

Teen & Tween Volunteering

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The library offers volunteer opportunities for teens of all ages and grades, from middle school through college. Many of our activities have been created in response to teens who have asked to fulfill their community service requirements at the library.

Why use teen volunteers?

Supports adolescent development - empowerment, self-esteem development, leadership skills, mentoring of younger kids.

Reinforces awareness of the library as a community resource as it supports school and religious requirements for community service.

Provides constructive activities for teens during school breaks.

Brings teens into library.

Gateway to relationships with teens and families.

Provides a venue for intergenerational activities.

How we use volunteers - see flyers for specific programs

Teen volunteers read aloud to young children - Book Buddies.

Teens teach basic computer classes to adults - Computer Tutors.

Teens offer instruction in use of personal electronic equipment - Pod Squad.

Teens may assist librarians at programs.

Older teens act as program instructors in activities such as zining, scrapbooking, creative writing and drama. Adds "cool factor" to programs.

Teens participate in a Read-a-thon and food drive (teens collect and sort food) to support the Interfaith Nutrition Network (INN).

Note: We do not use teens to do tasks of paid employees i.e. shelving books.

Planning involves cooperating with entire library and community

Coordinate with children's librarians and have them reach out for young children to be read to (include families, day care centers and nursery schools).

Cooperate with district's schools to advertise program.

Cooperate with village senior center to outreach to older adults.

Ask for activities to be included in PTA newsletter.

Take into account school and community calendars when planning activities.

Recruit former teen participants who have specific skills and interests who may be willing to run programs.

Implementation

All volunteers **must** sign up **in person** with me. This is to demonstrate their commitment to the activity (as opposed to their parent's).

Mandatory training sessions for volunteer Book Buddies including tips for reading aloud.

Summer Book Buddies are provided with t-shirts they must wear so they can be identified as volunteers.

Training sessions are held prior to each computer class and a training manual is given to Computer Tutors.

Problems

Too many teens, not enough volunteer opportunities.

Too many teens, too few children to be read to.

Solutions

Always be on the lookout for more volunteer opportunities. Find out what special talents and interests your teens may have.

Be flexible when working with teen volunteers; believe that everything will work out!

Teen/ Tween Volunteer Programs

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It seems like every day I receive requests from Teens, Tweens and their parents seeking volunteer opportunities at the SRPL library. There are many reasons to develop teen volunteer programs, but the reality is it takes commitment, support from library administration, ideas, planning, and assistance from other staff. In this outline I will offer you suggestions and enticements for implementing a teen/tween volunteer program. At SRPL we currently offer four programs. They are: Book Buddies, Summer YA Volunteers, the SRPL Teen Advisory Board (TAB), and Teen Computer Tutors. I am assisted by the Children's Librarians and Senior Connection Librarian, except for TAB which I run myself. Currently, limitations of time and staff prevent me from developing new programs though I have a few ideas! Please contact me if you have questions!

Why should we create volunteer opportunities for Teens/Tweens?

1. They need community service credit.
2. This is a way of supporting the teens in your library, and it gives them a chance to build the 40 developmental assets identified by the Search Institute.
3. Teens are our future and we should invest in them.
4. Frequently, programs such as Book Buddies, Homework Help, & Teen Computer Tutors benefit the library, the community, and the teens as well!

How do I design a volunteer program for the Teens/Tweens in my library?

1. Start with a simple idea that serves your teens and your library.
2. Survey neighboring libraries, the Internet, and the library literature for ideas. Also get ideas from teens through a survey and/or a focus group meeting.
3. Plan ahead by at least 6 months. Consider promoting your program on the library website, in the library through flyers, newsletter, and word of mouth at area schools, and at community centers that support youth.
4. Popular programs include Book Buddies, Summer Reading Volunteers, Computer Tutors, Tech Help, Homework Helpers, and of course the Teen Advisory Group. However, don't hesitate to start a teen volunteer program that is completely new and different! Your library and/or teens have unique needs and you may be a creative person so run with it!
5. If you can't start that volunteer program just yet, be sure to encourage teens in your library in other ways. Keep a current list of volunteer ops in your community for them; check the web for volunteer op match sites too. Develop a small collection of materials on volunteer, community service, and internship ops for teens.

Solicit teen help on a small scale such as a in a game or mystery night or read aloud session for National Library Week.

6. With the exception of Teen Advisory Groups, have a training session for your volunteers.

How do I know if my volunteer program is working?

1. Most likely you will be amazed by calls and requests about your program. This is a good sign. Be prepared to explain it over and over again as anything new takes awhile to catch on.
2. You have to limit registration. Or registration is slow, but after the program is over you get many requests for it. In your volunteer program you see many new teens.
3. The staff has a new respect for teens as they are doing something helpful for the library (i.e. computer tutoring, or reading books to young children).
4. Teen volunteers spread the word to others. Some of your teens become great library pages, and leaders in other areas.
5. You receive suggestions from teens on how to improve the program and have a core group of very involved teens.

A few words on the TAG or TAB group:

Teen Advisory Groups help teens build the 40 developmental assets needed to succeed, and are a great resource for the Teen Librarian. TAG members can suggest teen programs, assist in collection development, help decorate the YA Area, recruit teens for programs, help in library programs, assist in tech projects, facilitate in book discussions, and more. Don't hesitate to start a simple TAG group at your library that meets once a month. Begin your meeting with an icebreaker, have a simple agenda, & refreshments. Sit back as the teens run with the meeting and enlighten you with ideas on how to serve them better and improve the teen area. Vary the meetings too! I can't begin to tell you all the benefits of a TAG group (that's another workshop).

Finally: Revise, fine tune and tweak your volunteer program to meet you teen population's constantly changing needs. Keep your library director informed on how your volunteer program is working, what you've put into it, and what you need to keep it going! Elicit feedback from staff and teens too.

And if you need further info. check these sources:

The 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents (ages 12-18). [Online] Available <http://www.searchinstitute.org>.

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Vaillancourt, Renee. *Managing young adult services: a self-help manual*. NY: Neal Schumann Publishers, 2002.

West, Edie. *The big book of icebreakers:...* NY: McGraw Hill, 1999.