

Volunteer role design a key element

It's imperative to give people a reason to become involved in your organization

Understanding how to design a good volunteer role description is a must-have for any volunteer program, according to Wendy MacDonald.

As the former chair of Grant MacEwan's Voluntary Sector Management Program, MacDonald is sharing her vast knowledge in a three-day, volunteer management course.

Hosted by Volunteer Edmonton and the Resource Centre for Voluntary Organizations, the three-day course facilitated by MacDonald is designed to provide participants with information on how organizations can most effectively engage volunteers.

MORE THAN A JOB DESCRIPTION

The Feb. 6 session was the second part in the series, which explored development of an effective volunteer role description and its affect on volunteer recruitment.

"At first, it sounds like we'll be writing a job description and that's it," MacDonald explained to the class.

"But there is much more involved when designing a role for your volunteers."

Specific tasks and outcomes, outlining activities involved and clarifying the purposes associated with the volunteer role

are just a few of the elements that should be included, but MacDonald was quick to point out that the role description must be meaningful, interesting and beneficial for both the volunteer and organization.

The task requires more than "finding bodies to fill positions", she says.

Volunteer managers need to take into account current trends, individual skills, talents and interests to ensure that organizations have a strong volunteer work force.

"No one wants to be given a volunteer role that's vague, doesn't explain the purpose of the activity or provide the volunteer with an idea of how their work connects to the organization," says Janice Bell, director of Volunteer Edmonton.

"A poorly developed role description will result in few volunteers who wish to stay at the organization, especially if they don't know exactly what their role is and what is expected of them."

MacDonald suggests adopting a targeted approach.



"Each role description should be unique," she notes. "Every volunteer has different responsibilities,

interests and skills - we wouldn't have one job description in the paid work world, but that's what we do in the volunteer work world."

The same goes for targeting potential volunteers.

Organizations were challenged to consider the kinds of volunteers who are indicating interest, whether they are seniors, students or professionals, as that is another important element when developing a role description.

Recruitment efforts that rely on pulling names from the organization volunteer database aren't the best way to expand your volunteer pool or gain the kinds of people needed to fill specific volunteer roles.

"Don't keep fishing in the same fishing hole," MacDonald warns. "Think about who has the qualities you're looking for." For many of the participants, the session provided new insight and ideas on how to

develop a role description and recruitment tactics.

"The whole idea of focusing on specific groups of people rather than going out and recruiting everyone and anyone was an important concept for me," says Fran Lucas, course participant and volunteer manager for Northlands.

With the information gleaned from the session, Lucas is hoping to implement new strategies in her volunteer program.

The final session in the three-day course will take place on March 13.

ALWAYS LOOKING FOR HELP

To learn about upcoming professional development opportunities happening in the community or how to become a volunteer, please visit www.volunteeredmonton.com.

Look to this space to see the work that the city's volunteers and nonprofit organizations are carrying out and what it is that Volunteer Edmonton is involved in. For more information or suggestions for story ideas, please contact Evelyn Pham, communications coordinator at epham@volunteeredmonton.com, call 780-732-6655 or check out our website at www.volunteeredmonton.com.



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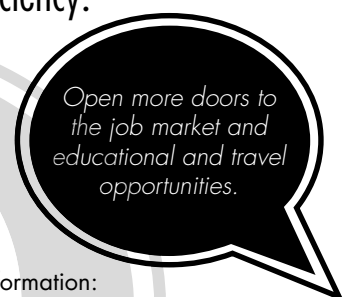
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