

Building Relationships: The Ties that Bind Us

Building relationships with our members of Congress, the media, other organizations and our community members are the cornerstones on which the foundation of RESULTS is built. Our successes are based on the ability of our volunteers and staff to build and maintain long-term relationships with a large network of players; members of Congress, the media, other organizations, community allies and heavy hitters within our communities to build the political clout necessary to bring about the end of hunger and poverty. RESULTS' integrity is built upon a structure of credible, timely, and accurate information presented in a non-partisan, consistent and compelling way. Members of Congress and their aides who work with RESULTS volunteers on a consistent basis have come to rely on our information as being extremely credible whether they are democrats or republicans.

Aides

Building a relationship with your senators' or representatives' aides is one of the most important relationships you can develop as a volunteer. Often times it is difficult if not impossible to see your member of Congress in person, and completely impossible to speak to them directly on the phone, but the aide who handles the specific topic you are interested in will often have daily briefings with your member and will be able to put your issue in front of him or her if they are compelled to do so. So developing this relationship can be vital in turning your member of Congress into a spokesperson for the end of hunger and poverty. Get the ear of the aide and you've got the ear of the Congressperson.

Members of Congress

RESULTS volunteers across the country have had various degrees of success at developing relationships with their members of Congress. There are many variables that come into play when you begin to develop your relationship. How long your member

Training Module 2 LINK: Building Relationships – The Ties That Bind Us

has been in Congress and his or her level of seniority can affect the access you will have to your member regardless of their party affiliation. Your job is to educate, inform and inspire them about successful programs with a proven history of results. Because of the tireless efforts of many of our volunteers over long periods of time many democrats and republicans have come to believe that a vital part of their legacy will be the work they do to ensure that the most vulnerable among us have opportunity and access to dignified pathways out of poverty.

The Media

One of the ways your congressperson gets information is through their local papers back home. A major metropolitan paper may have a circulation of 150,000 or more, so when an editor decides to run an editorial on AIDS or Head Start funding he is saying we support this position and we think many of our readers will too. Often editorial writers will try and sway their elected officials by calling them to action around a specific issue. RESULTS uses this platform as an effective tool for informing members of Congress about important issues around hunger and poverty. Members of Congress use their hometown papers as an effective way to measure the pulse of their constituency. Building a solid relationship with a paper can help educate, inform and inspire your member of Congress as well members of your communities about effective tools to fight hunger and poverty. Never doubt that the media has the power to make our issues a political priority, it is up to us to educate and inspire them about the positive role they play in ending hunger and poverty.

Collaboration with Other Organizations

Collaboration is a key ingredient in any social justice movement. Many organizations came together to fight for workers rights, women's right to vote and the civil rights movement; without this binding of a shared vision would have never been able to accomplish their goals. Historically this democracy has not embraced social justice movements and in fact, has brutally fought to keep the status quo in place. What separates democracies from dictatorships is that there is a certain breaking point for

Training Module 2 LINK: Building Relationships – The Ties That Bind Us

democracy where holding on to the old ideals or interests that profit only a few, will ultimately be given over to the fear politicians have at losing their seat in Congress. It sounds cynical but it's true. The ship of state will stay its course until a big enough wave pushes it in a different direction. One organization alone won't necessarily shift the tide, but many coming together has and will.

Environmental organizations, peace groups, homeless shelters, food banks, anti-nuke organizations, public health specialists, TB controllers, child welfare advocates we all have a shared vision of leaving our backyard, as well as the planet, in better shape than when we found it. Networking with a wide array of people and organizations will push us all closer to seeing a world worthy of every child, not just a privileged few.

Grasstops

The former mayor of your city may not want to become a full time RESULTS advocate but may be very willing, even energetic about lobbying your member of Congress on a specific issue that is close to their heart. Developing a network of "grasstops" or people who have political clout in your community is another way to mobilize a larger network to end hunger and poverty. Local business leaders, spouses of public officials, former public officials, University department heads, sports figures, and superintendents of schools are just a few of the folks who can raise the stakes when meeting with your member of Congress or the media. These are also important people to cultivate for one time actions around pieces of legislation that may be affected one way or another by your member. Never doubt what a few strategically placed phone calls from someone with political clout to your member can do to affect the way your member of Congress votes. Having a network of committed citizens, organizations and grass-tops can go a long way in leveraging the political clout it will ultimately take to make hunger and poverty a political priority.

RESULTS Groups

With all of this looking outward it is always important to remember that the backbone of this organization is its group structure. Strong relationships are maintained with other

Training Module 2 LINK: Building Relationships – The Ties That Bind Us

organizations, members of Congress, their aides and the media by strong, healthy groups across the country. RESULTS has developed and is continually working to expand and create new models for training, mentoring, networking and organizing its volunteers and allies. Within this structure of groups is a core group of committed individuals who find not only political action within its walls, but also fellowship and a community of spirit as well.

RESULTS groups typically have a minimum of four active volunteers, one of those being the Group Leader. The Group Leader commits to being in contact with a staff member or a Regional Coordinator on a weekly basis. The Group Leader then sets up a channel of communication with their group members to delegate responsibilities for that week's actions.

In RESULTS there is a history of activism that is hard to rival. RESULTS volunteers are truly some of the best and the brightest activists in the country. They are ordinary individuals accomplishing the extraordinary. Ordinary individuals committed to pushing themselves to grow and expand the limits of what they thought possible. Ours is not a caravan of despair, but a loud and lively, joyous adventure that we find when one person raises their voice to bring dignity to another.