

## Information Sheet

Here are a few hints for organisations looking to attract young volunteers to help their organisation:

### What Young People Can Offer:

- Energy
- Enthusiasm
- A fresh perspective and new ideas on how your organisation can do things
- Skills and abilities in particular 'new' skills - especially in IT
- A 'young person's' point of view
- A way of ensuring the future of volunteering within your organisation by bringing a younger generation of volunteers in to help and thus a way to help sustain your organisation into the future.
- The opportunity to involve your existing staff/volunteers in training and mentoring new volunteers.

### Why Young People Get Involved:

- Skill acquisition – job skills, communication skills, personal and professional development
- To gain experience – especially to be able to add to their CV or to gain a written/verbal reference
- To have fun
- To meet new people
- To experience new challenges
- To gain satisfaction from doing something to make a difference to the world we live in.

Market your position with young people in mind – think of the image that you are portraying about your organisation – would this be the kind of organisation that young people would be interested in helping?

- List ‘what’s in it for them’ – it maybe a reference, something to add to their CV, training, meeting new people, personal satisfaction, helping a cause they believe in or learning new skills – spell it out so they know what they can get out of helping your organisation.
- If you have benefits or particulars to your organisation that provide an added benefit – then tell them in your advertisement. E.g. reimbursements for travel expenses, monthly get-togethers for staff and volunteers, lunchtime walks in the park etc.
- Think creatively about your volunteer roles – divide tasks into ‘projects’ and think about which tasks could be done by a team of young volunteers.
- Be flexible about the timing of involvement – some young people may need to regularly change the day that they help to fit in with their other commitments. Remember, many young people are juggling work and study or work in more than one job, so may need to adjust their volunteering hours as their study or work commitments change.
- Look for shorter commitment – more project-based tasks.
- Make it easy for young people to get involved – Minimise the screening/induction process, from an expression of interest, reply as soon as possible (Remember it is the age of instant communication!) Invite the volunteer in so that you can meet them and tell them more about the position – if you are happy that they can perform the role and they

are still interested in helping you – then set a time for them to start!

- Make your job description sound interesting – don't start a gardening

position description with "Weeding" start it with "Enjoy the Outdoors!"

- Don't forget to check that your organisation has in place a set of policies and procedures cover the basic requirements to enable you to involve young people including disclosure (CRBS) and Child Protection.

- Involve young people in evaluating the program to improve and develop it.

## Involving Young People In Volunteering

Examples of Youth-friendly Projects & Youth-Friendly Language:

- Dog-walking – they may only need to commit to an hour a week
- Planting trees – they can see instant results
- Novelty fun fundraising activities – eg sponsored silence
- "Office skills, get real life experience!" – instead of asking for 'Admin Volunteers'
- Computer tutors to teach older people about computers and the Internet
- 'Retail Experience' – instead of 'Shop Volunteer'
- Marketing instead of volunteers to assist in brochure distribution
- First Aid at Music events
- Sailing or ten-pin bowling with someone with a disability.

## Retaining Young Volunteers:

- Show appreciation and recognise your volunteers – value their contribution. Celebrate and recognise their commitment with an MV Award or Young Highlander.
- Give feedback and get (and listen to!) feedback
- Give volunteers ownership/responsibility of a particular project – give them leadership/decision-making opportunities

- Provide on-the-job training
- Provide clear job descriptions
- Enable your volunteers to have input into the planning phase
- Allow your volunteers to develop their roles in areas that are of particular interest to them
- Include them as part of your team – ensure they meet everyone and feel welcome
- Introduce volunteers to each other – foster relationships
- People make mistakes, and so can volunteers! Don't undermine your volunteer's confidence – look at mistakes as learning exercises.
- Be flexible – ensure your volunteers know that you are prepared to adjust their volunteer work to suit their schedules.

## What Discourages Young People:

- Poor organisation of the task, orientation within the organisation or supervision of the volunteer
- Unsatisfying jobs
- Unclear job tasks
- Being talked down to
- Lack of feedback
- Lack of recognition.

## A Practical Checklist for organisations involving young people as volunteers

Target more information about volunteering opportunities at young people to help them make better choices.

Use positive images of volunteering (and less stereotyping) to attract younger people to your organisation.

Make volunteer opportunities attractive and appealing to young people. Variety and the fun

Create clear, progressive and varying volunteer roles for young people. Flexibility of volunteering (time and commitment) is important to reflect the diverse range of things which may be happening in a young person's life.

Make sure volunteering provides benefits to young people in terms of skills, new challenges, work experience and so on.

Ensure that young people feel valued and respected by others they may be volunteer with or for.

Make your volunteers feel empowered and consult and involve them in the development of their volunteering.

Provide a friendly and relaxed environment for young people to work in, with support from an identified person when they need it.

Ensure recognition of what young volunteers do, either by providing accreditation in the form of a qualification or simply providing a reference or record of achievement, stating skills and experience gained while they were volunteering (MV Awards are good starting point for celebrating and recognising young people's contribution).

Make sure young volunteers are never out - of - pocket.

Follow good practice in management of volunteers in all instances e.g. volunteer policy, recruitment and selection, induction, training, support and supervision.

Be creative and consider if there are tasks within the organisation which individual young volunteers or a group would be able to undertake and run as their own project, with back-up support

For detailed information on policies, procedures and guidelines including CRBS and child protection policies contact Volunteering Highland.

For more information on MV Awards, Young Highlander and involving young people contact Bill Anderson, Youth Development Worker, Volunteering Highlands.