

Chapter Information Sharing Session - Notes

Recruiting and Keeping Active Members

August 28, 2014

About

This conference call was organized to connect chapters together in an informal and easily accessible setting to share ideas on topics directly related to helping them succeed. We'll schedule more calls, possibly on a bi-monthly basis (still TBD), so be on the look out!

This call had 12 attendees, with 10 chapters represented. The notes below are a compilation of responses to questions posed to the group on the topic *Recruiting and Keeping Active Members*. The focus of the call was really about sharing ideas and experiences on growing an active volunteer base. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Deidre at dkennelly@cnps.org. Thank you!

What has worked in recruiting and keeping active volunteers?

- Person-to-person communication
- Having a designated volunteer coordinator who actively recruits volunteers
- Say 'thank you' often
- Be Specific: Assign very specific and clear tasks to the volunteer so they know the expectation and what they are signing up for, rather than having them sign a blank check
- Send email blasts to all members with volunteer opportunity notices
- Be sure to collect volunteer's contact information to say thank you after they volunteered
- Use an insurance sign-off form to collect information on volunteers at any event
- Use "Yes I would Like" List at every event to collect targeted information on each volunteer (*See attached form from North Coast Chapter*)
- Do something with the list of names you collected and follow up with people who have shown interest in volunteering
- Keep track of what skills are needed to fulfill duties at your chapter and look out for those specific skills every time you encounter a volunteer or potential volunteer (during field trips, workshops etc.)
- Guide volunteers to where their skills can be used best; where they fit
- Always have a sign-in sheet to collect information
- Encourage volunteers to participate during and after events
- Reach out to new people who show interest in what you're doing
- Add volunteer notices to newsletters (*see an example in the attached Blazing Start Newsletter of the Santa Clara Valley Chapter*)
- Send out volunteer recruitment emails
- Use MeetUp.com- may not get more active volunteers, but it will extend reach
 - Cost is \$150/year
 - East Bay Chapter can provide instructions on setting up MeetUp.com
- Use the "step ladder approach" when onboarding new volunteers

How do you appreciate and/or recognize volunteers?

- Pay for a volunteer's CNPS membership as a thank you gesture
- Send thank you cards by a local photographer to all volunteers after an event
- Call volunteers after an event and say thank you
- Give a free plant to volunteers after they volunteered for a plant sale
- Give a handmade award to people in leadership to recognize them for their outstanding efforts
 - Spray-painted a dried plant gold and placed it in a shadow box frame (North Coast Chapter)
 - Other handmade gift ideas for board members: engraved rock, gold-painted bristlecone

New ideas:



- Have the CNPS office provide a 'volunteer recognition kit' to all chapters
 - Include a *Fremontia*, a button/pin, and a signed certificate
- Annual chapter-focused volunteer recognition event
- Create a badge or pin to give to volunteers who've helped out at events

Did you know?

- **CNPS Volunteer Recognition Committee**- The Volunteer Recognition committee give out a Volunteer Recognition Award to chapter volunteers at Chapter Council meetings. For more information and to submit your nomination contact the committee Chair, Charlie Blair, at blairce@sbceo.org.
- **Complimentary Memberships** - Each chapter has 5 comp CNPS Memberships per year that they can give to people (including volunteers) who meet the following criteria set by the Membership Committee:
 - The individual is an official at a state or Federal agency (including elected officials) that we have partnered with on various aspects of our mission and vision fulfillment.
 - The individual or entity is a member of the press or a media outlet.
 - The individual or entity is affiliated with an institutional donor or foundation for which we have or may apply for a grant or other type of funding.
 - Other special circumstances as recommended by the Membership Committee and approved by the Board of Directors and Executive Director.
- Contact Stacey at sflowerdew@cnps.org about comp memberships.

What the office can do *right away* to help:

- **Publicize Events to Get More Volunteers** – submit any chapter event to the CNPS Horticulture Calendar by following these instructions:
http://cnps.org/cnps/admin/pdf/hortcal_instructions.pdf
 - This calendar allows the office to publicize your event ahead of time through social media and press releases- *reaching over 9,000 people at a time*



- **Complimentary *Fremontia*** – We can provide your chapter with *Fremontias* to give to volunteers as a small thank you gesture. Contact Deidre at dkennelly@cnps.org with quantity and address if you would like some.
- **Name Tags for Board Members and Special Volunteers** – We will be ordering name tags that you can purchase for your board or special volunteers. Look out for an order form from Deidre soon!
- **Monthly Update Email** – We are going to send out a *Monthly Update* email to chapters that will include tips from other chapters and statewide announcements, geared towards supporting chapter efforts.
- **Hear Your Suggestions-** Submit suggestions and ideas to Deidre at dkennelly@cnps.org!