

A Healthy Volunteer Program: Recruiting & Sustaining Volunteers

Annette Lamb, Wayne County 4-H Volunteer
alamb@eduscapes.com
<http://eduscapes.com/sessions/volunteers>

An influx of quality volunteers can energize your 4-H program. In this engaging, interactive workshop, you'll learn to identify characteristics of effective volunteers, locate enthusiastic participants, persuade them to get involved, and keep them motivated. This quick-paced session will provide dozens of ideas for jumpstarting your volunteer program.

According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2014), the rate of volunteering is at its lowest point since 2002. However 62.6 million people volunteer and you only need a few of those. About a quarter of adults volunteer including 22.2 percent of men and 28.4 percent of women. Look around you. One in four are willing to volunteer... you just need to find the right ones!

Workshop Goals

1. Identify reasons for volunteering
2. Identify categories of volunteers
3. Identify your pool of potential volunteers
4. Determine your volunteer needs
5. Create and implement a plan for recruiting volunteers
6. Create and implement a plan for sustaining volunteers

Reasons for Volunteering

What foods satisfy hunger? Each person enjoys different toppings on their pizza. In the same way, people who choose to volunteer have different personal needs and interests. Their reasons for volunteering vary. A 4-H survey found that "having an impact on the life skills of youth" was a major reason that people become 4-H volunteers.

Why do people volunteer? Why do you volunteer? Circle a few major reasons you volunteer.

Impact the life skills of youth
Meet new people
Develop your leadership skills
Leave a legacy
See smiling faces
Opportunity to "give back"
Fun
Aligned with my values
Have a positive impact on next generation
Build the next generation of leaders
Feel pride in helping others
Understand your community better
Chance to improve people skills
Chance to promote a hobby or interest

Inspire and empower youth
Share what you have learned
Make a difference
Help the local community
Being valued and appreciated
Enjoy mentoring
Support my children
It's a cause I believe in
Teach enduring life skills
Teach young people in an area of personal passion
Develop new and current skills
Share skills through hands-on experiences with youth
Opportunity to meet new people

Why do people choose not to volunteer? What keeps you from volunteering. Circle major reasons.

Family obligations
School obligations
Needs don't fit my schedule
I'm busy when they want me
Financial issues (gas)

Work obligations
Distance and transportation
I don't have time
Health issues
Perceived lack of useful skills

Categories of Volunteers

What makes a great sandwich? Most sandwiches have a filling with something to hold it together. The same happens with 4-H. You don't just need "volunteers". You need specific categories of people to address particular needs.

Bun Volunteers: Hold things together.

- Know 4-H, love the 4-H philosophy
- Enjoy leadership roles
- Want to have a big impact on future generations
- Believe in promoting life skills
- Want a long-term commitment
- Want to build relationships
- Use their connections, enthusiasm, organizational skills

Veggie Volunteers: Create a nourishing environment.

- Know 4-H, enjoy involvement
- Prefer working directly with youth
- May not want to lead, but enjoy being involved
- Want to make a difference, one child at a time
- Enjoy learning and sharing
- Use their enthusiasm to keep your programs going

Meat Volunteers: Add flavor and depth.

- Know content, love sharing knowledge
- Possess specific skills and have a passion for their interest area
- Like to share and have an impact
- Enthusiastic about content
- Many or may not have experience with youth
- Use their experience and help them develop teaching skills
- Start with on boards, one-short events

Key Ideas

Minimize **Junk Food Volunteers**. Sometimes you go without the meat and just learn it on your own. These people sound like they want to help, but they don't follow-through

Potential Volunteers

What's at the salad bar? You need to identify your potential pool of volunteers. Below you'll find some of the types of people who might volunteer. *Think about a few of these categories you could target.*

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Moms | Dads | Uncles |
| Aunts | Grandparents | Church goers |
| Concerned Citizens | Community members | 4-H young alumni |
| Local business people | 4-H older alumni | 4-H staff |
| Retirees | Teens | |

Professional Experts: Medical, Law, Natural resources, Info & Tech, Business & corporate, Farmers & ranchers, Artists & musicians, Plumbers & mechanics, Educators, Govt workers
Hobby experts: animal husbandry, art & music, hunters & anglers, wood workers, electronics & robotics, chefs & bakers, gardeners, LEGO builders, sewing, sports

Just because a person is a parent, doesn't mean they'll be a great volunteer. However, most can be trained.

Guard: hovers and wants to protect their own child

Assign them tasks that don't directly involve their child

Disciplinarian: wants to control others and ensure they "do it right"

Review the 4-H philosophy and model a mentoring approach

Dictator: wants to do everything for a child rather than helping them learn

Help them how to be an effective teacher and facilitator

Socialite: wants to have fun talking with other adults, so ignores children

Assign them the registration area or greeter duties

Uninvolved: they show up but don't do anything

Provide very specific direction and tasks

Your Volunteer Needs

What are your wants versus your needs. You may want to start some great new programs, but first you need volunteers to handle what you're currently doing.

What volunteers do you have now, what types of volunteers do you need, and where are your gaps?

Why are volunteers needed?

What specific **skills** are needed?

What are the **responsibilities** of the volunteer?

How will the volunteer be **supported** (i.e., staff, budget, resources, materials)

What is the **time commitment**?

What types of volunteers do you currently have? What types of volunteers do you need? Where are the gaps?

It's necessary to identify the specific **role**, **tasks**, and required **skills**. For instance, you may be looking for an Bicycle Safety Project Leader who assists with enrollment, establishes goals, organizes a bike rodeo, and supervises junior leaders. This volunteer may need organizational, planning, and supervision skills.

Pick ONE of the following five roles. Identify tasks and skills that go with that role.

Examples of Volunteer Roles

Club Advisor: Plan projects, organize events, lead group activities, and work with youth.

Teen Volunteer: Serve as teen leader planning, organizing and working with youth.

Episodic Volunteer: Teach a special program, judge at County Fair, or assist youth with projects.

Advisory Board Volunteer: Assist in short and long range planning.

Virtual Volunteers: Develop programs, build websites, and communicate through social media.

Examples of Volunteer Tasks

Arrange for tours or field trips (i.e., contact sites, arrange for transportation, supervise youth)

Assist with enrollment (i.e., register youth, maintain mailing lists, contact participants)

Assist youth with projects (i.e., teach a class, work one-on-one with children, serve as mentor)

Coordinate club operation (i.e., establish goals, build schedules, organize volunteers)

Communicate with youth and families (i.e., make phone calls, email parents, write articles)

Encourage youth (i.e., attend 4-H events, supervise children, cheer for youth, ask questions)

Lead youth (i.e., coordinate group activities, supervise projects, assist with homework)

Organize events (i.e., clean-up day, pet show, bike rodeo, emergency safety, quilt walk)

Organize programs (i.e., after-school program, summer workshop series, reading group)

Organize county fair events (i.e., register youth, coordinate judging, arrange for awards)

Plan events (i.e., organize activities, arrange for volunteers, collect materials)

Recruit supporters (i.e., youth, parents, volunteers, community support)

Promote events (i.e., create posters, contact the media, write news articles, post on Facebook)

Serve on board (i.e., establish goals, develop policies, conduct short and long-term planning)

Serve as camp counselor, chaperone, judge or other specific, short-term role

Serve as a community liaison (i.e., attend meetings, give presentations, communicate through email)

Support club activities (i.e., assist at events, provide transportation, organize materials)

Teach classes and workshops (i.e., develop curriculum, adapt existing curriculum)

Examples of Volunteer Skills

Communication Skills (i.e., speaking, listening, writing, and non verbal skills)

Information Delivery & Dissemination Skills (i.e., use of technology including word processing, email, social media)

Marketing & Public Relations Skills (i.e., writing press releases, invitations, news articles, Facebook and Twitter posts)

Educational Design and Development Skills (i.e., differentiating instruction, developing age-appropriate activities, incorporating a variety of learning styles, designing cooperative and collaborative activities, applying subject matter knowledge, evaluating and revising programs)

Expert Skills (i.e., agriculture/animal science, environmental/nature science, business and citizenship, arts, healthy living, STEM: science, technology, engineering, math, youth leadership)
Interpersonal Skills (i.e., acceptance, caring, compassion, empathy, ethics, flexibility, honesty, morality, patience, relationship building)
Organizational Skills (i.e., delegating, goal-setting, planning, organizing, recruiting, managing time, developing partnerships)
Program Management Skills (i.e., strategic planning, financial planning, upholding 4-H mission, risk management, liability issues, record keeping, collaboration)
Technology Skills (i.e., productivity, art, communication, web development, and social media tools)
Youth Development Skills (i.e., ability to motivate, enthusiasm, leadership, empower others, use age-appropriate approaches, develop life skills, develop partnerships, appreciate diversity)

For ideas, go to <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/state4h/volunteers/roledescriptions.cfm>

Recruiting Volunteers

Where can I find the best? You need to go to the right place. Target your search. For fresh vegetables you go to the farmer's market. For a first aid class, try a local EMT. For a sewing class, try the local quilting bee. Recruiting involves identifying individuals who are enthusiastic and ready to grow.

Identify Recruitment Approaches

People come to you.
Go directly to personal contacts and ask.
As friends of friends. Use Facebook friends.
Ask parents about people they know.
Ask "influencers" who might know people such as church members or business people.
Ask in local paper focusing on skill sets needed.
Ask on social media such as Facebook, website, or email.
Reach out at local events (i.e., school and church promotions, county fair, parent meetings)
Identify other locations to make connections with new people (i.e., hobby meetings, business association events)

Top Approaches

According to a 2010 4-H survey, volunteers are most likely to come from the following places:

1. Word of mouth (vast majority)
2. Friend of volunteer
3. Church or other organizations
4. Email or newspaper advertising
5. Social media

Prepare for Recruitment Opportunities

Stories and Testimonials

Prepare your personal testimonial. How has 4-H impacted your life?
Gather testimonials from 4-H youth and volunteers who have enjoyed their experiences.
Think about the following questions and create stories you could share:
What's your most memorable experience as a volunteer?
Why do you volunteer?
What have you learned by volunteering?
How has being involved in 4-H helped you?
How has 4-H changed your life?
What would your life be like without 4-H?
What's the best 4-H class or programs you were involved in?
Did you learn something that changed the way you see the world?
Did you meet someone during your 4-H experiences that impacted you?
Did you have a particularly fun experience?

Share a very specific story about a positive experiences you've had volunteering.

Elevator Speeches

An elevator speech is a very short story (30-60 seconds, 100-200 words) that expresses the value of volunteering. They can take place at a county meeting, library, school event, church, grocery store, the RV park, high school teen events or anywhere with potential volunteers.

Elevator speeches generally have four parts:

Hook. The introduction should include who you are and your connection with the person.

Talking Points. Match a few key ideas and examples with the target audience.

Ask. Invite the person to attend an event, email you about options, or volunteer for a specific task.

Follow-through. If possible, run into this person again, remind them about the conversation, and encourage them to act.

Consider the following elements:

Audience Focus. Be ready with a short statement for all your target audiences. How do you approach a teenager differently than a professional? How do you address a working mother versus an empty nester?

Personal Connection. Think about key volunteer opportunities that are often overlooked by particular groups. Use those in your speech. Match the task with the potential volunteer.

Examples. Have a short statement about a life skill and an example from 4-H.

Be Ready. As you think of ideas, keep an elevator speech file. Jot down ideas that could be used in conversations. Remember, you don't literally need to be in an elevator.

Be ready with FAQs

Why do you volunteer? What's your story?

What types of tasks do you have in mind?

What type of time commitment?

Spend a few minutes brainstorming "talking points" that could be used as part of an elevator speech.

Communications in Recruitment

Regardless of the communication, the key is to be friendly and sincere.

The Bump

Use your elevator speech plus stories as needed.

The Call

Introduce yourself

Explain your purpose in calling.

Describe value in volunteering

Focus on personal benefits

Identify a reasonable, specific need

Ask for commitment

Thank the new volunteer

The Blast

Email is like phone call, but you have time to think about your answers

Post on Facebook groups (i.e., birder's group, hiking club page, 4-H page)

Write a newspaper article about specific volunteer needs

Match Assignments with Volunteers

Match assignments to potential volunteer types.

Set a positive tone.

Share basics of 4-H philosophy such as the pledge.

Provide volunteers with a few choices of assignments.

Provide clear directions and make expectations clear.

Help volunteers get to know each other

Trace progress and clarify roles

Reassure volunteers that we all learn together and it's not necessary to be an expert

Sustaining Volunteers

How can I stay healthy? It's all about lifestyle. The same is true of a healthy 4-H volunteer program. It can't be a one-shot approach, it needs to be ongoing.

Evaluate your Program

Observe strengths and weaknesses. Promote strengths and provide encouragement and suggestions in weak areas.

Ask open ended questions and encourage volunteers to share their ideas. Volunteers need to feel included.

Is the volunteer clear about their role and the expectations?

Is the volunteer happy with their task and staff happy with their performance?

Does the volunteer feel actively involved without being stressed by overcommitment?

Track Volunteer Status

Check to see who stays and who leaves. Follow through to find out why people leave.

Nurture Volunteers

Provide oral and written thanks.

Give small gifts like t-shirts and snacks.

Provide food at meetings. Hold working lunches and dinners.

Recognize volunteers for their contributions through awards.

Transform Volunteers

Turn one-shots volunteers into regular volunteers

Turn parents into volunteers after their children are gone

Turn young alumni into volunteers immediately

Expand the roles of volunteers (banker on board to classes in financial planning)

Make It Work

Retain - keep your volunteers busy and ready for the next adventure.

Redirect - help volunteers feel challenged and keep them interested with new adventures

Refocus - help volunteers move into areas where their skills can be best used

Reimagine - create new programs and opportunities that expand use of volunteers

Resources

Brochures you can use at <http://www.4-h.org/VEARtoolkit/>

Volunteering in the United States, 2013 (February 25, 2014). Bureau of Labor and Statistics. Available: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.nr0.htm>

Quotes on Volunteering

Select the quote that best fits with your philosophy of volunteerism. You need to be able to convey your philosophy of volunteering in order to convince others of its worth. Which quote would you put on a brochure about volunteering? Why?

How can I be useful, or what service can I be? There is something inside me, what can it be? - *unknown*

Service to a just cause rewards the worker with more real happiness and satisfaction than any other venture of life - *Carrie Chapman Catt*

Consciously or unconsciously, every one of us does render some service or other. If we cultivate the habit of doing this service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger, and will make, not only our own happiness, but that of the world at large - *Mohandas Gandhi*

One drop of water helps to swell the ocean; a spark of fire helps to give light to the world. None are too small, too feeble, too poor to be of service. Think of this and act. - *Hanna More*

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. - *Margaret Mead*

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others. - *Mohandas Gandhi*

I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve. - *Albert Schweitzer*

Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer. - *unknown*

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. - *Winston Churchill*

If you want to touch the past, touch a rock. If you want to touch the present, touch a flower. If you want to touch the future, touch a life - *unknown*

Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not. - *Dr. Seuss*

I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do. - *Edward Everett Hale*

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give. - *Kahlil Gibran*

I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands. You need to be able to throw something back. - *Maya Angelou*

The work an unknown good man has done is like a vein of water flowing hidden underground, secretly making the ground green. - *Thomas Carlyle*

We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future. - *Franklin Delano Roosevelt*