

Tips to Write a Volunteer Award Nomination

To help your nominee in the consideration process, tell your nominee's story in a compelling way to help the selection committee understand why the person stands out. (The selection committee is hearing about your nominee, and her or his volunteer activities, for the first time.)

Here are some helpful things to consider:

- How does this person engage in meaningful volunteer service that makes a measurable difference in the community or installation?
- Does this person take initiative?
- Is your nominee innovative and creative in problem-solving or finding solutions?
- How does this person inspire others?
- Does this person demonstrate selflessness and commitment to the project, program, and community?

How do I write a compelling nomination?

In order for your nomination to stand out against the many others we receive, you must explain and include evidence and clear examples of what makes your nominee so exceptional.

Don't just say your nominee is outstanding – prove it!

It's important to use specific and concrete examples to illustrate how your nominee meets each of the eligibility and award criteria. Provide examples of how your nominee has demonstrated outstanding character and is a deserving candidate for the award.

Show how they have:

- Encouraged and exemplified the virtue of good citizenship.
- Touched or enriched the lives of others, particularly those who are vulnerable or less able to help themselves.
- Shown ongoing initiative, leadership, and dedication.
- Devoted themselves to sustained and selfless voluntary service.
- Earned the respect of their peers and become a role model.
- Demonstrated innovation or creativity in delivering lasting results.

A compelling nomination should also describe as vividly and precisely as possible the difference your nominee's contribution has made and show why it has been important.

Include details such as:

- What made this an outstanding achievement – indicate any extraordinary circumstances or challenges the nominee faced (include statistics or historical background if applicable).
- What knowledge your nominee had of the situation and what actions they choose to take.
- The scale of the achievement and whether it is completed or ongoing.
- The achievement's sustainability and impact on the community and how it has enriched the lives of others.
- What makes your nominee different from others doing the same thing?

Keep it simple.

Remember that longer doesn't necessarily mean better. When presenting your nominee, keep your explanations clear and to the point while ensuring there is enough information for the selection panel to make their decision.

How do I find the right words to present my nominee?

Strong nominations will often include persuasive nouns such as:

- determination
- drive
- innovation
- impact
- visionary
- pioneer
- commitment
- sustainability
- creativity
- mentor
- teamwork
- hidden hero
- respect
- recognition
- selflessness
- performance
- Leadership
- role model

Adjectives such as:

- trusted
- dedicated
- persuasive
- resourceful
- persevering

- unflustered
- positive
- generous
- inspirational
- passionate
- enthusiastic
- sympathetic
- supportive
- articulate
- conscientious
- incomparable
- exemplary
- fair
- admired
- vibrant
- diligent

Phrases such as:

- making a difference
- succeeding against the odds
- going over and above
- mentor and role model
- overcoming obstacles

What shouldn't I do?

Selection panels evaluate nominees' merits based on the information provided to them. That is why only the strongest and most compelling nominations often result in an award. There must be enough convincing information in the nomination package to make a good case.

Therefore your nomination should not be:

- A list of awards, appointments, or positions
- A list of job description showing what the person has done.

Because weaker nominations often list these things, a regular complaint from selection panels is that the nominee was "simply doing their job" or "nothing exceptional was demonstrated".

What should I do?

Instead, you should describe what is outstanding about your nominee's achievements and show memorably and persuasively how and where they have made a difference. Here is an actual citation that illustrates how a nominee has demonstrated outstanding character and meets many of the criteria mentioned above:

The "Name of Organization" Camp Pendleton office is pleased to nominate Samuel Addams for Civilian Volunteer of the Year. Sam began volunteering with our organization in June, 2002 and over these 16 years has personally assisted over 700 Service members and their families through financial counseling, resource guidance, and financial assistance to the amount of \$420,000. In 2018, he demonstrated his personal devotion to service with over 176 volunteer hours, in which he aided 50 Service members with expert financial counseling. Sam's personal interest in the wellbeing of the Service members and families in need was evidenced as he facilitated much-needed financial assistance in 31 cases, totaling \$23,400, to provide necessities such as groceries, car repairs, emergency travel, and rent payments.

Sam is also a great recruiter for "Name of Organization". His personable and genuine nature was instrumental in bringing additional volunteers to the office staff in 2018, single-handedly increasing the volunteer staff by almost 20%.

Sam's dedication to serving the military community extends beyond his devotion to "Name of Organization". He organizes an annual Thanksgiving meal for students of SOI-W who are away from their families for the holidays. In 2018, 24 Marines participated. He also serves on the board of the Wilson High School Scholarship Foundation. The organization created The Samuel Addams Scholarship, which is awarded to high school students who demonstrate his spirit of community service.

When asked about his commitment to community service, Sam says, "I just want to pay back the Marine Corps for all it gave me." In total, Sam has served over 300 hours in 2018 on Camp Pendleton and in the local community.