



**Thanks
to Our
Volunteers!**

Recognizing Volunteers

Recognition of volunteers is an on-going process throughout the school year. Official recognition typically occurs at the end of the school year, during the month of February especially the week of Valentine's Day, or during April, National Volunteer Month.

Recognition by the School

What is Real Recognition?

People often ask for fresh "new ideas to recognize their volunteers, something that will excite them and make volunteers happy at the schools!

Certainly there are new, creative ideas that come up, such as writing personal thank-you notes, e-mailing a note of thanks, etc; but we believe always looking for new ideas seems to miss an important part of recognition—a sincere thank you.

Instead of using gimmicks and glitz, make the thank you sincere, timely and continuous throughout the year. Working directly with different types of people in your school, it becomes a critical responsibility to find ways to continuously recognize everyone involved. Here are some suggestions:

Put volunteer/staff recognition on your weekly "To do" list.

Keep a record of those you have praised. This will help to avoid overlooking others.

Instruct others to do the same and be sure that you remember to thank these people yourself.

Use voice mail, e-mail, and websites when appropriate. Don't forget the old standbys, an article or mention in the school newsletter is a great way to say thank you to volunteers!

As you think of new ways to recognize volunteers, make an idea list of recognition opportunities. Invite others to add to the list, so that everyone responsible for saying thank you has a reference source of creative options.

Valuable is the work that you do,

Outstanding is how you always come through,

Loyal , sincere and full of good cheer,

Untiring in your efforts throughout the year,

Notable are the contributions you make,

Trustworthy in every project you take,

Eager to reach your every goal,

Effective in the way you fulfill your role,

Ready with a smile like a shining star,

Special and wonderful-that's what you are.

Recognition Ideas for Principals

- ✓ Put a message saluting your volunteers and partners on your school marquee.
- ✓ Mention volunteer and business partnership contributions and express appreciation in a memo, newsletter, etc. sent home to parents and partners.
- ✓ Send individual letters (can be one standard letter to all with individual names typed in) to each school volunteer or partner.
- ✓ Prepare a “Dear Volunteer” letter expressing appreciation and providing a coupon good for a free cup of coffee or inviting volunteer to enjoy refreshments provided in the office during an appreciation activity.
- ✓ Invite School Board members and/or district administrators to volunteer recognition events. Ask them to offer a word of appreciation to our volunteers.
- ✓ Ask several faculty members to speak a few moments at your appreciation events on what having volunteers means to them and their students.
- ✓ Invite your volunteers to stop by for a personal chat and coffee and donuts. You may want to give a specific time and place.
- ✓ Send letters of appreciation to volunteer groups that serve the school: Booster Clubs, PTA?PTO, SHAC, community groups that may have provided volunteer services to the school such as Foster Grandparents, fraternities and sororities, and community service clubs; business partners and other supportive businesses.
- ✓ Include mention of volunteers and volunteer contributions in morning announcements over the intercom.
- ✓ Encourage students and staff to express their appreciation to volunteers and business partners regularly.

Ideas for School-wide Recognition

- ✓ Invite volunteers to breakfast or lunch at school on a certain day. Have students decorate tables with hand-made place mats, placard, centerpieces, corsages, favors, etc. Have volunteers RSVP so you know the number planning to attend. Hang a large sheet of paper on the wall with the message “Thank You, Volunteers” the day before the event; encourage students to sign it or write messages to volunteers. Involve teachers in the event. Have them present a suitable skit, perform a song or read a poem.
- ✓ Plan a volunteer appreciation party (a before-school coffee or after-school reception). Faculty members must be willing to attend in order for this to be an effective expression of appreciation. Ask a florist to donate a centerpiece and give it to a volunteer as a door prize.
- ✓ Plan a dessert day and send out invitations that read: “Our volunteers deserve their Just Desserts! Please join us for dessert...”
- ✓ If you are having “an event”, have students perform songs, poems and skits.
- ✓ If you have student volunteers serving at your school do something special for them. Plan a sundae party with lots of yummy fixings or prepare goodie bags with things like pencils, stickers, gum, fast food coupons, etc.
- ✓ Set out goodies for volunteers occasionally. Something like a bowl of candy hearts near the sign-in location would be nice, or a pretty arrangement of fresh flowers with a card saying Thanks.
- ✓ Fix up little packages of mints for volunteers with the following message:

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- 1 “COMPLI-MINT” because you are so nice.
- 1 “ACHIEVE-MINT” for your past performance.
- 1 “ENJOY-MINT” to keep you smiling.
- 1 “COMMIT-MINT” for your continued efforts.

- ✓ Decorate volunteer station in office with “Thank you” and “I Love You” balloons.
- ✓ Recognize volunteers with coffee cups, pads of paper, pens, etc. with the school insignia printed on them.
- ✓ Provide volunteers with appreciation certificates or consider plaques for your outstanding school volunteers.
- ✓ Decorate a prominent bulletin board with a volunteer appreciation theme. This may include student thank you notes, poems or pictures. Examples of bulletin board ideas are “We love our volunteers” or “volunteers give from their hearts” with photos of volunteers working throughout the school or with hearts with volunteers’ names in them.
- ✓ Draw a big tree on a bulletin board and distribute cutout pieces of red paper shaped like an apple throughout the school. Students and teachers write special thank you messages to their volunteers on these apples and give them to the volunteer coordinator who will arrange them on the tree.
- ✓ Honor your volunteers each morning on the morning announcements.
- ✓ Hang a large, laminated banner thanking volunteers near student drop-off and pick up area.

- ✓ Send valentines to volunteers from principal, volunteer coordinator, teachers and/or students. These can be handmade, bought or computer generated.
- ✓ Faculty can wear buttons “We Love Our Volunteers” during a certain week. These can be made at a minimal cost and can be used over and over.

Just a Reminder! Provide a form for teachers to complete with names of classroom volunteers to be sure no one is missed from the volunteer sign in lists when making an invitation list for the recognition event.

Photo Wall Collage of Volunteers

Does your staff recognize the volume of services carried out by volunteers? If not, here is a great way to make them well aware.

Follow along with volunteers on routine assignments. Take a camera and snap candid photos as they perform services or participate in meetings.

Print the photos larger than usual. Mount them in interesting groupings/angles, on a long piece of colored butcher paper. Choose a theme such as, “The Many Faces of Service”. Create a quaint border by printing volunteer names around the outer edges. Now display the oversized poster in a high-traffic area.

You will be surprised at the attention a photo wall gets, and it is a visible reminder of just how much volunteers contribute.

Ideas to Recognize Your Business Partners

- ✓ For special occasions, have students serve baked goods to business partners at their place of work.
- ✓ Provide decorations for business functions, meeting, luncheons; i.e. centerpieces, signs, etc.
- ✓ Provide free tickets for special programs or athletic events at the school.
- ✓ Give your business partner a plant for his or her office with a personal note.
- ✓ Make a poster to hang at the business. Have photos of volunteers (especially people from the business)
 - working with students, mount each photo on a colored heart and write a description of the volunteer
 - activity beside it. At the top of the poster write “Volunteering at (school name) and at the bottom of the
 - poster write “is good for the heart!”
- ✓ Always remember to thank businesses. Notes from students are particularly effective.
- ✓ Provide choral or musical groups for special occasions.
- ✓ Provide space in the school to highlight partnership activities.
- ✓ Provide businesses with an inside look at school, tour the school and explain curriculum. Invite your partners to shadow a teacher.
- ✓ Put businesses on your mailing list and communicate often. Be sure they receive the school newsletters.
- ✓ Provide visibility by submitting partnership information to be used in press releases, human-interest articles and school publicity.

Ideas for Teachers to Honor Individual Volunteers

- ✓ Decorate your classroom door or a classroom bulletin board using any theme expressing appreciation for volunteers.
- ✓ Make a large valentine from the whole class and have everyone sign it. Laminate it, your volunteer will treasure it forever.
- ✓ Invite your volunteer to the class valentine party as a special guest. Have a valentine box or bag for your volunteer and urge students to make valentines for him/her.
- ✓ Have students draw pictures of volunteer helping in their class. Hang these on a bulletin board or wall and then give them to volunteers to keep after the celebration week. This activity would involve discussion of the concept of volunteering with students and making a list of all things volunteers to do help at the school.
- ✓ Find out volunteer’s birthday and provide a card, especially one signed by all the students.
- ✓ Prepare your students to rise in a standing ovation when the volunteer arrives. This requires special preparation on the part of the teacher and the students in advance. This is an excellent way to impress upon students the value of volunteering.
- ✓ Remember to say thank you often! Smiles and hugs go a long way!

More Thank You Ideas for School Volunteers

You're a Cracker Jack volunteer! Thank You!

Write message and tie it with ribbon around a box of Cracker Jacks

We can always bank on your help! Thank You!

Attach a thank you note to a child's bank and tie with ribbon.

You are a key to the success of our students! Thank You!

Glue an old key (spray painted gold) to a piece of paper folded double. Cut a key shape about 1 inch bigger than the key all around, write your message inside, punch a hole and tie with a piece of ribbon like a key chain.

Thanks for your help—it tops everything off just right!

Write your message and tie with ribbon to a jar of ice cream topping or a jar of salsa.

You're a real lifesaver!

Write message and tie to a pack of Lifesavers.

Thanks for all the thyme you give to help our students.

Write message and tie to tiny potted thyme plant or to a box of seasoning.

We'd all go nuts without your help—thanks!

Write message and tie to a can or bag of nuts. If you really want to go all out, make a batch of spice walnuts or pecans and put them with the message.

Just to set the record straight—you're wonderful!

Write message and tie to a phonograph record or a piece of black construction paper cut like a record with white paper put in the center to resemble a record's label.

You are SEW helpful—thanks for all you do for our school!

Write message and tie to a small sewing kit.

Face it—you make a difference in the lives of our students. Thanks for all you do.

Tie message to a small mirror.