



Volunteers, part 1 of 2—

# Recruiting Your Volunteer Team

by Joey Ellis

**T**he Bible says, “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:11,12).

## Pray first.

Pray before you ask anyone to do anything. Ask God for insight as to who should do what ministry. Too often we sidestep this fundamental part of recruiting. This should precede any type of recruiting effort

## The best recruiting is done one-on-one.

Pulpit announcements, letters, skits, notices in the bulletin or newsletters rarely work. Announcements like this work well for event recruiting like VBS or fall festivals, but not for weekly ministry.

Nothing beats a face-to-face-to-heart connection where you ask a person to get involved in meaningful ministry. I would watch people at church before I ever asked them to be involved. I wanted to see their commitment level to church services, their relationships with people in the church, their desire to worship and seek the Lord, and their overall spiritual level. I wanted to create an environment of excel-

lence among our children’s ministries leadership, and that meant searching for “eagles.” Once I found someone I wanted to recruit, I spent personal time with him in the recruiting process.



**There is a direct correlation between the amount of time invested** in the recruiting process and how long the person will serve in a particular ministry.

Don’t recruit while running down the hallway, out of breath, and late for the church service. Take time. Make an appointment to meet for coffee or dessert somewhere and invest some time. This communicates two things. First, that the person is important, and second, the ministry is important.

**Give them time to think and pray about their decision.**

Don’t force a decision on the spot, unless the person is clearly ready to decide. But do give him a time limit to decide—usually about a week is enough.

I would often begin the recruiting process by finding the person at church. I would pull him aside, share with him the “big picture” of what we were trying to accomplish, talk about the specific ministry I wanted him to pray about, and leave the conversation by setting a future appointment with that person to finalize his decision.

## Always recruit first to a vision, second to a job description.

Share from your heart why you do your particular ministry before you share what exactly is done. For examples of actual job descriptions for positions in children’s ministries, visit [http://ag.org/4kids/admin\\_smpjob\\_desc.cfm](http://ag.org/4kids/admin_smpjob_desc.cfm).

## Be honest about ministry expectations and requirements.

Don’t “undersell” the ministry. People respond far better to a challenge than to something that is described as “no big deal.” Let them know all the expectations as well as the overall objective.

**B**uilding your dream team takes time, effort, and the hand of the Lord. Be on a continual search for eagles. Your chil-





Volunteers, part 2 of 2—

# Keeping Your Volunteers

by Joey Ellis

In the previous article, we focused on effectively recruiting leaders. In this second part, we will deal with the challenge of keeping those volunteers.

## Affirm, Affirm, Affirm

Words of praise go farther than you think. People want to know if they are doing a good job. Tell them. If they aren't, gently correct them. Always remember this about relating to people: praise them in public; correct them in private. Catch them doing something good, and pour on the praise!

## Send notes of thanks and encouragement.

While serving as a children's pastor, I would send handwritten notes of thanks twice each year to each of my workers. They were handwritten because I wanted the workers to know I cared enough to take time to write them a note instead of allowing them to feel like I told my secretary to type them a note. Often your volunteers will keep your notes as reminders of why they are doing what they are doing.

## Recognize them in front of your congregation.

How many times do children's workers get recognized publicly?

Hardly ever! This recognition lets them feel the appreciation of the entire church body.

Give your workers gifts of appreciation. If your budget allows, give your leaders tangible tokens of your esteem for them. Creative ideas are endless, but here are a few suggestions: a



dinner in their honor, a nice pen with your ministry name engraved on the side, plaques for special ministry awards, certificates for their faithfulness, a tote bag with your ministry logo silk-screened on the side.

## Make Their Ministry as Easy as Possible

### Provide assistant teachers to handle minor classroom responsibilities.

This can be accomplished by

having parents rotate through your classrooms. Many hands make light work. Some people enjoy volunteering to simply take the class role, help with refreshments, assist with crafts, or any other assistant's role.

### Provide ministry supply request forms that allow them to get the supplies they need quickly and easily.

Nothing frustrates teachers more than being out of basic supplies and having to spend their own money to provide for the needs of their classrooms.

### Provide quality children's ministry training for the leaders.

Teach them how to do what you have asked them to do. Read books together as a team. Send them to children's workers conferences, seminars, or conventions.

### Listen to their complaints and concerns.

Life and ministry are full of concerns. Your volunteers will have issues with which they need your help. Never give the appearance of being unconcerned. At times it may feel like problems are everywhere, but you need to stop and listen to your leaders.

Take appropriate steps to

remedy a problem, if necessary. Here are two ways of handling issues with your leaders: (1) You step in and handle it (which is not always the most efficient solution); or (2) you give them ideas and release them with authority to handle the problem.

**R**ecruiting and keeping your volunteers is one of the most important tasks in which you, as the leader, will engage. Your volunteer leaders will make you or break you. Your ministry will only be as good as your leaders. Take the time necessary to care for

them. Give it your time; give it your energy. Doing so will pay off in the lives of the children.

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### Questions for Further Study—

1. In what ways do you show appreciation to your volunteer staff?
2. How might you improve in showing appreciation to your volunteer staff?
3. How could you better assist your volunteers to make their ministry easier?



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