



# CURATED WITH CARE: ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS AT YOUR LIBRARY

Presented by:

*Liza J Dyer, CVA Volunteer Engagement Coordinator  
at Multnomah County Library  
Carol Aldrich, Volunteer Coordinator at  
North Plains Public Library*





# What we will cover

- Who, what, why of volunteers
- Volunteer Management vs. Engagement
- Recruitment
- Training and orientation
- Support
- Other places to find information
- Time for questions and idea sharing

# Why volunteers?

- Volunteers expand and enhance library services by complimenting and supporting work of paid staff
- Volunteers help us make connections for a stronger community
- Volunteers are community ambassadors for the library
- Volunteers are reflective of our diverse community
- The library shows community care by investing in people as volunteers



# Who volunteers?

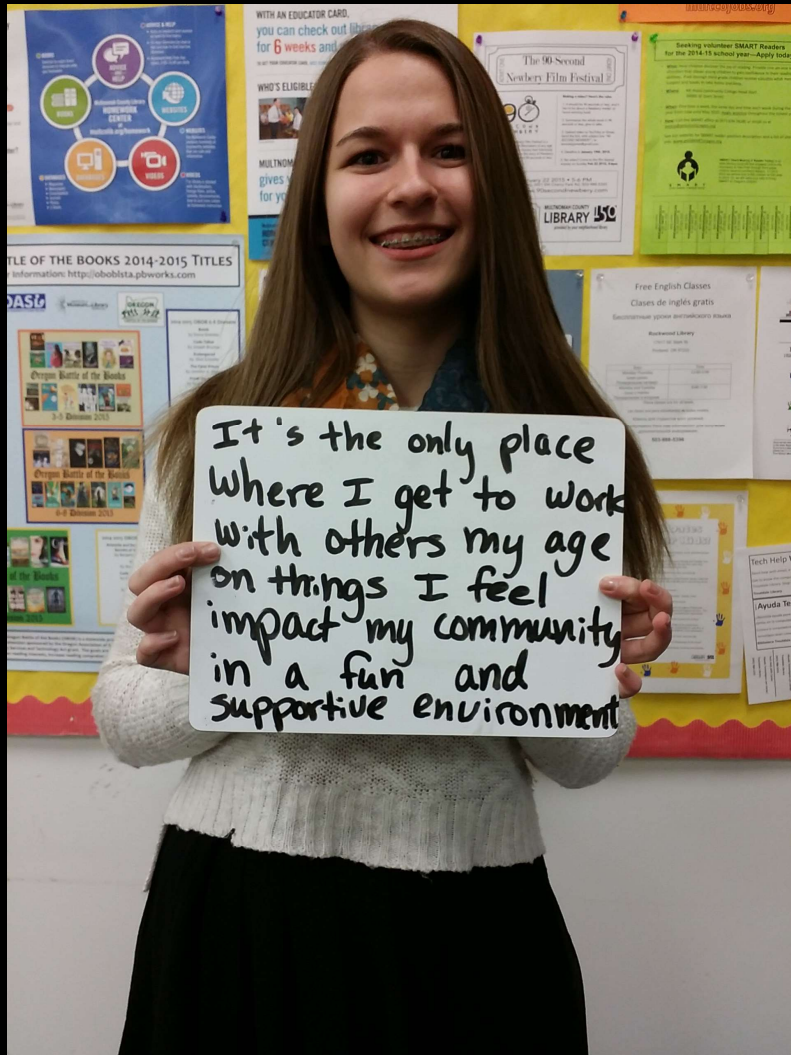
- Community members who come in for a specific task; e.g., shelve, help with programs, Summer Reading
- Advisory board members
- Professionals who present/lead programs on a pro bono basis or are compensated by their employer
- Teen/youth council members
- Community service groups
- Anyone else who does work for the library and is not compensated with money
- May or may not be coordinated by your library; e.g., friends and other groups



# Why are volunteers motivated to serve?

- Share expertise
- Want to fill their day with useful activities
- They love the library and love books
- Want to contribute to their community
- Parents and teachers require or encourage it
- To be helpful
- Interested in a library career
- Social interaction

*The motivation may be different for every volunteer and it may not be why you would volunteer*



# What volunteers get

- Lifelong learning
- Better health - physical, intellectual, emotional
- Stronger skills and work experience
- Community connections
- A pathway to participate in service to others

“VOLUNTEERING IS THE ULTIMATE  
EXERCISE IN DEMOCRACY. YOU VOTE IN  
ELECTIONS ONCE A YEAR BUT WHEN  
YOU VOLUNTEER, YOU VOTE EVERY DAY  
ABOUT THE KIND OF COMMUNITY YOU  
WANT TO LIVE IN.”

-ANONYMOUS



# Volunteer Management vs. Volunteer Engagement

“**Volunteer management** is the process that a nonprofit organization uses to recruit, track, engage, and retain volunteers.”

Source:  
<https://www.initlive.com/blog/volunteer-management>

“**Volunteer engagement** is simply an organizational strategy that encourages collaboration between staff and volunteers to develop meaningful volunteer opportunities that positively impact the organization and the community.”

Source:  
<https://www.initlive.com/blog/volunteer-engagement>





# VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT CYCLE

1. Planning
2. Recruitment
3. Orientation & training
4. Supervision & evaluation
5. Recognition

Retention happens when you do everything else



A decorative border with a repeating pattern of stylized green leaves and branches surrounds the central text area.

PEOPLE  
—OVER—  
PROCESS

# Recruitment – why?



---

Get the word out that you want  
volunteers

---

Share your library's community  
mission and values

---

Risk management - recruit the right  
people for properly developed roles  
to avoid negative risks in the future

---

Show that the library has community  
buy-in

# Recruitment – the basics

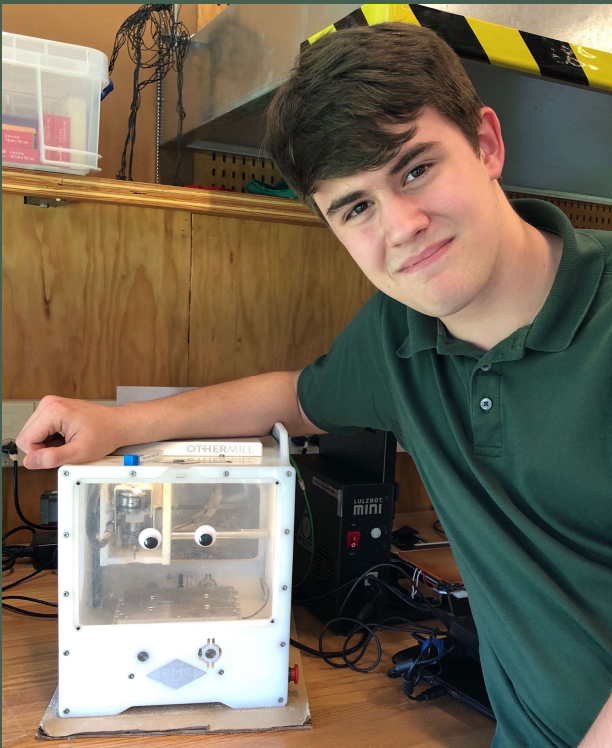
- Tie every role to mission and values
- Get specific with requirements: location, time, age (if important), previous experience (if needed), etc.
- Include benefits; e.g., training on specific skills
- Try not to sound too desperate
- Be honest and **don't** over promise or sugarcoat things





# STORIES ABOUT RECRUITMENT

# Places to recruit



- Word of mouth from staff and volunteers
- Fliers in your library and community
- Your library's social media and newsletter
- VolunteerMatch.org
- Your local United Way
- Local houses of worship; e.g., churches, synagogues, mosques, community centers, etc.
- Local service groups (youth and adult)

# Training & orientation - why?

- Part of onboarding
- Share expectations up front
- Set them up for success
- It benefits everyone
- Invest in the volunteer and their growth



# Training & orientation – the basics

- Provide the tools, resources, and knowledge they need to do the thing they're doing
- Explain why things are done the way they are
- Is there already staff training that volunteers can access?
- Remember they usually don't have as much time to learn/practice as staff



# Training vs. Orientation

## Training

- How to do something
- Safety and ergonomics
- Done once or chunked out
- One-on-one or in a group
- Pre-recorded or live

## Orientation

- Often done at the beginning of the
- volunteer's experience
- What's important about the library, the program, etc.
- Organizational culture and structure
- Policies and procedures



# STORIES ABOUT TRAINING & ORIENTATION

# Supporting volunteers - why?

- Training and orientation are often done once and at the start of the volunteer's relationship with your library
- Ongoing support is needed to make sure everything goes well
- Volunteers aren't invisible, let's not make them feel that way
- People like talking about their volunteer experiences (good or not)

*“Volunteer talent management is all about supporting volunteers so that they can take personal risks and emerge victorious.” – Tobi Johnson*

# Supporting volunteers with 3 C's

## **Coordinate**

- Schedules
- Training/orientation
- Recognition

## **Cultivate** relationships

- Volunteers
- Staff at your library
- Volunteer Coordinator

## **Communicate** with

- Volunteers
- Staff at your library
- Volunteer Coordinator





# Supporting volunteers – the basics

- Check in with volunteers regularly and informally
- Connect with volunteers when things are going well
- Don't wait to talk until things are really bad
- When difficult situations come up, address specific behaviors and not character
- Manage outcomes, not people (when you can)
- Supporting volunteers isn't a one-person job

# Supporting volunteers – the role of all staff

- Be welcoming
- Get to know their names
- Know which volunteers work during your shift
- Be ready to answer questions about a task
- If they look like they have a question, ask if you can help
- Notice when they don't make it in
- Have a concern about the work they do? Check in!
- Have work ready when they arrive
- Ask the Volunteer Coordinator or your manager if you have questions or concerns



# STORIES ABOUT SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS

# Further learning

- VolunteerMatch webinars:  
<https://learn.volunteermatch.org/>
- Get Involved Clearinghouse:  
<https://getinvolvedclearinghouse.org/>
- VolunteerPro: <https://volpro.net/>
- Energize, Inc.: <https://www.energizeinc.com/>
- Engage Journal: <https://engagejournal.org/>
- Association of Leaders in Volunteer Engagement: <https://www.volunteeralive.org/>
- Nonprofit Ready:  
<https://www.nonprofitready.org/>
- Weekly Zoom for leaders of volunteers in libraries (contact us for more information!)





THANK YOU FOR JOINING US!

CONTACT US:

**Liza J Dyer, CVA**, Multnomah County Library, [lizaj@multcolib.org](mailto:lizaj@multcolib.org)

**Carol Aldrich**, North Plains Public Library, [carola@wccls.org](mailto:carola@wccls.org)  
A member of Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS)

