

VIRGINIA MASTER FOOD VOLUNTEER

The creation of the Master Food Volunteer (MFV) Program in Virginia resulted from the need to expand the Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) program in the counties across the Commonwealth. The MFV Program focuses on the subjects of food safety, nutrition, food preparation, and physical activity. This program will help reach current and untapped audiences to provide consumers with up-to-date research-based knowledge so they can enjoy food in many new ways.

A Virginia MFV is an individual who acts on behalf of Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) as a volunteer educator within his or her community after receiving training in FCS through cooperative programming with VCE. These volunteer educators serve as partners with VCE to promote, inform, and work with community leaders, industry and individuals presenting programs on all aspects of FCS, including nutrition, health, wellness, physical activity, food safety, and home food preservation.

During two training sessions (2009, 2010) 41 people have become Virginia Master Food Volunteers (MFV) with a program design including various teaching methodologies—lecture series, cooking demonstrations and learning stations. During this time volunteers educated 4,977 adults and youth contributing 788 volunteer hours through demonstrations at farmers' markets, health/wellness fairs, nutrition/healthy cooking workshops and physical activity promotion programs. The participants were educated on increasing fruits/vegetables, whole grains, physical activity and purchasing healthy low cost foods.

The 2011 MFV program will model this design with numerous guest speakers and opportunities for involvement.

STEPS TO BECOMING A MASTER FOOD VOLUNTEER

When you enter the MFV program, you enter into an agreement. In turn for the training you receive in this program, you pledge to give back an equal amount of volunteer hours to VCE. Upon completion of this training, you have one year to give back the volunteer service hours. Failure to complete this obligation means the individual does not receive the title of MFV. All individuals receiving MFV training must be able to commit to a minimum of 30 hours of service field experience in food-based, educational programs. When a person ceases active volunteering with VCE he or she also relinquishes the title of Master Food Volunteer.

FUTURE SPECIALIZED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Advanced training modules provide MFVs the opportunity to expand the influence of VCE through leadership in their communities and enables MFVs to get involved in and lead programs that address particular community needs. Specialized training is available in various areas including, but not limited to:

- Food Preservation
- Cooking for Crowds

- Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids
- Color Me Healthy
- Literacy, Eating, and Activity for Preschoolers (LEAP) for Health

MASTER FOOD VOLUNTEER JOBS

The title “Master Food Volunteer” should only be used when doing unpaid volunteer work for Extension. It should not be used to imply that VCE is endorsing any product or place of business.

In surveying county agents, many activities have been mentioned as potential jobs for volunteers. You, the volunteer, may have other ideas for programs you may be comfortable in doing. Below are some ideas of activities for volunteers:

- Health fairs
- Food demonstrations
- Farmers market displays
- Grocery store displays
- Support for 4-H Youth Programs
- Judge at fairs
- Newspaper or newsletter articles on healthy eating, physical activity, and food preparation
- In school and after school programs
- Assist with education at food distribution sites
- Health Ministries in your community
- Create your own!

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT, EVALUATION, AND REPORTING PROCEDURES

MFVs are an expansion of program services to make the County Extension Agent more efficient. However, the Agent still provides leadership to the program. Volunteers can become managers of programs to facilitate other volunteers. Program planning and goal-setting with the Agent helps determine specific needs and the type of projects to plan.

To ensure satisfaction of volunteer work, evaluations must be completed to determine volunteer performance and the adequacy of support from the Extension office. This will also help determine if the tasks you are performing are worthwhile to you and for VCE. All program evaluations must be submitted to the local FCS Extension Agent as soon as possible following the completion of the program.

MFVs are responsible for keeping track of all contacts and volunteer time. At minimum, volunteer hours and contacts need to be reported to the local FCS Extension Agent monthly.