

Narratives

Executive Summary

Runningwater Draw RSVP is a federally legislated grant program serving three rural communities in the Texas Panhandle/South Plains area for the past 40 years. Floyd, Hale and Lamb counties encompass 3,013 square miles. Senior volunteers aged 55 and over are linked with community needs throughout the three counties served. At the end of the 36 month grant period, an estimated 325 unduplicated RSVP volunteers will serve elderly, homebound, disabled, veterans, low-income adults and children through their efforts at 30 volunteer stations in Floyd, Hale and Lamb counties. The primary focus area for Runningwater Draw RSVP will be Healthy Futures. Through this important area, an estimated 174 unduplicated RSVP volunteers will serve homebound, older adults, veterans and individuals with disabilities through sites providing food delivery, and companionship. They will also serve through food distribution, food collection and food pantry support at two food pantries which provide emergency only food assistance.

In addition, volunteers will provide childhood immunization education for new mothers at three hospitals which will ensure healthy futures for the children born in Floyd, Hale and Lamb counties. Approximately 590 unduplicated new mothers will receive this lifesaving education during 12 months at the end of the 36 month period. Also, at the end of the 36 month performance period, 400 individuals assisted through food delivery, and companionship will report having increased social ties or perceived social support.

Also at the end of the period, 440 individuals will report increased food security for themselves and their children as a result of the services provided by the volunteers. These outcomes will be achieved through the efforts of the unduplicated RSVP volunteers. The CNCS federal investment of \$46,540 will be supplemented by \$39,835 of non-federal resources.

Strengthening Communities

Rural communities in Floyd, Hale and Lamb counties in the Texas Panhandle/South Plains area have

Narratives

been served by Runningwater Draw RSVP for the past 40 years. The area is comprised of 3,013 square acres of rolling plains with farming being the mainstay for all three counties. The two year drought has affected the area farming communities. There are no major corporate philanthropies located in this area. Due to economic conditions, non-profit and health organizations in the rural area served have tightened budgets and need RSVP volunteers to fulfill their missions to provide help for those in need.

There are twelve communities in the three counties with Plainview being the largest with 22,194 residents per the 2010 Census. Each rural community has been strengthened through the volunteers meeting community needs. The total population of the three rural counties per the 2011 Census Facts is 57,059.

The Texas Department of Health reflects 24% of the area population is over 55 years of age. Hispanic, Black and Caucasian residents comprise 97% of the population in the three counties. The Hispanic population is the majority at 54.5% per Census 2011 Facts. The rural area covered is below poverty level at 22.2% of the population. 3,237 residents are veterans per the 2011 Census Facts.

Elderly residents 65 years of age and over comprise over 16% of the population. Southern Online Journal of Nursing Research 2000 states more than 40% of older Americans have been identified as "at nutritional risk," and between 10% and 51% are malnourished or have an inadequate nutritional intake. Both obesity and malnutrition can lead to functional dependence, increased morbidity, mortality, and greater use of health care resources.

Hunger in Texas is a serious problem throughout the state. The Center for Public Policy Priorities states one in six Texas households is Food Insecure. The Texas Tribune states in the June, 2012 edition more than one in four Texas children lacked adequate access to food in 2010.

Studies and surveys show most homebound residents desire to remain in their homes and independent as long as possible. Due to physical limitations, they are unable to prepare hot, nutritious meals for

Narratives

themselves. This results in additional health issues, worry by family members who do not live in a close proximity, and additional safety issues regarding meal preparation and lack of personal contact. Assuring these individuals receive at least one hot, nutritious meal daily and social support enables them to live in their own home for a longer period of time.

These statistics demonstrate the overwhelming need for assistance for low income, elderly, veterans and disabled residents in the three counties served. Assistance for Healthy Futures includes food insecurity, companionship for disabled and homebound seniors including veterans and immunization education. Veterans returning home can face financial, physical and emotional problems. Veterans are not aware of all of the services available to them to ensure Healthy Futures. All Healthy Future projects will include veterans.

Texas children need timely receipt of immunizations to prevent the devastating effects of diseases that are now vaccine preventable. Volunteers will help educate new mothers having babies in the counties served concerning immunizations. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention ranks Texas 24th among the 50 states for up to date vaccinations for children ages 19 months to 35 months. Significant barriers for timely vaccinations in the three counties served include lack of information on the importance of vaccinations, a belief that the timing of vaccinations is unimportant and parents not knowing when immunizations are due. Volunteers can fill this need to ensure healthy futures for Texas children.

RSVP will recruit, place, and retain volunteers to continue present and expand future services to meet Healthy Futures goals.

RSVP volunteers will be managed through placement at volunteer stations that fit their interests and time requirements. Placing volunteers requires an interview by the RSVP staff along with training and education of RSVP rules and requirements. Background checks are completed as needed. Volunteers interested in meeting food insecurity needs, providing companionship for disabled and homebound

Narratives

seniors including veterans, and providing immunization education to new mothers are interviewed by the volunteer stations who have requested volunteers to meet these needs. Through the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the stations and RSVP, stations provide training and oversight. Volunteer hours are submitted monthly to the RSVP Volunteer Coordinator and any problems are reported to the RSVP Director.

Volunteer stations addressing food insecurity needs for elderly, veterans and disabled residents are Meals on Wheels, Senior Center Meal Home Delivery, and emergency only food pantries are Faith In Sharing House and Spirit of Sharing. Visitation to elderly homebound residents brings hope and security to these lonely residents.

The Seniors/Volunteers for Childhood Immunization program educates new mothers to ensure healthy futures for the youngest members of the communities served.

Through the efforts of the RSVP volunteers, the assistance provided through the Healthy Futures Focus Area projects will lead to the National Performance Measure outputs and outcomes. As outputs, the number of individuals receiving emergency food from the two area food pantries will be tracked through tracking forms. Annually the number of individuals reporting increased food security of themselves and their children as a result of the emergency food banks will be reported as outcome. Additionally, the number of homebound elderly and disabled along with veterans who are able to live independently through receiving home delivered meals, and companionship visits will be tracked through activity logs and surveys for output. Annually the number of homebound elderly and disabled along with veterans who report having increased social ties and/or perceived social support will be reported as outcome.

The need for home delivered meals, food pantries, and companionship visitation, will be carried out by RSVP volunteers who have a commitment to helping ensure healthy futures for low income elderly, disabled and veterans who are in need. The outcome of volunteers delivering meals to homebound

Narratives

elderly and disabled including veterans will allow these citizens to remain independently in their own homes. In addition, increased food security will be obtained through the efforts of the unduplicated volunteers giving of their time to distribute emergency food through area food banks to adults and children. The number of individuals receiving emergency food from food pantries will reflect output and the number of individuals reporting increased food security for themselves and their children will be the much needed outcome obtained through the efforts of volunteers.

Veterans are an important focus to Runningwater Draw RSVP. Healthy Futures Focus Area will include veterans through volunteers delivering meals to homebound veterans, emergency food provided to veterans and their families, and companionship through visitation to veterans. Through the Veterans and Military Families Focus Area, veterans in nursing homes will receive visits from RSVP volunteers throughout the year. Volunteers who are themselves veterans will be utilized to complete these services for veterans.

Recruitment and Development

Recruiting volunteers is best achieved through current RSVP volunteers. "Because they asked" is the number one reason someone signs up to volunteer. Also the RSVP Advisory Council and RSVP staff promote RSVP and personally recruit volunteers. It is a joint effort.

Advertising is an important tool to educate the communities on the purpose of RSVP, the tremendous needs reached because of the volunteers efforts and the need for more volunteers. The newspapers in the area communities are all utilized including the newspaper targeting the Hispanic population. A weekly Sunday newspaper article is written by the RSVP Director and affords the opportunity to promote RSVP and educate where volunteers are currently needed. Also utilized are radio stations, booths at health fairs and RSVP programs presented throughout the year to various organizations. Outreach to veterans includes advertising in all of the communities served and presenting returning veterans with welcome home baskets. RSVP programs are presented to area VFW and American

Narratives

Legions to recruit veterans.

Each new volunteer completes an interest survey which includes the day of the week and the time requirements for their volunteer opportunity. During the interview by the RSVP staff, the volunteer is asked to share his or her experiences, skills and abilities. A high quality experience that utilizes the full potential of the volunteer and fulfills the meaning of service is achieved on an individual basis by the volunteers. Volunteers meeting community needs is the goal of RSVP.

RSVP volunteers receiving training through high quality volunteer assignments are a priority in recruitment and development of volunteers. The RSVP staff educates the new volunteer on the mission of RSVP, what is expected from the volunteers, and the volunteer is matched with the station that will make a positive impact for the community where the volunteer resides. Each station offers unique training to ensure the volunteer understands the assignment and is able to competently fulfill the requirements. A quality assignment affords the volunteer the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate which increases skills and builds leadership expertise.

Volunteers are recruited without discrimination. All races, ethnicities, sexual orientation and degrees of English language proficiency are included in recruitment and development. Volunteers must be 55 years of age or over and pass a criminal background check as required. Volunteers with disabilities are linked with volunteer opportunities that work with their needs and abilities.

The 2011 Census Facts reflect the population in the three counties served is 97.2% Hispanic, Black and Caucasian. The Hispanic population is the majority at 54.5% and most of the Hispanic volunteers speak English. RSVP offers enrollment literature in Spanish and interpreters are available as needed. A local paper that targets the Hispanic community is included in disseminating RSVP information including recruitment and events.

Volunteers are recognized for their tremendous contributions throughout the year. Each month a birthday recognition event is held to celebrate another year for the volunteers who have birthdays that

Narratives

month, an Older Americans Month Event is held in May, the Volunteer Recognition Banquet is held annually, and Christmas Open House is held in December. A Volunteer of the Month is selected by the RSVP Advisory Council and recognized with a newspaper article about their life and where they volunteer along with a picture in their community newspaper. From the Volunteers of the Month, a Volunteer of the Year is chosen and honored at the Recognition Banquet. Recognizing the senior volunteers is an important part of retention. Annually each volunteer is contacted to update their information and verify they are satisfied with their current volunteer assignment.

Program Management

Sponsor of RSVP, the City of Plainview, provides oversight of the RSVP program. The City has many years of experience administering state and federal grants and has a proven track record in all these areas.

The RSVP director has ten years of experience administering the program and attends all available training opportunities. To achieve effective program management adherence to program regulations and the RSVP Operations Handbook is imperative. Meeting community needs while providing meaningful placements for the volunteers is a joint goal of the sponsor and the RSVP director.

The volunteer coordinator has been in place for eleven years. She works closely with the volunteers and utilizes the Volunteer Reporter to maintain all volunteer statistics. This program is user friendly and a valuable tool in all areas of recording, tracking, and reporting.

Volunteer stations are developed and managed through contact with the RSVP director and the volunteer coordinator. The Memorandum of Understanding ensures the requirements of the station and RSVP are mutually understood.

Data requirements for reporting are discussed with the station contact person. This can include pre and post testing/surveys. Each station completes the Safety and Accessibility Checklist. The RSVP staff considers the needs of the station and how each station can meet community needs not only in the

Narratives

Primary Focus Area, Healthy Futures, but also in the Veterans and Military Families, Disaster Services, and Environmental Stewardship Focus Areas. Working with the stations to meet National Performance Measure outcomes and outputs is imperative. Measurement will be obtained through activity logs, client database, and surveys obtained through a working partnership with the stations. RSVP foresees the need to graduate volunteers to meet changing community needs in Floyd, Hale and Lamb counties. The RSVP staff will work diligently to place volunteers in Focus Areas and 30% of the volunteers in the Community Focus area. Those who do not fit will be thanked for their longtime service to RSVP and the importance of the volunteer work they do will be emphasized. A personal meeting with each volunteer will be used to ensure the graduating volunteer understands how much his or her volunteer efforts have achieved throughout the years is appreciated. Even though their hours will no longer be counted for RSVP, they will be encouraged to continue their important good works. They will no longer be included on the volunteer supplemental insurance and they will sign a form stating they understand they are no longer covered by the supplemental insurance.

Graduating stations will also be thanked for their longtime commitment to the RSVP program and also thanked for the community needs they have met throughout the past 40 years. They will be encouraged to keep utilizing older volunteers. Graduating stations will no longer be submitting volunteer hours to RSVP and the Memorandum of Understanding will become invalid when the station graduates.

Resources will be managed for 36 months through careful planning by the project director and adherence to budgeted items. Accountability and the efficient and effective use of available resources are overseen by the RSVP sponsor, the City of Plainview. The common goal for the sponsor and the RSVP project is to carefully utilize the Federal Grant funds to meet Performance Measures. Also efficient and effective management of a State Grant, Seniors/Volunteers for Childhood Immunizations Grant, small local grants and in-kind funds from local businesses will allow

Narratives

Performance Measures to be met in the three rural counties served.

Organizational Capability

Runningwater Draw RSVP has a vast knowledge of experience gained through the 40 years of implementing this important program. There are three RSVP Staff members. The Director has been in place for ten years with previous experience working with seniors through a community action agency. The volunteer coordinator has served the program for over 11 years and works closely with the volunteers and stations to ensure success of the program. The third staff member has overseen the Seniors/Volunteers for Childhood Immunizations program for the past five years. This program is grant funded through the University of North Texas. Each employee has a clear and precise job description compiled by the RSVP sponsor. Each new employee is carefully screened and a thorough background check is completed before employment.

RSVP is fortunate to have office space, utilities, maintenance and custodial services provided by sponsor, the City of Plainview. Office furniture, computers, and a copy machine have been previously purchased. Supplies are purchased as needed through budgeted grant funds.

The City of Plainview has in place a system for assessing employee performance, office policies, self-assessment, evaluation, and a strong and efficient Financial Department that is always willing to help RSVP staff. Purchasing procedures set in place for the sponsor are followed for RSVP which is a department within the City of Plainview. Each purchase requires a purchase order and corresponding receipts or invoices. The City of Plainview Personnel Policy handbook clearly defines policies including travel requirements. An independent audit is completed yearly of the City of Plainview records and the RSVP program is included in the audit. The RSVP Director provides monthly financial reports to coincide with the monthly reports provided by the Finance Department.

The RSVP Advisory Council is comprised of 15 members representing all three counties served. The men and women serving on the Advisory Council represent Hispanic, Black, Caucasian, veteran and

Narratives

disabled residents and are non-seniors as well as seniors. This important group reviews the financial reports at each monthly meeting and provides support for the RSVP program. A sponsor representative attends the Advisory Council meetings and assists with RSVP projects. The Mayor is a senior citizen and supports the RSVP program by attending meetings, attending fund raisers, speaking at RSVP events and promoting the RSVP project at every opportunity.

Goals and objectives for the RSVP program are presented to the Advisory Council and sponsor representative at the beginning of each year. The results of the previous year Performance Measure goals and objectives including accomplishments are reviewed by the Advisory Council during the January meeting. The mutual desire of the staff, Advisory Council and sponsor is to continue to improve the quality of the RSVP program and meet Performance Measures.

Runningwater Draw RSVP has been managing volunteers for the past 40 years. Successful management of volunteers and measuring performance has enabled RSVP to have longevity in the communities served as well as a reputation for meeting community needs through the efforts of the senior volunteers. Volunteers have a proven track record they can make a difference for others by delivering meals to homebound seniors and disabled including veterans. They also are helping stop hunger by providing emergency food assistance at the food pantries in the counties served and they are providing companionship to homebound individuals. Also, volunteers are educating new mothers on the importance of immunizing their children and helpful reminders cards are being mailed to these new mothers by the volunteers.

RSVP will adequately sustain the required 30% non-federal share through leveraging the State Grant, SVCI (Seniors/Volunteers for Childhood Immunizations) grant, local grants, fund raisers which includes a golf tournament, and donations along with memorials supporting RSVP.

Other

N/A