



EVENT VOLUNTEERS GOING GREEN

By Florence May, TRS

The impact of a major event is likely that of a substantial number of human footprints followed by an enormous amount of waste: Thousands of water bottles, cans and other trash on the ground; Boxes of extra event shirts, credentials and other inventory; Pollution from traffic; Hundreds of printings and mailings; Leftover food thrown out; Enormous power expenditure.

Getting Started on the Green Path

What can your event do to lessen the ecological impact and be a good community partner?

Begin by considering the key opportunities your event has to Reuse, Recycle and Renew. The following paraphrased list is used by the Council for Responsible Sport for their event certification program.

Waste – Recycling is an obvious starting place. Are your plates and utensils recyclable? Are your recycle bags different colors from landfill trash bags? Do you have a composting program? And is there an emphasis on waste reduction?

Climate – How is your event powered? Are renewable energy sources and/or alternative fuels utilized where possible? Have you checked with energy companies and renewable partners in the area to assess your options? Is your food sourced locally?

Equipment & Materials – Are you implementing reusable options for signs, storage and apparel? Are you handling all registration and follow-up material online?

Community & Outreach – What mechanisms exist for volunteers, participants and spectators to take part in sustainable practices? Car pools, mass transit, bike/walk trails are all options.

Evaluation & Innovation – How will you assess to see if the green team efforts were successful?

Will you gather additional ideas and encourage constant improvement? (Tip: SurveyMonkey provides free online survey tools)

Gather Ideas and Partners

Moving forward? Form a volunteer green team to do the event assessment, gather opportunities and discuss implementation strategies. You will likely have interested participants within the existing pool of event volunteers.

Your green team should also include partners from the local waste management firm, local recycling business, local energy providers, and local electric/hybrid car dealerships.

Check with the local university. Many schools have new renewable energy programs. And don't forget local renewable energy businesses. Depending on the location, new opportunities in wind,

EcoFriendly Volunteers

1. Ask volunteers to bring their own reusable water bottle. Event must supply readily available water refill stations for this to be effective. (Saves \$\$)
2. Talk to your volunteer t-shirt vendors. Shirts made of recycled and bio-degradable materials are now readily available through many vendors.
3. Go paperless. Volunteers can register online. (Saves \$\$ and time.)
4. Eliminate snail mail. Confirm volunteer schedules automatically online. Send waivers, maps and updates by e-mail. Most online registration systems have these features. (Saves \$\$ and time.)
5. Recycle volunteer credentials.
6. Create volunteer t-shirts that will be re-worn because they are clever and fit right! Short supply? Have a t-shirt trading table. If shirts don't fit request a trade by size. (Great event promo!)
7. Set up volunteer car or shuttle pools online. Promote mass transit options to the event. (Check out pickUPpal.org as a mechanism to coordinate volunteer car pools.)
8. Establish a beautification program with the neighborhood surrounding the event facility. In the weeks prior to your event have volunteers plant trees, bushes or flowers. Ask the neighbors to join in and help with picking up trash. (Community spirit!)
9. Bring in fresh food from local vendors and/or farmers for the volunteers. Ask vendors to eliminate wrappings and packaging as much as possible. (Healthy!)
10. Ask volunteers to help keep electricity use to what is required. Turn off lights when not needed.

solar, kinetic and water energy may be accessible to your event.

New green team partners may even provide green team volunteers to help implement the strategies.

Set goals

Consider how your green team will document and measure your green strategies. What level of sustainability do you want to achieve in the next 3 years? How much waste reduction? What % of renewable energy will your event consume?

Implement

The move to go green must be embraced by the staff, volunteers and participants to make it truly successful. Take the extra time during volunteer training to educate all the volunteers on the new green efforts and how they can assist regardless of their festival job.

Communicate with your community that a green initiative is in motion and you need their help to achieve sustainable goals.

Clearly marked recycling and composting directions on signs will help event attendees understand the expectations. It is also recommended that green team volunteers are strategically placed to encourage participants to put trash in the correct containers.

Is Going Green Worth Our Time?

In just a few words. Yes.

Doing the right thing always feels good but the event will also have the potential to reap the benefits of good PR, new partnerships and the reduction of costs.

More Resources

- Greener Events (Green Contest for Festivals) www.agreenerfestival.com
- Council for Responsible Sport (Green Certification) www.resport.org/

Florence May is President of TRS – The Registration System. TRS provides online registration, expert consultation and technological support for volunteer managers. TRS clients include the 2011 North Texas Super Bowl LOC, Kentucky Derby Festival, Indy 500 Festival, Cisco Ottawa Bluesfest, 2011 NCAA Men's Final Four, SeaFair, 2011 EuroGames, and International Children's Festival.

Florence can be reached at:
 TRS – The Registration System
 846 North Senate Avenue, # 206
 Indianapolis, IN 46202 USA
 tel 317.685.9780
 cell 317.966.6919
fmay@theregistrationsystem.com