



## Narratives

### Executive Summary

The Community Action Commission of Belmont County sponsors the RSVP program in Belmont County. The Community Action Commission was established in May of 1965 as a part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty. Since that time, CAC has worked toward its mission of combating poverty and its consequences by offering programs to help our residents become self sufficient and to meet their needs and goals. CAC searches for volunteer opportunities in the community which support our agency mission and meet the community needs. Volunteer stations are designed to help many different members of the area including low income adults and their children, seniors, and veterans. A total of 120 RSVP volunteers will be recruited to service 14 locations in Belmont County to meet a variety of needs. The services that the volunteers will provide assistance with include the following: Ohio Benefit Bank for Households, Ohio Benefit Bank for Veterans, Preschools, Head Starts, the Summer Food Program, Local Food Pantries, a computer technology class, and a community garden. At these sites the volunteers will: assist households and veterans with the preparation of filing their taxes and determine if the clients are eligible for other community services; work with children on school readiness skills; assist with the Healthy Living theme at the Summer Food Program and ensure that children are making healthy food choices; assist in the pick up and delivery of food at the food pantries; support and develop basic computer knowledge to help prepare adults to be more marketable in today's competitive workplace; and assist families to create and maintain a community garden. At the end of the 12 month period we plan to have these expected outcomes at the volunteer sites: Ohio Benefit Bank for Households will serve approximately 100 individuals and families using 10 RSVP Volunteers. Ohio Benefit Bank for Veterans will serve approximately 20 veterans with tax preparation as well as helping them find information about other services in which they will qualify. This veterans program will use 10 volunteers. 12 volunteers will assist approximately 120 preschool students with school readiness skills over the course of a school

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year. 13 volunteers will assist approximately 220 Belmont County Head Start children with school readiness skills. 10 RSVP volunteers will serve approximately 320 hours of service at the Summer Food Sites throughout the months of June, July, and August providing children with knowledge for a Healthy Future. 50 volunteers will be placed at Local Food Pantries throughout the county spending up to 15 hours per week at the stations. 5 volunteers will serve 25 clients helping them learn basic computer skills. 10 volunteers will work closely with 20 families to build a garden that will meet the needs of local low income families. The CNCS federal investment of \$32,668 will be supplemented by \$22,302 (anticipated level of non-federal resources).

### **Strengthening Communities**

Belmont County is part of the Appalachian Region of the United States. This region has a variety of economic, social, and geographic characteristics that set it apart from other areas of the country. Belmont County has geographic features that stand out. It is a large rural region with the Ohio River on its Eastern border. The 2010 Census reported the county's population to be 70,400 people. The county's population has dwindled and at the same time the median age has risen from 40.9 in 2000 to 45.5 on the most recent census estimates. Belmont County is suffering from a high rate of unemployment with the current estimate at 7.3 %. This high rate of unemployment seems to be comparable with the rates seen in other parts of the country; however, Belmont County's higher than average poverty rate suggests that it is in fact getting hit harder than other parts of the country. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, only 14.1% of Belmont County residents have earned a Bachelor's Degree. There are few career options available and nearly 25% of the working population work retail jobs that pay an average annual salary of approximately \$15,000 per year. With such low wages as the status quo it is not surprising that 25.4% of Belmont County children live below the poverty level.

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The disproportionately low incomes in Belmont County mean that many families, especially children, are not able to get adequate nutrition. This is why our Primary Focus Area is Healthy Futures. We are putting a great deal of emphasis on our volunteers servicing the Local Food Pantries by assisting in the pickup and delivery of foods. 25% of all requests at food pantries are children ages 0-17. According to the Mid-Ohio Food Bank 2011 "Because No One Should Go Hungry" Report, 29,423 people in the county made requests at local food pantries. RSVP volunteers serve in the Living Bread Kitchen in Bellaire, the Bridgeport Council of Churches Pantry, the Shadyside Fellowship Pantry, and the Rayland-Yorkville UMC Pantry to ensure that healthy meals are served to people who need them. Another area which will feature the Healthy Futures theme is the Summer Food Program. The Summer Food Program is housed in 4 low-income housing units in Belmont County. From June through August, the RSVP volunteers will assist children with making healthy food choices. According to the Robert Wood Foundation with the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute 2012 Health Rankings, 31% of adults in the county are obese. We want children in the county to be educated at a young age so that percentage doesn't increase over time. The final site that is part of the Healthy Futures focus area is the Community Garden. The RSVP Volunteers will provide the community with information on healthy food choices. If healthy food choices continue to be limited, then the 22% of residents in the county reporting that they have limited access to healthy foods could rise to an even higher percentage. This percentage is also found in the Robert Wood Foundation with the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute 2012 Health Rankings. If the needs of these residents go unmet, the numbers could rise. RSVP will also assist Belmont County Veterans and their families with free tax assistance and free tax return preparation Through the Ohio Benefit Bank. According to the U.S. Census, Belmont County has over 6,000 veterans. By using the Ohio Benefit Bank, RSVP volunteers will help guide veterans to resources that they qualify for but may not have known exist. These resources include food assistance, child care subsidies, and the

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HEAP Program. This is an important program to help our local veterans of Belmont County.

### Recruitment and Development

The Community Action Commission of Belmont County realizes the importance of assuring a high quality experience for volunteers and the role that a successful recruitment and retention plan plays in this effort. We believe that a strong plan for recruiting volunteers is a key to program success. Current recruitment efforts are generally built upon the use of articles released to local media outlets, information published in the quarterly newsletter and "word of mouth" In order to increase recruitment efforts, we have developed a recruitment plan which will reach various groups of seniors in our county. Our recruitment plan will be implemented by the RSVP Director and will be ongoing throughout the program year. Strategies will include: Development of a brochure which will highlight volunteer opportunities and success stories Distribution of brochure to customers in all CAC programs, other social service agencies in the county and the community at large. RSVP Director will join with other outreach efforts conducted by other agency programs and make presentations regarding volunteer opportunities to a variety of groups in the county including service groups such as Rotary and Lions. Speaking to local businesses, non profits and local units of government about distributing information about volunteer opportunities to their employees Retention of volunteers is also a priority. Currently retention of volunteers is encouraged by an annual volunteer recognition luncheon. The RSVP Director also sends birthday cards to each volunteer to show appreciation. Volunteers will also be recognized in the quarterly newsletter and through articles published which highlight success stories. New volunteer opportunities will also be highlighted in the quarterly newsletter so that existing RSVP volunteers can be informed of all opportunities available. Training and technical assistance will be a key component to ensure successful volunteer development. The RSVP Director will attend all Corporation sponsored mandated trainings in order to keep apprised of the most recent information regarding program changes and guidelines. The RSVP Director will train volunteer station supervisors

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when the MOU is discussed and signed. The Director will explain program guidelines and requirements for RSVP volunteers. Regular informal contact is encouraged between the director and station supervisors as needed. RSVP volunteers are trained by the program director after they enroll in the program and also by the station supervisors with regard to training necessary for a particular volunteer assignment. In order to create high quality volunteer assignments, the RSVP Director will work with the CAC Planning Office to assess community needs. We believe that volunteers will be committed to utilizing their skills and abilities to improve their community when they are addressing community needs and know that their service will result in making a real difference. The RSVP Director will work with each individual volunteer station supervisor to plan training for that volunteer site. In this way training will be customized to ensure that volunteers have the tools to be effective in their assignments. Recruitment plans include efforts to reach out to individuals of all races, ethnicities, sexual orientation and degrees of English Language proficiency. Individuals with disabilities including age related disabilities will also be recruited and placed into volunteer assignments. We will accomplish this by making sure that outreach efforts are made to as many Belmont County residents as possible. In addition to brochures and press releases to local media outlets, the RSVP Director will participate on the Belmont County Interagency Council. This is a group of local service providers and is an information sharing group. The group meets monthly and members share information about their programs and activities. This will be a perfect place to disseminate information about volunteer opportunities and members can then take the information back to their respective agencies for dissemination. The RSVP Director is co located at the Belmont County One Stop named Connections. As the name indicated this is a perfect place to connect with others and form relationships and collaborations. The Belmont County Veterans Representative is also located at Connections. The RSVP Director will work with the Veterans Representative to reach out to local veterans and their families. The CAC RSVP program recognizes the value and importance of their work that our volunteers do

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and the impact that they make to the community. We feel that they should be recognized and that they need to know how much of an impact their efforts are making. The CAC planning office will compile a report which shows the hours that our volunteers have spent as well as all of the areas of the community that these volunteer efforts have touched. The report will be shared with the volunteers at an annual recognition luncheon. In addition the RSVP Director will highlight the volunteer accomplishments in a volunteer newsletter and also in press releases to local media outlets.

### **Program Management**

The Community Action Commission will develop volunteer assignments that address specified community needs. In order to ensure this, the RSVP Director will work with the CAC planning office and the Executive Director of the CAC in identifying needs of the community and planning for the RSVP program based on those identified needs. The planning office prepares a community assessment every two years and updates the assessment annually at a minimum. The RSVP Director will receive a copy of the assessment whenever it is updated and will meet with the planning office staff and the executive director to discuss updated assessments and how the information might relate to planning for the RSVP program. The RSVP Director will share this information with the Advisory Council so that they will also have input into the planning process. In addition the RSVP Director will complete quarterly ROMA reports on project outcomes and participate in ROMA Results and Learning meetings to share this information with all CAC program management staff. ROMA (Results Oriented Management and Accountability) is a method of reporting utilized by Community Action Agencies to assess progress toward identified goals in individual programs. ROMA is based upon principles contained in the Government Performance and Results Act of 1983. The planning office of the CAC will be responsible for preparing an annual report to the community and the RSVP Director will submit RSVP project accomplishments annually to the planning office for inclusion in the annual report. In addition, the RSVP Director will complete and submit progress reports to the Corporation

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semi annually and required evaluations to the corporation to access achievements. Quarterly reports will also be submitted to the area Agency on Aging Region 9. The Community Action Commission of Belmont County manages project resources, both financial and in-kind, to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources. Financial information is shared between the Executive Director, the Project Director, and the Fiscal Department, as well as, the Governing Board. The CAC planning office will work with the RSVP Director and the Executive Director to continue to work with volunteer stations to maintain and secure in kind and cash resources to sustain and expand the RSVP program. Volunteer stations that do not meet community needs will be graduated and volunteers who are working in those stations will be offered reassignment at a new station which does meet community needs. This will be an ongoing process.

### Organizational Capability

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The RSVP program operated by the Community Action Commission of Belmont County is managed by a Program Director with the support and expertise of various areas of key management staff within the agency structure. The RSVP Director has been involved with senior programming for the past several years. She has operated the Senior Community Employment Program and in that capacity she has developed many contacts in the community and has become acutely aware of the needs of the community. Other key management staff involved with program management and planning include the Executive Director who has held the position for 27 years and holds a Masters Degree in Political Science. The Agency Planner has been with the CAC for 15 years and the Fiscal Director and three Fiscal Assistants have a combined seventeen years of service with the agency and all hold degrees in accounting. The Community Action Commission of Belmont County has effective financial management systems in place to safeguard the assets of the funding sources. These systems

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consist of responsible personnel, (the Board of Directors, the Executive Director, and the Fiscal staff,) established fiscal policies and procedures, and a computerized accounting software system. The Governing Board formulates financial policies, delegates the administration of financial policies to the administrative staff, and reviews operations and activities. The Executive Director has responsibility for all operations and activities, including financial management. The Fiscal Director is responsible to the Executive Director for all financial operations. The fiscal staff consists of the Director and two assistants, each possessing an educational background in Accounting. Each fiscal position has specific duties and responsibilities, separated so that no one employee has sole control over transactions. Fiscal department employees are cross-trained to ensure a continuous flow of operations. The Fiscal Department utilizes a computerized accounting software package, specifically designed for non-profit fund accounting. The software, which is continually updated, is used to process and maintain all transactions, as well as, provide reports to both internal and external users. The agency has established fiscal policies and procedures to promote effective internal controls. The Policies and Procedures manual covers all financial aspects -- cash receipts, cash disbursements, payroll, procurement, etc. and defines the appropriate processes. As required by the U. S. Office of Management and Budget A-133 Compliance Supplement, an annual agency audit is performed by an independent auditor. Past audit reports, which express unqualified opinions on all major federal programs, have found no significant deficiencies in internal controls over financial reporting or compliance. There have been no findings or questioned costs reported in the past several audits. The RSVP Program has been affiliated with the CAC for the past twelve years and during those years the Agency has successfully managed the program and provided meaningful volunteer opportunities for our Belmont County Senior citizens while providing much needed assistance to community efforts. The CAC was established in 1965 as a result of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty and since that time we have offered numerous programs to Belmont County residents including Child and Adult Care Food program and Summer

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Food Program which fall into our primary focus area of healthy futures. We operate several senior programs including RSVP and the Senior Community Employment program. Our experience in operating programming and measuring is extensive. All of our agency programs utilize the ROMA method of reporting which is described above to measure performance. Volunteers are an important component to several of our programs including Head Start where parent volunteers provide many hours of help in the classrooms. The Advisory group has recently reformed and the members have had an organizational meeting. The CAC Executive Director and Planner attended the meeting along with the RSVP Director. The advisory group is enthusiastic and anxious to serve. They had several ideas about programming which would meet community needs and their ideas have been incorporated into the work-plans . The Fiscal Department will track non federal share from monthly reports supplied by the RSVP Director. The Fiscal Director will monitor progress of non federal share to make sure that the program is on track as far as meeting the required non federal share. Any issues will then be discussed with the RSVP Director.

### Other

The value of the cumulative experience of the senior population cannot be under estimated. RSVP recognizes that civic engagement by a large percentage of the senior population is important to the community as a whole, and watches for opportunities that will allow the civic-minded senior population to put their experience to use. Meaningful Civic engagement for senior volunteers has been a driving force for many of the decisions the RSVP program makes, and those decisions are not made hastily or without appropriate research and discussion. One of the most valuable resources in this process is the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council works cooperatively with the staff and volunteers to promote active participation by both mature adults and agencies in compliance with directives set forth by the federal funder (Corporation for National and Community Service). The Advisory Council shall promote continuation and future development of the RSVP Program in

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Belmont County. It goes without saying that the senior members of society have a wealth of experience from which to draw, but with the rapid innovation and adoption of computers into every facet of our culture much of that experience is in danger of lying fallow. RSVP is a fluid organization that evolves in any way necessary to ensure that that knowledge and experience is utilized. One of the programs that demonstrate the RSVP program's ability to meet the unique circumstances of this is the 21st century is the Benefit Bank. The Benefit Bank is a cutting edge program that is jointly sponsored by the Second Harvest Food Bank and the Governor's office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Involvement in the Benefit Bank program arose because of the RSVP Program Director's involvement in the Adult Services Coalition and the subsequent introduction to the Director of Senior Services. The various Benefit Bank stations around the county will provide volunteer opportunities for the more civic-minded seniors of the county to engage with and work directly with the people of Belmont County who not only need help but also need guidance to find the correct help for their situation. A few other areas that the volunteers will be able to provide knowledge and background is helping children in preschools and Head Start receive the school readiness skills necessary for Kindergarten. To go along with our Healthy Futures theme, the RSVP volunteers will be able to share information regarding healthy fruits and vegetables with children during our Summer Food Program. The sizable portion of our population known colloquially as the "baby boomers," is now beginning to reach retirement age. This large group of citizens leaving the workforce is a valuable pool of potential volunteers. RSVP is actively seeking to add "Boomers" to its corp. of volunteers. A drive is underway to contact local businesses, non-profit agencies and/or local government agencies to request permission to distribute information regarding volunteer opportunities to those employees contemplating retirement and/or early buy-out. As the RSVP program acquires new volunteers it must not overlook the important aspect of managing volunteers and retaining them for long-term volunteer activities. A crucial aspect of this is to ensure that there are multiple avenues for volunteers to put their skills to

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use. The RSVP Program Director distributes a newsletter on a quarterly basis that serves to inform current volunteers of other volunteer opportunities. RSVP feels that this is a particularly important part of the volunteer experience as the long term involvement of the anticipated rise in volunteers from the "Boomer" segment of the population will be of great value to the community.

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

Not applicable