



## **AROUND YOUR WORLD FOR A DAY – WORKING WITH YOUTH VOLUNTEERS**

If you sometimes have groups of young volunteers who are working just for a day or weekend – often to fulfill a requirement -- how do you get the most productivity from them? Volunteer managers sometimes say the results aren't worth the effort it takes to train and organize these one-off volunteers. But that might not be the case. Some tips:

- Volunteer management consultant and author Tom McKee ([www.volunteerpower.com](http://www.volunteerpower.com)) suggests starting the workday with a “huddle” – a brief meeting (15 minutes maximum) where you talk about your cause...who you help and how; the difference you make in people’s lives. If you or one of your volunteers can produce a three-minute video that includes a testimony from a client, that can be a strong introduction and motivator for teenagers. “Keep it short, moving and exciting,” Tom advises. You never know whether a 17-year-old will be back to volunteer a few years later because of what he or she learned about your organization in the “huddle.”
- Remember that your project is a social occasion for young volunteers, whether or not that’s your intent. For them, Tom McKee says, “Volunteering, like everything else, is about blending in, making friends, and having a good time.” Let them work in teams, and if at all possible, let one of them be the team leader. A good way to do this is to work with whomever is sending the volunteers, asking him or her to suggest those most likely to be good leaders (which includes following an adult’s game plan.)
- Be ready to handle late arrivals and early departures. Kids are overscheduled sometimes. But you might be able to hold them if they know they’re getting ice cream or small prizes at the end of the day.
- Often you don’t have much notice, when asked to take a group of youth volunteers. To make sure you don’t have the same wall painted several times in a year (that happened, at one nonprofit), keep a list of maintenance projects that are needed but not urgent, and plan how to complete those projects if you have groups of ten, twenty, or whatever other number you expect. How could you organize those groups into teams, on short notice? What equipment will you need?
- When you get the request to bring on youth volunteers, make your safety requirements absolutely clear, and get a commitment that they will be met. Otherwise, your one-offs will show up in flip flops and, invariably, without gloves.

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