a one-shot, short-term event in the life of a program. More often it is the product of ongoing efforts to make the program visible to those who ought to know about it. Anything that draws

positive attention to the program will help attract new volunteers, and some ways to attain recognition that have special implications for recruiting volunteers are listed below.

1. *Use the school newspaper or agency newsletter.* Run a regular column on new volunteer opportunities, and suggest occasional articles about newsworthy projects or profiles of student volunteers.

2. *Produce a video presentation* on the program. Students in one program made an MTV-type music video that was very effective in recruiting new volunteers. Others have done documentaries of specific projects. If your school or agency does not have adequate equipment, contact the cable TV company serving your area. Usually it is part of the company's franchise agreement that it make equipment and expertise available to community groups.

3. *Set up a bulletin board* in a high traffic area of the school or community with pictures, notices of current needs, and anything else that will draw attention. In some schools the same kind of information is transmitted through a *video monitor*. It also would be possible to put relevant information into an *interactive computer program* that would give passers-by updated information on available placements.

4. *Keep people who make referrals* (such as counselors, social workers, administrators, and teachers) *informed* and up-to-date on the program so they feel some ownership.

5. Take a hint from other school groups. *The school P.A. system* could as easily give periodic information on the volunteer program as it does on the soccer team, and volunteers might wear *pins and badges* as appropriately as do members of the school pep club.

6. *Use previous and current volunteers* as much as possible in any activities, particularly in making presentations to classes or youth groups. They always will be the most credible witnesses for the program.

7. *Produce a printed brochure* or other attractive handout that is easily (and cheaply) distributed to interested people.

8. *Think about new ways to reach large numbers of people.* Mass assemblies are seldom effective, but large numbers might be reached by other means. One school with a large volunteer program hosts a *Community Volunteer Fair* each fall at which agencies desiring student help set up booths in the festively decorated library, where they talk to students and make clear by their very presence that young people are needed and wanted in this community.

9. If possible, have a *conveniently located central office* where students can find out what volunteer opportunities are currently available and get other information about the program. Staffed by a coordinator and/or students, it will be welcomed by community people as well.

10. In some programs *parents also must be "recruited,"* or at least persuaded that their son or daughter should be allowed to participate. Some youth organizations telephone parents to explain what their child will be doing, or even stop in to meet the parents personally.

Some groups encourage teenage volunteers to bring a younger brother or sister and let them get involved in community service too. That approach may persuade a parent that their son or daughter can help with child-care responsibilities while still being involved in community service.

From [Youth Service: A Guidebook for Developing and Operating Effective Programs. Recruitment](#)

General Recruitment Tips

- Conduct major recruitment campaigns in the spring and the fall. These campaigns should include both direct and indirect recruitment strategies. Recruit volunteers all year long as new needs arise.
- Recruit for only the positions identified by the school. If volunteers are not placed in a position quickly, they probably will not volunteer again.
- Identify a starting date and an ending date for the volunteer placement. It helps to get people to volunteer if they know it is not a lifetime commitment.
- It is best to start your partnership program small. This will give you the flexibility to refine volunteer placements and to monitor the volunteers. There will always be plenty of possible placements at the school, but remember: it is best to have a quality program rather than simply a large number of volunteers.
- Recruit specifically for the placements. Search out the persons who have the necessary skills to service specialized placements.
- Be honest about your partnership. Define the placement and the responsibilities for servicing the placement. This should include time commitment, training and skills needed.
- A satisfied volunteer will help you sell the program. You should always have more volunteers the second year, third year, and so on. If this is not the case, evaluate your recruitment activity immediately.
- Apply team management to the partnership. If volunteers have input into the planning, placement and managing of the partnership program, they will make a commitment to the partnership.

Types of Recruitment Strategies

Specific Recruitment

Specific recruitment refers to recruiting a particular individual or group with specific skills. This strategy is employed when there is an unfilled volunteer placement which requires specialized skills, experiences or knowledge. There are several methods that may be applied to recruitment plans.

Direct Recruitment

This classification emphasizes communication between the recruiter and the prospective volunteer. In all instances, except the one involving the telephone, the people see each other. An especially important feature of direct recruitment is the opportunity for two-way communication between recruiter and prospective volunteer. The recruiter should be very knowledgeable about the operation of the school and possess information regarding the available placements and the requirements for each placement. This should include interviewing, orientation, training, evaluations and recognition. The strategy of recruiting one-on-one always achieves the best results.

Specific Strategies for Direct Recruitment

- Person to Person- Approach the individual. Invite the individual to a planning meeting. Arrange a special tour of the school for the individual to meet the appropriate teacher. Introduce the notion of volunteering over lunch, coffee, or other informal setting.
- Group presentations
- Slide/video presentations

Follow-up is vital. In order to capitalize on interest generated by presentations, a sign-up sheet or application forms should be circulated. Prompt communication with those who indicate interest in becoming involved is important. Do it immediately!

Indirect Recruitment

This classification of methods and techniques encompasses the range of media and materials that rely on one-way communication.

Specific Strategies for Indirect Recruitment

- Posters. Can be made in shapes and sizes to fit any space, and can remain in one place or be shifted often. They can be prepared in such a way as to enable certain information to change periodically such as dates, times, places or names. They can be displayed in places where people congregate or travel. Telephone numbers of persons to contact should be highlighted, etc.
- Printed materials, brochures, news clips, articles, newsletters. Use pictures, statements from satisfied volunteers, human interest stories, etc.
- Media. Public service announcements, slide shows, video tapes, etc.
- Displays. Place in the foyer, cafeteria, lounges, etc.

Satisfied community leaders, teachers and students already in the partnership make the most effective recruiters. Their enthusiasm becomes highly contagious and generates powerful interest, support and excitement about partnerships in the schools.