

# Corporate Volunteering Section

Group projects offer businesses the opportunity to help address community needs, extend their reach and visibility within the communities they serve, and provide exciting and meaningful opportunities for employees. As with all company-managed employee volunteer opportunities, the project should mesh with the business' priorities, corporate culture, and employee interests.

## Key Steps for a Successful Company-Sponsored Project

### **1. Start a project committee.**

Designate a committee leader, such as an employee volunteer program manager, who will recruit representatives from other departments. A diverse committee can recruit volunteers from all parts of the organization. Engage your company's management to further help champion the project and provide visible support.

### **2. Choose a project.**

Decide what activities are appropriate for your location and your employee volunteers. Consider corporate community involvement goals, employee interests and skills, community needs, and existing volunteer opportunities.

Consider projects that encourage and provide opportunities for family volunteering. For more ideas, contact your local volunteer center at 1-800-VOLUNTEER or view our Seasons of Service calendar at [www.pointsoflight.org/programs/programs\\_seasons.html](http://www.pointsoflight.org/programs/programs_seasons.html). Your local Corporate Volunteer Council, a coalition of businesses that are developing or have active employee volunteer programs, is also an excellent resource.

### **3. Contact a partner organization.**

Contact the prospective recipient organization to make sure they can use your services. Agree upon the objective, time, and location of the project, what supplies are needed, how many volunteers are needed, the project evalua-

tion, and any other critical project management activities.

### **4. Communicate the project**

Start posting fliers and posters throughout your office to recruit employee volunteers. Distribute a memo from top-level management encouraging employees to participate. Include messages in company newsletters, e-mail messages, and meetings. Also have executive secretaries, union leaders, and office managers recruit volunteers within their department.

### **5. Recruit volunteers.**

Hold meetings to explain the project. Sign-up volunteers for specific tasks. Send periodic pre-event updates to volunteers with event details, names of volunteers who have signed up, celebra-

tion party details, etc. Build excitement by creating flyers showing the planned activities or distribute creative reminders. Approach employees one-on-one and do not forget to engage senior management as volunteers as well. A personal “ask to volunteer” goes a long way!

### **6. Finalize checklist.**

Verify that needed supplies are available. Reconfirm the details with the partner organization. Reconfirm leadership participation and support. Provide volunteers with clear instructions about event details. Distribute company logo volunteer T-shirts or buttons for employees to wear during the project.

### **7. Plan for media coverage**

Partner with your internal communications department to contact the media and distribute press releases detailing your projects and the results of your effort to the community. Plan to arrange for a photographer—either an employee or professional photographer—to document the event. Be sure to get action shots and be able to identify

people in the pictures.

### **8. Post project steps.**

Plan a celebratory event immediately following the project. Recognize volunteers with certificates of appreciation or small tokens. Highlight volunteers in your annual report, internal newsletter, or at a special luncheon. Solicit volunteer feedback and evaluate the project. Post photos and results of project.

## **Volunteering is Good Business**

In a survey of executives, more than half of the respondents strongly agreed that employee volunteer activities bring about the following benefits:

- helps create healthier communities;
- improves corporate public image;
- enhances impact of monetary contributions;
- builds teamwork skills;
- improves morales;
- attracts better employees.

Source: Points of Light Foundation in partnership with The Conference Board, *Corporate Volunteering: Benefits to Business*, 1992

## Real Life Examples: Companies Engaging in Group Projects

- \* A number of projects from Washington Mutual, a financial services company, leverage employees' expertise. Many employee volunteers use their financial skills to promote financial literacy through innovative classroom presentations at local schools on everything from the value of money to the stock market. The company also developed a series of classes for adults covering topics such as opening and using a bank account, budgeting, and applying for loans.
- \* The Corporate Volunteer Council of Central Maryland and 125 volunteers from Baltimore-area companies and organizations joined together for a one-day cleanup. A shelter's bedrooms, bathrooms, and hallways were painted, repaired, and cleaned. Picnic tables and flower boxes were constructed for the shelter courtyard.

A collection drive provided linens, children's toys, and toiletries for the shelter.

- \* Recent projects for employees at Legacy Health System included environmental restoration in Portland's 5,000-acre Forest Park, restoration of bicycles for needy children, and opportunities to serve on community litter patrols. Managers and directors were encouraged to use these projects as team-building exercises.
- \* Through EDS' Global Volunteer Day 2001, more than 20,000 volunteers in 24 countries worked on 425 projects. For one project, a team in Germany took 60 children from an orphanage to a mine to prospect for precious stones.
- \* Through Levi Strauss & Co.'s Volunteer Day 2001, more than 2,600 employees participated in volunteer projects at more than 60 nonprofit community organizations. In the San Francisco Bay

Area alone, volunteer projects included painting murals at schools, planting gardens at community centers, sorting clothing at a clothing bank, and refurbishing day care centers.

"Group volunteer projects give employees the opportunity to come together as colleagues and make a difference in the lives of individuals and families in our communities."

—Joyce Fung-Yee, Employee Community Involvement Manager, Levi Strauss & Co.

# Resources

## Corporate Volunteer Development

Businesses are primary sources of volunteer power and an employee volunteer program (EVP) is a strategic vehicle for advancing business goals and integrating corporate philosophy and values with community needs and employee interests. By harnessing the power of employee volunteering, businesses of all sizes can affect a sea change in the way private enterprise contributes to public good. While each EVP is unique, there are approaches and program features that work consistently across a wide range of small to medium to large size businesses.

The Points of Light Foundation has a broad range of experience working with companies to build, strengthen and evaluate employee volunteer programs and enhance vital community partnerships. With our experienced staff, we can help you establish, enhance and sustain an EVP that

benefits your business, employees and the communities you serve.

Through partnerships with Corporate Volunteer Councils and the Volunteer Center National Network, the Foundation assists businesses to be more effectively engaged in corporate community service at the local level.

### Ready to Get Started?

- To learn more about how to engage your employees in community volunteer projects contact your local Volunteer Center at 1-800-VOLUNTEER or [www.pointsoflight.org](http://www.pointsoflight.org).
- To locate a Corporate Volunteer Council near you, email [CVC@pointsoflight.org](mailto:CVC@pointsoflight.org).
- Or, for general information about workplace volunteering or using

group projects as a team-building strategy within your employee volunteer program, please contact [CVDinfo@pointsoflight.org](mailto:CVDinfo@pointsoflight.org).