

Helping Volunteers THRIVE!

Professional Development Series Putting Volunteer Training Resources into Practice

Ashley Burns, Ph.D., *Clemson University*; Candi Dierenfield, Ph.D., *University of Florida*; Karla Knoepfli, *Oklahoma State University*; Keri Hobbs, *University of Georgia*; Laura Huebinger, Ed.D., *Texas A&M University*; Daniel Sarver, *University of Tennessee*; Meggan Franks, D.B.A., *Louisiana State University*; Ken Culp III, Ph.D., *University of Kentucky*; Hope Bragg, *University of Arkansas*; Harriett Edwards, Ed.D., *North Carolina State University*

NEED/GOAL

Volunteers provide many resources and are critical to delivery of 4-H programs. However, training and development of 4-H volunteers by Extension staff can be a daunting task given the broad scope and diversity of training needs; in addition, resources related to the 4-H Thriving Model are targeted to professional staff, not volunteers. To help overcome issues surrounding 4-H volunteer training and development, volunteer specialists from across the southern region collaborated to design and teach a five-part volunteer engagement series for 4-H professionals that connected topics of the 4-H Thriving Model's developmental context with practical application of updated resources in the Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency (VRKC) taxonomy. Specific objectives of *Helping Volunteers THRIVE!* were to:

- Increase knowledge of the 4-H Thriving Model in program delivery;
- Increase confidence in intentional program development and delivery; &
- Provide practical application of VRKC resources (e.g., a "take-away/lesson" they can replicate with volunteers).



APPROACH

Southern Region Volunteer Specialists leveraged the successful approach of the 2022 *Ignite the Spark* professional development training series to launch the 2023 *Helping Volunteers THRIVE!* series. Marketing and recruitment materials were developed and disseminated through volunteer specialist networks. Pre-registration was hosted in Zoom, allowing individuals to register for any or all five sessions. Reminder emails were sent prior to each session. Sessions were recorded and materials shared in Google Drive for participants to access (see QR code). Volunteer specialists from 11 different states assisted with the development and delivery of content across the five sessions. Each session also had a post-reflective evaluation and voluntary, digital completion badge. The virtual sessions had over 1,100 registrations and 366 live attendees put VRKC content into Thriving context.

RESULTS

Table 1. Participation in *Helping Volunteers THRIVE!* professional development sessions.

	THRIVE Focus	VRKC Domain	Registrants	Live Attendees	Survey Responses
Session 1 April 6, 2023	Belonging and Relationships	Communication	158	76	43
Session 2 May 4, 2023	Sparks and Engagement	Positive Youth Development	202	78	21
Session 3 Aug. 3, 2023	Sparks and Engagement	Educational Design and Delivery	249	84	24
Session 4 Sept. 7, 2023	Belonging and Relationships	Organizational Skills	261	77	20
Session 5 Oct. 5, 2023	Sparks and Engagement	Positive Youth Development	265	51	8
	TOTAL		1135	366	116

90

digital badges issued
(to 58 unique participants)

32%
response rate
(based on live attendees)



Figure 1. Image representation of 5 individual, session-completion and one series-completion digital badges that were issued via Canvas Badges by Instructure (Salt Lake City, UT) following *Helping Volunteers THRIVE!* professional development.

KNOWLEDGE CHANGE



Figure 2. Knowledge change scores on a 5-point scale in a post-reflective assessment by survey respondents (n = 116, unless otherwise noted) following the *Helping Volunteers THRIVE!* sessions.

AGREEMENT



Figure 3. Agreement (combined moderately or strongly agreed on 5-point Likert scale) that survey respondents (n = 116) indicated to the following statements after *Helping Volunteers THRIVE!* sessions.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Registration grew throughout professional development series *Helping Volunteers THRIVE*. Participation and engagement remained strong until session 5 when live attendance and survey responses dropped markedly in October. Knowledge change scores for increased awareness of VRKC and Thriving Model resources were high in session

1 and relatively lower in sessions 2-5 (data not shown), suggesting repeat attendees demonstrated less change in knowledge over time. Survey responses support that *Helping Volunteers THRIVE* was successful at connecting 4-H professionals with VRKC and Thrive resources they could put into practice.

CONTRIBUTORS: Individuals listed as authors on this poster served as facilitators of the *Helping Volunteers THRIVE!* sessions. In addition, Jamie Morris, currently at Purdue University, served as a facilitator of a session. Additionally, Southern Region Volunteer Specialists not listed contributed in a meaningful way to the success of the effort through idea generation, collaborative support, and/or participant recruitment – including, but not limited to Chad Proudfoot at Virginia Tech, Nancy Alexander of Auburn University.



Participant Resources

"I will apply these strategies to aid volunteers in their development and help build a positive correlation between volunteer needs and youth needs to make comprehensive programs and activities for all." ~ Participant survey response

