

CAVORT 2016

Nuts-&-Bolts Volunteer Roundtables Session Saturday, March 19, 2016, The Galt House Hotel

Compiled by Meg Matheny, Session Organizer & Host, from notes submitted by table recorders

RETAIN

Roundtable 3: Recruitment & Retention of Volunteers

Facilitator: Patrick Oliva, Pasadena Playhouse

Recorder: Wendy Ledford, Old Globe Theatre

- Recruit by word of mouth, a brochure at the theatre, the theatre's and volunteer organization's websites, and publicity for fundraising events.
- Offer free membership the first year.
- The Old Globe volunteers organize "friend raisers" such as a welcome coffee for new members, an annual Bunco event with door prizes and a wine bar (members pay \$25.00 and guests/prospective members pay \$10.00), and a tour of the theatre (members pay \$10.00, and guests/prospective members attend at no charge). Volunteers could provide most of the refreshments for these events to keep costs down.
- Allow schools to do community service at the theatre (future volunteers!).
- Give incentives such as pins for different amounts of hours, tickets to the current show (if reach a certain number of hours), and Volunteer of the Month (name on sign at the theatre and on the website).
- Recognize volunteers with an annual luncheon and/or awards night (raise money for this by selling items through a gift cart or shop).
- Pasadena Friends give FRED (Friends Recognition of Excellence in Drama) awards. The actors and theatre staff attend along with the members. They pay to attend (keeps cost down) and get acts from the theatre to entertain during the awards.
- Get volunteers together to carpool to fun events around town.
- Keep everyone connected with a monthly newsletter.
- Create a glossary for new members to define theatre acronyms and provide contact information for liaisons and volunteer coordinators

Roundtable 9: Challenges in Working with Volunteers

Facilitators/Recorders: Suzanne Mercer, Atlanta Shakespeare Company

Terry Conway, Actors Theatre of Louisville

- Working a large theatre vs. a smaller one – large theatres may require multiple levels of assistance, while smaller theatres could use captains as a go-between for volunteers and the House Manager.
- Coordinating volunteer schedules – larger groups could use SignUpGenius.com, while smaller groups could use VolunteerSpot.com (both sites are free).
- Communication is key! Assign a liaison between volunteers and the Board; have the president of the volunteers speak at a Board meeting; use social media such as Facebook for volunteer communication; good relationship with theatre staff is critical.
- Background checks – generally not needed.

- Troublesome volunteers – It's extremely rare to have to get rid of a volunteer, but a process should be in place. Could talk with the volunteer to remind them they represent the theatre, then follow up with a letter.
- Working with college students as volunteers – emphasize that the volunteer group operates like a business. The students could usher along with bussing tables and cleaning up for meals, while the more established volunteers bring food.
- Money management – keep separate bank accounts for operations and reimbursements.
- Personality conflicts – make sure roles are clear up front, don't correct other volunteers, focus on the positive and don't complain or argue in front of patrons.
- Maintaining interest – some volunteers just want to put the activity on their resumes. Engage them in frequent activities such as a monthly luncheon, etc.
- New volunteers – listen to their ideas; have a liaison for new volunteers who can explain if some of their ideas won't work.
- Older volunteers – give them tasks they can do comfortably, such as sitting down to direct patrons if needed.