

Narratives

Executive Summary

An estimated 350 RSVP volunteers will serve. Some of their activities will include:

Tutoring - Volunteers will tutor students who are struggling with their literacy skills in Kindergarten, First, Second and Third grades.

School Readiness - Volunteers will work with students in Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) to improve their level of school readiness before they enter Kindergarten. A focus will be on literacy skills.

Mentoring - Volunteers will mentor students in 4th - 12th grades. The mentors will meet with each student at least once per week and will spend time focusing on academics as well as interpersonal relationships. Mentors working with high school students will also focus on job interviewing, resume writing, and dress for success activities.

Improving Trails - Volunteers will work at two local state parks to assist with removal of invasive species and clearing natural debris such as fallen trees and limbs and unnatural debris such as hazardous fuel and waste.

Recruiting Volunteers - RSVP volunteers will help non-profits with volunteer recruitment for community, educational, and fundraising events as well as direct service activities.

Habitat For Humanity Home Builds - Volunteers will participate in Habitat builds on September 11th and MLK Day each year.

The primary focus area of this project is Education.

At the end of the three-year grant, outcomes will include:

Students in grades Kindergarten, First, Second and Third, will have improved academic performance in literacy.

Students in the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten programs will be more ready to start Kindergarten and will demonstrate gains in literacy skills.

Students in 4th - 12th grade that have received mentoring will show an improvement in academic engagement that could include: better attendance, improved classroom participation, more assignments completed, fewer disciplinary referrals, less reports on substance abuse.

The CNCS federal investment of \$43,760 will be supplemented by \$52,237.

Strengthening Communities

Narratives

RSVP serves Flagler County, including the cities of Palm Coast, Flagler Beach, Bunnell, and Beverly Beach. Flagler County is located on the Atlantic Coast in northeast Florida. The median household income from 2007-2011 was \$48,708 -- 13.3% of residents live below the poverty level. Flagler County currently has a 10.4% unemployment rate.

RSVP of Flagler County's primary focus area will be Education. The percentage of students on Free and reduced lunch in our county is 60%. This has steadily increased over the past four years and currently 8 out of the 10 schools are Title I schools. According to the United States Census Bureau 15.1% of Flagler County residents live in homes where a language other than English is spoken in their households. According to the Florida Department of Education, in 2011 25% of Kindergarten students in Flagler County had less than a 67% probability of reading success measure on their Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading (FAIR) Test. FAIR testing is a progress monitoring test that is given at the beginning of the school year, mid-year and at the end of the school year. This is the current tool that the school uses to determine which students will participate in our tutoring programs and what progress they make over the course of the year. 32% of 3rd grade students do not score at level 3 or above on their FCAT test.

Education service activities in our area will include:

Tutoring students who are struggling with their literacy skills in K -- 3rd grades. Sessions will be held in one-on-one or two-on-one settings. Volunteers will be matched with students that they will work with throughout the entire school year allowing them to build a positive relationship with the child while also improving their reading skills. Volunteers will meet at least once per week with their students. The focus will be on building the child's confidence in reading by having the student read a book to the volunteer followed by tutoring activities which will focus on blending letters, sounding out new words and learning their meanings in context. Emphasis will be placed on comprehension and the connection between reading and writing. This includes letter recognition and spelling. Data from FAIR Testing will be collected at the beginning of the year to determine which students are in need of tutoring, midway through the year and at the end of the year to monitor student improvement. Additionally, surveys will be done with the teachers and volunteers. At the completion of the school year the majority of students will show more than a 67% probability of reading success measure on their FAIR Testing. We are currently piloting use of Scholastic REAL (Read Excel Achieve & Learn) curriculum with our struggling Kindergarten and 1st grade students. The program equips mentors to inspire students and build literacy skills. It is a powerful tool used to motivate reading mentors and

Narratives

inspire students. R.E.A.L. makes it possible for a diversity of mentors from all walks of life in the community, to share their love for a great book by reading aloud and encouraging children to read aloud.

Tutoring students in Pre-K to prepare them for Kindergarten. Volunteers will work with students in Pre-K to improve their level of school readiness before they enter Kindergarten. Volunteers will work with the same students throughout the school year and will focus on Reading skills with the students. They will work with a Skills-based Educational Experience Delivery System (SEEDS curriculum). SEEDS provides the volunteers with a packet each week that includes a book, a planned activity and a guide to give them direction on how to best work with the child. Data from the student's FLKRS (Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener) will be used to determine a baseline for the student's school readiness. Additionally, surveys will be done with the teachers to gauge improvement in the student's classroom behaviors including in the areas of increased self-confidence when participating in classroom activities, an increased ability to sit in circle time and stay attentive, increases in word vocabularies and whether they have a better understanding of the English Language. At the completion of the school year the majority of the students will have a minimum of a 50% progression in test scores related to their reading skills.

Mentoring students in 4th -- 12th grades -- Volunteers will be matched with children that have been designated by school personnel as needing a mentor. Mentoring children has become a critical need within our society today. There are more single family homes in America today than ever before. Nationally the statistics show that 35% of our youth are growing up in a single family home and the State of Florida ranks higher than the National average at 39%. When families are functioning as a single parent the family dynamic has changed and each child can't receive the same amount of attention as with a dual parent home. It has been proven that children have more problems emotionally, inter-personally, in school, and with the law than those raised in a healthy two parent home. It is proven that youth thrive with positive attention and aspire to higher levels in small settings that provide individual interactions. Students will often act out in the need to be seen and recognized and therefore this program is essential to provide a positive influence from a stable resource that supports the existing family unit. The guidance counselors will identify students that they deem "at risk" and/or who could benefit from having a RSVP Volunteer mentor assigned to them. The mentor will meet with each student once a week and will spend time focusing on

Narratives

academics studies as well as interpersonal relationships. Mentors working with high school students will also focus on job interviewing, resume writing, and dress for success activities.

RSVP of Flagler County has had great success in the past with our tutoring programs that focus on struggling reading students in grades K-3. RSVP was encouraged by the School District to engage volunteers in early literacy initiatives in hopes of improving 3rd grade FCAT scores. This year our county ranked 8th in the state in reading scores on the 3rd grade FCAT. Last year we were ranked 19th. The level of improvement was impacted by our volunteer efforts in improving early literacy skills.

Many of our education focused volunteers are veterans. Our volunteer recruitment efforts for all of our focus areas and capacity building efforts include individuals that are Veterans or members of military families. Additionally, RSVP of Flagler County partners with our local Habitat for Humanity to conduct a Veterans Build on September 11th each year.

Recruitment and Development

RSVP of Flagler County will assure a high quality experience for volunteers by working directly with the Flagler County School District, local non-profits and government agencies to ensure that a wide-variety of volunteer opportunities is at all times available to the volunteers. RSVP staff will diligently seek volunteer opportunities that are meaningful to the volunteers, to the community, and that enhance the capacity of these local organizations. A high value will be placed upon opportunities that will engage veterans and military families and/or build capacity for the volunteer stations.

RSVP of Flagler County has worked in partnership with the Flagler County School District and with our local United Way to establish training workshops for volunteers who participate in our tutoring and mentoring programs. Volunteers in both reading programs receive a 4.5 hour comprehensive training session, and are required to attend two in-services throughout the school year. Training instruction in mentoring, use of materials, how to read with children, introduction of books and "print concept". Focus is placed on vocabulary development, language enhancement, effective strategies to use to help children to stay on task. During training, volunteers are required to role play and interact with each other, using the materials they will use with children. At our in-service sessions, specialist in Early Learning, Behavior, and Literacy present additional instruction. Staff will monitor the Volunteers to ensure that they are provided with proper supports for individual

Narratives

circumstances for their tutored and mentored students.

Volunteers that are participating in capacity building receive on the job training in our offices. Additionally, we work directly with our RSVP stations to ensure that RSVP volunteers are properly trained for other focus areas.

RSVP project staff, volunteers, volunteer station supervisors and Advisory Council members will be kept informed on training and technical assistance available to them through Flagler Volunteer Services, other local agencies, the Corporation for National & Community Service, Volunteer Florida, and the Florida Association for Volunteer Resource Management. RSVP project staff will also be kept informed and encouraged to participate in online training modules that are available to them. This information will be shared with others whenever appropriate. RSVP project staff will be encouraged to maintain a strong relationship with the State Program Office so that they have a place to turn for other assistance. Staff will be encouraged to attend annual Corporation for National and Community Service conferences that include various workshops that provide training on program activities.

RSVP will utilize the RSVP project staff, Advisory Council and our current RSVP volunteers to recruit volunteers that reflect our diverse community to participate in our program. RSVP will recruit volunteers through speaking presentations, newspaper articles, and other avenues of public relations. Veterans and military families will be targeted in recruitment activities.

RSVP staff will work to retain volunteers by maintaining a high level of communication with them. Staff will encourage them, educate them on the benefits of volunteering and the volunteer opportunities available to them, and be a phone call or email away for any issues that they may have through their volunteer work.

According to United States Census Bureau, Flagler County population was estimated at 98,359 in 2012. Approximately 27% of the population is over the age of 65. 18.8% of the population is under the age of 18. 83.9% of the population is white, 11.5% is African American and the remaining population is made up of diverse races/ethnicities. RSVP of Flagler County recruits volunteers of all races, ethnicities, sexual orientations and degrees of language proficiencies as well those with disabilities. Additionally, we recruit volunteers that are veterans or members of military families to become RSVP

Narratives

volunteers.

Volunteer recognition is a high priority for RSVP of Flagler County. Our Volunteer Recognition Committee plans an annual Volunteer Recognition Event to highlight the difference the volunteers have made in the community. At this time we recognize our Volunteer of the Year award winners for their outstanding service. RSVP also presents the Presidential Service Awards to the volunteers that have achieved gold or lifelong volunteer levels. RSVP believes that it is just as important to recognize the efforts of volunteers who may not have reached any set levels or made what some would consider outstanding impact on the community. One of the ways we do this is by designating a volunteer to personally call each volunteer on their birthday to wish them a happy birthday and thank them for their efforts in the community.

Program Management

RSVP staff will work directly with the Volunteer Stations to ensure volunteer opportunities within their agencies are not prohibited activities and that the stations themselves are in compliance with RSVP program regulations. RSVP staff is required to read and sign off on their understanding of federal RSVP program regulations on an annual basis. This internal requirement helps our staff stay up-to-date with any changes made in the regulations and refreshes staff's memory of what each regulation is.

RSVP of Flagler County works with our volunteer stations and requires that they capture data that shows volunteer hours, service activities, and the impacts of the RSVP volunteers that serve their agencies. Staff maintains contact with our stations on a regular basis and will offer quarterly networking sessions that all stations will be invited to attend. These sessions will ensure current communications within the station activities and assist in maintaining a positive and supportive relationship with station personnel.

RSVP of Flagler County has a proven record in our community for meeting changing and emerging needs. Throughout our history in Flagler County the agency has been able to engage RSVP volunteers in unexpected disaster related activities such as responding to Fires, Hurricanes, Tropical Storms, Water Main breaks and Hazardous spills.

Our volunteers have been able to assist our community with capacity building efforts such as

Narratives

partnering with our local sheriff's office to start a Citizen On Patrol program nearly 20 years ago. RSVP assisted with volunteer recruitment efforts to triple our hospital's volunteer base when a new hospital was built and has helped with many more community needs throughout Flagler County RSVP's nearly 25 year existence. The agency is confident that there will be a minimal disruption to the current volunteers when we graduate stations. Any RSVP volunteers that are currently placed in stations that will be graduated will still have a home within our agency with other programs that we conduct. This will make the transition nearly seamless.

RSVP of Flagler County has had a priority focus on education during our last 2 grant cycles. Our main mission has been on improving reading skills in grades K-3 with the hopes of increasing the number of students who were passing the reading FCAT by grade 3. The main program we have put in place is our "I Can Read" program that utilizes RSVP volunteers to work one-on-one with students in grades K-3. We have seen impressive results over the past 5 years. According to our School District, the FCAT Student Achievement data received in Spring of 2013, indicates that at Grade 3 our county currently ranks 8th in the state with 68% of students scoring at level 3 and above. This number has shown a steady improvement over the past few years. The previous year's ranking was 19th. The School District has expressed that they believe that this improvement indicates the effectiveness of the early intervention programs and primary programs that are in place including our "I Can Read" program. The school district has encouraged our agency to not only continue our "I Can Read" program but to expand to other areas including school readiness and mentoring programs. The Agencies desire is to be able to continue our programs and to expand them through this grant.

RSVP has an Advisory Council in place that meets on a monthly basis. The RSVP Advisory Council is knowledgeable on RSVP federal regulations and includes members that represent many of the Volunteer Stations that we have established.

RSVP Volunteer Stations are required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with our agency that clearly identifies the roles of the RSVP office staff, volunteers, and the volunteer station supervisors. Once the Memorandum is authorized our staff and office volunteers immediately begin to recruit, train and place volunteers who are eligible to serve in RSVP in that station's various volunteer opportunities. The agency reevaluates volunteer needs on a monthly basis to ensure that they are properly prepared.

Narratives

Organizational Capability

Flagler Volunteer Services, Inc. recognizes its responsibility to maintain financial controls necessary so that its monetary resources are properly protected against unexpected or improper loss. Flagler Volunteer Services, Inc. will implement such accounting procedures and internal controls as are reasonably necessary to accomplish this goal. A record of financial transactions is kept electronically in the QuickBooks for Non-Profits maintained by Flagler Volunteer Services. Policies and procedures are on file that includes: purchasing procedures, personnel policies, internal policies, travel policies and other management procedures. There are also Job Descriptions on file that clearly define roles for staff and administrators. All staff are familiar with RSVP program requirements (statutes, regulations, and applicable OMB circulars).

All financials are reviewed and monitored by the FVS Board of Directors.

The RSVP Project Director is currently Suzanne Gamblain. Suzy has been a staff member for RSVP for 19 years and has been in the Project Director position since October of 2007. She is well known and respected in the community and actively participates in a number of community supports including the American Cancer Society's Flagler Unit Operating Board, Heritage Crossroads Volunteer Committee and she is on the Relay For Life Planning Committee. She has completed the American Cancer Society's Volunteer Leadership Institute, has been trained in Volunteer Management, Financial Management and Disaster Related Activities including Volunteer Reception Center Operations, Shelter Operations, and Advanced E-Team training for our local Emergency Management. She is currently the Treasurer for the Florida Association for Volunteer Resource Management.

The RSVP Volunteer Coordinator is currently Jean MacAllister. Jean has been employed with our agency for seven years. Jean has a degree in Business Administration and was previously the Executive Director of one of RSVP's volunteer stations and has a great deal of knowledge in volunteer management. Jean is actively involved in the community and is past president of her Home Owners Association, and is past president and currently serving on the Board Of Directors for Flagler Palm Coast Kiwanis, receiving Kiwanian of the Year last year for her service to the children through the "I Can Read" program. She is a member of her neighborhood's CERT team, a member of the CERT Council, and is actively involved in her Church. She is an active member of the Adult Community

Narratives

Education/Flagler Technical Institute Advisory Council. Jean is trained in multiple areas of disaster preparedness, response, relief and brings a strong background in leadership and management related activities with her to the Volunteer Coordinator position.

Barbara Witt is Flagler Volunteer Service's Special Events & Fundraising Assistant. This position oversees volunteer committees that plan and conduct fundraisers that benefit the RSVP program. This staff member also helps to promote RSVP in the community and continuously seeks support and financial and in-kind contributions from local businesses, organizations, and the general public.

The staff are dedicated to work as a team to ensure that RSVP successfully accomplishes project objectives and has a positive influence within our county.

Flagler Volunteer Service's Board of Directors and staff work hand in hand to ensure accountability and efficient effective use of available resources by working within the agency's established policies and procedures, documenting all financial and in-kind contributions, and ensuring that all expenditures have been approved and that proper documentation is on file to back up expenses. To further ensure accountability, the Board of Directors review monthly financial statements and have had experienced financial experts examine the agency's internal control, financial tracking, and accounting procedures.

The RSVP federal grant was awarded to Flagler Volunteer Services in 2001.

Flagler Volunteer Services, Inc. is a 501c3 Non-Profit Corporation that was formed in 2000 by members of the RSVP Advisory Council in response to the Flagler County School Board's decision to release their sponsorship of the program. When Flagler Volunteer Services was formed, the main priority was to oversee and manage the RSVP Project and provide support to the activities of RSVP by obtaining financial support for the project and providing direction to the project staff and Advisory Council. This remains a primary focus of Flagler Volunteer Services.

Flagler Volunteer Service's Board of Directors is comprised of local business owners, managers, and respected citizens that include people in the financial, legal, human services, grant management and media fields within the community. Each board member brings with him/her past experiences that

Narratives

will benefit the RSVP operation. None of the board members are compensated for their services.

Other

Flagler County is currently in the planning stages of creating an early prisoner release housing project.

Flagler Volunteer Services and RSVP are hopeful that we will be able to partner to assist the children of the prisoners involved in the program with mentoring/tutoring assistance. I could not include this in our workplans at this time because it isn't finalized and we have not worked out the details.

However, we hope to have it in place by the start of this grant and will be looking to add it in at the time.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A