

Creative ideas for awards and rewards

Their efforts are priceless, but we can still find a way to “pay” volunteers for their work.

There are countless ways to show appreciation for your Kiwanis club members. Use your own creativity in finding a method of showing your appreciation that works for your club and your leadership style. Here are a variety of ideas.

Creative examples of awards

Row of honor. A lasting way to recognize a member or several of them for their valuable contributions is to offer to plant a tree on the grounds of a special place in town. Every year a row of trees is planted, the “row of honor.” Each tree has a plaque with the member’s name and year of recognition.

Oscar night. Hold an “Oscar night” where the members being recognized are awarded an “Oscar” for their contributions. You can go all out for this affair, having members dress formally, and using presenters with envelopes to read the winners. The “Oscar” can be any trinket, such as a votive candle turned upside down with pipe cleaners for arms, a pom-pom for the head and googly eyes.

Unbanquet. Many times we strive to do so much recognition through the use of banquets that they become less special occasions. If you are involved in planning too many banquets, make one an unbanquet: Plan a simple menu along with special activities, like team skits or a magician, that are generally uncharacteristic of a banquet. Let people wear blue jeans, serve different courses by different people, do whatever it takes to shake things up!

Personal ads. Take out a personal ad in your local newspaper to praise the accomplishments of individuals or groups. This is an inexpensive way to praise efforts and to share recognition in front of peers.

A round of applause. Cut a piece of paper into a circle, symbolic of a “round of applause.” On this paper “round” write who the applause is to, from, why and the date. Anytime members want to say thank you, have them give a “round.” After a member receives three rounds, he or she should turn them in for a prize (gift card, exempt club dues, etc.).

Hats off. Cut top hats out of paper and award them to those who deserve a tip of the hat.

Stirring-things-up award. For those who have stirred things up in a positive way, recognize them with the gift is a large wooden spoon. Attach a note or certificate to explain how they have mixed things up.

Burning the candle. Burn a candle at both ends and present it to someone who is pushing themselves to the limit.

Energizer award. Give an energizer award to the individual who is doing the most this month to energize the club. You may use one battery mounted on a plaque or present each honoree with an individual battery.

Starfish award. Share the story about a gentleman who questions why a person is going to extraordinary measures to throw one starfish back into the sea. When asked the question, the rescuer responded, "Because it makes a difference to this one." This short story emphasizes the importance of making the extra effort. Make a starfish out of crushed tinfoil and present it to those who are outstanding in reaching out to others.

C.A.R.P. award. C.A.R.P. is an acronym for Caring And Responsible Person, and a C.A.R.P. award should be made anytime one of your members has done something that is sensitive and supportive of others.

Bright ideas. Give out a light bulb to those members of your organization who have had a bright idea.

Good egg award. Blow out an egg, decorate it and award it to a member who has been a "good egg."

Hangers. Give a plastic hanger to members of a group or organization that need encouragement to "hang in there" after a difficult project.

Outlet awards. Give the award of a small outlet cover or plate to someone who has been an outlet for creative ideas or energy within your club.

Brushing-up award. Give an award of a paint brush to those members who are making efforts to improve their leadership skills by attending workshops, programs and conferences. It's important to encourage this kind of activity.

Paper clip award. Give awards of giant paper clips to those who are working to keep your club or project organized and working together.

Hawaiian lei rotating award. At each meeting, or every month, pass around the Hawaiian lei award. For example, one month it could be the "John Smith Award," where John Smith decides whom he would like to recognize with the lei. The following meeting it becomes the award granted by the last recipient. This is a fun way to build the team and help others recognize each other.

Creative examples of rewards

Dedications. Dedicate programs, activities and events to the outstanding individuals in your club. This really will cost nothing—just make mention of it on the advertisement, in the program or during the introduction.

Adjourn in honor of.... As simple recognition, adjourn your meeting in honor of an individual or group that has excelled. This should appear in the minutes.

Magnificent marbles. Every member of your group should receive a marble. Then explain that this is a magnificent marble and that it should be given to someone who is deserving because he or she has done something magnificent. Each member is encouraged to visit with another member of the group who deserves to receive this marble and share why they are making this “award.” This is a positive, non-threatening way to share positive strokes.

Jar of candy. Pass around a jar of candy at the start of a meeting and only let individuals take a piece of candy from the jar if they can share an outstanding personal success or accomplishment with the group. Better yet, if people are too humble to share their own news, have members give candy from the jar to another member who has done something worth recognition.

Notes. There are so many times that a simple note can have such great impact. Many people enjoy receiving praise in person, but there’s something about having a note to refer back to that makes it very special. You can put a note on almost anything—it’s just the time you take to write it and send it that makes it special.

Letters to families. A powerful recognition tool is to take time to write a letter to members’ families. Spouses, parents and children all enjoy hearing the positive impact their loved one is making. In today’s busy society we need to recognize that when a Kiwanis member chooses to dedicate time to a club project, there is less time to spend with family. Acknowledging the sacrifice made by the entire family increases understanding and makes everyone feel appreciated.

Limerick/poem. Write a goofy or fun limerick or poem to celebrate an individual or the accomplishments of a group. Pass it out at meetings or include it in your minutes. Use Dr. Seuss books for ideas.

Words of wisdom. Have each member give you a quotation that is a personal favorite. Compile these into a list, including who submitted the quote and its attribution, and distribute the list to all members. This will serve as shared inspiration but also will help members get to know what each person finds inspiring.

“To-do” jar. Have people in your organization write the things that they have fun doing at meetings on a card. After a particularly long day, meeting or personal/organizational success, draw one of the cards and do what is written on the card.

Friendship plants. There are a variety of plants that can be propagated very easily by simply rooting a cutting in water. Have a big plant like this in your office or room, and give a cutting out to people who have helped you or who are deserving of recognition.

Buttons. Buttons can advertise a number of things. They can indicate membership, or they can indicate special recognition within your group. Use buttons as an inexpensive way of recognizing the efforts of others.

