



# Recruiting Volunteers for Asset-Building Initiatives

A key to the success of an asset-building initiative is a volunteer corps that does the bulk of the work. What's true for assets is true for asset-building volunteers—the more the better. Roles for volunteers can range from creating informal relationships with youth, to joining asset-building task forces, to developing newsletters and promotional materials. Engaging volunteers and keeping them interested isn't always easy, especially with busy schedules and lots of demands on people's time. Here are some suggestions on how to get and keep volunteers for community initiatives:



## GETTING VOLUNTEERS

- ✳ **When recruiting, include people who are sometimes overlooked as potential volunteers** because they are assumed to be too busy, not interested, or “recipients” rather than providers of service. For example, consider people who are poor, those for whom English is not their first language, single parents, working parents, newcomers to the community, developmentally disabled people, senior citizens, families, children, and youth.
- ✳ **Focus on the hopefulness of the assets** and the power that individuals have to make a difference for kids.
- ✳ **Use current volunteers as your best spokespersons** in recruiting new volunteers.
- ✳ **Target recruitment efforts to specific groups you want to involve.** For example, young adults might be reached effectively through athletic clubs or teams, employers, or colleges and universities; seniors might be reached through congregate dining programs, travel clubs, or community centers; volunteers of color might be reached through congregations, fraternities and sororities, and professional groups.
- ✳ **Make presentations to groups to find volunteers.** Parent-teacher-student organizations, high school assemblies, businesses, congregations, and youth-serving organizations are potential places to target.
- ✳ **Find out if a volunteer center exists in your community.** You can often find volunteers through these centers. If one doesn't exist, collaborate with other organizations that need volunteers to see if you can set one up.
- ✳ **Personally meet and talk with potential volunteers** on their own turf (such as in their neighborhood or work site). If that cannot be done, at least try to do recruiting face-to-face.



- ✦ **If you do initial recruitment by a sign-up sheet, make sure that you do a personal follow-up within a week or two.** Lack of quick action will give potential volunteers the message that you don't really want them.
- ✦ **If possible, have a job description for each volunteer.** Make sure that the title of the position accurately reflects the responsibilities. People are more willing to volunteer if the tasks, the time commitment, the location, the project goals, and the training requirements are all clearly stated.
- ✦ **When seeking volunteers, consider creating a profile of the type of people you're looking for.** List the skills, talents, and experiences you would like them to have.
- ✦ **See if your local newspaper has a column listing volunteer needs,** and advertise the positions you are seeking to fill.
- ✦ **Create easy, short-term projects for busy people** and long-term commitments for people willing to give more time and energy.

## KEEPING VOLUNTEERS

- ✦ **Hire or recruit a volunteer coordinator.** If volunteers tire or become bored, their attendance may become more erratic. If they do not see an impact or change, they may become disillusioned and quit. A volunteer coordinator can keep in touch with volunteers and make sure their needs are met.
- ✦ **Remember that volunteers have different reasons for serving;** learn what motivates each one and strive to meet their needs.
- ✦ **Be careful not to equate volunteering for the initiative with committing to build assets.** Both are important, but they are different. Encourage all volunteers in the initiative to make a personal commitment to building assets in their personal and professional lives.
- ✦ **Offer opportunities for volunteers to advance** in terms of leadership, responsibility, and developing new talents and skills.
- ✦ **Remember that a happy volunteer will be your best recruiter** of other volunteers.
- ✦ **Recognize, honor, and thank volunteers.**