

# Keys to Effective Motivation in Volunteer Groups



- 1. Provide a reason to participate.**

People must perceive a reason for becoming involved. They, not you, must perceive the reason. Individuals will participate in different issues, activities and groups only to the extent that their personal needs and interests are appealed to and met.
- 2. Give recognition.**

To be appreciated, to feel important and needed is a prime motivator in all of us. Encouragement and recognition are essential to stimulating and maintaining active involvement in volunteer groups.
- 3. Clearly define and communicate your goals.**

You motivate people by selling ideas, programs and results—not membership. A group with a set of goals that are clearly understood and mutually accepted by its membership has a force that is almost irresistible. Many groups, however, lack a clear sense of direction and as a result they wander in their efforts with limited accomplishment.
- 4. Conduct meetings that stimulate.**

Nothing is more discouraging than a poorly organized, rambling, unproductive meeting. Productive meetings require more than a powerful leader and parliamentary procedure.
- 5. Value others through communication.**

It is through communication that people are motivated. The way we express ourselves can either “turn people on” or “turn them off.” It can either gain their support or discourage their participation.
- 6. Listen.**

People want to be listened to. A person is motivated to achieve when he or she feels his or her ideas and suggestions are listened to and respected. The biggest cause of group “apathy” is the failure of leaders to really listen.
- 7. Look at yourself.**

The ability to understand others begins with an understanding of oneself. Ask yourself these three questions: How did I get to be the person that I am? What motivates me to do the things I do? Why do I react in different ways to different people, situations and things? Honest answers to these three questions can give you tremendous insight into what motivates others.
- 8. Handle conflict creatively.**

Disagreement and conflict can be very destructive forces if not dealt with constructively. Open free-for-alls can split a group right down the middle. Likewise, the suppressing of disagreement discourages new ideas and, in turn, the very vitality the group so badly needs.
- 9. Reduce risks of participation.**

There are various hazards involved in group participation—being imposed upon by others, feeling insecure, being criticized, taking responsibility for decisions made, etc.

# What Motivates Volunteers Exercise

## **Purpose**

To assist participants in understanding the factors that motivate volunteers.

## **Directions**

Using the handout, "What Motivates Volunteers" ask participants to:

- A. Rank the eight motivators in the order in which they believe volunteers would respond, with #1 being the strongest motivator down to #8, the weakest motivator.
  
- B. Reveal the results of a recent Indiana study, as follows:
  1. An opportunity to help the community.
  2. An opportunity to meet and get to know people in the community.
  3. An opportunity to learn new skills.
  4. An opportunity to learn more about the community efforts and activities.
  5. An opportunity to use personal skills and knowledge.
  6. An opportunity to help their families.
  7. An opportunity to develop leadership skills.
  8. An opportunity for community recognition.

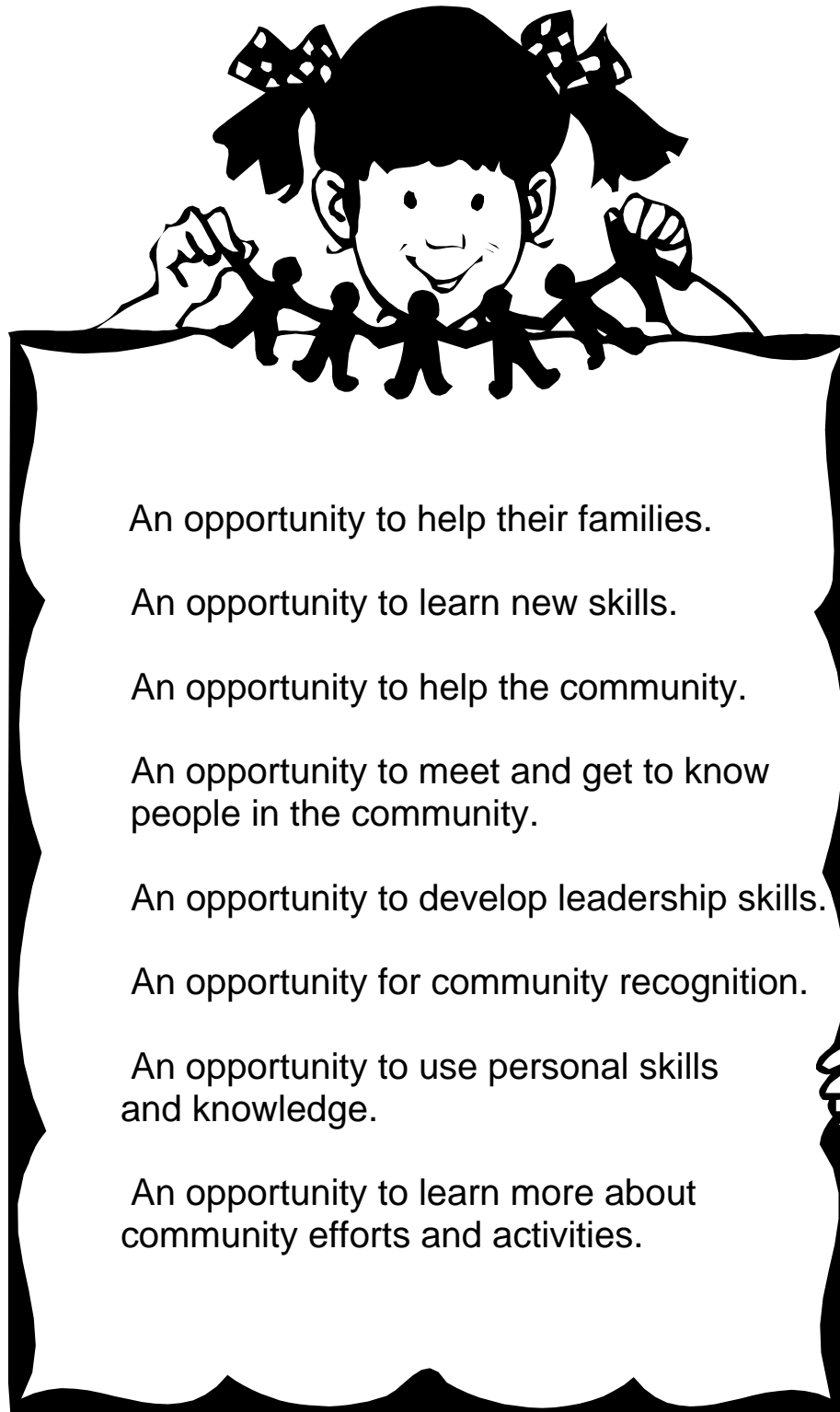
## **Key Questions**

1. Compare your ranking to the research results. How accurate were your ratings?
2. Given that volunteers told us that "an opportunity to help the community" is the strongest activator, how would you recruit volunteers for your positions? What would you tell them are the rewards of volunteering for Extension?
3. What could you do for your volunteers to provide a more satisfying (motivating) environment?

## **Key Points**

Research tells us that volunteers want to feel that their service is helping the community. Different people may be motivated by different conditions. Develop a sensitivity to your volunteers' needs.

# What Motivates Volunteers



An opportunity to help their families.

An opportunity to learn new skills.

An opportunity to help the community.

An opportunity to meet and get to know people in the community.

An opportunity to develop leadership skills.

An opportunity for community recognition.

An opportunity to use personal skills and knowledge.

An opportunity to learn more about community efforts and activities.