# **You Make the Difference Initiative**

# **Volunteer Experience Plan: Step-by-Step Guide**

## **Why It Matters**

Today’s volunteers expect more than a task — they expect an experience. A meaningful, intentional experience keeps them connected and eager to return.

***Volunteers who feels seen and heard stay,***

***volunteers who feel invisible disappear!***

## ***Step 1: Build Your Overall Volunteer Experience Plan***

* Create one plan that applies to all volunteers.
* Add extra steps for specialized roles if needed (special trainings, check-ins, or recognition).

## **Step 2: Identify Monthly Volunteer Touch Points**

* Plan for one intentional volunteer interaction each month.
* Focus on:  
  + Inspire – Remind them of the difference they are making.
  + Educate – Share helpful updates, tools, or ideas.
  + Celebrate – Recognize their contributions meaningfully.

## **Step 3: Collect Volunteer Information for Personalization**

* Use initial surveys, waivers, or sign-up forms to gather:  
  + Birthdays
  + Special milestones
  + Preferred communication methods (email, text, call)
* This allows you to create a personalized experience throughout the year.

## **Step 4: Create Your Volunteer Communication Calendar**

* Use tools like Constant Contact, MailChimp, direct email, text messages, or personal calls.
* Plan monthly outreach year-round, not just before the event.
* Make sure each touch point adds value before asking for more commitment.

## **Step 5: Plan Fair-Season Ramp-Up Communications**

* One month out: Send an email with volunteer assignments and key contacts.
* Three weeks out: Reminder email or Zoom meeting to review tasks and answer questions.
* Two weeks out: Personal text or call confirming readiness.
* One week out: Final Zoom or gathering to energize and celebrate.

## **Step 6: Connect Volunteers Into a Community**

* Group volunteers into small teams or tasks.
* Assign team leaders to personally check in with their group.
* Host quarterly appreciation activities (free lunches, Zoom meetups, casual gatherings) to maintain connection and momentum.

## **Step 7: Plan the Volunteer Day Experience**

The day of your event is a critical moment for volunteers. Design it intentionally:

* Make check-in fast, welcoming, and clear.
* Personally greet every volunteer with gratitude and positive energy.
* Provide clear directions: where to go, what to do, who to report to.
* Encourage immediately: “You’re making a huge difference today!”
* Leadership should be visible, thanking volunteers throughout the day.
* Celebrate small wins as they happen: “We served 1,000 guests thanks to you!”
* Reinforce that volunteers are valued all day long — not just at the end.

A positive day-of experience ensures volunteers feel seen, supported, and eager to return.

## **Sample Volunteer Experience Timeline (Example)**

* January: Send a New Year welcome message with success tips.
* February: Share a Volunteer Impact Report celebrating contributions.
* March: Invite volunteers to a spring meeting or appreciation event.
* April: Send tips for preparing for summer events.
* May: Highlight a volunteer success story.
* June: Send birthday or anniversary shout-outs.
* July: Host a pre-event Zoom orientation or refresher.
* August: Ramp up weekly communications leading into and during fair time.
* September: Host a post-event thank-you celebration.
* October: Send a feedback survey to volunteers.
* November: Share a gratitude message during Thanksgiving season.
* December: Celebrate the year with a highlight video or leadership thank-you message.

## **Final Reminder**

Volunteers are not just giving their time — they are giving their hearts.

Inspire. Educate. Celebrate.

An intentional volunteer experience will build lasting loyalty, deeper engagement, and a stronger community.