



RESHAPING THE FUTURE **HONORING THE PAST**

CAP TIPS is a series of periodic messages to assist in the planning and implementation of NCVRW Community Awareness Projects. Please feel free to send your individual questions or requests for assistance to Anne Seymour at annesey@atlantech.net.

CAP TIPS #4

To Improve *Public Awareness*

Tips to Seek and Engage Volunteers for Special Events and Activities

Introduction

It is undoubtedly difficult for victim advocates and allied professionals to plan and implement National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) activities with their full-time jobs and other commitments. The proactive solicitation and use of volunteers can "lighten the load" of NCVRW Planning Committees and designated staff, and also engage community members in important efforts to promote victims' rights and services. Many community members who engage as volunteers prior to and during NCVRW go on to be longtime trusted and reliable volunteers throughout the year.

This CAP TIP is designed to help you consider the core elements of volunteer recruitment and management, and provide many resources to make this process as simple as possible.

Be Specific about Your Volunteer Needs and Messages

Many volunteers are drawn to activities that require limited time, energy and commitment (however, experience proves that if they *enjoy* and *are rewarded* by such experiences, they are likely to commit to future volunteer activities!).

It's very important to clarify the "benefits" of volunteering for your NCVRW activities, i.e., your volunteers can:

- Help to promote the important needs of crime victims, their rights and available services.
- Contribute to individual and community safety.
- Meet like-minded volunteers who are concerned about crime, victimization and public safety.
- Commit to limited voluntarism during NCVRW that goes a long way to help crime victims and survivors (with "future volunteer opportunities" offered following NCVRW).
- Consider that they may know *someone* – family members, friends, co-workers, even *themselves* – who has been affected by crime and victimization.

Targeting Volunteers

There are many venues that are *perfect* for volunteer solicitation because of their ongoing, clearly-stated commitment to voluntarism. You can tap into such opportunities through personal contacts (telephone, email and in-person requests through on-site visits, presentations, speeches, etc.) to:

- Civic organizations
- Allied justice professionals
- Chambers of commerce
- High school organizations and students (who are often “required” to commit to a specific number of volunteer hours)
- College/university organizations and students
- Senior citizen organizations (e.g. Senior Corps, RSVP -- Retired Senior Volunteer Programs)
- Multi-faith communities
- Families – emphasizing that crime often affects families and family dynamics, and that an appropriate response to victimization can include family engagement on issues related to personal safety, crime prevention and victim assistance.
- And of course, *crime victims and survivors* who are often readily invested in activities that promote victims’ rights and services.

Networking for Volunteers

- Ask all NCVRW Planning Committee members and their respective staff members to recruit *at least one volunteer* for your special events or activities.
- Ask your existing volunteers to help out and recruit their families and friends to assist with your special events and activities.
- Include a “Seeking Volunteers” link on your website that describes *very specific volunteer activities* (see “Be Specific...,” above) related to 2011 NCVRW.
- Develop a one-page volunteer solicitation that can be:
 - Included in participant resource packages at conferences and other training venues prior to NCVRW.
 - Made available in waiting rooms and offices at victim assistance, justice and allied professional agencies.
 - Emailed to all constituents and clients of your NCVRW Planning Committee and allied professionals.

Volunteer Training

For “one time” events, you can conduct volunteer training through a variety of venues.

It’s important that your volunteers feel welcomed; clearly understand the goal(s) of your activities; and are given the opportunity to provide input and suggestions.

You can conduct volunteer training programs:

- On-site at your organization or agency.
- Via teleconference.
- Through use of a web-based training program.

Through your volunteer training programs, you may identify people with specific areas of expertise that can enhance your NCVRW activities. Don't hesitate to provide them with a "leadership role" as a chairperson of a committee or other leadership role!

And if you're asking for volunteers for a specific event, make sure you tell them to arrive at least 90 minutes in advance, so you can provide an on-site briefing and clarify assignments and volunteer responsibilities.

Volunteer Supervision

Since many organizations and agencies are involved in your NCVRW activities, it's important to establish a *single point of contact* for volunteer supervision. When you reach out to volunteers – in recruitment, training, supervision, evaluation and recognition – it's important to have one person with whom they can directly communicate on an ongoing basis. Make sure that volunteers have access to your "volunteer coordinator" by telephone and email, and it's helpful to have contact information for "in case of emergencies."

Volunteer Evaluation

It's a good idea to seek input from volunteers about their experiences. You can develop a simple one-page evaluation form that asks:

- How did they perceive their volunteer experience?
- Is there anything that could have enhanced their experience?
- Do they have any specific suggestions for future volunteering?
- Would they like to stay in touch to be informed about future volunteer opportunities to promote victims' rights and services and community safety?

Volunteer Recognition

One of the best ways to *retain* volunteers is to *recognize their efforts*, and "reward" them for the time and energy they have committed to help out. You can recognize your NCVRW volunteers by:

- Writing personal notes of thanks to them following NCVRW (or a personal email).
- Using the "certificate of appreciation" artwork from the 2011 NCVRW Resource Guide to personalize a certificate that recognizes their voluntarism.
- Asking "all volunteers" to stand and be recognized during your NCVRW special events or activities.
- Writing a "letter to the editor" following NCVRW that commends your volunteers and communities for supporting your efforts.

Web-based Volunteer Promotion and Solicitation

The web has made it easier than ever before to solicit volunteers. There are countless sites that allow you to post volunteer opportunities, and allow individuals who are seeking volunteer activities in their community to find you!

It's important to draft two-to-three sentences that accurately and enthusiastically describes the types of volunteer activities you are sponsoring, and how/whom to contact for more information (as many online posting sites have limitations on the length of your submission). For example:

“Volunteer opportunity to help crime victims and survivors and contribute to our community’s safety. Volunteers needed for (*describe events/activities and dates/times*) to promote victims’ needs and rights during 2011 National Crime Victims’ Rights Week.”

The following list is intended to provide examples only (this list was compiled by entering “finding volunteers” into an Internet search engine); there are likely other opportunities in your jurisdiction that you can tap to solicit volunteers online:

- Energize Inc. (www.energizeince.com) provides a listing of websites where you can post your volunteer activities. It also contains a “treasure trove” of links about how to solicit, secure, train and reward volunteers (see “About Volunteering”).
- Craigslist (www.craigslist.org) allows you to post volunteer opportunities. Simply find the Craigslist listing for your community or state; click on “post to classifieds,” then “community,” and then “volunteers.” Volunteer listings are sorted by the date of posting, and you can either post a personal/work email or create an anonymous one.
- Volunteermatch.org (www.volunteermatch.org) allows people seeking volunteer opportunities to do so by zip code. There is a “free basic account” that is perfect for 2011 NCVRW, and this site also sponsors a very cool blog.
- Meetup (meetup.meetup.com) is a site that allows individuals to create on-line “meetup venues” to engage people who share common interests. At this website, there are many people – sorted by zip code – who are seeking volunteer opportunities. You can also easily start a “meetup group” that solicits volunteers for your NCVRW events and throughout the year; it only requires a commitment to “pledge to create a real, face-to-face community.”
- If your agency or organization is a member of United Way, www.liveunited.org is a great centralized website to post and seek volunteers.

Online Resources for Volunteer Recruitment and Management

There is a wide variety of online resources to help you consider the full scope of volunteer recruitment, management and evaluation. Here are just four sources among the many available to you via the Internet:

- The National Crime Prevention Council, with support from the Office of Justice Programs, has published a four-page overview of “volunteer recruitment” that is succinct and includes very creative “secrets of success” (http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ccdo/programs/H_a.pdf).
- MAP for Nonprofits (www.mapnp.org) features a free management library that features, among a wide range of topics, information about volunteer planning, operations and resources. Its broader management library for nonprofit organizations can be accessed at www.managementhelp.org.
- Service Leader (www.serviceleader.org) offers tips for engaging, recruiting, supporting, supervision and recognizing volunteers.

- Citizen Corps (http://www.citizencorps.gov/councils/volunteer_mgmt.shtm) has an excellent online “Volunteer Liability Guide” that is a “must read” to make sure you prepare for and address all potential liability issues.

For More Information

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