

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

RECRUIT

Roundtable 1: Starting & Managing a Volunteer Program

Facilitator: Terry Delavan, Syracuse Stage

Recorder: Linda VanVark, Old Globe Theatre

- Start small with a brand-new volunteer group. Have a staff member lead the group as it gets going.
- Make benefits of volunteering clear; emphasize that their work saves the theatre time and money.
- Keep staff and volunteers connected.
- Give new volunteers a tour of the theatre and background on available volunteer opportunities.
- Create a mentoring program to pair new volunteers with seasoned volunteers.
- Give volunteers specific tasks. Always work from a list of things that need to be done.
- Give back to the volunteers by organizing activities such as Friend-Raisers and new member coffees.
- Keep track of volunteer hours for theatre audits and grants.
- Communicate with volunteers in a variety of ways: email, phone, text, etc.

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 4: Marketing Volunteer Opportunities & Projects

Facilitator: Ann Bronsing, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis

Recorder: Linda Vandivort, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis

- Develop an e-newsletter for volunteers and internal theatre staff. Include volunteers' birthdays.
- Publicize volunteer events in the play programs, perhaps on a page dedicated to the volunteer group. Include web address to volunteer website and social media pages.
- Create a Facebook page.
- Invite theatre staff, board members, and guests to an annual volunteers' luncheon and talk up activities.
- One theatre published an 8-page brochure targeted to people nearing retirement to tell them about volunteer opportunities.
- Use the EventBrite website to attract younger volunteers – they can purchase tickets to events and link to the theatre's website and social media page from here.
- Hold an MFA luncheon for students and faculty from local graduate schools.
- Link the volunteer website with the theatre's website.
- Theatre could offer complimentary tickets as incentive for recruiting subscribers and volunteers.
- Promote the fun, social aspect of theatre volunteering with other groups – “cross-pollinating” of organizations.
- Advertise in church bulletins and programs of other events around town.
- Hold an annual volunteer recognition activity such as a brunch. Volunteers could create centerpieces with previous shows as themes, and people could guess which play is represented as a contest.
- Have something autographed by the actors as a door prize to encourage participation.
- Send email blasts to advertise events and ask for help.
- Hold monthly luncheons to get to know volunteers and pass on information.
- Select captains to coordinate volunteers on site.
- Theatre's marketing department could send out email blasts and press releases about big volunteer fundraising events.
- Ask the House Manager to thank volunteers before each show.
- Give the theatre a “check” (one of those big, fake, cardboard ones) showing the dollar equivalent of volunteer hours contributed each season.