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Great blue heron, Blackwater NWR, Maryland

Celebrate Success

Celebrate your successes

Perhaps one of the most important things your group needs to remember is to celebrate its successes. Celebrate big successes and little ones. It is the successes that will draw membership, volunteer participation, funds, and bring lasting recognition to your group.

Think about what defines overall success for each of your group's activities and plan to celebrate small successes along the way (especially for bigger, longer term projects). Holding out for the big, obvious successes might bring celebration into the picture too late. Besides, why wait until the end of a project to celebrate it?

The key is to find something to crow about, the silver lining, even the positive twist in a "failure." Fail with flair! Find something to celebrate, even when everything didn't go as planned. Reward the attempt, not just the outcome.

Celebrating success will give everyone in your group something tangible to feel good about. It is these positive feelings will help your group grow.

You can recognize your successes in a variety of ways. Say "Thank You," send a note, thank people in your newsletter. You can stage events, hold a dinner, make use of awards. Have fun with it, be silly. Most important, do it in a timely manner. Surprise people!

Use news articles to publicize the group's major successes. Use all the available opportunities, even five minutes at the board meetings can be built in to acknowledge your successes. Use pictures and words to describe your group's achievements. Give people the opportunity to see what your group is doing not only so the public can appreciate your accomplishments, but so that your members can too, so they can say to themselves, "Wow! Look at what we did!"

There will be others besides the people in your group that need thanks and celebration too. Remember the refuge staff, the community, your legislators and city officials. Thank you cards to donors are a nice surprise and always appreciated.

Words of Wisdom From Other Friends Groups

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Don't forget to do it.

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Don't take people for granted.

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It's okay to celebrate the partial successes. You do not have to be all done or 100% successful.

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Be sure to publicize it. The whole group is recognized too.

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Be sure the celebrations fit the successes.

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Celebrate all year long, not just once a year.

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Celebrate immediately. Do not wait too long or you lose the opportunities.

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Saying "thanks" goes a long way. Say it often.

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Negative feedback cannot be retracted and giving negative feedback can spell disaster for the group and the individual.

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Celebrate Success Checklist

Define what success means to your group. Celebrate often. Don't wait until a project is over. Celebrate the small successes too.	
Celebrating gives your group something tangible to feel good about. Positive feelings help the group to grow.	
Take advantage of any opportunity to celebrate success and acknowledge a job well done: your newsletter, at board meetings, in newspaper articles and letters to the editor, in a thank you note . . .	
Be sensitive to the differences of people in your group. Don't throw the spotlight on someone who would be made uncomfortable. Find another way to thank them.	
"Thank You." Two simple words that need to be used often.	
Consider anyone who needs to be thanked, not just members of your group, but also Refuge staff, members of the community, politicians, etc. . . .	
Post evidence of accomplishments with lists of the names of participants on a plaque near completed projects on the refuge.	
Celebrate with food. Throw a party.	

