

the Volunteer

M A N A G E M E N T R E P O R T

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YOUNG PROFESSIONAL VOLUNTEERS

\$500 Allows Innovators to Serve

By Yvette Boysen

They may be teachers, scientists, bankers or lawyers. Despite their professional differences, the Museum of Science's (Boston, MA) Innovators have one thing in common: a strong interest in science and technology.

"The purpose of the Innovators is to ultimately advance the mission of the Museum of Science," explains Michael Grace, director of annual giving. "Through an individually appropriate mix of time, expertise and financial commitment, they stimulate interest in and further the understanding of STEM and its importance in today's society."

While the only requirement to become an Innovator is to make a yearly contribution of at least \$500 to the museum's annual fund, this group of young professionals does so much more.

"Young donors want real responsibilities and an opportunity to put their skills and expertise to work," Grace says. "Basically, what we have found that works is reinforcing the idea that while initially joining seems purely financial, it's beyond that. It's a package that includes volunteerism, networking, philanthropy, benefits (museum membership, discounts, events, etc.), interaction with key organizational individuals as well as unique speakers, and ultimately advancing the museum's mission."

Started in 2005, the Innovators, Grace says, are considered the future of the Museum of Science. Throughout the year this group assists and participates in a variety of events and activities ranging from networking opportunities to STEM-focused events to family-friendly breakfasts. Additionally, many of the 160 current Innovators are active volunteers.

While there is no specific volunteer commitment required, the Innovators and the museum recognize the value of service.

"Volunteering is an important component as the Innovators are directly helping others learn more about the world around us and share in the mission of the Museum of Science," Grace explains. "It allows the Innovators to share their professional expertise with others, inspiring younger visitors. It also lets the Innovators experience museum programs from a completely different angle than they are used to, engaging them further within the museum community."

Opportunities range from assisting with museum programs like design challenges where they work with visitors to design, build and test prototype solutions for a specific problem to serving as guest educators for youth programs and even acting as test subjects for new programming. But their volunteer service doesn't stop there. Innovators also volunteer for programs arranged by the museum's community relations department like the Special Olympics or events that are closely related to the mission of the museum such as removing trash during a city cleanup day.

According to Grace, the Innovators group has grown from 110 to 160 members in just two years.

Source: Michael Grace, Director of Annual Giving, Museum of Science, Boston, MA. Phone (617) 589-0441. E-mail: mgrace@mos.org. Website: www.mos.org

Seven Ways to Engage Power-Motivated Volunteers

What strategies do you use to motivate volunteers?

When seeking to encourage and lift up your valuable volunteer force, it helps to first know what drives a specific volunteer to give of his or her time.

Some individuals, for instance, are driven by power or the opportunity to be a part of something big, while others may be driven by a sense of achievement or an affiliation with others.

When seeking to motivate power-driven persons, keep these points in mind:

1. Choose assignments that allow them to rub shoulders with persons of authority and/or increased responsibility and authority.
2. Provide them with opportunities that allow innovation.
3. Assign them tasks that allow them to teach or train others.
4. Publicize stories of their efforts in external and internal publications.
5. Find legitimate opportunities to seek their advice and suggestions.
6. Include them on your board.
7. Present them with awards and letters of commendation.

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Tips for Managing Volunteer Dismissals

There will likely come a day when you need to dismiss a volunteer. Maybe it will be because of a policy violation. Maybe your organization will be transitioning to project- or skill-based positions. Or perhaps a volunteer will simply be aging out. Regardless of the situation, Jennifer Bennett, senior manager of education and training at VolunteerMatch (San Francisco, CA) offers her advice:

1. To get things started on the right foot, Bennett stresses the importance of using at-will language early on. The volunteer needs to know he or she may end the relationship at any time, but your organization may do the same. The relationship must work for both parties.
2. Ensure that your "one-and-done" policies (coming to work intoxicated, using abusive language, mishandling cash, etc.) are clearly outlined in your handbook.
3. For areas where behavior may fall into a gray area, Bennett suggests a type of "three strikes and you're out" procedure. For instance, in the case where there may be a question as to what is breaking confidentiality versus what is gossip, she recommends pulling the volunteer aside and issuing a warning. During this conversation, which should also be documented, address the issue, answer questions and reteach. If it happens again, offer a reminder that the policy has been taught and retaught. If the violation occurs again, dismiss the volunteer.
4. When the restructuring of your volunteer program requires you to let someone go, remember emotions may run high. Be open and honest about the reasons behind the restructure. It's also important not to assume that your current volunteers don't want to be part of the new program. Ask them, and when appropriate, include them in determining what the new program may look like.
5. If possible, put a positive spin on the situation. "What you want to try to accomplish is to not let this last piece of the relationship jeopardize the rest of it, particularly if you've had a volunteer who's been with you a long time," Bennett says. "If you can, turn it into an acknowledgement or recognition of years or decades of good work." Another option is to offer emeritus status. Invite them to parties and send them your newsletter. These perks just come without the responsibilities of an being an active volunteer.
6. In situations where there may be potential resistance, Bennett stresses safety. Notify a manager, your executive director or security. Even if they don't say anything, their presence can provide moral and/or physical support.
7. Consider legal counsel if the volunteer is in what Bennett calls a "community connector role." This is especially important when intellectual property is involved. "We do need to think if we maybe need to involve legal counsel or get our board involved to ensure that the access or ownership or relationship that a volunteer may have in our organization can be transferred to someone who should be representing the organization or should be in charge of that intellectual property," Bennett explains.
8. And lastly, be prepared. Have strong policies in place for areas such as conflict resolution, confidentiality, intellectual property and termination and dismissal. If you are looking for a place to begin, consult your organization's employee handbook and work with the human relations department. "Hopefully you'll have them, and you'll never need them," Bennett says. "But when you need them and you don't have them, you have a longer road to walk, and you have nothing to fall back on as far as warnings or processes or recourse, and you're sort of making it up as you go. That's a situation nobody should be in."

Source: Jennifer Bennett, Senior Manager of Education and Training, VolunteerMatch, San Francisco, CA. Phone (415) 321-3639. E-mail: jbennett@volunteermatch.org. Website: www.volunteermatch.org

Measure Beyond Volunteer Hours

It may be easier to simply track volunteer hours, but you'll likely find more impact by measuring outcomes, as well.

"Many people find it difficult to define outcomes because they are so used to thinking in terms of what volunteers do instead of what they are trying to accomplish," explains Rick Lynch, president of Lynch Associates (Seattle, WA). "Once they get the hang of it, it is not that hard."

To begin, Lynch says you must first define your outcomes. He recommends examining the work your volunteers do and asking, "Why do we want them to do that? What are we trying to accomplish by having them do that?"

Once you have answers to these questions, it's time to actually measure the results of your volunteers' work. To do so, Lynch once again recommends asking questions: "What information will tell us the outcome is being achieved?" and "How can we collect that information?"

Armed with this data, he says your organization can look beyond volunteer hours and determine actual results of volunteer service. And according to Lynch, that is the information that builds credibility with donors. It can even motivate volunteers — a definite win-win.

"Volunteers would like to feel that their time is used for a good purpose," he says. "It gives them a sense of accomplishment to know that they are achieving valuable outcomes."

More information about defining outcomes is available in Lynch's book, "The Complete Volunteer Management Handbook."

Source: Rick Lynch, President, Lynch Associates, Seattle, WA. Phone (206) 547-1269. E-mail: rds1@aol.com. Website: www.ricklynchassociates.com

TARGETED RECRUITMENT

Volunteer Greeter Recruitment Strategies

At The Mob Museum (Las Vegas, NV), volunteer greeters are the first people visitors see on the museum floor. They answer questions, assist visitors and provide an introduction to the history of organized crime in the United States. Jacob Murdock, volunteer program manager at the museum, says the right type of person is necessary — they look for a gregarious personality and sense of humor.

Murdock offers this advice to ensure you get the best greeters to be the face of your organization:

1. **Recruitment is key.** First consider who would be the ideal volunteer, then go seek out that person. For Murdock, retired, longtime Las Vegas locals — those who lived in town in the '60s — are ideal because they have firsthand knowledge of the events the museum showcases. To recruit these "ideal" volunteers, Murdock visits other groups or locations where these people frequent. For example, he learned from current greeters that many also participate in a local car club, so he will give a presentation to that club. Also look at community centers, senior groups and partner organizations.
2. **Training is necessary** to ensure greeters are comfortable interacting with visitors, but also comfortable with the material to be a resource to visitors. While greeters at The Mob Museum follow the same orientation/training protocol as all volunteers, they have an additional shadow step. Shadowing helps volunteers understand the expectations and start to cultivate their voice before they go solo.
3. **Not everyone has the skillset to be a greeter.** If someone isn't working out, Murdock first offers additional training or support. If that doesn't work, he looks for other roles, perhaps with less customer interaction. If that doesn't work but the person has good qualities or skills, he refers them to other reputable organizations.

Source: Jacob Murdock, Volunteer Program Manager, The Mob Museum, Las Vegas, NV. Phone (702) 724-8610. E-mail: jmurdock@themobmuseum.org. Website: www.themobmuseum.org

Make Volunteer Projects Exciting Experiences

To attract enthusiastic volunteer participants and keep them motivated, assess each of your volunteer projects in advance and explore how to make them more festive and exciting for everyone involved.

As you examine ways to pack your projects with more fun, be mindful of the type of volunteer you're hoping to attract.

Here's an assortment of ideas to help you create your own fun-filled strategies:

1. **Convey a sense of excitement in recruitment brochures and ads.** Make it obvious that this will be a fun experience. List activities that volunteers can enjoy or benefit from during non-work periods.
2. **Build a growing sense of anticipation among those who will be participating.** Send periodic announcements prior to the event. Share the names of others who will be participating.
3. **Incorporate friendly competition with prizes and incentives for participants.** Pair up individuals or create teams for a more pleasant experience. Reward positive behavior with incentives. Offer inexpensive prizes that allow everyone to win.
4. **Pleasantly surprise participants.** To keep everyone pumped, surprise them with a visit from your CEO or board chairperson. Have a balloon bouquet delivered. Get a local choir to pop in for a brief surprise performance.
5. **Make your volunteers the center of attention.** Let volunteers know they're special by having a reporter stop by for a photo and human interest story. Invite your organization's employees to write notes of thanks.

Work to make each volunteer project a pleasant and fun-filled experience to keep your volunteers coming back for more.

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Thank Volunteers' Secretaries

The secretaries or administrative assistants of working volunteers often do a great deal of behind-the-scenes work for their volunteer bosses: setting appointments, completing paperwork and more.

Don't forget them. Thank them for the ways in which they, too, are contributing to the work of your organization.

Offer Bite-Size Involvement

While many people may think they're too busy to volunteer, many might be willing to give an hour of their time now and then.

Identify projects that will take no more than one hour each week (or month) and share them with would-be volunteers through your newsletter, website, direct mail and other outlets.

Marketing themes might include:

- For an Hour of Your Time.
- Bite-Size Volunteer Opportunities.
- For the Busy Volunteer.
- One Hour Can Make a World of Difference.
- Because We Respect Your Time.
- Could You Spare an Hour?

Cross-Train Volunteers Who Have Ongoing Jobs

Do you have dependable volunteers who regularly fill ongoing positions?

Consider the benefits of cross-training them with those who have other responsibilities.

If, for instance, you have one group of volunteers who only staff your front desk, teach them another group's responsibilities for conducting facility tours.

By teaching volunteers additional jobs, you can achieve these multiple benefits:

- Volunteers can fill in for others in an emergency.
- The change provides some variety.
- Volunteers learn to appreciate others' roles more fully.

Practical Ways to Get the Attention of Passersby

Ever set up an exhibit booth at a volunteer fair or elsewhere as a way to attract new volunteers? Whether you're selling the merits of your organization, recruiting volunteers or simply increasing community awareness of your agency, here are some practical ways to get the public to stop by your exhibit:

1. Register for a need-not-be-present-to-win prize.
2. Meet or get the autograph of a local or regional celebrity.
3. Play a game: guess my weight, age, place of ancestry, etc. and win a prize.
4. View an attention-getting object (e.g., a live mannequin who hardly moves).
5. Create your own work of art or observe an artist or craftsman at work.
6. Give a free demonstration — computer software, how to make something, etc.

PROFESSIONAL OPINION

Test New Ways to Reward, Motivate Volunteers

Describe one way in which you recognize or reward those special volunteers who seek and assume increasing responsibility.

“Some of the rewarding aspects of volunteering in the museum are the variety of volunteering options provided to our volunteers. We offer two different volunteer programs, volunteering for individuals 18+ and our junior program for dedicated teenagers looking for development opportunities. We promote a balance of work and fun, including tasks that benefit the museum paired with running our virtual reality headsets, 3D printers, birthday celebrations and engaging public programs. We also encourage volunteers to create and explore new programs of their own design. If a volunteer is passionate about a specific craft, skill or project, we help coordinate a space and time where they are welcome to share their interest with the public. We love our volunteers and want to say, ‘Thank you,’ by giving back to them. We recognize special volunteers with single admission passes to the museum, family memberships and outstanding letters of reference and recommendation. Last but not least, at the end of each summer we throw a volunteer appreciation party with lots of pizza, fun games and sweet treats.”

— Remi Geohegan, *Weekend Manager and Volunteer Coordinator*,
Maine Discovery Museum, Bangor, ME. E-mail: rgeohegan@mainediscoverymuseum.org.
Website: www.mainediscoverymuseum.org

“When our volunteers are exceptional, we often nominate them for our national award programs and always for our annual United Way volunteer awards. They will be our special guests at the luncheon and hopefully enjoy the attention and publicity. However, as we all know, so many of our volunteers selflessly give of their time and passion and resist recognition of any kind. For these special folks, we make a concerted effort to befriend and thank them as often as possible, and include them in staff meetings and events as appropriate. Of course, all other volunteers are regularly thanked and appreciated and an annual volunteer recognition event is planned during National Hospice and Palliative Care Month.”

— Beth Logan, *Director of Volunteer Services and Marketing*,
Hospice Savannah, Inc., Savannah, GA. E-mail: blogan@hospicesavannah.org.
Website: www.hospicesavannah.org

Personalize Marketing Pieces

- When listing contact information on marketing materials, avoid listing an office or department only. Make it personal by listing names and titles, along with e-mail addresses and cell phone numbers, as appropriate.

**Plan now to attend the ServiceUnites Conference,
June 18–20, 2018, in Atlanta:
www.volunteeringandservice.org.**

RECRUITMENT IDEAS

Published Article Boosts Volunteerism and Business Support

What if you could increase volunteer awareness and solicit support from businesses at the same time without leaving your office? Sound too good to be true? It's not. In fact, it's exactly what leaders of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Delaware (Wilmington, DE) did through an article in a publication geared toward Delaware business leaders.

"As an organization, we are always looking to appeal to diverse audiences to raise awareness about who we are and what we do," says Hilary Burke, marketing and communications director at Boys & Girls Clubs of Delaware. "The business community in Delaware is one we rely heavily on for donations, corporate partnerships, volunteers, event sponsorship and mentoring opportunities for our youth."

To target this audience, the article — which was written by Mary Kate Benson, director of volunteer services — appeared in the Delaware Business Times as part of its new Insight program (www.delawarebusinesstimes.com/the-value-of-volunteers). In less than a month since its publication, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Delaware has experienced an influx of individuals and businesses looking to volunteer.

"The Insight program is a content marketing strategy that we committed to invest in to enhance our brand recognition by publishing content that we felt was relevant and engaging to the business community," Burke explains.

Benson, who oversees 1,400 volunteers, says she wanted the article to not only highlight the value of her current volunteers, but to also impress upon readers the importance of volunteer work.

"I wanted to highlight that the time people contribute can be just as valuable as a monetary donation," she says. "It can be an immeasurable value, but also there is a monetary value to it as well. For our organization, there are many things that wouldn't get done without volunteers."

Because of her experience of working in the volunteer department of a nonprofit, Benson knows the impact of giving of one's time and talents. However, she explains that those in the for-profit world may not recognize this. The Delaware Business Times was her canvas to share this information, and your organization could take the same approach with local publications.

"If you don't work in volunteer management, you don't think about service this way — as a business decision or something that provides tangible value to an organization," she says. "It's important to share that with people as a means of gathering support."

Source: Mary Kate Benson, Director of Volunteer Services, Boys & Girls Clubs of Delaware, Wilmington, DE. Phone (302) 658-1870. E-mail: mbenson@bgclubs.org. Website: www.bgclubs.org

SPECIAL VOLUNTEER ROLES

Museum Relies on Strong Docent Guild

Much of the Museum of Latin American Art's (Long Beach, CA) success lies in the hands of an independent affiliated organization — the Docent Guild.

"The docents bring their passion to the museum and pass that along to our guests," says Susan Beckley, volunteer manager and liaison between the guild and the museum. "They are the ones who give that connection between the art and the viewer. They are the heart of MOLAA."

Started in 1998, the primary purpose of this 38-member group is to support the museum's mission by giving tours and presentations. But their responsibilities don't end there. Additional duties also include supporting the museum at exhibition openings, lectures and events. Guild members promote the museum and often make financial contributions as well.

Here's how it works:

Beckley says an individual who is interested in becoming a member of the guild must commit to a yearlong training process, pay a \$30 training fee and meet the following requirements:

1. Be passionate about Latin American and Latino art and culture.
2. Have the ability to attend training sessions and meetings.
3. Hold a MOLAA membership.
4. Commit to a two-year tenure after the completion of training.
5. Have an e-mail address.

For those who qualify, training begins in January and includes eight, four-hour sessions, followed by three months of shadowing and five months of touring. At the completion of each training milestone, the docent-in-training offers a tour for evaluation. Veteran docents are responsible for approximately half of the training process (the education and curatorial staff does the other half), as well as the evaluations.

Upon successful completion of the training process, docents are required to attend the guild's bimonthly meetings, give two tours each month and five lectures each year. They also work events, study artists and artwork on exhibit and serve as museum ambassadors.

While training is intense and responsibilities are many, Beckley says members of the Docent Guild reap several benefits, including the opportunity to view new exhibitions first. Docents also have the chance to work closely with the curator and artists allowing them to learn about each artist's processes and methods. Store vouchers and discounts also can be earned.

Source: Susan Beckley, Volunteer Manager, Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, CA. Phone (562) 216-4119. E-mail: sbeckley@molaa.org. Website: www.molaa.org

Utilize Pro Bono Volunteering As a Leadership Solution

Common Impact (Brooklyn, NY) — an organization that builds skills-based volunteer programs — doesn't just focus on filling vacancies, they care about aligning skills to projects. The goal of a skills-based project is to solve a complex operational challenge.

What makes skills-based volunteering different from classic pro bono is that skills-based projects are two-sided. According to Danielle Holly, CEO at Common Impact, matches are crafted as an experiential learning opportunity where skilled volunteers can give back to a specific time-based project while also benefitting their careers. On the other side, the organization benefits by building its own competency. When done well, says Holly, skills-based volunteering is transformational because of this knowledge transfer.

What makes this different is the match. In traditional pro bono situations, skilled volunteers work independently to complete the project. Alternatively, skilled volunteers in traditional volunteer roles either don't contribute their skills or are asked to help sporadically, making it difficult to focus. Skills-based volunteering brings the skill, the need and the project together with specific deliverables, expectations and timelines, making it easier for everyone to commit and highlighting the mutual benefit.

Holly finds that this kind of arrangement leads to increased focus and priority. And bringing a skilled volunteer into this kind of experience leads to a better experience on both sides and better deliverables.

To get started with skills-based volunteering, Holly suggests starting with the project. Here are some tips:

- ✓ The organization needs to be ready to do this. Identify a clear need with clear outcomes and the skill set needed. Be sure you have the staff/resources to accommodate.
- ✓ Don't try to force a project to fit a volunteer, or force a volunteer to fit a need.
- ✓ Be patient to find the right project scope and right skilled volunteer at the right time.
- ✓ Say, "No," when the opportunity or volunteer isn't right.
- ✓ Be very clear about outcomes and expectations. Put it in writing.

Source: Danielle Holly, CEO, Common Impact, Brooklyn, NY. Phone (929) 295-6160. E-mail: dholly@commonimpact.org. Website: www.commonimpact.org

Recognition Ideas

- Invite a newspaper reporter to visit your nonprofit to learn more about your programs and then write articles about individual volunteers.

What Should Your Volunteer Manual Include?

By Amber Erickson Gabbey

A volunteer manual is an effective way to ensure everyone understands the rules of volunteering. Elise Mercer, volunteer coordinator at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (Atlanta, GA), views the manual as a "tangible way to document expectations."

What's included:

Your manual can be as simple or robust as you'd like, but should include the following:

1. Organization information (mission, vision, values, etc.).
2. Volunteer information (dress code, policies, expectations, roles/duties, signing up for shifts, badges, etc.).
3. Contact information (volunteer office as well as other key staff).
4. Benefit information (including how to get the benefits).
5. Health information (such as HIPAA, immunizations, safety guidelines, etc.).
6. Mission-specific information (such as constituent facts, industry nuances or local notes).

How it's used:

Mercer requires would-be volunteers to read and understand the manual before applying. This way people understand the expectations and requirements (such as flu shots) before starting the onboarding process. If they don't agree to the rules in the manual, they don't volunteer.

The manual is also hosted on their website to ensure volunteers always have access. (See the manual here: www.choa.org/~media/files/Childrens/donors-and-volunteers/volunteers/volunteer-online-orientation-manual.pdf?la=en.) Volunteers are required to re-read and sign annually.

Mercer offers the following advice for writing and maintaining a manual:

1. Find the balance of including all pertinent information while being sensitive to page count. Similarly, make the design easy to read (and easy to scan).
2. Be conscious when rolling out a new manual to longtime volunteers. Take the time to talk through any changes.
3. Ensure the information in the manual matches what's in orientation and what's done in practice.
4. Don't assume anything is common sense. Spell it out clearly.
5. Update the manual (and orientation) regularly to address commonly asked questions.
6. Make sure you (and all staff) read the manual regularly. Everyone is responsible for upholding the rules so you must be well-versed in exactly what the manual states.

Source: Elise Mercer, Volunteer Coordinator, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Atlanta, GA. Phone (404) 785-4832. E-mail: Elise.Mercer@choa.org. Website: www.choa.org

Strengthen Volunteer Corps Through Consensus Building

As a volunteer manager, one of your biggest goals may be getting key supporters to reach a meeting of the minds to achieve a common objective. This becomes even more difficult when two or more reasonable volunteers have differences of opinion on issues.

How can you help facilitate productive discussion when some of your most valued supporters disagree on how to reach a goal or approach a project?

Use these strategies to help diverse individuals find common ground:

- **Begin the planning process with clearly defined objectives.** When it's your role to bring a concept or proposal to your volunteers for consideration and eventual implementation, make it clear that everyone's initial input is important.
- **Involve your most likable volunteer leader or board member.** Because you want to stay on friendly terms with all of your volunteers, it may be helpful to call a meeting with your most respected and reasonable leader at the highest possible level. The fact that this individual is willing to spend time with your volunteers will make them feel valued and respected. He or she will know that an objective person who has the best interests of the majority at heart is carefully considering each differing idea.
- **Make a list of the pros and cons of each approach.** Ask each individual or group to list the advantages of their plan, as well as any obstacles they anticipate. You and key staff or volunteer officers can evaluate each one, then return to each party with your questions or concerns. Borrow the best ideas from both plans, emphasizing those that both parties share. Present a revised plan with the best and most feasible ideas from each group, allowing all to enjoy some ownership of the final plan.
- **Keep the number of persons you involve in the solution to a minimum.** Focus on the thoughts of the individuals you know will be most affected.

Points Help Clarify Filing Tasks for Volunteers

If you rely on volunteers to help with filing, keep these points in mind:

- Designate a file manager to supervise and establish a filing system.
- Create an index for existing files.
- Establish a checkout system (with time limits) for those who wish to borrow files.
- File daily to avoid a buildup.
- If the information is available elsewhere and used very little, get rid of it.
- Date material that is being filed.
- Set a time at the end of the year to review files and discard unneeded information.

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Don't Overlook The Daily Point of Light Award

We've all met them — volunteers who go above and beyond and stand out from the crowd. So why not nominate them for an award that does the same?

“Daily Point of Light Awards are given five days a week in the United States and the United Kingdom to honor individuals and groups creating meaningful change to meet community needs, efforts which often lead to long-term solutions and impact social problems in their local communities,” explains Jia Gayles, recognition manager at Points of Light (Atlanta, GA). “Whether it is a teenager battling bullies, a family leading a homegrown disaster relief drive or an athlete wielding his celebrity for good instead of goods, Daily Point of Light honorees take action to create change in their community through volunteer service.”

Nomination forms are available online at www.pointsoflight.org/programs/recognition/dpol/nomination. To qualify, nominees must be legal residents of the United States and cannot be paid for their service. Additionally, the nominee's volunteer service must be ongoing and last a minimum of six months unless the work is considered disaster relief.

According to Gayles, a selection team meets once a month to review each nomination received. She says they are judged on “community impact, innovation and the ability of the nominee to inspire others to take action by volunteering in their own communities.”

Those who are awarded the Daily Point of Light Award receive a certificate signed by former President George H.W. Bush, who created the award in 1989, and Natalye Paquin, CEO of Points of Light. Additionally, the honoree's story is shared on the foundation's social media channels.

“When volunteers receive a Daily Point of Light Award, they become part of a rich tapestry of changemakers that have changed the course of this nation's history through personal sacrifice and grassroots efforts,” Gayles says.

Approximately 60 nominations are submitted each month. To date, nearly 6,100 Daily Point of Light awards have been given in the United States.

Source: Jia Gayles, Recognition Manager, Points of Light, Atlanta, GA. Phone (404) 979-2934. E-mail: jgayles@pointsoflight.org. Website: www.pointsoflight.org

Volunteer *INSIDER*

*"The most effective way to do it, is to do it."
— Amelia Earhart*

THE MONTHLY IDEA SOURCE FOR VOLUNTEERS LEADING THE WAY

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ENERGETIC VOLUNTEERS

Positive Attitude Key to Volunteer's Success

By Yvette Boysen

"When she comes in, the building lights up."

Rob Gray, vice president of operations at Tampa Metropolitan Area YMCA (Tampa, FL), is speaking of 31-year-old Ayden Thomas, a longtime volunteer at the Campo Family YMCA (Valrico, FL).

"She just has that kind of energy," Gray says. "You go from a 60-watt to a 100-watt lightbulb."

Every Tuesday and Thursday Thomas spends eight hours volunteering at Campo and has done so for seven years.

"At first I wasn't too sure if it would be fulfilling for me or if it would help the Y out because of my being in a wheelchair."

You see, Thomas was born with spina bifida. This means her spine did not form properly. She has no feeling below her waist. Despite this, Thomas says she knew she needed something to do after she graduated.

"I've loved everything that I've done," she says. "I've just been really grateful for this opportunity because not all kids with special needs have had or will have the opportunity to get out and go and volunteer."

And volunteer she has. When she first began she performed a lot of administrative tasks. Soon she began offering testimonies and assisting with events throughout the year. She then found herself working with the volunteer team. Most recently, Thomas began assisting with the annual campaign and stewardship.

"She's always rolling up her sleeves, willing to pitch in and help in any department that needs help on a given day with a great attitude," Gray says.

Thomas explains, "I stay very positive and outgoing and just try to put my best wheel forward in anything I do. My co-workers would probably tell you that they see me with a smile on my face all of the time. I'm always willing to help, and I'm in there with a smile on my face, talking, laughing and having a good time."

She takes her work seriously, though. Thomas says she enjoys a challenge and experiences a great sense of joy when she accomplishes a new task. Through it all, she never lets her wheelchair stop her.

"I don't look at myself as having a disability, I was taught from a very young age to do the best that I could do in any situation, and I have lived with that motto all of my life," she says. "I don't use that as an excuse. It's okay to put yourself out there. Do the best you can with whatever capabilities you have."

Combined with her positive attitude, Thomas has discovered her recipe for success.

"Keep a positive attitude about everything, put your best foot forward and know it's okay to show yourself. If you do all three of those things, good things will happen," she says.

During her time at the YMCA, Thomas has contributed more than 5,800 hours and was awarded Volunteer of the Year in 2013.

Sources: Rob Gray, Vice President of Operations, Tampa Metropolitan Area YMCA, Tampa, FL. Phone (615) 598-4145. E-mail: rob.gray@tampaymca.org. Website: www.tampaymca.org

Ayden Thomas, Volunteer, Campo Family YMCA, Valrico, FL. Phone (813) 684-1371. Website: www.tampaymca.org/locations/campo



Keep Dress Code in Mind When Volunteering

When you're volunteering, you are representing that organization just as much as any employee may be. That's why it's important to dress accordingly.

For whatever reason, staff may be reluctant to tell you how to dress. They may not feel it is their place. So take the initiative and err on the side of good judgment. Observe what paid staff are wearing, and look to dress to at least that level of professionalism. If you're in doubt, ask your supervisor for guidelines.

If you wear a volunteer uniform, keep it as crisp and clean and sharp-looking as possible. That goes for all pieces of your ensemble, including shoes.

And it goes without saying that cleanliness and good personal hygiene matter. Make the effort to always put your best face forward for your volunteer cause!