VOLUNTEER/INTERN HANDBOOK
EXPECT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

MAKE AN IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY
SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE • GAIN HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE
INTERN • EXPLORE YOUR INTERESTS
ASSIST OTHERS • NETWORK • MAKE NEW FRIENDS
HELP THE ENVIRONMENT • LEARN ABOUT GOVERNMENT
Thank You

for becoming a VIP - Volunteer in Pinellas!

We rely on YOU — our dedicated volunteers and interns committed to making a difference — to help us effectively serve citizens and visitors of Pinellas County.

Volunteers in Pinellas (VIPs) are dedicated and prepared to serve the citizens of Pinellas County. Our VIPs span a variety of ages, occupations and backgrounds, and have a multitude of skills. There’s a role for everyone.

We want to match your interests, needs and abilities with exciting volunteer and intern opportunities. Matching these diverse offerings to available volunteer and intern opportunities creates a rich and mutually beneficial partnership between you and the community. We want to create a meaningful and genuinely rewarding experience for you.

Once you are placed, your supervisor will hold an individual or group orientation to review department policies and procedures. Training will be provided if required.

You may be subject to a background check depending on your assignment.

If you are under the age of 18, you will have adult supervision and must have a signed and notarized parental consent form.

Welcome to the VIP family, and thank you for making a difference!
Dear Volunteers and Interns,

As a Pinellas County volunteer or intern, you join a special group of individuals dedicated to serving fellow citizens. It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to our VIP family and thank you, in advance, for the outstanding impact you will make in the community.

Pinellas County Volunteer Services was founded in 1992 and today is more than 3,000 volunteers and interns strong. Our success is due to the dedication of individuals like you who give your time, energy and talents.

Our volunteers and interns have one thing in common – your commitment to make a difference. During your time here, your efforts will have a direct impact on providing a high level of service to the citizens of the County. We recognize that your time is very valuable, and we are grateful you chose to contribute to Pinellas County Government.

There are many volunteer and intern opportunities within Pinellas County. Volunteering is a great way to learn new skills, serve your community and meet new people. We want to encourage you to log your hours in the VIP System so you are eligible for various milestone awards and recognition for your contributions.

Be sure to follow Volunteers in Pinellas on Twitter and Facebook.

Remember to take the time to get to know your site coordinators, fellow volunteers and interns, County employees, the citizens you serve, and most importantly, have fun!

Pinellas County Volunteer Services
Volunteer Services Program Mission Statement

The mission of the Pinellas County Volunteer Services Program is to PROMOTE, RECRUIT and PLACE citizen volunteers in their County government and FACILITATE the involvement of Pinellas County employees in community events and projects.
We, the volunteers and interns of Pinellas County, as providers of public service are committed to the highest standards of personal integrity, honesty and competence.

To this end we will...

...Assist in providing open and accessible government by giving courteous, responsive service to all citizens equally.

...Accept only authorized compensation for the performance of our duties and respectfully decline any offers of gifts or gratuities from those we encounter through our volunteer service.

...Disclose or report any actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

...Comply with all laws and regulations applicable to the County and impartially apply them to everyone.

...Neither apply nor accept improper influences, favoritism or personal bias.

...Use County funds and resources efficiently, including materials, equipment and time.

...Respect and protect the privileged information to which we have access in the course of our duties, never using it to stir controversy, to harm others or for private gain.

...Represent responsible government, acting at all times to merit public confidence in ourselves and Pinellas County.
My experience was a lot of fun and was filled with opportunities!

-Alyssa C.
Richard O. Jacobson Technical High School

All of the staff were focused on getting me exposed to as many aspects of the job as I was willing to learn, and the result was a more rounded experience than I could have hoped for at most places.

-Cheyenne L.
Public Health, University of Florida
Your rights as a volunteer/intern

You have the right to be a volunteer/intern regardless of your military status, political affiliation, age, race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, religion, disability, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by law.

You have the right to a competent and thorough interview and an assignment appropriate to your interests, background and abilities.

You have the right to know and learn about the department’s policies, programs, employees and plans. You also have the right to receive orientation, ongoing training and supervision.

You have the right to offer suggestions and be heard.

You have the right to an evaluation of your performance. You also have the right to help evaluate the program you serve.

Your responsibilities as a volunteer/intern

Be a dependable team player, supporting your volunteer/intern group and staff. This means to work well with the public, keep an open mind, and be flexible and willing to learn and try new things.

Be honest and clear during the initial interview about your interests, skills, expectations and availability.

Be aware of the agency’s purpose and the requirements and expectations of your assignment. You may be entrusted with confidential information. It is your responsibility to respect and maintain that confidentiality.

Be dependable, reliable and follow policies and procedures. Discuss what you like and don’t like about your position with your supervisor. Participate in training and accept the guidance and direction of your supervisor. If you must be absent, notify your supervisor as far in advance as possible.
**Benefits of Being a VIP**

You may join the Pinellas Federal Credit Union by presenting your volunteer/intern badge.

You may use the County’s Wellness Center in Clearwater by presenting your badge and attending a short orientation.

You may be eligible for learning opportunities through Pinellas County, when applicable.

**Internship Opportunities**

Pinellas County is proud to partner with high school and college students to provide our workforce-of-tomorrow with valuable and practical hands-on working and learning experience. Interning with Pinellas County Government yields many personal benefits while you make a positive difference in your community. High school and college students currently enrolled, in good standing, in an educational program that has a formal academic student internship component may apply for an internship. The internship has to be for academic credit or offered through the school’s program. Visit [www.pinellascounty.org/intern](http://www.pinellascounty.org/intern).

**Recognition**

Your contributions and time are valuable. To recognize your efforts, we have implemented a rewards program based on contributed hours. Additionally, departments give volunteers certificates and lapel pins representing years of volunteer service. We hold departmental appreciation events throughout the year and highlight our volunteers during National Volunteer Month in April.
As a volunteer/intern, you are representing Pinellas County. It is your responsibility to become familiar with and abide by the County’s Drug-Free Workplace Policy (DFWP) at www.pinellascounty.org/hr/drugfree.

Our DFWP prohibits the use or possession of alcohol and illegal drugs while you are volunteering with Pinellas County. You are required to sign a statement agreeing to Pinellas County’s DFWP.

Within the guidelines of the DFWP, an Appointing Authority or supervisor, who is of the opinion that reasonable suspicion exists that a volunteer/intern is under the influence of alcohol or drugs while on duty or representing the County in an official capacity, will request the volunteer/intern undergo a test of his or her blood or urine.

The Pinellas County DFWP prohibits volunteers from:

- Use, possession, manufacture, distribution, dispensation or sale of illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia on County property or in County-supplied vehicles.
- Use, possession, manufacture, distribution, dispensation or sale of illegal drugs off County property during working and non-working hours.
- Testing positive for alcohol or drugs under the provisions of the substance-abuse testing procedures in conjunction with a reasonable suspicion, as defined in Section III of the DFWP publication.
- Refusing to consent to alcohol or drug testing when requested by management.

- Interfering in any manner with specimen collection procedures.
- Use of alcohol during breaks or lunch periods.
- Use of alcohol while off duty wearing a County uniform with County insignia or a County ID.
It is the policy of Pinellas County to provide a work environment free from bullying and verbal or physical conduct that unreasonably harasses, disturbs or interferes with a volunteer’s work performance or that creates an intimidating, offensive or hostile work environment.

County volunteers/interns are expected to avoid any activity which harasses or disrupts the work of their co-volunteers, co-interns, coworkers, subordinates or the general public. Any verbal or physical conduct which harasses another volunteer, intern, employee, subordinate or member of the general public with whom volunteers/interns may have contact, because of that person’s race, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy, age or military status, is prohibited.

“My internship was a continuous positive, educational experience. Staff treated me like a true team member. The projects were meaningful, and I was given real ownership of tasks or ideas. The experience bolstered not only my skillsets and confidence but affirmed a career interest in natural resources and public service.”

-Matthew H.
Urban Forestry
In particular, sexual harassment is strictly forbidden, including harassment of members of the same sex. Sexual harassment in the workplace is a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Any sexually harassing or offensive conduct, whether by managers, supervisors, employees or non-employees who enter the County’s workplace, is prohibited. Such prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Unwanted physical contact or offensive conduct of a sexual nature, including flirtations, advances or propositions;
- Harassment concerning an individual’s sex, sexual interest or orientation, sexual innuendos and offensive jokes or descriptions of personal sexual conduct;
- Demeaning, degrading or insulting comments about a person’s physical appearance;
- Displaying in the workplace photos or other materials which are demeaning, insulting, intimidating or sexually suggestive;
- Demeaning, insulting, sexually suggestive or otherwise offensive written, recorded, telephonic or electronically transmitted messages.

Any of the above-listed activities or offensive behavior based upon an individual’s race, national origin, religion, disability, pregnancy, age or military status is also prohibited.

If you experience harassment:

- Document the incident by writing the date and time of the incident, what was said and done, who was present, where it occurred and witnesses to the incident.
- Report the incident orally and/or in writing to your supervisor, department head, the Appointing Authority, Pinellas County Human Resources or the Pinellas County Office of Human Rights.

Violations of the County’s Anti-Harassment Policy may result in termination.
Risk Management staff is available to assist you with any questions regarding a work-related injury. Contact Risk Management at (727) 464-3664.

**Volunteers**

If you are injured while performing your volunteer task, call 911 immediately if there is a medical emergency. If an injury is NOT a medical emergency:

1) Notify your supervisor immediately

2) Call the Company Nurse® Hotline (855) 921-9508

The hotline is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. You will receive instant telephonic first aid advice from a Registered Nurse.

**Interns**

Interns are NOT covered by Worker’s Compensation. If you are injured while performing your intern task, call 911 immediately if there is a medical emergency.

**Other Safety Guidelines**

For any safety-related questions, contact Risk Management. Volunteers/interns may operate a County motor vehicle after successfully completing training required by Risk Management. Upon notification, Risk Management will review the person’s driving record to verify the individual has an acceptable record.

Volunteers/interns must be trained and certified on any equipment before being allowed to operate equipment independently. When personal protection equipment is required, the volunteer/intern must either provide his/her own or be properly equipped and trained in its use by the department prior to engaging in any such work.

Volunteers/interns may not carry firearms while performing volunteer service on behalf of Pinellas County.

Volunteers/interns are welcome to sign up for safety training offered by Risk Management. Contact your supervisor to learn more.
Volunteers/interns have a right to know about exposure to hazardous/toxic substances in the workplace.

Departments will provide volunteers/interns with information about the hazardous/toxic substances with which they work and will train volunteers/interns in safe handling practices and emergency procedures.

Volunteers/interns must not be knowingly exposed to any unnecessary danger or hazards in the workplace and must not perform any functions requiring a license or certification unless they have a current license or certification to do so.
I would highly recommend taking an internship in Pinellas County because of the team’s desire for interns to succeed.

- Adriana C.
  Public Relations, University of Florida

I loved the experience so much, I decided to become a full time Emergency Management employee with Pinellas County Government, and I enjoy every day of it!

- Spencer S.
  Emergency Management Specialist

The education opportunities never end. I have gained certifications and skills that will help me with my career as I continue moving forward.

- Stephen M.
  Disaster and Crisis Management, Everglades University
The following basic policies apply to all categories of volunteers and interns. Volunteers and interns:

- Perform duties within the rules set by the responsible supervisor.
- Perform tasks assigned by their supervisor and approved by the responsible administrator.
- Must maintain strict confidentiality concerning any information to which they may have access within their volunteer/intern duties. In some cases, confidentiality agreements are required.
- May not use information generally unavailable to the public and obtained by reason of their volunteer/intern positions for the personal benefit of themselves or others.
- Must be 18 years of age or older, except youth volunteers and interns who must have adult supervision by a long-term volunteer or a Pinellas County employee.
- Shall sign in and out, either electronically in VIP Management or on the Volunteer Daily Log. This record is maintained by all departments or facilities to record volunteer/intern names, dates, hours of service and tasks assigned.
- Will receive ID cards from their department upon completion of orientation and must pass a background check.
- Who are public officers/employees may not volunteer/intern to perform services in their own department.
- Must read and agree to abide by the County’s Drug-Free Workplace Policy information at www.pinellascounty.org/hr/drugfree.
Log Your Hours

All long-term volunteers and interns are required to sign in and sign out when performing duties for the County. This may be done either electronically (VIP Management) or by utilizing a log sheet and turning it in to the volunteer site coordinator.

Emergency Preparedness

It is critical for you to know the correct action to take before, during, and after an emergency or natural disaster. The official Hurricane Season is from June 1 to November 30. Please ask your supervisor to provide you with:

- A review of your department’s emergency preparedness plan
- Who to contact before, during, and after an event
- Alternative work schedules
- When to report back to the site location

Use of Social Media and Photos

We understand that many of our volunteers and interns are on social media. We are too. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter. However, it is important for our employees, volunteers and interns to present themselves in a professional manner. Please abide by the following:

- Volunteers and interns may not represent themselves as members of the Pinellas County Government workforce or volunteer/intern team on social networking sites regarding matters specific to their official duties.
- Volunteers and interns shall not disclose any confidential or proprietary information of the County on any personal social media platforms, including the use of County logos or other branding.
- Volunteers and interns shall not create unauthorized social media sites that intend to represent or present itself as a County-sponsored social media platform.
By reading this Handbook and signing a Commitment and Placement Form, you agree to the following:

• The volunteer knows how to report volunteer injuries and understands that injuries incurred while volunteering for Pinellas County Government may be covered by Workers’ Compensation.

• The intern understands that injuries incurred while interning for Pinellas County Government will NOT be covered by Workers’ Compensation.

• The volunteer/intern has read and understands the County’s Anti-Harassment Policy.

• The volunteer/intern has read and understands the County’s Drug-Free Workplace Policy and agrees to abide by it.

• The volunteer/intern irrevocably consents to and authorizes the use and reproduction of any and all photographs and/or video recordings taken of him/her for any purpose whatsoever, without compensation. All photographic images shall constitute Pinellas County’s property, solely and completely.

• The volunteer/intern agrees to abide by the County agency to which assigned. The volunteer/intern will abide by the Project Guidelines, will perform assigned duties to the best of his/her ability, and will comply with the director or supervisors.
Volunteers In Pursuit of Areas of Opportunity

- Airport
- Animal Services
- Clerk of the Circuit Court
- Communications
- Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Economic Development
- Emergency Management
- Environmental Management
- Extension Services
- Facility Management
- Florida Botanical Gardens
- Graphic Design
- Heritage Village
- Human Resources
- Human Rights
- Human Services
- Information Technology Laboratory
- Management and Budget
- Mapping
- Museums
- Parks and Preserves
- Plant Operations and Water Quality
- Public Works
- Risk Management
- Solid Waste and Recycling
- Stormwater and Vegetation
- Supervisor of Elections
- Tax Collector’s Office
- Transportation
Nellases Are VIPs!