

## PART I - FACE SHEET

<b>APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE</b>		1. TYPE OF SUBMISSION: Application <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Construction														
Modified Standard Form 424 (Rev.02/07 to confirm to the Corporation's eGrants System)																
2a. DATE SUBMITTED TO CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CNCS): 10/18/12	3. DATE RECEIVED BY STATE:	STATE APPLICATION IDENTIFIER:														
2b. APPLICATION ID: 13SR143832	4. DATE RECEIVED BY FEDERAL AGENCY: 10/18/12	FEDERAL IDENTIFIER:														
<b>5. APPLICATION INFORMATION</b>																
LEGAL NAME: Polk County Board of County Commissioners DUNS NUMBER: 078315959	NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PROJECT DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON TO BE CONTACTED ON MATTERS INVOLVING THIS APPLICATION (give area codes): NAME: Michelle Shiver TELEPHONE NUMBER: (863) 534-5329 FAX NUMBER: (863) 534-5356 INTERNET E-MAIL ADDRESS: michelleshiver@polk-county.net															
ADDRESS (give street address, city, state, zip code and county): 2135 Marshall Edwards Dr Bartow FL 33830 - 6757 County: Polk																
6. EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN): 596000809	7. TYPE OF APPLICANT: 7a. Local Government - County 7b. Volunteer Management Organization															
8. TYPE OF APPLICATION (Check appropriate box). <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEW <input type="checkbox"/> NEW/PREVIOUS GRANTEE <input type="checkbox"/> CONTINUATION <input type="checkbox"/> AMENDMENT If Amendment, enter appropriate letter(s) in box(es): <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> A. AUGMENTATION      B. BUDGET REVISION C. NO COST EXTENSION D. OTHER (specify below):	9. NAME OF FEDERAL AGENCY: <b>Corporation for National and Community Service</b>															
10a. CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER: 94.002 10b. TITLE: Retired and Senior Volunteer Program	11.a. DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF APPLICANT'S PROJECT: RSVP of Polk County Board of County Commissioners 11.b. CNCS PROGRAM INITIATIVE (IF ANY):															
12. AREAS AFFECTED BY PROJECT (List Cities, Counties, States, etc): Florida Opportunity #6. Polk County, Florida.																
13. PROPOSED PROJECT: START DATE: 07/01/13      END DATE: 06/30/16	14. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF:    a.Applicant <input type="text" value="FL 012"/> b.Program <input type="text" value="FL 012"/>															
15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Year #: 1	16. IS APPLICATION SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS? <input type="checkbox"/> YES. THIS PREAPPLICATION/APPLICATION WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE STATE EXECUTIVE ORDER 12372 PROCESS FOR REVIEW ON: DATE: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO. PROGRAM IS NOT COVERED BY E.O. 12372															
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">a. FEDERAL</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 85,744.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b. APPLICANT</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 52,511.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>c. STATE</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>d. LOCAL</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 52,511.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>e. OTHER</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>f. PROGRAM INCOME</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>g. TOTAL</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$ 138,255.00</td> </tr> </table>	a. FEDERAL	\$ 85,744.00	b. APPLICANT	\$ 52,511.00	c. STATE	\$ 0.00	d. LOCAL	\$ 52,511.00	e. OTHER	\$ 0.00	f. PROGRAM INCOME	\$ 0.00	g. TOTAL	\$ 138,255.00	17. IS THE APPLICANT DELINQUENT ON ANY FEDERAL DEBT? <input type="checkbox"/> YES if "Yes," attach an explanation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	
a. FEDERAL	\$ 85,744.00															
b. APPLICANT	\$ 52,511.00															
c. STATE	\$ 0.00															
d. LOCAL	\$ 52,511.00															
e. OTHER	\$ 0.00															
f. PROGRAM INCOME	\$ 0.00															
g. TOTAL	\$ 138,255.00															
18. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF, ALL DATA IN THIS APPLICATION/PREAPPLICATION ARE TRUE AND CORRECT, THE DOCUMENT HAS BEEN DULY AUTHORIZED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE APPLICANT AND THE APPLICANT WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ASSURANCES IF THE ASSISTANCE IS AWARDED.																
a. TYPED NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE: Janet Bartuska	b. TITLE: Volunteer Svcs Mgr	c. TELEPHONE NUMBER: (863) 534-5580														
d. SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:		e. DATE SIGNED: 10/18/12														

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## **Narratives**

### **Executive Summary**

An estimated 42 RSVP volunteers will serve with the Polk County Board of County Commissioners' RSVP program. RSVP Tale Teller volunteers will read weekly to kindergarten students in Title 1 elementary schools to improve their emergent literacy skills. These students will be better prepared to begin reading in the first grade and will become successful readers. To improve the reading skills of boys between the ages of seven and fifteen, male RSVP mentors with Polk Men Read, will conduct weekly lunch hour reading sessions with boys who are identified as reluctant readers from the third, fifth, seventh and ninth grades. These boys will develop a love for reading and will show improvement in literacy skills and behavior. The volunteers will serve Polk County Schools and the Polk County Schools Polk Men Read to improve the overall literacy rate in Polk County whose low literacy rate impacts economic growth. One in five Central Florida adults reads below a fifth-grade level. ([www.literacyleague.org](http://www.literacyleague.org)) The primary focus area of this project is Education. At the end of the three-year performance period, 2700 Kindergarten students in Polk County Schools will have improved their emergent literacy skills and will be prepared to enter first grade as strong readers; and twenty-four young male readers will benefit from the experience of working with a male mentor and will improve their literacy skills and behavior. The CNCS federal investment of \$85,744 will be supplemented by \$52,511 by Polk County Board of County Commissioners as cash and in-kind contributions.

### **Strengthening Communities**

Polk County is located in Central Florida along the Interstate 4 corridor between Tampa and Orlando. The land area of Polk County is 1,798 square miles with approximately 334.9 persons per square mile according to the 2010 census report. According to the Polk County Board of County Commissioners ([www.polk-county.net](http://www.polk-county.net)), approximately 62 percent of Polk County's total population resides in the unincorporated area of the county; the other 38 percent of the population live in Polk County's 17

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cities. According to the US Census Report, the 2010 population estimated was 602,095 persons; a 24.4% increase over 2000 census data. The 2010 Census Report ethnic/racial breakdown shows 64.6% residents are Caucasian (not of Hispanic origin), 14.8% are African-American, 17.7% are Hispanic, 2.1% are other races and 2.4% listed 2 or more races. In a "June 2003 Quality of Life in Polk County" study conducted by the University of South Florida and funded by the United Way of Central Florida, a number of key indicators were identified as needing to be addressed to improve the lives of Polk County residents including low educational attainment in outlying communities, calling for systemic change.

According to the 2010 US Census, 15.2% of Polk County residents live below the poverty level; this is higher than the 13.8% average for the state of Florida. Poverty is a key indicator that impacts all areas of quality of life for Polk County residents. Poverty affects an individual's ability to obtain meaningful employment, higher education, adequate housing, reliable transportation, adequate child or elder care, and limits one's ability to purchase health insurance.

Polk County's low education attainment impacts the local economy. "Children who are poor tend to have fewer language skills when they enter school. If we can narrow that gap between low-income children and middle- and high-income children, then we can affect poverty levels." (Terry Worthington, United Way of Central Florida)

RSVP volunteers work with a variety of agencies to improve the literacy of both children and adults throughout the county. RSVP Tale Tellers is an initiative of Polk County RSVP and works in conjunction with Polk County Schools to provide volunteers to read to Kindergarten students in Title I schools to improve their emergent literacy skills. RSVP volunteers also participate in the Polk County Schools' Polk Men Read program, a mentoring program for third, fifth, seventh and ninth grade

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students matching mentor and mentees to address leadership, social skills and literacy.

The county's adult literacy challenges are addressed through organizations throughout the county that are members of READ Polk, which provides adult literacy training for volunteers and support for member agencies including Read Lakeland, Northeast Polk Literacy Council, East Area Adult School and West Area Adult School. These volunteers work with adults to help them achieve their individual literacy goals. Because many of the students the volunteers work with have vastly differing needs and goals, this challenge will be addressed as "other community needs."

According to Polk County Schools, vocabulary development is the key to learning. Children who come to school with a high level of oral and aural vocabulary are guaranteed success in reading. Strong readers are more likely to do well in school, graduate and have successful careers and lives. Two out of three students entering Kindergarten in Polk County Public Schools lack the vocabulary development and phonemic awareness that will make them successful as readers. It is important, therefore, to provide sufficient read-aloud experiences to make up for the years lost while the children were preschoolers.

For kindergartners to be able to begin learning to read in first grade, it is necessary for them to leave Kindergarten with a strong vocabulary background, and phonemic awareness and phonics skills that can help them decode words when they begin to read. Without those skills, students are unable to read with fluency which keeps them from comprehending what they are reading, which is the goal of reading instruction.

Reading aloud to children is the only way that students can get the vocabulary, phonemic awareness

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and phonics skills that are critical to future reading success.

RSVP Tale Teller volunteers serving with Polk County Schools will read to Kindergarten classes at least once per week to improve their emergent literacy. This program, now in its third year, is a partnership between RSVP and Polk County Schools. RSVP recruits volunteers to read at Title 1 schools; these volunteers receive specialized training from Polk County Schools in reading to young children, engaging children in discussion and working with teachers. Results of the program show that more than 80% of the kindergartners working with Tale Teller volunteers show reading readiness to enter first grade.

"Since 1981, when the U.S. Department of Education began keeping complete statistics, we have seen that boys lag behind girls in most categories. The 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress finds boys one and one-half years behind girls in reading/writing" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000).

Low level readers have rarely been read to as young children. When adults engage with them in the reading and discussion of good literature, their ability to read increases and they are more willing to do the hard work of learning to read. Men, especially, have a large role to play in helping young men feel that reading is an attribute that will help them become strong leaders in their homes and in their communities. Polk Men Read provides a structured, safe and enjoyable platform for men and boys to engage in conversation which increases vocabulary, provides a link to the text from background experience, and "sells the sizzle" of reading.

Students who are mentored reduce discipline referrals from an average of 48% to 33%. School attendance for mentored students increases from an average of 76% to 98%. Students who attend

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school regularly and stay focused on the requirements of their classroom activities will succeed in school, and therefore, succeed in life. (Polk County Schools)

RSVP Polk Men Read volunteers receive training from Polk County Schools in how to be an effective mentor and in the selection of appropriate books. Each mentor receives courtesy copies of the book for the students and one for themselves provided by Polk County Schools' vendors. At least 75% of students receiving mentoring from RSVP volunteers will show an increase in literacy.

The RSVP program works with the Director of Polk County Schools Community Involvement (for Tale Tellers) and the Director of the Polk Men Reads program, who select schools meeting the criteria, to place volunteers and ensure that RSVP volunteers have completed appropriate paperwork and training.

### **Recruitment and Development**

Development of the corps of volunteers is an integrated approach that involves recruitment, placement and recognition. Recruitment activities involve engaging current members in the effort to share their positive experiences with others; presentations to 55+ communities, organizations and community events are opportunities to put faces to the organization and establish a contact with potential volunteers (or agencies) and allow them to discover what possibilities exist. We also utilize the internet to the fullest extent that our sponsor allows by recruiting for positions using a variety of websites including Volunteer Match, Facebook and utilizing recruitment available from Volunteer Polk. The County's Communications division assists with press releases to local media outlets, and partners such as the Polk County Schools also assist with promoting the program through press releases and developing brochures, flyers and handouts. The County's own PGTV television station covers the Volunteer Polk recognition event, which honors Outstanding RSVP volunteers and provides

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added exposure for the program and the issues it addresses. A new column in the local newspaper, "The Lakeland Ledger," features a different volunteer each week; to date, RSVP has had six volunteers featured in this column. Diversity for Polk County has many facets that reach beyond, ethnicity, race, age, and language; for example, it also includes geography. Because the county is geographically large we strive to have opportunities available in all areas of the county. This helps us to be inclusive of the diversity in our community. The RSVP Advisory Council is working on a plan to establish relationships with local veterans' organizations. RSVP is currently organizing a focus group of RSVP volunteers who are veterans to provide the program with insight, and programming ideas to incorporate more veterans and establish a work plan addressing the needs of military families.

Once a volunteer is recruited, placement in a meaningful position that meets the expectations of the volunteer is an important component to retention. The diversity of Stations in the RSVP program allows volunteers to find opportunities with an organization that aligns with their personal goals, and provides meaningful roles based upon their interests and skills, and is located within their geographic area. Many of these opportunities allow our volunteers the opportunity to take on, or expand, their leadership within the organization. When surveyed by our Advisory Council in September 2011, 100% of our volunteers told us that they find their volunteer roles meaningful, satisfying and that they make a difference in the community.

Another important component of retention is an ongoing recognition program that acknowledges the volunteers' value to the organization in a variety of ways in order to respect the variety of ways in which people are motivated. The use of cards (thank you, volunteer appreciation, birthday, holiday etc.), newsletters, certificates, pins, Presidential Volunteer Service Awards and a yearly volunteer recognition banquet are a few of the methods that are employed. Polk County RSVP nominates its

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volunteers for community recognitions, acknowledging volunteers' role in impacting the community.

The West Central Florida Area Agency on Aging has recognized Polk County RSVP volunteers for their roles in addressing identified community needs. The Florida Commissioner of Education has honored one of our RSVP volunteers as one of the twelve winners of the 2011-12 Outstanding School Volunteer Award. This designation is awarded to volunteers who have shown exceptional dedication and meaningful commitment to quality education in Florida. RSVP has submitted a nomination to CNCS for a feature on "Hometown Heroes," highlighting the volunteer service of veterans. The CNCS "Spirit of Service" Award will be submitted for two of our outstanding volunteers as well.

Personal development opportunities for volunteers, such as classes for seniors offered through the Rath Senior CoNEXTions Center, are promoted through the RSVP newsletter or emails to Stations and volunteers. Other enrichment opportunities are also available through the Stations to expand the volunteers' skills in the areas for which they are volunteering. RSVP provides an orientation session to volunteers covering the organization's mission, information about the program's policies, procedures and guidelines, value of community service and opportunities available to them as RSVP volunteers. RSVP also extends opportunities to our volunteers to attend special programs such as Polk County Emergency Management's Hurricane Expo to prepare residents for hurricane season. Volunteer Stations offer organization orientation and training to RSVP volunteers that is specific to the position in which they will be serving with that organization. For example, Guardian ad Litem provides extensive training to volunteers in policies and procedures addressing the management of at risk children. Polk County Schools provides free training for Tale Teller and Mentor volunteers.

Ongoing communication with the Stations ensures a high-quality experience for the volunteers of Polk County RSVP; it is through communication that the volunteers feel a connection to the organization. Each station is visited by RSVP staff at least once a year to assess current station and

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volunteer needs. Frequent emails keep stations up-to-date on reporting, changes and current events. RSVP stations must be non-profit agencies which have the capacity to support and manage RSVP volunteers engaged in the identified community needs. Stations often seek out RSVP and the RSVP Coordinator and Advisory Council identify potential Stations. The RSVP Coordinator meets with the Volunteer Manager and often the CEO of potential stations to discuss both of their programs and their goals. Stations are provided a copy of the outcomes in the work plans they are involved with and the RSVP Coordinator discusses the information that needs to be gathered and the methods to be used along with reporting periods. This is also the time that the Coordinator discusses the method and periods for reporting volunteer hours to RSVP. If both sides agree to the partnership then a Memorandum of Understanding is signed outlining both parties' contributions. As a program supported by Polk County BoCC's Volunteer Polk, Polk County RSVP stations receive the benefits of volunteer management support such as volunteer management training and volunteer manager roundtable discussions and meetings. MVPs (Managers of Volunteers in Polk) provides one-of-a-kind opportunities for volunteer managers in Polk County to network, share skills and ideas and get the latest information on professional volunteer management from Volunteer Polk and Polk County RSVP.

Professional development for the RSVP Coordinator and Program Assistant is available through the Polk County BoCC's Organization and Employee Development (OED.) OED offers free courses, with several certificate tracks available, to assist employees in developing customer service, supervisory and management skills. The opportunity to attend conferences such as the Florida Association of Volunteer Resource Managers' (FAVRM) quarterly meetings, and other local conferences such as the Governor's Hurricane Conference and the Florida Literacy Coalition Conference, provide the Coordinator the opportunity to enhance her skills in areas crucial to the grant's success. The RSVP

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Coordinator and project assistant participate in free webinars offered by VolunteerMatch and CNCS, including the National Service Inclusion Project. These webinars build skills in volunteer management and disability inclusion. In 2012, the Project Coordinator received her CVA (Certified Volunteer Administrator) credential from the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration. RSVP Advisory Council members receive "Orientation to RSVP" to provide an overview of CNCS, Senior Corps, RSVP and Polk County RSVP policies, procedures and guidelines. They also receive Orientation to RSVP Advisory Council which includes information on the purpose and expectations of the RSVP Advisory Council. The RSVP Coordinator has been certified by Girl Scouts of the United States of America as a certified International Instructor of Trainers and is an experienced trainer who is a member of the American Society of Training and Development's Tampa Bay Organizational Development Special Interest Group. RSVP has provided advisory council members with training and strategic planning sessions. These engaging sessions provide participants with skills that are beneficial to building a strong advisory council that they can take back and use with their own organizations/companies. Included in these sessions are program analysis to identify program Strengths, Opportunities Aspirations and Results (SOAR,) Team Building and High Performance Communication exercises.

### **Program Management**

Each year, the RSVP Coordinator conducts a program assessment based on information gathered from annual station progress reports and conducts a volunteer survey to ensure the program is meeting the volunteers' expectations and gathers input for decision-making. This information is shared with the RSVP Advisory Council as part of a S.O.A.R. (Strengths, Opportunities Aspirations and Results) analysis where plans are developed for the upcoming year. The yearly program assessment addresses the findings revealed in the S.O.A.R. analysis. It also includes input from the advisory council, the annual CNCS Progress Report and results from volunteer surveys. Volunteer

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surveys go beyond satisfaction and include information on their expectations of the program, opinions on senior service and the value of the organization. The RSVP Advisory Council conducted a new community needs assessment in September of 2011 and has identified gaps and areas for growth as well as the program's strengths.

Our project's goals are based upon the results of the S.O.A.R. analysis and the community needs for our county that have been identified by the County's Basic Needs Team as part of the County's Budgeting for Outcomes. Methods for collecting data will be established as part of programming for impact guidelines and are part of the work plan for each impact area. Each area will be assessed annually for relevance, impact and viability. Annual station reports will track the progress of goals. Station reports include training information and success stories in addition to outcome measurement for each goal.

The RSVP Coordinator, as well as members of the RSVP Advisory Council, are active participants in a variety of community organizations. By participating with groups that are actively engaged in disaster preparedness/response, for example, potential stations are identified and relationships are built. Participation in general community activities helps identify community needs and potential partners.

Polk County RSVP has kept volunteers and stations informed of upcoming changes as we have realigned with CNCS primary focus areas throughout the past five years. At present, there are only a couple of stations and their volunteers who will need to graduate as a result of this current grant proposal. Station supervisors are aware of the upcoming changes and volunteers will be offered the opportunity to become involved in new ways. Graduating volunteers will be notified of changes via

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letter, which will contain information on the opportunities that will be available in addition to encouraging them to continue their commitment to the station. All volunteers will receive updates outlining our programming and opportunities that are available via the RSVP newsletter.

Polk County RSVP has been successful collecting and measuring outcomes since 2004. The RSVP coordinator works closely with Stations to develop the necessary measurement tools for each work plan through regular correspondence and site visits. RSVP has become a leader in our community by helping our non-profit partners become better equipped to measure outcomes and successfully show the impact of their volunteers. Prior to signing a memorandum of understanding, agencies are provided a copy of the RSVP report and are instructed in proper reporting procedures. Regular check-ins by phone, email or in person assists the stations. In preparation for the final report, stations are sent an email containing the specific request for the work plan's data. The RSVP coordinator is available to answer any questions and assist them as necessary in completing the report.

Records management for the program is handled through Volunteer Reporter software. Data entry of volunteer information, placement, and hours is logged on to Volunteer Reporter on a weekly basis by the Assistant Coordinator or the volunteer Office Assistant. All stations provide semi-annual reports that are specific to their individual work plan and detail outcomes achieved by RSVP volunteers. Polk County Finance and Accounting will process all transactions involving project revenues and expenditures. The Social Services Department has a fiscal manager assigned to the RSVP program to oversee all financial aspects of the program including requests for draw down. All program expenses are tracked in Oracle software and are monitored monthly by an internal monitor that reviews and assesses spending. Additionally, the RSVP Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator monitor spending each month via Oracle reports. A grant monitor from the Social Services Department is assigned to

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oversee the RSVP program to ensure that the program maintains the highest standards and is compliant. The grant monitor assesses the RSVP grant annually to ensure the program is in compliance with all regulations. Additionally, a yearly assessment of the program is performed with assistance from the RSVP Advisory Council and volunteers. These assessments ensure that the program continues to address the fundamental needs of the community as well as the needs of the program's volunteers. The RSVP Advisory Council continues to enlist community partners for support of RSVP activities including plans for the annual RSVP Martin Luther King Day project, held in collaboration with Polk County Schools and AmeriCorps Reads, to engage more volunteers in service to the community through the RSVP Tale Tellers literacy program.

Polk County BoCC provides match utilizing both cash and in-kind contributions. In-kind contributions are comprised of a percentage of supervisory staff time, office space and copier usage. Staff time is logged on biweekly time sheets, office space is set by facilities management and is based on local market rates; copier usage is reported by Volunteer Polk from copier use reports. All of these are reported to the Social Services Fiscal Manager for entry into the Oracle database and in FFR reports. Polk County Finance and Accounting will process all transactions involving project revenues and expenditures.

### **Organizational Capability**

As a government entity, the Polk County BoCC has extensive experience in managing federal, state and other grant funds. In Fiscal Year 11/12, the total value of special revenue grant funding for Polk County exceeded 45 million dollars.

Since 1994, Polk County Board of County Commissioners has operated a Volunteer Services Department that coordinates the recruitment and utilization of non-paid staff within the Board of

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County Commissioners' agencies and programs. In 2010, Volunteer Services transitioned into Volunteer Polk and serves as the County's Volunteer Center and continues to oversee the RSVP program.

Volunteer Polk has volunteer handbooks and site coordinator handbooks and memorandums of understanding for community agencies; RSVP currently has volunteer handbooks and memorandums of understanding for all agencies in the program.

The RSVP Coordinator is responsible for administering the RSVP program utilizing accepted volunteer management practices. The RSVP Coordinator establishes procedures for recruiting, screening and orienting RSVP volunteers. The coordinator will ensure that volunteers have meaningful volunteer assignments that have positive, measurable impacts upon the community, will plan and carry out all recognition activities for RSVP volunteers, and will work closely with other staff and community leaders focusing on recruitment, retention and management of volunteers.

In 2012 the Project Coordinator received her CVA (Certified Volunteer Administrator) credential from the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration by demonstrating she has a clear philosophy volunteer administration, pledges to work within a professional code of ethics, and demonstrates her clear knowledge-in-use in the core competency areas of organizational management, human resource management, accountability, leadership, and advocacy. She also holds an Advanced Volunteer Management Certificate from the Advanced Management Institute (AVMI) and a Volunteer Management Certificate from Volunteer Florida. The RSVP Coordinator has over 9 years of experience in volunteer management and 30 years experience as a volunteer.

The RSVP Coordinator reports directly to the manager of Volunteer Polk who will provide general

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oversight and direction for RSVP. The Volunteer Polk Manager has over 20 years experience in volunteer management and holds a volunteer management certificate from Volunteer Florida. A minimum of 10% of her time will be dedicated to this program.

The Project Assistant Coordinator provides essential clerical and project support. Besides processing all volunteer paperwork, entering project data and completing required reports, she coordinates the RSVP Tale Teller reading project, working closely with Polk County Schools. She serves as an assistant to and reports to the RSVP Coordinator in all phases of the project. She has completed Polk County BoCC's "Customer Service" certificate program.

The Polk County Board of County Commissioners has several programs that promote education at several different levels. In the organization's Employee Handbook, details are outlined for permitting paid time for BoCC employees to volunteer as Mentors as well as serving in other school volunteer roles. The County Manager, even volunteers his time reading to students in local schools. Healthy Families Polk, a voluntary home visitation program of the Board, promotes and enhances family-strengthening skills and practices. The program creates opportunities for positive childhood outcomes through instruction in parenting techniques and practices, which lead to healthy physical, emotional and educational child development. Healthy Families Case Workers bring books to give the children, each time they visit the home, to promote literacy.

Cooperative Extension Services Division is a publicly supported education program. The Division's Extension Agents are faculty members of the University of Florida and assist community volunteers in identifying local needs and, in turn, designing educational seminars, tours, demonstrations, materials and/or consultations to respond to those needs. Educational programs currently offered in

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Polk County include: environmental horticulture for homeowners, commercial citrus management, beef/forage management, commercial ornamental plant production, 4-H Youth Development, Agri-Fest, Nutrition Education for low-income families and youth, LakeWatch ,water conservation and water quality assessment.

Parks and Natural Resources' Nature Discovery Center at Circle B Bar Reserve features an exhibit hall, along with indoor and outdoor classrooms providing visitors an opportunity to discover Polk County's water, wilderness and wildlife, experience hands-on exhibits, view live aquatic plants and animals in aquariums and explore the Learning Tree. Monthly workshops include topics such as birding, photography, native plants and animals. The center has a cooperative agreement with the Polk County School Board in which a classroom teacher is provided on-location to offer instruction to student field-trip groups visiting the reserve.

Polk County RSVP has a long and successful relationship with Polk County Schools. Polk County Schools Senior Director of Community Involvement is an active member of the RSVP advisory council and facilitates working relationships between the project and Polk County School personnel. In 2010, after more than five years of providing reading tutors for Polk County Schools, RSVP and Polk County Schools worked together to develop the RSVP Tale Teller program. This exclusive RSVP program was an immediate success for volunteers, schools, teachers and students. RSVP has also supported mentors for the Polk Men Read program and provided adult literacy tutors for Polk County Adult School. Both programs have had RSVP volunteers recognized within the state for their accomplishments.

Polk County is home to a large number of senior adults, 18.3% of the population. During the months

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of October through March, it becomes the resort haven for many seniors who choose not to weather the snow up north. Polk's Elderly Services Division provides services for the elderly who are frail, and who are age 60 or older. Services include: case management, nutrition, in-home services and adult day health care. Senior clients receive ongoing physical, mental, medical environmental and social condition evaluation. In-Home services include the provision of personal care, homemaking services, emergency alert response necklaces, nutrition, respite care, transportation, information and referral through the Elder Helpline.

A project of the State Attorney General, Seniors vs. Crime in Polk County is sponsored by the Polk County Sheriff's Department and is entirely staffed by RSVP volunteers. These volunteers maintain two offices where seniors can come if they feel they may have been a victim of fraud. RSVP volunteers take their statement and either refer them to appropriate law enforcement agencies or they will investigate and, if warranted, they will attempt to recover the money. They also provide valuable education services to community groups on how to avoid becoming victims of fraud.

The BoCC utilizes a "Budgeting for Outcomes" program which requires Departments to routinely track the accomplishments of their programs. Several departments receive grants that require outcome measurement as part of their funding agreements. All of the departments are proficient in this effective management tool. Polk County BoCC has eighteen Departments that provide a wide range of services to the citizens of Polk County.

Personnel Management policies and procedures are maintained by the Human Resources Division. Information Technology assists with issues and needs related to managing program data collection and reporting. The Budget and Management Division has assigned a budget analyst who assists with analyzing spending patterns as well as grant and fiscal reporting issues. Polk County BoCC has an

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employee handbook that outlines policies and procedures regarding personnel management and travel. (www.polk-county.net) The County's procurement department has a handbook that contains all of the purchasing policies, procedures and guidelines that all employees must follow. All employees who make purchases must attend training provided by the procurement department and pass a written exam prior to receiving a purchasing credit card. Both the RSVP Coordinator and Project Assistant passed the County's credit card examination in the spring of 2011. The County's facilities department is responsible for the maintenance of all county facilities through facilities staff or outsourcing. The County's organizational chart is on file with CNCS and shows how RSVP is supported by the Social Services Department within the Polk County BoCC.

The Polk County BoCC has received the "Employer of Distinction" designation, for eight consecutive years, from Polk Works to recognize employers in Polk County who have shown consistent commitment to improving the quality of life for their employees. These companies are leaders in developing a best-practice workplace that encourages employees to work at their very best.

The Polk County BoCC has demonstrated capacity to support the RSVP program. RSVP is provided with an in-kind contribution of office space that allows for the smooth operation of the program. This includes all of the basic office equipment (desks, chairs, phone service, filing cabinets etc.), services (custodial, maintenance, IT support, fiscal staff etc.) for the Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator and a volunteer desk. As a program supported by Volunteer Polk, RSVP has in-kind use of a color copier, and fax machine. County vehicles are available for the project staff to sign out at the current County rate (charged to the program) and sometimes vehicles are provided for RSVP use at no charge.

RSVP Advisory Council members consist of business leaders, station representatives, and RSVP and

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community volunteers. The Advisory Council is a diverse group which represents the geographic, ethnic, gender and age diversity of our community. There is representation from the local School Board, Hospice, Healthcare, Rath Senior ConNextions Center and several area businesses including a media company and a senior health agency. The Advisory Council has committees devoted to recruitment, needs assessment, recruitment materials, partner outreach and MLK Day of Service. Each committee has a chair and works closely with the RSVP staff to stay up-to-date on what is needed. Each year the board participates in a training/evaluation/planning session to develop their skills as a board and plan for the next year. Each member receives a position description and is appointed for a one year term and may be reappointed for subsequent terms as is agreed upon by both RSVP and the member.

The Advisory Council brings to the table a wide range of experience, community connections and partnerships. Members combine their experience with the needs of the BoCC's Budgeting for Outcomes Team (which produces a yearly dashboard of community needs that the BoCC identifies as the most critical in the community.) The RSVP Coordinator provides information on CNCS priorities and adds her own experience and insight to the process which also includes information from the Community Participation Survey.

An RSVP advisory council member is responsible for Polk County Florida Schools receiving a grant through the KIDS Consortium Service Learning Institute in the amount of \$1,234.00 to support the Polk County RSVP Martin Luther King Day of Service Project. The grant was written by students from the Boys and Girls Club on behalf of Polk County RSVP utilizing their service learning on Martin Luther King, Jr. The grant was only available to students and these students chose the Polk County RSVP project as their focus! The Social Services Department, which RSVP is a part of, has a dedicated

## **Narratives**

grant-writer who seeks additional funds for the department's programs. The grant writer is currently seeking additional funding support the RSVP program's activities to allow the program to continue to grow. Specifically, grants are being sought to support the successful Martin Luther King Day of Service project to bring books and readers to kindergarten students in selected Title 1 schools.

Additional grants are being sought to bring added benefits to RSVP volunteers.

### **Other**

N/A

### **PNS Amendment (if applicable)**

N/A