

Attract, Engage, Retain New Volunteers

Attracting....

- A. Be a part of your parish community – get to know your fellow parishioners. Work alongside them. Have conversations. Stop to visit. Ask questions. What are their interests, gifts, passions? What’s happening in their lives?
- B. Ask yourself who has the talents and gifts for this ministry? When you talk with them, tell them why you are inviting/asking them to participate in this ministry. What gifts/qualities did you see in them?
- C. Be clear about the responsibilities of this position as well as the vision. Invite with vision, not need. Invite people to the “why” of “what” you do.
- D. If you are new, ask current staff members for their suggestions. Ask your current volunteers for suggestions - build relationships.
- E. Avoid desperate pleas for help, they may cast doubt on whether your program is worthy of support.
- F. The more challenging or complicated the position, the more you need to ask in person or at minimum, on the phone.
- G. Use church newsletters, constant contact, web pages, social networking in appropriate ways and partnered with screening to describe the mission and the opportunity for volunteers. Do you have a business card? If so, could you use the back of it to describe your mission and the successes of your volunteers?
- H. Short term projects provide excellent “first dates” – they’re how you can find your long term volunteers – and they give people an opportunity to try on your ministry to see how it fits.
- I. Can volunteers work in teams or pairs – especially at the beginning of a new ministry? Co-leaders or catechist/aides?
- J. Don’t invite too many volunteers... having people stand around with nothing to do is a waste of their time.
- K. Motivate yourself to invite. Don’t procrastinate. Keep a list of who you have contacted or asked to help --- check yourself

Engaging in Ministry.....

Continue to create a vision of why this ministry is important and communicate it frequently- weekly notes or e-mails.

Have a clear, written role description – what's expected- said in a positive way. Including important policies.

Perhaps you could have experienced volunteers help with training or in-service in areas where they excel.

Use volunteer manuals as well as lessons or meeting plans clearly outlined for volunteers to follow.

Volunteers working with children or vulnerable adults need Virtus training and background checks (contact the Safe Environment Dept. at the Diocesan offices).

I often provide volunteer leaders with prayer options and resources (prayer samples, music cd's, candles, Bible, etc.)

Training in-service, mentoring.... In both large and small groups. With new volunteers I often schedule individual meetings after the general in-service to walk them through their first and second meetings or classes.

Help volunteers get to know each other.....create community with icebreakers.

I always have snacks and drinks available for meetings. If it's a longer in-service, a meal. You never know who is coming right from work. And food is often a good icebreaker. If sharing meals with His Disciples was good enough for Jesus, it's good enough for me!

Share successes and accomplishments, uplifting statistics that highlight the importance of your ministry.

People want to be part of something that is family and fun. How can you encourage both of these?

Pray for your volunteers, let them know you are praying for them and for their families and have them pray for each other.

How can you help them grow in their ministry or into leadership? Suggest books to read, StrengthsFinder® assessment, spiritual gifts assessment, etc. Do you have funds to send them to a class or training?

Retaining Volunteers....

Be prompt about answering questions, phone calls, e-mails and about finding materials volunteers need.

Use check in or feedback forms from your volunteers. Listen to their suggestions. Ask them what they need or how you can help them be successful.

Celebrate and share good ideas and accomplishments.

Hallway conversations before or after service help you know what's going on in their lives.

Call volunteers by their name.

Small treats (holidays or special times of the year).

Impact statements from those being graced or affected by this ministry.

Publish names and thank volunteers in your parish bulletin.

Service milestones- recognition and appropriate gift.

Formal celebration events (end of the year)

Thank you notes - always- even for small gifts of time.

Here are some ideas for volunteer appreciation gleaned from the internet:

- Chalk your appreciation for your volunteers on the sidewalk or parking lot outside your building.
- Honor their birthday with a card and a coupon for a free cup of Coffee.
- Roll out the "red carpet" along with an appreciation sign at a special time.
- Give each volunteer a special lapel pin to wear signifying your Ministry.
- What about a designated parking place for the "Volunteer of the Month?"
- How about a designated time to wash your volunteer's cars?
- Neck and shoulder massages after volunteering on a designated day.
- Give a plant or packet of seeds in appreciation for how they've helped your ministry grow.
- Host an "All-Star Party" with a baseball theme. Have all-star trading cards with volunteer pictures and accomplishments. Serve stadium food.