



What is a Great Volunteer? posted March 2010

They may not be what you think.

Who is the best volunteer? A great volunteer isn't necessarily the person who does everything.

The best volunteer is the person who does what they say they will do, when they said they will do it. It doesn't make a difference if they are involved in a huge project or a single "tiny task". If they do the job, do it well and do it on time, they are great.

Most people are hesitant about volunteering. They usually respond that they don't have enough time or don't have the skills. More likely, the problem is the opportunity itself and how it is presented. To create great volunteers, consider the following:

- Is it a match with their interests or needs?
- Are responsibilities clearly delineated?
- Is the task right-sized – not too large or ambitious?
- Will there be adequate support?
- How will they benefit by volunteering?
- What are the goals and measures of success?
- How will you recognize their efforts and achievements?

Yes, we love having self-motivated members who are willing to do everything and can do it all well but there is a downside. Frequently, the person who does it all is not able to delegate, discouraging other members from getting involved. The super-volunteer may be perceived as irreplaceable, diminishing your ability to enlist new volunteers with fresh perspective.

An association's goal should be to involve as many members as possible in the most appropriate ways, to help them become great volunteers. The end result: An engaged member is an invested and retained member.