

## **Meet Veronica Maxwell: She's Back Where She Belongs**

By now, many of you have already met Veronica Maxwell. Since she joined OLLI in October as our new director in training, she has sat in on classes, participated in some shared interest groups, and joined committee meetings.

I first met Veronica at a joint event of the Food! Glorious Food! and OLLI Outdoors Shared Interest Groups. She came to meet the members and learn about what we do. By the end of her visit, she had talked to nearly every one of the 40-plus people there. And we were thoroughly charmed.

Veronica has a friendly smile and a big, outgoing personality. But even more than her positive personal aspects, her strength as our new leader lies in her wealth of experience in education, fundraising, working with volunteers, and serving older adults.

### **From Younger To Older**

Veronica began her career nearly 20 years ago working with a much younger group of people.

Shortly after earning a bachelor's degree in biology and African studies from the University of South Florida, Veronica became a schoolteacher for the Hillsborough County school system. For the next eight years, she taught science and related topics to middle and high school students.

Her next career move brought her into a totally different world.

As senior program coordinator for nutrition and wellness for Hillsborough County Aging Services, Veronica helped manage the county's senior centers and supervised the staff and volunteers who serve them.

In this role, she was working with people who had led lives rich with experience.

"I had worked with children before, but never older adults," Veronica says. "I met so many amazing people who had accomplished so much in their lives. And I loved that they were willing to share their wisdom and their experiences. It added color to my work. I felt like I was standing on their shoulders."

Among Veronica's roles as senior program coordinator was management of the numerous volunteers who participated in the centers. She also cultivated the many corporate donors who helped fund the centers' events.

## **Coming Home**

But although she immensely enjoyed her work with the county, she kept a decade-long goal in mind – to return some day to USF.

“For as long as I can remember – ever since I went to school here at USF –I’ve wanted to end up here,” she says. “As a student, I fell in love with USF. I loved living in the dorms. I loved walking the grounds. I loved going to classes. I loved everything about the university.”

So when the OLLI director's role became available, she immediately applied. And much to her delight, she was selected for the job.

Now, Veronica is busily seeking to learn as much as possible about OLLI and its members. She will fully take over the organization's reins in January when Director Ara Rogers will retire.

Veronica's goals are to build on what Ara has achieved for OLLI-USF: to expand the membership numbers, encourage donorship, enhance the number and type of class offerings, and maintain the organization's lively cadre of volunteers.

She describes her experience so far as “wonderful.”

“I'm loving everything about it,” she says.

In addition to her bachelor's degree, Veronica holds a master's degree in science education in instructional leadership. She is currently working toward a doctorate degree from USF in career and workforce education.

She also is active in the volunteer community as a leader in organizations that include Leadership Hillsborough, Hillsborough Association of Volunteer Administrators, the Suncoast Credit Union Senior Advisory Board, Touched By An Angel Community Outreach, the Church of God State Women's Board, and the International Harvest Center Church of God.