

The Farm Volunteer Profile

Haha, the title is a little misleading.....because we absolutely do not have a volunteer profile, at least not the way you would normally think of a “profile”. I was recently asked that question on a local radio show we were asked to participate called “Sustainable Living” on WMNF, hosted by Kenny Coogan and Annie Ellis. The answer is that our volunteers are comprised of 80 families: representing about 15 different countries and cultures; are as ethnically diverse as you can imagine; represented by the entire socio and economic strata and have every level of gardening experience from zero (most often), to very accomplished. Our members are single individuals looking for community; moms and dads looking for information and educational opportunities for kids; working executives that recognize the value of releasing stress by being outdoors and working with your hands; and retired folks still looking to learn from others but also imparting their wisdom. We believe the colliding of those cultures and levels of experience, along with the collective thought and collaboration that naturally occurs within a diverse group is what differentiates us from other farms. As I mentioned on the radio show, “we aren’t for everyone”, even though we have a lot of folks that come out and identify with what we are doing. Unfortunately, many people know it’s what they should be doing for their health, but at the end of the day, they won’t devote the time, commitment and resources to do what is required. In that regard, we recently published our “Volunteer member in good standing” checklist:

Volunteer, “member in good standing” checklist

Premise: The farm only thrives as a result of dedicated volunteers that enjoy the company and culture of the farm and are committed to its constant improvement and stated mission. If some are not in compliance and not participating as required but still enjoying the benefits, it’s discouraging to others and creates ill will and discontent. Therefore, we would like members to score their own involvement at the farm against our required standards for membership.....and determine if we are the right fit:

Time

First and foremost is our time at the farm. As stated at orientation, in the application and regular reminders.....membership requires being at the farm at least twice a week and spending 3-5 hours a week. This would include working on your personal bed, group/community responsibilities and projects. Like everything, we are all busy but we make time for what is important. Is the farm important to you?

Communication

Effective communication is the cornerstone of every organization. Our method of choice is GroupMe (today) and it has been effective for many years. Parts of it can be messy and overwhelming (we have some folks that LOVE to talk) but it’s also full of love, care, concern, tips and great (sometimes vital) information. Group and project leaders want and need your input, even if it’s to say “I can’t be there”. Are you staying up to date with what’s going on in your group and at the farm and communicating regularly?

Community

We believe that people that love being outdoors, enjoying nature and attempting to live a more sustainable lifestyle by growing their own food constitute.....a “tribe”. In that tribe we should generally enjoy the company and community with likeminded people. We are better, smarter, stronger and wiser in community and it’s one of our core values. How involved are you with your group or project and do you regularly attend meetings, workdays and events?

Resources

Our farm is a qualified 501(c)3 nonprofit and therefore exists by the generosity of individuals and businesses that believe what we are doing is noble and worthwhile. We have never had to beg for money or have fundraising events to stay open. More so, members make monthly bed donations without being asked, make other monetary gifts to the farm periodically and simply pick up needed items that we consume.....because they are needed. Put simply, we support the things we believe in and is the farm worthy of your investment?

The Parents (and grandparents)

We love children and are praying their experiences at the farm will create a lifelong love for nature, being outdoors and growing their own healthy, organic food. However, it's unfair for other members to be responsible for the health and safety of your children and many are uncomfortable with how they are monitored. Volunteers in good standing are considerate of this and abide by the stated policies (and numerous posted signs) regarding monitoring their children, making sure they aren't anywhere that is prohibited without adult supervision and are always under your supervision. Are you a considerate parent and farm volunteer?

The Asset

The farm property was donated, in perpetuity, to Abby's Organic Community Farm and can never be used for any other purpose. In that regard, at this time we are all the guardians and caretakers of this valuable community asset. Therefore, the care, maintenance and improvement of the grounds, the farmhouse, greenhouse, garage, playground, stage, bee experience, animal farm (coming soon), blueberry project (coming soon) is everyone's responsibility. There are always things to clean, straighten and improve.....are you part of that?

Legacy

The farm is the living legacy of Abby Saylor, created to provide the next generations a place to accomplish everything aforementioned. Our own legacy to our own friends, families and farm visitors is being written every day as we all endeavor to develop, improve and make our lovely farm a treasure in our community. How important is that to you?

If this looks like something you can do we would love to hear from you. We currently are at capacity and have a waiting list to join the farm. Please go to our website abbysfarm.org to fill out the volunteer application and you will be invited to a introduction/orientation workshop. You can also contact David at the information below.