



13 Volunteer Team Building

Defining the Needs, Recruiting and Interviewing

CHAPTER PREVIEW

- ☞ What Motivates Volunteers?
 - ☞ Building a Volunteer Team
 - ☞ Step 1: Defining the Needs
 - ☞ Step 2: Recruiting
 - ☞ Step 3: Screening and Interviewing
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VOLUNTEERS are essential to any effective Youth and Family Ministry program. They come from a wide range of ages and offer a variety of talent and abilities. Volunteers today want to engage in meaningful work using their spiritual gifts. Many of them prefer to select how they volunteer rather than being willing to do “just anything.” To effectively use volunteers some thoughtful planning benefits everyone.

WHAT MOTIVATES VOLUNTEERS?

First, consider some of the various reasons why people might volunteer for your program.

They want to:

- Do something useful—help others, solve problems.
- Have fun with children and/or teens.
- Do that which Spirit guided them to do.
- Acquire new skills—be creative, cultivate new interests.
- Make new friends, belong to a group.
- Repay what they have received.
- Learn, to develop and to grow personally.
- Contribute to a cause that is important to them.
- Feel like they are needed.

Volunteers today are also interested in knowing what the benefits are to them. Before beginning recruitment, become clear on the benefits so that men and women realize that

volunteering is not all giving, but rather, they will receive much in return. Consider some of these benefits. Mention these as well as your own ideas each time you talk with a potential volunteer. They will:

- Learn and grow spiritually along with those they assist or teach.
- Meet and know many fascinating children, teens and adults who are like-minded.
- Be emotionally rewarded knowing they are serving the church.
- Have opportunities to develop new skills.
- Experience a supportive and loving environment.

Additionally the church will provide many of the following for its volunteers:

- Training
- Prayer and emotional support
- Curriculum/lesson plans and supplies as needed
- A safe environment
- A complementary CD of the minister's lesson

Youth and Family Ministry offers amazing opportunities for volunteers to experience love, joy and spiritual growth as they serve and share their gifts.

As you help others spiritually and in every way you not only fulfill the law of giving and receiving, you develop your own resources and capabilities in fuller measure. By helping others under the guidance of the Spirit of truth you at the same time help yourself.

—Myrtle Fillmore

BUILDING A VOLUNTEER TEAM

A strong volunteer team results from intentional recruiting, careful screening, discerning when to say yes or to redirect certain people, and time in prayer. As we remember our purpose to create a safe ministry where children and adults can learn and grow spiritually while expressing joy, we move patiently through the process of growing our Youth and Family Ministry on a solid foundation.

To build a strong volunteer team, take time to go through these six steps.

1. Define the needs.
2. Recruit.
3. Screen and interview.
4. Provide orientation and training.
5. Coach and supervise.
6. Give frequent recognition.

The first three are the steps taken before volunteers commit and are described in this chapter. The next three steps discuss the guidance and support to provide after volunteers commit. These are described in Chapter 14 “Volunteer Training and Recognition.”

In Unity, prayer is a foundational piece of all action. As you move through each of the steps, consider each one prayerfully. Time in prayer allows us to open to Divine guidance as we serve youth ministry. Prayer also allows us to appreciate the existing gifts in the ministry.

STEP 1: DEFINING THE NEEDS

Whether you have a small or large youth ministry, begin by identifying the needs of your program. What tasks are essential to conducting a meaningful Sunday morning youth program? List the actual tasks for which volunteers are needed. Remember the tasks that need to occur prior to Sunday as well. A chart of possible volunteer roles at the end of the chapter can assist you in defining these roles to fit your program’s needs.

How can the tasks be grouped? Write job descriptions for each of the various volunteer opportunities so that people are clear on what they are to do. This helps determine how many adults are needed for the program. Defining expectations helps create a more positive experience for everyone. In defining needs, set standards of excellence and strive to meet them by matching the abilities of volunteers with program needs. Consider the age groups of the children in determining the total number of teachers and classroom assistants needed. The table at the end of this chapter, Possible Volunteer Roles, may give you ideas for growing your program.

What are the recommended qualifications for volunteers?

These are suggested requirements for your church or program to consider when selecting volunteers.

- Six months or more regular attendance at your church (Recommend requiring this as a safety measure.)
- Church membership or willingness to consider joining within six months to a year (for insurance reasons). See Chapter 16 “Risk Management.”
- An understanding of Unity principles demonstrated in some way such as having completed a *Lessons in Truth* class
- Love and acceptance for children/teens

- Willingness and desire to be of service to children/teens/families
- Willingness to work in a team
- Background check for all who work directly with children or teens
- Willingness to commit (2 Sundays per month) for 6 months or a year
- Completed application

You may also want to consider creating a Volunteer Advisory Board for Youth and Family Ministry. These specially selected volunteer leaders can assist with many functions. They can serve as a leadership team for smaller churches, sometimes in place of a youth director. They can assist with program direction, with enrolling additional volunteers, and with many of the extra functions that create a vital, growing program.

STEP 2: RECRUITING

Recruitment is the ongoing process of locating volunteers who are qualified or can be trained for the positions to be filled. There is no one best way to recruit volunteers. Instead, use a variety of strategies at different times of the year. Be sure to target men as well as women. Be creative and enjoy the process. Know that your passion and enthusiasm will motivate others to want to be a part of the program.

1. Gather names of potential volunteers.
 - Ask for recommendations from your minister, other staff members, board members and other volunteers in the program.
 - Notice what adults seem to have a rapport with the children or teens.
 - Listen for people who value and care about teens and children.
 - Consider adults that have lots of energy and enthusiasm.

Use a one-on-one approach to personally invite these people to volunteer. This is usually the most effective approach.

2. Announce the needs during a service and offer a short informational meeting afterwards or meet them near the exit. Offer an Interest Inquiry form (See Chapter 19 “Forms.”) and promptly call those who return it to answer their questions.

Remember that some of your congregation does not understand what happens in Youth and Family Ministry so include a brief description of the youth ministry vision and mission before announcing needs.

3. Have a mature youngster or another teacher announce the opportunities. Be sure to assist this person with exactly what to say and help them practice. This could be a “testimonial” about the joys and fun of being in youth ministry.
4. Hold a volunteer fair after a service with each church area represented that needs volunteers. People can visit each of the tables to learn about a variety of volunteering opportunities. At the youth ministry table display pictures of your volunteers in action. Have some of them present to share what they do. Give away affirmative bookmarks the children created or some other creation.
5. Encourage and arrange for an interested individual to visit a class.
6. Hold an open house in your youth ministry facility. Display or have children share about what they do there. Give children the opportunity to make and serve refreshments. Share the variety of opportunities for more volunteers and invite them to complete an Interest Inquiry form. (See Chapter 19.)
7. Wear a button that says “Ask me about Youth and Family Ministry!” Then be ready to promote your program to anyone who asks.
8. Feature youth ministry for 8-10 minutes during a service. This could include honoring current volunteers in front of the congregation. Consider showing pictures of children and volunteers doing interesting things in youth ministry. Include in the bulletin an Interest Inquiry form.

SPECIAL TIPS FOR RECRUITING MEN!

1. Help men view children’s programs as significant ministry. Promote using photos of men and women involved in the excitement of working with your children and teens.
2. Ask men to recruit men. Highlight male workers through testimonies and newsletter articles as well as women.
3. Help men understand their unique role in the classroom. Pair a male and a female volunteer when possible. Often discipline needs are reduced when a man is present.
4. Encourage and affirm male volunteers often. Both men and women want to be accepted and valued.
5. Provide strong leadership to the program. Strong leadership attracts strong volunteers—male and female.
6. Give men and women ownership of their portion of the program. Invite them into the goal-setting process and ministry evaluation.

STEP 3: SCREENING AND INTERVIEWING

1. Ask everyone interested in volunteering to complete an application. This is essential and very valuable as it provides contact information and insight into the interests and abilities of the potential volunteer. Keep blank copies on hand so you have them ready to distribute anytime someone expresses an interest. (See Application Youth Ministry Volunteer form in Chapter 19.)
2. Review the application carefully. You may want to schedule a date and time for an interview. Or you may want to call the references—both personal ones and other churches where the applicant volunteered—before scheduling. Check with your minister and other staff as well. This is essential especially when volunteers work with vulnerable populations like children or with sensitive information.

CONTACT REFERENCES SAMPLE SCRIPT

Hello, my name is (name) and I'm the (title) at (name of church). I'm calling for a personal reference on one of your friends, (name). He/She is offering to volunteer in our youth ministry department as (name of position). As with all our volunteers working with children, we request they give us three personal references, which we then proceed to check.

(Name) listed you as one of his/her references. I simply need brief answers to the following questions.

- 1) How long have you known (name)?
- 2) In what capacity have you known (name), or how did you meet?
- 3) What is your overall impression of (name) as a person?
- 4) How do you feel he/she works or would work with children, even if you have not personally seen him/her do so?
- 5) Would you have any reservations whatsoever with (name) working with children?

3. The interview lends importance to the position and to the Youth and Family Ministry program. It also provides an opportunity for the volunteer to learn about the different needs in the program and where they might best serve. Know that the volunteer is interviewing you as much as you are interviewing them. Before the interview write a list of what you want to discuss. Then write those items as specific open-ended questions for the candidate to answer.

In an interview the director can learn:

- Why the individual wants to volunteer
- The volunteer's expectations about serving
- If there is a match

The volunteer can learn:

- Responsibilities and expectations for the position
- What specific skill sets are important
- What training will be provided

4. Conduct the interview.

- Welcome the potential volunteer warmly and invite them to make themselves comfortable. Offer a cup of coffee or water. Try to establish rapport and make them feel at ease. Use good eye contact and body language. Then begin with prayer before moving into the discussion.
- Ask specific open-ended questions and listen carefully to what the person has to say. During the interview or immediately after, jot down their responses.
- Offer the opportunity to ask questions about the youth program.
- Explain any policies that apply to this volunteer position such as a background check.
- Briefly explain training and support offered.
- Close the interview at the appropriate time. Give them a clear indication of whether or not you are interested in them and a projected date for a final decision. End the interview by thanking them for their interest and willingness.

QUESTIONING STRATEGIES

- Effective: What have you enjoyed most about your past volunteer experiences? What made it that way? NOT! Have you had any previous volunteer experience?
- Effective: Please describe a situation where you worked in a team. What did you like and dislike about the experience? NOT! Are you a team player?
- Effective: In what ways do you think you could help the Youth and Family Ministry fulfill its mission? NOT! Given our limited budget, are you okay working with us for free?
- Effective: Tell me about a time when you prepared an event or lesson that didn't work out the way you thought it would. (Behavior-based question) NOT! Have you ever prepared a lesson that the teens didn't like?

5. Prayerfully consider each applicant. Listen to your intuition and guidance. Do not bring the person into the position if it is not a good match. Re-direct them to another area to volunteer, or encourage them to take some classes. Lovingly make clear that there is no appropriate match for them just now in Youth and Family Ministry.
6. Conduct background checks before offering the person the position. (See Chapter 16 “Risk Management.”)
7. Offer the position. Once the volunteer accepts, both parties sign a Commitment Agreement that summarizes the responsibilities and indicates agreement to the volunteer position. This is not a legal binding contract, but insures understanding between volunteer and church. (See Commitment Agreement in Chapter 19 “Forms.”)
8. Schedule the observation and orientation with them so that they are clear when they begin. (See Chapter 14 “Volunteer Team Training and Recognition.”)

Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men and women, knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord.
—Ephesians 6:7-8 NRSV

POSSIBLE VOLUNTEER ROLES

Volunteer Title	What Does Volunteer Do?	When Is It Done?
Greeting Angel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greet/register children • Direct to appropriate places 	Sunday morning as scheduled
Supply Room Angel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and purchase supplies • Set up and put away supplies 	Can be handled during week or when designated
Youth and Family Ministry Volunteer Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep records of all volunteers in program • Contact volunteers as needed • Contact new families 	Mid-week responsibilities as well as some Sunday responsibilities
Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare lesson well in advance • ‘Sit’ with lesson allowing Spirit to help you understand it • Pray for guidance and for your children • Test any activities you are unclear about • Gather all supplies needed, if not done for you • Arrive early and be prayed up • Facilitate lessons (See Chapter 8.) • Clean up classroom before leaving 	May schedule on rotational system, i.e. 2 Sundays on/2 off or, on 1 Sunday/off 2 or 3 depending on the rotation
Teacher/Classroom Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist teacher and children, especially with individual needs/problems • Arrive early to prepare the space and to become centered • Place supplies and materials ready for use • Play music when appropriate • Prepare for arrival procedures • Warmly welcome youth and parents • Handle special requests 	May schedule on rotational system, i.e. 2 Sundays on/2 off or, on 1 Sunday/off 2 or 3 depending on the rotation
Uniteen Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and facilitate effective lessons • Pray for guidance and for teens • Arrive early and prayed up • Be a Spiritual Leader and role model • Coordinate events, service projects • Coach young teens in responsibilities • Administer paperwork for group events • Sponsor events • Serve as liaison between teens and youth director 	Sunday morning as scheduled Occasional weekends When events are scheduled
YOU Sponsor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a Spiritual Leader and role model • Facilitate spiritual lessons as needed • Coach teens in facilitating lessons • Coach/guide/support teens in events, service projects & other teen leadership functions • Supervise all functions as scheduled • Mentor teens from spiritual perspective in challenges • Serve as liaison between teens and minister/youth director • Pray for guidance and for teens • Uphold church policies, procedures and state laws 	Sunday as scheduled When events and YOU functions are held

POSSIBLE VOLUNTEER ROLES

Volunteer Title	What Does Volunteer Do?	When Is It Done?
Substitute Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill in when regular teacher is not available • See teacher responsibilities 	Some programs use the rotational system for scheduling so no sub is needed.
Musician	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach songs and lead singing • May create music tapes for classroom use 	As scheduled by the director
New Family Greeting Angel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send welcome letter and packet of information, and contact new families that visit youth ministry 	Usually handled during the week
Youth Ministry Prayer Team or Chaplain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is specially trained to pray with the children • Hold the sacred space for children and families 	Primarily on Sundays
Drama Angel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead/assist with special dramatic productions 	Usually a concentrated short time
Photographer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photograph Sunday classes and special events • Collect signed permissions from parents for photos 	Periodically as special events occur
Memory Maker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange photos in albums and scrapbooks 	During week as needed
Bulletin Board Designer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and change bulletin board displays in youth ministry 	As needed
Newsletter/Publishing Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist in gathering and writing articles for newsletter • Prepare forms and flyers 	As needed
Office/Clerical Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare mailings • Collate forms and file • Follow up on medical release forms • Organize and maintain a database • Send group emails 	During each week
Bakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide treats for youth ministry 	As needed
Nursery Care Attendant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handle all responsibilities for nursery children • Sign all little ones in and out • Keep record of where parents will be • Keep medical records readily available in room • Keep children safe by watchfulness at all times • Supervise their play and encourage participation in simple activities and songs • See Chapter 15 for more specifics. 	May be paid position, every Sunday and occasional mid-week
Advisory Board Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as leadership team member for youth ministry • May recruit, train, etc. 	Meet quarterly with director
Transportation Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide transportation to and from events, usually parents 	As needed
Special Events Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with organizing and carrying out special activities and events 	As needed



14 Volunteer Training and Recognition

CHAPTER PREVIEW

- ☞ Step 4: Volunteer Orientation and Training
 - ☞ Step 5: Coach and Supervise Volunteers
 - ☞ Step 6: Volunteer Appreciation and Recognition
 - ☞ Releasing Volunteers
 - ☞ Training
 - ☞ A Sample Training
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YOUTH and Family Ministry is about ministry to all involved—the children, the teens and the volunteers. Ministry includes equipping the volunteers for success and joy as they serve. It is also about stimulating their growth spiritually and in recognizing the many and varied contributions of the volunteers. This chapter continues the steps involved in building a strong volunteer team.

Step 4 recommends providing orientation and training. Frequent volunteer training is essential for a successful, dynamic program. Training and orientation for new volunteers raises their comfort level as they begin assisting in their new role. Training helps continuing volunteers stay abreast of what is happening in the youth ministry program. It equips them to demonstrate excellence as they serve. Training also builds team relationships, encourages growth spiritually, and provides specific skills. Aspects of ongoing training are presented in this chapter as are recommended steps for orientation. For specific content possibilities, use other chapters in this guide to create specialized training.

Step 5 is to coach and supervise volunteers, an essential step for an effective ongoing program.

Step 6 is to give frequent recognition! Continuous recognition of volunteers is essential. We hope that the strategies we have included will stimulate your creativity in honoring the people who serve in Youth and Family Ministry.

What are the training needs for Youth and Family Ministry?

- New volunteers need observation opportunities, orientation and training.
- Ongoing volunteers benefit from training that answers their questions and provides them with new skills, classroom lesson strategies and insights about children and teens. Everyone values meetings that include procedures, curriculum, spiritual growth, relationship-building and fun!

What are some ways to offer training?

- Regular meetings, 1-2 hours, well-planned and announced well in advance.
- Extended trainings of 3-5 hours, especially for new teachers. Use excellent volunteers and/or grade-level team leaders as facilitators for some parts of the training.
- Teachers' retreat—Use the time for fun, relationship building, renewal and some concentrated training for youth ministry.
- Individualized training—can be accomplished using tools like *Unity Youth Ministry Fast-Start Training CD*. (Available through www.unitychurches.org/shop)
- Task-focused individualized training—is specific to a need such as registration, office help, etc.
- Regional events offered by your Regional Educational Consultants. Visit www.unity.org/rec

National training opportunities

- Child/Teen Ministry Week offered yearly by Unity Worldwide Ministries in July or August. Visit www.unity.org/yfm for details.

STEP 4: VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

For new volunteers, training may actually begin informally with the interview described in detail in the previous chapter. In the interview the director learns what opportunity the potential volunteer is looking for and what gifts they wish to share.

S/he can also learn what previous training the person may have had, what they would like to learn more about, and when they are available. The needs in the youth program can be described, and the mission, values and overall philosophy of the ministry may be reviewed with the prospective volunteer.

Orientation for new volunteers is essential to raise their comfort level as they begin assisting. Additionally, children benefit as they are assured of ongoing consistency in their program even when a new volunteer face is present. Orientation ensures that information passed on to visitors is accurate and helpful. Expecting a volunteer to catch on over a few weeks of participation without an orientation is an unrealistic expectation and one that often results in short terms of service.

1. In the initial orientation for new volunteers, include:

- The vision, mission and purpose of the Youth and Family Ministry.
- A brief description of overall program.
- An explanation of the approach used with children and teens.
- General knowledge on policies and handouts. Create a Policy/Procedure Handbook and provide a copy at this training. At the end of Chapter 16 “Risk Management” is a discussion on how to create this and recommended content for the handbook. (More specific ideas for new volunteer training are later in this chapter.)
- A walking orientation of the facilities. Include:
 - Youth and Family Ministry class locations
 - Area where volunteer communication folders and schedules are kept
 - Location where report forms are kept and returned (Incident report, supply requests, attendance sign-in, etc.)
 - Location and procedures regarding classroom supplies
 - All locations where first-aid/emergency supplies are kept
 - Resources available for check-out
 - Where and how volunteers obtain a CD of the church service

2. Schedule 3 one-hour observations in a class of the age the volunteer will be with. Only one observation before serving may result in potential volunteers not signing up to continue. Through several observations the prospective volunteer gets to see

the flow of the program and this also helps to reverse the affects of observing an ineffective Sunday. (See New Volunteer Checklist in Chapter 19 “Forms.”) These observations may be with different age groups to see where the adult resonates. Or they may be with the same age group to gain more insight. You may choose to schedule these before the new volunteer orientation training.

3. Some new volunteers may benefit from specialized on-the-job training rather than all the parts of the new volunteer training just described. Roles that may be best for this include registration table person, office assistance, craft angel who comes during the week, etc.

STEP 5: COACH AND SUPERVISE VOLUNTEERS

Once orientation, a tour, and class observations have been completed, the director will want to continue to observe, coach and encourage new volunteers. Other classroom volunteers may not be comfortable in this role, so provide frequent opportunities for new volunteers to ask questions and to grow in their skills. This can be through conversation after class, a phone call or email during the week or a brief meeting of new volunteers a few weeks after they begin. Give feedback in a loving, constructive way. Offer specific ideas to improve their skills, and compliment them on what they do well.

STEP 6: VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION AND RECOGNITION

Volunteers are the hands and feet of ministry for the youth congregation! It is essential to express appreciation to volunteers and to give them formal recognition as it contributes to the enthusiasm and willingness of volunteers. It also increases their length of service. Appreciation and recognition is best when given often, from the heart, and to the person—not for the work they contributed. This is an on-going responsibility of the director and other paid staff. Many creative approaches can be used. Here are a few ideas.

- Give verbal thank-yous to individuals often, mentioning something special you observed.
- Send special notes expressing thanks for being an angel to our children and teens! Send notes on the odd holidays like Valentines Day, St. Patrick’s Day, Halloween, etc.

- Use emails, texts, or notes to acknowledge random acts of kindness and going the extra mile.
- Create a Volunteer Wall of Fame or Volunteer Tree with pictures and names, both group and individual. Include action shots and “Thank You!”
- Have all volunteers wear a yellow star, “Youth Ministry Star Volunteer,” on a designated Sunday. Invite everyone to express their appreciation to the Youth Ministry stars.
- Provide food at trainings and other small gifts... i.e. Unity bookmark, Basic Unity Principles wallet card, or a special candy treat with a saying—“You are worth a mint to us!”
- Acknowledge birthdays through cards, song, etc.
- Plan a fun event to celebrate volunteers! Play together.
- Yearly present all with certificates of appreciation during a church service. Possibly include recognition of longevity as well.
- Maintain communication with volunteers—offer prayer support and inquire after it has been requested.
- In church newsletters, acknowledge volunteers by name and their contributions.
- Use intangible acknowledgements such as verbal thank-yous, giving respect and status to volunteers, and maintaining a personal interest in them.

Giving splendid care to volunteers is rewarding to both you and them. You make their day as they help to co-create with you a ministry of excellence for the youth and their families.

RELEASING VOLUNTEERS

Nearly all volunteers will desire to be released from their service eventually. Some may have finished what they needed to experience with that age group. They may be renewed by working with a new age group. Others may have life circumstances that make volunteering in YFM no longer workable for them. We joyously celebrate their contributions, bless them, and release them to their highest good.

Occasionally a volunteer is not a good fit. In this circumstance, it becomes the director’s responsibility to lovingly release and re-direct them to other areas of service in the church or community. Avoiding handling such a situation often makes this

a more complicated process than it would have been with earlier action. Observing the volunteer in action helps with the decision-making process as does written documentation. The volunteer may even be relieved to make a change.

When faced with one of these situations, consult with your minister or supervisor. They probably have effective strategies for this process and may be willing to be present with you as you talk with the volunteer. Pray with the individual. Be clear and honest about their contributions as well as the reason for release. Suggest other opportunities or persons to contact if they are interested in another area of service. Maintain confidentiality afterward.

No matter why they are leaving, invite all retiring volunteers to complete a volunteer questionnaire that includes an evaluation and an opportunity for feedback about the program. (See Retiring Volunteer Exit Questionnaire, Chapter 19 “Forms.”)

TRAINING

Well-trained, happy teachers are essential to an effective youth ministry program. A primary responsibility of the director is to train and empower teachers and other volunteers. Whether they are new or continuing teachers, this means providing them with as much support as they need, down to a word-for-word script if they feel they need it. It also means helping them gain skills and confidence to gradually take ownership of their class and to feel free to deviate from the lessons plans, as guided by Spirit, as long as they stay somewhat on the topic. With experience, teachers and assistants come to know their classes, and with regular and adequate preparation, God gives them incredible activities that serve their children better than any published curriculum can provide!

What is involved in providing training?

The best training provides relevant information, presented so that it can be used immediately, and modeled through a variety of strategies. Adult learners already have much wisdom, so call on them to share some of that.

Director Decisions Before Training

- Define the training's purpose/topic—Identify its value.
- Decide how long. Be realistic—Where? When? How often? For whom?
- Use training for more than just passing out information—If information can be distributed in written form, do so.
- Plan content and sequence. (More on this later.)

- Organize handouts/packets and room considerations.
- Include support, sharing, connecting, learning and fun.
- Start in prayer, end in prayer or with a spiritual closing activity/ritual.
- Consider including food, recognitions, maybe even door prizes!

How do I decide what content to offer?

Begin by identifying the areas of training that can be offered. Consider them in relation to the year's calendar and the experience and needs of your volunteers. New volunteers benefit from training immediately, focused specifically on their needs.

Continuing volunteers respond to monthly or bi-monthly training if it includes spiritual nurturing, relationship building, and skill building offered at a convenient time in a well-structured format. Be aware that it is nearly impossible to provide training that will satisfy everyone. Focus, rather, on meeting the needs of the majority and hope that word of the value of the training will spread to those who are unable to attend. Announce training dates well in advance so volunteers can plan to attend.

Some churches schedule a quick lunch followed by volunteer training right after the Sunday service and provide child care for the volunteer's children.

As you plan, check to see what training will be offered in your area by your Regional Consultants so that you are not duplicating efforts. Your volunteers benefit by joining with other youth ministry volunteers at regional training events, and by networking with people from other churches.

What are areas for ongoing training?

Refer to the recommended chapters for more details.

How children learn (Chapter 9 “Understanding Children and Teens”)

- Developmental characteristics of each age
- Multiple Intelligences (the many ways of learning)
- Interactive learning appropriate for various ages and stages
- Faith development

About teaching (Chapter 8 “Curriculum Lessons”)

- *A Living Curriculum* philosophy
- Why the Sunday program and lesson are structured as they are
(Resource: *Unity Youth Ministry Fast-Start Training CD*)

- What we teach
- How to prepare a lesson
- How to deliver a lesson effectively
- How to lead a prayer or meditation (Resource: *Unity Youth Ministry Fast-Start Training CD*)

Setting the stage (Chapter 8 “Curriculum Lessons”)

- Preparing the environment
- Obtaining supplies—whose responsibility?
- Using music in various ways for differing ages

Classroom management (Chapter 8 “Curriculum Lessons”)

- Helping children manage their behavior
- Creating Heart Agreements with youth
- Strategies for redirecting behavior—Peace Chair

Building relationships with youth, with your teaching team

- For new volunteers ask yourself: What does a new Unity youth ministry teacher or assistant need to know before stepping into a classroom for the first time?
- What information makes a difference between feeling confident and successful or feeling overwhelmed and inadequate?

Risk reduction policies and procedures (Training section in Chapter 16 “Risk Management”)

- Program procedures including attendance, bathroom, teacher absence, equipment and supplies
- Safety/First-Aid/Emergencies procedures
- Reporting procedures

What do volunteers need to know as they begin?

Unity background (Chapter 4 “Understanding Our Unity Roots” and *Unity Youth Ministry Fast-Start Training CD*)

- The history of the Unity movement
- Unity foundations

Commitments and expectations for their position

- How communication is handled—folder, email, phone, text, Facebook or dedicated page on church website
- Youth and Family Ministry team schedule (who's where and when)
- Calendar of special events—routines, how to find announcements

Procedures for Sunday morning (Chapters 6, 7, 16, 19)

- Signing in, attendance
- Who and when to call if you will be absent
- How to handle emergencies, lock-downs (Chapter 16 “Risk Management”)

What is team teaching?

Team teaching is having two adults in a classroom working together with the children. One may do all the teaching and the other the assisting, or they may choose to alternate responsibilities. Two adults in the classroom are also recommended for liability purposes. (See Chapter 16 “Risk Management.”)

Team teaching also means having all the adults serving a certain age level meet together, bond together, and act as a team that makes decisions together regarding their children. This level of teaming results in consistency and continuity in the classrooms for families and for the children. The children benefit because they always are with adults they know and can develop supportive friendships with.

Team teaching also provides several benefits for the volunteers.

- More consistency from week to week because team members know what the other part of their team is doing.
- New volunteers can gradually acquire additional skills at their own pace.
- Each team member is supported by others in prayer and problem solving.
- Team efforts result in a greater source for ideas and expanded creativity in lessons.
- Team members can set their own rotation schedule.
- Team members can substitute for each other.
- More fun for everyone as relationships develop through shared experience.

A SAMPLE TRAINING

Preparation

- Begin by centering yourself with prayer.
- Create a detailed plan of what you intend to include in the training. Include prayer and fun.
- Create a handout of the agenda following the sample training guide (next page). Post the agenda. Use catchy titles and bullet-points as attention grabbers.
- Prepare the room and materials for the participants, modeling an ideal classroom.
- Set up a pre-session activity and encourage participation as soon as people arrive.
- Review agenda checking for:
 - Adequate time for what you have planned
 - Pleasant flow
 - Physical movement
 - Inclusion of both large group and small group (pair, triad, quad) activities, where suitable
 - Active participation using activities, music, visuals, demonstrations
 - Appealing (Does this sound enticing and fun?)

Sample Training Guide

Opening

- Open with prayer.
- Welcome everyone and briefly state plan for the training.
- Initiate introductions in a creative way. (Ex. Give your name, how you are assisting, and one sentence about something fun you did last week.)
- Facilitate a relationship-building activity.* (Life is all about relationships.)
- Make announcements.

Heart of the Training

- Introduce topic and why it is important.
- Present/facilitate material using visuals, handouts, actual experiences, discussion.
- Invite questions relating to presentation.
- Review key points.
- Plan time for problem-solving other volunteer concerns when appropriate.

Closing

- Express appreciation for volunteers' presence.
- Ask for prayer requests, modeling how you want them. (Ex. Please give us the first name of the person we are praying with and a word expressing the request such as healing or courage.)
- Close with prayer including the requests.

***RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING IDEAS**

Find someone you don't know and share something with them.

- Your favorite hobby
- One of your concerns about this volunteer position

Create something as a small group.

(Use creative experiences from Unity lessons.)

- Peace collage
- Group body sculpture
- Poster of characteristics of certain-age child

Pair a new volunteer with an experienced one for Q&A.

Director Tips for Conducting Meetings/Trainings

- Be completely prepared 30 minutes ahead.
- Invite others to help and to present parts of the training.
- Start on time, end on time.
- Be enthusiastic, dynamic, and include humor!
- Begin by letting people know what will happen.
- Model in every way what you are teaching.
Ex.: Include welcoming, name tags, sacred space or altar, job cards, being prepared.
- Plan for active participation by those being trained. Give them jobs, group activities and hand-on experiences.
- Move them—their bodies, around the room, in song, by trading seats, or by pairing them.
- Use a variety of tools—flip chart, computer projection—to make it visual as well as auditory and kinesthetic.
- Have handouts—decide when to give them out, amount to use, how to use, and why. Handouts briefly summarize what was just demonstrated or experienced.
Caution: Do not give a handout to read instead of explaining what you want them to learn.
- Include your minister in a small portion, i.e. opening prayer, explaining a principle, etc., when possible.
- Determine if a pause/break is needed and when.
- Determine if and how a resource table may benefit volunteers or yourself.
- Express appreciation for the volunteers' time in attending the training as well as for their service to the youth ministry.

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.* —Psalm 19:14 NRSV