



## **CREATIVE IDEAS TO THANK YOUR VOLUNTEER TEAM**

There are countless ways to recognize and celebrate the extraordinary service and hard work of your Blessings in a Backpack Volunteer Team. Remember, recognition should be ongoing and frequent. Get creative and keep your ideas fresh and fun. Check out the following list of easy, everyday ideas to express your appreciation of the volunteers who support your backpack program.

### **Volunteer Appreciation Event Ideas**

#### **1. Celebrate National Volunteer Week**

Throw an Appreciation Party with fun games, good food, photo booths and a special time to share all of your volunteers many accomplishments, from hours served to dollars raised!

#### **2. Treat Volunteers to Lunch**

Take your volunteers out to lunch or invite them to your home to share a meal together.

#### **3. Host a Garden Party**

Celebrate your volunteers and the success of your program with a spring themed party. Create cupcake flowers with confection butterflies and present volunteers with a button or lapel pin. A great way to let volunteers know you're lucky to have them on your team.

#### **4. Give Them Just Desserts**

For a memorable volunteer appreciation event, invite your team to a Just Desserts recognition ceremony in their honor. Feature a variety of desserts, like a build-your-own sundae bar, gourmet cupcake buffet, or dessert potluck. There are plenty of sweet rewards you can treat them to!

#### **5. Afternoon Tea**

Invite your volunteers to an afternoon tea to thank them for their dedication to your organization. Serve different kinds of flavored tea, finger sandwiches, salad and miniature desserts.

#### **6. Show Them They Make a World of Difference.**

Tell volunteers how much they impact your program with a *You Make a World of Difference* themed event. Decorate with bold blue and green decorations, or reuse old

maps. Feature food from around the world and give each volunteer a small memento of your appreciation, like a globe magnet or mouse pad.

### **7. Roll Out the Red Carpet**

Give your volunteers the red-carpet treatment to show your appreciation. Create your own Walk of Fame by putting the names of your volunteer team on gold stars in a hallway of your program site (school/church). Have an award ceremony and invite school staff, PTA/PTO members, etc. and treat it with all the finesse and flair of the Academy Awards!

### **8. Volunteer All-star Party**

Decorate with a baseball theme for a perfect spring or summer event. Create all-star trading cards featuring your volunteers and their stats, for example: what they do, how long they've been serving, and how many hours they've served. Serve hot dogs, peanuts, cotton-candy and other favorite stadium food.

### **9. Superstar**

Talk to the principal at your program site about having a "Superstar Wall" or "Wall of Fame" in the school where pictures and names of your volunteers are posted for everyone to see; include a banner that reads "We couldn't do it without our Superstar Volunteers!"

### **10. Thank You Graffiti Wall**

Paper one wall at your school and leave markers and Sharpies for volunteers, staff, and students to write down their thoughts of appreciation.

### **11. Flash Mob/Dance Party**

Coordinate a synchronized flash mob dance routine to surprise volunteers, or simply show up with some sweet tunes (rock & roll, nineties, eighties, country, you choose) and a boom box for an impromptu dance party to say thanks!

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## **Social Media**

### **13. Tweet a Thank You!**

It's easy, start with this example >> *Huge THANKS to all the awesome Blessings volunteers at Beechwood Elementary! We celebrate YOU this week for all the hunger-free weekends you provide. #Hunger No More at Beechwood*

### **14. Facebook Shout Out**

Post a thank you shout out, a picture or link on your Facebook page or website. Post photos of your volunteers (or photos taken by the volunteers themselves) in action serving others.

### **15. Email Works Too!**

Send a simple thanks in an email. Make it short, sweet, to the point and full of love! If you have a little time, turn those emails into phone calls. It doesn't matter that you reach people – leave a heartfelt message – it might be the nicest message your volunteer gets that day!

### **16. A Picture's Worth a 1000 Words**

Any great photo becomes a great post on Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter. Post a photo that celebrates volunteers in action.

### **17. The Power of Video**

Make a quick 30 second thank you video on your smartphone that you can share on social media or put together a quick slideshow with music, text and pictures. You can also grab those video clips and pictures from events and activities and string them together for a thank you video or slideshow.

### **18. Volunteer Spotlight**

Each day during National Volunteer Week, spotlight a different volunteer on your website or Facebook page, Twitter.

### **19. Pin a Thank You**

Pin a special thank you image for your volunteers and link to it on all your social media channels.

### **20. Old School**

- ❖ Send a letter to the editor of your local paper about the difference your volunteers make in the community.
- ❖ Contact your local paper or e-publications and ask if there is free space available to list and thank your volunteers for being part of your team.
- ❖ Mail letters to volunteers' employers that express how grateful you are that their employee contributes time to your program
- ❖ Send a hand-written thank you note. In these days of email, texting and cell phones, handwritten notes, sent through the mail, have become rare. So, when it happens, it's noticed and appreciated. Simple, but thoughtful and gives your volunteer something to hold on to. You can also work with school staff to have children in the Blessings program write thank you notes.

## **Volunteer Appreciation Gift Ideas**

### **21. Create Your Own Bookmarks**

Remind your volunteers how much they are appreciated every time they open a book. Create your own appreciation bookmarks with a simple design and a meaningful quote about volunteers. Laminate them and punch a hole in the top for a ribbon.

### **22. Thank You Photo Album/Scrapbook**

Create photo albums with Facebook, Flickr or Shutterfly that includes photos of them serving throughout the year. Include flyers or tickets from events and letters from children and families who have benefitted from your volunteers' service; or go old school with a scrapbook theme and binder.

### **23. Thank You Flowers!**

Whether it's one big bouquet, or a flower a day from you or school staff, flowers are always a beautiful way to show your volunteers how they help their community **"bloom."**

### **24. Design Your Own Note Cards**

Create your own note cards using old greeting cards and scrapbook materials. Tie a set of your homemade note cards together with a ribbon and present to your volunteers as a gift.

### **25. Give a Hug, High Five, Fist Bump or Handshake**

Sometimes the best appreciation doesn't require any words at all! Show your volunteers how much you appreciate their efforts and commitment with a high five or other similar gesture.

### **26. A Pat on the Back**

Trace your hand on plain paper and cut it out. Write, "Here's a pat on the back for \_\_\_\_\_. Thanks for all your hard work." Invite teachers, children, parents, PTA members, etc. that have contact with volunteers to make one in recognition of their service. Hang them all together for visual impact.

### **27. You're Worth Your Weight in Gold**

For long-standing volunteers, collect gold foil chocolate coins in the dollar amount of hours served, place them in a vase tied with a bright ribbon and present to them at a year-end celebration or event.

### **28. Present a Certificate of Appreciation**

Examples of awards and certificates are a great way to show special recognition to your volunteers. <https://www.blessingsinabackpack.org/get-involved/pc-toolkit/pc-toolkit-volunteer-recognition/>

