

Icebreaker Question

Please discuss with individual at your table

- ▶ Name
- ▶ Organization
- ▶ How big is your current volunteer program?
- ▶ Biggest challenge in your volunteer program?
- ▶ What is one take-away you would like from this session?

Thinking Outside the Box

Creative Solutions to Volunteer Retention

Presenters

- ▶ Ericka Fleming, Manager of Volunteer Services at Denver Botanic Gardens
 - Manage of team of five Volunteer Coordinators, at four locations
 - Former AmeriCorps State & National and Vista Member
 - Prior experience worked at Judi's House for 3 years as the Volunteer Coordinator.
 - Has worked in Denver nonprofit sector for the last 9 years
 - Involved in Metro Volunteers, where she has trained new volunteer coordinators and nonprofit staff on the concepts of Volunteer Management
 - Held the offices of vice chair of Directors of Volunteers in Agencies (DOVIA), and cochair of National Philanthropy Day Colorado.
 - Current Directors of Volunteers in Agencies (DOVIA) Board Member
- ▶ Katie Bukowski, Volunteer Coordinator at Denver Botanic Gardens
 - Volunteer Coordinator for 3 years
 - Manages multiple volunteer programs at four different DBG locations
 - Master's Degree in Non Profit Management

Case Study

Denver Botanic Gardens

► Organization

- Mission: Connect People with Plants
- Values: Transformation, Relevance, Diversity and Sustainability
- Locations: York St, Chatfield Farms, Mt. Goliath, Plains Conservation Center

► Volunteer Program

- Volunteer Program has existed for 55+ years
- Over 2,000 volunteers
- Ongoing vs. Special Event
- Affiliate Volunteers (Herb Guild, Associates)

DBG Volunteer Program Challenges

- ▶ Under-utilization of skilled volunteers
 - Lack of skilled positions
 - Low retention of skilled volunteers
- ▶ Organizational education/information
 - Volunteers lacked basic information about DBG
 - Incorrect information was being given to the public
- ▶ Staff & volunteer relations
 - Volunteers couldn't differentiate staff from guests
 - Volunteers didn't understand staffing and positions within the Gardens

Challenge #1

Under-utilization of skilled volunteers

Solutions for Engaging Skilled Volunteer

- ▶ Lead Volunteer Position
 - Volunteer Lead meetings with essential staff members
- ▶ Volunteer Leadership Council
 - Ten Principal Volunteers, who come together and create programming, recognition and communication to enhance our volunteer program
- ▶ Created Volunteer Resource Team
 - Orientation Hosts
 - Placement Discussion Coordinators
 - Core of volunteers who help to create and deliver our volunteer orientation. Along with engaging new volunteers in in-depth discussions to find the best placements within our organization

Table Discussion

- Have you identified skilled volunteers within your programs?
- Discuss a new area where you can utilize skilled volunteers?

Challenge #2

Organizational education/information

Solutions for Improving Organization/Information

- ▶ Bi-Annual Volunteers Summits
 - Twice a year all volunteers are invited to 2 hour gathering, hosted by volunteer services.
- ▶ Volunteer Weekly Email
- ▶ Hosting Monthly Coffee Hours
 - Hosted at our four different locations
 - Topics are presented by DBG staff

*We always make sure you relate our communication back to our mission and core values

Table Discussion

- What ways do you keep your volunteers informed and connected to your organization?
- What is a new or revised method to of communicating with your volunteers you could implement?

Challenge #3

Staff and volunteer relations

Solutions for Improving Staff & Volunteer Relations

- ▶ Ongoing Education Opportunities
 - Created an opportunity for Gardens staff to educate volunteers on their department along with current programming.
- ▶ Department Open Houses
 - ▶ Departments opened their doors to volunteers, in order to allow volunteers the opportunity to learn more about the department, and its connection to the organization as a whole.
- ▶ Monthly Communication with Gardens Staff
- ▶ Golden Gnome Award

Table Discussion

- What is your current volunteer/staff relationship status?
- What is one new way to strengthen the relationship?

Conclusion

Reasons Denver Botanic Gardens Volunteer Program continues to thrive

- ▶ Stronger Commitment to the Gardens
- ▶ More connected as an organization as a whole
- ▶ Program has grown
- ▶ Longevity of volunteer commitments
- ▶ Better ambassador of the organization as a whole
- ▶ Tight knit group, stronger bonds
- ▶ Higher Retention

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. These shapes are primarily located on the left and right sides of the frame, leaving a large white central area. The shapes are layered, creating a sense of depth and movement.

Q & A

Contact Info

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