



# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The New River Valley Agency on Aging was established as a governmental cooperative in 1975 to advocate for and serve older citizens living in what is known as the New River Valley region of Virginia. 2010 U.S. Census shows our four county service area has a population of 21,161 adults age 65 years and older. The Pulaski County Retired and Senior Volunteer Program will serve Pulaski County with volunteer placement in the issue areas of Healthy Futures, Education and Disaster Services. Pulaski County RSVP will serve our entire service area through its innovative telephone reassurance program, making regularly scheduled telephone calls to older adults, homebound seniors and persons with disabilities. Through RSVP, an estimated 144 volunteers will be placed in a network of 35 volunteer stations such as feeding programs, telephone reassurance programs, community based volunteer programs and the local chamber of commerce addressing needs in the objectives of senior citizen assistance, food security and k-12 education. The anticipated outcomes of the project are; seniors will maintain an independent lifestyle, area seniors will have higher food security, area students will be better prepared for the realities of life after school and area non-profits will be better able to utilize their funds.

The cost to fund this project is \$60,369; of this amount \$20,390 has been committed from county and town governments. We are asking CNCS for \$39,979 to complete the funding needed to fully operate the Pulaski County RSVP project.

## Strengthening Communities

The Pulaski County Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (herein after referred to as PCRSVP) serves Pulaski County which is located in a region of Virginia known as the New River Valley (herein after referred to as NRV). The county's 318 square miles consist of a 4,500-acre lake, gently rolling foothills, open space, farmland, and mountains. Pulaski County contains 19,000 acres of the Jefferson National Forest which is popular for hiking, camping, hunting, and fishing.

## Narratives

The 2010 U.S. census shows the population of Pulaski County is 34,872 and is spread out with 19.2% under the age of 18, and 17.8% who were 65 years of age or older. The median income for a household in the county is \$30,874. About 31.9% (or 11,112) of the population has incomes below the poverty line. The workforce of Pulaski County is diversified with production, transportation and material moving occupations comprising most of the workforce. Pulaski County's major employers include Bond Cote Corporation, James Hardie Building Product, Inc., Jefferson Yarns Inc., Trim Systems LLC, Volvo Trucks North America Inc. and Xaloy Inc. The recent economic downturn has had a devastating effect on the area resulting in an average unemployment rate of 9.63% over the last 12 months.

PCRSVP is well established and has served Pulaski County for 39 years. Its sponsoring agency, the New River Valley Agency on Aging (herein after referred to as NRVAOA), has served the NRV for 37 years. Both PCRSVP and NRVAOA continually engage local input into program design and services through the use of Advisory Councils. The NRVAOA Board of Directors and its Advisory Council consists of representatives from the counties of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski and the City of Radford. PCRSVP Advisory Council members are included from each of the five districts that make up Pulaski County with special emphasis on recruiting Advisory Council members from diverse social and educational backgrounds. Some of whom have worked in local factories, and for the local universities and colleges. The PCRSVP membership includes retired professors, farmers, retail workers, teachers, nurses and production workers. PCRSVP Advisory Council members are encouraged to promote the RSVP program and to seek out new and meaningful volunteer opportunities within their respective communities and organizations. In the past PCRSVP Advisory members have represented PCRSVP during community activities such as fairs, community improvement and road cleanup activities, church festivals, and community clubs /organization meetings. During these activities PCRSVP volunteers hand out RSVP brochures, talk about current PCRSVP projects and actively

## Narratives

recruit volunteers for PCRSVP and our participating partners. During one community event a PCRSVP Advisory Council member spoke about the annual RSVP "Supplies for Seniors" project, a project where basic household items are collected and distributed to area homebound residents. Her actions resulted in a donation of 250 six-packs of bottled water for the project and two new PCRSVP recruits. During a community club event another PCRSVP Advisory Council member spoke about a proposal made by PCRSVP to start a formal Telephone Reassurance project. She asked club members to survey their community and report back to her whether or not residents of the community thought the project would be beneficial. Within a two week time frame she had received over 25 telephone calls asking for more information about the project and how they could sign their loved ones up to receive daily calls. Upon joining the PCRSVP Advisory Council each member agrees to participate in this form of community collaboration allowing PCRSVP to stay in touch with local needs. As community needs are discovered PCRSVP actively seeks community partners to help address these needs. As each new community partner comes on board they are required to sign a "Memorandum of Understanding" (MOU) which outlines the roles and responsibilities of PCRSVP and the community partner. Project evaluation is done through yearly volunteer station surveys administered by PCRSVP Advisory Council members. PCRSVP Advisory Council members meet with station supervisors to discuss community needs and to determine what we can do to support their mission. PCRSVP staff review proposed projects to determine if they are measurable, achievable and compatible with our goals. The goal of PCRSVP is to integrate at least 25% of our volunteers into assignments that address the CNCS Focus Area of Healthy Futures with the objectives of Aging in Place and Food Security. PCRSVP serves the NRV with its Telephone Reassurance project. The NRV is comprised of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski counties; the city of Radford; the towns of Blacksburg, Dublin, Christiansburg, Floyd, Narrows, Pearisburg, Pulaski, and Rich Creek. Conclusions of a 2007 community needs survey administered by the Virginia Tech Center on Gerontology indicated that 32-

## Narratives

58% (345 completed surveys were returned) of respondents across all age groups were likely or very likely to benefit from daily reassurance calls. The results of this survey lead to a request for services to meet the need and the creation of the PCRSVP Telephone Reassurance project. Volunteers with the Telephone Reassurance project makes scheduled daily and weekly phone calls to homebound seniors, older adults and persons with disabilities who are either identified by a partnering agency or self identified. The purpose of this project is to verify the well-being of isolated or disabled adults, to provide social interactions, companionship and to help identify health and housing emergencies. PCRSVP volunteers will make regularly scheduled telephones calls to approximately one hundred ninety six homebound seniors, older adults and persons with disabilities living in the NRV.

The recent economic downturn has had a distressing effect on the local workforce in Pulaski County resulting in a 9.63% unemployment rate over the past twelve months. Information compiled from the 2010 census also shows there approximately 1,035 families and 751 seniors 65 years of age or older are living below the HHHS Poverty level guidelines. Due to such limited incomes many area residents find it difficult to meet their needs. PCRSVP volunteers in association with Pulaski Daily Bread (a local ecumenical feeding program) will provide hot mid-day meals five days per week, 52 weeks each year. PCRSVP volunteers will be trained in all aspects of the daily operation and will provide services as needed each day. Services include picking up donations, unloading deliveries, stocking shelves, preparing and serving meals, cleaning up after meals and collecting and reporting data. Over 36,000 meals were served at Pulaski Daily Bread last year.

There are numerous non-profit organizations locally that have volunteer programs; however there is no other central program for matching senior volunteers with local needs. PCRSVP serves this role effectively. Lewis Gale Pulaski Community Hospital, Pulaski United Way, Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce, New Valley Agency on Aging, Pulaski County Extension Office and the Ruritan National Headquarters rely heavily on PCRSVP to expand their capacity in areas related to

## Narratives

community outreach. PCRSVP staff conducts an annual survey of its volunteer's placement satisfaction, typically during its volunteer recognition event. The NRVAOA conducts a yearly satisfaction survey of its clients to help determine if their needs are being met and to ask for their input for planning additional services. Each year as the NRVAOA begins its plan for service delivery and budgeting for the next fiscal and program year it makes a request for public input. Comments are requested from the public for guidance on how they think the resources can best meet the needs of older adults. Following the public comment period results of the client survey and public comments are shared with the PCRSVP staff for project impact evaluation. With resources shrinking due to state funding cuts, it is more important than ever to ensure that funds are used for the services most needed by older adults.

Throughout our years of service to Pulaski County the NRVAOA and PCRSVP has developed a strong system of community partners. An ongoing effort is the cooperative partnering, planning and hosting of joint projects such as the annual "Supplies for Seniors" drive. This project brings together two RSVP projects, NRVAOA, area parks and recreation departments, senior centers, retirement villages and local industries to collect and distribute basic household goods for over 250 homebound residents of the New River Valley. Another cooperative project involving PCRSVP is the annual "Caring Connections" Caregivers Conference and Resource Fair. A panel of experts convened by the Rosalinde and Gilbert Foundation, February 2007, determined that "if caregivers are to be effective in their role in the long term, there must be recognition of their needs". This four year old project brings together PCRSVP, NRVAOA, New River Community College, respite providers and other organizations from around the NRV to provide a day of empowerment for family caregivers. This project is unique because it provides an opportunity for community collaborations to eliminate the fragmentation of services and supports for informal caregivers. Without charge family informal family caregivers can visit with exhibitors to learn more about products and services that are available to assist them, attend

## **Narratives**

expert presentations throughout the day on a variety of topics featuring nationally renowned and expert presenters, discuss one on one their care giving situation with Information and Assistance specialists to learn about specific services and resources available to them, In 2008 one hundred and thirty unpaid family caregivers attended the first annual "Caring Connections" event; in 2011 over two hundred unpaid family caregivers attended the fourth annual "Caring Connections" event.

Participants are surveyed after each event to ensure their satisfaction and to seek input for improving the next year's conference. Survey results have lead us to expand the one day conference into a two day event allowing paid caregivers to attend.

The public is constantly made aware of PCRSVP projects through presentations given by staff and Advisory Council members. PCRSVP staff and Advisory Council members participate in public events to provide awareness and to recruit volunteers for the RSVP project and its community partners. PCRSVP staff and Advisory Council members provide the public with brochures and marketing materials during community health fairs, festivals and public awareness activities. Monthly newsletters, Public Service Announcements and press releases also highlight the project, its community partners and program activities.

### **Recruitment and Development**

PCRSVP staff and designated volunteers have been trained in developing our program and recruiting for our community partners. Our training has included the most common methods used for recruitment: face to face recruitment, distributing marketing materials during public events, public service announcements and public speaking, asking current volunteers to ask friends to join, recruitment competitions, targeting individuals with needed skill sets (i.e., Master Gardeners for community beautification projects). Using these methods we have recruited information technology professionals to teach computer classes, accountants/tax preparers to participate in the AARP Tax Aide Program and approached church congregations to help during large events such as the annual

## Narratives

"Supplies for Seniors" drive, Caregivers Conference and Resource Fair, and Relay for Life. PCRSVP staff and members monitor places where seniors tend to gather such as the local Moose Lodge, AM VETS headquarters, American Legion and VFW posts for potential volunteer recruitment. PCRSVP highlights the benefits of volunteering and joining RSVP by inviting potential members to give back for the good of the community, stressing that it benefits volunteers and those in need. PCRSVP invites volunteers to make a difference by sharing their skills and experience with the community. PCRSVP volunteers have access to opportunities at 35 nonprofit organizations and programs. They also receive the benefits of membership, i.e., free supplemental accident insurance, excess auto and personal liability insurance, monthly newsletter, "The Member Messenger", recognition for service to the community, and invitations to annual luncheons. Each PCRSVP member receives an annual birthday card, as well as thank you, get well, and sympathy cards as appropriate. Articles praising members and highlighting projects are submitted to area newspapers. Recognizing volunteers in a timely manner, when community events happen and accomplishments occur, helps to ensure a high quality experience for members. PCRSVP encourages its partnering agencies to treat their volunteers as "valued employees" by recognizing their accomplishments and providing guidance when efforts are not as successful as anticipated. PCRSVP Telephone Reassurance volunteers are required to have certain qualifications. They must have a sincere interest in older adults and adults with disabilities, appreciate the dignity and worth of each client; have the ability to accept and empathize with the life circumstances of the client and listen well without passing judgment; possess a sense of responsibility and dependability; be willing to sign a confidentiality agreement and abide by its conditions; have the ability to work without direct supervision; and to accept the rules and regulations of the project and its partners. A criminal background check is another component of the PCRSVP Telephone Reassurance project volunteer placement procedure. The background check includes criminal records searches of convictions, arrests, inmate records, and sex offender registries. Each volunteer is provided with

## Narratives

comprehensive training with the project coordinator when joining the project. During the training they are provided with a procedure manual and a volunteer job description that outlines their duties and responsibilities which are to provide calls to the older adults in the program, provide socialization and stimulation to the client, check on the person's health and well-being, communicate regularly to the project coordinator on any significant changes in the client's physical health and any other problems noted during phone conversations, attend scheduled training sessions, maintain strict confidentiality, and complete all required paperwork in a timely manner. During initial training volunteers are schooled in a step-by-step procedure for conducting telephone calls. For example, how to complete client log sheets, reviewing the information from the previous calls for relevant information, noting the time the call is placed with a brief description of the conversation and what to do if there is no answer. Volunteers are also provided with a Telephone Talk Sheet with examples of appropriate follow-up questions and how to proceed with clients who sound disoriented or confused. The volunteer and project coordinator engage in role-play sessions during the training to ensure that volunteers are comfortable with their role as a caller. Volunteers are trained in how and what to ask during the conversation in order to retrieve relevant and necessary information. At least 20% of volunteers recruited for the Telephone Reassurance project are asked to recruit other community volunteers to help expand the capacity of partnering agencies as well as recruiting potential Telephone Reassurance project volunteers. Recruitment volunteers are active and visible, speaking to people, handing out marketing materials for all organizations partnering with the Telephone Reassurance project. Recruitment of volunteers to serve in the Telephone Reassurance project helps build the capacity of the NRVAOA and other community partners by enhancing their services. Referrals for the Telephone Reassurance project are actively sought through NRV public agencies; Departments of Social Services, Hospitals, Police Departments, Home Health Agencies, Meals on Wheels, RSVP's of Montgomery County/City of Radford, Giles, Floyd and the NRVAOA. Preliminary to the May 2007

## **Narratives**

NRV wide needs assessment, the NRVAOA surveyed other public service agency professionals to gain input on the community needs they encounter. Professionals from local Departments of Social Services, Police Departments, Home Health Agencies, Health and Rehabilitation facilities, Hospitals and area RSVP's were surveyed during the information gathering process. This information along with the results of the May 2007 New River Valley wide needs assessment was analyzed, thus concluding that the Telephone Reassurance project was needed. Partnering agencies took part in initial organizational meetings to define roles, expectations of involvement and the referral process.

### **Program Management**

Community need is identified throughout a network of local senior programs, social service programs, county administrations as well as churches and volunteers. NRVAOA is instrumental in recognizing community needs through its annual client and public comment periods as well as periodic community needs surveys distributed throughout NRV. As community needs and potential volunteer stations are identified, PCRSVP communicates its policies and procedures concerning volunteer service and station responsibilities to ensure compatibility. Once compatibility is established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is signed between PCRSVP and the volunteer station. After a MOU is signed, information is provided to the station about PCRSVP's primary and community focus goals and the role the volunteer station has in meeting those goals. PCRSVP provides ongoing information sharing and training in its programming goals through periodic meetings with volunteer station supervisors and through its monthly newsletter. In the fourth quarter of each fiscal year PCRSVP Advisory Council members evaluate selected work stations, results of which help to keep PCRSVP staff and its work stations informed of all needs and changes. During these evaluations information is gathered to assess PCRSVP's accomplishments and the impact of its volunteers on the volunteer station clients and to ensure that volunteers are experiencing meaningful placement. Each year the Executive Director of the NRVAOA submits an annual request to the Pulaski County Board of

## **Narratives**

Supervisors for local public cash to be used as matching funds required for the operation of the PCRSVP program. In-kind contributions are provided by the Town of Pulaski as office space, on site copies, fax lines, utilities, etc. The NRVAOA also provides in-kind support of project supervision, financial supervision and newsletter copies. Local businesses also support and contribute in-kind donations toward the development and enrichment of PCRSVP projects. All volunteer data and monthly hour reports are collected and recorded in the Volunteer Reporter management system at the PCRSVP office. In addition to volunteer records data, impact goals and objectives are monitored by PCRSVP staff, volunteer work sites and PCRSVP Advisory Council members. Assessment of project goals and objectives is accomplished through surveys and evaluations that are implemented by each partnering agency. Project resources, both financial and in-kind, are managed by the PCRSVP Director, the NRVAOA Executive Director and its Board of Directors. Each request for expenditure is made in writing and reviewed by the NRVAOA Executive Director and Director of Finance to ensure it is necessary and cost effective. Monthly financial reports are provided by the NRVAOA finance department to PCRSVP Director and the NRVAOA Executive Director and Director of Programs. Over the past six months PCRSVP has been gradually graduating stations and volunteers whose missions or volunteer placement descriptions do not meet the primary focus of the NRVAOA and of CNCS of aging in place or were deemed non-impact. The final graduates will be phased out by February 28th, 2013. This strategy was put in place to allow the graduated stations and volunteers adequate time to adjust to the change and to consider other volunteer placement possibilities. Each graduating station's mission or impact statement was reviewed by PCRSVP staff to insure they fit the criteria of non-impact.

### **Organizational Capability**

NRVAOA provides support services, advocacy, resources, and information to aging and disabled adults, as well as to their caregivers, to enable them to achieve maximum independence, maintain

## Narratives

their dignity, and strengthen their social support systems within their communities while enhancing their quality of life. The NRVAOA has provided services to the elderly in NRV for over 37 years. PCRSVP is guided by a full time project director and a part-time secretary. The PCRSVP project director's position is that of full time with 95% of her time spent solely on the development and administration of the RSVP project. Leaving 5% of her time to develop and implement fundraising projects that support the PCRSVP program and its community outreach projects. The current director has been with PCRSVP for over eleven years. Starting with the program as a temporary part-time secretary in November 2000 and accepting the position as permanent part-time secretary when it became available in January 2001. She then became the project director in October 2003. She is the current vice president of the VA/DC Senior Corps Directors Association and a community volunteer with the Pulaski County Chamber of Commerce Community and Economic Development Focus Group. With her past experience as an Industrial Analyst and Training Supervisor for a major manufacturer she brings with her leadership skills which helps when working with staff, volunteers, volunteer stations and the PCRSVP Advisory Council. The current part-time secretary/project coordinator worked for the NRVAOA as a client case manager for 2 years until the position was eliminated due to state budget cuts. Before that she worked as an Interim Administrator of various nursing homes for 16 years. She became the part-time secretary of PCRSVP in February 2009 assuming the duties of maintaining all files, entering all statistical data and processing general correspondence. As Telephone Reassurance project coordinator she has assumed the following duties; recruiting volunteers, training, tracking client call records, tracking volunteer reimbursements, making follow-up calls to volunteers and communicating relevant information to partnering agencies. The Executive director of the NRVAOA, who holds a B.S. Ed. from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and M.S. Ed. from Virginia Tech and has over 28 years of experience with the NRVAOA. The Director of Programs at the NRVAOA, who holds a B.S. in Organizational Management from

## Narratives

Bluefield College in Bluefield, Virginia and has over 11 years experience with the NRVAOA, supervises the PCRSVP Director. The NRVAOA has a strong management team consisting of the Executive Director, Director of Programs, Long-term Care Ombudsman/Elder Abuse Prevention Specialist, Director of Finance, Nutrition Programs Supervisor, Director of New River Valley Senior Services/Pulaski Area Transit and the PCRSVP Director. The management team is a useful support network for each member and assists each other regarding fiscal management, program development, policies, reports and technical support as needed. The NRVAOA management team meets weekly. The financial management system used by the NRVAOA is the Sage Accounting System and is in compliance with all state and federal guidelines. The NRVAOA Director of Finance oversees all expenditures made by PCRSVP. All requests for expenditures are made in writing to the NRVAOA Director of Finance; each purchase must be approved to be in compliance with sponsor policies and with the Office of Management and Budget. All policies and procedures for purchasing, personnel management, travel and internal policies are clearly defined in the NRVAOA employee handbook given to each employee at the beginning of employment. Job descriptions are periodically reviewed and updated by the NRVAOA Board of Directors as roles change and responsibilities are added. The supervisor of each staff member provides employee self-assessments, job performance assessments, and evaluations yearly. The PCRSVP Director is required by the NRVAOA to attend Corporation for National and Community Service trainings and all continuous improvement training provided by the sponsor.

The NRVAOA receives the largest portion of its funding from the Virginia Department of Aging through the Older Americans Act. They also receive funds from the Virginia General Assembly, grants, contributions, fees and some support from the eight local governments which make up their service area. Federal and state funds received are distributed through the Virginia Department of Aging. Last year, NRVAOA provided services to 2,824 residents over the age of 60 years of age living

## Narratives

in NRV. Area residents have had access to programs such as Nutrition programs, Homemaker service, Respite programs, Information and Assistance, Care Coordination, Ombudsman program, Elder Abuse Prevention program, Med-ride services, Transportation programs, Health Insurance Counseling and Medicare Fraud Prevention, Long Term Care Coordination, Home Repair and Legal Assistance for over 37 years due to the commitment of the NRVAOA staff, its Advisory Council and Board of Directors. In recent years new programs have been established which further the mission of the NRVAOA to advocate for senior dignity. Some of those programs are: The Long Term Care Coordinating Council (LTCCC) which advises, implements, and monitors community-based long term care planning in NRV and facilitates the improved coordination of home, community-based, and institutional services for older adults and adults with disabilities. It is the single body in NRV that evaluates all issues related to improving community-based long term care and supportive services. Senior Law Day is an annual event which offers free educational seminars by leading elder law attorneys, and finance and health care professionals. Topics include: wills and trusts, community resources for seniors, reverse mortgages, elder consumer fraud protection, estate taxes, advance directives, long-term care insurance, choosing a nursing home and identity theft. The Elder Justice Coalition which coalition brings together members from law enforcement, social services agencies, and public agencies to establish a cohesive network for recognizing, educating and reporting elder abuse and exploitation. Through the creation of the coalition and its collaboration with the Center for Gerontology at Virginia Tech, the center has received a research grant to study elder abuse recognition, elder exploitation and elder neglect in rural communities. "Caring Connections" Caregivers Conference and Resource Fair is an annual event that was created to help provide family caregivers with easier access to valuable information, answers and links to community resources in an effort to afford them some relief of their daily responsibilities so they can continue their important work.

## **Narratives**

Each year the Executive Director of the NRVAOA submits an annual request to the Pulaski County Board of Supervisors for local public cash to be used as matching funds required for the operation of the PCRSVP program. Due to recent state budget cuts this aspect of local support is expected to remain level. In-kind contributions are provided by the Town of Pulaski as office space, on site copies, fax lines, utilities, off street parking, etc. The NRVAOA also provides in-kind support of project supervision, financial supervision and newsletter copies.

### **Other**

n/a

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

n/a