

Ways to Recognize Volunteers All Year

January

Distribute a list of celebrity alumni (or supporters) of your program. Scramble the names or develop an activity to place the names in fill-in-the-blanks so members can learn more about these individuals. This activity could be included with a newsletter to constituents.

Develop a "Tip Your Hat to a Top Volunteer" recognition poster that is posted in a public place (e.g., grocery store, local café, your web site). This is similar to an Employee of the Month award. Rather than requiring a selection committee to review qualifications, draw a name from the list of all volunteers in the program. Talk to several adults and youth who work with that individual to list 5 reasons we should "tip our hat to this top-volunteer."

February

Send a valentine to every volunteer who has helped you grow or had an impact on your clientele or the organization.

Send volunteers a package of hot cocoa mix to "warm them up" during the coldest month of the year.

March

Take a jar of jellybeans to each meeting. Let participants guess how many jellybeans are in the jar. (Plan the number of jellybeans to equal the number of volunteers in your program last year.) After the guessing contest, talk about the significance and value of that number of volunteers working in this program.

Have a drawing that includes all the volunteers who have attended training sessions this month (or during the past 3 months). Present a mug, gift certificate, or pen.

April

Deliver a packet of vegetable or flower seeds to a volunteer and say: "Thank you for helping us grow."

During National Volunteer Week, write a press release thanking volunteers for their service to this organization. If possible, list the names of all volunteers.

May

Make arrangements to spend 3 hours with volunteers helping them to do spring cleaning. Help rake leaves, wash windows, plant flowers, or clean a garage. (You could have a drawing for this opportunity!)

Deliver a May Basket filled with flowers and/or treats to volunteers.

Send a virtual (no cost) greeting card and bouquet of flowers through the Internet.

June

Sponsor a potluck picnic for volunteers.

Print LOTS of volunteer accomplishments in the monthly newsletter.

July

As you plan a parade float, include a sign thanking one volunteer or all volunteers in a group.

Send firework "sparklers" to volunteers with a message: "You Light Up My Life!"

August

Set up a poster or display at a local event. (e.g. county fair).

Send volunteers a "back-to-school" goal setting worksheet. Invite volunteers to attend a meeting or training session to share their ideas for organizational and/or program goals.

September

Prepare a meal. Invite parents as guests.

Help volunteers get organized for the new program year by sending them a calendar or yearly planner.

October

Deliver a bag of peanuts to each volunteer with a label: "We are NUTS about you!" (A monkey costume would be great for the delivery person around October 31!)

Have a pumpkin decorating fun day.

November

Say THANKS by having a reception for parents and others who volunteer for specific events or subject matter.

For northern climates, make a winter survival kit for your volunteers. (Include candles, matches, a metal cup, snacks, hot packs, etc.)

December

Have a cookie-baking marathon and deliver cookies to individuals and organizations that serve the community through volunteers – schools, school boards, fire departments, 4-H and Scouts.

Send a holiday wreath to each group that works with volunteers.

Sources

- Marilyn Lesmeister, former Leadership and Volunteer Development Specialist, North Dakota State University Extension.
- Carmel Miller, former County Extension Agent, North Dakota State University Extension.
- Some ideas adapted from *Tennessee 4-H Ideas* newsletter, More of 98 Ways to Celebrate National 4-H Week, Peggy Adkins, Associate Extension Specialist, Tennessee