

Subject: Volunteer Supervisors December Newsletter

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Unwrapping the Gift of Library Volunteers

by Heidi Port, MLS Volunteer Coordinator



The Capitol Hill Library's 50th Anniversary Celebration was in full swing. Eager children awaited the arrival of the clowns and a free balloon. Unfortunately, a glitch with the helium tank extended that wait. Two librarians worked feverishly to fill the balloons with helium, but to no avail. Desperate, I randomly pulled a teen volunteer from his assignment and asked if he could help. During the short walk to the tank, he quietly commented that his family had owned a carnival while he was growing up. I had unwittingly selected a former clown who was delighted to share his skill and knowledge of helium tanks. Within minutes, he had filled a huge bunch of colorful balloons. He continued at his post most of the day, showing his friends, fellow volunteers and library staff the finer points of balloon inflation.

He had come to the Library Celebration as a community service STARS volunteer, but he left as a hero, saving the day by sharing his special talent. As a community service volunteer, he had so much to offer. He was a reminder to me to search out the hidden and sometimes undiscovered gift in each volunteer.

How do we unwrap the hidden gifts?

1. Don't be deceived by wrapping paper. Sometimes the outward appearance of a volunteer can be off-putting or misleading, or behavior can detract from talent. The circumstances under which volunteers choose the library can cloud our discovery process. Remain open as you uncover the potential for impact.
2. Be careful not to tear the tape. Forming and maintaining relationships is a fundamental reason people volunteer - the social glue that connects us with others. How can you

increase those connections? By reaching out, including, and encouraging others to follow your lead.

3. Discover what's in the box. The time and energy required to get to know a volunteer can easily be surpassed by the impact made when talents are effectively utilized. This also results in satisfaction and a sense of pride regarding the completed task, and can strengthen the bond between the volunteer and the library.

Have a story about a volunteer's gift you'd like to share? E-mail it to hport@metrolibrary.org!

[Click to read](#) the article by **Martin J. Cowling**

Effective People: Keeping Volunteers in Boring Jobs



Celebrate Monday, Dec. 5th!

Be sure to thank any library volunteers for making a difference in our world! Check [here](#) for more information about [IVD 2011](#).

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