Volunteers and Extension¹
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This is one publication in the series The Cooperative Extension Volunteer Teacher. This volunteer teacher series addresses the need for guidelines to assist Extension county faculty in the important task of preparing the volunteer to teach.

UF/IFAS Extension Volunteers
University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension programs depend on the utilization of volunteer services. Volunteers help propagate the mission of UF/IFAS Extension (education) by helping people secure information to educate themselves or others. The link that volunteers provide between the land-grant system and people who need information is a unique role among volunteer agency programs. Volunteers provide many services with the help of UF/IFAS Extension county and state faculty which include

1. teaching groups and counseling individuals;
2. organizing educational events and projects;
3. assisting with research and demonstrations;
4. providing meeting places and materials;
5. preparing media programs;
6. sharing information informally;
7. serving as officers and on committees; and
8. lending a hand as needed.

Volunteers work in all aspects of UF/IFAS Extension, and some have special titles—Home and Community Educator, Master Volunteer, 4-H Leader, and Master Gardener. Others work on committees or projects without specific titles; and still others represent community organizations that seek specific kinds of assistance from UF/IFAS Extension.

The role of volunteers will vary by program area and location throughout the state, but serve in one or more of the following roles:

1. a service role such as answering the telephone or providing some type of assistance to the UF/IFAS Extension program;
2. a community outreach role in which the volunteer becomes involved in community issues or represents UF/IFAS Extension programs to other organizations; and/or
3. a teaching role in which the volunteer works with participants or learners in delivering a lesson or demonstrating a skill.

While each of these roles is important, the teaching role—formal and informal—is one of the most significant.


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contributions that volunteers make to the county and state Extension programs.

The increasing utilization of volunteers to carry out UF/IFAS Extension programs requires a system for organizing their involvement and maximizing the results of their work. It is well documented that volunteer success depends on commitment and ability to do the task required. These alone are not sufficient to insure success for the volunteer or the UF/IFAS Extension program. A system is needed to bridge the gaps between the goals of the UF/IFAS Extension program, the experiences of the volunteer, and the learning needs of the clients. This is especially true when volunteers are asked to teach adults. Frequently the volunteer lacks experience in working with or teaching adults.

If the volunteer’s experiences are to be wisely utilized for UF/IFAS Extension, the population to be reached, and the personal fulfillment of the volunteer, a training program is needed. The impact of many programs depends on the skill and knowledge of the volunteer teacher and how well he/she represents the UF/IFAS Extension program and mission to the client group. UF/IFAS Extension county faculty need to be involved in training local volunteers to teach and to represent the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, and UF/IFAS Extension as the institutions whose mission they are carrying out in the course of their teaching.

This volunteer teacher series addresses the need for guidelines to assist UF/IFAS Extension county faculty in this important task of preparing the volunteer to teach.

The UF/IFAS Extension Volunteer Teacher

The responsibility for preparing the volunteer to teach belongs to the county faculty who use their service. The task of teaching is the same whether it is done by a professional or a volunteer, and the outcomes are no less important because they are the result of a volunteer teacher’s work. Thus the same careful preparation that the Extension faculty makes to teach his/her client group is needed by the volunteer teacher. Teaching volunteers to teach others deals with the same attitudes, skills, and knowledge that are needed by the professional UF/IFAS Extension educator.

This volunteer teacher series is designed for use by UF/IFAS Extension professionals who work with volunteers in any context. It provides a systematic approach to prepare the volunteer to teach UF/IFAS Extension clientele, including seven separate modules that address different but sequential aspects of volunteer training.

- Module Two deals with recruiting and interviewing the volunteer to insure that they have the appropriate skills and attitudes for being a volunteer teacher.
- Module Three deals with orienting the volunteer to the institutions they represent, the personnel with whom they will be working, the facilities, and other details.
- Module Four is an overview of the teaching process. Suggestions on methodology include organizing a lesson, conducting a demonstration, and using questions to stimulate discussion.
- Module Five deals with the subject of evaluating the volunteer teacher. It includes a set of questions for self-assessment and discussion with the supervisor. Recognition is the payment that is given to volunteers for their valuable contributions.
- Module Six deals with providing recognition.
- Module Seven contains legal implications for the utilization of the volunteer teacher. Aspects of the Florida Statutes are included, as well as interpretations.