

Leading the Way for Volunteer Programs



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What to Expect

- How to position your volunteer program's role within the organization
- How to ensure staff buy-in
- How to build a framework that maximizes and maintains volunteers' contributions

What do you want?

- What is the purpose of the program? *Why do we involve volunteers in our work?*
- Where is the program positioned?
If volunteers are integral to the overall organization, the program manager's position needs to reflect that.



Determine the Lay of the Land

Ask yourself:

- Are volunteers trusted and respected?
- Do staff understand the role of volunteers?
- Are volunteers appreciated regularly?
- Are volunteers who undermine the work of staff and/or other volunteers effectively addressed?
- Are volunteers involved in running and developing the program?
- Are volunteers in the loop on shelter “news”?
- Do volunteers have a space at the shelter that is centralized and “important”?
- Are staff evaluated on how well they work with volunteers?

Potential Issues

If the answer is “no,” there may be an overall:

- Lack of trust in volunteers
- Lack of proper supervision and oversight
- Too much micromanaging
- Lack of understanding / acceptance of the important role volunteers can play
- Lack of appropriate policies / protocols and systems
- Lack of empowering staff to handle issues

The Leader's Responsibility

The organization's leader is just as responsible for the volunteer program as the volunteer manager!



The Leader's Responsibility

Leaders are instrumental in:

- Finding the right person to manage the program
- Creating the culture around the engagement of volunteers in the organization
- Empowering the program to engage at all levels within the organization
- Explaining how volunteers are involved in accomplishing the organization's goals

Managing the Program

The supervisor should be:

- Highly placed within the organization
- Have program and people management experience (animal welfare experience is probably less relevant than program management experience)
- Comfortable with technology and learning new systems
- Highly skilled in emotional intelligence and conflict management
- Able to build a team of assistants (mentors) and be able to delegate

Mentor System

- Better supervisor-to-staff ratio
- Involves volunteers in the program
- Creates opportunities for advancement and buy-in



Technology



- Work smarter, not harder
- Budget for the tools that will help the supervisor manage their time
 - Volunteer tracking software
 - Scheduling system for training
(connect mentors with volunteers in training)
- Encourage adoption of technology across the organization

Dedicated Space

We get it—space is at a premium, but:

- Volunteers must feel welcomed
- Storage for belongings, sign in/sign out area (if it can't be near staff)
- Storage of program-related materials
- Area for mentors to train volunteers

Equipment for Volunteers

Volunteers require tools to accomplish their work, and you need to make sure they've got what they need, even if you request that they cover the cost.

Find ways to have volunteers use these items when they are at the shelter and return for the next person to use.



Staff Interaction

- Staff must be trained on how to work successfully with volunteers
- Selected on their willingness & ability to work with people
- Evaluated for how successfully they work with volunteers
- Nobody has permission to be rude!



Process for Addressing Issues

- Staff has to know you have their back
- Standards of conduct must be developed and enforced
- **No one** should be “held hostage” by volunteers who don’t make a positive contribution
- Create a culture of mutual respect



Effective Communications

- Volunteers must be kept in the loop
- Volunteers must have a way of being able to contribute and be heard



ARL Iowa

Effective Communications

An effective system must be in place:

- List-serv
- Google group
- Private Facebook group
- In-person meetings
- Surveys
- Weekly emails

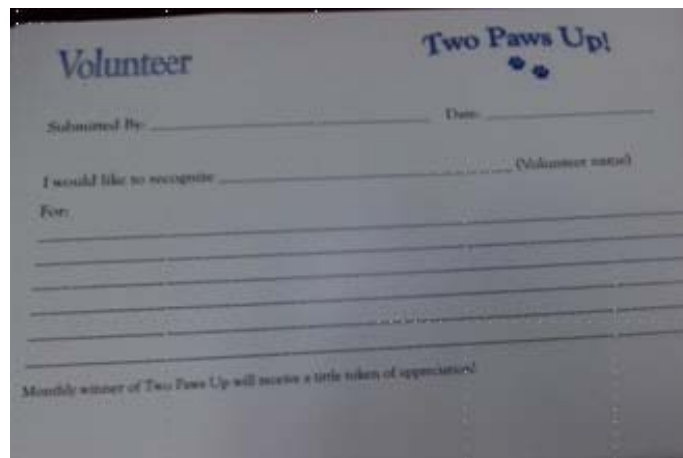
Training Program

- Make training a priority
- Empower volunteers to participate and take the lead
- Establish a culture of learning, feedback and continuous improvement



Culture of Appreciation

- Top down review of the visibility of volunteers in organizational collateral
- Build opportunities for volunteers to acknowledge staff excellence, and vice versa
- If your organization takes in donations, are the volunteers considered to be donors too and appreciated as donors?



The image shows a form titled "Two Paws Up!" with the word "Volunteer" in the top left corner. The form includes fields for "Submitted By:" and "Date:". Below these, it says "I would like to recognize _____ (Volunteer name)" and "For:". There are several horizontal lines for writing. At the bottom, it states "Monthly winner of Two Paws Up will receive a little token of appreciation."

Creating a Community

Volunteers often want to meet new people and develop positive working relationships with other volunteers and staff.

These relationships are critical to provide the volunteer with support, information and inspiration so that they stay with the program.

“Community” often needs to be created rather than assuming it will just happen.



Creating a Community

Put in steps that help build relationships for volunteers:

- Name badges
- Photos of staff/volunteers with names
- Social get-togethers
- A required, regular schedule so volunteers get to know the people on their shift
- “Welcoming” volunteers
- Email address for answered by mentors or communication board



Ensuring Staff Buy-In & Support

The program has to be designed to actually help staff in their work!

- Accountability systems
- Feedback systems
- Engage volunteers in developing roles
- Evaluate staff on their interactions with volunteers (and vice-versa!)

Retention is an Outcome

Volunteers who enjoy their work and make meaningful contributions will stick around.

Boundaries are essential!



Volunteer Management Resources

- [AnimalSheltering.org resources](#)
- [Join the Volunteer Management Discussion Group](#)
- [Everyone Ready](#) (free training resource)
- [Volunteer Program Assessment](#)
- ASPCApro webinars:
 - [Volunteer Management 101](#) (Hilary Hager)
 - [Volunteer Management 201](#) (Hilary Hager)
 - [Recruiting and Keeping Equine Volunteers](#)

Questions? Contact Us

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