

WISCONSIN YOUTH FUTURES

Technical Report #13

Volunteer Retention and Recognition



University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension
[Cooperative Extension](#)

Volunteer Retention and Recognition

by

[Mary R. Huser](#), C.H.E.S.

Youth Outreach Educator, University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension

INTRODUCTION

Wisconsin Youth Futures aims to build communities of support for youth and families. Volunteers are a vital component of this prevention program. Incorporating volunteer management principles into Youth Futures will strengthen local programs and increase the likelihood of fostering positive youth development.

Published materials on volunteer management typically focus on a myriad of related topics, including training, personnel management, organizational finances, and communications. This resource guide contains information and activities highlighting two additional aspects of volunteer management - retention and recognition of volunteers.

VOLUNTEER RETENTION

Recruiting volunteers to the Youth Futures effort is only one step in establishing a solid and broad base of volunteer support for the project. Retention is another necessary step of working with volunteers. Plans to retain Youth Futures volunteers are vital if the project is to grow and succeed.

Some of the same principles of volunteer recruitment apply to volunteer retention, yet significant differences between the two concepts exist. The following section focuses on three principles specific to volunteer retention:

1. matching volunteer roles with people's reasons for involvement,
2. creating meaningful volunteer opportunities, and
3. expanding volunteer opportunities.

Matching Volunteer Roles with Reasons for Involvement

When people are asked why they initially became active as volunteers, their responses frequently resemble the following:

- Someone I know asked me
- I believe in the cause or goals of the group
- I can make a positive difference in this group
- It will be a good way to meet other people
- I can get some experience or credit for a future paying job
- This is a way for me to "give back"

Researchers have categorized reasons for volunteering into the following six areas:

1. To act on deeply held beliefs about the importance of helping others
2. To learn for the pure enjoyment of it
3. To acquire new skills or facts to increase job skills
4. To meet the expectations of and to impress other people
5. To provide relief or escape
6. To meet the desire to be needed and important

Why do people volunteer to work on the Youth Futures projects? Responses from participants at the 1993 Youth Futures Conference included:

- I was asked to be involved
- This project is new and interesting
- I have something to offer to this
- I'm curious about what will happen
- This is a different approach that I have confidence in
- Because of the youth involvement
- It is an opportunity to work with the whole community

Research with volunteers has shown that these initial reasons may (and often do) change once the newly recruited volunteer gains experience with a project or program. That is to say, what may have been the reason for a person first becoming active in Youth Futures may not be relevant later on. The rewards the experienced volunteer seeks from his/her contribution are seldom the same rewards sought earlier in the volunteer role. A study by Smith and Berns found that when job responsibilities are built around a volunteer's motivating factors, the job is meaningful and the relationship is a success. **Thus, by knowing the reasons and rewards motivating to Youth Futures volunteers, appropriate roles can be designed to meet these factors and create fulfilling volunteer experiences.**

What are the reasons local Youth Futures volunteers have for their involvement in the project? The following activity is designed to compare volunteers' reasons for being involved in Youth Futures with their current experiences. Discussion should focus on how volunteer involvement matches expectations and what actions could be taken to better align these two components necessary for successful volunteer retention.

No matter the circumstances, actions to accommodate the volunteer's reasons for involvement can be identified and suitable changes can be determined through the previous activity. It is imperative that once volunteers have identified their reasons, appropriate changes are made for a better match between their experiences and reasons for involvement. Failure to design more satisfying roles for volunteers expressing interest in such a change may erode current volunteer contributions as well as negatively impact future volunteer involvement.

Another closely related, but distinct aspect of volunteer retention concerns the skills and preferences volunteers possess. Research shows it is important to match volunteer skills and abilities with job tasks and to relate tasks to volunteer values. Investigators of volunteerism have found that discrepancies between volunteer preferences and actual roles performed often lead to feelings of discontent and dropping out of the group. Another activity helps to illustrate this important concept.



Activity #2 (See Appendix B for a prepared activity form)

Objective: To match Youth Futures volunteers' preferences and skills with job tasks.

Step 1) Ask volunteers to circle 3 of the household activities listed below they would be most willing to do.

- wash the car
- iron clothes
- cook dinner
- shovel snow
- grocery shop
- clean garage
- wash & dry dishes
- mow lawn
- take out garbage
- clean toilet
- change bedding
- vacuum
- sweep floor
- change oil in car
- clean shower/bathtub
- dust
- rake leaves
- other _____

Next, ask volunteers to think about which of the above tasks they do most often. Ask them to place a check in front of those 3 tasks they most often do.

At this point, informally discuss if there is a good match between what volunteers like to do versus what they actually do. Facilitators should begin to introduce the concept of how job satisfaction is related to the tasks of the job. This, of course, differs with individuals. The majority of discussion time should be spent on the next part of the exercise.

Ask volunteers to read through the list below of tasks involved in Youth Futures and circle the 3 tasks they would be most interested in doing. (This will be most useful if a list of Youth Futures tasks specific to the local site is generated and used here.)

- chaperon youth activities
- assemble newsletters
- write articles for newspaper and newsletter
- be interviewed on local radio or TV
- help lead/teach workshop for parents
- help lead/teach workshop for youth
- do fund-raising with local businesses, boards, individuals
- lead committee meetings
- telephone other members on reminders
- organize activities
- other _____

Next, ask volunteers to check the 3 tasks they most often do in Youth Futures.

Have 2 participants tally responses of the group on separate sheets of newsprint or on overhead transparency. Ask participants to analyze their lists...are the items circled the same ones checked? Is there any overlap? Or, are volunteers doing tasks that they really don't enjoy? That is, how well are volunteers preferences matched to the roles they are asked to perform? Gather ideas from volunteers on how their role with Youth Futures could be adjusted to better reflect their job preferences. Record ideas and use to make changes in volunteer roles.

Volunteers new to Youth Futures could use the local list of tasks to indicate their job preferences. Applied most effectively, matching volunteer preferences with tasks occurs during the volunteer orientation.

Creating Meaningful Volunteer Opportunities

The importance of designing exciting, challenging and rewarding volunteer jobs can make the difference between high and low retention rates. Are Youth Futures volunteer jobs ones that people look forward to and want to do? Lynch states that a job people want to do is the cornerstone of all successful volunteer programs; the job must fulfill them in some way. This is especially true for the majority of volunteers today who also hold a paying job—volunteer jobs need to be more fulfilling than the one they get paid to do or must fill a void not met in the paying job.

Lynch recommends four elements be incorporated to create rewarding volunteer jobs:

6. Volunteers need to experience their own "turf", that is something they are responsible for. Volunteers who feel this ownership, are more apt to stay with a project. Rather than assigning a volunteer to one task that is performed repeatedly, opportunities should be designed for volunteers to carry a project to completion. Lynch states that even in the simple task of a newsletter mailing, volunteers who do just one activity, such as collating, stapling, or folding for all the newsletters, get less satisfaction from the job itself than those who do all the activities for a portion of the newsletters.
7. Volunteers must have responsibility for planning, organizing, deciding, and evaluating what they do. In other words, if volunteers continually do tasks that others have decided need to be done, the volunteer job is not as rewarding as if the volunteer had a say in the decision-making. To establish a sense of ownership for the job, volunteers need to be involved in decisions made pertaining to the job.
8. Volunteers that are held responsible for desired results as opposed to a set activity are more likely to continue their volunteering. This may be especially appropriate for Youth Futures volunteers. For example, if Youth Futures volunteers are focused on the desired outcome of their efforts, i.e. preventing underage drinking, violence, or prejudice, it will keep them focused and continually analyzing the reasons for their actions. If instead, the "why" behind their actions is lost and volunteers feel responsible for some activity, but don't know the reason, the jobs quickly loses satisfaction and appeal. Defining volunteer jobs in terms of results helps make the program more successful because people are clear about what is to be accomplished and how their efforts contribute to meeting that goal. Therefore, it is important to familiarize volunteers with the prevention goal of the Youth Futures site as well as a brief explanation of why and how this goal was selected.

9. Volunteers should be involved in measuring whether their efforts are contributing to the organization's goals. Volunteers can help collect and share informal and formal data on the impact of their efforts. Without this information, volunteers may begin to feel that their contributions make little, if any, difference. This is often the point when organizations lose volunteers.

Insightful information on how volunteers view Youth Futures tasks can be discovered from Youth Futures volunteers who have ended their involvement with the project. This information is important in building rewarding volunteer jobs for current and future volunteers. One way to gather these facts is through an "exit" interview - a few questions that a current volunteer asks the outgoing volunteer. This type of information often uncovers the barriers to participation that paid staff overlook or are unaware of. These comments are best used to redesign volunteer experiences which encourage commitment and challenge.

"The Changing Role of Volunteerism" report by the United Hospital Fund recommends new approaches be used to manage and motivate volunteers. Recommendations include 1) strategic screening and placement to clarify expectations of both the volunteer and the volunteer administrator, and 2) ongoing motivation that begins by recognizing why a volunteer "is there in the first place." Developing volunteer jobs that bring out the best in people and matching job responsibilities with volunteer preferences and skills is an excellent way to increase volunteer retention.

Maintaining Volunteer Activity

Battle states that the best retention tool is a working system of maintaining volunteer activity. Following are the 10 steps Battle sees as necessary to activate and reactivate members of a volunteer organization (as tailored to Youth Futures).

10 STEPS TO ACTIVATING MEMBERS (the best retention tool)

1. Make the member feel wanted and needed.
 - Current members should approach new volunteers and welcome them to their subcommittee (if appropriate) or to the Youth Futures project in general.
 - "Assign" each new member an experienced volunteer to help with becoming oriented to the Youth Futures goals, action plans, and history.
 - The board of directors or executive council should mail a letter welcoming new members to Youth Futures.
 - Keep an updated listing of volunteers on the Youth Futures stationery.

- Submit names of new members to newspapers and other local publications; include photographs when possible.
2. Get to know the new member.
 - Collect personal information—birthday, spouse's name, parent's name, employer/job, year in school, hobbies, ambitions, etc.
 - Make sure someone personally visits with new members to discuss their interest in Youth Futures and what opportunities will meet their reasons for becoming involved.
 3. Provide an orientation about the organization.
 - Familiarizing new Youth Futures volunteers to the goals, objectives, history and current status of the organization is an important first step of retaining members. The orientation may be conducted over lunch, via a videotape and materials, or at a formal meeting. Design the orientation to be convenient, time-effective and fun.
 4. Get the volunteer involved.
 - New volunteers should be involved soon after being recruited; if more than 2-3 weeks lapse, they may feel their contributions are not needed. This often results in losing the volunteer.
 5. Turn responsibility over to volunteers.
 - Allow volunteers to take ownership of the Youth Futures project on a timeline that reflects their readiness.
 6. Do not use volunteers only on fund raising or manual labor activities.
 - If a member feels that you only want him or her because they can raise money or do manual labor, interest is likely to fade quickly.
 7. Keep volunteers informed about group activities.
 - Be sure to add new names to the Youth Futures mailing list.
 - Encourage and demonstrate effective communication skills.
 - Keep volunteers updated on the group's progress. Helping people see that the work they do contributes to the project goals can be motivational. An excellent technique to use is to begin formal and informal Youth Futures meetings with an activity that summarizes what has been accomplished and how that fits into the action plans.

8. Compliment and reward contributions.

- Members will be more likely to continue being involved if their efforts are recognized.

9. Keep up with changes in volunteers' lives.

- Recognizing changes in volunteers' personal lives conveys an interest beyond contributions to Youth Futures.

10. Call volunteers whose involvement has dropped.

- If a volunteer shows signs of burnout, one response might be to design a change of responsibilities to help rejuvenate the volunteer. Or, a break from volunteering may be in order to help the person reevaluate their interest and enthusiasm. A complete break from the Youth Futures project may be appropriate for the volunteer who has contributed to the organization and is no longer interested and willing to continue. This situation warrants a respectful thank you to the volunteer with an invitation for future involvement if interested.
- If a member cannot participate anymore, perhaps s/he could recommend another volunteer who will help with the project.

Volunteers have various reasons for remaining active with their chosen causes and projects. Morrison identifies some of the top reasons:

Why Volunteers Remain Committed

1. They feel appreciated
2. They can see their presence does make a difference
3. There is a chance for advancement
4. There is opportunity for personal growth
5. They receive private and public recognition
6. They feel capable of handling the tasks offered
7. There is a sense of belonging and teamwork among co-workers
8. They are involved in the administrative process, such as problem-solving, decision-making and objective-setting
9. They recognize that something significant is happening because the group exists
10. Their personal needs are being met

The degree to which the above criteria are met for Youth Futures volunteers will largely determine the extent of their involvement and commitment to the project. Thus, if we want to increase the retention rate of Youth Futures volunteers, we need to ask, "To what extent are these criteria currently in place and what needs to be done to ensure

these criteria are met for volunteers?" See Appendix C for Activity #3 designed to analyze if and how these criteria are met in Youth Futures sites.

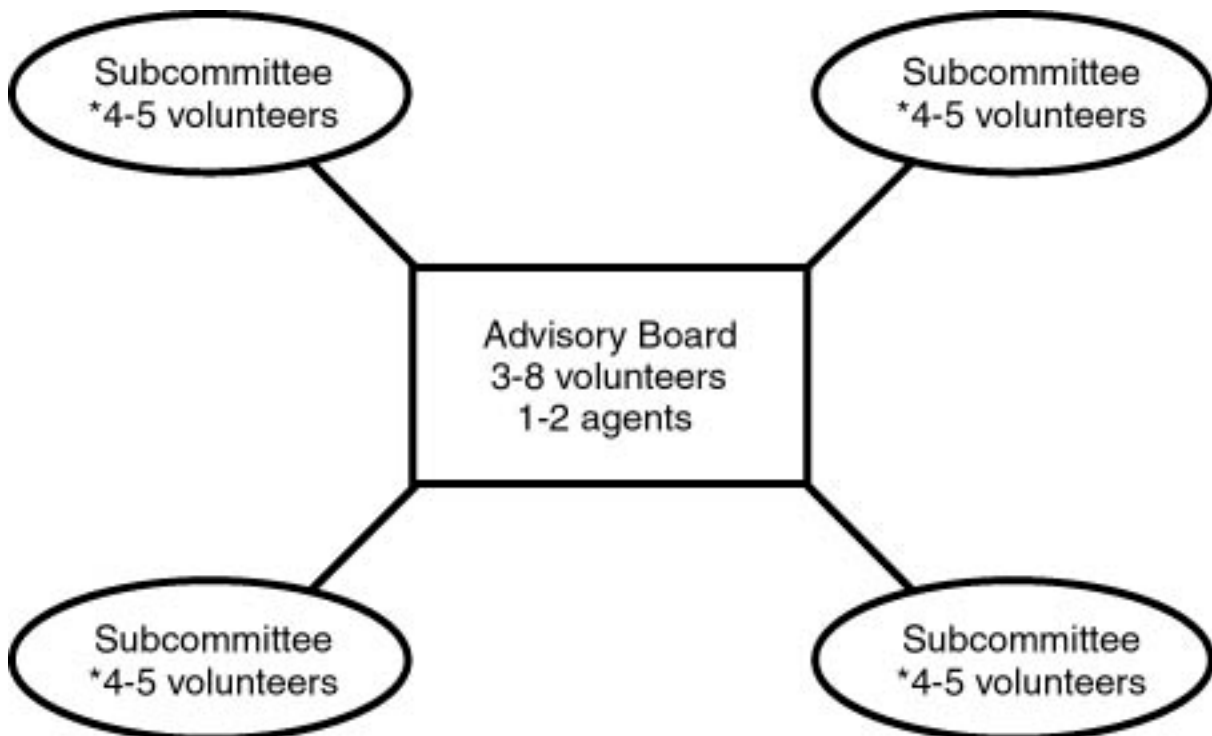
Expanding Volunteer Opportunities

"The Youth Futures Committee started with 35 members attending the meeting series. After the last meeting, we had almost half of the group drop out, and they haven't really been active since. Now we're seeing this slow decline in the number of volunteers - both youth and adults - who are truly active. It's getting harder and harder to carry out the strategies of the action plan when our membership keeps decreasing."

-Youth Futures Committee member-

Once the Youth Futures meeting series is complete, the original Youth Futures Committee changes. Having served for the time commitment initially agreed to, it is not unusual for some members to end their involvement while others continue on and work with one of the subcommittees. Knowing that the original Youth Futures Committee is not expected to remain involved with the project (although they are invited to do so), another arrangement or structure needs to evolve. A small Youth Futures advisory board might make a commitment for 2 to 3 years, but most of the planning and actual work will be accomplished by smaller volunteer groups that regularly gain and lose members.

The following diagram illustrates a formal organizational structure that may be appropriate for Youth Futures sites:



Notice how the advisory board and subcommittees are comprised of a small number of members. Members of the advisory board and subcommittees are responsible for deciding major policies and plans to guide the future direction of the project. Working from a large committee is often unmanageable and it is unrealistic to expect long-term commitment from large numbers of people. Yet, if roles for Youth Futures volunteers are limited to only serving on the advisory board or on a subcommittee, many potential volunteers will never be involved in the project because neither of these roles accommodates their personal situation. It is important, then, that we expand our definition of Youth Futures volunteers and the roles available for them.

In years past, volunteers were able to commit significant amounts of time to an organization or cause. Today, volunteers face increasing demands on their time which affects their willingness and ability to volunteer. This loss of discretionary time is one of the greatest challenges in volunteer retention. Effective volunteer organizations recognize this situation and, in response, offer alternative opportunities to volunteers. In Youth Futures, two alternative volunteer opportunities can be offered to tap into the energies of community citizens, yet still be respectful of their other obligations. These alternatives offer additional roles for volunteers who cannot commit to a Youth Futures subcommittee or advisory role.

Short-term time commitments are one option to individuals who are not able to volunteer on a regular basis. Many groups already use this approach with great success. Rather than ask someone to serve in a role that carries a long-term commitment (such as on an advisory board), organizations now offer volunteer assignments that are measured in terms of hours or days instead of an ongoing in-depth commitment. These "ad hoc" or "fast food" volunteer opportunities offer an alternative to the person who is reluctant to become involved in a position requiring a lengthy time commitment.

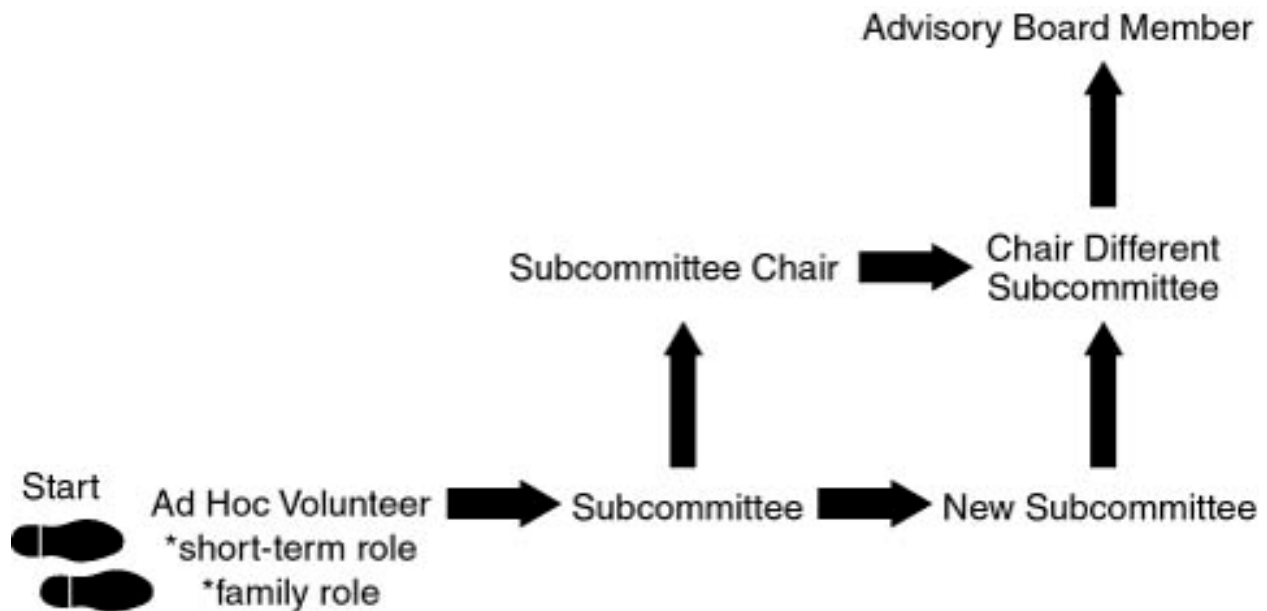
Youth Futures sites may want to integrate this approach into their retention (and recruitment) efforts. If asked to serve on say, the Youth Futures Activities subcommittee and attend regular meetings of the group, persons already holding a full-time job may see little appeal in this task. Instead, could the commitment be redefined and still meet the present need? Perhaps if the request asked for a commitment to "plan 3 family activities in our community from January through May with the help of 8 other local volunteers", this might still provide the necessary volunteer assistance needed while, at the same time, framing the request in terms realistic to the potential volunteer. Another example of a very short-term volunteer job might be to ask a business person to present a 2-hour session twice a year to adolescents on career choices. Already employed volunteers are likely to see such short-term and clear requests as "do-able" and realistic. Volunteers with limited time are more likely to stay involved with Youth Futures if the volunteer job is easy for them to do and, at the same time, makes them feel useful with their limited time constraints.

When volunteers are needed for a special event, can Youth Futures sites reach out to citizens who do not already have major volunteer responsibilities with the organization? Relying too heavily on a few dedicated volunteers places them at-risk for burnout and does little to involve the community at-large.

Strive to introduce people to volunteer jobs that are easy for them to accept and make them feel useful even though they have limited time. Be aware that short-term volunteering is not as rewarding as long-term; therefore, it is very important that short-term volunteers know how the tasks they are doing contributes to the overall goal.

Family volunteer opportunities offer another approach Youth Futures sites can use to retain and recruit volunteers. Employed parents who may already feel they have too little time with their children and spouses, may view a family volunteer opportunity as a genuine way to contribute to their community and spend quality time with their family. Youth Futures sites often work on activities and events that lend themselves to this type of arrangement.

The following illustration depicts a "career ladder" structure which volunteers might follow that includes opportunities of similar or increasing responsibility based on time and experience of volunteers. At any point, a volunteer can move in any direction to a different opportunity or can drop out of the volunteer role.



The bottom line on volunteer retention is to design volunteer work to be so much fun and so rewarding that persons want to stay with the volunteer experience, for without it, a void would exist in their life.

RECOGNITION

Volunteer recognition is a vital component to keeping volunteers active and motivated. Meaningful recognition serves as a powerful motivator for not only continued involvement, but for the successful recruitment of new volunteers. Recognition is equally, if not even more important for youth volunteers; Hawkins includes recognition as one of three conditions necessary for youth to feel bonded to a group. For volunteers, recognition may be the "salary" for their efforts.

Recognition is a process, rather than an endpoint or product. That means thoughtful recognition must be ongoing and displayed in different forms. Just as volunteers have different reasons for being involved in Youth Futures, they also vary in how they like to be recognized. Some people find satisfaction in receiving pins and certificates, while others would much prefer a thank you letter be sent to their family and employer. Planning various forms of recognition into the Youth Futures program is the surest way to meet many different individual preferences.

Recognition is most effective when people are rewarded with things that are significant to them. Recognition may be formal or informal. Formal recognition involves more traditional and structured methods such as pins, certificates and award banquets. Formal recognition frequently involves the media in publicizing news releases and conducting interviews with radio or TV.

Informal recognition ranges from the simple "thank you" to providing useful tools and resource materials to volunteers. Offering volunteers ongoing opportunities to learn and become more knowledgeable about the issues related to Youth Futures is an excellent type of informal recognition.

The most effective recognition is personalized, creative, appropriate and meaningful for the individual; that means, it cannot be "canned". Bruny states that recognition by and in front of peers, professional associates, friends, and/or neighbors is the most meaningful type of recognition. Often times, recognition is more meaningful if it reflects a specific contribution of the volunteer, rather than general recognition for involvement in the program. For example, Youth Futures volunteers could be recognized for being a founding member, recruiting the most volunteers over the last year, organizing a special event, or making public presentations.

A balance of formal and informal recognition will have the best chance of meeting the varying preferences among volunteers. No matter the combination, Holtham notes three factors important in successful recognition:

- When formal recognition is awarded, the person who recognizes the volunteer should be familiar with the volunteer and knowledgeable on his/her contributions. Often, the mistake is made to have someone high in the organization's structure recognize the volunteer when this person hardly knows the person s/he is acknowledging. Recognition is most meaningful when it is presented by someone who has rapport and an established relationship with the volunteer.

As one example of this, a book on volunteer management recommended writing thank you letters to volunteers as acknowledgement of their contributions. A "form" thank you letter was included so volunteer managers could just insert the name and address of different volunteers onto the same letter! What an example of personal recognition! Instead, a thank you letter should be tailored to the volunteer and written by someone who is aware of and respectful of the volunteer's contributions.

- During volunteer recognition events, the focus should always be on the volunteers and their contributions. Special guests, administrators, and so on are of secondary importance at a volunteer recognition event.
- Allow volunteers being recognized the opportunity to offer a testimonial on their experiences. This testimonial may be a brief address to the audience, an interview in the organization's newsletter, local newspaper or radio, or printed statements on program literature and displays. These testimonials serve to reinforce the volunteer's motivation to continue as well as motivating other volunteers and recruiting new volunteers.

A myriad of ways to recognize volunteers exist, limited only by the creativity of those doing the recognizing. Recognition can be done in conjunction with schools, businesses, civic clubs, and other youth organizations to increase the publicity and awareness of the project.

Ideas for Recognizing Youth Futures Volunteers

Recognition is an attitude as well as an activity, a process as much as a product. Ideally, it takes place day to day, not as a once a year event.

- ★ Call the volunteer by name
- ★ Send handwritten thank you notes to the volunteer
- ★ Send thank you notes to the volunteer's spouse, parents and/or family
- ★ Send a letter of appreciation/commendation to the volunteer's employer, school principal or teachers (see Appendix D)
- ★ Arrange for a "spotlight" article on the Youth Futures volunteer(s) in church bulletins, company newsletter, school newspapers, etc. (see Appendix E)
- ★ Introduce new volunteers at meetings and feature them in newsletters (see Appendix F)
- ★ Profile a volunteer in Youth Futures newsletters, newspaper columns, school newspapers, bulletin boards, etc.
- ★ Conduct a radio interview with a volunteer every other month

- ★ Recognize a volunteer on a local bank electronic sign, business marquee, church bulletins, etc.
- ★ Submit articles to a local newspaper about volunteer contributions; include photograph of volunteers in action (see Appendix G)
- ★ Send a letter to the editor commending volunteer contributions
- ★ Take the volunteer out for pizza
- ★ Compliment volunteers for a job well done
- ★ If volunteers work at the Extension or Youth Futures Office, provide a mailbox, coffee mugs, etc.
- ★ Provide refreshments
- ★ Display pictures of volunteers at local fairs, community celebrations, church bazaars, school events, etc.
- ★ Design a "One for One" program which awards current volunteers who recruit another Youth Futures volunteer
- ★ Arrange volunteers to provide help to one another; for example, ask youth volunteers to provide child care and ask adult volunteers to provide transportation
- ★ Take time to listen; ask and answer questions
- ★ Ask about the volunteer's family and personal interests
- ★ Find out the best time to call the volunteer and stick to it
- ★ Give as much advance on requests as possible
- ★ Ask for opinions and viewpoints when decision-making
- ★ Provide opportunities for volunteers to take on more responsibility
- ★ Arrange opportunities for volunteers to speak with others about the Youth Futures project
- ★ Include volunteers as co-presenters when asked to talk with other groups
- ★ Contact school officials and inquire about providing school credit for youth efforts
- ★ Write letters of recommendation to potential employers
- ★ Provide references for jobs
- ★ Write letters of recommendation to colleges
- ★ Arrange for letters from high authorities or dignitaries thanking volunteers
- ★ Award pins and certificates
- ★ Solicit special discounts at area stores, restaurants or theaters for volunteers
- ★ Hold an awards dinner or pizza party; "roast" Youth Futures volunteers
- ★ Smile and say "Thank you!"
- ★ Give constructive feedback
- ★ Provide opportunities for volunteers to give constructive feedback
- ★ Hold a Youth Futures Volunteer Day during National Volunteer Recognition Week (usually the third week of April)
- ★ Ask volunteers what they want to get out their work and see that they get it

- ★ Alert volunteers to training opportunities and sponsor their participation
- ★ Invite skilled volunteers to train other volunteers
- ★ Nominate outstanding volunteers for community awards
- ★ Give special awards to long-time volunteers
- ★ Let volunteers know they are missed when absent
- ★ Ask experienced volunteers to help orient new volunteers
- ★ Post an "honor roll" of volunteers in the community library or town hall
- ★ Use a job title for volunteers on correspondence
- ★ Comment positively on volunteer's new skills and abilities
- ★ Send humorous cards at particularly busy or stressful times
- ★ Have fun at meetings—have a theme at meetings
- ★ Stop by while volunteers are working and talk with each
- ★ Track the length of time volunteers have worked and recognize by years served
- ★ Develop profiles of specific individuals
- ★ Create chart showing \$\$\$ value of volunteer efforts
- ★ Help paid staff understand and appreciate volunteer roles
- ★ Help volunteer staff understand and appreciate paid staff roles
- ★ Include volunteers' families in celebration events
- ★ Publish a monthly birthday listing in newsletters
- ★ Feature photos of volunteers on displays, in brochures and other publications
- ★ Organize a volunteer skit - borrow the Volunteer Recognition Skit Kit, available from Linda Kustka, Lowell Hall, Madison
- ★ Involve volunteers in the development and refinement of the local Youth Futures project

CONCLUSION

Anyone concerned with maintaining and building the Youth Futures volunteer base must direct attention to the issues of volunteer retention and recognition. To maximize effectiveness:

- Design Youth Futures volunteer tasks to complement members' reasons for volunteering
- Match Youth Futures volunteers' preferences and skills to volunteer tasks
- Create an environment that is friendly, respectful, welcoming, challenging and rewarding for Youth Futures volunteers
- Recognize Youth Futures volunteers on an ongoing basis using formal and informal methods.

Sometimes a reminder on the importance of the work being done can serve as an incentive to volunteers and salaried staff alike. Perhaps the following poem will serve in that capacity for individuals working with Wisconsin Youth Futures—

Not Such A Silly Goose

This fall, when you see geese heading south for the winter—
flying along in a V formation—you might consider what
science has discovered as to why they fly that way.

As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird
immediately following. By flying in V formation,
the whole flock adds at least 71 percent greater flying
range than if each bird flew on its own.

People who share a common direction and sense of community
can get where they are going more quickly and easily,
because they are traveling on the thrust of another.

When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag
and resistance of trying to go it alone—and quickly
gets back into formation to take advantage of the
lifting power of the bird in front.

If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation
with those who are headed the same way we are.

When the head goose gets tired it rotates back in the wing,
and another goose flies point.

It is sensible to take turns doing demanding jobs—
with people or with geese flying south.

Geese honk from behind to encourage those up front
to keep up the speed—
What do we say when we honk from behind?

Finally—and this is important—when a goose gets sick,
or is wounded by gunshots and falls out of formation,
two other geese fall out with the goose and follow it
down to lend help and protection.

They stay with the fallen goose until it is able to fly or
until it dies; and only then do they launch out on their own
or with another formation to catch up with their group.

If we have the sense of a goose—
we will stand by each other like that.

author unknown

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APPENDIX B

ACTIVITY #2 - MATCHING SKILLS & PREFERENCES WITH TASKS

(A sure way to lose volunteer commitment is to place people in jobs that don't match their skills or preferences. Maximizing volunteer involvement can be achieved when people are working on tasks that complement their abilities and interests.)

If you were asked to do 3 of the tasks listed below, which 3 would you be most willing to do? Circle those 3.

- wash the car
- iron clothes
- cook dinner
- shovel snow
- grocery shop
- clean garage
- wash & dry dishes
- mow lawn
- take out garbage
- clean toilet
- change bedding
- vacuum
- sweep floor
- change oil in car
- clean shower/bathtub
- dust
- rake leaves
- other _____

Now, think about which of the above tasks you do most often. Place a check in front of those 3 tasks you most often do.

(over)

Listed below are some tasks of Youth Futures projects. Circle the 3 tasks you would be most interested in doing.

- chaperon youth activities
- assemble newsletters
- write articles for newspaper and newsletter
- be interviewed on local radio or TV
- help lead/teach workshop for parents
- help lead/teach workshop for youth
- do fund-raising with local businesses, boards, individuals
- lead committee meetings
- telephone other members on reminders
- organize activities
- other _____

Now, go back and check the 3 tasks you most often do in Youth Futures.

Questions

Is there consistency when you compare what you like to do versus what you actually do?

Are there tasks you would rather do than those you're presently doing? If so, which one(s)?

APPENDIX C

ACTIVITY #3 -WHY VOLUNTEERS REMAIN COMMITTED

Summarized below are reasons volunteers remain committed to an organization or cause. For each reason listed, cite examples of how the local Youth Futures project fulfills the reason. For example, how does Youth Futures let volunteers know they are appreciated? That their involvement makes a difference? That there is opportunity for advancement? What will be done to provide these examples where few or none exist?

Reasons	Youth Futures Examples
1. They feel appreciated.	
2. They can see their involvement makes a difference.	
3. There is a chance for advancement.	
4. There is opportunity for personal growth.	
5. They receive public and private recognition.	
6. They feel capable of handling the tasks offered.	
7. There is a sense of belonging and teamwork.	
8. They are involved in the administrative process, such as problem-solving, decision-making, and objective-setting.	
9. They recognize that something significant is happening because the group exists.	
10. Their personal needs are being met.	

APPENDIX D

(letter of commendation to school principal)

May 1, 1994

Jeanette Hampton, Principal
Wisconsin Dells High School
Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965

Dear Ms. Hampton:

As an advisor to Wisconsin Dells Youth Futures, I would like to call your attention to the notable contributions invested by Jason Shepard and Connie Nickel, students at WDHS. Jason and Connie have both demonstrated leadership skills far surpassing what has been asked of them.

WI Dells Youth Futures is a community-based coalition that works to prevent alcohol use and abuse by young people in our community. Youth Futures efforts bring together the energies of youth and adults who strive to:

- provide parents and other community adults with educational opportunities
- promote less emphasis on alcohol sales and consumption during community events
- encourage productive teen-parent communication
- increase consistent law enforcement policy in the 5-county area of underage drinking

Both Jason and Connie have taken a strong public stance against underage drinking and have worked diligently to make changes that improve the community to be more supportive of young people. Jason headed up a public opinion telephone survey which collected information on citizen views regarding the presence of alcohol at various community events. Connie has spoken to community civic groups and presented information from the Teen Assessment Project survey and how organizations can contribute to the positive development of WI Dells youth. Jason and Connie represented WI Dells Youth Futures at the 1993 Statewide Youth Futures Conference and presented the status of the local effort. Numerous other examples attest to their commitment to preventing underage drinking.

I have enclosed a brochure on WI Dells Youth Futures for your perusal. WI Dells Youth Futures strives to include as many young people and adults in our community as possible. I ask you to support Jason and Connie in their efforts for youth and to encourage other young people to become involved. Your participation, as well as that of all school personnel in WDHS is welcome. Please contact Jason or Connie or myself at 608/742-2141 for more information on WI Dells Youth Futures.

Sincerely,

COUNTY AGENT AND TITLE
COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE

APPENDIX E

(highlights the contributions of an "ad hoc" volunteer; include photograph)

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Niagara Youth Futures salutes (NAME) for her contributions in decreasing underage drinking in our community. (NAME) helped coordinate four Middle School Activity Nights for 6th to 8th grade students since January. These activity nights provided a fun and alcohol-free social gathering for young teens as well as involved older teens in leading games and events at the nights. When asked if the activity night was worthwhile, one middle school student said, "(INSERT QUOTE)." (NAME) is one of many Niagara residents who have volunteered their time to Youth Futures and helped make a positive difference for young people.

APPENDIX F

RIPON COMMUNITY FUTURES WELCOMES NEW MEMBER

Ripon Community Futures is pleased to announce (NAME) has been selected a member of the Executive Council, a group of eight youths and adults who provide leadership to the organization.

(NAME) is a (INSERT OCCUPATION) at (INSERT PLACE OF WORK OR SCHOOL). As a board member, (NAME) will help determine policies and strategies which will best meet the goals of establishing parent networks, providing youth activities, and expanding prevention education in the schools. (NAME) joins (INSERT NAMES OF OTHER MEMBERS) on the Executive Council.

Many other residents have volunteered their time and energy to Ripon Community Futures—so far, area volunteers have contributed more than (INSERT NUMBER) hours of time to the project.

"Volunteering is good for your health, according to a ten-year study (Volunteer 2000 Study, American Red Cross, 1988) that found that volunteer work -- more than any other activity -- dramatically increased life expectancy, " said (AGENT OR VOLUNTEER NAME).

"The study found that men who did not volunteer were two and a half times as likely to die during the study as men who volunteered at least once a week. The study also found that continued volunteering can reverse the effects of environmental stress, because social relationships directly affect the immune system and overall health."

To find out more about volunteer opportunities with Ripon Community Futures, contact Linda Jones, Program Assistant at 414/929-3170.

APPENDIX G

NIAGARA YOUTH FUTURES VOLUNTEERS DONATE MORE THAN (INSERT \$ AMOUNT) WORTH OF TIME TOWARD HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE

Niagara -- More than (FILL IN NUMBER) of (YOUR COUNTY) high school seniors report getting drunk at least once a month, according to a University of Wisconsin-Extension survey of young people in grades six through 12.

In response to the survey results, more than (INSERT NUMBER) adults and teenagers in Niagara have worked together since the fall of 1991 to form Niagara Youth Futures. Their goal is to prevent underage drinking.

Together, they have volunteered more than (INSERT NUMBER) hours of their time, worth (INSERT \$ AMOUNT), according to one national study of volunteers (INSERT NAME AND SOURCE OF STUDY). Their strategies for reducing teen drinking include:

- providing parenting education opportunities,
- increasing enforcement of existing laws for underage drinking, and
- increasing student involvement in school and the community.

To provide better social opportunities for young people, the Niagara Youth Futures committee has worked on a Middle School Activity Nighty for students in grades six through eight.

Older teens lead events and model positive behavior for the younger participants. Parents and other adult volunteers helped coordinate the event.

"Activities like this provide an opportunity for everyone. Parents can talk with one another and open the lines of communication for parent networking," said (FILL IN NAME OF YOUTH FUTURES VOLUNTEER OR AGENT).

"Older teens learn responsibility and gain recognition from the younger students, which encourages positive behavior. For the middle school participants, the activity night provides a fun, alcohol-free environment they can enjoy with friends."

Four Activity Nights have been sponsored by Youth Futures, and attendance has increased with each event.

In Niagara, Youth Futures is coordinated by Liz Youren, project assistant. Volunteers who chair the subcommittees are (FILL IN NAMES).

Marinette County UW-Extension faculty providing resources to Youth Futures are (INSERT FACULTY NAMES AND TITLES).

For more information on the Niagara Youth Futures, contact Liz Youren at 715/251-3769.

Note to Agents:

To estimate the dollar value of volunteer hours, two national studies serve as resources. "Giving and Volunteering in the United States" 1992, conducted by The Gallup Organization for Independent Sector reported that volunteers estimated the hourly value of their time at \$14.30. Based on information in "Volunteer 2000 Study" done by the American Red Cross, 1988, the current dollar equivalent of volunteer time was estimated at \$9.00-10.00 per hour. Feel free to use either of these figures or to calculate another one.

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This publication is available online at:
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/familyimpact/techrpts.htm>

Or you may order a hard copy of this publication. Youth Futures Technical Report #16 is \$3.00. Please add \$1.00 for postage and handling and make the check payable to: *University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin Youth Futures*. Send your order to:

University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension
1300 Linden Drive, Room 130
Madison, WI 53706-1524
(608)262-0369
Fax: (608)262-5335