

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION IDEAS

A Reference Sheet for Rape Crisis Programs

Volunteers are at the heart of work done at Rape Crisis Centers. For many Rape Crisis Centers, it would be impossible to provide the crisis intervention services 24 hours a day, every day of the year without volunteers. For this reason, it is incredibly important to show our appreciation for the time and resources volunteers provide to the Rape Crisis Centers and the survivors they serve. At nonprofit agencies, funds can be tight, and many grants do not allow for expenses related to volunteer appreciation, so we have compiled this quick list of low- or no-cost volunteer appreciation ideas.

National Volunteer Week is typically the third week of April, but we encourage you to celebrate your volunteers all year long!

5 Ways to Show Appreciation for Volunteers without Breaking the Bank

- 1. Birthday Cards** — Keep a calendar of volunteers' birthdays and, on their special day, send them a card with a handwritten message and signatures from all of the RCC staff. Encourage your staff to sign all the cards for one month at a staff meeting, so they're ready to go. You don't have to splurge on cards, either! You can make them on the computer (or by hand if you're really crafty), or you can buy an inexpensive box of blank notecards online or at your local craft store.
- 2. Annual Candy Awards** — Host an annual volunteer awards ceremony at your agency. Provide some low-cost snacks like cookies, cake, and juice and provide each volunteer with a printed award certificate unique to them. You can attach candy to the award, to signify what the award is for. For example, "The Werther's Award" for the volunteer who has a heart of gold, or "The 1000Grand Award" for the volunteer whose dedication is priceless! You can find more ideas for candy-themed awards online.
- 3. Agency Swag** — If you already purchase promotional items for your agency, such as pens, chap stick, nail files, etc., make sure you give one of each item to your volunteers. Typically, agencies purchase hundreds or even thousands of items at a time to be given away at outreach events. Giving items to each volunteer will probably not be an extra expense, and your volunteers will love having items with the agency name on them. Remember your volunteers any time you order new swag as well!
- 4. Local Sporting Events** — Reach out to local sports teams for tickets! Many times, minor-league sports teams will provide a certain number of free tickets to nonprofit agencies for games that are not sold out. Providing volunteers with tickets for themselves and their families to attend a local sporting event is a great way to show appreciation, and can be of no cost to the agency. Consider asking for free tickets to other community events such as concerts or theatre productions as well.
- 5. E-Mail/Newsletter "Shout-Outs"** — If you send a monthly newsletter or regular e-mail updates to volunteers, be sure to include "shout-outs," or praise, for volunteers who have recently gone above and beyond. This can be a simple one-line statement of gratitude or congratulations for a particular achievement. You can also give praise for personal accomplishments or major life events, such as graduation, career advancements, engagement, marriage, or the birth/adoption of a child, if the volunteer doesn't mind you sharing that information.

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