

# I Volunteers

## **Introduction**

Volunteers and volunteer programs don't just happen. Like designing a new home, a volunteer program requires careful planning. For a volunteer program to be successful, two critical factors must be considered:

- Volunteers must feel that what they are doing is important and that your cause is worthy.
- A system that encourages and supports the volunteer effort must be established.

In most clubs, volunteers are handled by a board committee, while in others they are the responsibility of a single person. But more often than not, no individual or group is given the responsibility for managing volunteers. This section also examines the changing nature of volunteers, planning and developing a volunteer system, and managing a successful volunteer program. By enhancing volunteer involvement, the continuity and growth of your volunteer program is ensured and better services will be offered to both your members and the community.

## **Volunteerism – the Changing Nature of Volunteers**

The changing nature of today's volunteers and their reduced length of service have created new challenges for curling clubs. When individuals now volunteer their services and time to an organization, they must feel comfortable quickly, they must understand their duties and responsibilities, and they must believe that their contributions are important.

## **Who Are The Volunteers?**

Volunteers are people who freely donate their time and expertise to help deliver services or perform specific tasks. At one time or another, almost everyone has volunteered for something. Although the increase of women in the workplace has not appeared to affect the number of women volunteers, it has affected the amount of time available for volunteering.

## **Volunteer activities that are short-term, easy to schedule, close to home or work, and include families continue to make volunteering attractive.**

The increase in volunteerism has changed the nature of the volunteer marketplace. Volunteer work is no longer considered a leisure activity for those without regular employment. Today's volunteers:

- also hold paid jobs
- include more men
- range from teenagers to senior citizens
- are more skilled and educated
- seek opportunities that demand a higher level of skills and abilities
- are involved in both service and administrative positions
- consider volunteering an integral part of a person's lifelong work and learning experience.

The relationship between curling clubs and their volunteers has also changed. Today's volunteers demand more challenging jobs, greater responsibility, and more participation in the decision-making process. Organizations have responded by providing their volunteer workers with more direction and training. Volunteers no longer perform menial tasks for the convenience of the

organization; today's volunteers do important work.

- Has your organization adjusted to meet the needs of the new community volunteer?
- Do you have short-term volunteer opportunities available?
- Do you provide opportunities for couples and families to volunteer together?

## **What do we need?**

1. Do we have the volunteers we need to carry out the plans and activities that enable us to accomplish our goals?
2. Does our organization have a clear, long range plan that guides our activities?
3. Do we do an annual review of our current volunteers, their skills, needs and expectations?
4. To accomplish our plans we compare the skills we need with the people we have available to do the work.
5. We provide significant support to our Nominating Committee in its ongoing search for good people.

## **Whom do we have available to do it?**

One of the more effective ways to recruit is to design a membership application form to include a section of volunteerism. You could ask:

1. What do you do for a living and who do you work for?
2. Any hobbies or skills?
3. Willing to volunteer?  Yes  No
4. Willing to volunteer as a committee or board member?  Yes  No

Before rushing out to recruit new volunteers, take a look at the people who already volunteer with your organization. These volunteers are likely to be committed, enthusiastic and already oriented to the organization. By gathering more information about them such as what skills/capabilities they bring to the organization, whether these skills are effectively used in their current positions, and what preferences they have for their involvement in the organization, you can do an inventory of your existing human resources.

There are many ways to collect this information. Remember to include a privacy policy about the information you collect i.e. "It will never be shared or used by any third party".

## **Recruitment**

1. Do we have a well organized plan for finding suitable volunteers?
2. Does the curling club portray a positive, vital image that attracts quality volunteers?
3. Are we creative in where and how we look for new volunteers?
4. Are our recruiters are informed and enthusiastic representatives of our organization?
5. Do we respect the needs and expectations of potential volunteers?
6. Are we candid about the amount and kind of work involved in a particular job?

Both the volunteer and the curling club have something of value to offer each other. The volunteer has skills, abilities, intelligence, experience, knowledge, time and energy available at no charge, and the club can provide opportunities for personal challenge, learning and growth and, at the same time, the chance to make a valuable contribution to the operation. If this partnership is to be successful, both parties must carefully consider what they want and need from each other. Thus, if the volunteer is offered something challenging and worthwhile to do, then an "invitation

to serve" will be accepted.

## How to Recruit

The initial contact with a potential volunteer is crucial — first impressions can be lasting! Make sure you are honest and enthusiastic and that you present the volunteer commitment as clearly as possible. You can make an initial contact in a number of ways:

- personally or on a one-to-one basis;
- presentations to leagues or rentals
- word-of-mouth
- advertisements, i.e. bulletin boards
- on the viewing glass to the ice (with erase colour marker)
- community newspaper story, letter to the Editor, classified ads
- newsletters
- posters, brochures, pamphlets

Be honest. The reason most volunteers give for quitting their jobs is that there is a big difference between what they are asked to do initially and what they end up doing. These "differences" are usually with respect to the amount of time required, the type of work requested, and the amount of support available, e.g., other volunteers, payment of out-of-pocket expenses.

## Matching Jobs and People

1. Do we have an effective process for matching volunteer expectations and skills with our organization's needs?
2. Do we encourage volunteers to reflect on their needs and expectations for involvement?
3. Are we careful to ensure a match between the volunteer's needs and expectations and those of our club?
4. Do we define the tasks, responsibilities and authorities for volunteers as clearly as we can?
5. Are there job descriptions for all positions?

Volunteer expectations are changing. Thirty years ago, being a volunteer was viewed as part of one's responsibility as a member of the curling club. People volunteered primarily out of a sense of duty to improve their curling club. Today, our facilities compete with many more activities for people's leisure time. In addition, volunteers are more articulate about what they want out of their involvement with the club, i.e., what their expectations are.

## Typical Expectations of a Volunteer

Personal Growth	Helping the Club
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• learning opportunities</li><li>• worthwhile accomplishments</li><li>• challenge</li><li>• recognition, status, responsibility and influence</li><li>• social interaction with like-minded others</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• part of being a member</li><li>• concern about values <i>i.e. teaching kids</i></li><li>• giving back for something received</li></ul>

## **Job Description**

Most volunteers function without job descriptions. This can result in unrealistic expectations and demands, a lack of clarity about the work to be done, unreasonable workloads and repetition of duties. Compared to the time and effort taken to recruit a volunteer and the time and effort the volunteer will donate on behalf of the club, the creation of a job description is a very small but essential task. The benefits are obvious: clearly defined and realistic responsibilities and results, and clarification about who does what.

Job descriptions should be done by both the volunteer and the club, to ensure that the needs and expectations of both will be met. Here is a sample step-by-step process for developing a job description.

1. Agree on a job title;
2. Outline the general description of the work;
3. Clearly define what is expected;
4. Decide on who the volunteer reports to and if any written report is expected;
5. Identify the skills needed to complete the job;

## **Orientation**

Orientation begins with the first contact between the volunteer and the club. The primary purpose of orientation is to bring the new volunteer "on-side". The club wants a productive volunteer and the volunteer wants to be helpful, competent and to get on with the work.

The volunteer needs to know the following:

1. a clear expectation about duties and responsibilities;
2. a tour of the facilities from top to bottom;
3. to be brought up-to-date on other aspects of the club that are often not put into writing, i.e. politics,

## **Volunteer Recognition**

1. Do our volunteers feel well recognized for their efforts? Do they know they are appreciated?
2. Do we promote ongoing "personal" recognition for our volunteers?
3. Do we have an organized and well publicized plan for recognition?
4. Are we careful to make an appropriate match between the form of recognition and the recipient.

Recognition, whether subtle or substantial, is an art. When practised sensitively and honestly, it can ensure that volunteers feel acknowledged, accepted, praised, identified as being special. Most people appreciate recognition and for volunteers who are giving freely of their time and energy, recognition can be a highly potent motivator. Different individuals will benefit from different types of recognition. Part of the "art" of recognition involves determining the best type to use for each volunteer.

## Personal Recognition

Personal recognition is the responsibility of all volunteers. It involves simply saying a genuine 'thank you' for work accomplished for your club. This is the least expensive and easiest form of recognition and if your club does nothing else you must say **THANK YOU!**

## Public Recognition

Public recognition of your volunteers can be delivered in many forms:

1. **Words** — letters, public thanks;
2. **Awards** — plaques, trophies, certificates, photo albums, inductions into prestigious groups e.g. Hall of Fame, special presentations;
3. **Rewards** — free tickets/passes, out-of-town travel, training workshops, T-shirts, mugs, personal notepaper, identification pins;
4. **Events** — banquets, "roasts", tributes, special occasions/ events;
5. **Special Attention** — TV programs on local cable stations, newspaper articles, newsletter articles, radio programs.

Here are some tips to help your recognition program:

- Name one person to be responsible for supervising both personal and public recognition.
- Keep track of previous awards given so that you can create an historical perspective.
- Celebrate your recognition system.
- Build an aura of prestige around your major awards so that people winning them feel the significance of their achievements.
- Be aware of the impact of subtle forms of recognition such as involvement in decision making, the discussion of important issues, or inclusion in senior policy discussions.
- Keep in mind that a recognition system is a way to say "thank you" for volunteers' efforts. Too many recognition "wares" can reduce their meaning and value to recipients.
- Remember to match the appropriate form of recognition to the right person.

## 101 Ways to give Recognition to our Volunteers

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

1. Smile
2. Put up a volunteer suggestion box!.
3. Treat to a pop
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 Honour Roll in reception area.
18. Respect their wishes.
19. Give informal teas.
20. Keep challenging them.
21. Send a Thanksgiving Day card to the volunteer's family.
22. Provide a nursery.
23. Say "Good Morning."
24. Greet by name.
25. Provide good pre-service training.
26. Help develop self-confidence
27. Award plaques to sponsoring group
28. Take time to explain fully.
29. Be verbal.
30. Motivate agency VIP's to converse with them
31. Hold rap sessions
32. Give additional responsibility.
33. Afford participation in team planning.
34. Respect sensitivities.
35. Enable to grow on the job.
36. Enable to grow out of the job.
37. Send newsworthy information to the media.
38. Have wine and cheese tasting parties.
39. Ask client-patient to evaluate their work-service
40. Say "Good Afternoon."
41. Honor their preferences.
42. Create pleasant surroundings.
43. Welcome to staff coffee breaks.
44. Enlist to train other volunteers.
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 laudation.
72. Accept their individuality.
73. Provide opportunities for conferences and evaluation.
74. Identify age groups.
75. Maintain meaningful life.
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 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 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 groups and individuals in the group.
90. Maintain safe working conditions.
91. Adequately orientate.
92. Award special citations for extraordinary achievements.
93. Fully indoctrinate regarding the agency.
94. Send Christmas cards.
95. Be familiar with 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. Start your own list.

## **Miscellaneous**

### **Sample Volunteers Slogans**

- Volunteers: our greatest natural resource
- Volunteers: partners in tomorrow
- Family volunteering: handing down the strength of tomorrow
- Your child, your coach, your neighbours: volunteers without name tags

- The most important donation: your time
- Thank a volunteer: build for tomorrow
- Volunteers: unseen but never forgotten
- Empower yourself: be a volunteer
- Volunteers make it happen
- Volunteers: people helping people
- Volunteers: the key to our success
- Learn new skills. Make new friends. Update your resume. Volunteer today!
- Volunteers are ordinary people doing extraordinary things
- Volunteers add that special touch
- Volunteers put *unity* in community

### **Favorite Quotes**

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.

*Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet*

Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, things aren't going to get better, they're NOT!

*Dr. Seuss, The Lorax*

You have not lived until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.

*unknown*

The best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service of others.

*Ghandi*