

Effective Recruiting

Which comes first the chicken or the egg? This time-honored question is appropriate as you plan to effectively recruit volunteers for various tasks in the educational ministry of your congregation. It was once said, “Recruiting volunteers before designing a job description is like trying to dance before the music begins. You’ll end up out of step!”

True. It *is* important to have a clear understanding of the task at hand. At the same time be open to creating new “job opportunities” in response to specific gifts that present themselves as your congregation grows or as the interests and skills of the congregation expand. For instance, if a high school dance teacher joins the congregation, you might consider how this person’s gifts and skills might be incorporated into your Christian education programming.

Consider the following suggestions as you begin to “call” individuals to various tasks in the educational ministry of your congregation:

IDENTIFY

There are several ways by which volunteers can be identified:

- pray for God’s guidance and wisdom.
 - time and talent surveys.
 - spiritual gift inventories.
 - referral from church staff or others.
 - simply by “listening” in casual conversation, or by what an individual may say during a Bible study, congregational meeting or fellowship opportunity.
 - simply by “watching” how a person interacts with others or by their exhibited faith practices.
- Be about identifying gifts and not about filling positions—be open to new gifts and skills that present themselves.

INVITE

Pay close attention to inviting others to service in caring ways:

- personal, “face to face” invitations are preferred.
 - follow up with a telephone call.
 - allow the person to describe personal preferences for the kind of conditions in which they prefer to serve such as team-tasks, short term opportunities, working from home, outdoor jobs, tasks that can be done by those with physical limitations.
 - spend time getting to know about the skills, interests and attitudes of the individual.
 - tell the person why he or she seems to have the qualities needed for the task or where appropriate, how they came to be recommended.
 - be honest and clearly communicate details of the commitment including the support the congregation offers. Indicate a job description has been drafted.
 - pray together.
 - when an invitation is declined, offer alternatives such as involvement at a later time, ways this person might be involved in a lesser degree, or other ways this person may be willing to serve.
- It is vital to communicate that the individual’s gifts are important-not just filling a position.

AFFIRM AND SUPPORT

Once a person has agreed to be “called” to a ministry position, your job has only just begun. The many ways you support and affirm each individual will serve to strengthen the volunteer’s sense of value in edifying the body of Christ.

- draft a clear job description and covenant.
- install all education volunteers during a worship service.
- enlist a prayer team whose primary responsibilities are to pray for those who serve in the congregation’s Christian education programs.
- provide an initial orientation and training.
- be creative in the ways “gifts” are used; can the task be accomplished away from the church facilities? Can a team share the task? Is it an on-going or one-time task?
- provide “Sabbath” opportunities such as a “day-off” or opportunities to occasionally attend an adult learning opportunity.
- provide opportunities for growth via retreats, synod or conference learning events, on-line chat rooms or Web sites.
- provide all materials and supplies and a clean, safe environment.
- communicate regularly through phone calls, newsletters, and bulletin boards.
- honor the volunteer by keeping the congregation informed; list all educational volunteers in the congregation’s newsletter, include individuals by name in the prayers of the church, highlight activities in the bulletin or newsletter naming the leaders involved.
- select random volunteers each week and recognize their ministry in the worship bulletin.
- show ongoing appreciation with notes, small gifts, E-mail messages, “grab n’ go brunches, a recognition banquet or by honoring the families of the volunteers.
- offer opportunities for ongoing evaluation and ownership in making changes.
- have screening, safety, and emergency policies in place.
- communicate preferred styles of positive behavior management (discipline).
- establish paths of accountability for advice and help.