

Top 25 Ways to Recognise Your Volunteers This NVW2014

Volunteers represent a better, more resilient future for everyone, there are many ways to recognise your volunteers for their outstanding contributions. In our 25th NVW year, we decided to share our top 25 ideas for recognising volunteers.

1. Present your volunteers with a certificate to commemorate anniversaries of involvement. Acknowledging and appreciating their active contribution and marking the date of their anniversary.
2. Hold a special ‘thank-you’ social function, with the guests of honour, being the volunteers. A simple morning tea or office party will ensure everyone gets on board to celebrate the roles of volunteers in your organisation.
3. Write letters to the volunteer’s family, letting them know how much the person’s work has contributed, and thank the family for supporting the volunteer in their efforts.
4. Give your volunteers a ‘pat on the back,’ differently. By tracing your hand on a plain piece of paper and writing ‘Here’s a pat on the back for\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ thank you for your hard work.’ Allow staff members who are in contact with the volunteers an opportunity to make one in recognition of the service of particular volunteers. Hang them all together for visual impact.
5. Create volunteer buttons and pins, giving them a sense of their value within the organisation.
6. Give them a mug with the company logo or one with a ‘thank-you’ motif and Tweet or Facebook a photo with them and their new coffee break addition, posting directly to your account. Showing your interest in your volunteers on social media will make them feel appreciated and builds an online community for your volunteers.
7. Provide free refreshments during coffee and tea breaks, and include them in conversations.
8. Purchase a jar, and have employees write encouraging ‘post it notes’ about volunteers when they have a positive interaction with them. Urge all employees to participate and at a ‘thank you’ function held for volunteers you can read out all the lovely messages that were said about them.
9. Create a climate where volunteers feel comfortable and motivated to work, by saying ‘thank you’ and greeting your volunteers by name, provides a work culture of acceptance and gratitude.
10. Use quotes from volunteers in leaflets and annual reports, small things like including their name on a program they have helped organise, does not cost the organisation while being priceless to the individual volunteer.
11. Nominate your volunteers for community awards. Look on our website for a comprehensive list of awards a volunteer can be nominated for in our Volunteering Awards Calender.
12. Match the volunteer’s preferred work and skills with the organisation’s needs.
13. Arrange discounts for your volunteers at local shops.
14. Accept that an individual volunteer’s ability to commit may change over time, and still appreciate their contributions to the organisation.
15. Devote resources (time and money) to volunteer support, time for staff to talk to them regularly and money for things like training or thank you events a few times a year.
16. Share the results of program evaluations with volunteers so they can see their impact on clients and programs.
17. Know the volunteers’ names, the names of their partners, kids or pets and ask about how they are, this will show you have an active interest in your volunteers.
18. Ask volunteers opinions when developing new policies and strategies.
19. Maintain regular contact with volunteers, even if they work off-site or at odd hours.
20. Present volunteers with a special memento recognising their service to the organisation.
21. Provide letters of reference for your volunteers and let them know you are happy to do this.
22. Recommend volunteers to prospective employers.
23. Offer to help volunteers prepare information about their volunteer role they can include in their resumes, emphasising the skills they have developed through their volunteer work.
24. Have staff and clients write comments and quotes about the difference volunteers make, and have these printed in a booklet and mailed out or shared at a recognition event.
25. Have an annual volunteer award ceremony and celebrate the years work together- especially during NVW each year! In 2014 its 12-18 May.

Go to Volunteering Australia’s website to find more ideas and download resources to help you celebrate NVW2014.