

# VOLUNTEER WORKSHOP

## ISSUES

- How to get more members involved in board positions.
- How to nurture confidence in new members so they will volunteer.
- How to get members moving from passive to active. Always same people volunteering.
- How to get young volunteers.

NURTURE CONFIDENCE. Most new members don't know native plants. Chapters need to nurture skills and knowledge to instill confidence.

Two levels of jobs: basic level or small tasks to instill confidence to move on to more responsibility. For example, have each leader for a conference have an assistant with smaller assigned tasks.

## IDEAS

Survey - Rock River chapter sends out survey every year with membership renewal asking "How would you like to help" with a listing of many choices of varying responsibility. Some people are willing to volunteer at the last minute but don't want to commit very far ahead. Those people can be put on a list to call as needed. (Constance has survey if anyone would like a copy.)

Free plants – Volunteers at plant sale get plants at cost.

Incentive – Get credit for 2 volunteer hours and put names in hat for special prize. Advertise so members are aware of this.

Volunteer coordinator –

- Use survey to see what people signed up for.
- Maintain the "call me if something comes up" list.
- Personalize with a thank-you card or at least an e-mail.
- Drawing at end of year.

Partnering - Work with Master Gardeners so that members get MG credit for educational programs and volunteer hours. May get more volunteers when members learn it is a sanctioned project.

Young volunteers –

Work with green clubs or local schools, tech schools, colleges. Staff directory will help identify contacts. Some schools now require community service hours and project could be sold this way. Provide food and beverages for added incentive.

Projects can be aligned with Earth Day or National Service Day. Publicity can help. Posters on bulletin boards, flyers. More students drawn in, more own it.

Volunteer training session – One person who knows what to do can teach others. This helps the learning process of new volunteers. Once a year hold a volunteer training session at a new members' meeting. Try to get new members involved right away.

New members meeting – Hold a new members meeting a month or two after peak membership increase which is usually after conference or plant sale. They receive a welcome packet with survey and newsletter but it isn't personal.

Mentoring program – have seasoned members mentor new members. This should help to instill confidence and increase volunteerism.

Board Members –

Write up a description of duties.

Have assistants for some positions so they can eventually take over. (one on one time involved.)

Have a nominating committee. Some members may be on committees if they don't have to attend board meetings

Don't micromanage which will discourage participation.

Parting Thoughts

Trust that volunteers can do the job. Instill confidence.

Emphasize healthy aspects of getting out and working in nature. (Mary Jo has a caloric chart.)

Volunteering creates a network of friends due to personal involvement.

Stress that there are both active and inactive volunteering duties so everyone can be included.

\*Parking lot item from Northfield – How to get more people to attend programs despite receiving good publicity.

Additional Notes from Volunteer Workshop

Questions asked

- How to promote and inform members of volunteer opportunities
- How to train volunteers in a way that instills confidence
- How to get volunteers from outside the core group
- How to nurture new leaders from volunteer pool
- How to move members from passive to active
- How to get younger people as crew on adopted gardens
- How to manage requests from outside groups

Solutions and Ideas offered

- Newcomers come to learn – invite them to learn via volunteering, in building their confidence along the way

- Several chapters have surveys or new member packets that outline volunteer op
- Some offer volunteers credits toward discount on plant sales
- Volunteering in gardens is good exercise plus you make new friends
- Offer service hours for Master Gardeners
- Host a training session or intro level meeting once or twice a year after peaks of new members
- Similarly, a new member round table or orientation
- Have a clear description of what is expected for volunteer or leadership positions
- Offer food whenever there is a group project
- Tap into National Service Day (collegiate level) and list activities

#### What NOT to do

- Do not micro manage volunteers; in other words, learn to trust volunteers are willing but may make a few mistakes along the way

#### Final comments

- Respect for volunteer time commitment
- Patience, wheels turn slowly in an all-volunteer organization