

VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE  
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# An Introduction To People Involvement

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Community Resource Development



Four-H

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061  
and  
Virginia State University  
Petersburg, Virginia 23803

Prepared by:

R. Michael Chandler, Extension Specialist,  
Community Resource Development

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no. 301-006  
VPI  
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**Community Resource  
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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and September 30, 1977, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Mitchell R. Geasler, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, and Vice Provost for Extension, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061; Clinton V. Turner, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia 23803.



The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service takes great pride in welcoming you to the People Involvement program. As a volunteer advisor, you will actively participate in the development, delivery, and evaluation of Extension educational programs designed to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Virginia. The purpose of this brochure is to introduce you to the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service and the People Involvement program.

## **The Nature of Extension**

The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, funded by federal, state, and local governments, provides educational programs which focus on important problems and concerns of the citizens of the Commonwealth. Specifically, these programs are developed in the areas of agriculture, home economics, 4-H, and community resource development to help Virginians:

- Produce food and fiber products efficiently.
- Conserve natural resources and use them effectively.
- Manage home resources wisely to achieve family goals.
- Develop youth as individuals and as members of the family and the community.
- Improve a community's capacity to cope more effectively with community problems and opportunities.

Your local extension office is part of a statewide network with offices in 95 counties and 12 cities. These offices, while part of your local government, are also linked administratively to six district offices located in Abingdon, Roanoke, Appomattox, Warrenton, Richmond, and Windsor. In turn, this network is tied to supporting faculty and administrative staffs at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg and Virginia State in Petersburg. The federal link in this cooperative effort is the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

## The Need for People Involvement

The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service is committed to developing non-credit educational programs for the people of the Commonwealth. In fulfilling this mission, the Extension Service is guided by the principle of "helping people help themselves." Now, as in the past, Extension's strength is derived from the involvement of people in the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating educational programs that meet their individual and community needs. This process of actively seeking input from the citizens of the community in developing Extension programs is what is meant by the term People Involvement.



## Role of People Involvement

The goal of People Involvement is the establishment of a formal communication linkage between Extension agents and the citizens they serve. This goal is being met in two ways. First, program area committees or commodity committees are being organized for each of the four Extension programming thrusts - agriculture, home economics, 4-H, and community resource development. (See publication 301-002 for further information).

The second way the goal of People Involvement is being met is through the development or strengthening of an overall advisory committee. (See publication 301-003 for further information.) As a member of one of the program area committees or the overall advisory committee you will play a key role in assisting your Extension agents in performing the following functions:



### Program Planning

- Assist in identifying the short- and long-term program needs of the unit.
- Assist in establishing realistic program priorities.
- Assist in the annual evaluation of unit sponsored programs.

### Resource Identification

- To identify and secure resources, facilities, materials, and funds needed to conduct effective programming.

## Community Relations

- To explain and promote Extension programs and opportunities to potential clientele, government officials, and the general public.

## Who are Committee Members

You were recommended for service because of the respect and confidence you have earned as a result of your involvement in community activities and affairs. Further, your commitment to shaping positively the economic and social growth of the people of your community; your knowledge of the community's needs; and, your proven ability to get things done, are personal talents and traits which distinguish you as a community leader.

Committee members have been selected to represent a cross section of the community's active and potential program clientele. As a committee member, you are representative of the community according to generalized geographic and socio-economic characteristics.



## **The Nature of Your Responsibilities**

As a committee member you will:

- Study and discuss community data pertinent to developing Cooperative Extension programs.
- Recommend program needs and direction based on evaluated needs and related information.
- Assist in delivering Extension programs and in evaluating their effectiveness.
- Assist in setting unit long- and short-term goals.
- Serve as a sounding board for new ideas and new program direction.
- Assist in the identification of potential program resources and in promoting the Extension program in the community.

As the chairperson of a committee you will:

- Call meetings and prepare, in conjunction with the Extension staff, the meeting agenda.
- Preside at committee meetings and lead discussions toward appropriate objectives.
- Assign committee tasks when appropriate.
- Make all members feel welcome, and ensure that each member knows and appreciates the goals of the committee.

## **Your Extension Agents' Responsibilities**

Extension agents are responsible for organizing and maintaining the committees as effective working groups, and for developing and carrying out an effective Extension program. Some of the specific tasks agents will perform are:

- Establish the various committees.
- Inform committee members of their responsibilities.
- Familiarize committee members with unit educational programs that are under way and with prevailing and emerging local, state, and national program thrusts.
- Serve as technical advisors to the committees.
- Arrange for secretarial and related services needed by the committees.

