

# Best Practices: Volunteer Appreciation Program

---

- Research existing volunteer appreciation programs
  - MAVA
  - Energize
  - Points of Light
  - HOTC
  - The Volunteer Management Handbook

## Best Practices

1. **Volunteers NEED recognition:** It is not a question whether or not volunteers need to be appreciated, it is how. Volunteers give so much to Second Harvest Heartland that we need to appreciate them; if we don't we will lose them.
2. **Connect to Mission:** An important part of recognition is using meaningful and sincere ways to connect individuals and groups to Second Harvest Heartland's mission.
3. **Incorporate Existing programs:** Find ways to incorporate already existing special days and weeks that relate to Volunteerism. Also, use existing programs that can be adapted to suit our needs such as Presidents Volunteer Service Award, Daily Points of Light Award, Be the Change Award, etc.
4. **When to Recognize:** When recognizing volunteers it is very important to give recognition:
  - **Frequently:** Recognition has a short shelf life. If volunteers don't receive any appreciation for a while they will start to wonder if they are doing a good job and might even stop volunteering with us.
  - **Consistently:** If you recognize one volunteer for an accomplishment it is a must to recognize another volunteer for the same accomplishments.
  - **Timely:** Recognition for an accomplishment should be done as soon as possible, don't wait for months to say thank you.
5. **Life Cycle of a Volunteer:** Recognition should be given at the beginning, middle and end of service. Many organizations also celebrate other milestones such as reaching a certain number of hours or volunteering a number of months or years.
6. **Formal and Informal:** A complete and well balanced appreciation program needs to have components of both formal and informal procedures.
  - **Formal Practices:** comprised of awards, certificates, plaques, pins, events
  - **Informal Practices:** daily thank yous, taking interest in their life, sending notes

7. **Individual Fashion:** Everyone likes to be appreciated differently, what makes one person feel recognized doesn't necessarily mean it will make another person feel recognized. Make sure the appreciation program encompasses all three recognition types

### The Three Recognition Types

- **Affiliation-**orientated people value relationships. They enjoy being surrounded by others and being liked. Provide affiliators with volunteering opportunities that involve direct contact with clients and group-based projects with other volunteers and paid staff. Aim to recognize affiliators through thank you cards from clients, and opportunities for social events such as luncheons and dinners, photo on website or newsletter.
  - **Recognition should be given at group event**
  - **Should be given in presence of peers, family, other bonded groups**
  - **Item or award should have a "Personal Touch"**
  - **Should be organizational in nature, given by the organization**
  - **Should be voted by peers**
  
- **Achievement-** orientated people value achieving goals and often enjoy tasks that can be measured and quantified. Provide achievers with opportunities to lead projects or work alone on goal-directed tasks so they can see the results. Recognize achievers with more challenging tasks, promotion to a position of greater responsibility or additional training opportunities. Acknowledge them publicly and present 'most' or 'best' awards that they can display.
  - **Ideal result of recognition is additional training or more challenging tasks**
  - **Subject for recognition is best linked to a very specific accomplishment**
  - **Phrasing of recognition through "best" "most" awards**
  - **Recognition decision should include "checkpoints" or "records"**
  - **Awardee should be selected by co-workers**
  
- **Influence/Power-**orientated people like to make an impact and to influence others. Provide these volunteers with tasks that provide opportunities for them to mix with other power people and to persuade others to support the cause. Recognize power people by promoting them to more powerful or prestigious positions, sending them thank you letters from the CEO, or naming an award after them. Acknowledge them publicly in newspapers and newsletters. Have senior management select them for and present them with an award.
  - **Key aspect of recognition is "promotion" conveying greater access to authority or information**
  - **Should be commendation from "Names"**
  - **Should be announced to community at large, put in newspaper**
  - **Decision should be made by the organization's leadership**

