





# Recognizing Our Volunteers



Mission

Knowledge

Social

Connection

# What Motivates Volunteers?

Health

Add a questionnaire to your onboarding process to gather information about volunteers' motivations and preferences so you can tailor their roles and how you recognize them where possible.

Passion

Values

Career

Community

# **TANGIBLE Rewards – Pins, Trinkets, Certificates, Gifts, Gift Cards...**



## **PROS +**

- Easy Peasy
- Time Saver
- Don't Know Volunteers Likes
- One Size Fits All
- Typically Inexpensive

## **CONS -**

- Requires a Bigger Reward
- Removes Desire to Do On Own
- Some Volunteers Say Save the \$
- Not Individualized to Motives
- Don't Promote Long Term Commitment

## ***TRANSFORMATIONAL*** Rewards – Appeal To Values



- Driven by personal reasons or enjoyment of the work
- Derive a sense of satisfaction
- Enjoy the challenge of new tasks
- Having choice of what they do
- Being able to work with and help others
- Meaningful, positive acknowledgement for their work
- Mission Centered

### *Volunteers Wonder...*

- Do my service and time make a positive difference?
- Am I able to live my values through my service?
- Am I learning more about my community and myself?
- Does my service engage my talent and skills?



80% of Volunteers would like to be recognized by hearing the impact of their contributions, less than 60% of organizations currently do this.

*Volunteer Canada*

Examples:

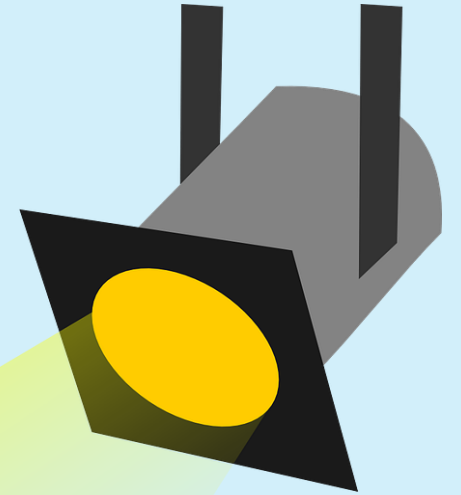
- # Patients and families visited by hospital or hospice volunteers
- # Kids who participate in volunteer-led tutoring or youth programming (and their parents and caregivers)
- # Participants who receive meals served by volunteers
- # Seniors in a transportation program who can get to doctor appointments safely and affordably
- # Families served in a disaster shelter
- # Bags Folded for Postal Service or # Letters in Bulk Mail

TIE IN EMOTIONAL SIDE W/ TESTIMONIALS, ETC.



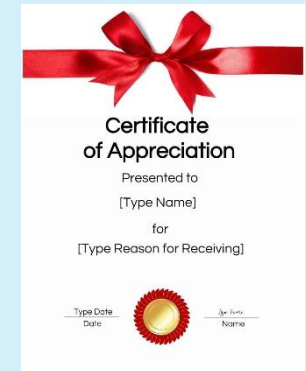
# Doesn't Cost A Dime Ideas

- Send Email or E Card - Provide specific example of appreciation
- Video Message from you or your Executive Director or Board President. Include photos
- Spotlight via Tweet or on Facebook, Website, etc.
- Spend personal time together to get to know your volunteer
- Share an impact report showing how their contributions helped achieve goal
- Include Volunteer Impact in Annual Reports
- Recognize Volunteers at existing events verbally
- Spotlight a Volunteer in each Newsletter with special name "Hero", etc.
- Give Volunteers a Voice – Create a Volunteer Advisory Committee
- Share upcoming improvements, changes, etc. so they are **in the know** ahead of time.
- Nominate volunteers for Regional or National Awards (JG – Jessica Garvin, Volunteer Spotlight jgarvin@jg.net)
- Invite a valued volunteer to speak with the ED or Board of Directors
- Create a #Hashtag for volunteers to follow along. Devise clues that can be found to win a prize!



# Communication

- Pen handwritten Thank You note – Include a photo of them while volunteering
- Appreciation Certificates
- Send a Thank You note to the Volunteers Supportive Spouse, Parent or Family (use cards with pictures/message specific to your organization)
- Send a thank you to their EMPLOYER if someone volunteering through a business
- Send out a thank you postcard after each event featuring a photo from the event, hand address for personal touch
- Solicit and include thank you's from your clients and the community.
- Send a letter to the Editor of your newspaper
- Have your volunteer complete a “Favorite” list during orientation such as candy bar, place to eat, etc. so that you can personalize gifts to them
- If budget allows, take out a newspaper ad recognizing volunteers
- Remember Birthday, send Get Well cards as appropriate, Miss you cards to snowbirds, Thanksgiving and Christmas greetings, etc. Invite the entire office to sign.





# Photo Opps



- Create a photo gallery with pictures of your volunteers individually or interacting with clients. Add short story, tidbits, Q & A, hours served, personal info, etc.
- Create a personal photo album for each.
- Create a Slide Show of your volunteers in action to run in your lobby or other public space. Tie into music such as “Thank You For Being a Friend”
- Take a group photo of all your volunteers. Frame it for them.
- Gift a framed individual photo, ask staff to sign the matting around the photo
- Frame a quote from your ED expressing appreciation.
- Post action photos (with their permission) on Social Media



# Virtual Ideas



- Order lunch to be delivered to volunteers and host a meeting on Zoom to share updates
- Host a Zoom Party – Paint Party; Dinner Party; Game Night; Movie Night
- Host a Zoom Call with a Surprise Celebrity Guest
- Mail Gifts to Volunteers Homes
- Provide a “Drive Thru” Opp – Pick up gifts/Employees Celebrate Them
- Dedicate a Blog Post to Thanking Your Volunteers
- Send a Handwritten Note
- Make a Personal Phone Call to Them
- Send a Personal Video via Email
- Purchase e-gift cards
- **Awards** - Virtual presentation of awards for traditional categories – years of service, hours, etc. Have fun with it! Include Awards with specific attributes i.e. volunteer with the most steps; walked XX miles with rescue dogs or volunteer who has read XX of books to children.
- ***When Allowed to Get Together, Opt for Small Gatherings:*** invite volunteers to join you for a variety of small gatherings of appreciation. You can spend more time getting to know each of your volunteers, and still Social Distance.



# Food Related



- BBQ/Picnic/Grill out
- Build food, entertainment, etc. around a theme such as “You Make a World of Difference”, or Western, Beach, etc.
- Host a Gala, Recognition Dinner or Brunch with Celebrity Speaker. Create your own awards, add a photo booth or silent auction.
- Host a “Build Your Own” Sundae Bar, Taco Bar, Potato Bar, Pasta Bar, etc.
- Hold a Thank You Tea Party or Garden Party
- Host a “Just Desserts” Recognition Party
- Have your staff make x dozen cookies each and invite your volunteers in to assemble a cookie box
- Bring in a Food Truck or Ice Cream Truck



# Volunteer Family Outing Ideas

- Zoo Visit
- Bowling Event
- Mini Golf
- Fantasy of Lights Night
- Komets/TinCaps/Pacers
- Host a Thank You party following a large event
- Host an “Un” Talent Show
- Create a “Scavenger” Hunt
- Picnic at the Park w/playground



# Gift Ideas



- Volunteer Cookbook- include anecdote about each volunteer. (Sell to raise \$ for your Non-Profit)
- Custom T-shirts or polo's
- Car Wash, Movie Passes, Gas Gift Cards
- Send or give Flowers
- Provide Incentives for Bringing on Additional Volunteers
- Snap a photo of your clients holding signs spelling out THANK YOU! Enlarge and frame for your volunteer.
- Tote bags, coffee mugs, coasters, water bottles, etc. personalized with volunteer group photo
- Host a monthly raffle of theatre tickets, dinner or movie passes
- Present new volunteers with a welcome gift
- Stemless imprinted wineglasses filled with candy
- A Journal. Personalize a message inside. Encourage your volunteers to use it as a Gratitude Journal
- A Self Care Item – Neck wrap, stress ball, lavender lotion



## Length of Service Awards

Create peak moments, honor friendships and acknowledges contributions over time

- Award certificates or ribbons for volunteering
- Volunteer Pins for number of years
- Gift Cards matched to volunteer interests/habits
- Years of service awards for volunteers should be something they desire, not necessarily things that they “need.”
- Nice celebration or exceptional dinner out
- Choice of a personal award item (ranging from jewelry, electronics, home accessories, leisure/sports items, travel accessories, luxury items, etc.)
- Symbolic award to represent the years of service in a unique, meaningful way or to connect back to something memorable about the company



# FUN ACTIVITIES

- Host a weeklong speaker series: Monday Magic with a local magician, Tales on Tuesday with a storyteller or one of your own participants or team members, Karaoke and Kicks with music and exercise!
- Create a contest. Invite volunteers to submit poems, stories and songs. Voting by clients, participants, guests or organization.
- When volunteers return, host a **Welcome Back Party**
- Host a “Red Carpet” Event. Line a hallway with Gold Stars for a Walk of Fame.
- Host an “All Star” Baseball Theme Party. Share their Stats, serve hot dogs, Cracker Jacks, etc.
- Switch Up Your Venue: Instead of a banquet hall, hire out a trendy cafe or brewery.
- Invite a Speaker Who Knows Your Volunteers: The volunteer appreciation speech is a banquet institution. Instead of city officials or board members delivering a speech, ask community members your program works with to share *their* stories. EX, ask a parent to speak about the profound difference your volunteer tutor made on their child’s education.
- Use holidays for free smiles. Ex. Fun names for St. Patty’s Day. “Merry McDoodles”



# Additional Recognition Ideas

- Volunteer parking spots
- Volunteer of the Month - Volunteer Plaque-either revolving or ongoing
- Engraved name tags
- Plaster their workspace with sticky notes full of your favorite things about them. Or cover a poster board and leave it where they'll find it.
- Encourage employees and others to write a special message for the volunteer and place in a Thank You box.
- Plant trees, bushes, etc. in volunteers honor with plaque/ Stepping stones in a garden
- Create a "hierarchy" of volunteers with special titles, allowing volunteers to train others, etc.
- Host a Volunteer Support Group (especially effective for hospice volunteers)
- Make a donation to their Charity of Choice
- Have someone artsy create a mural or even use sidewalk chalk to share a thank you message.
- Create a "Thank You" bulletin board in the office where people can leave positive comments about their fellow volunteers. Also post pictures of your volunteers in action.





# Catchy Gift Labels

- Candle – “No One Holds a Candle to You”
- Logoed Hat – “Our Hats Off to You”
- Thyme Plant – “Thank You for All Your Thyme”
- Starbucks Gift Card or Frappuccino – “Thanks a Latte”, “Sip Sip Hooray, Coffee’s On Us Today”
- Ice Cream Cone Coupon – “Here’s The Scoop – You’re the Best!”
- Pen – “Thanks for Being De-PEN-dable
- Sharpie – “Thanks for your Lasting and PERMANENT Contribution”
- Hand Soap or Sanitizer – “Thanks for Lending a Helping Hand”, ‘Hands down, you are the best around’
- Hand Lotion – “We’re in Good Hands with Your Help”
- Hand Warmers – “Your Warmed Our Hearts – Let Us Warm Your Hands”
- Comfy Slipper Socks – “You Knock our Socks Off”, “You Rock My Socks Off”
- Mask - ‘We can’t mask it; we appreciate you’
- Gloves – “Thanks for the Helping Hands”
- Puzzle pieces around photo frame – “You Are a Great Fit”- “You Make Our Puzzle Complete”
- Bath Bomb – “You Are the Bomb”
- Note Card – “Take a Note, We Love You”, “Take Note, We Think You’re Awesome!”
- Burt’s Bee’s Lip Balm — “Thanks for Beeing a Great Volunteer – You’re the Balm”
- Jar of Honey - “Thanks for Bee-ing So Helpful”
- Handmade Bracelet – “ Sending You a Socially Distanced Wish. Tie This Bracelet Around Your Wrist and Make a Wish”
- Live Flower in Pot – “Thank You For Growing With Us”, “We Grow Luckier Every Day You are With Us”
- Ruler/Tape Measure – “It’s Easy to Measure the Difference You Make – You’re Amazing”
- Survival Kits – Multiple Ideas Available Online



## Crafty & Inexpensive Thank You's Using Food Stuffs

- Donut – “We Donut Know What We’d Do Without You”, “Donut Ever Forget We Appreciate You”
- Donut Holes – “We Appreciate You A HOLE Bunch”
- S’more Kit – “We Need S’more Volunteers Like You!”
- Microwave Popcorn – “Thanks for Popping in To Help”, “No One’s BUTTER Than You! Thanks for All You Do”
- Individual Bag of Peanuts – “We’d Go Nuts Without Your Help”/“We’re Nuts About You”
- Box of Frosted Flakes – “You’re Gr-r-reat”
- Muffin – “Muffin to Do But Appreciate You”, “We Would Be MUFFIN Without You”
- Chips – “You’re All That and a Bag of Chips”, “Thanks for Chipping In”
- Animal Crackers – “We’re Glad You Are a Part of Our Three Ring Circus”, “This Place Would Be a Zoo Without You”
- Cheez It’s – “This Might Be a Bit Cheez-y But We Appreciate All You Do”
- Simply Juices – “You’re Simply the Best”
- KIND Bars – “We Appreciate Your Kind Efforts”
- Lemonade Mix or Lemon Drops – “ Giving Thanks for Someone who Always Makes Lemonade out of Lemons”
- Mountain Dew – “What Would We Dew Without You?”
- Coke – “You Are SO-DA Bomb!”
- Hot Tea or Arizona Tea – “ You Are Tea-rrific”, “Your Help Is Tea-rrific”
- Nacho Chips – “NACHO Average Volunteer”
- Goldfish Crackers – “O’FISH ally The Best Volunteers. Thank You”
- Chocolate Chip Cookies – “Chip Chip Hooray, We Appreciate Your Work Everyday!”, “No Matter How the Cookie Crumbles, You’re the Best!”
- Mini Bundt Cake – “Thanks A Bundt-ch For All That You Do!” “No If, And or Bundts About It, You Are Great”
- Lucky Charms – “We’re Very Lucky to Have You”





## Inexpensive Thank You's Using Candy Bars

- 100,000 Bars – “You are Worth a Hundred Thousand Grand”
- Butterfinger Candy Bar – “Things Are so Much Butter with You Here”
- Milky Way – “You’re Out of This World – Thanks for Your Help!”
- Twix Bar – “Betwix You and Us - We Couldn’t Have Done It Without You”
- Hershey’s Bar – Create your own sleeve with your personal message
- Take 5 Bar – “Thanks for Working So Hard, Take 5”
- Reese’s Bar – “There Are So Many REESE-ons We Appreciate You”, “So Many REESE-ons To Be Thankful” “Have I Told You REESE-ently How Much We Appreciate You?”
- Reese’s Pieces - “2-4-6-8 Who Do We Ap-REESE-ate?”, “Without You We’d Fall to Pieces”, “We Appreciate You to Pieces”
- Mounds–“We Have Mounds of Appreciation for You”, “Mounds of Thanks for All You Do”
- Snicker’s Bar – “For All the Fun and Snickers, Having You on Our Team is Great!”

# Inexpensive Thank You's Using Other Candy

- M & M's – “Thank You for Being So Marvelous & Magnificent”, “Much and Many Thanks For All You Do”, “Thank You for Your Miles and Miles of Service”
- Jr. Mints, Tic Tacs or Peppermints – “Thanks for Your Commitment”, “I Mint to Tell You How Much I Appreciate You”
- Lifesavers – “You Are a Lifesaver”
- Starburst – “Thanks for Being a Star Volunteer”, “Bursting with Appreciation for Your Star-Studded Efforts”
- Whoppers – “You Were a Whopper of a Help”
- Tootsie Rolls – “Thanks for Your Roll in Our Mission”
- Bag of Hugs Candies – “Thanks for All You Do-These Hugs Are for You”, “You Deserve A Lot of HUGS”
- Extra Chewing Gum – “Thanks for Going the Extra Mile”, “Thanks for Doing a Little Extra”
- Mentos – “We Mento Tell You Thanks for All You Do”
- Chocolate Gold Coins in small bag – “You're Worth Your Weight in Gold”
- Sweet Tarts – “You're Such A Sweetheart”
- Hersey's Gold Nuggets – Put in Gold Box “ You Are Worth More Than Gold”
- Peach Candy Slices – “What a Peach You Are – Thank You!”
- Dove Hearts – “Volunteers Don't Necessarily Have the Time; They Have the Heart”
- Pint Box Filled with Fruit Candies – “We Couldn't Have PICKED a Better Volunteer”
- Jelly Beans – “Thank You For Bean a Sweet Volunteer”



## **Ideas Shared by Our Volunteer Managers at the end of the meeting:**

Heart Shaped Stress Balls sent during Valentines – Squeeze that Pandemic Stress Away, Happy Valentine's Day.

Take photos of the decorated bulletin boards (with photos, birthdays, announcements, etc.) to send to your virtual volunteers so they don't feel like they are missing out.

Do a specific activity at your organization just for the volunteers, no public invited. A campfire (Eagle Marsh did), tour, a hike, open house, see an exhibit, etc. Take picture of volunteer holding laminated sign "I Volunteer Because" - Volunteer Fills in the Blank. Employees can hold signs that say I Appreciate Volunteers Because.....fill in the blank.

Drive through to pick up a free box lunch.

Use a Cricuit cutter to personalize items with their name, your logo, etc.

Practical gift like imprinted pen and post it pad.

Note signed by all staff. Sent along with Window cling that said Thanks for Being a Part of the Zoo Crew to be used on car or in house. Employees received as well.

Sent via email: Gift Basket with Iced Cookies that said Thank you. Included a Thank You note, face masks and other items.

# RESOURCES

**Galaxy Digital**

**VolPro**

**Volunteer Spot**

<https://www.galaxydigital.com/blog/volunteer-appreciation/#:~:text=While%20volunteer%20appreciation%20is%20about,real%20difference%20in%20the%20community.>

<https://volpro.net/freebie-volunteer-appreciation-ideas-ebook/>

[https://www.slideshare.net/VolunteerSpot/volunteer-recognition-from-a-to-z?from\\_action=save](https://www.slideshare.net/VolunteerSpot/volunteer-recognition-from-a-to-z?from_action=save)

YOUR IDEAS

