Starting a volunteer program is a way to bring people with special skills into your organization. Because they do not charge for their time and work, volunteers help organizations that don’t have a lot of money. But don’t think for a minute that your organization is not helping volunteers, too.

People who volunteer do so because they believe in the mission and work of the organization. One survey showed that 76% of volunteers say that they feel physically better as a result of volunteering. A whopping 94% say volunteering improves their mood!

GETTING THE RIGHT VOLUNTEERS
Matching the work you do to the type of volunteer you want is critical. Not every type of volunteer is good for every volunteer program. Once you know what type of volunteer you want, you need to decide where and how to find them. This table shows ways to organize your thoughts about finding volunteers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT WE DO</th>
<th>TYPE(S) OF VOLUNTEERS NEEDED</th>
<th>HOW WE FIND OUR VOLUNTEERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build for Tomorrow</td>
<td>We need really strong people who also have skill and experience in building houses.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare on Wheels</td>
<td>Nurses, doctors, and health aides</td>
<td>Let National Medical Volunteers know that we’re looking for volunteers; post an ad on City Hall’s volunteer webpage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Garden</td>
<td>Eager young people; retired people</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Put up posters at local high schools and senior centers.
INTERVIEWING VOLUNTEERS
Volunteers work for free, but that doesn’t mean you can’t screen them. Your organization makes serious contributions to the community. In turn, you have the right to expect serious work from your volunteers. But how can you tell in advance who will be a great volunteer? You need to interview volunteers to find out if they are:

- trustworthy
- good at problem solving
- hardworking
- committed to your cause

Tell me about a time when you had to solve a problem creatively -- how did you decide what to do?

TRAINING VOLUNTEERS
Always start with a volunteer orientation. This is a meeting or series of meetings in which volunteers learn all about your organization. They also learn about the work they will be doing for you. And they find out what to do if they need support.

At the end of your orientation, your volunteers should know:

- how your organization works
- how to get the resources they need to solve a problem
- how to communicate well with the people your organization serves
- how they will interact with other volunteers and with their supervisor
- how to reach a staff member 24/7 in case of an emergency

Just because your volunteers aren't kindergartners doesn't mean you can't fascinate them with what you have to say.

TROUBLESHOOTING PROBLEMS
Even after you train your volunteers, you might sometimes have problems with a few of them. You will have to troubleshoot these problems. Here are some problems I've
had over the years:

• Sometimes volunteers can't do the work they are assigned. They might show up and try really hard, but they never seem to do the work correctly. If this happens, you should **offer support, but make sure the volunteer knows what you expect and that you need to see an improvement.**

• Every once in a great while, someone on staff will come to you with the accusation that a volunteer has stolen something from the office or, worse, from a client. **Never accuse a volunteer of stealing unless you can first meet with that person privately and show him or her your evidence.**

**TAKING CARE OF VOLUNTEERS**

If you are starting a volunteer program of any kind, one of the most important things to do is to take care of your volunteers. They are giving their precious time to your organization. Your program exists because of them. Take care of them every day. Here are just a few suggestions:

• Your volunteers work hard. Check in with each one. If he or she is tired or tense, offer time off or an easier job.

• Give your volunteers freebies. Every so often, ask your organization to buy small gifts for your volunteers, such as tickets to a performance.

• Throw a big party for the whole crew! Nothing says “thank you” like a party.

Always remember that you and your volunteers are doing very important work. We’re all in it together!