



CLUB CASE STUDY

REWARDING AND RECOGNISING VOLUNTEERS

We look at two case studies that demonstrate how rewarding and recognising volunteers can have a positive effect on your club.

Club Spotlight - Telford Athletic Club

In 2020, Paul Sanderson, from Telford AC, was the West Midlands Services to Athletics & Running Winner at the Regional Volunteer Awards. He went on to receive a national award for his contributions to the sport. This is what it meant to him:



What did winning the Regional Volunteer Awards mean to you?

I felt very proud and it was special to be acknowledged by EA. Being appreciated by the sport you are involved in made it more important for me. Telford AC were really pleased for me, and I was congratulated by many club members. Stuart Paul, the West Midlands regional council chair, came and presented the award to me. I then went on to win the national award and Jenny Meadows talking about my contribution to the sport and the community was another proud moment.

Has winning the Regional Volunteer Awards inspired you, or those around you, to become further involved in athletics?

I have felt inspired since winning the award and it has made me reflect on my involvement in the sport. Over the years I have had a range of voluntary roles, and these have included organising events, officiating and coaching. My greatest sense of achievement has been seeing the journey of Telford AC and the development of the track in the area! Volunteers are the backbone of races, training, competitions, and club events.



Why do you think the Regional Volunteer Awards are important?

The awards are important as they recognise the contribution of volunteers. Without volunteers we wouldn't have a sport, and everything starts at grassroots, so it is nice that those involved in making the sport happen are acknowledged. Volunteers are the backbone of races, training, competitions and club events.



For more digital club support, visit the [England Athletics Club Hub](#) and [MyAthletics Portal](#)

Club Spotlight – Thornbury Running Club:

Thornbury Running Club identified that it was important to thank volunteers for their contributions and have developed a culture of recognising the contributions of volunteers within their club. Kevin Wood, from Thornbury, played a big part in developing this and told us about what they have been doing:



Why did you decide to start rewarding & recognising volunteers?

As a running club we felt it was important that we recognised both running achievement and the contribution made by people volunteering with the club. Everything that happens in the club is the result of somebody donating their time. Not everyone has the time to volunteer, due to family and work demands, so it's important to recognise those who do actively contribute. We have for a long time had a trophy, the Helen Ralphs Memorial Award donated in memory of a member, which is awarded to a club newcomer who has made great progress and who has supported other newer members. This particularly encourages a member who has joined via our beginners course to give back.



How do you reward volunteers?

We are grateful to everyone who volunteers. I think it starts with simply remembering to say “thank you”, that’s the essence of recognition. It means you noticed somebody has done something and they don’t feel taken for granted. This can also include a ‘shout out’ in the club bulletin and/or club night announcements for public recognition. We then have two ways of rewarding our members for their contribution, a simple gift or the annual awards. If it is a single event, e.g. organising a social, we might give a one-off gift and a public thank you. Our Annual Recognition Awards are given to people who have made contributions in multiple ways across the year and are consistent serial contributors. There is no limit to the number of awards we are willing to give each year, provided they meet the criteria. No member of the club committee is eligible for any of the awards while they are on the committee. The awards are presented at our Annual Club Awards social event. In 2022 we worked with a local wood turner to create unique awards using wood that had been recovered from wind damaged trees. He asked us to donate all the monies he would typically earn from making the trophies to the Ukraine appeal.

What did it mean to be recognised?



I don't volunteer to be thanked but because I find it fulfilling. Therefore, receiving the Recognition Award was great because it said, 'we see everything you do for the club and want to say thank you.' – Emma Pritchard (run leader, supporting beginners, mental health champion, social event organiser, membership secretary)



The Recognition Award is for all the little jobs I do to help the smooth running of the club. All the little things add up, so it is really nice to be recognised. It is my way of giving back to a club that has done so much for me. – Carol Mosses (run leader, supporting beginners, mental health champion, kit sales)



As a volunteer, you never expect any reward for giving up your time, but when you are recognised by your peers then it does make the hours of planning, and coaching in all weathers all the more worthwhile, and underlines the impact (however small that may be) that you are making. – Nick Williams (run leader, Tuesday coaching)



What plans do you have for rewarding and recognising volunteers in the future?

We plan to continue to recognise in the ways described. 'Recognition & Rewards' is a standing item on our committee meeting agenda to make sure we don't overlook anyone who deserves to be recognised. Anyone from the committee can nominate a person they think merits recognition or reward for discussion.

Why would you encourage other clubs to start doing this?

We believe it creates a virtuous circle of more people being willing to contribute. In our experience, asking for people to volunteer has limited success but a direct approach is far more likely to succeed and the more people who volunteer the lighter the load. In any voluntary organisation it is always the few who are willing, and recognition means this doesn't go unnoticed while encouraging others to join in.