



volunteer centre

Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Fhine Ghall

FINGAL

# Recognising your volunteers

101 top tips to recognise your volunteers



Recognising volunteers doesn't have to involve spending a lot of money. There are many ways you can show them you appreciate them without having to spend a cent! You should remember there are some costs involved in engaging volunteers. Start by saying thank you on UN International Volunteer Day (December 5<sup>th</sup> each year), and keep showing your gratitude all year round.

Fingal Volunteer Centre is part of a network of 22 volunteer centres a member of Volunteer Ireland. Further information on the network can be found at [www.volunteer.ie](http://www.volunteer.ie) More information on volunteering, volunteering opportunities and the supports and volunteer management systems on offer from Fingal Volunteer Centre can be found on our web site [www.volunteerfingal.ie](http://www.volunteerfingal.ie)

**International Volunteer Day (IVD) is December 5<sup>th</sup> each year and here are some ways to get involved in the day**

## Ways to celebrate IVD ...

1. Give a certificate to commemorate anniversaries of involvement.
2. Take photos of volunteers 'on the job', imprint a 'Thank you' message and frame them - then give them to each volunteer.
3. Hold special 'thank you' or social functions in honour of volunteers.
4. For long-standing volunteers, collect coins in the amount of hours contributed, place them in a vase tied with a royal blue ribbon and present to them at a special afternoon tea.
5. Have a morning tea with testimonials to the volunteers from recipients of services.
6. Give them a mug with logo or 'thank you' motif.
7. Create bookmarks for the volunteers with an acknowledgement of appreciation for work contributed.
8. Hold a BBQ for your volunteers.
9. Run a Volunteer's Breakfast.
10. Give a pat on the back: Trace your hand on plain paper and cut out. Write, 'Here's a pat on the back for X. Thanks for all you hard work.' Invite staff or anyone else that has contact with the volunteers to make one in recognition of the service of particular volunteers. Hang them all together for visual impact.

11. Create Volunteer buttons and pins
12. Arrange discounts for your volunteers at local shops.
13. Celebrate formal recognition events such as UN International Volunteer Day (December 5<sup>th</sup>) and National Volunteer Day with dinners, teas, dessert buffets, etc.

**Don't just stop on IVD. Recognising volunteers all year round is simple and easy! There are many ways in which volunteers can be recognised for their remarkable spirit of giving.**

## Make sure you start off on the right foot with your volunteers ...

14. Match the volunteer's desires with the organisation's needs.
15. Develop a volunteer policy for your organisation.
16. Accept that an individual volunteer's ability to commit may change over time.
17. Add volunteers to memo and e-mail distribution lists.
18. Ensure volunteers have adequate space and equipment to do their work.
19. Ensure a safe and healthy working environment.
20. Ensure confidentiality for your volunteers.
21. Provide a clear role description for every volunteer.
22. Make sure new volunteers are welcomed warmly.
23. Give volunteers a proper induction.
24. Provide car or bike parking for volunteers.



25. Devote resources (time and money) to volunteer support.
26. Maintain Health and Safety standards.
27. Provide the opportunity for volunteers to take 'leave of absence'.
28. Have a vision for volunteer involvement in your organisation.

**After you have warmly welcomed your volunteer, it is so easy to show your appreciation everyday without having to spend a huge amount of money.**

### Easy everyday and cost-free ways to acknowledge your volunteers ...

29. Always be courteous.
30. Always greet your volunteers by name.
31. Say 'thank you' often, and mean it.
32. Recognise that volunteers play a unique role.
33. Be honest at all times.
34. Don't treat volunteers as 'second-class citizens'.
35. Make volunteers feel good about themselves.
36. Create a climate in which volunteers can feel motivated.
37. Do not overwhelm volunteers.
38. Always be appreciative of volunteers' contributions.
39. Give volunteers a real voice within the organisation.
40. Tell volunteers they have done a good job.
41. Suggest sources of help and support for problems.
42. Know the volunteers' names, the names of their partners, kids or pets and ask about how they are.

**Respecting your volunteers is another important way of showing your appreciation that won't break the bank. It will help you improve your volunteer program and retention rates, and will bring new ideas and viewpoints that may allow you to improve your organisation.**

### Ways to show you value your volunteers' input ...

43. Ask volunteers themselves how the organisation can show it cares about volunteers
44. Encourage them to sit on committees and attend meetings.
45. Allow volunteers to take on more challenging responsibilities.
46. Encourage volunteer participation in planning that affects their work.
47. Enable volunteers to 'grow' during their volunteering by offering training opportunities.

48. Send articles about your volunteer(s) to the local newspaper or run them in your newsletter.
49. Include their name on a program they helped organise.
50. Ask volunteers to share their ideas.
51. Share the results of program evaluations with volunteers so they can see their impact on clients and programs.
52. Review the progress of volunteers on a regular basis.
53. Provide constructive appraisal.
54. Allow volunteers to get involved in solving problems.
55. Learn what motivates each volunteer, and make your recognition appropriate to what he or she thinks is important.
56. Give volunteers tasks in which they will be successful.
57. Make sure the volunteers are doing work that is meaningful to them and the community.
58. Promote volunteers to other roles that take better advantage of their talents.
59. Highlight the impact that the volunteers' contribution is having on the organisation.
60. Always have work for your volunteers to do, and never waste their time.
61. Provide meaningful and enjoyable work.
62. Give volunteers an opportunity to debrief, especially if they work in stressful situations.
63. Let volunteers put their names to something they have helped to produce or to make happen.
64. Use surveys as a way of eliciting your volunteers' views.
65. Take the time to explain and listen to volunteer's ideas and concerns.
66. Ask volunteers to give presentations or lead meetings.
67. Ask volunteers to train other volunteers, for example, older volunteers to mentor the young.
68. Make sure the volunteer coordinator is easily accessible and has an 'open door' policy.
69. Supervise volunteers' work.
70. Set up a volunteer support group.
71. Do not impose new policies and procedures without volunteers' input.
72. Include volunteers by providing them with a special mail box in the office so they can retrieve memos or files when they stop by.
73. Ask volunteers' opinions when developing new policies and strategies.
74. Maintain regular contact with volunteers, even if they work 'off-site' or at odd hours.
75. Use quotes from volunteers in leaflets and annual reports.
76. Allow volunteers to air legitimate grievances and make sure these are dealt with swiftly.



**If your budget allows, spending a little bit of money on your volunteers is a nice gesture to show the organisation values their contribution.**

### Some tips that may involve a slight cost ...

77. Provide excellent training and coaching.
78. Reimburse out-of-pocket expenses.
79. A personal note to say 'thanks' for a job well done.
80. Thank them in a newsletter.
81. Pay registration fees (or part of) for continuing education classes or conferences.
82. Write letters to the volunteer's family - let them know how much the person's work has contributed, and thank the family for supporting the volunteer in their efforts.
83. Have a letter to the volunteer from (or a visit with) a person who has benefited from the volunteer's services. Let the volunteer really see, hear and feel the end result of their work.
84. Have staff and clients write comments and quotes about the difference volunteers make, and have these printed in a booklet and mailed out or shared at a recognition event.
85. Create a volunteer notice board.
86. Provide free refreshments during coffee and tea breaks.
87. Include volunteers in your coffee breaks.
88. Nominate your volunteers for community awards. Look on Fingal Volunteer Centre's web site for a list of awards a volunteer can be nominated for

There are other forms of recognition that may only be relevant once a year or at the appropriate time, but which are nevertheless worthwhile doing as they show you value your volunteers.

### Annual/one-off recognition ideas...

89. Have an annual volunteer award ceremony.
90. Conduct an exit interview when a volunteer leaves.
91. Feature your volunteers at special events throughout the year.
92. Farewell volunteers when they move away from the area or leave the organisation.
93. Provide letters of reference.
94. Recommend volunteers to prospective employers.
95. Help interested volunteers prepare their resumes, emphasising the skills they have developed through their volunteer work.
96. Send birthday cards.
97. Present volunteers with a special memento recognising their service to the organisation.
98. Celebrate the year's work together.

99. Present special awards for 1, 3, 5, 10, 15 and more years of service.
100. Nominate a volunteer of the month, put up their picture in your office and send it to the local newspaper.
101. If you work with children, ask them to make thank-you cards for volunteers.



### Fingal Volunteer Centre

Fingal Volunteer Centre is an independent and free matching service to encourage more people to become involved in volunteering across the county. It aims to promote, develop and support volunteer participation in the general Fingal area.

### We help organisations ...

- If you need volunteers we will try and source them for you
- We can visit you and help with any issues about taking on volunteers for the first time, or to review current procedures
- We will come and talk to you about anything to do with volunteering, such as references, Garda Vetting, volunteer management, good practice, expenses ... and much more.

### Further Information

Please visit our web site or telephone (01) 820 9550 for more information on volunteer management training and the other services we provide to volunteer involving organisations in Fingal.