

Community Services

Capital News: Volunteer Centre Column 2013 April 11

Involve volunteers in special events

With the warm weather come special events that offer lots of ways to involve volunteers of all ages, skills, backgrounds and time commitment.

I recently found a tip sheet from Volunteer Alberta that outlines 10 steps for successful volunteer engagement in community events (<http://volunteeralberta.ab.ca>).

First, make it fun. People who enjoy what they do, do a better job and the event gains enthusiasm, smiles and laughter.

Realize that volunteers are not free. Can you offer refreshments, name tags or give away items? Do you have a recognition plan that respects what volunteers value?

Have you considered special event liability? Check with your organization's insurance provider about event cancellation, event liability, accident and/or liquor liability insurance.

Design volunteer roles so that the individual and your organization win. Benefit and impact for both are important. Can you create a position that keeps volunteers coming back?

Volunteers need a place and a person to call their own. Where do they show up, leave their belongings, perform their tasks, and hangout when off duty? Who notices? Were they introduced to a supervisor who remained accessible?

Ensure that all supplies needed to do the job are handy. Think about efficiency and safety. Will two way radios, security vests, pens, screwdrivers or whistles help?

Assess and manage risk for each volunteer role; screen and supervise accordingly. Are volunteers supervising children or handling money? Are they closely supervised?

Tell volunteers about your organization and the event. Provide clear role descriptions and hands on training so everyone has the skills to perform to expectation.

Evaluate on event day and after. Try spot checks, check box evaluation after shift and online follow-up feedback.

Finally, say thank you. People have not been thanked until they feel their contribution is acknowledged.

Register your volunteer opportunities at www.kcr.ca and they will automatically be e-matched with volunteers who have profiles and are interested in special events.

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