



Arthritis Walk Volunteer Retention: How to Keep Your Volunteers

Recruiting the right volunteers is probably one of the hardest jobs an Event Chair faces. This is the group of people you are trusting to run your event and achieve your goals. They were hard to find and now that you have them, how do you keep them?

- **Recognition**

Volunteers need to be recognized in a way that matters to them. By getting to know your volunteers, you will figure out what motivates them. Some easy ideas of ways to recognize your volunteers would be:

- Highlight their accomplishments at a committee meeting
- Be sure to acknowledge them on the day of the event
- Give your committee members special shirts to wear on event day
- Nominate them for a local award. Many local agencies give out volunteer awards. Even if they don't win, knowing you nominated them let's them know you think they are important
- Give them a donated incentive, everyone likes gifts
- Wrap-up events are a good time to give certificates, awards and gifts and also will allow you to get feedback about the event. (see sample)

- **Promotion**

Volunteers who have served on your committee for more than one year may become bored if they are doing the same job year after year. If you want to keep them, consider "promoting them". Here are some ways of doing that:

- Increase their responsibility on the committee
- If they have leadership potential, put them in a leadership role on your committee
- Involve them in more decision making roles and possibly in important community meetings

- **Respect Their Time**

Keep in mind that your volunteers have many other responsibilities and will become frustrated if you do not respect their time. Ways to achieve this are:

- Start meetings on time and limit their length – however do not end too soon and leave them feeling as if their time was wasted
- Stick to your meeting agenda. Keep a "parking lot" list for items not on the agenda and discuss them at your next meeting – making sure to prioritize and touch on the most important topics first

- Watch the amount and length of e-mails you send out to your committee. Also, ask your committee members to avoid “respond to all” so you don’t fill everyone’s mailbox
- Using past examples is a great way to show correct and incorrect ways of doing things. Concentrate on different areas at each meeting, based on what is most important at that particular time

- **Keep Year Round Contact With Your Volunteers**

Let your volunteers know you think of them year round. This makes them feel a part of the bigger picture, not just the Arthritis Walk. Some easy ways to achieve this are:

- Put them on your chapter’s newsletter list
- Send them Research Updates
- Send them a Thanksgiving or Holiday Card
- Send them a birthday card

- **Thank You!**

These are two simple words that mean a lot. Make sure that whenever you correspond or meet with a volunteer, your last sentence includes these two words.