

Recognize Your Honorees Locally

1) Decide On Awards for Honorees

Recognizing your honorees can be as traditional or unique as you choose. Keep in mind that this will serve as the memento that will forever remind your award recipients of their local “Star” status.

Your awards need not be expensive. The following list provides cost-effective methods for selecting the type of award (or a combination) that you may give:

Certificate	Cash Donations	Plaque
T-shirts	Mugs	Key Rings/Pins
Gift Cards to Local Businesses and Stores	Scholarships	Volunteer “Hall of Fame” in a Public Building
“Floating” Trophy Passed to New Recipient Each Year	Medal or Medallion	Gift Baskets (food, prizes)
Trophy	Framed “Thank You” Drawings from Local School	Travel Costs for the GVSA Ceremony

2) Ask Your Mayor(s) to Prepare a Proclamation

County Coordinators should connect with the County Mayor to notify them about the county’s selected volunteer honorees. **It is also recommended you contact them about preparing a proclamation.**

The goal of a proclamation is to recognize and celebrate the extraordinary achievements of the community’s citizens and non-profit organizations, honor occasions of importance and significance to Tennesseans, and increase public awareness of issues to improve the well-being of the people of the city. Proclamations issued by a local public official generally provide an opportunity for the official to recognize exceptional events and people, often when they cannot acknowledge them in person. Your volunteer recognition is the ideal time to request that the local, public official designate the day of your event as official “Volunteer Day” in your county.

Designate a team member to contact your local public official to request the proclamation. Send a proclamation request letter and a sample proclamation and follow up with a phone call. Make sure all team members are present when he or she adopts the proclamation. Immediately following, send a thank-you letter and display the proclamation in a highly visible place (i.e. the local courthouse). A sample proclamation request letter and proclamation are provided on the [Volunteer Tennessee GVSA Resource](#) webpage.

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3) Alert the Media

The media are some of your biggest allies, and it is important to keep them apprised of details regarding your county's recognition event. After choosing your award recipients, use your media list to inform them about the event through media alerts, fact sheets, press releases, pitch letters, etc.

Some counties may choose to submit award nominee profiles to the media as potential feature stories. Another option includes submitting letters to the editor to reveal personal opinions about the importance of the event.

Remember to send a notice about your event to community calendar editors at your local newspaper. Also, consider submitting editorials about volunteerism, localizing the importance of giving back to the community.

10 Tips for Approaching the Media*

1. Know the difference between a news story, a column and an ad.
2. Don't call reporters on their deadlines. After 3 p.m. is the worst time for most reporters who work on morning papers or for evening news broadcasts.
3. Start with a reporter and work your way up, unless you already have a good relationship with an editor.
4. Speak in sound bites, not speeches.
5. Use email and voicemail - don't insist on personal interactions at first.
6. Humor is your friend.
7. Be prepared to follow up conversations with more information: fact sheets, names and phone numbers, web sites and faxes.
8. If you are rejected because your pitch is not in the reporter's beat, ask if there is someone else at the media establishment who may be interested.
9. Make as many calls as you can yourself. PR professionals rarely have the same depth of knowledge or interest in the topic as an advocate.
10. Be upbeat and enthusiastic. If you're not interested, why should anyone else be interested?

*Tips provided by **Desirée Cooper**, columnist, *Detroit Free Press*

4) Host Your Recognition Events

Although the overall goal of the GVSA is to increase the rate of volunteerism in Tennessee, much of your success will be measured by the results of your local recognition. Should you decide to host an event, here are a few tips that should ensure that your event will run smoothly:

- Prepare the location beforehand. (Arrange seating, equipment, and other materials)
- Contact all partners and vendors the day before the event to remind them of arrival times.
- Contact special guests the day before to make sure they are clear on arrival/departure times.
- Ensure team members will be present to meet special guests (the Mayor, presenters, partners, etc.).
- Establish a contingency plan. Anticipate any potential problems and come up with a plan B for each.
- Keep a To-Do list, delegate tasks, and designate a key person to update the master copy of the list.
- Enjoy your event!