



## **Narratives**

### **Executive Summary**

The University of Louisiana at Monroe (ULM) is the sponsoring agency for RSVP Ouachita. ULM's Mission Statement reflects its commitment to serving as a gateway to diverse academic studies for citizens living in the urban and rural regions of the lower Mississippi Delta. ULM values the continued development of mutually beneficial partnerships involving schools, government, businesses, and a variety of community-based agencies. ULM is categorized as an SREB Four-Year institution, as a Carnegie Master's College and University I, and as a COC/SACS Level VI institution. RSVP of Ouachita is proposing that 300 RSVP volunteers will serve in Ouachita and Union Parishes across a variety of programs; 100 of these volunteers will work in the primary focus area of Education (k-12) on the United Way partnered Volunteer Reading Initiative. Since 34% of the Louisiana adult population is illiterate (reading below fifth grade level), the primary service activity will be increasing literacy among young children so as to stop this tragic pattern. One hundred and sixty students from 6 lowest performing schools in reading will be provided with 30 minutes per week of tutorial reading by volunteers across the school year. Volunteers will meet the parents and the children they will be tutoring before they actually begin. This program will begin in April with four elementary schools (Clara Hall, Shady Grove, Swayze, and Thomas Jefferson). These schools are all in high poverty areas, where up to 97% of the children receive free lunches. The three year expected outcomes from this program are: (1) Increased reading levels by at least 1 standard deviation on standardized test from pre to post program, (2) Increased enthusiasm for reading in children as reported in parental surveys, and (3) Enhanced motivation and reward reported by mentoring RSVP volunteers and assessed by surveys pre to post program. Four sites have already signed MOUs with plans to sign two more. The CNCS federal investment of \$67,709 will be supplemented by \$29,020 of non-federal resources.

### **Strengthening Communities**

## Narratives

Ouachita Parish RSVP serves two parishes, Ouachita and Union. They are located in the north/central part of Louisiana. Union Parish borders Arkansas to the north, and the scenic Ouachita River to the east. Ouachita Parish, southeast of Union, is located on the Ouachita River. Union Parish is a rural parish with a population of 22,732 (2010 US Census). Ouachita Parish has a population of 154,919 (2010 US Census). The two parishes combined have approximately 25,000 persons 55 years of age or older. Approximately 13% of all adults living in Ouachita Parish are aged 62+ years; 31% of these are living alone (US Census, 2010). According to the Census Bureau (2010), in Union Parish, 18% of the adults are aged 62+ years, with 27% of the households having a co-resident of 65+ years of age. Union Parish has approximately 22% of their rural and remote population living below poverty level and Ouachita has 21% (US Census 2010) Union Parish residents are less educated, overall, than Ouachita Parish residents. According to a recent report (News Star, 9/22/12), Ouachita parish, in which Monroe is located, saw the highest increases in poverty rates from 2010-2011 (US Census, 2012). Throughout the state, the Monroe metropolitan region (which includes Ouachita and Union parishes), had the highest poverty rate increase from 20.9% in 2010 to 27.9% in 2011. Louisiana's poverty rate is the 3rd worst in the nation. Nearly 910,000 Louisianans live below the poverty level, an increase of more than 80,000 people since 2010; 1 in 5 residents live in poverty now. According to the 2009 Northeast Louisiana Economic Fact Book, approximately 21% of Ouachita residents have some college and 33% possess a high school diploma or GED, while the respective percentages for Union Parish are 18% and 40 %. Education is often tied to income and both parishes have similar median household income for 2010 with Ouachita having \$39,823 and Union, \$38,930 (US Census 2010). 60.8% of the residents of Ouachita Parish are Caucasian and 36.8% identify as African American; for Union Parish, respective percentages are 71.4% and 27.2% (US Census 2011)

Among the many problems facing Louisiana residents today, such as poverty, low educational

## Narratives

attainment, little economic opportunity, and poor and/or unavailable healthcare, is one of illiteracy. According to the Northeast Louisiana Economic Fact book (2011), more than 34% of adults aged 18+ years in Louisiana are illiterate, or read below a 5th grade reading level. In order to stop this vicious cycle of generational illiteracy, RSVP will partner with the United Way's Volunteer Reading Initiative. The overarching goals of this Initiative involve: 1) creating enthusiastic readers who can read at or above grade level; 2) empowering communities to help children; and 3) a long-term goal of increasing the number of children who will go on to graduate from high school.

United Way devised this program based on the dismal school district statistics from our 4th graders on standardized iLeap state-wide testing. Among the 6 schools targeted for this reading initiative, there are significant problems with poverty and 4th graders are reading below grade level. ( Shady Grove Elementary - 473 students - 92% on free lunch - 52% reading at grade level; Swazy 397 students - 97% on free lunch - 35% reading at grade level; Clara Hall Elementary - 306 students - 98% on free lunch - 52% reading at grade level; Thomas Jefferson - 206 students - 100% on free lunch - 42% reading at grade level.

As can be seen by the above numbers, many of these children are at-risk for non-completion of school and/or dropping out. In fact, in Ouachita Parish our dropout rate for youth in grades 9-12 is 7%; almost double the rate for the nation (4%). Across these schools approximately 13% of the children have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), indicating special needs in learning. Out of the entire school district budget, only 6% is spent on elementary education (GRADES k-6). This paints a dismal picture for school success among our Ouachita and Union Parish elementary school children. It is not surprising that this region is plagued by unemployment, poverty, and failure in school. Therefore, we hope to break this cycle of illiteracy evident among our adults by intervening with elementary school children early on to promote school success.

This new partnership with United Way of Northeast Louisiana will give our volunteers graduating

## Narratives

from non-focus area programs an opportunity to volunteer in this new initiative. Further, newly recruited volunteers will have an opportunity to help create enthusiastic readers who can read at or above grade level in schools that have received below average scores in reading. The schools that have been identified are all in high poverty areas, where up to 97% of the students receive free lunches. RSVP will partner with United Way of Northeast Louisiana, Ouachita Parish School Board, Union Parish School board and local libraries to put in place a tutor/mentoring program in Ouachita and Union Parishes 2nd and 3rd grades. RSVP will recruit 100 volunteers to read/tutor 160 students in 2nd and 3rd grades. Thus, 160 students will complete participation in our CNCS supported program. At least 80 (50%) of the reading mentor volunteers will be veterans or spouses of veterans. There will be no problem getting these volunteers as 86% of our volunteers attending our recent Volunteer Recognition Luncheon are veterans or have a spouse or family member who is a veteran. Volunteers will complete a training class taught by United Way. After background checks are completed all volunteers will be assigned a school. A meet and greet meeting will be held at each designated school where parents, students, teachers, and school support staff will have a chance to meet and discuss how the program will be managed. Volunteers will be paired with students. Schedules will be made, with sign in sheets placed at each school. DIBELS testing will be used to determine each student's level of reading. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) are a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills. It will be administered three times a year by the school: prior to program starting, mid-program, and at the conclusion of the program. It is expected that at least 120 of the program participating students will improve on standardized testing by the end of the program. Parent and volunteer surveys also will be utilized at the beginning and ending of the school year to gauge any attitudinal and visible changes toward reading. RSVP Director

## Narratives

will visit each school on a monthly basis to assess if any changes need to be made in volunteer assignments. Sign in sheets will be collected monthly and data entered in the Volunteer Reporter computer program. At the end of the year volunteers and students will have lunch together, discuss their progress, and make plans for them to continue reading during the summer months.

### Other Focus Area RSVP Programs

Project HEROS: Helping to Educate and Reunite Our Enlisted Servicepersons, According to the Kaiser Family Health Facts (<http://www.statehealthfacts.org>), there are 304,889 veterans in the state of Louisiana (1.4% of total U.S. population). Of these 304,889 vets, the majority are male (277,700) vets who saw combat. The largest percentage (31%) is Vietnam War vets, with the second largest number of vets serving in the Gulf War. As the U.S. population is aging, so is the veteran population. It is estimated that over the next 30 years, the percentage of veterans aged 65+ years will double to represent 54% of the veteran population. Although currently the vet population aged 65+ years accounts for less than 30% of the total vet population, older vets consume a disproportionate share of Veteran Administration (VA) services and resources (Villa et al, 2003). RSVP of Ouachita has been meeting with its community partners, the Chennault Military Museum, VA State Officer of Louisiana, and the University of Louisiana at Monroe (ULM) Gerontology Department for awhile in preparation for this grant. RSVP and ULM partners met with returning vets from Afghanistan and active military to understand what needs are prevalent among the vet population and their families. According to Lt. Col. Jason Wing, "It's incredibly important for our warriors to connect with their local communities and to feel like a productive part of their communities, and volunteering helps with both". Mentoring a vet program -- a program offered through Project HEROES will utilize discharged vets to mentor newly returning military in assisting them in coping with the shock and stress of returning. There will be vets who are paired with recently returning military, recruited from the Patriot Riders, and other partners; those seeing combat will be paired with returning military that has also seen combat and the

## Narratives

reverse as well. Based on the focus group information, and as one vet indicated, "you don't want to just share your feelings with anybody, especially if they are not a vet themselves." "Talking to a psychologist, when they may not be able to relate, is not helpful." Thus, the returning military and their vet mentors will be invited to meet biweekly to discuss whatever they need to. This approach is modeled after the vet-to-vet program, which has been quite successful nationally. However, an important novel aspect will be added to this program, that of making an informative video (professionally done with ULM's Curriculum and Instruction Video Production Studio) on how we, as a community, can help returning military and their families. This documentary will feature vets who wish to suggest to the civilian population what they see as the most effective ways to help newly returning military. There is no other video like this available, so this will be an important, innovative product coming from the Program and Project HEROES.

There are currently 11,553 veterans (2010 US Census) residing in Ouachita and Union Parishes. In the past two years, four returning military have taken their own lives. A focus group of veterans, active military, Chennault Aviation and Military Museum, Chase Bank, and The Louisiana National Guard and ULM met to discuss needed programs. According to the veterans and active military, many of the veterans and returning military need a mentor. RSVP was asked to recruit veterans to mentor other veterans and returning military. RSVP volunteers that are veterans will mentor newly returning military/older veterans (many have still not come to terms with their part of the military action) in assisting them in coping with the shock and stress of returning home. The goal is to help all returning military become part of their community again, and then continue to help others.

Another vital program which RSVP manages is VIPS -- Volunteers in Police Service. Our VIPS volunteers serve a vital function for our community by insuring safe neighborhoods and freeing up commissioned officers to handle more pressing incidents. For example, our VIPS volunteers patrol in Sheriff's cars to guard against vandalism, victimization of shut-in elders living alone, and public

## Narratives

safety. These 25 VIPS volunteers are instrumental in protecting our communities and their residents. RSVP volunteers working at the Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Department and Union Parish Sheriff's Department complete a 21 hour training course, attend bi-monthly meetings including training modules, and are placed with an existing RSVP volunteer for on-the-job mentoring. The volunteers patrol neighborhoods, school zones and follow up on extra patrol request. They patrol all areas of Ouachita and Union Parishes, making communities a safer place for all. Volunteer hours and number of extra patrol requests are supervised by the Chief Deputy and time sheets and patrol numbers are received in the RSVP Office.

Recently, our area was spared the wrath of Tropical Storm Isaac. However, we were not so lucky in 2005 with the onslaught of Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Gustav in 2008. Louisiana has been devastated by hurricanes since time immortal, thus it is imperative that our community residents be educated and prepared for natural disasters. Our main focus is hurricanes, with hurricane season running from June to November. Our RSVP volunteers have provided a vital service to our community in this area through volunteer opportunities in Disaster Assistance, such as the Citizen Corps Search and Rescue Team. This group does specific training to search by horseback in wooded areas for persons lost or hurt (e.g. hunters). In 2009, this group found an autistic boy that had been missing for 6 hours, and in 2010 they found an elderly gentleman with dementia who had wandered away from his home. They also do foot searches if it is dark and are trained to work evacuations if needed. They have been called out many times by the Sheriff. These RSVP volunteers train community volunteers to assist the Office of Homeland Security during emergencies and disasters.

Two significant problems encompassing Ouachita and Union parishes are diabetes and obesity as a precursor to mortality from hypertension and heart disease (LDHH, 2005). In fact, according to the Louisiana 2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), DHH Bureau of Primary Care and Rural Health, diabetes affects 10.2% of Louisiana residents, and Louisiana is ranked 7th highest in

## Narratives

the nation for diabetes. Diabetes mellitus (diabetes) is a serious chronic disease caused by either a shortage of, or a decreased ability to use, insulin, the hormone that allows glucose (sugar) to enter cells and be converted to energy. Uncontrolled, this deficiency leads to damage of the vital organs, caused by the prolonged presence of glucose and fats in the blood. Persons who are obese, physically inactive, members of ethnic minorities, (especially African Americans), and those with a family history of diabetes or prior gestational diabetes, are at a higher risk of developing diabetes. According to the Urban Institute study of the US and obesity (2007), northeast Louisiana is at the highest risk for obesity.

Diabetes is a common and serious disease in Louisiana, especially in the northeastern section. It is costly not only in terms of the burden it imposes on the State, but also in terms of the human suffering it inflicts, including complications. Of all states, Louisiana has the highest age adjusted rate of death due to diabetes as the underlying cause (42/100,000) and has maintained this high rate continuously since 1996 (BRFSS, 2004). Diabetes is also the leading cause of blindness in adults aged 20 to 74 years, and the most common cause of non-traumatic amputations and end-stage renal disease, accounting for approximately 40% of new cases of end stage renal disease nationwide (CDC, 2003). In 2001, approximately 16% (93,000) of Louisiana hospital discharges and 18% (\$1.5 billion) of the costs associated with these discharges were attributable to people of all ages with diabetes as the principle diagnosis; a great proportion was aged 65+ years. The cost, which reflects the estimates known from cases of diabetes is likely an underestimate, given that only 1/3 of all diabetics ever receive a diagnosis (BRFSS, 2004). The overall prevalence of diabetes in Louisiana is 8.3% (BRFSS, 2004), however demographic factors account for some of the differing rates in regions across Louisiana. In 2004, African Americans had a higher prevalence of diabetes in Louisiana, and nationally, compared to Caucasians--a statistic which still holds today. Women who are African American are at the greatest risk for diabetes, their prevalence rate almost twice as high as African

## Narratives

American males. The likelihood of having diabetes increases with age in Louisiana, with the highest prevalence found among those 65+ years of age (almost 20% compared to 10% in younger groups). The prevalence is also highest among impoverished households or households with lower total incomes in Louisiana, especially those households along the Mississippi Delta. Further, lower educational attainment is a significant risk factors nationally, and in Louisiana, with those having lower education and incomes annually less than \$15,000 having a diabetes prevalence rate of 14% across all ages, and again, much higher in the older segment of this subgroup.

The second leading health problem among Louisiana residents according to CDC (2008) and BRFSS (2004) is obesity, with complications from obesity resulting in hypertension and mortality from heart disease. Obesity and diabetes are linked in that approximately 87% of all diabetics (diagnosed) in Louisiana are also obese. Thirty percent of Louisiana diabetics are overweight, and another 57% are morbidly obese. Because the maintenance of ideal body weight depends on lifestyle choices over which every individual has some control, this is an area where considerable opportunity for impact and intervention exists. Physical inactivity continues to promote obesity in Louisiana residents, almost half (41%) of Louisiana residents do not exercise at all (not even walking). High blood pressure, a consequence of obesity typically, runs rampant here--69% of African American 65+ year olds in Louisiana had serious hypertension problems complicated by diabetes and were on medication (AHA, 2009). Diabetes from low income households (Region 8 Delta parishes), have highest rate of hypertension in the state (79% back in 2004, this has since increased). Fifty-four percent of all adult diabetics in Louisiana have high blood cholesterol. This prevalence is intimately tied with lower income, lower education, poorer households and over-consumption of fatty food. Although African American adults are 40% more likely to have high blood pressure, they are 10% less likely than their non-Hispanic White counterparts to have their blood pressure under control.

Health disparities are preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or

## Narratives

opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantaged populations.

Populations can be defined by factors such as race or ethnicity, gender, education or income, disability, geographic location (e.g., rural or urban), or sexual orientation. Health disparities are inequitable and are directly related to the historical and current unequal distribution of social, political, economic, and environmental resources.

Health disparities result from multiple factors, including

- \* Poverty
- \* Environmental threats
- \* Inadequate access to health care
- \* Individual and behavioral factors
- \* Educational inequalities

Health disparities are also related to inequities in education. Dropping out of school is associated with multiple social and health problems. Overall, individuals with less education are more likely to experience a number of health risks, such as obesity, substance abuse, and intentional and unintentional injury, compared with individuals with more education. Higher levels of education are associated with a longer life and an increased likelihood of obtaining or understanding basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.

A final program to be implemented by RSVP volunteers is disseminating health information in the various sites. This health information will cover proper diet and exercise and ways to prevent the chronic medical conditions affecting our elders in this area. The RSVP volunteers will disseminate information regarding healthier lifestyle tips, resources in the community, and other important healthcare information. Two of the largest hospitals in Ouachita Parish are already conducting "Lunch & Learn" outreach health education seminars and RSVP volunteers will assist with these seminars through a partnership agreement to improve health and access to care in our community.

## Narratives

### Recruitment and Development

Recruitment of volunteers is an ongoing endeavor, utilizing a multi-pronged approach. Not only do we obtain most of our volunteers from word-of-mouth, but we also utilize other means for recruiting new volunteers, through our Advisory Council members, local businesses and health centers, and prior partnerships in which we have had successful projects in the past, (e.g., Paramount Health Care, Inc). Emphasis will be placed on recruiting Baby Boomers. We encourage our volunteers to recruit, as they are our greatest source of advertisement. Baby Boomers are a significant part of the growing older adult population and data show they are different from prior cohorts in educational level, vocal/political power, and economic circumstances. In order to tap into this growing pool of volunteers, we will conduct special recruitment talks targeting businesses in our parishes (e.g., Centurylink) that have retirement planning seminars. At least once per month, we will go to a different business to recruit Baby Boomer volunteers into our program, in addition to the other recruitment sessions also occurring monthly, such as at churches, senior centers and other community sites. It is expected that these Baby Boomer volunteers possess a different skill set than our other, older, non-Baby Boomer volunteers. We are proud of two particular new recruiting efforts which will occur this year. The first is a documentary to be made on a subgroup of the most active volunteers and those they serve in partnership with Dr. Kopera-Frye and a Gerontology Alum, Ms. Kimberly Griffin (both from ULM Institute of Gerontology). The documentary will include: a short segment on research on successful aging and civic engagement, then showcase some particularly active volunteers such as Dianne Guillot, who demonstrates the highest degree of social engagement, followed by interviews with several elders our volunteers have served. This will be an extraordinary recruitment tool for future volunteers, while showcasing the benefits of this program to the community and students in gerontology classes at ULM. A second recruitment tool will involve outreach to more ethnically diverse potential volunteers in our community. This will involve creating

## Narratives

an African American/Black Cultural Heritage intergenerational program in collaboration with Dr. Kopera-Frye, Ms. Griffin, and other church and community leaders. This program will focus on sharing writings, stories, memoirs, customs, etc. from African American leaders, both current and historical. The goal is to offer education outreach programming to our community elders and school children who are African American, while recruiting more RSVP volunteers, hopefully who are ethnically diverse to better serve some of our residents. This is an invaluable tool to get ethnically diverse potential volunteers to join our RSVP Program, while providing technical assistance and training on cultural sensitivity issues.

Our volunteer tracking is a highly efficient system. Every volunteer assignment is discussed with the volunteer station supervisor and RSVP Director to determine selection of volunteers and training that will be needed. Most stations provide specialized training for positions at their station. (How to speak to groups, record items donated to museums, how to properly use a police vehicle, etc.) As indicated previously, the RSVP Director assesses the station's needs in terms of volunteer duties. The corps of volunteers is examined for potential placement at a given station. The Director then contacts the volunteer to ascertain desire to work at that station. All volunteers have the option of changing stations or volunteering at more than one station (approximately 1/3 of our volunteers serve at more than one station). This system has been efficient for 39 years and the volunteers are continually monitored with site visits and with one on one conversation in terms of satisfaction with their assignments. The RSVP staff has been successful at collaborating with the university to offer classes for a cost of \$5 for any senior wanting, or needing, additional education including our gerontology online classes. Our law enforcement and Homeland Security stations provide training for their volunteers, and some disaster trainings are open to all volunteers. RSVP holds an annual Volunteer Luncheon where volunteers and site managers can reflect on the strides they have made in the community. Presidential Awards are given out along with gifts of appreciation. In addition prominent

## Narratives

community officials and local politicians often attend and help serve lunch while expressing their appreciation of the volunteers. We are working with the Ouachita Citizen Newspaper (the local paper) to highlight a "RSVP Volunteer of the Month". RSVP offers a wide variety of volunteer assignments with flexibility and multiple opportunities to stay connected to the community. Recall that a small percentage of our volunteers in both parishes, are African American, hence our year's plan to engage more ethnically diverse elders to meet the needs of diverse clients in the future. Our documentary will highlight several prominent RSVP African American volunteers. We also partner with The Office of Homeland Security. They offer CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) training, CPR and First Aid at no cost to our volunteers. On-line courses are also available that are free of charge. Volunteers at the hospitals are given training on how to deal with the public. The University of LA Monroe's police department will teach self-defense classes for all volunteers. The University also teaches a defensive driving class at no cost. We are always looking for other trainings that may be of help or interest to our volunteers. RSVP will maintain 300 volunteers, but will continue to recruit for volunteer positions that will be needed in Ouachita and Union Parishes. RSVP Volunteers worked 122,152 hours in Ouachita and Union Parishes in 2010-2011. At the national rate for volunteers, \$21.36 per hour, this is a savings of \$2,609,167 for the non-profits and health care organizations in our area.

Our Advisory Council is comprised of business leaders, faith-based leaders, law enforcement personnel, and volunteers. The Advisory Council is an integral part of the quality control for our project. In addition to attending quarterly meetings, they are connected via their community roles as business owners, volunteers, and healthcare and law enforcement professionals. The council plans an exceptional Volunteer Recognition Luncheon each year applauding the work of our volunteers. They greet, serve lunch to the volunteers, acknowledge volunteer contributions to the community, and donate goods for the give-away bags. The Council additionally has evaluated the volunteers in the past

## **Narratives**

and assisted with all fundraising activities. Each volunteer station also has at least one recognition event each year for their volunteers. The RSVP staff never misses a chance to thank our volunteers for their service and to encourage them in their work. Tote bags with various items from RSVP and other donated items such as umbrellas, mugs, flashlights, notepads, pens, pencil sharpeners, and other tokens of appreciation are distributed at the Annual Recognition Luncheon. All items imprinted have the RSVP office telephone number on them making it easier for them to stay in touch with the staff. A new initiative this year will involve designing a leadership development opportunity in the recruitment of new volunteers. An active, long-term RSVP volunteer who is particularly connected to various community entities and who desires a leadership role will be chosen to organize the monthly recruitment sessions for both the Baby Boomer and non-Baby Boomer potential volunteers. The Program Director, Ms. Massey, will train this Field Recruitment Coordinator to conduct the sessions either alone, or with Ms. Massey, or with Dr. Kopera-Frye. This Coordinator will be responsible for setting up the recruitment sessions, monitoring number of volunteers recruited from each site, and advertising the need for volunteers through community publications, newsletters, etc. They will report this information monthly to Ms. Massey. The RSVP staff receives Certified First Aid and CPR training. All RSVP staff have completed Community Emergency Response Team training. Computer classes and management training are provided by ULM to the RSVP staff. CERT training is offered for all volunteer stations and Advisory Participation Groups. Other training opportunities for RSVP staff include: attendance at the Annual Conference, professional development offered thorough ULM, and many one day seminars put on by local civic and healthcare groups. Volunteer station supervisors receive training on all RSVP policies, insurance, and time sheets. We offer our assistance to all of our volunteer station supervisors, as we make regular visits to each station to monitor all programs.

### **Program Management**

Our RSVP office has been in existence for 39 years. Thus, we have developed efficient, systematic

## Narratives

procedures to manage our programs. Compliance with RSVP regulations is assured through a 3-step process: 1) director monitors all tracking of volunteers; 2) the Advisory Council is made aware of all programmatic activities, expenditures, new focus areas of Senior Corps, and votes on any actions; and 3) the RSVP State Program Specialist, Ms. Vicki Schenk, conducts audits at least once every 6 years. She recently completed an audit on both RSVP grants ULM sponsors in April, 2012 and certified that both grants were in compliance with Senior Corps rules and regulations.

To date, 15 stations exist for our 300 active volunteers, encompassing health care, law enforcement, and disaster services, education, and military. These have been long-standing, stable community partners. The relationships evolved due to identified needs arising within these partner stations.

Currently, in order to effectively meet the changing needs of our community, we need to assess what those are. In collaboration with ULM's Department of Gerontology, we will create and implement a brief needs assessment survey to: 1) introduce our program to potential new stations; and 2) address any new community needs. In terms of day-to-day operations in monitoring volunteers, RSVP staff meets with all newly placed volunteers 30 days after placing them at a new station, records all monthly timesheets, and visit stations quarterly. At least 50% of our current volunteers maintain regular contact with the RSVP Director, and all volunteers have equal opportunity access to RSVP Director and staff. Volunteers are notified upon placement that they may contact the RSVP Director for concerns or issues concerning dissatisfaction with a current placement. Upon contacting the Director, the RSVP volunteer would be reassigned to a more suitable placement. While the volunteering is rewarding to our seniors, as noted on prior evaluations, the single most important appreciation effort lies in the annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon. The RSVP Director meets with community leaders (Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Department, Chamber of Commerce, Mayors, Civic Group Leaders, Government Representative and Senators) several times a year to make sure that RSVP is providing a high quality experience for the volunteers, and are addressing the specific needs of

## Narratives

our community. While only an annual evaluation was employed previously by the Advisory Council, this year several types of evaluations will be conducted to insure continuous improvements and meeting of annual goals. First, the RSVP Reporter data file will be continuously updated weekly, as new volunteers are recruited, by the Field Coordinator. The Program Director will inspect the file monthly to see where our volunteers are predominantly working, where else we can place volunteers, etc. To date, the RSVP Advisory Council has asked for site sponsors, volunteers, and community partners to address the quality of the program, etc. This system will be retained for in-depth surveying volunteers, site supervisors, and community partners on a six month basis.

Dr. Kopera-Frye, in collaboration with her gerontology graduate students will create a mixed method qualitative and quantitative survey to be conducted via mail and anonymously on a biennial basis.

This survey will be sent to all volunteers and will examine: 1) quality of volunteer experience on a 5-point Likert scale from 1= not at all satisfied, to 5= extremely satisfied; 2) an open-ended question addressing any perceived barriers/challenges to their volunteering experience (e.g., time commitment); 3) an open-ended question inquiring about things they would like to see changed; 4) an open-ended question asking what being a RSVP volunteer means to them; and 5) an open-ended question inviting them to share anything else they wish to add.

Finally, a short ½ page survey will be distributed quarterly to community agencies dealing with elders (e.g., senior center, etc.) to assess the agency's awareness level of RSVP services and the program on a quarterly basis. These two sources of evaluative information will provide for a comprehensive evaluation of the RSVP program with all relevant stakeholders represented. Dr. Kopera-Frye will be responsible for compiling the obtained data from the two surveys and providing a report to the RSVP Director, Ms. Massey, within a month of the conclusion of the survey. Should particular areas, e.g., recurrent challenges, be raised by the volunteers, the issues will be examined by the Advisory Council at the quarterly meeting and potential solutions will be offered. This approach will insure integrity of

## Narratives

program functioning, while allowing for consistent monitoring of the quality of program service delivery. Another source of quality control information is the RSVP Reporter Program. Volunteer hours are provided monthly by each station. An RSVP volunteer inputs this data into the RSVP Reporter Program at the RSVP office. Information is provided from the law enforcement agencies, health care facilities, and the Council on Aging that lets us see if we are on track with our performance measures. The RSVP staff visits with volunteers as much as possible to make sure their training is adequate and their volunteer experience is meaningful and gratifying. At the end of the year the Advisory Council will do the self-evaluation using the self-evaluation tool in the appendix section of the RSVP handbook.

Another source of information includes an annual volunteer survey administered at the Annual RSVP Volunteer Recognition Luncheon. On the survey two main areas were assessed: 1) meaning of the volunteer experience for them; and 2) what additional training does the volunteer feel is needed to be efficient at their volunteer station. A survey from the recent Volunteer Recognition Luncheon in September revealed that the volunteers believe that the volunteer activities are an integral part of their life and identity. They feel a strong sense of fulfillment as a function of helping the community. Ninety-eight percent of the volunteers indicated that no additional training was needed for their competence performance at their stations. Several volunteers have received computer word processing training through the West Ouachita Senior Center computer classes.

Through the surveys described above, we can gauge satisfaction of volunteers, station supervisors, and Advisory Council members with the on goings of our various programs. The oversight and monitoring of volunteers both within the primary focus area and in program outside the primary focus area will be conducted essentially in the same manner. That is, each month our Reporter program tracks all volunteer hours across the stations. The Director reviews the Reporter reports each month, and the Advisory Council reviews these reports quarterly. The Director will be visiting

## Narratives

each station on a monthly basis and monitor feedback given by supervisors on the surveys.

Essentially, this procedure has worked for 12 years, thus it is an efficient system.

By the time this grant is awarded all volunteers needing to be reassigned to primary or other focus areas, will have been completed. For those who prefer not to leave their stations, they will be allowed to continue their volunteerism activity, and new volunteers will be recruited. However, we expect the majority of volunteers will want to shift focus station programs to meet changing community needs. Per the directives in Appendix C on graduating volunteers, all attempts will be made to minimize any disruptions to the volunteers and/or stations when they are graduated. Those wishing to stay with the same site will be allowed to do so, but it will be made clear to the volunteer that they are performing this activity outside the RSVP program now. So, for those volunteers who wish to continue in a non-focus station, they will be asked if they would like to mentor new upcoming volunteers. Plus, each graduated volunteer will be paired with a newly recruited volunteer and they can share their experiences and lessons learned with the new volunteer. Thus, they will be deemed "Master Volunteers" and still be included as part of the RSVP program in a capacity building function. The capacity building performance measure will be the actual number of non-graduated Master Volunteers, the number of new volunteers being mentored, and the number of hours spent mentoring by the Master Volunteers.

The Primary Focus area national performance measure outcomes and outputs will be assessed through the following means: 1) ED Outcome (ED5) -- 100 volunteers - Assessed by # of students served; Ed Outcome (ED5) -- 100 volunteers -- Assessed by \*DIBELS assessment from pre to post program, \*Parental report of improved reading in their child; 2) Health Output H2 -- 75 volunteers -- assessed by # individual receiving information, number of individuals attending health seminars through attendance; 3) Veterans Output V1 -- 50 volunteers - assessed by # of vets receiving vet to vet services; 4) Disaster Output D1 -- 50 volunteers - Assessed by # of individuals receiving disaster

## Narratives

preparedness training as assessed by attendance sheets at all seminars.

All Project resources are managed by the RSVP Director. This includes the federal, state, and local monies as well as donations, fundraisers, and other revenue. All expenditures including payroll, petty cash, insurance, travel, and hosting charges are approved by ULM's Department Head of Gerontology, Dr. Karen Kopera-Frye. The approved paperwork is then forwarded and processed by ULM's Grants and Contracts office. Once approved, the required forms are sent to the Controller's Office for disbursement. All funds raised are under the fiscal responsibility of ULM, including A-133 audits which occur every 2 years. In-kind contributions are tracked via an In-Kind form which is signed by the donor and processed through ULM. Items over \$1,000 are bid out through ULM's purchasing department in order to insure fiscal integrity. Efficiency of project expenditures is demonstrated by our quality programming and management of volunteers. ULM is the sponsoring agency for RSVP. ULM has seen many changes in the RSVP program. They have supported RSVP by providing office space, utilities, and van insurance, along with technical and media resources. Currently, they will be partnering with us on additional endeavors to expand our program offerings and recruitment. ULM will additionally become more involved in grant pursuits with RSVP to ensure sustainability in tough economic times. We will be submitting grant proposals in partnership with the ULM Gerontology Program to maintain our excellent level of programming. RSVP partners with Citizen Corps (Program under Homeland Security, operated by the Ouachita Parish Police Jury) in funding our Volunteers in Police Service Program. They provide training, uniforms, and meals. Two of our area hospitals provide volunteers a meal for every four hours they work. St. Francis Hospital mails our recognition invitations, and Triad has purchased equipment (golf carts for Volunteers in Police Service) for our law enforcement volunteers. Vantage Health Care has agreed to sponsor the Annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon in 2013. Our Advisory Council has held fund raising events at Applebee's, held raffles, and have secured some monetary donations from local companies. The

## Narratives

project director enlists the grants management office and the gerontology department to help ensure that all resources are used for maximum benefit to the program.

### Organizational Capability

Our RSVP Program has been in existence for 39 years, and amassed a wealth of experience along the way. We have consistently received positive evaluations from our Advisory Council and community/station supervisors. Our Council members and supervisors have been in this role for some time and have been able to guide and suggest new programming as needs change in our area. We have continued to grow, excel, and achieve due to the combined expertise among our community partners and volunteer corps. We have received a Monroe City Community Block Grant, Grant from Chase Bank, and CABLE. RSVP wrote and was awarded federal grants through the Office of Homeland Security for the last eight years. In terms of leadership, we have had excellent, stable guidance. There have only been three directors in our 39 years of existence. The present Director, Rita Massey has been the Director for 22 years. She has an Associate of Science Degree and a Bachelor of Arts Degree from LA Tech University, and completed 3 graduate level courses in Gerontology. She is also a CERT Trainer for the Office of Homeland Security. The last three years Mrs. Massey has also been the RSVP Director of the Lincoln/Bienville Parish RSVP. She serves as Director at 50% of her time on each grant. This arrangement was approved by the State Office. As she ends the grant cycle in March, all performance measures and goals will be met. She received a State Audit in 2012, receiving excellent comments on all areas of the programs. She has served as a Board member for the American Red Cross and CABLE, Treasurer for the LA Senior Corps Directors Association, advisory council member for the Ouachita Council on Aging, and she is a member of the State Citizen Corps Council (Homeland Security). She has been very successful at writing for, and receiving, previous Programs of National Significance (PNS) awards and developing innovative stations and recruiting volunteers. Mrs. Massey has been a Peer Reviewer for AmeriCorps Grants for four years, and the

## Narratives

Louisiana Learn and Serve for one year. Most recently, Mrs. Massey has been a member of the RSVP Re-Compete Team. Mrs. Massey has an excellent relationship with all the RSVP volunteers and Station Supervisors.

The RSVP Administrative Coordinator, Teresa Gadberry, has been with the program 22 years. She started out part-time, but has worked full time for the last 11 years. She has been trained in every aspect of the program since beginning work here at RSVP 22 years ago, and works well with all the volunteers and site managers. Ms. Gadberry duties include not only secretarial duties, but also duties of an outreach employee. She has had CERT Training, CPR, First aid, and has participated in many table top exercises with the Office of Homeland Security. She also works very closely with the Volunteers in Police Stations.

RSVP is supervised under ULM's Department of Gerontology, College of Health Sciences. Dr. Karen Kopera-Frye (serving as Department Head) is responsible for fiscal oversight of RSVP. Dr. Kopera-Frye, ULM's Joseph A. Biedenharn Endowed Chair in Gerontology/Professor, joined the ULM Gerontology faculty and Institute for Gerontology in August 2009. She received all her degrees, B.A., M.A., Ph.D.(1992), in Developmental/Clinical Psychology and Gerontology from Wayne State University in Detroit, MI. Dr. Kopera-Frye has had extensive experience in grantsmanship, research with older adults, and has been trained as a federal Evaluator for the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Her gerontological research expertise spanning 24 years involves research with older adults on successful aging, health promotion, especially ethnically diverse elders, and intergenerational programming. Additionally, she teaches the graduate Gerontology courses at ULM. She will be working with RSVP on intergenerational programming, especially the senior documentary on the volunteers. She will also head the evaluation process for RSVP. She has experience working with an RSVP program in Nevada; therefore she is very familiar with the infrastructure of our program. She has presented us with new ideas from other programs.

## Narratives

ULM has a Grants and Contracts Department that approves all monies and files all financial reports. Ann Colvin has managed this office for 13 years. Ms. Colvin has a BA Degree from Northeast Louisiana University (no ULM). She is also a Certified Government Financial Manager and a Certified Public Accountant. She is also a member of the American Institute of CPA's. She worked for the Legislative Auditors Office for 25 years and is very knowledgeable about the federal and state regulations concerning the RSVP grant. Ms. Colvin's office manages approximately 375 grants and special accounts, of which approximately 85 are Federal Grants. Federal grants for 2009-2010 amounted to approximately \$6,680,091.00. Ms. Colvin checks all spending request against the budget before approval. ULM uses the Banner System for accounting. Ms. Colvin is responsible for all fiscal reports. ULM also has an A-133 audit every 2 years. All expenditures are proposed by the RSVP Director, approved by the Department Head, with final approval being the Grants and Contracts office. RSVP follows all ULM policies (State Guidelines) and procedures.

RSVP is allowed to use any of the ULM facilities as needed and also has support of all administrative personnel. RSVP follows all State Travel Policies and State Purchasing Policies. Clearly defined job descriptions are provided for all staff and administrators. ULM has an internal auditor that checks to see that all policies and procedures are followed. The RSVP Director reviews all programs quarterly. This includes meeting with site supervisors and selected groups of volunteers. See Program Management section for evaluation plan. ULM also has internal policies which tightly control the forms, nature of the requests, and reimbursement activity for budget expenditures. The controller for the University posts all current petty cash and payroll forms on the web page for ULM. It is the responsibility of Ms. Massey, in her capacity as Program Director, to fill out the forms correctly according to University guidelines (e.g., .51 cents per mile reimbursement for personal vehicle use in RSVP business) and obtain Dr. Frye's signature. The form(s) then need the approval of the Dean of the College of Health Sciences and the Vice President of Academic Affairs of the University before being

## Narratives

sent to ULM's Grants and Contracts and the Controller's offices. At that point, the forms are then scrutinized for adherence to ULM policy at the Grants and Contracts Office and forwarded to the Controller's Office if they meet the guidelines for ULM policy on limits, etc. If approved, the forms are finally forwarded to the Controller's Office for check disbursement. It is evident that there is a systematic process for approval of ULM forms including travel, supplies, petty cash, etc. All forms have always been filed by Ms. Massey in strict accordance with ULM fiscal policy.

ULM has an excellent Gerontology Department. This department has an endowed chair position and several faculty members; many of which are partners in the successful management of the RSVP program. Through ULM's Gerontology Department, we have expanded our opportunities for growth in several ways: 1) the Dept. has, and continues to, assist RSVP with local fundraising initiatives by involving Dr. Frye and her students 2) Dr. Frye and her graduate research students have been instrumental in creating evaluation tools for the station managers, advisory council, and volunteers as well as assisting in various recruitment of RSVP volunteer events, e.g., Health Fair at Princeton Place; 3) Dr. Frye and a former graduate student, Ms. Kimberly Griffin, will create an element to the programming in RSVP which involves appreciation of African American heritage to increase representation of African American RSVP volunteers; 4) Dr. Frye, Ms. Dillon and Ms. Griffin will create a documentary DVD short clip on RSVP volunteers and what it means to be a RSVP from the voices of our most active volunteers; and 5) Dr. Frye's students have gained valuable service learning, hands- on experience in working with the RSVP volunteers thus far through assisting at exposure and recruitment site events such as Meet and Greets. These are just several initiatives that ULM's Dept of Gerontology is providing in order to be innovative in programming.

### Other

n/a

### PNS Amendment (if applicable)