Appendix 3: Volunteer Recruitment and Management

Formal means of recruiting for councils and board membership are often ineffective in attracting a diverse group of participants. It takes more than newspapers or radio announcements, mailed flyers, and bulletin board notices to attract participants. Welcoming diverse participants often requires interpersonal contact in familiar settings. Personal invitations offered face-to-face or by telephone are just a few options. Another is working through establishing community groups that have diverse membership as recruitment pools. For instance, you might consider making presentations about your program and inviting participants in boards or planning events at churches, parent groups, or neighborhood organizations in which economically or culturally diverse community members are active.1

Management and Valuing Volunteers2

Usually the end of school means that gardens can be at risk of burning out, especially for gardens that run on 100% volunteer power. That is why one of the biggest challenges in maintaining a garden is the ability to keep volunteers motivated and engaged.

One way to avoid burning out the core volunteers is to rotate volunteers so that everyone has an equal amount of labor. For busier times, bringing in more volunteers is definitely a way to prevent burnout.

Creating a sort of “garden club” can bring community members, parents, faculty and students closer. Things like sharing a meal together can really make community members, parents, faculty and students more open to one another. It provides time for everyone to get to know each other outside of school and work time.

Try to be conscious of the talents and skills of each volunteer. Meshing garden tasks with the proper volunteers can really make the difference in respect keeping volunteers.

Verbally complementing volunteers is a great way to show one’s appreciation. Otherwise volunteers not work if they don’t feel appreciated. Taking volunteers for granted is the best way of losing volunteers. That is why it is important to take time to appreciate the work that they do. An example of this can be an Appreciation Dinner for the volunteers.

Keep in mind there is plenty of non-gardening work involved in a youth garden project. People who support the project but who do not have green thumbs can still contribute to a variety of tasks: taking photographs, updating a Website (if the garden has one), and spreading the word about the garden.

Communicating with Volunteers3

As previously mentioned, clear communication with volunteers is essential. When communication is poor, volunteers feel uninformed, unimportant, and underappreciated. Disorganization and lack of communication will frustrate them, and they will quit. Here are a few communication tips for working with volunteers:

Keep a good record of volunteers with up-to-date contact information.

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1 Parker, L. Betz, D. (June 1996). Diverse Partners In Planning and Decision Making. p. 4
This is very important in the event that a volunteer missed their assigned shift or even if someone got hurt.

**Establish a standard method of communication that is delivered consistently.**
This may be a weekly e-mail, a monthly newsletter, or a regular Web site posting. Choose a method that works well for you and your volunteers. By establishing a routine, you remind yourself to communicate with your volunteers, and in turn they have a place to go for the latest information.

**Create a written schedule of events that is accessible to all volunteers.**
It can be mailed out or posted on a Web site. Make sure you have an effective way to notify volunteers if any changes are made (via either e-mail or a phone tree).

**Hold a regular volunteer meeting either monthly or quarterly.**
Personal contact allows for more interactive discussions, and it is very important for volunteers to have a chance to provide you with feedback and suggestions for the program. This is also a great time for you to show your appreciation for their work.

**Provide members of the group with comments about their job performance.** Although a formal evaluation may not be possible, volunteers need constructive feedback so they can learn and grow during this experience. With your busy schedule, it may seem overwhelming to find time for this level of communication. If you feel that you cannot maintain strong communication, seek out a volunteer willing to assume this role. Communication is not a task that can be neglected even briefly without negative consequences. It is the key to a successful volunteer experience (for the volunteers and for you)!

For more information regarding Volunteer Management please contact:
Candy Maldonado at (575) 527-5800 or email her at cmaldonado@lcps.k12.nm.us

### Garden Volunteer Maintenance Schedule

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