

Put Volunteers First

by David Boyd

When on the road, I'm often asked questions by children's leaders. Here's one question and response I hope will assist your ministry.

Q I'm relatively new at a church. What is one of the most important things I need to do to make my ministry here successful?

A Invest in your staff.

1 First, determine what workers you have in each area of your ministry. Determine who the key leaders are. Schedule a meeting with each of them and their spouses right away and talk about their ministries. Ask them how you can help them. Ask them to list the areas of need they have, including staffing needs, budget needs, space needs, and other needs. Create a master notebook.

2 Second, gather all your key staff. Write all the needs of all ministries together

on a chalkboard. The value of doing this is that each member of your team realizes the list of needs goes far beyond anything that is humanly possible for one person alone. Assure them that with God's help and with everyone working together, you can



accomplish great things.

Explain that you will work hard to meet the financial aspects of their ministries. Usually you get a little flexibility your first year. Go to the board or pastor and explain the significance of meeting the needs of your key staff.

Explain that together we will

all have to recruit. Assure them you will work hard at it, but explain that you are brand-new and you don't know who's who. They are still the best recruiters.

Encourage them to cross recruit. In other words, if they ask someone to work in the nursery but the person asked can't because of schedule conflicts, see if he or she would be interested in another position that is open. When everyone works together, lots of good things happen.

3 Third, schedule fellowship times with all your workers. Buy steaks, corn on the cob, and potatoes and invite all your workers to a potluck dinner. Have them bring desserts! Offer them the feel that something different has just happened in the children's department. Give them the impression that they should stick around and see what's happening.

Remember, during a transition, a lot of people quit. The quicker you establish positive relationships with workers, the less you will lose.

4 Fourth, visit the workers in their classrooms. Take

note of their needs and meet them. If their chalkboard is lousy, replace it. If the nursery needs new toys, order them. Let the pastor know right away that

you see areas of the church that are in disrepair and are giving the wrong message to visiting parents. Explain that you will need to make some extra pur-

chases to help the children's ministries department catch up on badly needed updates.

Questions for Further Study—

1. In what ways do you invest in your volunteer staff? What improvements could be made?
2. What limitations do you run into when trying to fill the needs of your classrooms and your staff? How can you improve the situation?
3. When was the last time you sponsored a fellowship time for your volunteer workers? List some activities you could try in the future to encourage fellowship among your workers.
4. Begin a list of supplies and equipment needed in the classrooms.