

Volunteer Drivers: Finding Them and Keeping Them
March 13, 2017
Rockville Indoor Swim Center

Attendees: Evan Smith and Linda Herson (Friendship Heights Neighbor Network); Joyce Plaxen (Olney Home for Life); Sandra Egan (Village of Takoma Park); Jean Mocariski (Village at Kentlands); Kay Orr (Damascus HELP); Anne Gonzalez and Abby Simms (North Chevy Chase Connection); Sara Fought (JCA Village Rides); Paul Jones (Gaithersburg HELP); Trish Evans (City of Rockville); Amos Matthews, Kendell Matthews Sue Winakur and Harvey Flatt (Greater Stonegate Village); Bob Silva (King Farm); Sheila Taylor (Potomac Community Village); Denise Sherer (Silver Spring Village); Susan Girard (The Senior Connection); Nanci Wilkerson (Bradley Hills Village); Pat Shultz; Jane Coe (Burning Tree Village); Kathleen Meaney Stobie (RSVP/Montgomery County Volunteer Center); Pazit Aviv and Shawn Brennan (Montgomery County Aging and Disability Services)

IDEAS WE GENERATED

On Recruiting Volunteers

First, what motivates people to volunteer?

Keep busy/maintain some “structure” in one’s schedule
Fulfill a passion
Give back
Share life experiences/expertise
Help someone
Pay it forward—make a cosmic investment (someone may help you in the future)
It’s rewarding and provides meaning to one’s life
Meet people/get to know neighbors
Learn something new
Achieve a more balanced life
Gain a sense of accomplishment
Have impact locally
Explore interests/potential careers
Be part of a solution
Meet a spiritual need
Receive health benefits
Stay engaged/decrease isolation
Have fun
Feel appreciated

Successful Strategies for Recruiting Volunteers

- Take advantage of the resources of the Montgomery County Volunteer Center including its online database and newsletter <http://www.montgomeryserves.org/>.
- Volunteer Match (data base) <https://www.volunteermatch.org/>
- Remove barriers to volunteering. Make the process of getting involved as easy as possible.
- Conduct outreach in public locations and with partner organizations. (Example: set up a table in a community center before and after a program for seniors takes place.)
- Set up a table outside fitness centers or at farmer’s markets, community fairs/Oktoberfests.
- Ask volunteers to help recruit other volunteers, serve as ambassadors.

- Come up with incentives to volunteer or to recruit other volunteers (discount on oil change or such).
- Keep track of people who say “not now.” Ask them if you can reach out to them in the future.
- Provide job descriptions so folks are clear about what is involved/expected.
- Use social media.
- Hold “meet and greet” and other social events.
- Publish a free “Beacon Bit” in the Beacon Newspaper.
- Beacon online calendar
- Personalize the mission and the volunteer experience. Use stories.
- Ask someone. The #1 reason anyone does almost anything is that someone asked them to.
- Use list serves and e-mail.
Nudge regularly. People sometimes need that.
- Create flyers with phone numbers that can be ripped off. Post on community bulletin boards in places like Starbucks, Panera, Pot Bell, grocery stores etc.
- Envision your target volunteer and create messages that might motivate him/her to volunteer. Go to places where your target volunteer might go. Example, if you are looking for someone who enjoys driving, go to Advance Auto Parts.
- Put a car magnet on cars of existing volunteers to increase the community’s awareness of your organization and to give volunteers a sense of belonging.
- Include cars with magnets in community parade
- Ask volunteers to bring brochures/flyers recruiting both clients and volunteers into the doctors’ offices they travel to.
- Washington Post Local Living section (need to give 14 days’ notice)

On Retaining and Supporting Volunteers

First, why do people stop volunteering?

Don’t have the time or the task requires more time than volunteer is willing to give.

FT job

Health/family issues

Not used enough/not engaged

Feeling unappreciated

Overextended/burdened/burned-out

Bad experience

(Specific to volunteer drivers)

Difficult passengers

Traffic

Long waits at doctors’ offices

Cost of gas

Strategies to retain volunteers

- Recognize and reward what they do.
- Give choice/flexibility. (Ride scheduling software provides this.)
- Hold “exit interviews” Goal: understand volunteer’s experience/potential problems; increase likelihood they will return to the organization and volunteer again.
- Periodic conference calls with volunteers provide opportunity to connect, share successes and other experiences, solve problems. Rotate days of the week and times of day to maximize the number of people able to participate. Consider trying freeconferencecall.com.
- Send thank you notes.
- Hold volunteer appreciation events. If you have 75 or more, Cabot cheese will offer “Gratitude Grills.”
- Offer professional development opportunities.

- Negotiate benefits such as discount oil change for drivers.
- Appeal to volunteers' competitive spirits: Publicly acknowledge folks volunteering most hours/trips/miles, etc. Track numbers and celebrate.
- Be clear up front and periodically about what is expected.
- Provide a personal touch: periodically reach out with a phone call, note or e-mail.
- Create mentorship/leadership opportunities.
- Build community.
- Invite volunteers to talk about their experiences; write up in press releases, etc.

Parking Lot ideas to ponder for future events

Vetting volunteers

Protecting volunteer drivers/Volunteer Protection Law/Good Samaritan Laws

Recruiting riders