

South Dakota State University  
**Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional  
Repository and Information Exchange**

---

Extension Extra

SDSU Extension

---

1-1-2004

## Recruiting Youth Volunteers for Your Organization

L. J. Osborne  
*South Dakota State University*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/extension\\_extra](http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/extension_extra)

---

### Recommended Citation

Osborne, L. J., "Recruiting Youth Volunteers for Your Organization" (2004). *Extension Extra*. Paper 500.  
[http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/extension\\_extra/500](http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/extension_extra/500)

This Other is brought to you for free and open access by the SDSU Extension at Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Extension Extra by an authorized administrator of Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. For more information, please contact [michael.biondo@sdstate.edu](mailto:michael.biondo@sdstate.edu).



# Extension Extra

ExEx 15001  
January 2004  
Youth Development  
/ 4-H

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES / SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY / USDA

---

## Recruiting Youth Volunteers for Your Organization

By L. J. Osborne, Extension Youth Development / 4-H Specialist

When your organization is looking for volunteers in the community, do not forget to target young people. Recruiting youth is different from recruiting adult volunteers. Young people have certain requirements that need to be met if they are to become engaged in volunteer work and stay motivated to continue.

The following list of eight points describes the aspects you need to consider if you wish to be successful in targeting youth as volunteers. The list is adapted from the research report "What Young People Want From Volunteering" by Katherine Gaskin, Institute for Volunteering Research.

The eight points, summed up in the acronym FLEXIVOL, describe what you need to address if you want to recruit and retain youth volunteers. As you design positions for teens and young adults, you should keep these points in mind.

If you do not incorporate these points into position descriptions or the experiences of the youth volunteers, youths may be difficult to recruit. If you

do recruit youth, you will have a hard time retaining them. Finally, word will spread via the 'youth network' that your volunteer jobs are boring and recruiting future youth will become even more difficult.

The eight points of FLEXIVOL are **F**lexibility, **L**egitimacy, **E**ase of Access, **eX**perience, **I**ncentives, **V**ariety, **O**rganization, and **L**aughs. They can be described in the following way:

1) **Flexibility** – Will the job you are asking the volunteer to perform be so rigid that it does not meet the youth's restricted time commitments? Youth today are involved in school, sports, jobs, church, and hanging with friends. You need to be creative and help young volunteers find the time blocks that work best for them and for your organization.

2) **Legitimacy** – Will the job be of importance to the community in which the youth lives? Youth need to feel that they are making a difference. They need to be aware of the significance of volunteer work and have positive images of volunteering.

3) **E**ase of access – Is the job located far away from where the youth lives? If youths do not have to go out of their way, they are more likely to agree to work. You should also make sure that information about volunteering opportunities is readily available. Do youth in your community know how to get in touch with your organization if they would like to start volunteering?

4) **eX**perience – Will this help the youth in building a resume? Will it provide the youth with experiences that are relevant to his/her personal life and career goals? Today's teens know the importance of building a quality resume.

5) **I**ncentives – Is the youth getting any benefits from working? Incentives don't have to be monetary; they can, for example, be in the form of references the youth can provide to future employers. You also need to make sure that the youth doesn't have any expenses as a result of the volunteer work. Your organization should have a way to reimburse any money the youth may have to spend while performing the duties.

6) **V**ariety – Will the youth volunteer be doing the same things all the time? You need to create variety in the positions so each youth doesn't get stuck with the same task every time.

Variety in the type and amount of work also helps attract youth with different interests and talents.

7) **G**ood **O**rganization – Is your organization well respected in the community? Does the community know who you are and what results you produce? Is the organization efficient, but not overly structured? It should provide support when needed, without supervising the youth too closely.

8) **L**aughs – Are we having fun? Does the position provide the youth with chances to have fun, make mistakes and grow? Does the youth get a chance to interact and have fun with others? Youth who have a good time while working are more likely to continue volunteering.

Remember, no one formula or set of principles will produce volunteers for you. Paying attention to the needs of your audience and a lot of work and salesmanship are necessary to get results.

Following the eight points of FLEXIVOL will not guarantee that you get youth volunteers. But it will provide you with excellent tools in your efforts to recruit and retain young people as volunteers for your organization.

*“The future depends on what we do in the present.”*

*Mahatma Gandhi*

This publication can be accessed electronically from the SDSU College of Agriculture & Biological Sciences publications page at <http://agbiopubs.sdstate.edu/articles/ExEx15001.pdf>