

# Fact Sheet #11: Young Adults and Volunteerism

In 2002, 41% of college students volunteer for non-political groups, while only 25% of young people not in high school or college did the same.<sup>1</sup>

-Pew Research Center

## What Is Happening?

- *If you ask a young adult to volunteer, you shall receive.* The Ad Council reported that of the 43% of 18-24 year olds who were asked to volunteer in 1998, 87% volunteered. Of the 57% that weren't asked to volunteer, only 16% volunteered.<sup>2</sup>
- *Young adults volunteer more often than you think.* In 1999, 46% of 18-24 year olds said they had volunteered in the past year. 29% of those individuals had volunteered in the past month.<sup>2</sup>
- *Young adults aren't harder to recruit than other age groups.* Young adults volunteer at higher rates than 26-36 year olds (32%), 37-56 year olds (32%), and those 57 and older (22%).<sup>1</sup>
- *We aren't doing as good of a job as we can recruiting young adults.* According to a study conducted in 1999 by the League of Women Voters, half of those aged 18-30 want to volunteer and be involved in community activities more often.<sup>2</sup>
- *Young adults volunteer for mostly altruistic reasons.* Most young adults give three reasons why they volunteer: because they were asked to volunteer, because it feels good to do, and because it makes a difference in their communities.<sup>3</sup>
- *Young adults value the importance of volunteerism.* 51% of young adults with young children volunteer at least sometimes. This is important because the volunteer patterns of adults affect the likelihood of their children to volunteer later in life.<sup>3</sup>

## What the Tobacco Industry Knows Can Help You

"Younger adults (18-34) are the most active anti-smokers. Younger adults are more likely to do the following anti-smoking activities than older adults.

- Ask someone to give up smoking
- Not put out ashtrays in home
- Cough or make some sign when someone is smoking too close
- Move away when someone smokes near them"<sup>4</sup>

- 1982 RJ Reynolds Document

This excerpt from a tobacco industry document displays the prevailing negative attitude young people have about tobacco products. This attitude can be beneficial to tobacco control professionals in that it can be channeled into positive and constructive advocacy actions. If young adults are willing to perform these small anti-tobacco gestures everyday, how much more is it to ask them to sign a petition or ask an hour of their time to present to a city council?

Young adults have been raised in a culture where there is a polarization between those that smoke and those that do not. By becoming aware of this, tobacco control advocates can create a volunteer workforce that needs little persuasion to act.

## Ways to Recruit Young Adult Volunteers

There are several ways to recruit volunteers, and each style will recruit a different type of volunteer. Try each one to see what will work for you and your community.

**Warm Body Recruitment:** Warm body recruitment is the most common type of recruitment used. This involves casting a wide net for volunteers because the volunteer position does not require a specific skill set. Brochure and flyer distribution, PSA's and advertisements, and presentations are all ways to attract volunteers.

**Targeted Recruitment:** This method works by locating potential volunteers that can offer specific skills, a specific time commitment, or a specific character trait. These volunteers are recruited by first determining the type of person you are looking to recruit (age, occupation, motivations, where they can be located) and designing tailored outreach to this individual.

**Word of Mouth Recruitment:** This method operates on the theory that is easiest to recruit those who are already tied to your organization in some way. This involves talking to friends, relatives, clients, and people in the area about how they can give back to their community by volunteering.

**Ambient Recruitment:** This type of recruitment can only work in an institution or place where the community sees itself as interconnected (e.g., schools, military bases, church congregation). The first step involves developing volunteer work as a shared cultural value through an official statement. The second step is to educate members of the community about the value of volunteerism. The last step is to build a support system to sustain the logistical involvement of the community in volunteer work.

*For more information, check out "101 More Ideas for Volunteer Programs" by Sue Vineyard and Steve McCurley from Heritage Arts Publishing, 1995.*

<sup>1</sup> The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. *The Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A Generational Portrait.* 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Ad Council. *Engaging the Next Generation: How Nonprofits Can Reach Young Adults.* 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Center for Democracy and Citizenship. *Short Term Impacts, Long Term Opportunities: The Political and Civic Engagement of Young Adults in America.* Available at <http://youngcitizensurvey.org/volunteer.htm>

<sup>4</sup> R.J. Reynolds. "Smoking Attitudes Study. Social Acceptability." 1982. Bates No. 502674370/4396. Available at <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/kul78d00>.

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