101 Ways to Give Recognition to Volunteers

Continuously, but always inconclusively, the subject of recognition is discussed by directors and coordinators of volunteer programs. There is great agreement as to its importance but great diversity in its implementation.

Listed below are 101 possibilities gathered from hither and yon. The duplication at 1 and 101 is for emphasis. The blank at 102 is for the beginning of your own list.

I think is important to remember that recognition is not so much something you do, as it is something you are. It is sensitivity to others as persons, not a strategy for discharging obligations.

1. Smile
2. Put up a volunteer suggestion box
3. Treat to a soda
4. Reimburse assignment related expenses
5. Ask for a report
6. Send a Birthday Card
7. Arrange for discounts
8. Give service stripes
9. Maintain a coffee bar
10. Plan annual ceremonial occasions
11. Invite to staff meeting
12. Recognize personal needs and problems
13. Accommodate personal needs and problems
14. Be pleasant
15. Use in an emergency situation
16. Provide a baby sitter
17. Post Honor Roll in reception area
18. Respect their wishes
19. Give informal teas
20. Keep challenging them
21. Send a Thanksgivings Day card to the volunteer’s family
22. Provide a nursery
23. Say “Good morning."
24. Greet by name
25. Provide good pre-service training
26. Help develop self-confidence
27. Award plaques to sponsoring groups
28. Take time to explain
29. Be verbal
30. Motivate agency VIPs to converse with them
31. Hold rap sessions
32. Give additional responsibility
33. Afford participation in team planning
34. Respect sensitivities
35. Enable to grow on the job
36. Enable to grow out of the job
37. Send newsworthy information to the media
38. Have wine and cheese tasting parties
39. Ask client-patient to evaluate the work-service
40. Say “Good afternoon."
41. Honor their preferences
42. Create pleasant surrounding
43. Welcome to staff coffee breaks
44. Enlist to train other volunteers
45. Have a public reception
46. Take time to talk
47. Defend against hostile or negative staff
48. Make good plans
49. Commend to supervisory staff
50. Send a valentine
51. Make thorough pre-arrangements
52. Persuade “personnel" to equate volunteer experience with work experience

List compiled by Vern Lake, Volunteer Services Consultant, Minnesota Dept. of Public Welfare
53. Admit to partnership with paid staff
54. Recommend to prospective employer
55. Provide scholarships to volunteer conferences or workshops
56. Offer advocacy roles
57. Utilize as consultants
58. Write them thank you notes
59. Invite participation in policy formation
60. Surprise with coffee and cake
61. Celebrate outstanding projects
62. Nominate for volunteer awards
63. Have a “Presidents Day” for new presidents of sponsoring groups
64. Carefully match volunteer with job
65. Praise them to their friends
66. Provide substantive in-service training
67. Provide useful tools in good working condition
68. Say “Good night”
69. Plan staff and volunteer social events
70. Be a real person
71. Rent billboard space for public laudation
72. Accept their individuality
73. Provide opportunities for conferences and evaluation
74. Identify age groups
75. Maintain meaningful file
76. Send impromptu fun cards
77. Plan occasional extravaganzas
78. Instigate client planned surprises
79. Utilize purchased newspaper space
80. Promote a “Volunteer-of-the-month” program
81. Send letter of appreciation to employer
82. Plan “Recognition Edition” of agency newsletter
83. Color code name tags to indicate particular achievements
84. Send commendatory letters to prominent public figures
85. Say “We missed you”
86. Praise the sponsoring group or club
87. Promote staff smiles
88. Facilitate personal maturation
89. Distinguish between groups and individuals in the groups
90. Maintain safe working conditions
91. Adequately orient
92. Award special citations for extraordinary achievements
93. Fully indoctrinate regarding the agency
94. Send Christmas cards
95. Be familiar with the details of assignments
96. Conduct community-wide, cooperative, inter-agency recognition events
97. Plan a theater party
98. Attend a sports event
99. Have a picnic
100. Say “Thank you”
101. “Smile”
102.