



A service of the
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Youth Supports

A resource to encourage and empower youth leaders for the expansion of the Lord's kingdom.

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- Saying, "Thank you!"
- **K-Scope!**

Say, "Thank you!"

Give a note of encouragement.

Spend some money.

Saying, "Thank you!"

Vol.un.teer — noun- a person who performs or offers to perform a service of one's own free will.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of all that we do in the church. A great group of volunteers can make a project fun and enjoyable while a group of volunteers who are complainers and whiners can make an activity or project seem like a trip to the dentist. (I personally really don't like going to the dentist so this seemed an appropriate analogy. If you enjoy going to the dentist put in your own analogy!) I'm sure I'm not telling you anything you don't already know but I do want to focus on how we appreciate our volunteers. I don't think we recognize their contributions to our ministries to the full value.

Maybe you're a pro at appreciating your volunteers. If that is a true statement you can skip to the end of this article and e-mail me your great ideas about how you appreciate your volunteers. If, on the other hand, you are always on the lookout for new ideas and ways to appreciate volunteers keep reading. Some of the ideas below are tried and true but they, in my experience, have proven to be great ways of appreciating volunteers.

1. Say "Thank you!" This suggestion may seem simple enough but it's the one that seems to get forgotten the most. We get busy at whatever task we are doing and forget to tell the people who made it successful, "Thank you." You can never say, "Thank you!" too much.
2. Drop a note of encouragement to your volunteers. When you see a volunteer doing something well or they are going out of their comfort zone to accomplish ministry let them know. I personally keep a file in my cabinet labeled "warm fuzzies". In that file there are notes, letters, and drawings from people saying "Thank you." Those items can help me through a rough patch and remember there are people who appreciate all that I do. Just think about the possibility of encouraging your volunteer not only today but also somewhere down the road. Another great way of appreciating your volunteers is to have the kids they are working with write them a note or get together and have everybody sign the card.
3. Spend some money on your volunteers. This money can be in the form of gift cards to Starbucks, Cold Stone Creamery or Baskin -n- Robbins, have a volunteer appreciation breakfast lunch or dinner, buy a small gift at the local Christian book store, buy some little doodads at the dollar store and hand them out periodically. We have money in our church budget for volunteer appreciation

Listen to their ideas.

Relationships!

Recognition!

Give them time off.

K-Scope!

activities. I also spend money out of my own pocket, when I can, to appreciate volunteers who have really helped me out.

4. Listen to their ideas. Nothing shows appreciation like listening to their input and using the stuff that's good. Sometimes we can get so focused on how we think ministry needs to be done that we shut out the volunteers that God has given to us.
5. Relationships – relationships-relationships! Get to know your volunteers on a deeper level than just “Hi! How are you?” People are craving for relationships. When you are investing in a relationship with the volunteer they may be more willing to invest in relationships with the kids. Make the time to have time with your volunteers that don't involve the business at hand. Have a meeting a couple times of year that is focused on getting to know your volunteers better. Or even better, take time each time meeting to get to know what's going on in the lives of your volunteers. Add your volunteers to your prayer time.
6. Have a time when you can recognize them in front of the congregation. Not everybody likes to stand up in front of the congregation to be recognized but for the most part they will really be honored that you remembered them in this way. An example of this was a Sunday school teacher who had been teaching for 35 years! (Can you believe that?) She had not been recognized for her efforts as an individual, ever. The Children's Ministry team decided to recognize her in front of the congregation. We gave her a plaque and a time for the congregation to thank her for her work. She was overwhelmed with the gesture and has become an even better teacher this year!
7. Lastly, recognize that they may need some time off. A volunteer that is rested after some time away is way more valuable than the volunteer who is burnt out and just showing up out of obligation. I know this is sometimes difficult because we don't always have enough volunteers. However, if you don't honor a volunteer's need to step back you may not have any volunteers. You may gain some new volunteers that step up to the challenge.

Working with volunteers isn't always easy but appreciating their efforts can lead to volunteers that are happier and more engaged in ministry. May God bless your ministries!

In His Strong Name,

—Amy L. Schweim, Minister of Celebration and Children, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Puyallup, WA <Alschweim@aol.com>

Find past issues of Youth Supports at:

http://www.nowlcms.org/educational_services/YouthSupports.aspx

Kaleidoscope - “It's Where You Belong!”

This year's K-Scope is scheduled for July 10-15 at the Christ Lutheran Retreat Center on the Olympic Peninsula near Belfair, Washington. This creative adventure in living the Christian community (Romans 12) is a six-day experience in spiritual growth for high school youth of the Northwest District. Contact Rev. John Schmidt at <KScopeNOW@cs.com> or at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Tacoma, Washington, (253)584-2565.

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