

# Volunteer Recognition eTool Kit:

## Beyond Pins, Plaques & Parties

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# Section 1

## A Culture of Appreciation





# A Culture of Appreciation

Think of a time when you *know* you made a positive difference in someone's life. Whether working as a volunteer, as a paid employee, or as a relative or neighbor, consider not just what you *did*, but how you knew your efforts really made a difference and were appreciated.

Chances are good that you knew you made a difference not because you received a gift of a coffee mug or new set of earbuds, but rather because of the look on a child's face when she completed a chapter book for the first time on her own, or a thank you note describing how the funds you raised helped transport five homeless dogs to new "forever families". Perhaps it was a report showing that the health fair where you registered families provided hundreds of free screenings for potentially life-threatening conditions which, through early detection, could be treated.

## Volunteers – like all people – seek to know that their efforts are valued and make a difference.

Endeavoring to understand what motivates humans, researchers have long identified two kinds of motivation—extrinsic and intrinsic. Those who act according to extrinsic motivation do so for external rewards or to avoid negative consequences, while those motivated intrinsically are moved by the sheer enjoyment of the activity, interest in the issue, personal fulfillment, satisfaction, or a combination. The challenge many organizational leaders face is that traditional volunteer recognition programs often consist of certificates, banquets, and gifts (in other words, the proverbial *pins, plaques, and parties*) and are built around extrinsic motivation.

These approaches are not wrong, but they can be limiting if they remain the sole form of recognition. Plus, they can drain a budget. By contrast, tapping into and fueling individuals' intrinsic motivations nurtures a culture where volunteers give their best efforts, stay connected with the organization, and tell others about their experiences as well, thereby building support. Tapping into intrinsic motivation is about building a culture of appreciation. Cultures of appreciation leverage and maximize intrinsic motivation (and don't have to drain the budget!).





## In a culture of appreciation, we see:

- **Volunteers are valued.** The organization invests in volunteers through training, infrastructure, and staff time dedicated to supporting volunteers.
- **Volunteers are integrated into the organization's work.** They are part of the fabric of the institution by serving on teams alongside staff members. Volunteers' input is sought and respectfully considered.
- **Volunteers are celebrated.** They are sincerely thanked and acknowledged for the impact of their contributions.



Furthermore, in a culture of appreciation, appreciation is a two-way street. Extrinsic motivation is unidirectional – with the reward moving from one party to another. Tapping into intrinsic motivation, some organizations nurture a culture of appreciation where the appreciation is multidirectional – where it is just as important for volunteers to appreciate each other and the staff who support them as it is for staff to recognize and thank volunteers, not to mention the importance of staff appreciating each other!

“Tapping into intrinsic motivation is about building a culture of appreciation.”



## A Library Builds a Culture of Appreciation by Celebrating Together

In 2017, as part of a district-wide effort to enhance its volunteer engagement strategy and impact, Colorado's Douglas County Libraries shifted the way branch libraries celebrate and socialize. The library district is explicitly dedicated to integrating play and learning. As part of that commitment, branch celebrations are a big part of the library's culture, but, up until this point, volunteers and staff generally held separate gatherings. Thanks to a survey that included questions about recognition and appreciation, leadership saw an opportunity to shift the culture.



Starting at one branch library in the spring, volunteers were invited to a staff celebration in honor of “Pi Day” (a celebration on March 14 to mark the alignment of the date with the mathematical number “Pi” which starts with 3.14). It was a great success, with volunteers reporting that they enjoyed the chance to be part of the larger team and staff reporting that they welcomed the chance to get to know the volunteers better. And, everyone, of course, enjoyed the chance to eat some pie!

Now, across the district, staff and volunteers are included in branch celebrations, and volunteers feel even more appreciated as they are truly part of the team – in times of work and in times of play. The library has since experienced not only increased volunteer satisfaction, but also increased retention.

## What does this look like in the real world? Organizations with a culture of appreciation may...

- **Build teams of both staff and volunteers** and then acknowledge the work of the whole team
- **Include volunteers in all-staff meetings** and even in department meetings, where appropriate
- **Celebrate together**, rather than having separate events for staff and volunteers

Creating a culture of appreciation takes time and intention, but small efforts can build momentum and make a tangible difference. Any change begins with understanding your current culture. As you read through this eTool Kit, consider the questions included in Tool #1 on the next page. As you explore your current culture of appreciation, you may identify new, meaningful approaches to volunteer recognition so that you not only enhance your volunteers' experience, but also increase their impact.



# Tool #1

## Defining Your Organization's Culture of Appreciation

During a meeting with staff and volunteers, use these questions to assess your organization's current culture. To what extent does current culture support mutual appreciation and recognition?

### 1. Leadership Support

- |   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| a) Does leadership support volunteer engagement?<br><i>In what ways does leadership show appreciation for volunteers?</i> | Yes | No |
| b) Does leadership support staff members?<br><i>In what ways does leadership show appreciation for staff members?</i>     | Yes | No |

### 2. Team Support

- |   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| a) Do staff members appreciate and support each other?<br><i>In what ways do they show it?</i>    | Yes | No |
| b) Do staff members appreciate and support volunteers?<br><i>In what ways do they show it?</i>    | Yes | No |
| c) Do volunteers appreciate and support other volunteers?<br><i>In what ways do they show it?</i> | Yes | No |
| d) Do volunteers appreciate and support staff?<br><i>In what ways do they show it?</i>            | Yes | No |

### 3. Impact

- |   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| a) Is there a shared vision for success?  | Yes | No |
| b) Do staff and volunteers understand the impact of each other's work?          | Yes | No |
| c) Can staff and volunteers articulate the significance of their contributions? | Yes | No |

### 4. Personal Contributions

- a) How do I show appreciation for staff? For the individual volunteers with whom I work?

- b) Is feeling appreciated the norm rather than the exception?      Yes      No

### 5. Reflecting on the group's answers to the previous questions, identify three strengths within your existing culture:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### 6. Identify three areas where, through some effort, you can enhance the culture of appreciation at your organization:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

# Section 2

## And the Survey Says...





# What Research Shows about Recognition

Recognizing volunteers is not just about fulfilling the traditional “Three Rs” of volunteer engagement, namely Recruitment, Retention, Recognition. Building a culture of appreciation in which volunteers are acknowledged for their contributions can have measurable benefits, and that doesn’t just go for volunteers!

Building a culture of appreciation benefits both volunteers and paid staff. While people value being appreciated, expressing gratitude and appreciation doesn’t come naturally for us at work. A survey<sup>1</sup> by John Templeton Foundation focusing on gratitude showed that while 50% of Americans regularly express gratitude to their family members, only 15% do so with their colleagues. Yet, nearly all respondents said that they wish their colleagues would say thank you to them more frequently.<sup>2</sup>

Being appreciated at work translates beyond having employees or volunteers who feel good. Being appreciated leads to greater productivity. In other studies, researchers found that people were more than 50% more productive after having been explicitly thanked for their work, whether by the beneficiaries of the work or by a supervisor (even a distant one).<sup>3</sup>



A sense of appreciation is the single most sustainable motivator at work. Extrinsic motivators can stop having much meaning — your raise in pay feels like your just due, your bonus gets spent, your new title doesn’t sound so important once you have it. But the sense that other people appreciate what you do sticks with you.

– Adam Grant, *Give and Take*



Recognizing that all workers (paid or unpaid) benefit from sincere thanks, it's helpful to also look at research about volunteers specifically. Your organization may have already conducted surveys or interviews of the volunteer corps to identify what motivates individuals to engage with the organization and, if so, the data should inform your recognition strategy. If not, a good place to start is looking at what other research reveals.

Join In, a national organization in the United Kingdom dedicated to local sports volunteerism, summed up what volunteers (both sports and general volunteers) seek out of their volunteering using the acronym, "GIVERS."<sup>4</sup>

## Volunteers seek:

- G Growth** — personal growth and wellbeing
- I Increased** sense of purpose
- V Voice** — personalizing the invitation to volunteer
- E Easy** to sign up, to get there, to get the job done
- R Recognition** — specifically, being thanked, appreciated, and celebrated
- S Social** opportunities like making new friends and working on a team

It's noteworthy that, while "recognition" is listed as one of the six motivators, many of the other five are also part of a culture of appreciation. When organizations offer volunteers a chance to receive specialized training, for example, the volunteers understand that the organization is investing in them – and therefore appreciate them as worthy of investment. Furthermore, the study showed that recognition is not really about gifts or plaques. Volunteers seek to be thanked during the work and at the end of the project and to understand the impact of their work.

Join In's research aligns strongly with a Volunteer Canada 2013 Volunteer Recognition Study,<sup>5</sup> which looked at not only how volunteers prefer to be recognized but also at the methods organizations commonly employ. The research revealed a marked disconnect between what volunteers want and what organizations provide.

**Building a culture of appreciation benefits both volunteers and paid staff.**





The top two ways that volunteers want to be recognized are to be thanked by hearing how their work has made a difference and to be thanked in person on an ongoing, informal basis. The good news is that the most common way that organizations recognize volunteers is by thanking them informally, which aligns well with what volunteers seek. Unfortunately, the alignment ends there.

Organizations' next most common ways to recognize volunteers are to provide written recommendations or letters of reference and to host banquets. Those two methods are the lowest ranked preferences among volunteers.



## The takeaways from this research underscore the importance of recognition:

- Showing appreciation for volunteers (and for employees, for that matter) leads to happier, more productive members of the team
- Recognition is a strong motivator for volunteers
- The ways people want to be recognized are also the most cost effective

## In other words, be intentional about recognizing volunteers, be personal, and focus on the impact of volunteer efforts. You can do so in three easy steps:

- 1. Set the Stage** for effective recognition.
- 2. Make it Personal** for each volunteer or group of volunteers.
- 3. Keep it Going** by planning.

## Big Disconnect

### What Volunteers Want

**80%** want to be thanked by hearing how their work has made a difference

**70%** want to be thanked in person on an ongoing, informal basis

### What Organizations Provide

**95%** thank volunteers in person

**70%** provide formal letters of reference or recognition (second lowest rated among volunteers)

**60%** hold a banquet or other formal gathering (lowest ranked by volunteers)

– 2013 Canadian Study on Volunteer Recognition

## Survey Current Volunteers

Do your own research! Ask your current volunteers what types of recognition they find meaningful. Customize the following questionnaire to include all the ways your organization currently recognizes volunteers. Add some additional ones that could be possible then add the question to an annual volunteer survey or to a question-of-the-month posted on social media.

**How meaningful would each of the following recognition options be to you?**

	Very	Somewhat	Not at all
a) A sincere “thank you” from the staff or volunteer leader with whom I work			
b) Invitation to a volunteer lunch or dinner			
c) Nomination for a volunteer award			
d) Opportunities for training or professional development			
e) Opportunities to increase my leadership role			
f) Profile on our website			
g) Receiving a certificate or pin for hours or years of service			
h) Receipt of a small token of thanks (e.g., mug, tote bag, t-shirt)			
i) Selection for a special project			
j) Getting noticed and thanked by leaders of my team, program, or organization for something specific about my work			

**Being appreciated at work translates beyond having employees or volunteers who feel good.**







## Tool #2

### Assessing Your Recognition Practices

How does your organization rate in terms of evaluating and recognizing volunteers? Answer these questions, calculate your score, and see where you can enhance your recognition practices and your culture of appreciation.

	Almost Always (3)	Sometimes (2)	Not Yet (1)	I Don't Know (0)
a) Staff understand that it is part of their job to recognize and thank volunteers.				
b) Staff and volunteer leaders regularly provide feedback to volunteers on performance.				
c) Staff feel recognized and appreciated for their work.				
d) Volunteers feel recognized and appreciated for their work.				
e) We welcome, encourage, and give consideration to volunteers' suggestions and feedback.				
f) Volunteers who lead other volunteers show appreciation for the volunteers on their team.				
g) Staff and volunteer leaders know how volunteers want to be recognized.				
h) We regularly track and measure the impact of volunteer involvement.				
i) We acknowledge volunteer contributions and impact in ways that are meaningful to volunteers.				
j) Volunteer impact is routinely shared with leadership, partners, funders, volunteers, and the community at large.				

#### Calculate your score:

1. Write the number of checked boxes in each column.
2. Multiply each number from step 1 by the value at the top of the column (3, 2, 1, or 0).
3. Add the values from step 2.

**Score:**

If your score is in the 20s, congratulations! You have a strong culture of appreciation. If your score is 15-20, you have a good foundation on which to build. If your score is below 15, use this tool kit as a guide to increase your score.

# Section 3

## Set the Stage



# Set the Stage

Setting the stage for effective recognition begins with the volunteer position itself and continues with having an infrastructure in place to easily support a culture of appreciation.

## Volunteer Role

As both research and common experience show, volunteers seek to be recognized by being acknowledged for the difference they make. With that in mind, planning for recognition begins long before volunteers start their work with your organization. Recognition begins early on. In fact, it begins when you are crafting the roles that volunteers will be filling. Exactly how will the volunteer's efforts make a difference? Is that difference aligned with your organizational mission?

If the role is not mission-aligned, then no matter how much the volunteer works, the only way to thank them is for their hours of work. While hours of service are worthy of praise and appreciation, what volunteers really seek is knowing that their hours are impactful and that they make a difference for a cause they care about.

## Infrastructure

Ensuring that volunteer efforts are impactful goes beyond position descriptions alone. There are many ways to support volunteers and show appreciation for their time and talent from the moment they connect with the organization and then walk through your proverbial doors (even if a remote volunteer!). Is the organization expecting them? Are the volunteers welcomed? Treated as part of the team? Do they have the tools and resources they need to be successful?





## Tool #3

### Set the Stage for Meaningful Recognition

Use the checklist below to help you set the stage for meaningful recognition of volunteers.

#### 1. Create Impactful Roles for Volunteers

Identify the need or challenge this volunteer role will address

List the specific skills or resources needed to fulfill this strategic priority or address this challenge

Articulate the difference this volunteer role will make

Explain why a volunteer would find this work meaningful and how a volunteer would find this work enjoyable

#### 2. Build an Infrastructure to Support the Volunteer... and a Culture of Appreciation

Identify the employee or volunteer leader who will train and support volunteers in this role

Provide those employees and volunteer leaders with training and dedicated time to support volunteers on their team

Ensure the volunteer is welcomed and supported by providing every volunteer with:

*Written position description*

*Name badge*

*A place to check in and get organized for their day's work*

*A place to rest, socialize, take a break, and eat a snack*

*Equipment that is needed to do their job, such as tools and safety gear or computers and software*

*A designated staff member or lead volunteer to contact with questions*

*Newsletters or other ways to stay "in the loop" about important organizational news and information*

Acquire and use a system to track volunteer hours and impacts so that you can then acknowledge the results of their work in meaningful ways

Track the impact of your recognition efforts through changes in ratings on volunteer satisfaction surveys, volunteer retention data, volunteer feedback on exit surveys, or other means

What else should be added to this list?



# Section 4

## Make It Personal



# Make It Personal

People know when a thank you is sincere and personal. Those personal acknowledgments mean so much more than a standard thank you. It's the difference between receiving a handwritten, personalized thank you letter and opening a mass-produced form letter with a stamped signature.

## Motivational Styles

Certainly, handwritten thank you notes are a valued sign of recognition. But they are not the only option. One way to personalize volunteer acknowledgment is to match the recognition to an individual's interests, preferences, and motivational style. Researcher David C. McClelland, in his motivational theory, identified three motivational styles that impact work behavior.<sup>6</sup> Those three styles are achievement, power, and affiliation.

### Achievement Volunteers

- Are goal-oriented and look for time-limited projects with a defined beginning, middle, and end
- Desire clear and concrete feedback
- Value positions with the opportunity to solve problems, provide feedback, and suggest improvements

### Power Volunteers

- Seek assignments with a measurable impact
- Want to share their ideas and have influence
- Value positions with prestige and status

### Affiliation Volunteers

- Prioritize building relationships through work
- Want to be with others in a warm, friendly environment
- Value positions with the chance to demonstrate care and concern for others and strengthen relationships



Understanding what motivates volunteers will help ensure that your recognition plan includes different options to appeal to and serve the needs of volunteers with different styles. As you consider recognition options, build a program that includes rewards, opportunities, and support that appeal to a variety of individuals. Use the tool on page 19 to brainstorm specific ideas for each motivational style.

## Get Creative!

**Opportunities to share the impact of their work** (great for Power-oriented volunteers)

- Have the volunteer make a presentation to the board
- Invite the volunteer to write an article on the project for a publication
- Ask the volunteer to represent you at meetings
- Offer to write a letter of recommendation or commendation to the volunteer's workplace or school

**Opportunities to gain or develop new skills** (great for Achievement-oriented volunteers)

- Offer to send the volunteer to a conference
- Provide the volunteer with training or mentorship on new technology, practices, or research
- Send the volunteer to a lecture or program by an expert in a field related to his/her volunteer work

**Small but meaningful tokens of appreciation** (great for Affiliation-oriented volunteers)

- Donate a book to a library in the volunteer's name
- Order and distribute cute gifts such as...
  - Miniature flashlight with a note, "Thanks to a bright light"
  - A package of tea with a note, "Since you became a volunteer, things are really brewing around here!"
  - A jar of mints with a note, "Your commit-MINT makes a big difference!"
- Create a survival kit and distribute before an event, including items that will help the volunteers thrive even under stressful conditions (e.g., an energy bar, a water bottle, a throat lozenge, etc.)

**Fun and memorable ways to show appreciation for all**

- Create humorous awards such as, "Best attendance in meetings" or "Most inspiring pep talks"
- Create a photo album or digital slide show with pictures of volunteer activities, programs, and events

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## Make It a Team Effort

By understanding motivational styles, you can ensure that your recognition plan offers a variety of "motivational paychecks," but in most organizations, no one staff or volunteer leader has the time to get to know each and every volunteer and his or her motivational styles. However, you can enlist others to help you get to know the volunteer corps. No leader of volunteers should be solely responsible for volunteer recognition. Like volunteer cultivation and volunteer engagement, recognizing volunteers is everybody's responsibility. Here a couple of ways to make recognition a team effort:

- Add questions to the volunteer application or survey to learn about a volunteer's favorite snacks, coffee shop, or hobby. Then share that information with that volunteer's staff supervisors so they can pick out a personalized gift card.
- On a volunteer retreat, have volunteers complete a motivational analysis and share the results with those volunteers' team leaders to help them tailor their recognition appropriately.





# Tool #4

## Tailor Recognition to Motivational Styles

Use the characteristics listed to generate additional types of acknowledgment tailored to motivational styles.

Motivation	Characteristics	Acknowledgment
<b>Achievement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek time-limited projects with a beginning, middle, and end.</li> <li>• Want clear, concrete feedback.</li> <li>• Are interested in assignments with the opportunity to solve problems.</li> <li>• Want control over the outcome of the work.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attend a seminar that addresses the volunteer's assignment.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> </ol>
<b>Power</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek assignments with significant and definable impact.</li> <li>• Desire to have influence.</li> <li>• Want to share their ideas.</li> <li>• Are interested in prestige, status, and position.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Opportunity to report results of volunteer work to the staff and board.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> </ol>
<b>Affiliation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are interested in being with others.</li> <li>• Prioritize friendship and relationships.</li> <li>• Desire a warm, friendly, and supportive work environment.</li> <li>• Demonstrate concern and caring for others.</li> <li>• Relationships may be more important than the work itself.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support session over coffee or lunch.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> <li>5.</li> </ol>



# Section 5

## Keep it Going



# Keep it Going

Meaningful volunteer recognition means creating a culture of appreciation, setting the stage for impactful service, and making it personal. It also means planning so that recognition becomes a part of the fabric of the organization. While traditional recognition in the form of annual events and gifts have a place in the overall recognition plan, they alone do not fuel a culture of appreciation, nor do they feel personal. Understanding the research, committing to enhancing your organizational culture of appreciation, and planning for recognition helps shift your practice beyond mere pins, plaques, and parties.

It is helpful to think about recognition as having three different cycles or rhythms. Some recognition happens annually through formal events, such as volunteer dinners, awards ceremonies, or a yearly staff and volunteer field trip or guest lecture. Others occur throughout the year to acknowledge formal achievements, such as reaching a milestone year of service or marking the completion of a project. And, finally, there is the ongoing informal ways that an organization recognizes and thanks the people who make the organization tick. These are the daily acts of appreciation that are informal, yet are so vital to nurturing a culture of appreciation.

## Annual Formal Recognition: The Big Event!

Most organizations have some time set aside each year to acknowledge and celebrate volunteers. Meanwhile, there are also national and international “Volunteer Weeks” which many organizations choose to honor. Whether a fancy catered lunch with trophies and speeches or a relaxed potluck gathering, setting aside time to get together, reflect on the year’s accomplishments, recognize staff and volunteer partnerships, and thank volunteers for their contributions can be a cherished tradition and an important way to acknowledge volunteers.

## Consider these questions when planning the annual “Big Event”

### Who should attend?

Can both staff and volunteers come together to celebrate as one team? How is leadership represented at the event? How are executive staff and board members demonstrating leadership commitment to volunteer engagement at the organization?

### What is really being recognized and celebrated?

Marking the total number of hours that volunteers contribute is a common data point to share at these events, but for volunteers who are motivated by the chance to hear how their work has made a difference, sharing the outcomes of their effort will go even further as a thank you. In other words, how many children were tutored? Older adults educated about chronic disease management? Animals adopted? Miles of trail cleared and maintained? Or gallons of water saved?



## Ongoing Formal Recognition: Celebrating Volunteer Impact

In addition to the big events, many organizations have a formal recognition plan, often based on hours served or years of engagement with the organization. Volunteers who reach the 1000-hour mark may get a different color badge, while those who reach five years of service with the organization may earn the right to wear a special pin, for example. Dedication and longevity are certainly worth recognizing, but they alone are not the only thing worthy of celebration. In other words, quantity alone should not be the only measure of a volunteer – quality as well should be considered.

## Accomplishments worthy of recognition and celebration

Completing advanced training, finishing up a project, or even recruiting a dozen new volunteers are all accomplishments worthy of recognition and celebration!

**To help your organization get beyond recognizing only hours, consider incorporating recognition levels that celebrate and acknowledge the impacts volunteers have, such as:**

- Other volunteers recruited
- Projects completed
- Certifications or advanced training completed
- Trainings delivered
- Audiences reached
- Pounds of food delivered or meals served



## Tiered Training

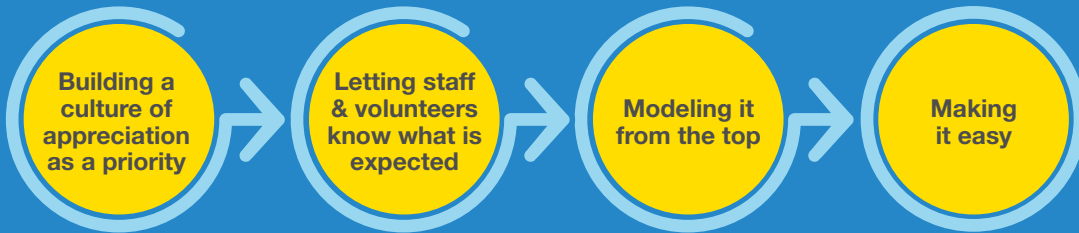
At San Diego Humane Society, every volunteer in the animal care division is required to complete basic training, which has come to be known as foundation training. In these sessions, all volunteers learn about working in the kennels, how to clean the area, support the work by helping with laundry, and basic care of the animals such as feeding. Volunteers with an interest in stepping up to more advanced work and who show success at the foundation level are invited to take additional training to learn special skills. Through these classes, called core training, volunteers learn more advanced dog handling skills, for example.

Individuals can step up even further to become certified through specialty training, which makes volunteers eligible to work with such wildlife species as raptors or provide veterinary treatments in the kitten nursery. Each level is vital to the ongoing operations of the humane society, but all volunteers are identified by the type of badge they wear and, of course, by the work they get to do. With the higher level of training comes status and prestige of having successfully completed the required training, but everyone is valued because, of course, the shelter could not function without the foundation work of the largest group of volunteers.

## Daily Informal Recognition: Creating a Culture of Appreciation

Getting beyond formal events and certificates to create a culture where volunteers and staff easily and regularly show appreciation for each other's contributions means investing time and training for staff and volunteers. While it may be natural for some people to smile, call volunteers by their names, and thank them for their work, it does take training and intention to make this part of the workplace culture, especially when people are busy.

### Organizations that successfully create such a culture do so by:





## Specifically, in organizations with a strong culture of daily appreciation we see:

### 1. A culture of appreciation is a priority.

- A culture of partnership and appreciation is identified as part of the strategic plan.
- Organizational culture is measured and tracked through surveys and focus groups and is part of the organizational dashboard.
- Expectations for how staff and volunteers treat each other are included in position descriptions for both staff and volunteer team leaders, and therefore are considered in the hiring process (for example, candidates with strong interpersonal skills are valued).

### 2. All staff and volunteers are expected to show appreciation and are trained to do so.

- Volunteer engagement training, including training on how to provide feedback, is included in all new employee orientations as well as ongoingly.
- Similar training is part of volunteer orientations and ongoing training.

### 3. The culture is modeled from the top.

- Board and executive leadership regularly share the impact that volunteers have.
- Board and executive staff participate in formal and informal recognition events.

### 4. Showing appreciation is made easy to do.

- All volunteers and staff have visible name badges so fellow teammates can get to know them.
- Informal recognition systems are in place so that everyone can easily and quickly provide feedback and commend others for their work, such as having “kudos” cards available for individuals to submit comments about a team member who went “above and beyond.” Then that individual receives a token gift or a shout out at an organizational meeting.

“Being appreciated at work goes beyond having employees or volunteers who feel good.”





# Tool #5

## Plan your strategies

Use the charts on pages 25-26 to develop and plan strategies to consistently and effectively recognize volunteers for their efforts annually and ongoingly—both formally and informally.



	ANNUAL FORMAL RECOGNITION				
	Event/Strategy	Recognition Tactic(s)	Eligibility or Criteria	Responsible Person(s)	Resources Needed
Example	Annual Volunteer Event	Board and CEO presentations, gifts	Annual hourly awards	Director of Volunteer Engagement; Board President	Funds for lunch and gifts, time of leadership, etc.
Brainstorm Ideas					



## ONGOING FORMAL RECOGNITION

	Event/Strategy	Recognition Tactic(s)	Eligibility or Criteria	Responsible Person(s)	Resources Needed
<b>Example</b>	Tiered recognition based on training levels	Certificate of completion; badge ID; eligibility for advanced roles	Successful completion of specified training programs	Director of Volunteer Engagement; Training Director	Training, certificates, support from program staff
<b>Brainstorm Ideas</b>					



## DAILY INFORMAL RECOGNITION

	Event/Strategy	Recognition Tactic(s)	Eligibility or Criteria	Responsible Person(s)	Resources Needed
<b>Example</b>	Spontaneous recognition of staff and volunteers for going “above and beyond”	Kudos Cards for staff, volunteers, visitors, or program participants	Nomination by staff or volunteer	Volunteer Engagement Coordinator or HR Director	Staff time and cards
<b>Brainstorm Ideas</b>					

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<sup>4</sup> Making Time, “Getting to GIVERS.”

<sup>5</sup> Volunteer Canada, 2013 Volunteer Recognition Study.

<sup>6</sup> Wilson, Marlene. *The Effective Management of Volunteer Programs*. Volunteer Management Association, 1976.

<sup>7</sup> Friedman Fixler, Jill and Sandie Eichberg. *Boomer Volunteer Engagement: Collaborate Today, Thrive Tomorrow*. VolunteerMatch, 2008.



## Special thanks to our guest author, Beth Steinhorn, President, VQ Volunteer Strategies

### About VQ Volunteer Strategies

VQ Volunteer Strategies is a leading provider of high-impact volunteer engagement solutions designed to help organizations raise their VQ – or volunteer quotient. Volunteer Quotient is an organization's ability to leverage volunteer talent to increase its impact – in other words, its ability to achieve smarter impact. VQ Volunteer Strategies helps organizations maximize existing resources, unlock their potential, and achieve mission by integrating volunteer engagement as a core strategy.

### About Verified Volunteers

Verified Volunteers helps nonprofit organizations gain confidence in the volunteers working with those they serve by delivering thorough, reliable background checks. By enabling volunteers to order, manage and share their background checks via a secure online platform, a community of vetted volunteers is created, which helps nonprofit organizations save time and money. Extensive expertise in screening and compliance best practices helps clients recruit the best volunteers in order to maintain a safe environment and positive reputation. Verified Volunteers is backed by Sterling Talent Solutions, one of the world's largest background screening companies, and partnered with Points of Light, the world's largest organization dedicated to volunteer service.

### Want More?

In addition to this eTool Kit, Verified Volunteers regularly publishes research and insights on the latest trends in volunteer screening and volunteer program management.

For more information, contact us at:

[info@verifiedvolunteers.com](mailto:info@verifiedvolunteers.com) / 855.326.1860 Option 2



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