

Volunteer Recognition

1. Say "thank you."
2. Persuade "Personnel" to equate volunteer experience with work experience.
3. Send a birthday card.
4. Provide good preservice training.
5. Nominate for volunteer awards.
6. Provide opportunities for conferences and evaluation.

From Vern Lake's list of "101 Ways to Give Recognition to Volunteers"

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION takes many forms. From the daily "hellos" and "thank yous" to the weekly invitations to staff meetings to the monthly volunteer meetings to the yearly ceremonies of honor and awards—recognition of volunteers is a continuous, diverse activity. It is an umbrella which covers almost every aspect of volunteer administration. For example:

By recognizing a volunteer's worth as an individual and to our organizations, we can make a successful **placement** in a job suited to that person's abilities. By recognizing the need for and value of *all* segments of our population—handi-

capped, low income, male, teenaged, minority Americans—we can improve our **recruitment** results by promoting volunteerism as a unique aspect of American life. By recognizing that each volunteer has a different set of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs and needs, we can **motivate** him/her to find self-fulfillment in a job. By recognizing our volunteers' need for a certain amount of information and skill to serve our organizations effectively, we can offer pre- and in-service **training**, a big factor in the elusive task of **retaining** volunteers.

The result? A number of one-, two-, five- and ten-year volunteers. It is this accomplishment that prompts many volunteer administrators and organization directors to "go public" with their volunteer recognition efforts. On the list of 101 ways to recognize volunteers, these activities include planning occasional extravaganzas, conducting community-wide events, planning annual ceremonial occasions, celebrating outstanding projects and achievements.

They are the type of public event that

is popular during National Volunteer Week—a time to salute volunteers by publicizing their achievements to the whole community as well as an opportunity to promote volunteerism, particularly through interagency cooperation. They are the type of event featured here—one, an evening's program of entertainment and tribute for *all* the volunteers in Worcester, Mass.; the other, a special "Involvement Day" for people in New York's Glens Falls area to demonstrate their spirit of community and caring by doing something for others.

Both were sponsored by the local Voluntary Action Center (and the Council of Churches in Glens Falls), both began planning in January for a spring event, and both were cooperative efforts by each city's agencies and organizations which involve volunteers. They are typical of a large-scale recognition event which both organizers and the public deemed "a great success." In each instance, careful and thorough planning was the key to the realization of a creative idea that many believed was an impossible dream.

The Mechanics Hall Celebration, Worcester, Mass.

By Barbara M. Stewart



The Salisbury Singers entertain volunteers in historic Mechanics Hall.

ANYONE INVOLVED IN VOLUNTEERING is aware of the great importance of recognition. It is what National Volunteer Week is all about. It is why volunteer bureaus and organizations utilizing volunteers all across the country rack their brains each year to come up with a unique way to honor those who give of themselves.

As 1978 began everyone involved with the Worcester, Mass., Voluntary Action Center (a division of the United Way of Central Massachusetts) realized that time was of essence in establishing a

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Live music...



for Worcester's volunteers.

recognition program for the new year. Planning should have begun much earlier, but the past year was a bit hectic for the Worcester VAC: A new director, Helen Mahoney, came on board; there was no assistant director for several months; and a grant ran out for the Teen Program.

When Mahoney came up with a plan to use the newly renovated Mechanics Hall, an historic building in Worcester, for a celebration to honor the city's volunteers, she was greeted with shocked awe. How could two full-time people, one half-time staff person and a volunteer interviewer/elder service representative possibly undertake such a project? It meant filling a building which could accommodate 2,000 people!

By taking a "first things first" approach, Mahoney and VAC Committee Chairperson David Grossi took their proposal to Julie Chase Fuller, executive director of the Mechanics Hall Association. Her reaction was enthusiastic; the hall's restoration itself had been a massive voluntary community effort.

With a heritage dating back to pre-Civil War days, the hall once played host to such dignitaries as Charles Dickens, Enrico Caruso and Theodore Roosevelt. But through the years the building had become shabby and run down. It became the home of wrestling matches; its beautiful hardwood floors were scarred from the wheels of thousands of roller skates; and its ugly pink walls seemed to call only to kids as a great place to hang out.

But in 1976 a group of concerned citizens rallied to the cause. Through the efforts of individuals, families, businesses, industries, philanthropic foundations, clubs and organizations, a restored Mechanics Hall opened its

doors on November 26, 1977. As a result, the VAC was able to reserve this symbol of volunteer involvement in the community for April 20 of Volunteer Week.

The next step was to draw up a plan of action. It included the creation of three committees—program, public relations and refreshments. Each was staffed by one of the VAC's three employees. Committee chairpersons were recruited from the VAC Committee, and committee members were solicited in the *Communicator*, the VAC's bimonthly newsletter which goes to approximately 500 agencies and organizations in the Worcester area. The response was great. Those who could participate actively were dedicated people who "knew the ropes." Others called to offer support and ideas.

The Program

Kay Seivard, director of volunteers at Friendly House, a neighborhood multi-service center, chaired the Program Committee. Members included volunteer administrators, city department employees, a performing arts school director, and persons with theatre experience.

They began by drawing up a preliminary program outline, which held up throughout the preparations. For entertainment, the committee selected students from the Performing Arts School of Worcester, a private institution with mostly volunteer teachers. (The school's director, John Cox, served on the committee.) The students would present string, guitar, early music and dance ensembles. The committee also booked the Salisbury Singers, a volunteer concert group led by Malama Robbins, head

of the music department at Anna Maria College. In addition, they invited appropriate dignitaries to address the audience, and a couple of dance bands to round out the evening's entertainment.

Despite the soundness of the three-part program, the committee felt something was lacking. Carolyn Dik and Lois Green came up with an idea to assure that the program would appeal to *everyone*. "How about a scroll?", they asked. Something imaginative and artistic, to be signed by a representative from each participating agency and organization.

In addition, the committee felt the need for a "name" to draw as many volunteers as possible. Someone suggested Joan Mondale, a known advocate of volunteerism and patron of the arts. A state senator agreed to send her an invitation and packet of information on Mechanics Hall, Worcester and the VAC.

Publicity

The Public Relations Committee, under the leadership of David Kean of the Worcester Office of Planning and Community Development, met once a week in the VAC office. Its first priority was to compile a mailing list so that information and tickets could be distributed. Keeping in mind that the celebration was for *all* volunteers—direct service, hospital, school, church, boards, committees—the PR committee obtained names of groups and organizations from every spectrum of the community. At the time of the final mailing, it had a list of over 2,000 names.

The committee also came up with a sound PR idea: The VAC had sent for the Volunteer Week kit from NCVA. It con-

tained a graphic design of a hand holding three flowers, each with a different label—appreciation, recognition, celebration. The committee adopted these words as the theme for the event, and all communications regarding the celebration displayed this graphic. It became a recognizable symbol with the message, "Join us at YOUR celebration—A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL VOLUNTEERS."

The PR committee also was responsible for the printing of the invitation and ticket, a flyer and the program. Members secured a master for the invitation from a local printer, after doing the paste-up at the VAC. The Chamber of Commerce took care of printing 5,000 tickets. They purposely printed more than were needed, knowing that probably half of this number would not be used because of the random mailing.

The flyer was an 8" x 11" blow-up of the invitation, with good black and white contrast for duplication on United Way's copying machine. The VAC also photocopied the program for the evening. Everything was printed in black on bright yellow stock for easy recognition.

Turning to the media aspect of publicity, the committee prepared and hand delivered press releases to contacts at the two major local newspapers. (Both run a monthly "Volunteer Now" column for the VAC.) They cooperated with a total of seven precelebration write-ups, including photos of Program Chairperson Kay Seivard and of volunteers working with youngsters at the Girls' Club. This publicity made a big difference: Telephone requests for tickets came in fast and furiously the day after these articles appeared.

After contacting the major city papers, the committee sent the releases to house organs, town and specialty newspapers. Two committee volunteers visited local radio stations to inquire about news coverage. United Way's Communications Department prepared and sent out tapes for public service announcements and contacted the local TV station. This coverage was difficult to monitor, but from outside reports, it appeared to be adequate. The TV station used the information as a news item on the day of the event.

Another PR source was the Volunteer Week Proclamation issued by Mayor Thomas Early. He presented it to VAC Chairman David Grossi in City Hall at the beginning of Volunteer Week, then

read it to the audience during the second phase of the evening's program.

The committee sent out a packet, "To: All Those Who Promote Volunteerism," approximately two weeks before the big day. It contained a letter explaining the celebration, four tickets (each admitting two people), a flyer for posting or reproducing, and a form to be mailed back to the VAC with the name of the organization's designee who would sign the scroll. The packet also contained an announcement that tickets were available on a first come-first served basis.

Shortly after the mailing went out, phones rang constantly. Many agencies requested additional tickets, in combinations up to 300. Dorothy Cronin, the VAC's volunteer interviewer and senior citizen representative, was responsible for handling all reservations.

In the meantime, the VAC still hadn't heard from its invited guest of honor, Joan Mondale. Initially, the feeling was that a celebrity would assure a good attendance. But by the time her telegram arrived, regretting that she was not free to attend, it had become apparent that the program, with good local talent, would fly on its own. Mrs. Mondale's impressive telegram, describing her commitment to volunteerism and wishing success for the evening, would be read to the audience.

Refreshments

The Refreshment Committee, chaired by Father George Smith, director of the Age Center of Worcester, solicited food and labor donations. Assisted by VAC Assistant Director John Brown, the committee obtained punch, napkins, cups and volunteer servers as well as such goodies as cookies, coffee rings and a large sheet cake inscribed, "Thank You Volunteers."

The committee decided to hand out refreshment tickets with the programs to assure fair distribution. Late in the evening, ticket rules would be relaxed and guests could help themselves.

With the major planning work in the hands of the three committees, VAC staff attended to the nitty-gritty jobs so necessary on the evening of the celebration. Helpers were right before their eyes—the sons and daughters of committee and VAC staff and the many friends vicariously involved throughout the weeks of preparation. These volunteers ranged in age from 8 to 21, the

older group recruited by Mary Bianchini, a VAC student intern and director of the Teen Program, from her classmates at Assumption College.

They distributed programs, staffed the coat room, assisted with the signing of the scroll, and gave general directions as needed. Besides helping out, they had a glorious time. One of the youngest was quite upset when she could no longer "sell" programs. Another said she would "...never forget this night as long as I live."

Another task was to obtain security for the night of the celebration. The Worcester Police Department cooperated by sending three courteous and friendly representatives of the local police auxiliary.

On the day before the big event, staff and volunteers worked frantically on finishing the printed program. The last ones were folded and delivered as guests began to enter the hall.

By this time most involved in the planning were in a "high zombie" state. They felt they had done their homework well, but as with all events, there was no way of knowing what kind of turnout there would be. This was a program that in order to be successful, *had* to draw people. After all, it was their celebration—*they* were the guests of honor.

At 6:00 p.m., one hour before the start of the program, the guests began to climb the stairs to enter the hall. They kept filing in until the audience numbered approximately 1,500 volunteers from the Worcester County area.

The program began with Master of Ceremonies Thomas Gorham III, operations manager for radio station WTAG, extending a welcome and thank you to all present. Then the students from the Performing Arts School of Worcester displayed their talents, followed by the Salisbury Singers, whose performance was enhanced by the acoustically perfect Mechanics Hall.

The second segment of the program consisted of brief remarks by several people directly involved in the preparations. In addition, Massachusetts State Senator Gerard D'Amico greeted the volunteers on behalf of everyone in state government. He also presented citations from Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis and the state senate. The scroll, entitled "We Believe in Volunteerism," was read by VAC Chairperson David Grossi, and presented to Mayor Early to hang in City Hall. The Mayor then read

his proclamation and the telegram from Joan Mondale as well as letters from U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy and NCVA Chairman George Romney.

The intermission proved a good diversionary tactic. Music for dancing began with a group of young musicians called Moving On, led by Reverend Charles Seivard. The second band, the Ragtime Rowdies, was courtesy of the Worcester Parks Department and the American Federation of Musicians Local 143.


One of the keys to the evening's success was that the entertainment was geared to all ages and tastes. From the classical dance and chorus presentations, to the light rock of Moving On and the versatile music of the Ragtime Rowdies, there was something for both old and young to enjoy.

Important Points to Consider:

- Involve professional directors of volunteers in your area.
- Get organized early. While a large steering committee is helpful for initial direction, small task-related committees get the work done.
- Investigate community resources and involve representatives on the committee.
- Capitalize on local resources, such as special buildings, unions, town and city departments, businesses, local politicians.
- Somebody, probably staff, has to be in charge of details as program takes shape. The list of details includes facilities, parking, fire laws, accommodations, props, electronic equipment, decorations, etc.
- Visit media early. Make plans for coverage before, during and after the event. Keep in touch as plans progress.
- Find a theme—both graphic and written—for use in all public relations.
- Don't count on any one source to get the word out—use media, mailings, word-of-mouth, newsletters, bulletins, flyers, etc.
- Find a "draw" to catch the interest of less involved community organizations, i.e., a scroll.
- Don't get discouraged! There will be hills and valleys as you go along. One secret is to have contingency plans ("If this doesn't work, then we will...").
- Write a *personal* thank you note to every individual or entity involved. If you recover, you may want to do it again.

Involvement Day,

What are you
doing on
**INVOLVEMENT
DAY?**

First full committee meeting in VAC office. Presentation of idea, suggestions and delegation of areas of responsibility. Discussion of logo appropriate to both organizations.	Meeting with director of WWSC radio station to explain project and enlist cooperation.
january 9	january 10
 <p>What are you doing on INVOLVEMENT DAY?</p>	Volunteer calls to agencies about Involvement Day project form to be mailed shortly. Calls made to agencies not already told through regular contact about upcoming project.
january 25	
Small write-up sent to Warren County Publicity Office for calendar. Coordinator met with community college student to discuss feasibility study on improving landfill as an Involvement Day project.	Committee meeting at VAC office.
february 1	february 6
Publicity team and coordinator met to discuss service club list to be used and to identify one person within each organization to be contacted personally by a project committee member to reinforce request for cooperation at the next meeting.	Volunteer enlisted to call many agencies who had not returned project forms. (Timing was important in order to write brochure giving examples of agency projects.) Envelopes typed for second letter to service clubs.
february 15	february 17
Coordinator contacted proposed festival committee members to enlist their help. These included Jaycees, two VAC volunteers, and one person in volunteer entertainment field, as well as VAC board member serving as festival coordinator.	
march 9	march 10

Glens Falls, N.Y.

By Kirby McCaw Udall

INVOLVEMENT DAY. A SPECIAL DAY set aside for all citizens of the Glens Falls, New York, community to volunteer, to demonstrate their spirit of caring and helping. Cosponsored by the Volun-

Kirby McCaw Udall was last year's project coordinator for Involvement Day.

tary Action Center of Glens Falls Area and the Council of Churches, Involvement Day was based on a similar event staged by the Voluntary Action Center of Kalamazoo, Mich. Individuals were encouraged to choose their own activity, while the project coordinator matched groups who needed or could provide service. A Saturday in spring was chosen as the date when the ground would be dry enough for such outdoor projects as clean-ups, gardening, painting.


A festival was planned as an end-of-day celebration of the community-wide voluntary accomplishments. Junior and high school bands and a student singing group were recruited to entertain the volunteers, while the Jaycees arranged

for clowns, balloons and a demonstration by balloonists in The Spirit of Glens Falls hot air balloon for the children. Planners encouraged picnicking and provided free orange drinks donated by McDonald's.

The following outline highlights the main features of Involvement Day and of the coordinated planning effort. The project was approved and proposed committee members were contacted in December 1977, with Involvement Day scheduled for May 13, 1978. The planners learned, however, they could have accomplished more by starting earlier.

Goals

- Encouragement of voluntarism by providing a variety of short-term volun-

Letter to agencies drafted. <i>january 11</i>	VAC director and volunteer coordinator (coordinator for project) meeting with editor of local newspaper to explain project and enlist cooperation. Agency letter to printer. <i>january 12</i>	Appointment with director of WBZA radio station to explain project and enlist cooperation. <i>january 13</i>
Mailing of letter and Involvement Day project form to list of agencies using volunteers, members of the board of supervisors and VAC board members. Letter to service clubs drafted. Meeting with volunteer director and chief of services at Wilton Developmental Center re coordination of their field day with our Involvement Day to secure volunteer help. This was a major project requiring up to 400 volunteers. <i>january 22</i>	Meeting with Queensbury supervisor to explain project and enlist cooperation, as well as to discuss possible projects. <i>january 30</i>	Meeting of Council of Churches. Local musician agreed to write an Involvement Day song. <i>january 31</i>
Lum's contacted re donation of frisbees for festival. <i>february 22</i>	Contacted bank re donating 1,000 printed balloons for festival. <i>february 10</i>	Meetings with superintendents of Queensbury and Glens Falls schools to explain project and enlist cooperation. <i>february 13</i>
		Involvement Day Committee meeting at VAC office. <i>march 8</i>
WBZA radio interview with Glens Falls mayor and Queensbury supervisor on occasion of proclamation of Involvement Day. Picture taken for local newspaper and WWSC interview with Involvement Day coordinator. Newscasts began at 12 noon. <i>march 14</i>	Proclamation and picture scheduled for paper, but not printed until 16th. Accompanying article included contents of brochure. <i>march 15</i>	Initial festival brainstorming session. Delegation of tasks, suggestions for entertainment groups and poster project chairman appointed. <i>march 17</i>

teer opportunities for people of varied ages and interests.

- Increased awareness of how many needs can be met in one day and by a "spontaneous" effort.
- Awakening of a continuing caring spirit and community concern.

Kinds of Participation

- Helping an elderly neighbor with grocery shopping or yard clean-up.
- Baking cookies for a friend.
- Visiting a shut-in.
- Roadside and park clean-up.
- Preparation of a garden for the blind.
- School children making posters.
- Bands and singing groups entertaining at the Wilton Developmental Center and at nursing homes.
- Redesign and landscaping of a children's playground.
- Newspaper collection for the recycling van.
- Knitting for the Cancer Society and hospital's maternity ward.
- Bloodmobile sponsored by the Council of Churches.
- Senior citizen museum tour and tea.

Management Structure

- Voluntary Action provided a project coordinator, who was the VAC staff coordinator of volunteers, phone and secretarial assistance. The Council of Churches provided a person, who was also on the VAC board, to coordinate and encourage church-related activities.
- A representative from each of the local governing bodies was asked to participate in the Involvement Day Committee.
- Two VAC board members formed a team to handle publicity, covering for each other when necessary, but in general dividing their areas between radio and press.
- A marketing and advertising professor from the community college was an active member of the committee.
- The VAC director assisted with personal contacts with the media.
- The Festival Committee was headed by a VAC board member with experience in this area, and the project coordinator served as liaison. Due to scheduling difficulties, these meetings were held separately from the Involvement Day Committee's meetings. This committee began its work in early March with a brainstorming session by a member of the Jaycees, two VAC volunteers, and a person deeply involved in local amateur entertainment.
- A poster committee evolved from the

festival planning. The committee contacted school principals and art teachers for grades K-3 to have children design posters. The committee selected and placed posters in store windows for two weeks prior to the festival. On Involvement Day the posters were strung on clothesline between trees in the park and were used as decorations for the bandstand.

Cost

- Involvement Day was a low-cost, community-wide effort: The Council of Churches contributed toward the expense of a loud speaker system, paint for a senior citizen's house, postage and minimal printing. The VAC took care of the balance, including the project coordinator's time.

- Loud speaker system (\$40), paint (\$52), postage (\$25), printing (\$5), miscellaneous supplies (\$10), coordinator's time (180 hours—\$765).

Resources

- A local artist designed two coloring sheets with a helping theme for children and others participating in Head Start programs, a day care center, and a center for the developmentally disabled.
- The advertising and marketing classes at the local community college printed and distributed brochures, coloring sheets and reminder slips to be placed in grocery bags at all local stores.
- The City of Glens Falls provided insurance for the day's activities in the

Letters to school principals sent by poster committee chairman explaining Involvement Day and asking that children be encouraged to make posters to be displayed in park on Involvement Day.	Member of publicity team on Glens Falls mayor's cable TV interview program re Involvement Day and VAC.
march 23	march 27
Festival Committee meeting in VAC office.	Council of Churches meeting re allocation of flyers to area clergy to be distributed to their parishioners the following Sunday.
april 4	april 6
Coordinator spoke to Junior Senate meeting of Glens Falls Junior High School. Publicity meeting re VAC board's desire to "go national." It was learned a four-month lead would be necessary for a national magazine.	Council of Churches noted to donate \$50 towards Involvement Day expenses.
april 19	april 20
Mayor's TV program on Involvement Day taped.	
Contacted Bay Fire Company re selling hot dogs in park. (They were not able to do this, as time period was too short and it was difficult to estimate sales.) Posters put up in downtown stores and malls.	
april 28	may 10
	Project coordinator and Council of Churches coordinator on "Speak-Up," a one-hour live talk show.

park, chairs for the bands, the continuing assistance of their special projects coordinator, and publicity through interviews on two of the mayor's weekly TV shows.

- A local bank contributed 1,000 balloons for release from the park during the festival.
- McDonald's donated orange drink and cups for 1,000 and a server.
- Two balloonists gave a demonstration in The Spirit of Glens Falls, a hot air balloon, at the developmental center and agreed to participate in the festival.
- A local musician composed a song for Involvement Day.

Publicity

- Initial coverage (TV, radio, newspaper) began March 14 with the Queens-

bury town supervisor and the Glens Falls mayor jointly proclaiming May 13th as Involvement Day.

- Pictures and story appeared in *The Post Star* on March 15. Radio stations covered the event as a news item.
- *The Post Star* ran regular feature stories and a "cut-out square" asking for suggestions of projects (to be returned to the VAC). It devoted a full page to coverage of activities on Involvement Day which was published the following week.
- "Headliner" show with Peter Rief on March 19 (taped March 16 with publicity team and the VAC director).
- Brief TV news coverage of the event on May 13.
- Radio stations shared spot announcements. WBZA ran spot announce-

ments for two months; WWSC ran spots continuously and did an interview on its "Speak-Up" program. The community college's radio station and Rock 99 in the Albany area also ran spots.

Results

- Public was given opportunity to think and talk about their choice of involvement.
- Widespread participation of children.
- Some agency clients gave of themselves to others. For example, clients of a sheltered workshop made containers and started plants for shut-ins served by the Friendly Visiting Program.
- An exciting project which released a spirit of community, of caring and sharing. Everyone was a winner that day!

<p>Contacted interested professor at community college re his recruiting success with student volunteers.</p> <p>march 29</p>		<p>Taping of "Headliner," Sunday am radio program, by publicity team and VAC director.</p> <p>april 3</p>
<p>First taping of Involvement Day song.</p> <p>april 7</p>	<p>Contacted hot air balloon people re timing for festival.</p> <p>april 10</p>	<p>School poster project article in paper.</p> <p>april 14</p>
<p>Posters collected from elementary schools.</p> <p>april 21</p>	<p>Selected posters for locations in downtown stores and malls, as well as ones to be saved for display on clotheslines between trees in park. Retaping of song delivered to radio station. Arrangements confirmed with Red Cross emergency van for festival.</p> <p>april 28</p>	<p>Coordinator met with publicity person to plan subjects for further newspaper coverage.</p> <p>april 27</p>
<p>Newspaper photograph in VAC office with coordinator and two members of The Women's Civic Club. Program with mayor of Glens Falls interviewing coordinator on progress of Involvement Day plans aired on TV. Confirmation of 13th Day Singing Group participation and rental of sound system for festival.</p> <p>may 4</p>	<p>Involvement Day song sheets, printed by the Council of Churches, distributed to festival entertainment groups.</p> <p>may 3</p>	<p>Coordinator spoke on Involvement Day to Interfaith Council.</p> <p>may 9</p>
	<p>Call from out-of-town newspaper for article.</p> <p>may 12</p>	<p>INVOLVEMENT DAY. VAC volunteer photographer took pictures to be incorporated in a display of volunteers at work. Coordinator manned phone from 9:00-1:00 p.m. to handle any problems, last minute volunteers or requests for help. Festival rained out just before starting time.</p> <p>may 13</p>