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Executive Summary

Name of Legal Applicant or Sponsor:

SOWEGA Council on Aging/Area Agency on Aging.

The SOWEGA COA sponsors different programs concerning older South-West Georgians.

SOWEGA COA is a single agency that sponsors these 21 programs through out the community. Its mission and values are as follows:

Vision: Living Longer, Living Safely, Living Well

Mission: The SOWEGA Council on aging coordinates a system of services that promotes the well-being and independence for older and disabled Georgians and helps them to achieve healthy and self-sufficient lives.

Values: Listen to older people and our partners who serve them.

Advocate on the behalf of our consumers by anticipating their needs.

Produce measurable outcomes that significantly impact the well-being of older people and their family caregivers.

Respond to changing needs and preferences of our diverse and growing elderly population.

Accountability and results.

Open Communication.

An estimated 444 volunteers will serve. They will serve children and youth, frail and isolated seniors ,veterans, public safety, the homeless ,tax filing for elderly, hospital and Hospice needs through a network of 18 volunteer stations such as schools, senior centers, wellness program ,food pantries, Meals on Wheels, adult day care, transportation, telephone response, soup kitchens, GA Cares. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. At the end of the 12-month performance

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period, anticipated outcomes include increased physical activity, improved nutrition, access to health care, increased social support to disabled and lonely seniors-services that increase senior's ability to remain in their own homes (age in place) with improved quality of life.

The CNCS federal investment of \$45,010 will be supplemented by \$26,866 non-federal resources.

Strengthening Communities

Strengthening Communities

The RSVP project service area consists of 14 counties of Southwest Georgia. This region includes the following counties: Baker, Calhoun, Colquitt, Decatur, Dougherty, Early, Grady, Lee, Miller, Mitchell, Seminole, Terrell, Thomas, and Worth. According to the 2010 Census Report, this service area is 100% rural with 18% of the population over the age of 65, 45% Minority, 20% Elderly Poverty, and 36% Minority Low-Income. With counties that cover a 6,000 square mile geographic area, and population ranges from 4,074 to 96,065, there are obvious challenges in providing consistent, cost-effective services.

The SOWEGA Council on Aging (COA) was established in 1966, to meet the physical, mental and spiritual needs of older people in the area. It has expanded over the years to meet the needs of an ever-increasing number of older people within the agency's 14 county service area. One of the COA's oldest programs, the RSVP program, was established in 1973. RSVP was established as a result of Federal Funding Appropriations by Congress to the ACTION program, which facilitated the COA's initial successful application for funding. The funding source required a local match of 25% in the first year, 50% in the second year and 75% in the third year. During the establishment of RSVP, the COA was a small agency with a limited budget and staff, too limited to serve the vast area of Southwest Georgia at that time. Budget restrictions limited the number of staff that could be hired; community

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volunteers did most of the work of the organization. Subsequently, senior volunteers became a vital part of the organization as it grew. Such growth allowed the COA to enhance the "Meals on Wheels" program which relies on volunteers to deliver meals to home bound elderly.

Although Dougherty County is technically a rural area, it is home to several educational institutions and businesses: Albany State University, Darton State College, Albany Technical College, Miller Coors Company, Proctor and Gamble, Mars Snackfood US, Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital, and the Marine Corps Logistics Base (MCLB) are the most prominent. Other counties in the service area are predominantly small farmland with secluded towns widespread across the area. The large senior population faces problems of isolation, loneliness, lack of transportation, poor nutrition, and limited access to health care.

The MCLB has been a partnering entity for the RSVP project for many years. The MCLB has recruited veterans and other volunteers to develop a Ramp Crew that builds ramps for disabled and elderly individuals in the area. The RSVP Director often refers individuals to the MCLB Ramp Crew for service in specific areas, and visa-versa. This partnership allows more individuals to be served within the area by assisting in serving more of the rural population.

The various educational institutions in the service area support the RSVP project by providing interns to help with various programs. Albany Technical College, Albany State University, and the University of Georgia (Athens-based) are current partners. The partnership is beneficial in that the students are able to complete their required volunteer hours and the RSVP program is able to serve more individuals, with the help of the students.

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There are several businesses in the project area that specifically support the RSVP project. Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital (PPMH) is one of the largest Medical facilities in Southwest Georgia, and supports RSVP programs through donations and funding for materials for the Ramp Crew and Teddy Bear Ladies (A program in which teddy bears are made for use at the Hospital). As a United Way Agency, the COA receives funding from the United Way of Southwest Georgia to be used for the RSVP project. Kimbrell Stern, City of Albany, GA. and ACC Distributers are local businesses that support the RSVP project with sponsorships for RSVP programs and events.

This region has great historical significance in the area of the Arts, Politics, Social Justice, Georgia History and American History. Formerly inhabited by the Creek Indians, the area was named "Thronateeska" (the Indian word for "flint") - because the flint mineral is found near the river. The Creeks used this Flintstone to make tools and weapons, such as arrowheads. The Flint River of Southwest Georgia and its tributaries touch nearly every county and community of the area. Surrounded by a farming region, which produces large amounts of cotton, the counties, which touched the Flint River, served as drop off and landing points for transportation of cotton by steamboats on the river traveling from Atlanta to the Gulf of Mexico. Some of the communities and towns, which bordered the Flint River, are still referred to as "ports" or "port cities".

There are numerous well-known Southwest Georgians who were born or have lived in the area:

- * Pianist, songwriter and soul singer Ray Charles was born in Albany, GA.
- * Luke Bryan, country music artist, was born in Leesburg, GA.
- * Paula Deen, Chef and host of Paul's Home Cooking on the Television Food Network, was born in Albany.
- * Olympic Gold Medal jumper, Alice Coachman was born in Albany.

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- * Jim Fowler, animal expert and host of the television show, Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom, was born in Albany.
- * Otis Redding, American soul singer, was born in Terrell County.
- * Nellie Brimberry, who became the first Postmistress of a major U.S. Post Office in 1910, was born in Albany.
- * Nancy Lopez, Golfer lives in Albany, GA.
- * Sanford Bishop, U.S. Representative for last 14 years, resides in Albany.
- * Buster Posey, World Series Champion with the San Francisco Giants was born in Albany.
- * George Busbee, former governor, lived in Albany, GA.
- * Peter Zack Geer, Lt Governor of Georgia from 1963 - 1967 was born in Colquitt, GA.
- * Phillip Phillips, American Idol winner is from Leesburg, GA.

The 21-member COA Board Of Directors is the RSVP program Grantee's governing board, and represents a cross-section of our local population.

The RSVP Community Participation Group (Advisory Council) gives advice and makes decisions that directly affect the RSVP program, with quarterly meetings and hands-on involvement with RSVP policies and issues such as fund raising, project selection, and evaluation. In program year 2013, this Advisory Council will help with evaluation of RSVP by surveying station supervisors and volunteers, and by studying RSVP monthly statistical reports. To make this group more helpful to our entire public service area, representatives from some of the other counties will be added. The SOWEGA Council on Aging Board and the RSVP Advisory Council strive to maintain memberships of diverse backgrounds each year.

Senior service is incorporated into community activities as other non-profit agencies express a need for RSVP volunteers. How we respond to these requests, in a timely and productive manner, forms a bond

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that builds good partnerships. We fill their need for volunteers, and they fill our need for a good volunteer station with placements and benefits for volunteers. Business partners are developed when the RSVP project maintains a retail account - meals for volunteers, lumber and supplies for building ramps-and then receives from the business a discount or free delivery. A business gives RSVP an in-kind or cash donation for an event, and RSVP provides free advertising to the business or group in our program, both printed and verbal.

The COA has established strong relationships with the local media. Two television stations, local newspapers and magazines provide coverage for the 14 county service area. Media often go "on site" and film or photograph volunteers on the job, such as the Ramp project or the AARP/RSVP Tax Aide program. The COA Development Director is responsible for all Public Relations, Fundraising and Special Events for all agency programs and services throughout the 14-county service area.

In order to mobilize community resources, the COA partners with local agencies and media. For example, the RSVP program joined with AARP to offer a Tax Aide Program. AARP provided the complex tax training, a lap-top computer for each volunteer tax counselor, and other supplies; while the COA provides press releases and media coverage, a receptionist to take reservations for clients, and an appreciation event at the end of tax season.

The COA Ombudsman program is mandated by the state to provide Patient Advocates for the Long-Term Care facilities they monitor, and RSVP assists in meeting this need. The lead Ombudsman provides important training for volunteers, to instruct them how to be a good visitor, how to look for signs of abuse and neglect, and how to handle problems between patients and nursing home staff. The LTC volunteers, or Advocates, then submit activity reports to the Ombudsman program, and these are

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included in their quarterly reports to the state and to RSVP.

RSVP volunteers are active in attending and participating in various local celebrations: Martin Luther King Day, Christmas and 4th of July parades, 9/11 observances, Council on Aging picnics and annual meetings, Town Hall meetings and seminars. When asked to facilitate an event, RSVP staff will call volunteers who have expressed an interest in this type of assignment, often Baby Boomers.

An important objective of the RSVP project is to enhance the capacity of community organizations and institutions. When PPMH realized-14 years ago-that they were discharging wheel chair patients, often amputees or stroke victims, with no way of getting into or out of their houses, they looked for help. RSVP stepped in with the Ramp Program.

PPMH's Hospice program recognized a need for drivers: some of their patients need transportation to a doctor or dentist, or they just want to take a ride out into the country. Senior volunteers will enhance the capacity of Hospice by providing this service, as well as respite care for the client's Caregiver. The RSVP Director is and will continue to be a member of the local Association of Volunteer Directors. The group meets, monthly or quarterly, in different agency facilities to discuss topics of interest within the volunteer programs.

Networking and sharing common interests with local agencies allows the RSVP project to bring awareness to the varied programs and services available to the community and builds partners and participants.

In addition to funding support RSVP receives from the United Way of Southwest Georgia, the local United Way Volunteer program provides volunteers of all ages to local non-profits. They often refer

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older volunteers to RSVP, and RSVP will refer younger volunteers (under 55) that are seeking volunteer service. The United Way slogan, "Live United", applies to all service programs, and RSVP strives to make this a motto too.

Recruitment and Development

Recruitment and Development

The successful recruitment of volunteers is essential to the continued success of the RSVP efforts in Southwest Georgia.

Similar to for-profit organizations and industries, RSVP will aggressively pursue talented individuals to serve as volunteers with two major strategies; Traditional Marketing Strategy, The "Headhunter" Strategy, and the In-house Recruitment Strategies.

Volunteers will build new skills and develop leadership potential through excellent training the projects they serve, for example, AARP Tax-Aide program, the RSVP Ramp project, and the Long Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman visitors. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requires accuracy from its tax volunteers; and it trains them, with one week of hands-on experience, to produce tax returns to pass their quality-review panels. Then AARP recognizes their exceptional service and assures them good media coverage, both TV and print. The volunteers realize their meaningful contribution to the community, and appreciate the thanks of their clients.

Training in carpentry skills is available through membership in the ramp crew, where the older and charter members of the crew share their skills with new volunteers as they come into the program.

The Long-Term Care visitors are trained at luncheon meetings by the lead Ombudsman and her staff.

Many stations have their own recognition events, including the Tax-Aide group, and hospitals. These, plus the annual RSVP appreciation luncheon, show volunteers the impact of their service, and how it affects the quality of their own lives.

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A community-wide event, anticipated all year, is the annual RSVP recognition luncheon. It is held in a large church dining room, with special music, a speaker, greetings from elected officials and Council on Aging staff, recognition of hours served, and special awards.

We will be recruiting new volunteers in 2013 to serve areas such as faith-based homeless and feeding programs, disability access, education and mentoring, elder abuse/neglect, in-home care, tax filing, food distribution, service to veterans, and healthy future for the elderly.

Retaining has been no problem for this RSVP project. When our volunteers receive good training and are placed with good supervision, and when our staff are trained to be good listeners, volunteers usually stay with us long-term. We lose volunteers through natural channels-moving, entering a nursing home or assisted living facility, chronic illness, or death-but this is to be expected.

Project staff receive excellent training at state, regional (cluster), and national conferences. The GA Association of Project Directors plan state meetings and conferences calls that help us learn from our peers. Our Grantee provides staff training in leadership and other subjects through the local colleges. She also plans retreats and entertainment to provide relaxation and stress relief for staff members.

Stations provide volunteer training, but some are total volunteer groups that offer one-on-one peer training. Examples include the ramp project, the ladies who sew teddy bears for the hospital or emergency vehicles, and the food pantry and other soup kitchens.

When a new station is developed, the Memo of Understanding and various RSVP forms for tracking and reporting volunteer data are reviewed with the station supervisor. The assistant director meets with supervisors quarterly or monthly to keep them up-to-date on any changes in our program. RSVP staff and grantee representatives review the role of RSVP to community participation groups, especially civic clubs and churches, in programs and presentations.

Program Management

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Program Management

By identifying the issues/problems that confront our local population today this project will develop and support stations that can successfully meet these needs in new or different ways. Albany is currently facing a homeless problem; a recent survey indicated a population of 326 homeless people in our immediate area. RSVP will be seeking ways to meet their needs, especially through some of the faith-based agencies that work in this area now. Volunteer assignments will be developed to insure meaningful placements for volunteers. Baby boomer assignments will help in this area of need, and also be meaningful to the baby boomers. The chairman of the survey committee shared these statistics with RSVP:

326 total homeless found. They figure that several hundred others were not found for the survey.

25 were precariously housed

132 were sheltered

38 were unsheltered

75 were facing eminent housing loss

90 were housed, but consider themselves homeless

(sleeping on a relative's porch, etc.)

8 were in jail or detox

10 undetermined

61% African American

37% White

In developing a formula for outlining the correct response to these numbers, it is important to note the ratio of those unsheltered (38) to the total number of homeless (326); which is a representation of 1/10th of those who are homeless. This ratio (1/10) which represents the percentage of unsheltered in an urban setting such as Albany, GA can also be used as an indicator or "red flag" as RSVP endeavors

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to attack this issue in rural areas. This further assists us in planning and developing volunteer stations which match the needs presented by these numbers.

For example, in an area where this 1/10 ratio exists, RSVP will initiate the following protocol: (1) research opportunities for volunteer assignments in collaboration with Homeless Serving Agencies in both urban and rural settings; (2) recruit the appropriate number of volunteer personnel for one to one contact which will match the 1/10 ratio; and (3) Respond with directed service that produces measurable results that will take the individual from the status of unsheltered to sheltered. This is just an example of how RSVP can and will approach any challenge regardless of the conditions.

This research-recruit-respond methodology provides the foundation necessary to develop our volunteer stations to match the proportion of need in any given service area: providing various volunteers per area of need. In this area, RSVP will be helping by providing complementary support to organizations like the Albany Coalition to End Homelessness and the Economic Development Authority to name a few. The research-recruit-respond cycle is reinitiated as direct response to on- going assessments of our work plans.

Assessment of the project requires that we review this grant and check the goals and objectives of each work plan. If our data collection shows that we are meeting our goals and objectives, then our performance measures indicate a high quality project.

This review provides our annual assessment and end-of-year Program report (PPR), and it is enhanced by indications of community or client impact reported as station feed-back. Some of our stations conduct their own assessments. An example is the Tax-Aide station. They conduct a detailed assessment at the end of tax season for AARP and RSVP, and this is a major part of our annual assessment.

To manage all the information and data for this project, we use Volunteer Reporter. It provides

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information on the number of volunteers enrolled and serving, and personal data such as age, race, and stations they are assigned to. Volunteer Recorder tracks each volunteer's hours served, and the hours generated by each station. Data compiled from the Volunteer Reporter helps RSVP measure project impacts and outcomes.

Efficient fiscal management insures the effective use of our resources. Sowega COA's accountant works out of a local CPA office. She submits FFR's to CNCS, and provides copies of FFR and monthly financial reports to the RSVP project director. She keeps separate accounts for a Ramp project building fund, and in-kind donations are recorded as they come into RSVP, and thank-you's are sent.

Local funding for RSVP has always been secured through United Way. They included RSVP in their brochures and films and power-point presentations. United Way and its agencies experienced a serious economic down-turn in 2009 and 2010, but it still shows strong support for RSVP, and an ambitious campaign has just begun for 2012. Financial and in-kind support comes from Phoebe Putney Hospital, such as cash for lumber, a trailer to carry ramp material, a van, volunteer meals on workdays, and money for fabric and yarn for teddy bears and premie caps/blankets. These items are made by volunteers. RSVP volunteers work on Wednesdays to sew and create the bears and blankets for Phoebe Putney Hospital. They work in a large meeting room at the Knights of Columbus Hall. It is rented for other events for \$400 a day, but for this RSVP project it is an in-kind donation.

Organizational Capability

Organizational Capacity

The Southwest Georgia Council on Aging (SOWEGA COA) was originally incorporated as the Albany-Dougherty Council on Aging in 1966, with a mission to meet the physical, mental, and spiritual needs of older adults in the local Albany, Georgia area. In 1979, in order to accurately reflect the growing service area, the name was changed and recognized throughout a mostly rural 14 county area of

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Southwest Georgia. At this time, the State Office on Aging designated the agency as an Area Agency on Aging. Over the years, the agency has expanded to meet the needs of the ever-increasing number of older and disabled individuals in the public service area.

The SOWEGA COA plans, provides, develops, and coordinates services for individuals age 60+ and the disabled population. With over 21 core programs and services, the SOWEGA COA is continually establishing new and innovative programs to meet the needs of the area.

Since the original agency was small, with a limited budget and staff, it was necessary to organize community volunteers in order to assist with the delivery of programs and services. The SOWEGA COA applied for, and was awarded, the RSVP sponsorship in 1972. This was the first RSVP grant in Georgia, outside of Atlanta. The SOWEGA COA has grown to the current staffing of 150 employees; however, the need for volunteers continues to increase due to the increased Aging Services needs in the area.

Advocacy

ACTO (Alzheimer's Caregivers Timeout Program)

CCSP (Community Care services Programs)

Elderly Abuse Prevention (Prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older adults)

Emergency Response Units (24 hour monitoring)

Family Caregiver Program

GeorgiaCares (Community education for Medicare, Medicaid, and other insurance)

Gateway (Aging and Disability Resource Connection)

Homemaker Services (In-home assistance)

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Legal Services (Legal assistance for the elderly)

Long-term Care Ombudsman (Advocates for residents of long-term care facilities)

Meals on Wheels (Warm, nutritious meals delivered to homebound individuals)

Senior Employment (Job opportunities for those age 55+ who meet requirements)

Wellness (Provides activities for 15 Senior Centers and community education)

Senior Centers (15 Centers serve warm meals and offer social programs)

The "Meals on Wheels" program was established in 1968, and is the SOWEGA COA's largest program.

Volunteers are the key to success for this program and are needed to assist in the delivery of over 165,000 meals per year.

A Board of Directors governs the SOWEGA COA. The Board of Directors is responsible for discussing and voting on high priority issues, setting organizational policies, and hiring and evaluating key staff.

Kay H. Hind, Executive Director SOWEGA COA, has been with the agency since its inception in 1966.

Hind has forty-six years of experience in the Aging Industry and is a strong advocate for improving the lives of the elderly and disabled in the service area. She has guided the development of the

SOWEGA COA from a small staff, small budget, and small office in a Housing Authority apartment

to what it is today -- a thriving organization whose administrative offices are located in 4 buildings in

Dougherty County and a 14 county service area that includes 15 Senior Centers.

Hind currently serves on the Georgia Council on Aging, and has served on boards and committees at state, regional, and national levels in the past. She has held leadership positions in all professional

organizations related to the field of aging, she was a delegate to the White House Conference on Aging in 1971, 1981, 1995, and 2005, and received the John Taylor Mauldin award for outstanding

contributions in the field of aging. The Southeastern Association of Area Agencies on Aging

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recognized her with the Excellence in Aging Award, and in 2012, she received the honor of "Distinguished Older Georgian". She was recognized for this honor at the State Capitol in Atlanta by area Representatives Winfred Dukes, Carol Fullerton, and Ed Rynders on the floor of the House of Representatives. This award is a singular honor presented to citizens of note 80 years of age or older.

Marilyn Westbrook is the current RSVP Program Director; she began her career as the van driver and program assistant in 1978. Marilyn continues to provide transportation and oversight to many groups of volunteers, and maintains personal contact with all senior centers in a 14 county area. She visits ramp applicants and other seniors in their homes to establish their needs and plan assistance for them. The RSVP Program also provides assistance in faith-based organizations and health care organizations. Because the SOWEGA COA pioneered the volunteer field in Southwest Georgia, the agency is sought by other agencies, needing volunteer services, throughout the 14 county service area.

Marla Rubsam, CPA for Bob Baker and Associates is contracted to provide responsibility for record keeping and fiscal management for the agency. Rubsam assists in managing the budget and record of expenditures to include a yearly CPA audit of all programs.

While the RSVP Program is our agency's only direct Federal grant, all of the agency's other programs are funded through the Older American Act, Federal funds distributed to the state Division of Aging Services. These funds are then channeled to the AAA's across the state. Local fundraising efforts are integral to the agency, with funds being raised for both Capital improvements and program delivery.

The SOWEGA COA RSVP Program was the first RSVP project in Georgia outside of Atlanta, it has grown and changed through the years to maintain compliance with national RSVP policy, with the

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entire focus of the program on senior activity and services and impact-based programming.

The SOWEGA COA has provided the RSVP Program with personnel management support, facilities, equipment, and purchasing procedures. The roles of staff are clearly defined; a policy handbook is available, and up-dated regularly, including a travel policy. The SOWEGA COA maintains the capacity to provide for its core Aging programs through its \$5.9 Million budget, presence in 14 counties, and current administrative buildings. In October of 2012, the SOWEGA COA began work on a new facility in Dougherty County . The new facility will be the hub of all offices, programs and services for the agency; and will also serve as the Senior Center for Dougherty County. Due to the fact that the current structures and offices in Dougherty County are old and limited in programmable space, the new facility will allow the agency to maintain the core programs and services the agency delivers throughout its 14 county service area, and to implement new programs and services to an expanded number of individuals. The new facility will also provide for increased sustainability for the SOWEGA COA through memberships, program fees and space rentals. Diversifying funding sources is crucial to the future of this agency and its programs.

The agency's self-assessment and evaluation culminate in the annual report, which is printed and distributed at the agencies annual meeting. The agency also works with a long-range plan known as the "Area Plan", which is updated and submitted to the State Division of Aging Service annually. Throughout the years, the plan has demonstrated a long history of success in management, assessment, training, fiscal accountability, community leadership, and integrity.

Other

Other

In program year 2013, the Sowega RSVP program will be assisting CNCS in meeting the following

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CNCS focus areas: Healthy Futures, Education, Service to Veterans, and Economic Opportunity.

Education initiative will be addressed through Elementary Education work plan, Economic Opportunity through Tax Counseling, Healthy Futures through several Health and Nutrition work plan, Service to veterans through veterans services in Community Based programs.

Criminal Background Checks.

Healthy Futures;

According to state and county health departments and Albany's hospital, Southwest Georgia seniors are at risk

Southwest Georgia seniors are at risk for a number of health concerns, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer. These concerns are very prevalent in our area and must be addressed. The core problem which is the common denominator for some, if not all of these concerns, is obesity. A first-of-its-kind study performed by the University of Georgia and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provided county-by county look at national obesity rates and finds a wide swath of Georgia with obesity rates exceeding 30%. It finds that, in Georgia, huge sections of East, Central and Southwest Georgia have obesity rates exceeding 30%. The higher density rural areas correspond with areas of high rates of diagnosed diabetes and high rates of poverty. This is consistent with the S W Georgia Council on Aging' s assessment within the 14 county service area. The area's and the state's worst obesity rate is Terrell County's 34.9% percent. Georgia ranks second in the nation in its obesity rate.

Wellness Program. RSVP will be working with the Wellness Program by locating, recruiting, training and placing volunteers (at least 2 per county). The volunteers will serve as personal motivators for seniors within the Wellness Program to encourage physical activity and nutrition education. In later portions of the fiscal year, the

For this impact-based work plan, RSVP will be partnering with the S W Georgia collaboration will

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result in Health Fairs and establishment of Farmer's Markets in hard to serve areas where seniors can purchase fresh produce. The collaboration will provide RSVP with the desirable canvas necessary to address obesity systematically.

The home and neighborhood environments are also important in obesity prevention by virtue of food availability, food preparation, cues and opportunities for physical activity, and family support. RSVP through its collaboration with families in rural areas and through supportive collaboration with churches can support healthy eating and physical activity. Unfortunately, the characteristics of some homes and neighborhoods are adversely related to physical activity environments, availability of healthy foods, and family support for physical activity and maintaining an ideal body weight.

In order to offset this adversity, RSVP's collaboration with churches will accomplish the following by method of resource sharing and outreach: (1) increase use of neighborhood features that support physical activity where there is plenty of land, minimal traffic and living in a safe and friendly neighborhood (ie parks, recreation areas, church facilities for recreation, etc.); (2) increase awareness about the importance of family group recreation (note study by Emory University suggested that the majority of participants were not physically active with their family members due to schedule conflicts and lack of time); (3) increase opportunities and access to healthy foods by decreasing cost barriers (through local farmer's markets, pantries, etc.) and the need to drive to a larger town for a supermarket with good variety of foods; and (4) increase (through church involvement) the likelihood of cultural/environmental change for family-based conversations about weight. Make it a higher priority among family discussions!

RSVP can positively impact obesity both in a systematic way and in a cultural/environmental way as well. The aforementioned Emory University study suggested that environmental change and family support for physical activity are essential to maintaining a healthy weight. RSVP Volunteers will, by

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encouraging and motivating, increase healthy behaviors and decrease the prevalence of obesity among rural residents.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

NOT APPLICABLE