Using Volunteers for Big Events

Even if your day to day operations do not require a large number of volunteers, most nonprofits have one or two events each year where more help is needed. This may be a gala, a fun run, a golf tournament or a special event such as “Voly in the Park.” Volunteers are a key component to helping your event flow successfully, and keeping your staff from physical or emotional meltdown.

Tips for use of volunteers for big events:

• Identify your staffing needs
  o How many people will you need?
  o How can volunteers help with pre-work like designing invitations or stuffing envelopes for mailings?
  o How will you handle on-site registration? How can volunteer help with that?
  o How can volunteers help with logistics like set-up, parking, providing directions, distribution or pick-up of materials, water bottles, etc.?
  o Imagine the joy of having a fresh set of volunteers arrive to help with clean-up at the end of your event.

• Who will supervise each group of volunteers, other than you? This is a great role for staff or board members and a more strategic use of their skills than personally providing all the physical labor.
  o Provide direction and instructions.
  o Be readily available for questions.
  o Tell volunteers about your agency, the event, and the important role their work does to serve your cause.

• Post your opportunities of www.voly.org
  o Provide enough lead time to attract the number of volunteers you need.
  o Rather than one general posting for the event, break down your event opportunities by task and time frame.
  o Write targeted group postings for tasks where a large number of volunteers can work together.
  o Monitor responses to your postings and revise postings that are not getting the desired response.

• Communicate
  o Provide detailed instructions to volunteers including things like time, location, parking information, appropriate dress, and availability of meals.
  o Volunteer are more likely to show up for the event if you let them know you are counting on them to cover a specific task which is vital to the success of the event.

• Thank each volunteer and let them know other ways they can serve your organization.