



part 1 of 4—

Maintaining a Healthy Volunteer Staff

Interview with the National Children's Ministries staff

What ways of volunteer recruiting have you incorporated?

BURWELL:

- One-on-one. Pulpit time can make people aware of ministries, but it rarely recruits people.

- Ministry fairs.

- Current workers. Ask your workers if they know of anyone else who may be interested in volunteering.

- Trust the Holy Spirit to bring names to you. Be faithful to follow through. Some of your best workers may not be who you'd pick, but

God knows they are perfect for the job.

- Training sessions. Invite the entire church. Suggest that parents would benefit from the training.

- Approach short-term volunteers. If they hang around long enough, they will get hooked.

- Parents.

- Host a recruiting campaign.

NOBLE: I think the Bible has the best recruiting method. Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send you workers. When I prayed,

God was always faithful and sent the workers we needed. I would also pray that God would direct me to the right person for every position that we had open. God never failed us! Also, we focused on giving our ministry a positive image in the congregation.

TINSLEY: There are many ways one can go about recruiting volunteers for ministry.

First, there is one-on-one re-



cruiting—talking one-on-one with people in the church. Then there is the “umbrella effect.” This is where you get the volunteers who are already involved in your area of ministry to help recruit the people they know in the church.

You can also host a church ministry fair by setting up a children's ministry information

table in the main church lobby. And last, utilize the church bulletin. This is not always the most effective way, but it keeps the need in front of the church family. (Check out Dick Gruber's website for some great recruiting announcements at www.dickgruber.com.) These are just a few to get you started.

What did you discover to be some of your most successful recruiting techniques?

BRUNER: In the smaller church, where an equal number of children's ministries may operate but in which fewer volunteers may be found, the role of worker recruitment is critical. Often the smaller church cannot afford a children's pastor and must rely on the dedicated lay leader to serve as the children's director. Therefore, his ability to recruit workers is often contingent on his people skills. An experienced children's leader knows how to work well with children, but must equally depend on his ability to work well with teens and adults. I would encourage you to also train up the children in your church who demonstrate an interest in ministry involvement.

Use your pulpit time to highlight the kids—doing bell choir, songs, skits, etc. This premier your ministry and can be done with such excellence that others will want to join your ministry team. Also use pulpit time to generate the interest of potential workers by making statements, such as, “We are expanding our ministries to children and preparing to reach kids as never before.” By expressing the positive dynamics and avoiding the appearance of pleading for workers, you can promote your ministries in such a manner that people will anticipate with eagerness the opportunity to join your ministry team.

First, pray that the Lord would direct you to people. Who knows better than the Lord who in your church has a compassion to teach children or who may be too timid at first to begin the new venture of working with kids? Search through your church directory or church adherents list, and prayerfully consider who would make good candidates. Next, approach those people who come to mind. Invite them to sit in and observe a children’s church. Or invite them to participate in one service by preparing a game, a craft, or just

to sit with the kids. Doing so allows you to observe the potential volunteer while also allowing that person to get excited about ministering to children.

Another approach is to invite parents to join you for a day at kids’ church (Royal Rangers, Missionettes, or whatever the ministry may be). Doing so allows the parents to participate, to observe, and to become acquainted with the children’s ministries. For you, doing so provides the opportunity to befriend the parents. Then, at a later date, you can invite each parent to periodically participate. Often adults may not wish to commit to a permanent position but will volunteer to assist from time to time. Inviting parents or other potential workers to “help out a bit,” may give you the hook needed to reel them in as full-time workers in the future. Obviously, any recruitment technique you follow must be accompanied by church worker screening.

BURWELL: One-on-one. Watch people! Those who like to be with kids are always good prospects. Lack of training is never a problem. Anyone can be trained. Utilize short-term volunteers.

NOBLE: Children’s Ministry Welcome: Once a quarter we would do a Children’s Ministry Welcome after the evening service. During that event, we would have each of the department heads explain what was happening in their departments, and then have them share their people needs. At one of these events, we had 40 new volunteers step forward.

We tried to place people according to their gifts so that they would be likely to succeed. We had a ministry description written for every position in our children’s ministries.

Word of mouth. We always encouraged our workers to speak to people in their circle of friends and recruit them to join us in children’s ministries.

TINSLEY: The most successful is building relationships with people in your church family and then getting those people involved. You need to be a long-term pastor to really make it effective. Schedule a major recruitment campaign that builds excitement with the church community and your current volunteers. The campaign should not last longer than a month. Hit it hard with as much excitement as possible.

Questions for Further Study—

1. List two new ideas for recruiting that you would like to implement in your ministry this month.
2. What are the untapped people groups within your church? In what capacities could you utilize them?



part 2 of 4—

Maintaining a Healthy Volunteer Staff

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What methods have you used to care for workers?

BRUNER: Communication is 7 percent words, 38 percent body language, 53 percent tone of voice, and 2 percent “other.” So say, “Thank you!” to your volunteers like you mean it! Express your thanks with continual words of affirmation. Gesture your thanks by giving your volunteers small gifts from time to time; the cost is not important; the intent behind the gift is what counts.

Here's one tip among the many: A personalized thank-you letter or card. Everyone is inundated with mass marketing mail these days. But what remains as one of the most successful approaches is the hand-written letter or card mailed in a hand-written envelope that contains a U.S. postage stamp. “Personal” is written all over this package. Taking the time to write someone a personal note of appreciation tells the worker you care enough to stop and say, “Thanks!” It sounds too simple, but it is a valuable approach.

BURWELL:

- Appreciation Banquet
- Notes, treats—give positive affirmation every time you see the workers.
 - Visit their class or group.
 - Invite them to your home.
 - Visit them when they have a problem or are sick.
 - Plan a fun activity for them—such as a barbecue, picnic, or after-church social.
 - Offer to take care of their kids.



Provide a “Workers Night Out.”

- Remember their birthdays and anniversaries.
- Always ask if there is anything they need or anything you can do for them.

NOBLE:

- Get to know them on a personal level.
 - Take time to find out their needs.
 - Focus on building a strong relationship.
 - Focus on their needs more than the needs of the ministry.

TINSLEY: Let them know you care. Send them cards for special days in their lives. Send them notes or cards to let them know you appreciate what they are doing. Check up on them each week in the area where they are ministering. If you serve in a church where you have a children's ministry budget, budget some funds for affirmation. These are funds that you use to take volunteers to lunch or buy small gifts for them at Christmastime (nothing expensive) as a token of appreciation. Use it to reaffirm your volunteer staff.

Explain how you develop long-term relationships with volunteers:

BRUNER: Don't burn them out. Give them time off when you can. Be their friend. And be sure to pay for them.

part 3 of 4—

Maintaining a Healthy Volunteer Staff

Interview with the National Children's Ministries staff

Share how to build relationships with volunteers:

BRUNER: Even in the smaller church, a good children's pastor is ALWAYS busy. But he will still find time in his hectic schedule to build healthy relationships with his workers. A great way to build those worker relationships can be focused around food. Hold monthly "celebration" cookouts or refreshment times when all the workers can get together to have fun and fellowship. If children's ministry is all work and no play, you will face potential worker burnout and survive on superficial relationships. You must love your volunteers as much as you love the kids in your church, so look for ways to continually show them your love.

NOBLE: Take time to get to know each worker as a person. Spend time with them outside of church. Have fun with them. Genuinely care for the people that you have on your staff. Look out for their best interests.

TINSLEY: By spending time with them. We will provide a couple of times each year for

all of our volunteers to come together for fellowship, food, and fun. These are times where I can build relationships with the volunteers and they can build relationships with each other in



a more relaxed setting. I tried to attend the departmental meetings and activities to show my support to the volunteers in that ministry.

How do you protect your workers from burnout?

BURWELL: I set limits on the number of areas of involvement. For instance, you had a choice, Sunday or weekday, not both. No exceptions, and I wouldn't budge. It took more workers. But the quality of the programs wasn't compromised.

Set limits on time involvement commitments. In addition to Sunday or Wednesday programs, everyone could also do short-term commitments (VBS, special events, field trips, fundraisers, etc.). However, the same person couldn't be in charge of all the events. We tried to focus on families, and over-involvement didn't fit in.

Encourage time off when it seems necessary. I gave the Sunday School and midweek workers the month of August off. The kids programs continued, but I recruited short-term volunteers and directed group activities for the month of August. Most of the time the workers met and planned for the coming year. It gave them four weeks of preparation without the kids and didn't take away from any family time. They came back ready to

go and excited in September.

NOBLE: Watch them. Protect them. Don't overload them, even if they are willing. Talk to them regularly about how they are handling their load. Provide a way for volunteers to take a break if you feel they are burning out.

TINSLEY: I limited how much a volunteer could get

involved. If you get someone who has a willing heart or who is very gifted, the tendency is to use them for everything. But the next thing you know, that same worker is wanting out of everything.

I made sure our workers attended at least one worship service so they could be fed spiritually. Building the relation-

ships and making the ministry become a small group also helps to keep the volunteers energized. Having a place of belonging and importance is vital. Keep them charged with new ideas, and reaffirm their importance to the Kingdom—it keeps them excited.

Questions for Further Study—

1. What fun activities have you held for your volunteer staff? List four new activities to place on your next year's calendar.
2. In what ways do you protect your workers from burnout?
3. Do you have restrictions on how much someone can volunteer?

part 4 of 4—

Maintaining a Healthy Volunteer Staff

Interview with the National Children's Ministries staff

How do you introduce new vision or change?

BRUNER: A smart visionary once taught me that new vision and change is easier to incorporate if vision is caught, not taught. By this I mean that your workers will more readily accept new vision or change if you lead by example. The bottom line: If you live the Spirit-filled life of the leader who has a servant's heart, then your workers will sense that spirit and be willing to follow—even if this involves new vision or change.

BURWELL: Three things:

- I tried to think the entire process through—who it would affect, how it could happen, finances, etc.

- I sold it (probably a poor choice of words) to a small group of people first.

- Then I explained it to the larger group of workers. The excitement in the small group many times would carry over to the others, and a change or new vision became easy to implement.

NOBLE:

- Get people excited about the vision and change.
- Know why you are changing.
- Don't just change for change's sake. Have a good reason.
- Make sure that you are keeping your volunteers' best



interest in mind. Pray that God will go before you.

TINSLEY: I constantly talk about my vision to my volunteers on a one-on-one basis so they get excited about it. Then when we introduce it to everyone, it is already a part of them and they are ready to spread the excitement.

What types of worker training did you provide?

BRUNER: Periodically gather the workers for a time of update training that provides an ample amount of fun. If you make it feel fun, then the training portion of the event appears fun as well. Also, monthly worker meetings can provide an array of training opportunities in small golden nuggets. By allowing 30 to 60 minutes in the monthly meeting agenda to cover updates and training essentials, your workers can stay current plus leave the meetings with a sense of empowerment.

BURWELL:

- Quarterly staff meetings always had a training feature.
- Local and district training events.
- On-the-job training. We would use mentor teachers—watch and learn, then team-teach until the workers were ready to go solo.

- Books and videos.

NOBLE: We provided the following types of training:

- Training for volunteers before they started serving.
- Ongoing monthly train-

ing: I would always require a segment of training at every meeting that our department sponsored.

- Quarterly training: Every quarter we would provide our workers a nice dinner with a special speaker just to show them how much we appreciated them. We would then break up by departments and do specific training.

- We offered great give-aways—espresso coffee and other great things to show that we appreciate our workers.

- Outside training: We would also take our workers to outside

training sessions specific to their areas.

Here's an interesting fact I heard: The average Santa Claus gets 18 hours of training each season to be Santa. The average Sunday School teacher gets four hours of training.

TINSLEY: There are several different types of training that need to be provided:

- Leadership training for team leaders: These are people who are ministry leaders or who I see one day may be ministry leaders.

- Overall children's ministry training that would be the same

for all children's ministry volunteers.

- Specialized training for their particular areas of ministry.

- General spiritual growth training: Your volunteers need to be refreshed just as much as anyone in the church. Some of these can be combined.

Whatever you do, respect of your volunteer's time. Their time is just as valuable as yours, so make the training count and the meeting time quality.

Questions for Further Study—

1. As a children's pastor, how would you rate the level of training you give to your volunteers?

2. How do you invest in the spiritual lives of your volunteers? List three new ideas you would like to implement.