**Celebrate Your Volunteers & Increase Retention**

Your volunteers donate their time because they believe in your cause.

Implementing a **volunteer recognition program** can improve your nonprofit’s retention rates and, simultaneously, keep volunteers feeling engaged. Even the smallest signs of gratitude can go a long way with your volunteers.

Read on for tips to make your volunteers feel more appreciated.

## **Simple Ideas to Try Today**

Visual representations can help volunteers understand the impact of what they do. For example, some nonprofits fill glass containers with marbles to represent the number of hours contributed. Or, for more tech-savvy audiences, some organizations design infographics, which are shared and retweeted by social media followers.

Other common practices include:

* Create posters or banners, designed with a “color in” goal meter
* Dedicate a bulletin board entirely to spotlighting volunteer programs
* Record a YouTube video, expressing gratitude and mentioning recent accomplishments

Regardless of the format or medium, it can be quite easy to begin recognizing your volunteers’ contributions. Use your creativity and the resources you already have in your office or on staff.

## **Develop a Volunteer of the Month Program**

Going one step further, the creation of a “Volunteer of the Month” program is another popular way to recognize volunteers. Doing so adds a competitive element to your volunteer initiatives and gives everyone a chance to shine.

For starters, develop a process that your team can adhere to. You’ll need to decide when and how the “Volunteer of the Month” will be selected. What criteria will be most important (hours served, event participation, relative impact)? Who will be responsible for pulling reports from your volunteer management software?

Once the process is outlined, some nonprofits choose to spotlight volunteers via a brief interview (video can be especially impactful). Meaningful content such as this can also serve as excellent marketing collateral for your organization, helping you to recruit new volunteers and donors.

## **Acknowledge Volunteer Milestones**

It’s also wise to celebrate with your volunteers when they reach major milestones, such as 100 hours volunteered or six months of service. Acknowledging a volunteer milestone can be done with a handwritten note, an email, or something more public such as personal recognition at an event. Recognizing volunteer achievements at a fundraising event adds an element of community connection and could positively affect donations. You may even inspire some donors to become volunteers.

## **Send Birthday Greetings**

Sending birthday greetings to your volunteers helps add a personal touch to the volunteer-coordinator relationship. A quick eCard or a handwritten birthday card (depending on your budget and time constraints) is all it takes to make your volunteers feel special. If you’ve connected with volunteers on Facebook, you can also send a quick birthday greeting in a matter of seconds.

## **Recognition Translates into Better Volunteer Relationships**

Your volunteers are an integral part of your organization’s mission. Showing your appreciation and recognizing volunteers does not require a huge budget. Get creative and show your appreciation today. Your volunteers will feel more connected and do even more good.

*Thanks to Rob Cardosi*