**7 Ways to Appreciate Your Volunteers**

Taking the time to recognize volunteers is important if you want to retain volunteers and recruit new ones. IUse these seven steps to show appreciation.

**While they’re volunteering
Give them the bigger picture.**One way to thank volunteers is to give them perspective about what they’re doing. Sometimes volunteers are given mundane tasks. I’ve done some tasks that were all right, but I wasn’t sure how they applied to the organization’s mission. No matter what they’re doing, let your volunteer know the larger context — not just what they’re doing, but why they’re doing it – and you’ll show that you respect them and appreciate their work.

### **Provide food for your volunteers when they work.**

Back in college, I always liked someone better when they gave me food. The same applies to volunteers. Be sure to provide food for them as they work. It keeps them energized and shows that you care. (Remember to mark food that is vegetarian and vegan!)

### **Check in with your volunteers.**

Be sure to check in with your volunteers regularly, especially if your volunteers are located in some back room or storage area where people don’t usually go. If they’re looking tired, give them a break. If they’re looking bored, offer to give them a different task.

## **After they volunteer**

### **Feature volunteer stories on your blog/website.**

Take time to interact with your volunteers, not just to thank them for their work, but also to get to know them personally. One way to do this would be to feature one volunteer a month on your blog or website.

Take fifteen minutes out of your schedule to interview them personally. You and the volunteer are winners here — the volunteer gets to tell their story, and you get feedback as well as some great material that you can use for volunteer recruitment.

### **Give your volunteers awards.**

Are there any volunteers who have gone above and beyond? Nominate them for awards such as “Volunteer of the Year.” You can even get creative and have multiple categories, such as “Most Inspirational,” “Most Enthusiastic,” etc.

### **Give your volunteers small tokens of gratitude.**

Who doesn’t like gifts? Give volunteers a thank you gift, even something as small as a Starbucks gift card. Reach out to stores in your community — you never know what you can get for free or at a discount that you can use as a resource to thank your volunteers.

### **Send your volunteers a simple, handwritten thank you card.**

Sometimes the best way to show you appreciate your volunteers is the old fashioned way — sending them a thank you card. In the age of email and social media, the handwritten letter is a novelty. Bonus points for personalizing the message, such as thanking them for a specific task they did during their time volunteering.

*Thank you to Volunteer Match.*