

Food Volunteers Engage Residents

The Extension Master Food Volunteer Program is a national Extension volunteer organization that started as a pilot program for Johnson, Wyandotte and Miami County K-State Research and Extension in 2002. Modeled after the successful Extension Master Gardener program, their mission is to engage and train passionate volunteers to promote and facilitate community health and food safety programs. For the last 20 years, the Extension Master Food Volunteers (EMFVs) have developed into a notable Johnson County organization where people who love food and learning about the latest research on nutrition and food safety, can engage in civic activities that help tackle food insecurity issues and make Johnson County a healthier place to live.

While the EMFVs engage in many activities, their primary method of outreach is to host cooking classes at the Extension Office for the public. Most of the volunteers do not have



Volunteer Judy Masonis preparing foods for recipe testing.

professional culinary experience when they join the program, and many have never taught, managed projects, nor spoken to a public audience before. But the program not only trains the EMFVs on nutrition and food safety topics, it also develops their speaking and project management abilities while demonstrating the importance of teamwork.

Cooking Classes

The classes take a lot of planning and preparation. For each class topic, a team of EMFVs must research recipes, analyze them for nutritional content, and test them to ensure their quality and accuracy. Then they work alongside the Family and Consumer Science Extension Agent to develop presentation materials and a recipe booklet.

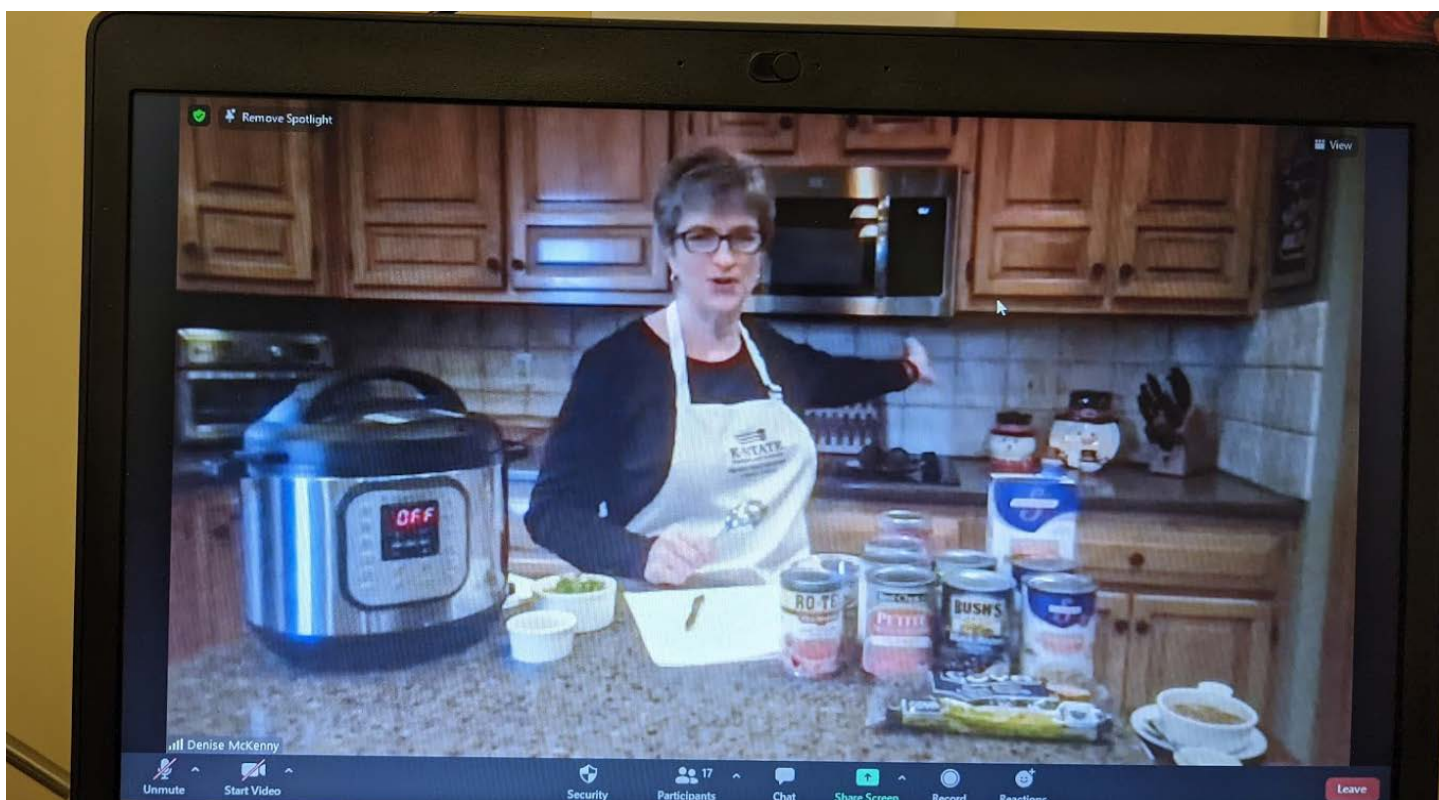
82 Extension Master Food Volunteers



\$135,833.⁸⁸

Dollar value of service of 5,331 hours for EMFV's.

K-STATE
Research and Extension
Master Food Volunteer
Johnson County



Denise McKenny Teaching Soups and Stews Via Zoom.

It's a lot of work, but the volunteers—and their students—love the result. Each year, the volunteers produce at least one adult cooking class and one kids' cooking class per month. They also offer two monthly hands-on cooking classes for adults with developmental disabilities and their caregivers. This unique program, called 4-Course Living, was developed by two EMFVs who are retired educators and worked closely with special needs students in the school system.

Volunteering in a Pandemic

Like many, the EMFVs were challenged by the pandemic. Hosting several in-person cooking classes each month was no longer an option, so they did what the rest of the world had to do—they went virtual. They produced 44

cooking demonstration videos during the lockdown period that were posted on the Johnson County Extension Facebook page and YouTube channel. When the office received a grant to offer Silver Clovers virtual programming for seniors suffering from pandemic-related isolation, the EMFVs had an opportunity to return to teaching—but from their home kitchens this time. They used their smart phones to share cooking techniques and recipe demonstrations while answering questions from a live virtual audience.

As the world starts to shift into a new normal, the lessons learned from the pandemic will not be lost by the EMFVs. They learned the world still needs people to teach meal prep, food budgeting, and cooking skills. And they

learned how to reach an audience even when in-person gathering was not possible. These lessons have helped expand the EMFVs' outreach. They plan to offer video presentations, virtual classes, in-person classes, and hybrid classes now—and beyond.

