

## Effective Recognition Programs

The end of the year recognition season is almost here, but if you're waiting for a banquet or awards ceremony to recognize the contributions of your membership, you're missing a great opportunity to motivate your members and strengthen your program. Rather than wait until the end of the year, develop an ongoing recognition program that is more informal and fun, and watch the positive response of your members.

### Benefits of Recognition

Recognizing contributions of members on an ongoing basis is important for several reasons:

**Keep up morale.** Everyone likes to be appreciated for their efforts, but it's not likely that your student leaders will be deluged with compliments on how well they organized an event or chaired a meeting—most students are oblivious as to how events at school happen and who organizes them. Working hard and never getting any recognition for it can induce attitudes of “why bother, no one notices anyway.” Taking the time to acknowledge contributions of your student leaders will go a long way toward keeping their spirits up.

**Encourage exemplary behavior.** If there's an area in which members could use some improvement—let's say they're having trouble making it to meetings on time—start rewarding the behavior you want to see and watch how quickly it



improves. For example, give every person who comes on time to the next meeting a mini candy bar or other treat. Members who see others being recognized for their

hard work, positive attitudes, and team spirit will be encouraged to adopt these behaviors too.

**Encourage additional contributions.** On a practical note, if you expect to have people continue to work hard to attain group goals, it would be wise to let them know their efforts are appreciated. Those who receive recognition will be much more likely to pitch in next time their help is needed.

### Mastering Motivation

To make a recognition program effective, you should keep in mind what motivates your students. Not all students are motivated by the same types of recognition, so your acknowledg-

ment should also be varied.

Formal recognition like awards, banquets, and certificates can be supplemented by informal and spontaneous rewards. Activity advisers are better at this than most people, but how many times have you taken the time to write a note to a student leader congratulating them on a good job or thanking them for their efforts on a project? Simple things like hand-written notes or giving small treats in the middle of a hectic week of activities—like a Power Bar for each person so they can keep on going—can lift everyone's spirits and show them that you understand what they're going through and recognize their efforts.

Consider forming a standing committee to recognize members or set up a subcommittee of your internal relations committee or spirit committee. One of the first things you and/or the committee should consider is what exactly is it that you want to recognize? Structure your recognition program to reward the types of behavior you want to encourage. Be sure to allocate an adequate budget for treats, notes, and more formal recognition like certificates and plaques.

Some ideas for recognizing members include:

- **Caught in the Act**—students caught in the act of expected

or desired behavior (e.g., staying late to clean up a project, helping someone else with a job, random acts of kindness, etc.) receive a chance ticket for a drawing. Draw three names each week, each month, or at each meeting to receive a small reward such as a candy bar, soda, popcorn, etc.

- **Public Praise**—acknowledge members' contributions at meetings by calling them up to the front of the meeting room and telling everyone what a good job they did. Allow other members to chime in with their thoughts and appreciations as well.
- **Sticker Splash**—give every member of your group a blank sheet of address labels or other stickers and ask them to write compliments and thank-you comments to all the other members of your group. At a meeting, have members walk around and stick the labels on each other.
- **Crunch Award**—recognize the member who comes through in a crunch with a note or certificate and a Nestlé's Crunch bar.
- **Helping Hand Award**—give members a wooden back scratcher with an attached note that says "Thanks for the helping hand!"
- **Spark Plug**—give a spark plug to recognize the efforts of a member who gets everyone else fired up and motivated.
- **EverReady Award**—give an EverReady battery to recognize a member who is always ready to lend a hand.
- **Rock Award**—give a rock

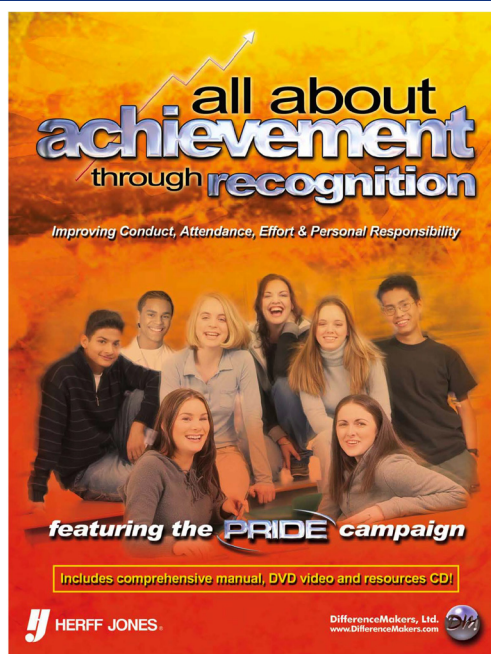
(possibly decorated or painted) and a certificate to the person everyone depends on, "the rock" of your organization.

- **Compass Award**—give a small compass to the student leader whose vision guided the organization through a crisis or who provided visionary leadership for the year.
- **Red Hot Member**—give a bag of red hots candy to a member who has been on a streak of good accomplishments.
- **Locker Signs**—hang a sign on the locker of group members to recognize an achievement like successfully chairing a committee to plan an event. Add some helium balloons to really call some attention to it.
- **Posters**—hang a poster congratulating all the members of a committee for an achievement or thanking them for their work on a project.
- **On Time Award**—give each member who arrives on time to a meeting a Hershey kiss.
- **Key chains**—find appropriate key chains to give as recognition, such as a steering wheel keychain for the members of a steering committee, a key to signify a member being "the key to our success," or a globe to let them know they made a "world of difference."
- **Letter to Parents**—send a letter to your

members' parents praising the student leader's efforts and thanking the parents for their support. Be specific when mentioning what the student has done.

- **Member of the Month**—group members vote each month on the member who has made the best contributions to the group that month.
- **100% Party**—all members who have attended 100% of the club's meetings and events are taken out to a pizza party lunch or given some other treat.

It's never too late in the year to start a recognition or motivation program. Make your recognition program an ongoing affair—even if it's something as simple as writing thank-you notes after each event with a sincere expression of appreciation—and you'll be amazed at the result.



Today, recognition is a "must do." Doing it right, doing it often, and doing it for everyone in the learning community leads to improved academic achievement for the entire school. See your local Herff Jones Professional for more information.