

### Support activities are meant to:

- ✓ Focus on the volunteer
- ✓ Create an environment where volunteers can express themselves
- ✓ Combat the isolation that can sometimes accompany volunteer roles
- ✓ Help resolve problems, usually of a personal nature
- ✓ Help volunteers feel good about what they are doing and show them that they are valued

### Supervision is meant to:

- ✓ Provide a framework for volunteers' work
- ✓ Monitor and evaluate voluntary work
- ✓ Clarify what the priorities of volunteers are in terms of their work
- ✓ Identify training needs
- ✓ Discuss volunteers' tasks and responsibilities
- ✓ Improve confidence and competence in the work
- ✓ Give feedback on volunteers' work
- ✓ Identify and handle problems

#### *How to support volunteers.*

Volunteers are usually supervised by individual members or a senior volunteer rather than by a single volunteer coordinator. Thus, it is important that potential supervisors know the following basic principles of volunteer management.

#### *Make sure the volunteer has something to do.*

Volunteering is done in a person's free time. If volunteers arrive at the organization only to find that you have nothing for them to do, they will feel as though their time is not respected and, thus, choose not to return. Losing a volunteer because of this is unfortunate. But even worse, this volunteer will tend to tell other people about their experience, discouraging them to volunteer at the organization. Try to avoid this situation, which will harm the organization's reputation. If a volunteer comes when there is nothing for them to do, use that time with them to plan tasks for them to do next time.

#### *Thank them for their work.*

A common management mistake is the failure to express appreciation to people for the work they do. This mistake can be particularly harmful when it occurs with volunteers. If they sense that others do not appreciate the gift of their time, they will take it elsewhere. A simple "thank you" (preferably with a smile) when the volunteer leaves can do wonders to keep them coming back. In addition, people who work with volunteers should consider recognizing their work by:

- Smiling and greeting them
- Thanking them for coming in
- Writing them a note
- Telling them they did a good job (if they did)
- Forwarding any positive feedback about them from the target group.

#### *Have a plan B.*

Sometimes volunteers will finish their work early or they will not be able to do what was originally planned. In order for volunteers to have a sense that you value their time, you should have a back-up plan.

#### *Have a place for them to work.*

Similarly, volunteers feel that they and their role isn't valued if there is no proper place for them to complete their tasks.

#### *Call them by name.*

It can be difficult to remember the names of all volunteers, but remembering their names will help volunteers feel included. When volunteers sense that members don't know their names, they tend to feel undervalued.

#### *Ask for their ideas and feedback on a regular basis.*

Volunteers may agree to do some pretty routine, uncomplicated tasks, but this doesn't mean they don't have ideas that can contribute positively to the organization. Ask them if they see opportunities for improving the way things are done. You might be surprised.