

# COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

volume 1

# VOLUNTEERS

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Training, Empowering & Resourcing Volunteers

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# INTRODUCTION

We are so excited to offer to you a NEW Resource that will help you and your volunteer leaders in a tremendous way! The Church Ministries Department works hard to have our “ear to the ground” by having many conversations with volunteers and leaders in the local church to understand what the needs, questions and challenges they are facing really are. It’s our heart to craft specific resources to answers those questions, help overcome those challenges and assist in meeting the needs.

We have partnered with key leaders all across Colorado and Utah in this collab resource. Leaders just like you have written the content with a hands-on approach to help others in the trenches with them.

This resource is all about VOLUNTEERS. Most of the calls and questions we receive have to do with recruiting, training and appreciating volunteers in the local church. In this resource you will find pro tips to help you:

- Recruiting Volunteers without burning them out
- Maintaining Volunteers and Volunteer Assimilation
- The Heart of Appreciation and the Power of a Thank You Note
- The KEY of Resourcing, Training and Setting Expectations

We hope you enjoy this collab resource and if there is a question, topic or challenge you are facing that we can help with, please reach out to our team at [cmd@rmdc.org](mailto:cmd@rmdc.org).



Shawn Reine  
Church Ministries Director



# RECRUITING MORE VOLUNTEERS

By LouAnn June

There are many ways that you can recruit volunteers, via email, an invitation from the stage, a group setting, or in person. An email is a quick and easy way to invite people to serve on a team, but it is also easy for the person you are asking to hit the delete button on their computer. When you speak about volunteering from the stage, people tend to listen but very few will sign up. For example, one Sunday we had an announcement from the stage about volunteering with one of our Outreach teams, out of 800+ attendees only three people came and spoke with me. And only two of them volunteered at one event. Inviting people to serve in a group setting (i.e., during a small group session) will definitely plant a seed and get some people to “click the box” that they are interested. But I have found that 80-90% of the people who say they are interested never respond when I send them an overview of the team and responsibilities. I personally have found that taking time to build a relationship with a person, and connect with them on Sunday morning before asking them to serve is the best way.



What I have found that works best is “in person”. Each Sunday, I make it a point to plant a seed with at least two people. I ask them to please think and pray about being on the First Impressions or Outreach teams. Then, after two or three weeks I will approach them again and ask them if they thought about what we talked about. They are either going to say they need more time, no they are not interested, or YES sign me up! I also encourage every team member to choose at least one person each Sunday and invite them to join a team.

People need to feel needed and wanted and as leaders, we need and want volunteers. When you take the time to build a relationship with someone before asking them to join a team, it makes the person you are asking feel wanted and not just needed because you are short volunteers. Additionally, by building a relationship with people first, you will be able to know which team will fit them the best.



# RECRUITING & MAINTAINING VOLUNTEERS

BY DANNY LUCERO



Most of us, if not all of us, have a desire within to be part of something bigger, greater, and more powerful than ourselves. There is an intrinsic reward in feeling like a contributor to a project, a mission or an organization that is making a difference, driving change, or helping our fellow human beings. Whether it's saving the humpback whale, protecting the rainforest, restoring an old downtown community, feeding the homeless or generally helping others; serving, giving time, and sharing resources has a funny way of giving back to us. It fulfills our inward desire to be a part of something bigger than ourselves.

If this is true, why do we have what some call the “80/20 Rule” in most churches across America today? You know, where eighty percent of the work gets done by twenty percent of the churchgoers. This applies to work within the church walls such as volunteering to help in the nursery for Sunday morning service or help with a campus cleanup day. This same 80/20 population can also be applied to work done in the community led by our churches such as feeding the homeless or making hospital and home visits to the elderly. If your church is like most churches today, 20% of the members are doing 80% of the work, regardless of how large or small your church membership is.

So how do we change that oh so common rule? How do we recruit and maintain a strong volunteer base? I once heard that the two hardest things to part with is our Time and Money. If an individual does not see or understand the importance or value of the work your church or organization is doing, they are highly unlikely to part with one of their most precious resources, time. It is unlikely that they will serve on a volunteer basis. Leaders must create significant value for volunteers, knowing that individuals will trade personal time for participation. Leadership must inspire vision that volunteers can identify with.

## **Build Value:**

As previously mentioned, individuals will choose volunteering over personal time when they are inspired to be part of something greater than themselves. As leaders it is our responsibility, our duty, and our calling to help others see and understand that what we are doing as a church or organization is the greatest and most powerful work of all. It is up to us, as leaders, to create an attitude and environment that helps the potential volunteer recognize that this work matters and is worthy of their time and resources. Primarily and most importantly, leaders must see value in serving before they can create value in the minds of potential volunteers.

## Cast Vision:

One way to create value in the minds of individuals is to cast vision. You, as the leader, need to help people see what you see. Help individuals recognize unmet needs in dynamic church or organization settings. We never want to create a static environment. Stimulate thinking that leads to understanding of why there is a need and why their contribution is important. Empower volunteers to be a vital member of a team. Casting vision requires recognition, stimulation, and empowerment. When casting vision remember to help volunteers see that the work you are proposing is serving the greater needs of your church, organization or community. Help individuals see, that in volunteering their time, they will be part of something bigger and greater than themselves.

## Follow-Up Process:

When individuals sign up to volunteer and give off their resources and/or time, churches and ministries must have a robust follow-up process. A good follow-up process will ensure potential volunteers don't fall through the gaps often found between the signup sheet and the action of service. Many times leaders will solely rely on the current volunteer base because there is no follow-up process. A good process might consist of 3 to 5 direct questions that the leader will ask the potential volunteer during their first conversation regarding the area of service. Another good practice for follow-up is to assign timelines for follow-up calls. For example, if individuals signup to volunteer on Sunday make sure contact is made within 2 to 3 days after. This will help the value that was built and the vision that was cast stay fresh in the heart and mind of the volunteer.

## Utilize Their Unique Ability:

When recruiting individuals for volunteer work, a good leader will help the individual recognize and utilize their unique ability. The best way to ensure volunteers stay engaged in their area of service is by empowering individuals to execute tasks or duties that align with their unique ability. Placing volunteers in areas where they feel most fulfilled will help keep them inspired, motivated and create opportunities for them to lead in ways of recruiting other volunteers with similar interests and abilities. How do you help individuals identify their unique ability? There are countless test, quizzes, and articles that one can use to help discover an individuals unique ability. Most online resources will help answer questions about personality traits and individual aspirations.

Remember that there is no greater work than the work that is done for the Kingdom of God. When looking to recruit new volunteers, help people see the value in what the church or your organization is doing by casting vision and having a good follow-up process. Also remember to keep volunteers engaged and happy by recognizing and utilizing their unique ability.







# VOLUNTEER ASSIMILIATION

BY KARIN HECKATHORN

Volunteer Assimilation is simply how you take someone from being a newcomer to being a volunteer. The most important aspect of your job as a ministry leader is relationship with people. People involve themselves in church life because they have the same innate need that you have - connection. Relationship is why this process of assimilation is so important and attainable.

Having a clear vision for your church is the first step in Volunteer Assimilation. Most people will not take part in something that is disorganized or chaotic. Your volunteer process needs to answer the question, “how”. Your vision answers the question, “why”. “How” and “Why” need to be clearly written and communicated often.

The second step is “Invite”. Some people will simply offer to help. Or, you will need to invite them to journey with you. Either way, one-on-one invitation is the most effective way to assimilate a volunteer.

Every ministry leader needs to understand that part of their role in leading is recruiting. Some are, of course, better at this than others. If you are not that person, then empower someone who is. If you are unclear what that person looks like, just find the person that has a lot of friends. These “outgoing” people are naturally good at recruiting.

Recruitment does not fluctuate according to the size of your church. With a church of 50, you will have a small hand-full of recruiters. A church of 500 will have dozens. Every ministry department will need to have someone inviting people to join. We have all heard the phrase, “doing life together”. Make the choice to never do ministry alone.

Third, write down the Volunteer Process.

When a new person comes through your doors, they will need a clear path for how to get involved. This will include: steps to volunteering, volunteer opportunities and a point person to answer questions. Every department in your church should utilize the same language for their volunteer material.

Our church has a program called, “Growth Track”. There are three sections to the volunteer process. The first is “getting to know us”. We cover our vision statement, our fundamental doctrine, and the process of volunteering. The second is sharing what areas are available for serving. At this step, we are telling them where they can be involved and then asking them where they want to serve. Once a person has chosen a ministry, their contact information is given to the ministry leader for follow-up. The third is our membership track. We encourage membership for everyone and require it for individuals who will be working with minors.

Fourth, “close the loop”. Your church needs to follow up with people who are working through the volunteer process. Encourage people often.

Talk about volunteering often. Advertise through social media/bulletins, website and service announcements. One thing we have learned is inviting people publicly for a specific need is usually not very effective. The most effective way to find the workers you need is through personal invitation. People will respond to a public plea, but most of them will never follow through.

Volunteer Assimilation is all about fulfilling our need to be in community. We fulfill community by Answering “How”, Invite/Recruit, Volunteer Process, and “Closing the Loop”.





# THE POWER OF A THANK YOU NOTE

BY LOUANN JUNE

As a leader when you take time to handwrite a thank you note to your team members, you are letting them know that they are not only important to the team but to you personally. You let them know that they are not just needed and wanted but appreciated.

For approximately a year, every Monday morning I chose one member from our First Impressions team (I went alphabetically through the list) and sent them a Starbucks card via email. During this time, I sent over 50 cards, and at least once every couple of months I logged onto the Starbucks website to see who had not opened their email

and resent the card to them. I also took time to call them to let them know that I had sent a card. And honestly only four people ever acknowledged that they received it. I stopped sending Starbucks cards last August and according to the Starbucks website, some cards that were sent over 400 days ago are still unopened.



Last August, I started taking time to write handwritten cards instead of spending the money on a Starbucks card that may or may not ever get used. Every Monday morning, I take about a half-hour and handwrite a short personal note on thank you cards. I started a simple spreadsheet to keep track of whom I sent a card to and when. I make sure that each team member receives a card every four weeks.

Since I started taking the time to send a handwritten card, every Sunday I have one to five people thanking me for the card they received. I have also noticed that people are more willing to fill a need when I send an email requesting additional help. I have even had a few people who are not scheduled but come in on Sunday morning for service, notice that we were short-handed, and asked if they could help.

Building a relationship with your team members (before or after they volunteer to serve) and personally letting them know that they are wanted and appreciated is the best way to build and sustain a team of people with servant's hearts.

Lastly, every single email that I send to any of my team members always ends with "As always, I appreciate every single one of you". I mean this statement and I do my best to express this in person every Sunday and at all Outreach Events. When a team member comes up to me and lets me know they appreciate me and my leadership, I know that I am succeeding in sharing the love of Christ with them.

# VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

BY KELLY SEDERS



We all know that recruiting volunteers is hard; Maybe even dreaded (especially if it involves changing diapers). When I served as the Kid's Pastor at the International Church of Barcelona we had multiple services that needed at least 30 volunteers a Sunday (just in our kids ministry). Planning Center was the bane of my existence. It was the least favorite part of my week, until I started focusing less on the amount of volunteers I had, and more on the amount of time I was investing in them. I think one of the hardest (and best secret to keeping amazing volunteers) is the the way that you honor them.

We can recruit the most qualified volunteers, put on the best events, have the most stacked nursery... but if we're merely interacting with our volunteers through Planning Center and being thankful under our breath that they accepted, we will be running a really great program, but probably a weak ministry. Jesus washed his disciples' feet. And one of the best ways to keep great volunteers, and have effective ministry, is to wash theirs.

So how do you do that without taking off anyone's shoes? It might be more simple than you think. One of the best ways to serve your volunteers is to get to know them deeper than surface level. It can be really easy to get excited about plugging someone new into a ministry, but not go much further than a transactional relationship. It's no surprise that employees perform better when they feel seen and appreciated - and it's no different with volunteers.



When a leader takes time to get to know their volunteers, the ministry is strengthened because you begin to build a team. When you take time to meet with your volunteers regularly and ask about how they are doing, pray for them, and spend some time laughing - their role goes from “warm body” to “part of the Body.” And after all, that’s our goal, right?

So what does this look like practically? Get out a calendar, and plan to meet one-on-one with each of your volunteers at regular intervals. Take them out for coffee, grab lunch after church, have them over for dinner. You don’t have to invite them to your personal family movie night for them to feel appreciated. Just a small moment of intentionally connecting and investing makes the world of a difference. It’s a simple step that you can make to dramatically change your ministry.

On top of meeting for a “one-on-one,” take time to get together as a team. This doesn’t have to be once a month, but even once a quarter is a good time to get everyone together on the same page, cast vision, and celebrate “wins” together. This can even be taking time to recognize and highlight something in particular that a volunteer did. Public praise is free and goes a long way!

Which leads me to my next priority in appreciating volunteers. Make sure they know their worth, and that others know it, too. One of my favorite ways to honor (embarrass) our volunteers is to bring them up on stage. Now you may not always have access to the main platform, but I’ve seen poker-faced volunteers cry in gratitude for receiving a thanks in front of others, especially if they are serving in a capacity that’s really behind the scenes. It means a lot when a leader notices, and others are aware, of the ways an individual contributes to a ministry.

One of my favorite games to play is the “birthday game”! And it doesn’t just have to be done on a birthday! We do this with our staff (when it’s their actual birthday) and Board of Deacons (during our board/staff appreciation dinner) to recognize them publicly. Essentially, if it’s someone’s birthday, everyone in the room goes around and says what they appreciate about the person! In cases when it’s not someone’s birthday, we reverse the game and say what we appreciate about each person ourselves. We picked up this habit from our lead pastors in Barcelona, and saw it have a tremendous impact on team dynamics.

My last piece of advice for appreciating your volunteers is to create something for them to be part of. It’s always more fun to serve when you feel like you’re part of something bigger, and an easy way to do this is something like a Volunteer Appreciation Night. We do this every year, where we serve food, have music, a couple of fun icebreakers, and a time to thank our volunteers for the ways that they’ve served. My favorite way to end out our volunteer banquet is with our Servant Award. This is a trophy that we give out yearly to recognize a volunteer that has gone above and beyond in service, and it’s a really fun way for everyone to feel like they’re part of something great.

Whatever way you decide to begin appreciating your volunteers, will be effective in keeping your ministry a ministry. Taking time to invest in your volunteers takes work to get started, but once you do, you’ll see the fruit of it and be amazed how God is working in your team.

# TRAINING, EMPOWERING & RESOURCING VOLUNTEERS

BY BROOKS GOERZEN



Countless ministry leaders have expressed the notion that volunteers are the lifeblood of a church, especially within ministry toward young people—children and youth. It is impossible and unwise to run a healthy, successful, and impactful ministry without a committed volunteer base. However, there is quite a difference between a ministry with a group of volunteers and one that thrives on the back of a vibrant and invested volunteer team. The first group may have many hands that can jump in to fill any number of roles or patch problems that might arise. The questions remain:

- Are those volunteers ministering to others from a position of spiritual health and vibrancy?
- Do they see how their role fits within the bigger picture of ministry in the church?
- Are they leading where they are supposed to—within areas of God's gifting?
- Do they have what they need to fulfill their role with excellence?
- Do they have the release or initiative to make crucial decisions?
- Do they know how to get better in the position they serve?

The answers to these questions can drive ministry from ineffective wandering to a life-cycle of purpose and fruitfulness. As a leader, your first task may not be determining how to most effectively minister to the people under your purview (children, youth, visitors, etc.). Instead, consider how you minister to your volunteer team so they can effectively reach out and care for those in your ministry. This model multiplies your efforts. It extends your reach beyond what you can accomplish by yourself. Importantly, it values people who serve alongside you, giving them the gift of serving God in faithfulness. They are valuable members of the community of God—not merely useful cogs in your ministry machine.

So, how do we develop this type of ministry mindset with our volunteers? I propose we evaluate each member of our volunteer team from several perspectives and work to serve them in the specific ways each person needs. Suppose you cannot give the same level of intentionality and input to each person on your team. In that case, it may indicate your need to develop a team to help you. Model your leadership style by investing yourself in a few trustworthy and strategic leaders, and then release them to do the same in others! The key is to appreciate the unique path God has brought each volunteer on to this point. Then, faithfully identify the next step in their journey, and walk with them along the route.

This process calls for, at minimum, an initial volunteer interview and periodic check-ins. Good leadership requires consistent communication and intentional effort to build the qualities you desire in the ministry efforts of your volunteers. Consider these areas when leading and training a volunteer:





- **Spiritual Maturity and Health:** Often, ministry leaders are so excited for a new volunteer, we miss whether they are ready to actually lead in our ministry. Before determining how your ministry can utilize a volunteer's strengths, take a moment to observe and talk with them about the vitality of their spiritual life. Is outward ministry the right step for this person at this time? Or are there other areas of their life that need some investment first? As leaders, we must value the person in front of us as God's child who is growing as a Christian more than a potential quick fix to fill a hole teaching Sunday School on the third week of the month! Consider what they need as a spiritual being and set goals with them to find the right time and means to enter into ministry as a volunteer.



- **Alignment:** Always remember that your ministry is part of the larger vision of your local church. Individual ministries struggle and cause frustration when they step outside of these boundaries. When someone's idea of a particular ministry begins to see it as the only or most important ministry of the church, danger lurks. In your training, ensure that your presentation builds up the vision of the entire church and highlights how their role fits within the larger scheme.
- **Giftedness and Fit:** If we take God's word seriously, we must accept that a person's spiritual gifts, personality, interests, and skills matter for where they serve within the church's life. No two people are identical. Merely assuming that anybody can step into a vacant role is a recipe for frustration and unmet expectations. Your role as a ministry leader is to accurately assess a volunteer's strengths and align those qualities with the church's needs. Make the best use of a person's giftedness so they can be satisfied and effective in their ministry life. Be aware, however, that a volunteer's assessment of their skills may not align with what you see as a leader. In wisdom, prayerfully discern whether this role is the right fit for your potential volunteer. Do not be afraid to revisit the position and responsibilities with them to ensure your and their expectations are met.
- **Tools and Resources:** Few things are more frustrating than being ill-equipped for a job you have been tasked with. Set volunteers up for success by ensuring they have the resources and training they need to serve well. Review curriculum, organize supplies, communicate early and often, provide a clean and engaging space, and offer meaningful training opportunities.

Do not simply assume that everything is excellent. Instead, be proactive as you ask what your volunteer needs to perform the role well, and respond promptly to requests. Anticipate what will be required and give it!

- **Initiative and Release:** Having found a good ministry fit and provided the necessary training and resources, consider whether you trust your volunteer to make meaningful decisions. This is not always the case. Often, volunteers need close oversight and do not feel comfortable operating outside a tight set of guidelines. But, when they have proven their wisdom and trustworthiness, evaluate whether it is time to elevate their role and release them to make decisions and lead others. Their ministry role should not be static. Instead, it should offer growth opportunities and provide room to demonstrate initiative as they take ownership of their position. Value ideas and input, and release your volunteer to serve well.
- **Next Steps for Growth in Their Area:**  
The relationship between you and your volunteers is not mechanical. They do not check off “job performance” boxes to elevate their position. It is instead a spiritual relationship. You walk with your volunteers in a discipleship covenant as their ministry leader. You help them live out their Christian life of service by matching their strengths with the Church's needs. Together, you have the chance to discover how they can more fully live the life to which God has called them. Walk with them along that path, and help them discern small, meaningful steps they can take to develop as a follower and servant of Christ. What a privilege!

Volunteers are absolutely vital to the life of every church and ministry. But, they are not merely useful bodies that can stand in during times of need. As a ministry leader, you have the unique opportunity to serve your volunteers well. Value them.

Encourage them. Lead them. Lift them up. Let them meaningfully serve, and watch how God can multiply your ministry efforts.







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# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- "Basic Job Descriptions" by LouAnn June
- "Weekend Checklist Guideline Example" by LouAnn June

Additional Resource Articles can be found on our Church resource page:

<https://www.rmdc.org/churchministries/church-resources/>

