

# UT Extension Celebrates Volunteers in Sullivan County

*National Volunteer Week is April 19-25, 2026*

Each year, thousands of volunteers in Tennessee donate their time and energy to make their communities a better place to live. These volunteers will be among the millions across the country who will be spotlighted during the 52nd anniversary of National Volunteer Week, April 19-25, 2026. According to the latest Volunteering and Civic Life in America research, 23% of Americans age 16 and over (60.7 million) volunteered 4.1 billion hours of service worth \$122.9 billion in 2021. In 2021 in Tennessee-The Volunteer State, more than 1.3 million volunteers contributed 99.1 million hours of service through organizations valued at \$2.6 billion. 23.8% of Tennessee residents volunteered. One group that relies heavily on volunteers is the University of Tennessee Extension system. In 2026 almost 200 youth and adults are volunteering in some capacity with Extension. In Sullivan County, 102 volunteers, both youth and adult, will serve as club leaders, project leaders, field day coordinators, educational facilitators, committee members, and in advisory capacities for the Tennessee Extension program.

Melody Rose, ANR Extension Agent and Master Gardener Coordinator for UT Extension in Sullivan County says, “The Master Gardener program serves as an outreach arm for the county by answering home horticulture questions from the general public, which is one of the largest audiences served countywide. Master Gardener volunteers contributed more than 13,000 hours in 2025, with an economic value of \$477,416.59 returned to the county via volunteer efforts in home horticulture programming and projects. Volunteers spend numerous hours working on tasks, such as helping a child with a 4-H project, leading a project to serve the community, or helping organize educational events.

Ethan Harvill and Arizona Bowers, both 4-H Agents with Sullivan County Extension are newly hired agents within the last year striving to build their programs via a volunteer base in order to offer more 4-H programs and projects to reach more youth audiences in 26 project areas, some of which include judging contests, project groups, and community service events. If you would like to continue to make the best better, please complete the [Volunteer interest form](#).

Extension volunteers are involved in every aspect of Extension programs, including determining the needs of the local residents, planning and implementing programs to address these needs, securing resources, and evaluating programs. An example of these volunteers is the Sullivan County Agricultural Extension Committee. The seven-member county committee, which consists of four appointed county citizens and county commissioners, works with the county Extension staff to plan and oversee Extension activities. Members include: Jack Barnes, Mike Blevins, Sheila Earhart, Hershel Glover, Linda Jones, Dwight King, Jessica Means, and Zane Vanover.

Rose says it is vital for the overall health of the total Extension program to have input from stakeholders and clientele within the county, including volunteers. With volunteers, much more can be accomplished, especially for the 4-H youth program. If you are passionate about serving in a volunteer capacity to support Extension programming, please reach out to one of our staff members at the UT/TSU Extension, Sullivan County Office.

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Megan Shelton, Sullivan County's FCS Agent says, "The FCS Program relies heavily on volunteers to make programming possible. Specifically, the county's FCE group members and friends have made it possible to begin offering sewing classes to interested community members in recent months. The value of volunteers for the FCS program alone in the first quarter was \$4,185. As the program continues to grow and more classes are offered, the value of volunteers is sure to increase. FCS is continually looking for new volunteers who are willing to share skills they may possess with others (painting, knitting, crocheting, etc.)."

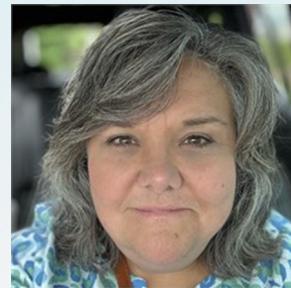
The work of Extension volunteers is continuous. Every day volunteers lend a helping hand to make Extension programs more beneficial to the residents of Sullivan County. Those interested in joining the team of Extension Volunteers are invited to contact the Sullivan County Extension Office at 423-574-1919 or via their website at <https://sullivan.tennessee.edu> Through its land-grant mission of research, teaching and extension, the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture touches lives and provides Real. Life. Solutions.



Arizona Bowers



Ethan Harvill



Melissa Hauk



Susan Lachmann



Melody Rose



Megan Shelton