

# Tips for Retaining Volunteers Over the Summer Break

In business, they say it's more cost effective to keep a repeat customer than to attract new ones. The same can be said for volunteer teams. The time and effort involved in bringing new volunteers on board can be costly to team unity. Here are a few proven retention ideas to try with your team this year

## Prayer

- Make a list of volunteers for whom you want to pray during the break. Pick a prayer partner and hold yourselves accountable to pray regularly.

## Family and friend involvement

- People are going to be much more involved in ministry and much less likely to quit when serving next to a family member or a good friend. Create opportunities for parents to stay involved in church ministry with their own kids, especially in youth ministry.

## Relationships

- Use social media to keep in contact with your team during the break. Follow the Awana Facebook page to get connected with other local-church Awana volunteers across the country.
- Gather leaders at or near the end of the Awana ministry year. Ask questions about how the year went. Their input will increase ownership in the ministry. For example, ask your leaders to fill out a survey. What did they like and dislike about the ministry year? Do they have ideas to make things better next year?
- Invite leaders to your home occasionally for refreshments. Give them the opportunity to offer ideas and feedback. Turn this into an end-of-year or summer activity. Nominate a team leader to organize a mid-season or off-season gathering or BBQ to talk about ministry and build rapport. Brainstorm ways to promote club in your church and community next year. Come up with ideas for filling open leader positions.

## Encouragement

- Encouragement is oxygen to the soul of your Awana leaders – and a great way to keep them in your ministry from year to year. Let this become part of your “DNA.”
- Throw a party: Retain leaders with a thank-you dessert after the Awana year ends. Leaders receive service awards, gifts and praise for service.
- Make sure every leader receives intentional encouragement from you, a director, another leader, a parent of a child or the kids they work with regularly.
- Email or write a short note of encouragement to a different director or leader each week. This includes student leaders, listeners and other support positions. Be sure to use the free encouragement and thank you cards on the Awana website.

## **Fulfillment and support**

- When volunteers are confident that they're supported, they're more willing to serve and more likely to stay. Praise your volunteers regularly when you witness good work and be genuine!
- Volunteers remain committed to your ministry if they find personal satisfaction and meaning in their role. If you notice a leader struggling, ask how you can help.
- If you have volunteers who struggled this year or need more of a challenge, encourage them to talk to the Awana Ministry Director about other options. You can also use a spiritual gifts assessment to match them with the right new role next year. Your church may have a gifts assessment available, or your pastor can connect them with one. Once they are in their "sweet spot" of ministry, they will gain fulfillment and inspiration to keep serving.
- Have you considered rotating the roles of some volunteers from year to year or every three to five years? If a leader is thinking about quitting, offer him or her a different ministry role. He or she may just need a fresh responsibility, or perhaps he/she isn't plugged into the right role or age group. A club director may be better suited as a game leader, or a leader may feel more useful as a secretary. Variety from year to year can help some volunteers feel renewed and refocused.

## **Inspiration**

- Inspire volunteers by asking them to recall a leader who impacted them as kids or who impacted them during the ministry year.
- Talk about volunteers' favorite moments of the Awana ministry year.
- Share your vision and goals for next year. Encourage fellow team members to consider their vision and goals for next year, too. Encourage them to think big. Ask them to write out goals for next year. What would they like to see God do through them in the lives of kids?
- Scripture motivates every believer. If you have a verse chosen for your ministry, share it. Commit as a team to pray for your ministry's vision and for each other's goals. Consider having a day of prayer and fasting for the vision and goals of your team followed by a BBQ or potluck.
- Show how influential ministry is even after kids and teens become adults. Share the results of the Awana Alumni Study. Short and long versions of the study are available at [awana.org/alumni-study](http://awana.org/alumni-study). As 1 Corinthians 3:6-9 says, I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.
- Discuss what makes a servant great. Find Bible passages about the importance of serving. Read about important servants in the Bible. Read portions of the book Rock-Solid Volunteers about Nehemiah, one of the Bible's greatest motivators of volunteers. Hold these discussions at your volunteer meetings or during your training sessions.