

Family Living Educators: What does it mean to sponsor a Volunteer Master Food Preserver?

Are you feeling challenged by the food preservation needs in your county? Are you interested in having a trained volunteer assist you with programming? If so, consider sponsoring an individual (or two) to attend this summer's Volunteer Master Food Preserver training!

The goal of the Volunteer Master Food Preserver program is to train volunteers who will support local programming in food safety and food preservation. Trained volunteers must first complete a 3-day hands-on training program which includes classroom lectures, daily homework and a final exam, as well as hands-on experience processing a wide variety of products. Once trained, volunteers work through UW-Extension to support food preservation programming in the community.

As a Family Living educator, what is your responsibility? You will **begin** by recruiting potential volunteers to attend the training. Remember, trained volunteers will help **you** in **your** county, so recruit individuals who are dependable and dedicated to working within the UW-Extension program structure. Potential volunteers might be HCE members, Volunteer Master Gardeners, past food preservation entrants at your county fair, 4-H volunteers, local home economics teachers, community garden coordinators, or individuals involved in a local foods network. **Next**, you will meet with your volunteer(s) and help her/him outline a volunteer plan that will be implemented after the training. Recruiting more than one person to attend the training is a great idea; giving the new volunteers a ready partner in food preservation activities. You will **sign** the volunteer agreement **and** application form for each person that you 'sponsor.' Sponsoring an individual (or two, or three) for training does not require that you pay for their training (although some counties choose to do this). Sponsoring an individual requires that you help him/her develop a volunteer plan and then support your volunteer(s) once they are trained. Once trained, your volunteers need your **support**. Volunteers will provide 20 hours of volunteer service per person per year. This service will be through UW-Extension. Recruiting individuals for the training and signing their application/volunteer forms implies that you will support them in meeting their volunteer commitment. You will help coordinate volunteer activities and support your volunteers, as they support you!

It sounds like a good deal, and it can be. But, programming in food preservation is not for everyone and not for every county. Our trained volunteers will only be successful if we support them in their volunteer efforts. If food preservation is not a priority in your county and you do not see yourself being able to support a volunteer, then **don't sign their forms!** You might encourage individuals to look at surrounding counties for sponsorship, or talk with him/her to understand their goals. Some individuals really just want a workshop on jams and jellies or salsa-making, and not a 3-day program with volunteer obligations. With your help, together we can make UW-Extension's Volunteer Master Food Preserver program the best in the nation.