



Athletic Field Design

Organize your volunteers

Mike Hebrard, Athletic Field Design

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With the ever present need to raise money and rely on volunteers to keep your program afloat, there are certain suggestions that I have to help coordinate the use of volunteers.

- Schedule a brief meeting with key boosters or parents to assess needs and goals. Neutral site, classroom, parents office or utilities meeting room. Find out what things can be donated and which things need to be purchased.
- Let's face it, sometimes we have to buy certain materials, and turn down certain donations to get proper material. (Sometimes you might hurt the feelings of some one because you don't accept their donation,) but it could make for more work for you, in the long run.
- Set a work date and or a back up date. Sometimes you don't have an option and have to do it on that date.
- How many people for how long? You might schedule two shifts, parents and underclassmen in the morning & Juniors & Seniors in the afternoon. Are your work parties mandatory or promote them to higher status?
- Does weather affect the task? Do you have adequate cover for people in case it rains or shade for hot weather?
- What can be done in case of inclement weather? Work on buildings, paint inside, fertilize, seed, mow, etc.
- Can this be done in the off season, so that it doesn't interfere with games or practice? Will someone think this is a practice or will the players get too tired the day before the game?
- Will equipment need to be rented and who will pick it up and return it clean. You might ruin any potential donation if you return loaned equipment dirty or broken, sometimes it might be advantageous if the head coach is personally involved, you might wet the appetite of the owner and get them involved.
- Can trades be made for services or equipment use? Fence signs or program ads might be a good exchange in lieu of payment, contact area or past players first so that you don't hurt anyone's feelings by going to a competitor.
- Will refreshments or snacks be provided? Make sure water is available. You already have the water cooler, so put ice and maybe one of your powder drink additives. Sometimes a local store may help out with drinks or snacks. Have a scheduled break so they get their own lunch. This can go a long way if you show the volunteers you are concerned about their needs. Are there restrooms or port-a-pottys available?
- Whose property are you working on, and do you have permission? Sometimes you assume that you're working on school district property and it might be park property. Make sure you have the keys with and don't give them to someone that leaves early.
- Does the School District need to be notified of the work? Make sure that your school district doesn't already have the

task scheduled or disagrees with what you're doing.

- Locate Utilities and other pertinent objects. There's nothing worse than cutting into a main power line or water line on Saturday afternoon and trying to find someone to fix it. Also have emergency phone #'s available and maybe even a cell phone.
- What insurance coverage will be needed ? Have first aid kit available and some sort of idea what to do if some gets hurt during the task.
- Is there a personal conflict with coaches or parents? Are you going to cut the kid the next day after the work is done and his dad worked like a dog for you? You might want to control how much certain parents are involved if the kid is a borderline player. Let's face it some parents don't get along and you might not know all of the past history of Little League selection or neighborhood squabbles.
- Have one key person that all of the communication & coordination goes through. Immediate phone accessibility, pager, cell phone, two way radios, work or home phone, if it is a big enough project or tournament you might want to rent or even buy your communication device.
- Believe it or not sometimes it works better if nothing is discussed, or planned or organized to have a successful work party.

Other suggestions about Volunteer organization submitted from coaches:

- According to Tim Taylor, Head Baseball Coach @ Marshall H.S. Portland, Or. "The more parents that you get involved in a project, the more potential resources are available to get special needs", he also commented, "The more the Head Coach is involved in organizing the volunteer task,

the more it compromises their ability to coach and manage time"

- Jeff Erdman, former 4A Baseball Coach of Year after coaching Madison (Portland, OR) to a state championship; and current athletic director at Clackamas H.S. State Champions, said, "It is a good opportunity for parents and players to get together investing time and pride in their program"
- Tony Murillo, Assistant Baseball Coach at Oregon State University, says "That you need to build and maintain a long lasting relationship and not a one time shot with those that volunteer goods and labor, that aren't directly connected with the school" and to "Remember after the event or project, that you send them a thank you note from the coach and not necessarily from the program, but from you".
- Mike Clopton, Head Baseball Coach and Athletic Director at Wilson H.S. in Portland, Or. has a different feeling about which volunteers he uses and how. "Players are the ones that benefit from a good playing surface, so as a coach we need to demonstrate the proper way to maintain the field. This another way to promote team work and unity, we need to get them to establish an ownership of the facility", he likes to schedule 4-6 work parties a season with about 4 - 5 month advance notice so that every player has a chance to participate. He also mentioned that "I let the parents spend their energy for fund raising activities".

Feel free to send some of your experiences working with volunteers and I'll add them to my list.