Volunteer recognition

Volunteer recognition is more than pins or certificates; it is creating a culture within your organization that shows volunteers they are valued, appreciated and important to the success of the program. Recognition can be formal or informal. Formal recognition is done on a regular basis usually with standardized recognition practices. Informal recognition can be done on a daily basis; can be spontaneous and often pertinent to the moment or event.

Why make a volunteer feel special? There are many reasons. It’s good manners to tell someone thank you, we all know that. Imagine how it would feel if you did a hard job, didn’t get paid and no one acknowledged your efforts — would you do it again? Therefore volunteer recognition is a retention tool, and maybe a motivational tool. Volunteers who feel important and feel they are making a difference will stay and continue to contribute. Recognition is also a public proclamation that a volunteer’s efforts are valuable and making a difference not only to the organization but to the community as well. There are really no bad reasons for thanking a volunteer or a group or volunteers.

Formal Recognition—one size does not fit all!

Banquet: can this be tied to another event where many things are celebrated?

Certificates: some people like the formal certificates, others throw them out

Pins: Some people gladly wear them, others never will

Letters: be creative — handwritten “thank yous” show you took the time,...maybe a thank you to the family or a letter to the editor or a place of work

Informal Recognition — be spontaneous and sincere

- Compliment a job well done
- Buy a cup of coffee — or bring one to the volunteer
- Make something that shows your appreciation

Alaskan concerns:

- No one wants to travel to an event — this is a message — listen carefully
- How to recognize adults? Teens? Youth? Do something different for each group
- I don’t have the budget to do this! Recognition doesn’t have to cost anything — use good manners and creativity!

Learn more about these topics at Everyone Ready

VNG-Volunteerism for the Next Generation:
- Sustainability of Volunteer Efforts “Ways to Recognize Volunteers” “Recognizing Volunteer Successes”

Everyone Ready:
- *Informal Volunteer Recognition: Creating a Culture of Appreciation