

Volunteers

Another tool you can use in your water safety campaign is volunteers. There are hundreds of people out there with special skills just looking for something to do. The trick is to hook up with them.

Here are some ideas you can use as a starting point to get involved with volunteers. After that, you may find that word of mouth will keep you in steady supply.

Use volunteers to serve as guest speakers at your campground interpretive programs. These experts can share their special knowledge as it relates to water safety. The local TV weather person is always a big hit when he/she talks about how to recognize approaching storms, etc. The fire department is a good one to demonstrate putting out an actual boat fire using a junk boat or letting the audience actually use a fire extinguisher. Your local boat dealer can be good to host a "so you want to buy a boat" seminar with, of course, a section on safety equipment. And your state conservation officer is always glad to speak on state laws or some other aspect of boating safety.

Specialists not related to boating can also help. A photo nut can supply you with all you'll ever need for your next water safety slide show. An amateur artist can fix you up with your newsletter or flyer clip art. A computer whiz could design a statistical database so you have easy access to all those "gee whiz" drowning figures you need to accomplish some of the other suggestions found in this book. So where do you find these people? Clubs that specialize in that area, college students looking to fulfill a class requirement, and putting up a sign at a visitor center are just a few places to recruit.

Lastly, organizations like the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the U.S. Power Squadron, and Sea Scouts, among others, can offer help. These folks can do things like offer personnel at special events, serve as volunteer speakers at campground programs,

help staff an inter-agency booth at a boat show, distribute Corps water safety brochures to the public during their own functions, conduct courtesy boat inspections, and so forth.

Administering a volunteer program can be easy, but it does require attention to issues beyond what is covered here. Things like recruitment, liability, awards, and such should all be considered. For further guidance, consult the volunteer regulations (ER 1130-2-432) and your district volunteer coordinator.

There is one more angle to this volunteer business, and that is you volunteering your safety expertise to these other organizations. Actually, you may be "on the clock" doing your regular job of spreading the water safety word, but these organizations will consider you a volunteer. The key here is that you get access to an endless supply of audiences to tout your message as they are always looking for people to help.

Here are a couple more ideas on how you may volunteer. Serve as a guest speaker at a Coast Guard Auxiliary safe boating class or at a Boy Scout function. Become certified as a state boating instructor (if your state has such a program) and sponsor several classes per year. These can be quite popular because successful attendees usually can receive a 10% discount on their boat insurance and meet licensing requirements for that state. The classes usually are eight hours and offer enough flexibility to cover any local issues you need to address, such as lock and dam safety. This approach is a great way to reach new boaters, create an opportunity to address specialized problems in your area, and it builds an excellent partnership with your state boating officials.

Happy volunteering!