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15 Ways to Say Thank You **By Carren W. Joye**

Leaders are always encouraged to say thank you to their volunteers and staff to let them know they are appreciated. We want our volunteers to know how much we value their work, but sometimes just saying thanks does not seem enough. Indeed, there are a variety of ways to express gratitude besides just a warm smile and "Thank you." Let's put a little more thought into our thank you, and get creative!

Here are some suggestions:

1. Acknowledge volunteers and hard workers in your newsletter.
2. Tell others of the volunteer's contributions.
3. Say thank you to the volunteer when others are around to hear you.
4. Give a hearty, well-deserved pat on the back or a genuine, warm hug.
5. Send a beautiful, handwritten thank you card. No emails!
6. Present the volunteer with a certificate of appreciation. You can find these on the Internet and print them on your printer.
7. Give a large candle with the note: "No one holds a candle to you."
8. Give a rock that you decorate with one of the following sayings: "Thanks, You Rock!" or "Thanks For Being So Rock Solid!"
9. Give a cupcake with the note: "You take the cake!"
10. Give a small, inexpensive gift that appeals to their interest. For example, a reader would probably enjoy a book of inspirational sayings or a nice bookmark, a chocoholic would relish a box of her favorite candy, and a coffee drinker would appreciate her favorite coffee or a new mug. If you have heard them mention some small item they would like, get it. On the other hand, if you have a special skill, make a small gift. Knowing you put your time and effort into making something with your own hands adds extra value for the recipient.

11. Collect money from the group or organization and give a bigger gift, such as a large plant, flower arrangement or gift certificate to a favorite store or restaurant. Tailor the gift to the recipient's hobbies or interests with a gift basket of various items the volunteer would like, such as items for working outdoors for an avid gardener or soaps and oils for a bath lover.

12. Treat the volunteer to the movies, lunch or a snack, such as ice cream, frozen yogurt, pie and coffee, or just a soda.

13. Bring "goodies" to share with the staff on obscure holidays or occasions, not just after special projects are done.

14. Throw a special picnic, barbecue or party to say thanks!

15. Purchase a beautiful small bowl and turn it into a "Blessings Bowl" or decorate a small box to be a "Warm and Fuzzy Box." Encourage members to write on a slip of paper one or two sentences describing how the recipient has somehow touched their life or what they admire about that person. It will serve as a memento of all that the recipient brings into the lives of others.

Of course, you should not be overly concerned about how to say "thank you." Most important is to remember to always express appreciation in some way or another.