



Master Wellness Volunteer Program

<http://agrilife.org/mwv>

Helping Texans
Better Their Lives

Relevance

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (AgriLife Extension) is committed to “Improving Lives, Improving Texas” through relevant, research-based education. One of AgriLife Extension’s high-priority issues is helping Texans improve their health. Research shows at least 50% of health status is due to lifestyle factors, such as not using tobacco, being physically active, maintaining a normal weight, and good nutrition, among many others.

AgriLife Extension has numerous programs to help Texans learn and adopt behaviors that can positively impact their health and wellness. The challenge faced by county Extension agents is diffusing these programs among the audiences who are in need of such education.

Response

AgriLife Extension is expanding the reach of its health and nutrition programs through *Master Wellness Volunteers*. The program structure is outlined below.

- Volunteers receive 40 hours of education in health and nutrition.

- This education takes place over five training days and includes a mix of in-person, online, and self-study materials. The major topics covered include: reaching limited-resource audiences, basic nutrition, food safety, health and wellness, and childhood overweight.
- Participants are required to take a certification exam to ensure that they learned the primary concepts related to each training class.
- At the conclusion of the training classes, participants begin returning volunteer service to AgriLife Extension. They are expected to give at least 40 hours related to helping AgriLife Extension plan, implement, and evaluate health and nutrition programs.

The volunteer opportunities are diverse: giving presentations for local community groups, assisting with healthy cooking demonstrations, distributing information at health fairs, working with schools and after-school programs, and data entry. Previous health or wellness training is not required, but an interest in living healthfully and helping others do the same as.

In 2015, AgriLife Extension launched a pilot, wherein *Master Wellness Volunteer Trainees* could complete 60% of their training online, under the supervision of their county Extension agent. The results of this pilot effort will be used to shape the program moving forward to offer counties and potential volunteers’ options for implementation and training.

AgriLife Extension also launched a new website for *Master Wellness Volunteers* to help with training, reporting and overall engagement at:

<http://agrilife.org/mwv>.



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Results

Since its inception in 2006, more than 40 counties have implemented the *Master Wellness Volunteer Program*, training more than 250 Texans to help with AgriLife Extension's outreach and education in their communities.

In 2016, 139 volunteers in 20 counties actively participated in the *Master Wellness Volunteer Program*.

- Volunteers logged more than 5,900 hours
- Volunteers taught or assisted with 1,440 educational sessions
- Volunteers reached more than 36,000 Texans through these educational sessions

County AgriLife Extension agents have indicated the *Master Wellness Volunteer Program* has:

- Increased outreach efforts,
- Helped reach new audiences, and
- Created advocates for the Family and Consumer Sciences program.



Volunteer Quotes

“The best part of the program is that you learn new things while helping others lead healthier lives.” – Cherokee County Volunteer

“There are always volunteer opportunities available. I’m so thankful I have my health so I can provide assistance where needed. The *Master Wellness Volunteer Program* allows me to make valuable contributions to my community.” – Hopkins County Volunteer

Master Wellness Volunteers also recorded a YouTube video about their experiences and impacts on their communities at:

<http://agrilife.org/mwv>.

The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.