Hello to all!

Two of my retirement goals were to volunteer for the Birmingham Botanical Gardens (BBG) and to receive my Master Gardener certification because I believed that the missions of these two organizations were so important.

I started in 2016 by volunteering in the BBG Library on a weekly basis and I am always impressed that it is the only public library devoted to horticulture in the U.S. It was here that I first encountered the interns of the Master Gardener classes and, over the years, it has been an honor to encourage and assist them with finding books on subjects they were interested in. Then in 2018, I was thrilled to be accepted into the JCMGA class where new friends were made, especially while working on our hands-on group project with girls in an after-school program. We built raised beds and worked with them to plant vegetables and flowers along with classroom instruction showing them they could be successful at trying something new.

I wish I could convey how much these volunteer and learning opportunities have meant to me, giving me a sense of purpose, of giving back to the community through gardening. Volunteering on the Master Gardener Helpline has been a rewarding challenge, acknowledging that we are a friendly face and/or voice to assist home gardeners. The knowledge gained through the intern classes also afforded me the opportunity to serve as the lead on our homeowners' association project to redesign our neighborhood entrance.

There are many opportunities to volunteer, both through community engagement and serving on a JCMGA committee. Check out our web page at www.jeffcomg.org for many options or talk with a Board member regarding committee needs. I have enjoyed serving on the Sunshine Committee and assisting with Membership and fundraising events along with volunteering as Secretary, Second VP and now as At-Large Director of JCMGA, Inc. It has continued to be an inspiration to work with those in the JCMGA/ACES program and I have admired the varied talents, skills, and leadership of many of you. Keep inspiring those around you!