Outreach Suggestions & Recognition Ideas
National Volunteer Week
April 17 – 23, 2022

The U.S. hospice movement was founded by dedicated volunteers and there is continued commitment to volunteering among our nation’s hospices. Volunteers continue to be a foundation of hospice. Volunteer Faces of Caring is the focus of this year’s National Volunteer Week, April 17 – 23, 2022.

The primary goal of volunteer outreach is to spread the word about the many benefits of volunteering for your hospice, palliative care organization, or end-of-life coalition. In previous years, we have offered suggestions of public activities to recognize volunteers, such as awards ceremonies, celebrations, or other special events. We recognize that amid the COVID-19 public health emergency, volunteer recognition needs to be more creative, flexible, and possibly virtual.

Below, you will find ideas that you can utilize from a virtual or social distancing perspective, as well as in-person ideas.

Virtual Recognition Ideas

- Develop a set of key messages about your organization/coalition’s mission and the role volunteers play within this important work. Weave your key messages into the theme of your outreach and your program’s communications with the public – especially in the public statements of officials or program leaders.
- Put out some of your key messages via social media if your organization is using them. NHPCO offers some social media graphics for members to use. Additionally, consider sharing key messages with your volunteers and ask them to send out via their social media. You may also want to share tweets from @NHPCO_news or share posts from the NHPCO Facebook page. If your organization uses Twitter or Instagram, we encourage you to tag NHPCO so we can share your posts.
- Use the high-resolution PDF ad slicks that NHPCO has created for our members. They come in different sizes and there are versions with full text and versions with minimal text. Feel free to customize or utilize these ads in any manner that will be helpful to your outreach.
- Tell a story – Do you have an amazing volunteer? Share their story with your community. Why do they volunteer for hospice or your coalition? What do they get in return? Why should others join them? Remember, social media is a great way to share a story.
- Involve a local celebrity or government official virtually – Invite someone with name recognition in your community to write a letter, record a video message, or post on social media with a message of appreciation to your volunteers.
- Submit a letter to the editor or op-ed to your local media outlet. Call them and ask who covers health care, human interest, or community news. Keep them informed with regular e-mails, phone calls, or faxes. NHPCO has created some template documents you can use to craft a message specific to your organization.
• Post a press release to your organization’s website and share it with local media contacts. Then, follow up on that release. Be mindful of deadlines and ask, “When is the best time to call?” The press doesn’t have to “be there” to report on a story. Sometimes a well-written press release makes all the difference.

• Use pictures or video to tell the story – consider what photos or videos you have collected from previous events that you can use, or ask your volunteers to share photos of the work they are doing while social distancing. Be sure to caption your photos.

• Create a digital photo scrapbook or album of your volunteers in action. Post your scrapbook on your website and on your social media channels.

• Place articles in your organization’s newsletter or website showcasing the hard work of your volunteers. Share these articles with your local newspapers; they make excellent human-interest stories.

• Send individual thank you cards to your volunteers. Short, handwritten thank you notes from board members mean a great deal.

• Give volunteers a phone call to express gratitude for the work they do and recognize them during National Volunteer Week.

In-Person Recognition Ideas

• Plan a public event or community activity. Coordinate a community fair, a walkathon, a volunteer awards ceremony, or a celebration like a community cookout for volunteers.

• Host a “drive-by” style event, where volunteers can pick up recognition gifts and say hello to staff while maintaining social distance.

• Invite a local celebrity or government official to visit your organization. The celebrity or official could volunteer for a day, visit with patients and family members, or tour a facility, creating positive press for both the dignitary and your organization.

• Hold a formal recognition event, such as a dinner, a reception or a dessert buffet.

• Establish a volunteer bulletin board with volunteers’ photos and names. Highlight special projects and place the board in a prominent place to be viewed by everyone.

• Share outcome and evaluation results with volunteers showing their personal impact.

• Arrange discounts for your volunteers at local shops.

• Create a booklet containing comments and quotes from staff, patients and families demonstrating the difference volunteers make. Share it at a recognition event or have it available at your office.

• Provide certificates of accomplishment for completion of a project, length of service, or active participation in your volunteer program.

NHPCO’s Marketplace carries a range of merchandise that can be used as special gifts for your volunteers; available items include tote bags, mugs, bookmarks, and recognition pins. For more information, please visit www.nhpco.org/marketplace or call 1-800-646-6460.

We also encourage you to brainstorm and share ideas with your colleagues in the Volunteer/Volunteer Management Community of MyNHPCO. To access the community and post in the discussion board, visit my.nhpco.org and sign in with your NHPCO credentials.