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Models Worth Sharing

Match Corporate Volunteers to Nonprofits by ‘Speed Dating’

By Amber Erickson Gabbey

For nonprofits and corporations alike, part of the challenge is finding each other. Common Impact, a nationally recognized nonprofit working to align business and social purpose, has found a way to bridge this gap: “speed dating.”

According to Danielle Holly, CEO at Common Impact in Brooklyn, NY, there are two different structures for implementing the speed dating philosophy:

1. **Matches** — The sole purpose is to create matches that lead to projects.

2. **Feedback** — The sole purpose is to create dialogue, program improvement and enhanced understanding of what each needs and how to better work together.

First, determine which method you will use, and then have fun building your event from there. Holly offers this advice on how to best use the speed dating philosophy:

**Matches** — To implement a speed dating program for matches, have enough nonprofit and corporate representatives in the room — ideally close to equal numbers of each — with shared missions/focus areas. This could be part of a larger event, or your own stand-alone event.

Set up the room to facilitate one-on-one conversation, set the timer and let the dialogue begin. Encourage participants to have questions prepared beforehand.

At the end of the time (be it 5 or 15 minutes), participants rotate to the next person and the process starts again. At the end of the event, hopefully matches have been made.

**Feedback** — Implementing a feedback-focused speed dating event is a bit different. The idea is for nonprofits to get feedback on how to improve their pitches to corporations. The corporation representatives get to learn more about how they can best plan their programs to be of service to their nonprofit partners.

The goal is a conversation that benefits both parties’ programs.

When Holly produced a feedback event for a recent VolunteerMatch conference, she created an opportunity for candid feedback without the added stress of trying to get matches.

Before the speed dating portion started, corporations and nonprofits were separated for prep sessions. Nonprofits learned how to package their story and determine their need. Corporations learned how to package their story (including why they have a volunteer program), what skills their volunteers have to offer and how to refine their programs to be more helpful.

At the end of the event, both sides felt more confident in moving forward with their programs. Many corporations reported learning a lot about corporate/nonprofit partnerships and how to package their programs to be more helpful and appealing.

Source: Danielle Holly, CEO, Common Impact, Brooklyn, NY. Phone (857) 756-8463. E-mail: dholly@commonimpact.org. Website: www.commonimpact.org

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Interview Helps to Identify Effective Volunteers

Finding a volunteer best suited for your organization is of utmost importance to sustaining the level of service your organization provides.

When interviewing your next volunteer candidate, ask the candidate to answer the following prompts to identify if he or she is a good fit for your nonprofit:

1. Can you provide an example of how using a positive attitude helped you overcome an obstacle?
2. Please identify three things you’re most passionate about.
3. Have you had punctuality problems in the past? If so, explain.
4. Is there ever a time when it’s OK to not show up for your scheduled volunteer time? If yes, please explain.
5. On a scale of 1 to 10, please describe your level of commitment to this organization and give the reason(s) why.
Impart Deadlines

- Be sure your volunteers know what’s expected of them and when you expect tasks to be completed. A deadline helps volunteers focus and imparts a feeling of urgency.

How to Plan a Community Service Conference

Proper training for effectively managing volunteers is something that is often hard to come by. That’s why for nearly 30 years the Maine Commission for Community Service (Augusta, ME) has hosted the Blaine House Conference on Service and Volunteerism. “We invite all volunteer managers across the state to attend. We want to help these people develop skills they may need down the road. It’s a way to include both current and future volunteer managers,” says Maryalice Crofton, executive director.

The goal of the one-day conference is to meet the training and professional development needs of volunteer managers throughout the state. Attendees can choose three of eight different workshop topics that typically last about an hour.

While most workshop topics change at the conference each year, Crofton says there are two workshops offered every year: “Volunteer Management 101” and “Difficult Conversations/Managing Difficult People as Volunteers.”

Crofton offers this advice when looking for other workshop topic ideas:

- Look into ideas that have emerged nationally. “While it may not apply to your part of the country or attendees yet, in three years or so they probably will need to be aware of these trends. Also, help people discover what they don’t know. For example, help people know what questions to ask when organizing people for volunteer work, and give people an idea of what they need to go learn more about.”
- Set a theme. “Our planning committee will research and scout out professionals who have knowledge on our theme.”
- Ask for ideas. “We will often do a call-out for any professionals who have a topic proposal they would like to present. We also will barter with people whom we have heard speak at other conferences on topics we think would interest our attendees.”

While planning for a conference like this takes work, it doesn’t have to be expensive. “We don’t have a big budget,” says Crofton. “Our keynote speakers are typically paid for by our sponsors. This conference isn’t designed to be a revenue generator. Our purpose is to provide a professional development opportunity for volunteer managers.” To increase the odds of planning a successful conference, Crofton offers these tips:

- Plan the “thinking” part of the day in the morning, since that is when most people have more energy.
- Work closely with the site of your conference so everything runs smoothly.
- Offer adequate and easy-to-find parking.
- Provide good food.
- Print signs and maps so attendees can easily find their way around.
- Use online conference management software to allow for easy online registration.
- Post the daily schedule in the hallway/corridor for easy reference.

Each year the conference is held in a different city across the state, but it always takes place on a college campus on a day when classes aren’t being held. The conference runs from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. and includes one keynote speaker, lunch, networking time and workshops.

Source: Maryalice Crofton, Executive Director, Maine Commission for Community Service, Augusta, ME. Phone (207) 624-7792. E-mail: Maryalice.Crofton@maine.gov. Website: www.MaineServiceCommission.gov

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Make Volunteer Expectations Clear

When it comes to risk management, Mela Shah, volunteer program assistant and hotline specialist, Minnesota Literacy Council (St. Paul, MN), always keeps this in mind: “Risk management is all about preparing for hypothetical situations that might occur at your program or organizations. Most of the time these things never happen, but it’s always good to have a plan in case they do,” she says.

So how can you successfully manage risk if you’re planning for a hypothetical situation? Shah’s advice is to make your expectations clear. “If you have a position description, which I recommend, for a volunteer, make sure they understand what you/the program expects of them and what they can expect of you/the program. This eliminates uncertainty on both ends.”

If you’ve set expectations and made them clear with your volunteers but a situation still arises, Shah says it’s important to discuss the situation with the volunteer in a timely manner. But before you sit down with the volunteer, ask yourself these four questions:

1. What is the best approach I can take with this volunteer? What are his or her “hot buttons”?
2. How does he or she best receive information or suggestions?
3. Where can I find points of commonality/consensus with this volunteer?
4. Is the volunteer finding some sense of satisfaction by contributing to this problem?

Once you’ve asked yourself these questions, you can talk to the volunteer by saying something like, “I noticed …” and ask the volunteer to describe what happened or his or her reasoning behind the behavior.

“If you start the conversation assuming that the person is doing something wrong, and there was really a good reason for their behavior, the volunteer is going to become frustrated with their position. If you go into the situation assuming the best, and you are wrong, you have the opportunity to talk to him or her about the behavior,” Shah says. Once the volunteer responds, Shah suggests following up with something like, “I’m sorry, we weren’t clear with our expectations. We expect that … (explain).” “Use this as an opportunity to explain the expectations as applicable,” she says.

Shah also stresses the importance of interviewing potential volunteers and making expectations clear in the interview process. “Sometimes people look great on paper and are less impressive in person and vice versa. It’s okay to use your gut to help you figure out if this person will fit as a volunteer,” she says.

By properly managing risk, a nonprofit is better able to protect the organization and the volunteer program from harmful situations. “If you don’t properly manage risk, you could potentially end up with disgruntled volunteers, which could be damaging to your volunteer program.”

“You could also be opening up your program to risk if you don’t have best practices in place for interviewing and vetting volunteers,” Shah says.

Source: Mela Shah, Volunteer Program Assistant and Hotline Specialist, Minnesota Literacy Council, St. Paul, MN. Phone (651) 645-2277, ext. 241. E-mail: mshah@mnliteracy.org. Website: www.mnliteracy.org

Support Behind-the-Scenes Volunteers

From doing paperwork to organizing books, the volunteers who work behind-the-scenes are just as needed as the volunteers who are more visible in the public eye. But sometimes it can be difficult to ensure behind-the-scenes volunteers are supported and feel like a valuable part of your team.

Lisa Hutchings, school and youth education coordinator at Mass Audubon’s Joppa Flats Education Center (Newburyport, MA), manages nearly 40 volunteers; of these, six work strictly behind the scenes. “Many of these volunteers are current or retired librarians and office managers who want to help us be more efficient, and they enjoy the organizational work,” Hutchings says. The work of these volunteers ranges from organizing the paper trail to doing online work from home on behalf of the organization.

That’s why making sure these volunteers feel just as valued as the other helpers is something Hutchings takes very seriously. “Just because they are behind the scenes doesn’t mean they don’t deserve the same praise and acknowledgment as other volunteers. I make it a priority to always say, ‘Thank you,’ and call them out for the work that they do,” she says.

Hutchings offers these six ideas as ways to support behind-the-scenes volunteers:

1. **Give recognition:** “Make sure everyone on your staff and other volunteers know who your behind-the-scenes volunteers are so they can also say, ‘Hi,’ and ‘Thanks,’ to these individuals.”
2. **Say, “Thank you”:** “I will often send a brief e-mail to say, ‘Well done!’ It can really go a long way.”
3. **Provide chocolate:** “At the end of every shift I have a piece of chocolate for them as a way to say thanks.”
4. **Send invitations:** “Make sure to personally invite behind-the-scenes volunteers to any special volunteer outings, presentations or gatherings.”
5. **Be available:** “Many times these volunteers are working at a time when you may be busy with something else. Make sure they know that you are still available to help them if they have a question. Tell them they can call, text, e-mail or leave a note anytime, and then follow through and make sure to respond in a timely manner.”
6. **Share success:** “Share the work they do with your other volunteers and staff. Point out how the books are organized or the paperwork is completed thanks to these volunteers.”

Source: Lisa Hutchings, School and Youth Education Coordinator and Teacher Naturalist, Mass Audubon’s Joppa Flats Education Center, Newburyport, MA. Phone (978) 462-9998. E-mail: lhutchings@massaudubon.org. Website: www.massaudubon.org
Volunteer Recognition

Use Social Media to Highlight Your Volunteer Program

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn — these are just a few of the many social media tools out there. So how can you utilize these tools to your advantage? Jaime Denniston-Merced, director of training and professional development, New York Cares (New York, NY), offers this advice when it comes to effectively using social media: “Social media, in my opinion, is a better tool for gaining support for your program and raising awareness. Because social media posts are generally shorter, it’s harder to use it as a recruitment tool, since it’s not always possible to show and list all the volunteer opportunities that are available,” she says.

That’s why Denniston-Merced and her staff have turned to social media as a way to showcase their program. “We pick one volunteer and highlight that person as our ‘someone of the week.’ We post pictures of the individual to show what they do, and then we follow that up with a call to action. It helps to bring awareness since photos tend to get more attention on social media than a long message,” she says.

Source: Jaime Denniston-Merced, Director of Training and Professional Development, New York Cares, New York, NY. Phone (212) 228-5000. E-mail: jaime.denniston-merced@newyorkcares.org. Website: www.newyorkcares.org

One set of hands is always helpful, but in some cases many sets of hands are even better. On any given day, Atlanta Ronald McDonald House Charities (Atlanta, GA) typically has about two to three different volunteer groups helping in a variety of ways. “Volunteering and meeting the families is a way for these groups to connect with the House and see what an amazing impact their donations make in the lives of real families,” says Catherine Lewis, volunteer services manager at the organization. “Many of our groups volunteer on a regular basis, but we often have groups who volunteer once a year. On average, we have about 70 volunteer groups each month.”

But not all volunteer work is best done with a group. That’s why Lewis has designated jobs specifically for group work, so when an interested group of volunteers contacts the House, she is ready. “Atlanta Ronald McDonald House Charities has many needs that groups can often more easily accomplish than individuals. We have two houses in Atlanta. Between both houses, we can hold 81 families a night. That is a lot of mouths to feed,” she says.

So what jobs work best for a volunteer group? Lewis offers these examples of both on-site and off-site group volunteer opportunities:

- **Family Meal Program:** Volunteers serve dinner, weekend brunches and weekday breakfasts for guests.
- **Casserole Club:** Casseroles are prepared by groups of volunteers on site and then frozen to be served to families at a later date.
- **Baker’s Club:** Volunteers bake sweet treats for families.
- **Cleaning:** For smaller groups, there are cleaning and organizing projects.
- **Bingo Night:** There is a bingo set at the House that groups can use, and volunteer groups are asked to bring prizes for winners/participants.
- **Family Activity Night:** Groups provide arts and crafts, game nights, manicure nights, performances and other activities.
- **Pop Tab Program:** Individuals, schools, businesses and corporations can raise money by saving pop tabs from aluminum cans. The collected tabs are taken to a recycling center, and the funds are used for the annual operating budget.
- **Wish List Drive:** Groups collect items that are on the wish list. The list is updated seasonally and available on the website.
- **Hygiene Kits:** Groups gather travel-size shampoos, soaps, toothpaste, deodorant and other items to create hygiene kits for guests.
- **Take-Away Bags:** Groups put together bags of snacks or activities for families. For example, a bag might include individually packaged snacks, a mini water bottle, a coloring book, crayons, stickers, a stress ball, a journal and/or a small toy.
- **$10 Restaurant Gift Cards:** Volunteers collect these gift cards, which provide meals to families who are unable to be at the House for dinner.
- **Personal Donations:** Volunteers can create a personal fundraising page and have family and friends support their personal goal, create a campaign team where volunteers work as a group to achieve a team goal or make a donation.

Source: Catherine Lewis, Volunteer Services Manager, Gatewood House, Atlanta Ronald McDonald House Charities, Atlanta, GA. Phone (678) 704-8098. E-mail: catherine.lewis@armhc.org. Website: www.armhc.org

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Recruiting Volunteer Groups

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Recruiting Volunteer Groups

View this newsletter online at WILEYONLINELIBRARY.COM DOI: 10.1002/VMR
Involve Volunteers in Delivering Greeting Cards

By Shelley Hexom

Three years ago Donna Cothron, a volunteer at St. Anthony’s Hospital Foundation (St. Petersburg, FL), went through a personal experience that introduced her to a program she wanted to bring to patients at St. Anthony’s Hospital. “My father was in the hospital several hours from where I was living. I got in my car and drove to see him one final time. To my surprise, once I got there he showed me several greeting cards he had received from other family members who also lived far away and weren’t able to come see him. I thought it was such a neat idea, and after learning more about how that hospital’s online greeting card program worked, I helped to start a similar program at St. Anthony’s,” Cothron says.

So how does the program work? First, the sender visits www.stanthonysfoundation.org/greeting-cards and selects from eight different pictures that rotate on a semiregular basis. “The pictures we have to choose from are photos that have been taken by St. Anthony’s staff and team members. It truly gives the cards an even more personal touch,” says Cothron. The sender then provides the patient’s name, room number and a personal message.

“In addition to family and friends who send cards, we have many nurses and clergy who send patients cards if they are off duty or out of town for a few days and unable to visit,” she adds.

When someone submits a request, the information desk volunteers add the message, print the card and hand-deliver it. “Our volunteers are the integral part of this greeting card program. It makes it very personal when a volunteer goes into the patient’s room to deliver the card.”

“If the person who sent the card leaves a note or special instruction for us at the hospital regarding the situation, the volunteer is given that information and can provide that added emotional support that oftentimes patients need,” Cothron says.

Once a request is submitted, typically the card is delivered to the patient’s room within a couple of hours.

After someone sends a card, he or she receives a confirmation that the card has been delivered and are then encouraged to send another card to someone else who may need something to brighten his or her day.

St. Anthony’s is a 393-bed hospital, and in the three years the greeting card program has been available, volunteers have delivered 2,000 cards. Cothron says the program is funded through a grant and maintained by the foundation. “We’ve also contacted all the churches in the area to let them know about this program, so they can include it in their bulletins and newsletters,” she adds.

Source: Donna Cothron, Volunteer, St. Anthony’s Hospital Foundation, St. Petersburg, FL. Phone (727) 502-4049. E-mail: Donna.Cothron@baycare.org. Website: www.stanthonysfoundation.org

Volunteers Help to Brighten Patients’ Holidays

When a holiday rolls around, it can be tough for those who find themselves alone in the hospital. That’s why St. Anthony’s Hospital Foundation (St. Petersburg, FL) is making sure every current patient gets a card every Valentine’s Day, Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Depending on the holiday, the cards come from different staff and team members at the hospital. “For example, on Valentine’s Day the volunteer department signs messages in all the cards. For Thanksgiving we set up a table in the cafeteria where anyone is welcome to come and sign a card. It’s really a neat way to get everyone involved,” says Donna Cothron, team member at St. Anthony's Hospital Foundation and volunteer at St. Anthony’s Hospital.

Four Points to Consider For Volunteer Retreats

Planning an out-of-the-ordinary retreat for volunteers? Be sure you factor in:

1. Your volunteers’ ages and abilities. If your volunteer pool encompasses a large cross-section of the population (e.g., ages 18 to 80), consider any physical challenges carefully.

2. Whether the retreat is mandatory or optional. Some volunteers might not be comfortable saying, “Thanks, but no thanks.”

3. Hiring an outside “fun firm.” If this event takes the place of a regular volunteer reception or annual meeting, you would have those funds available. If you do go with an outside firm, get and check out references; a phone call could save you money and credibility.

4. How to tie the retreat into your mission. If you want your volunteers to relate their experience to their volunteer work, consider picking a creative alternative that applies (e.g., a cooking challenge for a food bank, a “go green” challenge for an environmental organization, building toys for a child welfare organization).

Show Your Appreciation

Five Ways to Say, ‘Thanks’

Keep your volunteers involved and enthusiastic with these simple ways to thank them:

• Share a treat with the volunteers. A simple bag of candy goes a long way.

• Greet volunteers each day with enthusiasm and by name.

• Thank volunteers when they depart for the day.

• Send volunteers to off-site training.

• Meet with volunteers one-on-one and note ideas they have for improving the organization.

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Step Away From Your Desk And Energize Your Team

Are you contemplating a volunteer retreat, but growing tired of the same old group exercises and activities? The good news is you can choose from hundreds of ways to get your team motivated and engaged that don’t require any chairs, desks or pencils.

Some ideas may require in-kind donations or an event sponsor, but the results will be worth it, as the spirited ideas leave your volunteers talking about the fun they had and eagerly awaiting future events.

Here are team activity ideas to get you started:

• **Cooking Challenge** — Create your own “Iron Chef” competition, pitting teams of volunteers against each other in the ultimate food challenge. The best part? When they’re done, everyone gets to relax and socialize while sampling their creations.

• **Scavenger Hunt** — Whether it be a hunt for local landmarks or a digital photo hunt for local icons, teams will be running and laughing for hours as they try to secure the necessary items. Gather at a local restaurant or banquet hall at the end of the challenge to award prizes and share stories.

• **Build Your Own Anything** — If your cause serves children, have teams compete to build doll houses, kites, model trains, LEGO® structures or toys to be judged and donated to the children you serve or raffled off to benefit the organization.

• **Physical Challenges** — Rock climbing, paintball, laser tag, mini golf or corn mazes are just a handful of ways you can really get your team moving.

Whether you plan your own activities or hire a company to get creative for you, turning the old team retreat model on its ear will help energize everyone involved.

Retention Tip

• Identify your informal leaders and regularly ask for their opinions and concerns.

Verified Volunteers Make Screening Process Easier

The Girl Scouts of Colorado (Colorado Springs, CO) takes pride in providing girls with secure surroundings. “We partner with volunteers on a program that puts the physical and emotional safety of girls before all other things,” says Laura Stroud, volunteer support director. Volunteers are a strong part of the scouting program, and the organization requires screening of all potential volunteers.

Each year the organization screens about 2,500 volunteers, which can be time consuming. That’s why two years ago the nonprofit enlisted the help of Verified Volunteers (New York, NY), a company that works to make the screening process much easier. “We uploaded a very large batch of volunteer names at the beginning that needed to be screened. We were able to get them going on background checks quickly, and the dashboard helped us stay organized and track who complied,” says Stroud.

Verified Volunteers is tailored to the specific needs of the service sector and the first online community to mobilize repeat, vetted volunteers. “When we were deciding what screening vendor to enlist, we looked at quality, value and service. For us, budget is a huge factor. The screening products, high quality and price point that Verified Volunteers provide are unparalleled, and their ordering process is intuitive and quick,” Stroud says.

Source: Laura Stroud, Volunteer Support Director, Girl Scouts of Colorado, Colorado Springs, CO. Phone (719) 597-8603. E-mail: inquiry@gscolorado.org. Website: www.girlscoutsofcolorado.org

About Verified Volunteers

Katie Zwetzig, executive director at Verified Volunteers (New York, NY), says their screening process is meant to be volunteer-driven. “When a client signs up, they can upload a list of current and potential volunteers into their volunteer management dashboard and send invitations to the volunteers with just a couple of clicks. The volunteer/potential volunteer can then set up his or her own account and order the background check in just four steps. It takes less than five minutes. Because volunteers have their own accounts, they can own their background check, which means they can view the check’s status, including the report itself, and share it with other organizations, free of charge,” Zwetzig says.

The cost of the screenings varies based on volume, location, a la carte products and so on, but the base packages typically range from $12 to $37. “We were able to customize the payment options to encourage volunteers to contribute to the cost, and it worked. We are seeing about 50 percent of our background check fees paid by volunteers,” Stroud says. Screenings include:

• **Criminal history searches**: A search for criminal information or history on a local, state and national level (anything from a misdemeanor to a felony).

• **Sex offender search**: Finds registered sex offenders on a state and national level.

• **Motor vehicle record checks**: Looks at driving history including traffic violations and DUls.

• **Credit checks**: Searches for negative credit report history.

• **References**: Looks for negative feedback or concerns based on conversations with references.

The company is backed by SterlingBackCheck, the world’s largest background screening company, and works with local law enforcement all across the country. “All of this means faster turnaround times. While a volunteer manager doing it themselves might take several weeks to receive results, we typically return results in under two days,” Zwetzig says.

Katie Zwetzig, Executive Director, Verified Volunteers, New York, NY. Phone (855) 326-1860. E-mail: info@verifiedvolunteers.com. Website: www.verifiedvolunteers.com
Be Consistent in Conducting Background Checks

Some aspects of risk management are clear-cut. But background checks for your volunteers — and the possibility of bringing someone on board who is considered “risky” — can sometimes be a grey area.

According to Mela Shah, volunteer program assistant and hotline specialist, Minnesota Literacy Council (St. Paul, MN), “Consistency is key! If you’re running background checks on one type of volunteer, you should do it for all of those volunteers,” she says.

So how do you know if background checks on volunteers should be required? Shah offers this guideline: “In my opinion background checks are not necessary for all programs/volunteer positions. It really depends on what your organization’s policy is. If you’re working with children or vulnerable populations, then yes, absolutely do background checks. If your program isn’t working with children or vulnerable populations, talk to a manager or HR person and decide as an organization if you’re going to run background checks on volunteers. The most important thing is to be consistent,” she reiterates.

If you do decide to run a background check on your volunteers, also be consistent regarding what information is considered grounds for not hiring a volunteer. “Talk to a manager or HR person about hiring policies. You may be able to tweak some of those policies into a document about hiring volunteers,” Shah suggests.

Source: Mela Shah, Volunteer Program Assistant and Hotline Specialist, Minnesota Literacy Council, St. Paul, MN. Phone (651) 645-2277, ext. 241. E-mail: mshah@mnliteracy.org. Website: www.mnliteracy.org

No-Cost Background Checks

If you feel background checks should be done on your volunteers but don’t have much of a budget, Mela Shah, volunteer program assistant and hotline specialist, Minnesota Literacy Council (St. Paul, MN), suggests checking into these two free options:

1. **National Sex Offender Registry.** ([www.nsopw.gov](http://www.nsopw.gov))
2. **Public Criminal History database.** Most states provide this as a free service. For example: Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension ([www.bca.state.mn.us/bca.asp](http://www.bca.state.mn.us/bca.asp))

 Invite the Public to Attend Volunteer Orientation

Rather than hosting an orientation for only new volunteers who have already signed up, why not let the public know that you’re hosting an orientation and invite anyone to attend? Leslie Gardner, executive director at Happy Trails Riding Academy (Tulare, CA) does just that.

Gardner says the reason they invite the public to orientations is because they need so many volunteers, and any opportunity to bring new people into the volunteer process is worthwhile. It’s a really low-risk idea — both for you and potential volunteers.

Orientation sessions at Happy Trails Riding Academy are held about quarterly. It’s a four-hour session, and all volunteers must complete the orientation before they can begin. Gardner says some of her best volunteers are people who just decided to attend the orientation and ended up committing.

The key here is promotion of orientation days. Gardner puts the event on the organization’s website and promotes socially, but she also utilizes traditional mediums by sending a press release to newspapers and building relationships with local magazines and radio stations. She says she tells anyone who’ll listen.

Source: Leslie Gardner, Executive Director, Happy Trails Riding Academy, Tulare, CA. Phone (559) 688-8685. E-mail: leslie@wearehappytrails.com. Website: [www.happytrailsridingacademy.org](http://www.happytrailsridingacademy.org)

The Three P’s of Presentations

Whether you’re making a presentation to donors or preparing a training session for volunteers, follow these simple guidelines for clearly stating your message:

1. **Plan your presentation.** Offer a focus and a specific theme. Incorporate anticipation throughout the presentation so the audience will hang on your every word. Stay focused and interject humor to keep the audience interested. Also, allow time for the audience to interject questions throughout the presentation or let them know in advance that you’ll address questions at the end.

2. **Practice!** Do several practice sessions to best communicate effectively and concisely. Be sure you’re speaking with inflection and watch yourself in the mirror to assure you’ll make eye contact with the audience.

3. **Present a story.** Speak with conviction and use visual aids to present a captivating story. If using a slide show or PowerPoint, don’t use more than 10 words per frame and don’t read text from the frame out loud or you risk losing audience interest. Keep returning to the theme, offering supporting materials at the appropriate time.

Lastly, let the audience know in advance that you’ll be giving them an outline of the presentation at the end, so they do not waste time taking notes.

Appreciative Gestures

Besides your annual volunteer recognition event, what gestures do you offer volunteers who have gone way beyond the call of duty?

Here’s one action that will grab their attention: Invite them to attend a regularly scheduled board meeting and be formally recognized and applauded by your board.

Your volunteer(s) will be highly flattered, and your board will have new-found appreciation for the sacrifices made by your precious volunteers.
What It Takes to Mentor Inmates

In 2014 a change started to happen behind the walls of the Catoosa County Jail (Ringgold, GA): The sheriff started a program called Project CHANGE (Community Helping Accomplish Necessary Growth and Empowerment) to help put an end to repeat offending. “It is important the offender and their family have a positive influence in their life and a positive contact to assist them upon release. Through guidance, the mentor can often be the foundation for positive change,” says Cindy Graham, counselor at the jail.

There are currently about 35 volunteers who mentor inmates at the jail. The following are the stories and experiences of three Project CHANGE volunteers:

Melissa Morgan-Frazier, volunteer for nine months: “I was a mentee myself. I’m a convicted felon and have been to jail about 20 times. It was a bookkeeping mishap that brought me to the Catoosa County Jail, where I was able to participate in Project CHANGE. Right away I formed a spiritual connection with my mentor. She became my ‘mom.’ My mentor taught me how to pray and provided support I had never had from others before.

“Since becoming a mentor, I’ve helped 20 inmates by simply meeting with them for 20 minutes once a week. I want to be able to give back and let these people see there is light at the end of the tunnel. Just getting out of jail isn’t enough. These inmates need support after being released and I hope to provide that.”

As a mentor, Morgan-Frazier has seen firsthand how the work she is doing is making a difference. “Shortly after one of my mentees was released from jail, I happened to see her at a restaurant. She had her head down and I could tell she was praying. When I walked over to her, she looked up with tears rolling down her face. She jumped up and hugged me. She had been dialing an ex-drug dealer asking for a ride, knowing it was a mistake. So, instead, I brought her to my house so she would be safe. We sat and talked about her goals. The mentoring program changed her life,” she says.

For anyone considering inmate mentoring, Morgan-Frazier offers this advice: “Try to be a family for them, find out what they need and help them with their future plans and education goals and pray with them. Don’t get personal about your finances to protect yourself from someone trying to take advantage of you. Usually you can tell which mentees are sincere and which ones aren’t. You have to get personal with them in order to have a family-like relationship with them, but you must use wisdom to also not get hurt. The main point is to love like Jesus. Love your neighbor as yourself,” she says.

James Cook, volunteer for seven months: “I have a father-and-son relationship with the male inmates. I put myself in their place and just want to be a friend for them.”

Rev. Carroll Allen, volunteer since 2014: “Being a pastor, I understand that the problem goes deeper than drugs or robbery; it’s a spiritual problem. It’s an open door to help those who are hurting.”

Sources: Cindy Graham, Counselor, and Rev. Carroll Allen, James Cook and Melissa Morgan-Frazier, Volunteers with Project CHANGE, Catoosa County Sheriff’s Office, Ringgold, GA. Phone (706) 965-6862. E-mail: cindy.graham@catoosa.com. Website: www.catoosacountysheriff.com

Cell Phone Etiquette

When working around others, follow these two cell phone etiquette rules:

1. Avoid taking or making cell phone calls in the presence of others. It’s just plain annoying and can detract from the work at hand.

2. If you inadvertently forget to turn your cell phone off and it rings, immediately press the “send” button to turn off the ringer and step out of the room to accept the call.

Don’t Hesitate to Ask

- Unsure about something? Never avoid asking about things you don’t know or understand yet.