SHOWING VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

From Celebrate Volunteers website & Valentine’s Day blog 2017
https://www.celebratevolunteers.com/blog/love-and-volunteers-2

One way to add “love” to your volunteer recognition is to consider what is a meaningful expression of appreciation, or “love”, to your volunteer? Gary Chapman, author of The 5 Love Languages, suggests that there are five languages of “love” that each of us speak. Knowing what “love” language your volunteer speaks could make your choice of recognition more meaningful, more impactful to the volunteer.

According to Chapman, the 5 “love” Languages are:

- Words of Affirmation
- Quality Time
- Receiving Gifts
- Acts of Service
- Physical Touch

Each language can be spoken in volunteer recognition. A volunteer who values words of affirmation appreciates hearing how they have made an impact in the organization. This volunteer would love to have you say, “I really appreciate your …”, “I admire your …”, or “Your contribution of … was …."

A volunteer who values quality time would appreciate having a cup of coffee with you, having a conversation where you ask for their opinion or a phone call just to ask how they are doing.

Gifts are appealing to some volunteers, especially if it is personalized to the volunteer. The newest book from their favourite author, a gift card to their lunch spot, or a bag of their favourite goodies will let the volunteer know you appreciate them.

Even though volunteers participate in acts of service, this may or may not be a “love” language for them. If it is, this volunteer will be touched by your efforts to serve them by working with them side by side when they are extra busy, sharing an article or video as a follow up to a conversation, or asking them what would help them in their volunteer role and making it happen.

Lastly, you already know your volunteers who value physical touch. They are the huggers, the person who touches your shoulder or loves being near you. The best recognition in this “love” language is to hug the hugger, pat the shoulder toucher on the back, or a personal invite to join you at a meeting or to sit next to you at lunch.

Saying thank you to volunteers in the language that is most meaningful to them is the clearest way to communicate how much they are appreciated and valued by you and your organization. Customizing recognition to the volunteer’s “love” language will have them feeling understood, appreciated, valued and loved. Recognition of this nature is more meaningful, more impactful. Volunteers who feel understood, appreciated, valued and “loved” are more likely to increase their engagement, their service and their donations to the organization that “loves” them.

(Inverted commas not added by author)