

KENTUCKY EXTENSION HOMEMAKERS ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

VOLUNTEER SERVICE UNIT (VSU) PROGRAM

The Volunteer Service Unit (VSU) program is intended to recognize individual volunteer efforts in your club and community. It is also intended to help you grow personally in volunteer leadership skills, and to show you how you might use those skills. For example, you might want to climb a “volunteer career ladder.” That is, you may want to go on to more responsible volunteer positions in KEHA or in other groups. In addition, volunteer experience is often accepted and equated to paid employment if described in comparable terms when seeking employment.

- 1) **What is a volunteer?** A volunteer is an individual who agrees to do a job or perform a service for others (not family) for which the only pay is the personal satisfaction of a job well done. A volunteer can share time, knowledge, skills, materials, etc. with others. A volunteer may be paid or reimbursed for out of pocket expenses related to volunteer work.
- 2) **What is a Volunteer Service Unit (VSU)?** A VSU is an hour of volunteer effort. These hours include hours spent in preparing to carry out a volunteer activity as well as the hours spent directly involved in volunteer work. This includes hours spent within the KEHA organization, in volunteer roles with Cooperative Extension and other community work.
- 3) **How can I earn VSU's?** By regularly recording volunteer service hours on the VSU log and submitting your log to your county club/county Leadership Development Chairman. VSUs should be reported in the KEHA year in which the service occurred.
- 4) **How are VSUs categorized?** The VSU program has been reworked and expanded to include four categories of service. Those categories include Extension, KEHA, Community and Personal.
- 5) **What counts as volunteer hours in each category?**
Extension - All Extension Agent directed programs, including “train the trainer” lessons where you participate in agent-led training then teach the lesson to your club or other audiences. This category also includes assisting with any program organized and presented by an Extension agent like judging a 4-H event, leading a 4-H club, volunteering at an Extension field day, etc. This also includes volunteering for activities like 4-H Speech contests, Farm Safety Days, 4-H Reality Store, LEAP, or serving as a member or officer for the county Extension Council, county Family and Consumer Sciences Advisory County, County Extension District Board or State Extension Council. Counted hours should include your training, preparation time, travel time and delivery time to your audience. The key here is agent-led and directed programs where the KEHA member is a volunteer.

KEHA - Programs that originate and are directed by KEHA leaders and members. This includes service to a club, county, area, or the state as a committee member or officer. Participation in training sessions and organizing and leading KEHA-sponsored events should be counted. All volunteer hours from planning, preparing and conducting the meeting or activity should be included, as well as travel time, phone and/or messaging time and activity/presentation time. All volunteer time for club, county, area or state KEHA projects, fundraisers and special initiatives would be counted in this category. Examples include: making quilts for the Center for Courageous Kids, baking for local bake sales, planting trees, picking up trash in local clean-up project, etc.

Community - This category is for your service as a member or officer within community groups not Extension or KEHA coordinated or led. Examples include: local home owner's association, library board, Rotary or Kiwanis, Eastern Star, parent-teacher organizations, etc. This category is also for reporting volunteer time mentoring/tutoring students at school, with local literacy programs, senior home visits/music programs, American Cancer Society, Red Cross, local health departments, etc. as long as the volunteer role is not related to an Extension-led activity or Extension Homemakers activity. Also report serving as a volunteer first responder, on a local school board, any governmental appointments, jury duty, or any other similar roles. All volunteer hours from planning, preparing and conducting the meeting or activity should be included, as well as travel time, phone and/or messaging time and activity/presentation time.

Personal - This category is for discretionary reporting of any unpaid service to family, friends, and neighbors. It includes babysitting relatives not living with you, taking a neighbor or friend to the doctor and/or shopping, mowing the neighbors' lawn, shoveling their snow, raking leaves, etc. Church and faith-based participation such as choir member practice, Sunday school, transporting church members and other religious activities can also be included in this category.

- 6) **How do members report their individual hours?** The log for recording Volunteer Service Units (VSUs) can be found in the KEHA Manual Appendix. Make as many copies as necessary and total the number of hours per category before sending the log to the Club/County Chairman for Leadership Development.
- 7) Clubs may elect to report hours as an entity provided no individual member of said club is reporting individual hours as well. This eliminates the potential for duplicate reporting and confusion. Clubs with 1000 hours or more in a given year will be recognized.
- 8) **How are hours reported to the state level?** The County Chairman must forward the compiled County VSU Report Forms to the Area Leadership Development Chairman by August 15. The Area Leadership Development Chairman then completes the area VSU Report Forms and sends the form to the State Chairman for Leadership Development by September 15.

- 9) Each hour of your service should be counted in only one category. In the case of projects or programs that may cross category lines, choose the category that best represents that activity.
- a. *Example:* Happy Homemakers Club partners with a 4-H agent to conduct a sewing camp for kids. If leadership is shared by an agent and a KEHA leader, count those hours as **EXTENSION** due to agent involvement.
 - b. *Example:* Country Ladies Club partners with a local school to teach basic sewing skills to students after school. Since the project is organized and presented by KEHA members, these hours count as **KEHA** hours.
 - c. *Example:* Susie H. Smith volunteers with the Cancer Society and provides local residents transportation to oncology appointments. These hours are reportable under **COMMUNITY** because it is a specific function through a community group. However, If Susie transports Aunt Lulu as a personal favor, the hours count as **PERSONAL**.

Recognition:

At the COUNTY level:

- a. A listing of all members with any hours reported by category should be shared via the annual meeting program, a newsletter, social media, website, etc. The county council, working with the County Leadership Development Chairman, should determine the most appropriate means to share the listing.
- b. The top three members in each category will be recognized and presented with a certificate at the annual county meeting. The County Leadership Development Chairman is responsible for this recognition.
- c. The county will send a report of all members in the county with more than 500 hours or more of total hours across all categories, as well as the listing of the top three individuals per category to the Area Leadership Development Chairman.
- d. It will no longer be necessary to hold hours over to the next year as all hours will be recognized at some level each year.
- e. If your county annual meeting is held before the end of the KEHA year when reports these reports are due, this information will need to be saved by the County Leadership Chairman for certificate presentation at the next annual meeting or at another time designated by the county council.

At the AREA level:

- a. The top three individuals reported from each county in each category will be compared with the other county individuals of the same honor to determine the top three from each category for recognition at the Area meeting. These individuals will be recognized with a special certificate.
- b. All members with 500 hours or more (across all categories) will also be recognized and receive a certificate as will any clubs reporting 1000 or more hours (across all categories). This will be the responsibility of the Area Chairman. If the area annual meeting is held before these numbers are known, the information will be saved and certificates presented at the next annual meeting.

At the STATE level:

- a. All members with 500 hours or more will continue to be listed in the recognition booklet as will any clubs reporting 1000 or more hours.
- b. The member from each area with the highest total hours in each of the categories will also be listed in the book and receive a special state certificate.

IMPLEMENTING A COUNTY VSU PROGRAM

The Volunteer Service Unit (VSU) Program is a system for documenting and certifying time spent in volunteer activities. This program is for Extension Homemakers volunteers who wish to use records of volunteer services for the purpose of recognition, potential employment or advancement, volunteer career advancement, or personal satisfaction.

- 1) The Chairperson of the VSU Program at the state level is the Educational Chairman for Leadership Development.
 - A. Each county is *strongly encouraged* to appoint/elect a Leadership Development Chairman.
 - B. The County Leadership Development Chairman is expected to attend and receive training from the Area Leadership Development Chairman. [The Area Leadership Development Chairmen receive training each spring at the state KEHA State Meeting.] A packet of materials will be distributed to each county for your use with county clubs.
- 2) The duties of the County Leadership Development Chairman should be clearly defined at the time the program is initiated at the county level. As the program is put in place/established, the following duties are carried out:
 - A. The County Leadership Development Chairman will promote and publicize the VSU Program to each club.
 - B. The County Leadership Development Chairman may arrange a VSU training for individual members or club presidents/representatives who wish to participate in the program. A suggested training meeting program might include:
 1. Introduction, background, and advantages of the VSU Program;
 2. Explanation of the VSU Log, categories of service and directions to access the log;
 3. Discussion and practice in filling out and documenting volunteer service hours;
 4. Discussion about due dates within the county and within the area in order to meet the state deadline of September 15;
 5. Explanation of VSU Recognition Certificates (when and how awarded, etc.); and
 6. Questions and Answers.
 - C. Clubs and individual members send logs to the County Chairman by July 1 each year.
 - D. The County Leadership Development Chairman will review the volunteer service logs, verify the information reported if necessary, compile the County VSU Report and send the report to the KEHA Area Leadership Chairman. The Area Chairman will tally all county reports, complete the Area VSU Report and send the report to the state KEHA Educational Chairman for Leadership Development.

- E. The County Chairman for Leadership Development will compile a listing of all members reporting volunteer service with the total hours reported per member to share as deemed appropriate by the county council AND issue certificates to the top three members for each of the categories.
- F. The Area Chairman for Leadership Development will issue certificates to each member with 500 or more TOTAL volunteer service hours AND to the top three members in the area for each of the categories.
- G. The State Chairman for Leadership Development will compile a booklet listing all members with 500 or more TOTAL volunteer service hours for posting to the KEHA website and distribution at the KEHA State Meeting. Additionally, the state chairman will present certificates to the KEHA members and clubs reporting the most volunteer service units in each of the four categories across the state.