

Recognition

Section 7: Recognition

KEY POINTS

- Many national, state, and local groups offer volunteer awards for individuals and programs.
- Recognition does not have to be expensive or extravagant to be meaningful.

In-House Recognition

Recognizing your volunteers helps convey the important role they play in your agency and is a key to their retention. While many volunteers are not motivated by recognition, the time, effort, and talents provided by your volunteers should not be taken for granted. Recognition need not be time-consuming or expensive to be meaningful. A volunteer program and the agency as a whole should acknowledge volunteers regularly through sincere expressions of gratitude.

Simple ways to recognize your volunteers include:

- Expressing verbal expressions of thanks
- Writing letters of commendation
- Presenting pictures with and/or certificates of appreciation signed by local elected officials
- Writing personal notes
- Posting photos of volunteers on the job
- Writing letters to the volunteer's employer
- Giving gift certificates donated by local businesses
- Highlighting volunteers on your agency's Web site
- Working with your local media to publicly highlight volunteer contributions
- Presenting pins to acknowledge a certain number of total hours volunteered
- Asking staff to hold a potluck lunch to honor volunteers
- Encouraging staff to remember volunteers' birthdays and anniversary dates with the department

Formal recognition can consist of:

- Volunteer of the month and/or Volunteer of the year awards
- Regular award and recognition banquets/events that allow volunteers to bring their families to the events
- Providing plaques, shirts, bags, paperweights, or clocks with the agency's seal

While it is important to recognize outstanding volunteers, it is equally, if not more important to recognize all volunteers.

Community and State Volunteer Award Programs

Many states, local communities, and civic groups offer formal awards for volunteers and organizations. Check with your state's volunteer commission, usually housed in the Governor's Office, or your local volunteer center to find out what types of awards and recognition programs your volunteers may be nominated for. To find a volunteer center in your area, search the Points of Light Institute and HandsOn Network directory at www.pointsoflight.org/centers/.

National Law Enforcement Award Programs

Outstanding Achievement in Law Enforcement Volunteer Programs Award (“VIPS Award”)

The IACP and Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) sponsor an annual award to recognize excellence in leadership through the implementation of an effective, high quality volunteer program that successfully integrates volunteers into overall organizational operations and administration and to institutionalize the theories and practices of the Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program. Winners are honored at a reception held at the IACP annual conference.

For application information, please visit www.theiacp.org/awards/volunteerprogram/.

The Webber Seavey Award for Quality in Law Enforcement

The Webber Seavey Award for Quality in Law Enforcement was created jointly by IACP and Motorola and named for IACP’s first president, Chief Webber Seavey of Omaha, Nebraska. This program helps law enforcement agencies worldwide and the communities they serve by redefining the concept of law enforcement and how it is routinely performed.

The program annually honors achievements in one or more of the following areas:

- Continually improving services to the community
- Strengthening police relations and promoting community participation
- Effectively using resources
- Enhancing communications within and cooperation among agencies
- Developing creative and innovative approaches that promote excellence in law enforcement

For application information, please visit www.theiacp.org/awards/webber/.

Neighborhood Watch National Awards Program

The National Sheriffs’ Association (NSA) established the Neighborhood Watch Awards of Excellence Program in 2004 to recognize and honor those law enforcement agencies, Neighborhood Watches, states, organizations, and programs that are doing extraordinary things to promote Neighborhood Watches in their communities.

More information can be found at www.usaonwatch.org.

***The North Carolina Commission of Volunteerism & Community Service Award honors the spirit of volunteerism by recognizing individuals, groups and businesses that make a significant contribution to their community through volunteer service.
Visit www.volunteernc.org/code/award.html for more information.***

National Law Enforcement Explorer Competition

The Exploring Program is part of a greater initiative overseen by the Learning for Life (LFL) council, formerly a component of the National Boy Scouts. Exploring is a component of LFL's career education program for men and women ranging in ages 14 to 21. Exploring instills discipline, confidence, and team building skills in each young person. Youth compete in local, regional, and national conferences where they have an opportunity to interact with local and federal law enforcement agencies. The National Law Enforcement Exploring Conference takes place every other year and is an opportunity for explorers to compete in a variety of competitions. Team competitions at the conference include arrest and search, bomb threat response, and hostage negotiation. There are individual competitions such as bike policing and a police physical performance test. Awards are given on an individual and team basis. For more information, visit www.learningforlife.org/exploring/lawenforcement/index.html.

National Volunteer Recognition Programs

President's Volunteer Service Award

In 2003, President George W. Bush created the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. The mission of the council is to recognize and encourage outstanding volunteer service and civic participation by individuals and organizations. The awards, modeled after the President's Physical Fitness Awards, are given on an annual basis. This award program provides an excellent and inexpensive opportunity for your volunteers – and your agency – to be recognized.

If you have volunteers who are 15 or older and have completed 100 hours of volunteer service in the previous 12 months, they are entitled to receive the President's Volunteer Service Award. There is an award for youth 14 and under as well. To date, more than 80,000 volunteers have received the award. If you have volunteers who have completed more than 4,000 hours of volunteer service in their lifetimes, they are entitled to receive:

- A personalized certificate of achievement
- An official President's Volunteer Service Award pin
- A note of congratulations from the President of the United States, and
- A letter from the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation.

For more information, visit www.presidentialserviceawards.gov/.

Daily Points of Light Award

The Daily Points of Light Awards program is cosponsored by the Points of Light Institute, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the Knights of Columbus, with funding provided by the Knights of Columbus. Each weekday, one volunteer or volunteer effort receives the Daily Point of Light Award. For application criteria, visit www.pointsoflight.org/awards/dpol/nominate.cfm.

National Volunteer Week

National Volunteer Week was established through executive order by President Nixon in 1974. Every President since then has signed a proclamation recognizing National Volunteer Week as an annual celebration of volunteerism. Many states, localities, and agencies schedule recognition events to coincide with National Volunteer Week.

Future National Volunteer Week dates are:

- April 18 – April 24, 2010
- April 17 – April 23, 2011

For information on National Volunteer Week, including free downloadable resources, visit the Points of Light Foundation Web site at www.pointsoflight.org/programs/seasons/nvw.