

## Screening your mission volunteers!

### "Many are called-fewer are chosen"

Not everyone who wants to go on a mission trip should. People's motives may be inappropriate or even corrupt. And even when motives are good this in itself may not be good enough. It is critical for a trip leader to know who they're dealing with and to make judgments about who qualifies. I have worked alongside pastors whose main concern was "numbers" and would allow anyone to participate to make their programs appear successful. An example is the choir director who insists, "God doesn't care what you sound like, it's your heart that's important". Or the mission pastor who included someone with Tourette's syndrome thinking he could keep it contained (imagine trying to explain that one to your host church). The examples are myriad and even when you do your best, sometimes surprises seep through your defenses. This year we had someone with undeclared mental disorders. We discovered this because they left their medications in the states and had a meltdown on the trip.

The screening process is merely an exercise in good leadership and wise choices. But frequently individuals shirk their leadership responsibility to avoid tough choices or adopt feeble excuses posing as "a loving Christian attitude".

"It's not my place to judge others."

"I don't want anyone to feel bad or have their feelings hurt."

"God will be in control of who signs up and what happens."

"We are all called to go and none of us are perfect."

We hope the following gives a little guidance for the screening process and we recommend that prayer for discernment and God's grace not be overlooked.

I found that it's helpful to have an application process and a small committee of at least 2 or 3 that reviewed the applications. It is difficult to tell a church volunteer that they do not qualify when they volunteer for a noble endeavor. But it softens the blow a little bit if in advance people are aware that there are a limited number of spaces, that not everyone who volunteers will be chosen, and that it will be a committee decision. If one person is responsible for the screening they may become the villain or accused excluding someone because of personal issues.

You can find all kinds of application forms for short-term missions on the Internet. We have included a sample form that you can likely improve upon.

You should know where each team member is.....

Theologically:

TWAW is a Christian ministry representing Jesus Christ and biblically based.

I want to know that team members affirm the deity of Christ and the authority of the Bible over our lives. This is also important to all of our

Christian partners in Belize. Exceptions to this rule should be discussed.

Psychologically: (See mental health example above).

Physically: will heat be an issue or project demanding great physical exertion?

By Tim Tam updated February 27, 2013

Socially: do they “play well with others” or will they hamper team unity?

Character: is there any reason to question their honesty or integrity?

Attitude: humility versus arrogance?

Respect for authority versus rebellious

Independent versus team player..... Do they it was really nice have a

Separate agenda

teachable versus rigid

If you are taking youth, college, singles, it's not a bad policy to insist that people do not change their relationship status on the trip. If romance sparks up, let them pursue it when they return home.

As trip leader your job is to build and maintain our unity of mind and spirit. So choose a team that will succeed, individuals you are confident you can manage and work with. If God plans to do something wonderful and significant, you can count on Satan working to plant tares amongst the wheat.

There are many attitudes which are unhelpful and counterproductive but are still manageable. Expect that people will come with wrong motives.... We all have mixed motives. But also expect for God to work. These trips have amazing potential for fostering Christian growth. What may appear to be a contradiction here is merely the tension that you will have to manage. Bring imperfect people for their growth and filter out imperfect people that may sabotage the mission and ruin the trip.

Pray for wisdom. Pray for discernment. Be bold in making the hard choices.