

Sustainability

Laying Out the Welcome Mat

Mid-April 2009



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A service of the Corporation for National and Community Service - Special Projects and Sustainability Initiative

Dear "Welcoming" Colleague,

If you're like most people, inviting guests to dinner usually prompts a "straightening up" of the household. Burned out lights are replaced, overflowing trash cans are emptied, and the front door mat is shaken out. It's what a good host does to make a guest feel welcome and honored.

With the President's focus on serving community, volunteers will be knocking at your organization's door. This issue of On-the-Go eTA has some tips on how to lay out the welcome mat before your volunteer guests arrive. Topics include...

First Impressions Count

Volunteer Job Descriptions Spell Out Expectations

Guest Article: Good Volunteer Management Keeps Them Coming Back

Do you have questions or ideas about welcoming community members into your organization? Contact us through OntheGo@CampaignConsultation.com for more information. You can still access previous issues of On-the-Go eTA by clicking on the back issues at the bottom of the page.

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First Impressions Count

Every visitor who comes through your office door receives a first impression of your organization. You never get a second chance to make a first impression, and a first impression is a lasting impression. Research shows that it takes only seven seconds to make a first impression. To attract volunteers and keep them coming back, ensure that their visits are positive using the following ideas...

- Make certain that signage to your office is clear and up-to-date.

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Tips for the Times

Put out the welcome mat for visitors and newcomers. Have a welcome pack that includes information about your organization, who you serve, your leadership, news clippings and other information that shows you are an important part of your community.

- [e-Seminars for Sustainability](#)
- [VISTA Viewfinder](#)
- [AmeriCorps Week](#)
- [Video and Photo Contest for AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps*VISTA and AmeriCorps NCCC \(National Civilian Community Corps\)](#)

[Resources](#)

*Sustainability Learning
Products and Services:*

- Greet volunteers immediately with a smile and hospitable attitude.
- Once inside, create a warm and welcoming environment that is comfortable, easy to navigate, neat and clean. Establish a positive atmosphere that reflects your organization's mission and activities.
- Showcase your achievements and successes with pictures on your walls.

[Click here](#) to read how telephone communication skills impact the way your organization is viewed in the community.

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Volunteer Job Descriptions Spell Out Expectations

A volunteer coming on board to meet community needs through your organization requires a written review of the need and ways to meet those needs. A comprehensive description with a clear outline of responsibilities provides a practical welcome that assures volunteer confidence and commitment.

Here are some points to consider when writing a volunteer job description

You should provide a **Because volunteers**

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You should provide a written...	Because volunteers want...
Mission of Organization	To know what you stand for. Your words will translate a share with others.
Description of project	Assurance that the project has clear guidelines and won't grow to consume their lives.
Position Title	Credible recognition that their time is meaningful and directed toward a specific goal.
Location	To know where they will be working, especially if different from the main site location.
Time Commitment Required	Estimated information as to number of hours, days, weeks, etc. needed, description of what flexibility in the schedule is possible, and a project completion date.



Skills and qualifications needed	To make use of their talents and abilities to be effective in the position.
Training/orientation provided	Confidence that they can do their job safely and effectively and information about when and where that training will occur.
Benefits provided	Something for their time even if they don't express it outright. This could include free parking, lunch, coffee, mileage reimbursement, use of space or equipment at the site, etc. Let them know how they will be recognized for their service.
Supervision and support	A name and contact information for the person who will oversee them and respond to their requests or questions.

[Click here](#) to link to a volunteer job description provided by the Harry S. Truman Library & Museum.

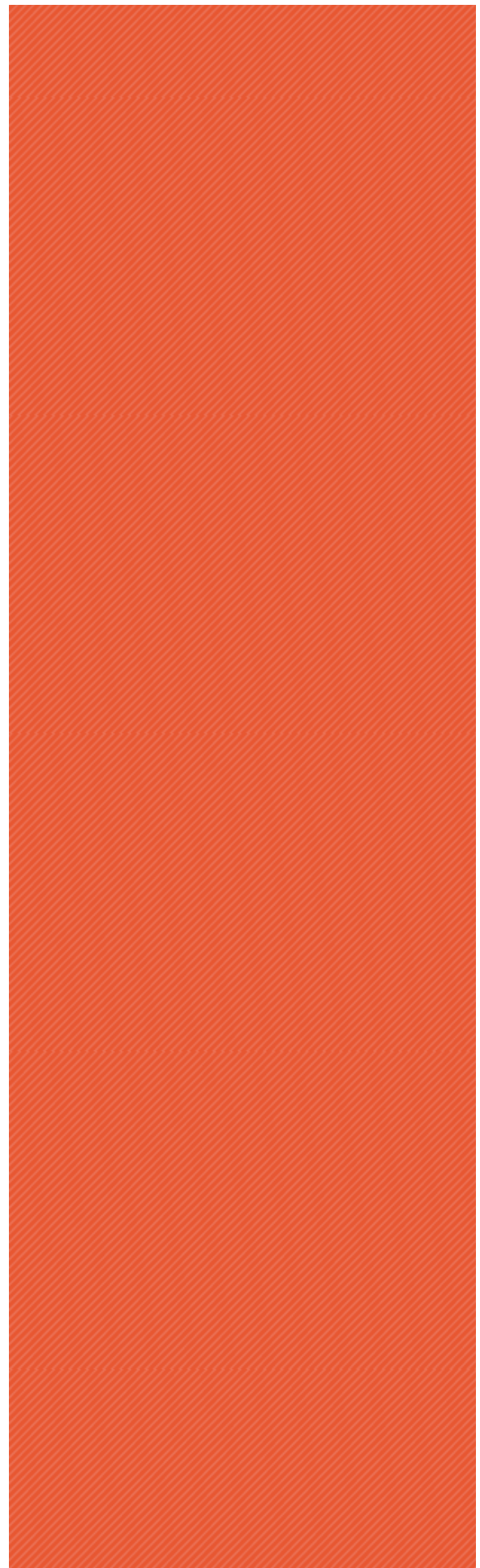
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Guest Article: Good Volunteer Management Keeps Them Coming Back

Special thanks to Becky Hare, RSVP Program Director, Knoxville County Community Action Committee, Knoxville, Tennessee for providing this article on good volunteer management.

“It’s wonderful to see and hear all the attention the media has given in the past several weeks to recognize the value of volunteering. The many acts of kindness are real stories featuring extreme needs that are resolved by volunteers giving back to their communities through non-profit agencies.

An agency that has the skill to attract the media to tell the story is often an agency that utilizes good volunteer management tools. There are, however, additional



components of responsibility that influence volunteer management. Some of the characteristics agencies should consider in order to implement or improve successful volunteer management include:

- Maintaining a good reputation in the community
- A clearly stated mission and reasonable goals
- Enthusiastic leadership skills for staff and professional peers
- Participation in community partnerships to enhance services
- Sound financial position

In the early 1990's social service agencies experienced a surfeit of volunteer services, generated in part by the common staff position of Volunteer Coordinator. With declining donations, forced budget reductions have eliminated or combined some staff responsibilities. If retained at all, the coordinator's job description often is rolled into other positions such as the marketing or development officer.

Today, the position is often non-existent which sets up the agency for this common scenario: The executive director is in awe of the tremendous response from a volunteer recruitment announcement in the daily newspaper. Out of desperation all of the applicants are accepted as volunteers, given their assignments, and they report as scheduled. Each week the tasks decline, and, no one routinely checks on their volunteers or even thanks them for helping. Finally the volunteers stop reporting to the agency.

Volunteers can be a valuable resource to establish a stimulus plan: bring back the role of the volunteer coordinator – with perks. With the current and unprecedented national publicity for volunteers, Baby Boomers are seeking meaningful opportunities and retired professionals want to share their skills and interest to help solve community problems. BUT, the caveat is good volunteer management in an agency that values them not only as volunteers, but also as highly trained and qualified professionals. Seize the credentialed applicant to organize the next fund raiser, take on a signature project or conduct the exhausting program evaluation.

As an RSVP director, I cannot afford to place great volunteers with agencies that do not incorporate good volunteer management principles. In 2004 the RSVP staff and advisory council sponsored a free, community-wide workshop for volunteer coordinators and leaders. By reputation and request, it has continued as an annual signature training event led by local professionals in direct or related fields of management. The outcomes have

“Mankind is divisible into two great classes: hosts and guests.”

– Max Beerbohm, 1872 –1956
English parodist and caricaturist

been successful and exciting from both sectors – private and non-profit.

Conducting volunteer management workshops provides many benefits, including:

- Better understanding of leadership for volunteer service
- Positive benefits of volunteer staff from paid staff
- Recruiting, screening, sustaining and training education
- Understanding applicable risk management issues
- Networking with professional peers”

If you have questions, or you would like more information, you may contact Becky at becky.hare@knoxcac.org

From time-to-time, On-the-Go eTA likes to feature the views and experiences of those in the field. The views presented in this article do not necessarily reflect those of the Corporation for National and Public Service.

If you would like to submit a guest feature on sustainability for review, please contact OntheGo@CampaignConsultation.com

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Let us know

Contact OntheGo@CampaignConsultation.com We would be happy to answer questions or to give you more support.

Thank you for your interest in On-The-Go eTA. We encourage you to send this and other issues of [OTG eTA](#) to friends and colleagues who would benefit from the information. Also, if you're on information-overload, you may request [email removal](#). Otherwise OTG e-TA will be back soon with another edition.

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First Impressions Count (cont.)

Telephone Communications Skills

Good telephone communications skills will establish that you value people. To practice good phone communications:

- Have a live person answer the phone in a cordial professional manner as often as possible, instead of relying on voice mail.
- Answer the phone by the third ring.
- Use a pleasant voice, state the name of your organization and your name when you answer the phone.
- Give your full attention to the caller and do not try to multi-task during the call.
- Keep your voice mail message as short and simple as possible while conveying enough information to assure the caller that his/her call is important.
- Return phone messages *asap*.

Remember that you may be the first and only contact a member of the community may have with your program, and that first impression will stay with the caller or visitor for a long time.

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Resources

eOrganizer

eOrganizer is an interactive clearinghouse for the latest and greatest web instruments of change. This GIZMO shows you how to maximize free and inexpensive online tools and resources to mobilize people around issues and within organizations. Structured around eight categories important to community organizing, it offers descriptions and provides access to many of the most current web arenas and strategies for bringing groups together to create community change.

<http://www.campaignconsultation.com/GIZMOs/eorganizer/index.html>

The National ASK (Awareness, Skills, Knowledge) to Sustain Institute, sponsored by Corporation for National and Community Service, provided by Campaign Consultation, Inc. 1998, 2002.

The CNCS Resources Now! National Institute, sponsored by Corporation for National and Community Service, provided by Campaign Consultation, Inc. 2005-07.

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Learning Products and Services

Sustainability:

OntheGo@CampaignConsultation.com is designed to give information fast on building capacity. Use this online support for advice from a fundraising professional. Contact OntheGo@CampaignConsultation.com

GIZMOs:

(Giving Information for Zooming Mission Objectives) GIZMOS are resource and fund development tools for you and your volunteers. They are tangible products in packets, pocket brochures, CD-ROMs, games, etc. They feature a myriad of fundraising topics such as The Case for Support, an interactive online resource. View and use our newest GIZMOs at www.CampaignConsultation.com/gizmosplash

The Chronicle of Philanthropy:

Everyone who comes to a Resources Now! National Institute gets a free subscription to the Chronicle for a year. Participants in CNCS Campaign Consultation workshops receive the latest issue free of charge plus a \$20 discount on one year's subscription.

Workshops/Clinics:

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), through its T/TA service provider Campaign Consultation, Inc., offers a three-hour workshops and clinics for those interested.

WebWizard:

CNCS sponsors this new service that Campaign Consultation provides to assist programs and projects in maximizing their websites for program, client, volunteer and fundraising needs.

Online Courses/Webinars:

Web course delivery of topics pertinent to resource development such as — **Build Fundraising Volunteer Champions** and **Cause Related Marketing and Corporate Partnerships**. Available through the Resource Center at <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org>

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