



RECRUITING AND FITTING IN

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DID YOU KNOW that fitting into a new organization can be challenging for new volunteers of all ages?

When we put ourselves into a volunteer situation, we all want to know that what we do will make a difference and matters to the larger group. At St. John Ambulance we often try to give volunteers the opportunity to build self-confidence by taking on challenges outside their normal comfort zone.

What can we do to help the newly recruited volunteer to fit in?

Planning, planning and more planning. The most important step in making a new recruit feel welcome into our organization is to carefully plan to ensure all our bases are covered which include: orientation, mentoring, communication, training, social contact, encouragement and feedback.

Very few people are comfortable walking into a room full of strangers. There is always that element of doubt wondering whether we will enjoy the new venture. Will we fit in? Will our differences interfere with our experience?

Our organization has zero tolerance for discrimination of any kind, whether it is age, gender, culture, disability, sexual orientation, to name a few. What we promote should be confirmed in our actions as “actions speak louder than words”.

A well developed volunteer orientation package should answer almost all the questions a new individual coming into the organization might have. This orientation package coupled with appropriate training to match the job description is the first step to ensure the individual recruited will want to hang around. Incorporate a variety of learning styles into the training to meet the expectations and skills of different generations. Different age groups access and respond to information differently.

Regardless of age differences, everyone responds to personal attention. That is where the role of the mentor fits in – personal attention from another member of the organization gives the individual someone to turn to for guidance.

Beyond mentoring, solid communication within the organization is paramount in establishing a good relationship with the new volunteer. Channels of communication should be open, clear and concise with the appropriate program-specific policies and procedures manuals in place.

Arrange for several social functions in which the atmosphere is relaxed, giving the new volunteer an opportunity to mix and mingle with other members. Also ensure some of the social functions are of an intergenerational nature to demonstrate that we foster respect for generational diversity and all volunteers are welcome and contribute to the organization. Social functions enable new volunteers to hone in on individuals with similar interests and compatible personalities while finding their niche.

Remember, our ultimate goal is to make volunteering easy, interesting and rewarding so that the individual will stay with SJA for many years to come.

For more recruiting information, please refer to Did You Know Vol. 9 No. 8 August 2002 and Vol. 7 No. 8 August 2000

DID YOU KNOW?

AN INFORMATION SHEET FOR ST. JOHN AMBULANCE MEMBERS