

ASSET-BUILDING IDEAS FOR VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS

As a person who works with volunteers, you know that there is a lot more to volunteer coordination than just scheduling. Volunteers need training, encouragement, and feedback on the work they are doing. Volunteers who work with youth can be great asset builders, and you can help them by providing the support they need. Here are some things you can do:

- **Recognize that some potential volunteers are uncomfortable around children and youth.**

Provide training in different skills such as listening, leadership, and conflict resolution. Ask volunteers what other skills they would like to strengthen or develop to help them feel more confident about working with youth.

- **Give each volunteer a list of the 40 assets** that focuses on the age-group he or she works with.

- **Create volunteer notebooks filled with practical information about youth.**

Notebooks could include sample lessons, typical behavior of young people and how to respond, articles that address specific topics related to your work, quieting-down activities, and class rosters. Some places create one or two office notebooks; others provide them for each activity or each volunteer.

- **Be creative with volunteer training.** Send one or two volunteers to a workshop and have them come back and train other volunteers (this is a way to empower and give leadership skills to volunteers). Assign a related book for volunteers to read and then have a book discussion. Or one person could read a book and write a review of it for others.

- **Establish clear boundaries for volunteers** working with children and youth.

- **Screen volunteers who will work with children and youth.** Know the potential risks of this kind of volunteering and do what you can to minimize them.

- **Talk with people in the community to learn about barriers to volunteering with children.** You could survey them, hold focus groups, or do phone surveys. Based on what you hear, take steps to do things that encourage people to get involved and make the barriers seem smaller.

- **Talk with volunteer coordinators in other programs about how they can and do incorporate asset building** into their program.

- **Post your volunteer opportunities through VolunteerMatch on the Web**

(www.volunteermatch.org), an organization that lets nonprofit groups, schools, congregations, and other organizations post their information free of charge. Then publicize your involvement on that Web site.

- **Create a job description for each volunteer position you have.** Be specific about details, including title of volunteer position, basic objectives and responsibilities, skills and experience needed, time commitment, training required, and to whom the volunteer reports.

- **Create youth-oriented volunteer opportunities that are diverse in the amount of time, energy, and expertise needed.** Someone who has never volunteered before may be more comfortable making a short, one-time commitment than a time-intensive, ongoing one.

- **Affirm volunteers.** Go out of your way to visit with them and tell them you appreciate their contributions. Provide opportunities for the young people to thank them. When their volunteer commitment is over, honor them in some way.

- **Spend time with volunteers,** provide supervision and feedback, provide opportunities for growth, and give them opportunities to get to know one another.

- **Build a diverse team of volunteers.** Recruit females and males of different ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- **Show volunteers the connections between the 40 developmental assets and the purpose of your program.** For example, in offering tae kwon do lessons, not only are you providing a youth program but you're also building self-esteem, personal power, and caring relationships and you are teaching resistance and peaceful conflict-resolution skills.
- Assess **whether your organization can involve children and youth as volunteers.** Service is an important component of asset building, and young people need high-quality volunteer opportunities.