

United Way of Salt Lake

serving Davis, Salt Lake, Summit, and Tooele Counties

Volunteer Recognition Ideas

Recognizing volunteers doesn't have to cost a lot of money or be complicated. Below are a variety of ways you can recognize your volunteers.

Free/Low Cost

- Thank the volunteer in person.
- Greet the volunteer by name.
- Send a handwritten thank you note.
- Send birthday/get well/congratulations/holiday cards (you can send free e-cards online).
- Post a volunteer of the month spotlight in a prominent place in your office.
- Highlight your volunteer or organizations newsletter.
- Include an article about a volunteer on your organizations website.
- Call out your volunteer on your social media sites like Facebook or Twitter if they are particularly engaged in technology.
- Invite them to help in the recruitment of new volunteers.
- Invite volunteers to attend your staff or board meeting to share their ideas or experiences.
- Host a potluck for staff and volunteers. Everyone can bring their favorite dish to share while meeting new people.
- Ask local businesses for coupons, gift cards or discounts that you can share as rewards.
- Put up a volunteer suggestion box. (Be sure to use some of their suggestions or talk to them about why some may not be feasible.)
- Encourage staff and board members to get to know your volunteers.
- Create a welcoming environment for your volunteers. (Set up a volunteer break room, have a secure place to store personal belongings, accommodate their needs and preferences, etc.)
- Provide letters of recommendation for school or work, if requested.
- Have special name badges for volunteers that call out achievements such as hours served, years served, program/unit they serve in, etc.)

Formal Recognition

- Host an annual volunteer reception, social or recognition event.
 - Ask local vendors or companies to sponsor your event. It never hurts to ask for something free or at a discount. Some organizations have a budget for dollars or in-kind donations they can make through the year so reach out early so you don't miss out if they run out before the year is done.

- Consider hosting your event somewhere that will give you a deal. If you know how many people will attend perhaps a local restaurant could offer a few free appetizers knowing people will buy drinks. Some places may allow you to utilize space free if your attendees purchase food or drinks.
- Sponsor your volunteer to attend a conference or training that would strengthen their skills or allow them opportunities to network.
- Offer a "Lunch with a Leader" for outstanding volunteers. A board member or executive level staff member could take the volunteer out to lunch as a thank you and to share their experiences with the volunteer.
- Nominate your volunteer for a local or national recognition award. Even if they are not selected as the recipient, sometimes nominees are still named in press releases or publications offering a chance for your volunteer to be recognized for their efforts.

Things to Consider

Are there local volunteer recognition events you can participate in? Some
communities have larger volunteer organizations that host a recognition event that allow local non-profit organizations to nominate their volunteers for awards. Check with your local volunteer center or State Commission on Volunteers to see if they offer any opportunities to recognize your volunteers.
Even if you're not the type of person who needs or wants recognition, every volunteer will have a different level of need. Some may adore the spotlight while others would prefer a private thank you. Make sure you understand your volunteers recognition preference to avoid embarrassing a shy volunteer.
You don't have to be creative to recognize volunteers! There are website like Baudville that are dedicated to all things recognition. Your organization could purchase all your recognition needs or use their free ePRAISE service to send a recognition ecard to your volunteers.