PRESERVING HISTORIC PLACES CONFERENCE,
EDUCATION SESSION

Supporting the Mission Through People: Volunteer Strategies for Museums and Historic Sites

SPEAKERS

Kristin Kraemer, CVA & Stephanie Ertel



SESSION OVERVIEW

How the Hour Is Structured



Kristin Kraemer, CVA

Manager of Volunteer Services,
Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum

Focus

Recruitment & Onboarding



Stephanie Ertel

Director of Education & Engagement,
Crown Hill Foundation

President, Board of Directors
Central Indiana Association of Volunteer Administration, CIAVA

Focus

Retention & Recognition

SESSION OVERVIEW

Learning Objectives

After attending this session, participants will be able to:

1. Identify effective recruitment strategies that attract volunteers aligned with a museum or historic site's mission, values, and audience needs.

2. Assess current volunteer engagement practices and recognize factors that influence long-term volunteer satisfaction and retention.

3. Apply practical tools for onboarding, training, and supporting volunteers in ways that strengthen institutional capacity.

4. Implement low-cost recognition and communication practices that increase volunteer motivation and commitment.

KRISTIN KRAEMER

Recruitment & Onboarding

Getting the right people in the door — and set up to succeed

OBJECTIVES 1 & 3

Kristin Kraemer, CVA

Manager of Volunteer Services, Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum

KRISTIN KRAEMER

Recruitment Strategies

Start with the role, not the recruit

Before posting a call for volunteers, define what the role requires and what success looks like. Vague roles attract vague commitment.

Diversify where you look

Cover 3–4 channels: retiree/senior networks, university or high school service-learning programs, community partners, and social media/local press for seasonal roles.

Match motivation to need

Not every volunteer wants the same thing — some want social connection, some skill-building, some quiet solitary work (e.g., archives). Share 1–2 matching examples.

Be upfront early

Set expectations about time commitment, training requirements, and physical demands before someone commits.

Staff Readiness

Confirm staff buy-in from the top down. Identify one or two coworkers willing to work with volunteers and establish clearly defined roles.



Onboarding & Training

FIRST IMPRESSIONS DETERMINE EARLY DROPOUT

Name this risk directly — volunteers who feel lost or unclear in week one are the most likely to quietly disappear.

Institutional Knowledge

History, mission, collections — “why we exist.”

Practical Skills

Visitor interaction scripts, safety protocols, what to do when something goes wrong.

Mentorship / shadowing model

Pairing a new volunteer with an experienced one for their first few shifts builds confidence faster than a manual or single orientation.

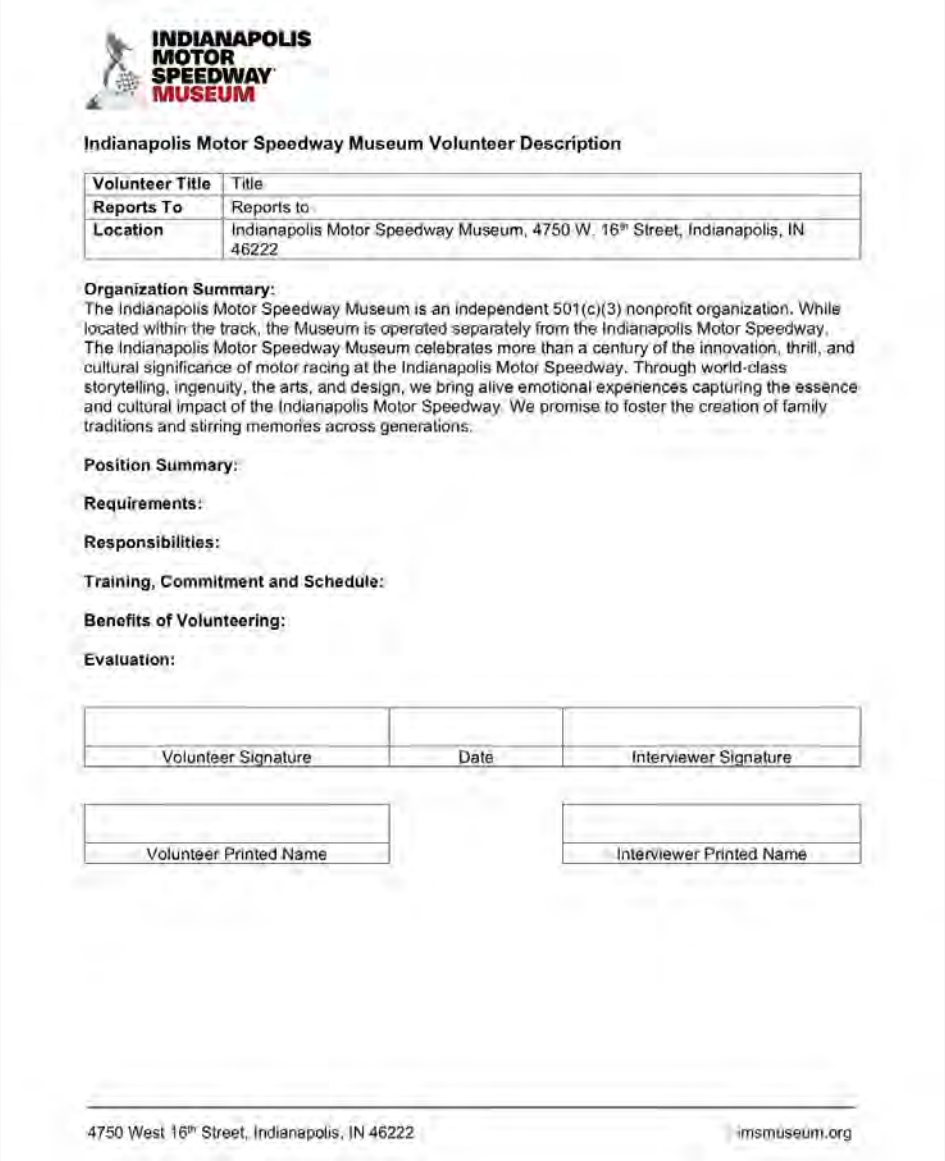
Training is ongoing, not one-and-done

Brief refreshers, updates when exhibits change, or annual “recommit” conversations.

Practical Tools

Sample Role Description Template

- Title
- Purpose
- Tasks/Responsibilities
- Time commitment and duration
- Required skills
- Reporting line



INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY MUSEUM

Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum Volunteer Description

Volunteer Title	Title
Reports To	Reports to
Location	Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum, 4750 W. 16th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46222

Organization Summary:
The Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. While located within the track, the Museum is operated separately from the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. The Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum celebrates more than a century of the innovation, thrill, and cultural significance of motor racing at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Through world-class storytelling, ingenuity, the arts, and design, we bring alive emotional experiences capturing the essence and cultural impact of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. We promise to foster the creation of family traditions and stirring memories across generations.

Position Summary:

Requirements:

Responsibilities:

Training, Commitment and Schedule:

Benefits of Volunteering:

Evaluation:

Volunteer Signature	Date	Interviewer Signature

Volunteer Printed Name	Interviewer Printed Name

4750 West 16th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46222 imsmuseum.org

Practical Tools



Sample Onboarding Checklist

- ☐ Paperwork
- ☐ Orientation
- ☐ Shadowing shifts
- ☐ First solo shift
- ☐ 30-day check-in

Invite the audience: which of these could you adapt with what you already have — no new budget required?

STEPHANIE ERTEL

Retention & Recognition

Keeping volunteers engaged — and making them feel it matters

OBJECTIVES 2 & 4



Stephanie Ertel

Director of Education & Engagement, Crown Hill Foundation
President, Board of Directors, CIAVA

> *So now you've recruited well and onboarded well — but the real test is whether that volunteer is still with you a year from now.*

STEPHANIE ERTEL

Engagement & Retention

CROWN HILL FOUNDATION
7 on the 7th
MONTHLY DOCENT UPDATE

Belonging over labor

Volunteers who feel part of a community stay longer than those who feel like unpaid staff. Example: volunteer social field trips; quarterly professional development; appreciation luncheon.

Communication & transparency

Volunteers blindsided by changes (policies, exhibits, schedules) disengage. Emphasize regular, honest updates — even when the news isn't great.
Example: monthly volunteer updates ("7 on the 7th"); shared calendars and sign-ups

Flexibility & Choice

Availability and interests change over time. Encourage regular check-ins rather than assuming an initial commitment is fixed forever.

Addressing underperformance respectfully

Often the most avoided topic — name it directly. A clear, kind, consistent policy protects both the institution and the volunteer's dignity. Reference your volunteer handbook; provide expectations for each volunteer role.





INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY MUSEUM · CROWN HILL FOUNDATION · CIAVA

STEPHANIE ERTEL

Recognition & Communication Practices

LOW-COST RECOGNITION IDEAS

- Personal, specific thank-yous — not generic, thanks for this specific thing
- Volunteer spotlights in newsletters or social media
- Milestone recognition (1 year, 5 years, 100 hours)
- Small gestures: handwritten notes, a shoutout at a staff/volunteer meeting
- Volunteer Appreciation Field Trips, Appreciation Luncheon

  Utilize your Community Partners!





GIVE VOLUNTEERS A VOICE

Invite input on decisions that affect their roles (schedule changes, new protocols). Ownership drives motivation more than perks do. Provide annual, anonymous google survey.

STEPHANIE ERTEL

Measuring Success

1

Data

Retention rates and hours contributed — not just headcount. Document & build your data!

2

Feedback

Short satisfaction surveys (annual or biannual) to catch problems before they cause turnover.

3

Impact

Fewer vacant docent shifts, higher visitor satisfaction scores, cost savings vs. paid staffing.

Use language that helps make the case to leadership for investing in volunteer management. Utilize resources like Independent Sector to calculate volunteer value!



INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY MUSEUM · CROWN HILL FOUNDATION · CIAVA

STEPHANIE ERTEL

Closing

Effective volunteer management maximizes your institution's ability to execute its mission and vision.

CALL TO ACTION

Before you leave today, pick one gap — recruitment, onboarding, retention, or recognition — and identify one small change you can make in the next month.



Q&A

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Central Indiana of Volunteer Administrators, CIAVA
www.ciava.us

IF YOU REMEMBER ONE THING

Clear, upfront expectations at recruitment prevent a large share of onboarding and retention problems downstream.