

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



How to Succeed With Volunteers-In-Parks
60-Minute Module Series

RECOGNITION Training Guide

**National Park Service
Volunteers-In-Parks Program**



HOW TO SUCCEED WITH VOLUNTEERS-IN-PARKS

60-Minute Module Series

Program Preparation
Program Planning
Motivation
Needs Assessment
Designing Jobs
Recruitment
Interviewing
Orientation
Training
Safety Management
Supervision
Delegation
Performance Reviews
Recognition

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INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to overstate the importance of making volunteers feel appreciated for the time and effort they so willingly offer.

Often volunteer recognition is narrowly thought of as a formal banquet or a small gift to acknowledge a volunteer's donated service. Instead, recognition needs to be considered an integral part of a total management philosophy that continually seeks to notice and value individual contributions.

Powerful and meaningful recognition begins when we recognize the talents and desires of prospective volunteers and offer them the job which responds to the motivational needs they are looking to fill through volunteering. The remainder of meaningful recognition is the myriad ways we formally and informally say, "I noticed," "congratulations," and "thank you."

If only one person at your park is responsible for providing all of the volunteer recognition, and other staff and leadership volunteers see this as **that person's domain**, the most important guidelines of volunteer recognition are broken. Recognition needs to be timely and genuine and it is most appreciated when given by the person's supervisor. In other words, volunteer recognition should primarily be the responsibility of the person overseeing the volunteer's work.

If your staff have never devoted time to examining their role in creating and implementing ways to thank volunteers, this topic will provide a stimulus for this important outreach.

PURPOSE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The **Purposes** of this module are to help staff appreciate the significance of meaningful recognition to volunteers and to discuss formal and informal acknowledgments that can take place at numerous times during a volunteer's involvement with the park.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the participant will be able to:

1. Understand the power of meaningful recognition.
2. Surface any personal and organizational barriers to giving volunteer recognition and problem solve solutions to address them.
3. Clarify the broad spectrum of ways volunteers can be thanked both formally and informally within the organization.
4. Brainstorm creative, minimal cost recognition items and acknowledgments that are appropriate to use when saying, "I noticed you!"
5. Review essential guidelines of effective recognition.

GENERAL NOTES TO TRAINER

1. This workshop is in a suggested format. Feel free to personalize it to meet your park needs.
2. This training should be upbeat and fun. Participants should leave the session with an increased sense of the value of recognition and additional ideas on ways to give it.
3. If your staff are resistant to volunteers or feel incompetent in supervising them, other workshops dealing with these issues should precede this training. Staff will not be receptive to talking about recognition if they need to work through real and perceived problems with the program.
4. If you are aware of general organizational barriers to giving staff or volunteer recognition within the organization, invite the participation of key park managers who have the power to create an atmosphere of open support and appreciation.
5. You may wish to change the timing in the workshop or use some of the suggested expandable activities depending on what discussions would be most appropriate to your park.

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Transparency Handout	Section	Method of Presentation	Time
T-1 T-2 T-3	H-1 Introduction Purpose of Workshop Introductory Comments Learning Objectives Opening Exercise Key Concepts	Presentation Discussion	8 minutes
T-3 T-4	H-1 Concept 1 Recognition is an integral part of the management process.	Presentation/Discussion	10 minutes
T-3 T-5 T-6 T-7 T-8	H-1 Concept 2 Recognition can be formal or informal.	Presentation/Discussion	12 minutes
T-3 T-9	H-1 H-2 Concept 3 The success of recognition is measured by the receiver.	Presentation/Discussion	10 minutes
T-3	H-1 H-3 Concept 4 Recognition is fun and is best when personalized	Activity	15 minutes
T-3 T-9	H-1 H-2 Summary/Wrap-Up/Evaluation Review principles of recognition	Summary Remarks	5 minutes

TOTAL TIME: 60 minutes

TRAINER'S NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Time: 8 minutes

T-1: Learning Objectives

Read purpose of recognition (H-1) and summarize learning objectives using T -1.

Have participants think about volunteer recognition in their own life:

Ask:

What kind of volunteer or other recognition have you received? How meaningful was it?

T-2: Recognition Experiences

Debrief 1

Ask a few participants to briefly share their answers with the group. Try to get examples of both meaningful and non-meaningful recognition.

Debrief 2

Ask group:

What did you learn about recognition as you listened to the participants tell about their experience with recognition?

On flip chart or transparency, record what they learned: (Answers will most likely include the fact that recognition can be very powerful, meaningful, not meaningful, creative, spontaneous, poorly presented, expensive or inexpensive, the job itself, etc.)

Summarizing key learning of this exercise:

You learn many essential principles of recognition when you analyze your own experience with receiving meaningful or not meaningful recognition in your life.

T-3: Key Concepts

This training is built on **four Key Concepts**.

H-1: Key Concepts

(Show Transparency with all concepts. Indicate that during the workshop each concept will be examined together with relevant material.)

CONCEPT 1

Time: 10 minutes

Recognition is an ongoing, integral part of the management process.

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

T-4: Barriers to Recognition

Presentation:

Recognition is a philosophy and an attitude that needs to permeate your entire organization. All managers and supervisors need to embrace the concept. If it isn't a part of your park's culture, volunteer recognition on an ongoing basis will be hampered.

Discussion Question:

What evidence have you seen that managers and supervisors in your park support recognition of your volunteers?

Discussion Question:

Are there any organizational barriers to giving positive feedback and recognition to your volunteers?

Utilizing a flip chart or transparencies, record barriers (left side) and methods to overcome barriers (right side).

Answers you might receive and suggested method of recording:

Barriers

1. Time
2. Competition among volunteers for recognition
3. Paid staff not feeling recognized

Overcoming barriers

Many forms of recognition require little time (give examples)

Have volunteers vote for volunteer of the year

Give joint recognition
Paid and non-paid staff recognized as a team

CONCEPT 2

Time: 12 minutes

Recognition can be formal or informal and can be given on many occasions during the volunteer's involvement with your park.

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

T-5: Formal Recognition (major values)

T-6: Formal Recognition (cautions)

Presentation:

Formal recognition (annual awards ceremonies, recognition dinners, etc.) is frequently held during National Volunteer Week or at some designated traditional event (e.g., Valentines Day, Thanksgiving, Annual Recreation Dinner, etc.

Ask participants: What kind of formal recognition do you do in your park?.

Major values of formal recognition:

- (1) Builds community spirit among volunteers
- (2) Publicly recognizes volunteers — attracts others to join

Cautions in formal recognition:

- (1) Thinking they replace daily “thank yous”
- (2) Lack of personal presentations
- (3) More costly - some volunteers object
- (4) Inflexible programs — only have meaning to old-timers
- (5) Some volunteers do not want public recognition
- (6) Others... (Ask for additional ideas)

T-7: Informal Recreation

Informal Recognition is the day-to-day ways we say, “We really appreciate you!”

Ask for a few examples from participants.

Major Values of Informal Recognition:

- (1) Sincere and spontaneous
- (2) Timely/instantaneous

Cautions in informal recognition:

- (1) Can be overdone
- (2) Should not replace formal recognition

T-8: Times for Recognition

Discussion Question:

When do we currently recognize volunteers and how could we enhance our recognition during these and other times?

- When the volunteer signs up or first day
- Daily or weekly basis
- Monthly/yearly basis
- Special occasions (birthday, anniversary date with organization, holidays, etc.)
- End of a project
- During a short term project
- When they leave the organization

CONCEPT 3

Time: 10 minutes

The “PAT” Principle: The success of any form of recognition is measured not by the giver, but by the receiver.

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

T-9: The “PAT” Principle of Volunteer Recognition

H-2: The “PAT” Principle of Volunteer Recognition

To be successful, according to the “PAT” Principle, recognition must be:

Personal. Appropriate. Timely.

Let’s examine each of these elements.

Personal

Recognition must be felt by each individual being recognized.

Ask: How can you make sure this happens, even when you are recognizing a group accomplishment?

Possible responses: Mention the actual accomplishment. If a groups is being recognized, break it down into elements. Mention the types of people working on the project, where they’re from, why they’re here, etc. so the volunteers gets the sense you are talking about them and not just about what they’ve done. Make eye contact with various individuals as you speak.

Appropriate

The amount and type of recognition must match the accomplishment and the volunteer. Ask participants for examples of recognition that seemed perfect for a specific volunteer accomplishment and for examples of recognition that didn’t work at all.

(One trap we may fall into is recognizing people the way we like to be recognized — which is, of course, irrelevant! For example, “I like to receive certificates so I always give my volunteers certificates.”)

When you are recognizing many types of volunteers in one event, make certain that you plan different types of activities and experiences so that all being honored feel personally appreciated. **But Remember**, not all volunteers want or appreciate public recognition.

Timely

Recognition should be given as soon after the activity as possible. Ask group for examples where the timing of recognition given to them or their volunteers made a big difference in how successful it was.

CONCEPT 4:

Time: 15 minutes

Recognition can be creative and fun and is best when it's personalized for your park, your volunteer(s) and the type of service provided.

T-3: Key Concepts

Recognition is your opportunity to show your volunteers how much you appreciate them.

H-1: Key Concepts

Exercise:

Ask participants: Think about a specific volunteer or a group of volunteers actually working in your park, that you want to recognize. Applying all the principles we have discussed, and digging deep into your own creativity and imagination, come up with a proposal to recognize that individual or that group. If you wish, you can use handout H-3, "Volunteer Recognition Ideas," as a starting reference.

H-3: Volunteer Recognition Ideas

After a few minutes, ask individuals to form small groups of four, pick one example from each group, and then work together to make that recognition as good as it can be. Then have each group report back to the whole group on their proposal.

(You might want to demonstrate this creative type of recognition with a gift to the group with the most creative idea! Use your originality here...)

SUMMARY/WRAP-UP/EVALUATION

Time: 5 minutes

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

**T-9: The "PAT"
Principle of Volunteer
Recognition**

In closing, show T -3 and T-9 with some reminders of principles for successful volunteer recognition.

END 60-MINUTE TRAINING

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXPANDED ACTIVITIES

1. Brainstorm creative recognition for long-term volunteers that already have all the visual certificates, plaques, mugs, etc.
2. Take longer to hear peoples' experiences with volunteer recognition and discuss what you learn from these experiences.
3. Design a handout that has participants fill in information describing current recognition practices and new ideas generated at the workshop.
4. Give workshop participants a list of barriers to giving recognition and ask them to check off any that specifically apply to their park. Spend more time working through a plan to overcome these barriers. (Barriers such as: "We don't have time, most volunteers are short term," etc.)
5. Ask group to come up with ways to incorporate many types of recognition styles in a formal ceremony so that all who are honored truly feel personally acknowledged.
6. Suggest a follow-up discussion to determine if new and rejuvenated methods of recognition are being tried as a result of this seminar.
7. Invite agency volunteers to the seminar and ask them to describe how the organization has recognized them and how it has been meaningful or not meaningful.
8. Ask group what kind of recognition people who are motivated by affiliation might like? How about people motivated by achievement? By power?

RESOURCES

1. McCurley, Steve and Rick Lynch. *Volunteer Management: Mobilizing all the Resources of the Community*, Chapter 12, "Retention and Recognition." Heritage Arts Publishing, 1996. Available from www.pointsoflight.org/catalog or www.energizeinc.com
2. Vineyard, Sue. *Beyond Banquets, Plaques and Pins: Creative Ways To Recognize Volunteers*, Heritage Arts Publishing, Revised, 1994. Available from www.energizeinc.com
3. Vineyard, Sue. *Recognizing Volunteers and Paid Staff: The art, the science nas a GAZILLION Ideas*, Heritage Arts Publishing, 2001. Available from www.energizeinc.com
4. Stallings, Betty. "Recognition - The Art of Letting Someone Know You Noticed." (video) Available from www.volunteermanagement.com

Additional resources that may be available

5. McCurley, Steve, and Sue Vineyard. *101 Ideas for Volunteer Programs*, 1986, Heritage Arts Publishing. 1807 Prairie, Downers Grove, IL, 60515 . (708)-964-1194.
6. Vineyard, Sue, and Steve McCurley. *101 More Ideas for Volunteer Programs*, 1995, Heritage Arts Publishing. 1807 Prairie, Downers Grove, IL, 60515. (708)-964-1194

T RANSPARENCIES

Guide to Transparencies

- T-1:** Learning Objectives
- T-2:** Recognition - Personal Experiences
- T-3:** Key Concepts
- T-4:** Barriers to Recognition
- T-5:** Formal Recognition (major values)
- T-6:** Formal Recognition (cautions)
- T-7:** Informal Recognition (major values, cautions)
- T-8:** When to Recognize
- T-9:** The "PAT" Principle of Volunteer Recognition

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the power of recognition in your own lives
- Identify personal and organizational barriers to giving recognition; propose solutions
- Explore ways of giving formal and informal recognition in their organizations
- Review essential guidelines for giving effective recognition

Recognition: Personal Experiences

Think about volunteer
recognition in your life

- What kind have you received?
- How meaningful was it?

Key Concepts

Concept 1

Recognition is an ongoing, integral part of the management process.

Concept 2

Recognition can be formal or informal and can be given often.

Concept 3

The success of recognition is measured not by the giver, but by the receiver.

Concept 4

Recognition can be creative and fun and is best when it's personalized.

Barriers to Recognition

- Are there any organizational barriers to giving positive feedback and recognition to your volunteers?
- If so, what are the barriers?
- How can we overcome them?

Formal Recognition

Major values:

- Building community spirit among volunteers
- Publicly recognizing volunteers
- Attracting other volunteers to join

Formal Recognition

Cautions:

- Thinking they replace daily “thank yous”
- No personal presentations
- More costly - some volunteers object
- Inflexible programs only have meaning to old-timers
- Some volunteers do not like public recognition

Informal Recognition

Major Values:

Cautions:

When to Recognize

- When the volunteer signs up on the first day
- Monthly or yearly basis
- End of project
- Whenever it feels right
- When the volunteer leaves the organization

The “PAT” Principle of Volunteer Recognition

The success of any form of recognition is measured not by the giver, but the receiver.

Personal

Recognition must be felt by each person being recognized.

Appropriate

Recognition must match the accomplishment and the volunteer.

Timely

Recognition must be given as soon after the achievement as possible.

HANDOUTS

Guide to Handouts

H-1: Key Concepts of Recognition

H-2: The “PAT” Principle of Volunteer Recognition

H-3: Volunteer Recognition Ideas

Key Concepts of Recognition

The purpose of recognition is to acknowledge the contributions of volunteers in meaningful and appropriate ways.

Concept 1

Recognition is an ongoing, integral part of the management process.

It starts with placement of volunteers in jobs suited to their skills and motivations. Recognition of volunteers also involves a philosophy and an attitude that needs to permeate your entire organization. If it isn't part of your park's culture, volunteer recognition on an ongoing basis will be hampered.

Concept 2

Recognition can be formal or informal and can be given on many occasions during the volunteer's involvement with the organization.

Formal recognition is given during scheduled events, such as an annual recognition dinner, and is an excellent way to recognize outstanding or long-term volunteers or groups of volunteers in a public way. Such recognition can help build team spirit among you volunteers. Informal recognition is the day-to-day ways we say, "we appreciate you" in simple, sincere, and inexpensive ways. Examples of appropriate opportunities for informal recognition might include when the volunteer first starts work, special occasions (such as the volunteer's birthday), the end of a project, or whenever a simple "thank you" is appropriate.

Concept 3

The success of any form of recognition is measured not by the giver, but by the receiver (the "PAT" Principle).

Successful recognition should be: 1. **Personal**, in that way it is felt by each volunteer being recognized. At group recognition events, a variety of activities, as well as, specific references to accomplishments, tools used, work locations, home towns, etc., will help insure that all being honored will feel personally appreciated; 2. **Appropriate** for volunteer and the accomplishment. To help you decide what type of recognition might work best, consider whether the volunteer is motivated more by achievement, social interaction, or power, and match the recognition to the individual. Be careful not to recognize based only on your own taste and preferences. Remember, you can always ask the volunteer what would be most meaningful to them, and; 3. **Timely**, in that it is given as soon after the accomplishment as possible, in order to insure maximum impact.

Concept 4

Recognition can be creative and fun and is best when it's personalized for your park and for the type of service provided.

The handout on "Volunteer Recognition Ideas" lists a number of suggestions to get you started.

The “PAT” Principle of Volunteer Recognition

The success of any form of recognition is measured
not by the giver, but by the receiver.

Personal

Recognition must be felt by each individual being
recognized.

Appropriate

Recognition must match the accomplishment and the
volunteer.

Timely

Recognition must be given as soon after the
achievement as possible.

Volunteer Recognition Ideas

- Send volunteers to workshops and conferences representing your park
- Make a fun video about a volunteer, then give it to him/her
- Give VIPs tickets to something they like
- Send card on anniversary of their becoming a volunteer
- Frame a copy of an article about the volunteer(s)
- Display a permanent plaque in the visitor center with long-term VIP names on it
- Promote volunteer to job with more responsibility
- Write articles about volunteers for local newspaper or park newsletter
- Write holiday notes to volunteers
- Dedicate a bulletin board just for activities/news relating to volunteers
- Give volunteers personalized coffee mugs
- Leave candy kisses on volunteer's desks
- Develop creative awards to give at your annual recognition event
- Develop an in-house award named after your founding volunteer
- Send notes thanking family members for their support of the volunteer's efforts
- Involve volunteers in long - range planning
- Invite volunteers to attend staff meetings
- Have a monthly birthday lunch to celebrate all volunteer birthdays that occurred during that month
- Nominate a volunteer for local, regional, and national recognition
- Send unexpected notes expressing thanks
- Give quality recognition items
- Provide bookmark, key chain, note cards, etc., with volunteer thank you message
- Work with cooperating association for a discount or yearly membership for volunteers or to pay fee for seminars or classes
- Give a watch with the VIP emblem embossed on the face
- Invite a volunteer to lunch with the Superintendent
- Use a digital camera to capture volunteers at work
- Create a personalized photo album about the volunteer
- Use email to send greetings, thank yous, cards, recognition, etc.
- Exchange trips for VIPs with other parks
- Develop park or team T - shirts or ball caps
- Give a volunteer a Golden Eagle pass (or Golden Age)
- Give a volunteer free surfing lessons
- Mention a volunteer or a particular group as a highlight in the annual VIP report
- Name a recognition award in honor of a former volunteer
- Voluncheer.com - Recognition items at www.voluncheer.com
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