

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

An estimated 248 RSVP volunteers will serve. Some of their activities will include serving military families and veterans by working with veterans who are patients of the local veterans' medical center, adopting a naval base in Japan to send active military and their families manufacturers' coupons, and mailing cards and letters to deployed soldiers and hospitalized veterans. Other activities will feature income tax tutoring as a service under the economic opportunity focus area. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. Some of the activities volunteers will be performing in this focus area are providing health care information, transportation, and companionship, as well as food distribution and food pantry support. At the end of the three-year grant, the anticipated outcomes are: seniors will maintain an independent lifestyle with transportation and companionship services; area children and families will have higher food security; and seniors and disabled individuals will have the best Medicare drug plans for their needs. The CNCS federal investment of \$48,543 will be supplemented by \$108,969 by the sponsoring agency.

## Strengthening Communities

The RSVP project service area includes Montgomery County and the City of Radford, located in the southwestern part of Virginia in the region known as the New River Valley (NRV). The other jurisdictions that comprise the NRV are Floyd, Giles and Pulaski. The County has a land area of 388 square miles and lies in the broad picturesque area between the Appalachian Plateau and the Blue Ridge Mountains. Nestled in a large bend in the New River, Radford covers approximately 9.5 square miles in the geographic center of the New River Valley with the Blue Ridge Parkway on one side and Jefferson National Forest and the Appalachian Trail on the other. Both areas are strategically located along Interstate 81. Montgomery County has a population of 95,194 and the City of Radford, 16,685 according to the most recent facts from the U.S. Census Bureau. The county's two major communities are Blacksburg and Christiansburg. Christiansburg, the county seat, is the fourth largest town in the commonwealth. With more than 21,041 residents, it is within 10 miles of two major universities. Both institutions, Virginia Polytechnic and State University (Virginia Tech) and Radford University, provide employment and economic stability for thousands of area residents while benefiting the area with both a myriad of cultural activities and a technology corridor, both of which stabilize the local economy. Blacksburg, Virginia's second largest town has grown into a thriving cosmopolitan community of approximately 42,620. In November 2011, Bloomberg-BusinessWeek named Blacksburg the best place in the US to raise children. Blacksburg is home to the 2,600 acre

## **Narratives**

campus of Virginia Tech, Virginia's largest enrollment university with a student body of 31,000. Blacksburg is also home to the Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM), the second largest medical college in Virginia and the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine. Montgomery County ranks as the twelfth largest county in population among the ninety-five counties in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is one of the fastest growing areas in Virginia and is becoming an emergent metropolis. There are several smaller rural communities scattered throughout Montgomery County, including Riner, Shawsville, Elliston, and McCoy. Radford University, located in the City of Radford, has an enrollment of 9,500 students and was listed as one of the nation's "Top Up-and-Coming Schools" in the U.S. News and World Reports' 2010 Guide to America's Best Colleges. For the fourth year in a row, Princeton Review has included it on its list of best colleges and universities in the Southeast. Because its natural beauty, cultural and historic features, friendly residents and outstanding educational, professional, technological, recreation and entertainment opportunities available, the area attracts a wide variety of people, making it diverse socially and culturally.

The geography of the area plays a major role in the community and how the population is dispersed. Montgomery County encompasses three completely different geographies and is bisected by the continental divide. The western and southwestern portions of the county are characterized by the rolling hills of the Christiansburg Plateau between the Alleghany and Blue Ridge Mountains and the narrow valleys along the Little and New Rivers. With the exception of the town of Christiansburg, the City of Radford, and the villages of Riner, Plum Creek and Belview, the area is predominantly defined by agricultural uses and by the Radford Arsenal, located along the New River.

The northern portion of the county is located on the slopes of the Alleghany Mountains and the broad valleys between Price Mountain, Brush Mountain, and Gap Mountain. While Blacksburg and the Village of Prices Fork have historically, been agricultural and urban/university based areas, the remainder of the northern portion of Montgomery County, including the villages of Merrimac and McCoy, has been defined by coal mines, subsistence farming, and river-based tourism. The eastern portion of Montgomery County, the area located east of the Continental Divide, is characterized by the severely steep slopes of the Alleghany and Blue Ridge Mountains and the deep, narrow valleys of north and south forks of the Roanoke River. While there are some small population centers in eastern Montgomery County, most notably Elliston, Lafayette and Shawsville, most of area has been and

## **Narratives**

continues to be used for subsistence agriculture and related industries. Finally, while Blacksburg, Christiansburg, the City of Radford, and the villages of Plum Creek, Belview, Prices Fork, and Merrimac are located in the Blacksburg-Christiansburg Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), the remainder of the County is still rural and lies outside of the boundaries of the MSA.

The geography of the County is important because many of the smaller population centers, most notably in the northwestern, eastern, and southeastern portions of the county, are physically isolated from their larger neighbors and from the economic benefits created by the presence of two universities--Virginia Tech and Radford University.

The combination of rapid urban and suburbanization in and around Blacksburg and in the rural villages of Riner and Prices Fork, along with relatively strict zoning laws in Blacksburg and Montgomery County, effectively moved much of the poorer population into subsidized housing and manufactured housing parks in Christiansburg and a number of the villages. The zoning laws have limited the location of manufactured housing to rural and agricultural lands which has contributed to the development of poverty pockets throughout the County. This has made the distribution of resources much more difficult, in part because it created a greater distance between residents and resources.

The median household income in Montgomery County is \$44,231. The median income for a household in the City of Radford is \$29,101. About 34% of the population lives below the poverty line in Radford, and 24% of the population live below the poverty line in Montgomery County. According to the latest census available (2010), a total of 18.9% of the population in Montgomery and 15.2% of the population in Radford are at least 55 years of age. This is a 3.4% increase in Montgomery County over the 2000 census. As the area moves from a rural community to a more urban one, the problems of urban expansion emerge. These include increased poverty, homelessness, health issues and a need for a myriad of services.

RSVP of Montgomery County and Radford has been in existence since 1973 and we just celebrated our 40th anniversary this year. Since 1978, the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors has served as its sponsoring organization. That it supports the RSVP program with more than double the required match shows that it values our mission, which is to provide meaningful volunteer opportunities to

## Narratives

people aged 55 and over and to meet critical community needs by providing services to older adults and others in the community. To determine the critical community needs, RSVP relies on several organizations which conduct needs assessments so that we can direct our service to identified, documented needs. The Montgomery County Board of Supervisors, our sponsoring agency, provides input on the needs in our community that are brought before their governing body and County Administration. Four other agencies, United Way of Montgomery/Floyd and Radford, New River Community Action, PATH, (the Partnership for Access to Healthcare in the New River Valley) and New River Valley (NRV) Agency on Aging conduct annual needs assessments from which we can glean information in order to prioritize the critical needs that our programs can address. We also obtain local input by having various partner agency and business representatives serving on the RSVP Advisory Council. The Advisory Council appoints these community Council members. When the Advisory Council conducted the Community Stakeholder's Survey, the members stated that we use our network of volunteers to connect with many partners in the community, often by sharing knowledge and experiences. We also tie the community together by sharing information facilitating cooperation with other organizations. Many volunteers serve in leadership positions in other organizations by serving on boards, as officers, and as chairmen of committees, thus bringing to the table input from those boards and committees on area needs. Some of the community groups or interests that are represented on the current Advisory Council are the New River Valley Agency on Aging, Humane Society of Montgomery County, New River Community Action, PATH, Montgomery County Emergency Assistance Program, Free Clinic of the New River Valley, AARP- Blacksburg and Radford Chapters, and Heritage Hall Nursing and Rehab Center.

RSVP of Montgomery County and Radford is best known for providing much needed volunteer support to numerous organizations throughout the community. When our Advisory Council members conducted a program assessment, they answered the question, "How meaningful is the involvement of the RSVP project in the community it serves?" by saying it is "priceless". They added, "Many organizations couldn't continue the services that they have, expand into new ones, communicate with their clients and members, or even function at normal levels without our assistance." Our reputation is very positive and we are recognized as an extremely strong and active organization. Partner organizations refer other agencies to our program because they know that there is a high standard of dedication and work ethic among our volunteers and staff. Our volunteers are valued by the organizations that we serve because they enhance their capacity to meet their own

## Narratives

missions.

Healthy Futures is the primary focus area for our program because of the evidence of need based on census data, needs assessments and other documentation addressing basic human needs facing individuals and families living in poverty as well as access to care and independent living services required by older adults to allow them to age in place. To address aging in place and access to care service activities, we used the information which follows. According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau data in 2012, a total of 10.5% of the population in Montgomery County and 8.1% in Radford is 65 years or older. According to AARP, approximately 10,000 individuals are turning 65 each day. 18.9% of the population in Montgomery and 15.2 % of the population in Radford is at least 55 years of age, a 3.4% increase in Montgomery County over the 2000 census. The New River Valley Livability Initiative Interim Report 2012 produced through the New River Valley Planning District Commission states that the New River Valley's population is aging rapidly with the number of seniors nearly doubling in the next 20 years, meaning that about 1-in-5 people will be over age 65 by 2030. They further indicated that an aging population brings specific challenges to the community, citing declining mobility as a major challenge. Declining mobility in the home and the inability to continue driving can lead to increased health risks and isolation. These are significant factors that drive premature placement in a nursing home, an extremely costly housing option for older adults, their families and the public. The New River Valley Area Agency on Aging has stated that many senior citizens often have difficulty accessing relevant information regarding Medicare, understanding changes in the Medicare premiums and policies, choosing the best supplement and Medicare Part D drug plans, and preventing fraud. This problem is also relevant to area veterans and disabled individuals. Ten unduplicated volunteers will assist in preparing and delivering food to 35 homebound seniors or disabled adults residing in Radford five days per week and assisting 9 seniors or disabled adults per month with transportation to at least one non-emergency medical appointment through Med-Ride or RSVP thus helping them remain in their homes, living independently and increasing their social support. We will conduct surveys for this measure from the adult receiving services. 5 unduplicated volunteers will be trained, certified and supervised through the Virginia Insurance Counselors Assistance Program (VICAP) and the NRV Agency on Aging. They will research and work with individuals on their particular needs to arrive at a suitable plan for their health care. Last year, 5 RSVP volunteers in addition to one NRV Agency on Aging staff person saved 855 clients \$344,880 by helping them find the best insurance plan for their needs during Medicare Part D Open Enrollment.

## Narratives

Not only do the counselors assist with insurance plans, but they refer clients to local resources that can impact their health issues and advise clients who are new to Medicare. 200 individuals will receive assistance with health care access.

11 unduplicated volunteers will provide companionship and respite services on a monthly basis to 40 older adults and individuals with physical and mental impairments who cannot be left at home alone while a caregiver works, does errands, etc. The programs where volunteers will serve are the Pointe West Club operated by the Community Services Board, the state mental health organization, and the VA Tech Adult Day Care Center. Currently, half of the Adult Day Care Center daily participants are veterans.

In addition to Aging in Place and Access to Care activities that volunteers will be performing under the Healthy Futures Focus Area, they will also be participating in Obesity and Food initiatives including food distribution and food pantry support. According to the U.S. 2012 Census Bureau data, 34% of the population lives below the poverty line in Radford and 24% live below the line in Montgomery County. This is well over the national poverty rate of 13.8% and Virginia's rate of 10.4%. 2,034 households or 5.9% in Montgomery County receive SNAP benefits and 669 households or 11.8% receive them in Radford. A new study titled Map the Meal Gap just completed by Feeding America, the nation's largest hunger-relief organization, based on statistics collected by the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, finds that 13,280 people in Montgomery County experience food insecurity. That means 14.2 % of the county's population is at risk of hunger. The CEO of Feeding America Southwest Virginia stated as a result of the study that "Food insecurity is one of the leading public health challenges in the United States, and it's affecting a large population in Montgomery County. We are particularly concerned about children who are under-nourished. Lack of adequate nutrition in children, for even a brief period of time, may also cause permanent physical and developmental impairments." 35.8% of students in Montgomery County and 36.5% in Radford participate in the free and reduced price lunch program.

To help address the hunger issues in our service area 5 volunteers will travel to the Southwest Virginia Feeding America warehouse in Salem to work 5 hours sorting donated food items to be distributed to 26 food banks in rural Southwest Virginia. 11 volunteers will serve at least once a month for up to 3 hours each day picking up, sorting and organizing food for 4 area food pantries. Once a week, 52

## **Narratives**

weeks a year, 12 volunteers pack approximately 357 backpacks at Micah's Backpack and Belview Methodist Church to be distributed to children attending 9 schools located in Montgomery County, including Head Start, who received free or reduced price lunches so that they will have food for the weekend. The director of Micah's Backpack reported that the number of children served by the program has steadily increased 10% each year for the past three years. The work stations have found ways to continue to distribute food during the summer months and long breaks. 3 volunteers prepare and serve mid-day meals 2 days per week for the Salvation Army Soup Kitchen to an average of 30 individuals who have low food insecurity. The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service provides educational and nutritional information to clients receiving food from the Feeding America partnership pantries. Each individual work station supervisor who utilizes RSVP volunteers will provide orientation and training. Services include but are not limited to: picking up donations, unloading deliveries, stocking shelves, preparing meals, serving clients, cleaning up after meals, collecting and reporting data. RSVP will utilize client tracking databases from the work stations to provide a count of unduplicated individuals who receive food to show the number who report increased food security. Veterans and their families are served through the local food pantries and soup kitchens, especially veterans who are homeless.

### **Recruitment and Development**

RSVP is constantly exploring innovative recruitment and retention methods. In 2008, the Advisory Council decided to form a Recruitment/Marketing Committee, which has since then proven to be very proactive in developing new strategies to publicize RSVP. The Committee began meeting regularly with three Virginia Tech Service Learning students who were seniors in business management and marketing. They devised the slogan "Life isn't over when you retire...get involved!" and developed a flyer to distribute in locations frequented by older adults such as pharmacies, beauty salons, the offices of doctors, dentists, physical therapists, realtors, and senior centers. This flyer was also published in local news magazines and newsletters geared to older adults. On the back of the flyer, the Committee listed volunteer opportunities with all 79 workstations.

Active volunteers often recruit friends and relatives so that word-of-mouth has consistently proven to be a reliable recruitment tool. We conduct New Volunteer Orientations quarterly and meet individually with new recruits who cannot attend these sessions. Our new volunteers are very satisfied with these sessions and believe that they help them have a thorough understanding of the program; therefore, we are better able to retain them as active volunteers. The orientation includes

## **Narratives**

participation by workstation supervisors, explanation of volunteer time sheets, allowable hours, and the handbook as well as introductions to long-term, seasoned RSVP volunteers who can speak about their volunteer experiences.

As part of broader community outreach, our volunteers also staff information booths at some of our local festivals and community events, in order to increase RSVP's public visibility and reach out to new members of the community.

We continue to offer new volunteer opportunities to targeted groups that are currently underserved -- minorities, the disabled, Baby Boomers and those without transportation. Our program takes every opportunity to participate in health fairs, seminars, forums, trainings, speaking engagements, and any other venues involving the senior population. Educating people about community service and our program contributes to a favorable climate for obtaining volunteers.

It has been very beneficial to have active volunteers join the director in speaking engagements and in New Volunteer Orientations because they can relate firsthand why volunteering is important to them and explain the benefits and opportunities of volunteering. We now give our recently enhanced Interest and Skills Inventory survey to potential volunteers and explore their responses in our interviews with them to help us assign them to the best possible match with their skills and interests. In all contact with our volunteers, we promote the value of service and volunteering as a life style. We value and acknowledge their contributions and ensure that they find their assignments to be personally meaningful. As volunteers become successful in their volunteer roles, the staff recognizes their efforts and encourages them to assume leadership roles. Our program has several volunteer leaders as a result: two of the area's thrift shops are managed by RSVP volunteers, a volunteer has coordinated home repair projects for the United Way, and one volunteer supervises the AARP Tax Aide Program.

Our staff engages in follow-up after a volunteer has been assigned to a workstation. Within a few days of placement, we make a phone call or email to thank them for helping with the project and to ask how the assignment went. This approach lets the volunteer know that we care about their comfort and satisfaction with their placements and is also a proactive way to deal with any potential problems. We have found this step to be an effective management tool and critical to the retentions of

## Narratives

our volunteers.

Recognition is another important tool in retaining our volunteers. The monthly newsletter highlights and thanks volunteers who help with specific projects, and during our events we always take time to recognize individuals or groups of volunteers.

In addition to our annual volunteer recognition banquet, which honors approximately 150 volunteers who attend and is held in April to coincide with Volunteer Appreciation Week, we plan another volunteer recognition event in the 3rd quarter recognizing volunteers serving on the Advisory Council, especially those rotating off of the Council that year. Approximately 125 volunteers attend this event.

We conduct an annual Volunteer Satisfaction Survey. The results of the 2012 survey showed that volunteering with RSVP has positively affected many aspects of the respondents' lives. For example, 96% of the respondents believe that the volunteer work that they do has an impact. 73% enjoy more social contact/friendship, 74% feel that they are making a difference in the community, 85% feel more productive and useful, 73% feel a sense of accomplishment, and 48% volunteer more than 20 hours per month. We or persons at the work stations themselves provide training to volunteers as needed for specific projects. Volunteers receive extensive training with some work stations such as hospice, the Women's Resource Center or literacy volunteers. If problems arise during assignments, we often find that they are indications that training and technical assistance may be needed.

On a monthly basis, we update our web page, which is located on Montgomery County's web site, by adding such things as our brochure, enrollment form, volunteer timesheet, calendar of events, newsletters and volunteer opportunities. We also have an active Facebook page showing a timeline of many of our activities and highlighting our volunteers. We have the capability to send announcements of our activities to all the listserv participants in the County. We also have a group who has requested to be on the RSVP listserv, and we send information to these individuals on a monthly basis. In addition to the County's web page, our program's volunteer opportunities are included in Volunteer Match, Volunteer Solutions through the local United Way and Volunteer NRV. These three are web-based programs that match local volunteers with groups who need assistance. We anticipate that having good Internet access for potential volunteers will help us to appeal to the Baby Boomers and those who utilize technology to obtain their information. We are utilizing email as

## Narratives

a valuable way to communicate with our volunteers regularly. When we receive a request for volunteers, our staff can email the request with dates, times, and job description to our volunteers, many of whom have expressed that they prefer we contact them by email instead of the telephone. Our program continues to have a high visibility with the local media, including the three newspapers, two television stations, and five radio stations that run public service announcements for our special projects.

RSVP volunteers come from diverse backgrounds culturally, socially and economically. Many are lifetime residents who have farmed or worked in local garment factories, the Radford Arsenal, both universities, as well as many small local businesses. Some are retired professors, farmers, retail personnel, teachers, nurses, homemakers and engineers. Their strong work ethic and dedication to the community has earned our program an excellent reputation in the community. Montgomery County has become a destination for new retirees seeking an affordable, rural atmosphere with activities provided by a college town along with access to skiing, trails, natural beauty and wildlife. RSVP has gained many active volunteers with specialized and professional skills from those who have moved to this area from large cities, particularly the Washington, D.C. area. These volunteers have added new energy and ideas to our program. The longtime residents are very accepting of the newer residents and both groups enjoy working and learning from each other. Many of our newer volunteers first discover our program on the website. Some volunteers can sew and garden, others can work on databases and websites. Volunteers in our program range in age from 55-99 and currently, 20% are males. 30 volunteers are veterans from all branches of the service. There are 5,110 veterans residing in Montgomery County or 5.4% of the entire population. We work hard to develop opportunities for people of all ages and physical and mental capabilities. There are currently two active volunteers who are legally blind and approximately 35 volunteers with physical impairments as well as two volunteers who are developmentally challenged. An important benefit of our program is transportation assistance to those who want to engage in volunteer activities but who do not drive or have other means of transportation. Our sponsor has provided an 11- passenger van and the salary for a part-time van driver. The van has regularly scheduled pick-ups, thus affording those living in rural communities without public transportation an opportunity to be engaged in community service. If this particular program did not exist, over 25 volunteers would not have the opportunity to serve in the community. The percentage of racial minorities in our program is 4%, a portion that is consistent with the county's population of 4% minorities. 32 volunteers are veterans from all branches of the service. We work with several veteran organizations to promote volunteer service and sometimes

## **Narratives**

partner with them for special projects. They are two area VFW's, the Marine Corps League, Wounded Warriors and the Disabled American Veterans. We have a nominating committee who assures that every group from the RSVP membership is represented on the Advisory Council, whether it is age, gender, areas of residence within the county and Radford, race, sexual orientation, physical disability, or other traits.

### **Program Management**

We have developed a written operations manual that addresses all aspects of the program including recruitment and management of volunteers, risk management, work station management, reports and recordkeeping, volunteer reimbursements, community advisory group and budgetary management. This manual was developed in accordance with RSVP program regulations. There are several components to our program management. The first component is ensuring that volunteers are eligible to serve as an RSVP volunteer, placing them in meaningful assignments and providing a support system to each volunteer. Our operations policy requires them to complete an enrollment form certifying that the information that they are providing is true to the best of their knowledge by signing the statement on the form. RSVP staff can attest by sight and by viewing a DMV ID card or driver's license that they meet the age requirement. We have developed a volunteer handbook to provide participants in the program with detailed guidance and have scheduled group orientation sessions for all new volunteers. If the volunteer cannot attend the group session, we schedule an individual appointment. One tool that we have developed that has proven to be extremely helpful not only to first-time volunteers but also to our more experienced volunteers is a brochure listing each work station and the job descriptions.

The second component of our program is managing the workstations, each with different requirements, as quantified by the Memorandum of Understanding which is updated every three years or as major changes occur. Our regular communication and visits with workstation supervisors keep the program running smoothly. We deal with any problems immediately so that they are resolved in a professional manner in the best interest of all parties involved. Because we communicate with the workstations on a regular basis, they know who we are and feel comfortable with us, building a better relationship between the site and RSVP. It also is important to communicate with the volunteers assigned to the workstation to determine if they are receiving necessary training and supervision, fulfilling the job description, enjoying the experience and not being requested to perform tasks that are prohibited. Our staff engages in follow-up after a volunteer has been assigned to a workstation. Within a few days of placement, we make a phone call or e-mail to thank them for

## **Narratives**

helping with the project and to ask how the assignment went. This approach lets the volunteer know that we care about their comfort and satisfaction with their placement and is also a proactive way to deal with any potential problems. We have found this step to be an effective management tool and critical to the retention of our volunteers.

Before an organization is considered as a workstation, RSVP staff confirm that it is the type of organization that may serve as a volunteer workstation. There are several methods of producing documentation of an organization's qualification. The Urban Institute offers a website that enables one to verify the 501(c) 3 status of some non-profit organizations. The IRS offers databases that allow research of non-profits, by searching for their 990 reports. Many non-profits, faith-based and government/public agencies have their own websites that include their status. The final means to ascertain an entity's qualification to serve as an RSVP workstation is to have the entity provide its own documentation, which may include copies of charters, incorporation documents or a simple letter stating that it is a proprietary health care organization.

The RSVP Advisory Council comprises a third component of our program. It sets goals, helps identify community needs, charts our progress at meetings, and completes an annual evaluation of our program. Each December, volunteers elect RSVP volunteers from the various local communities within our service area and appoint individuals from various organizations as well, so that all groups have a voice in our activities. The Council's by-laws assure that a diverse group is selected to serve. The 13-member Advisory Council is the driving force behind our program. The Council meets bimonthly and holds committee meetings as needed for each project. The Council reviews our goals at the beginning of each year, sets new ones and guides the program over the course of the year to meet those goals. It evaluates our progress during the course of the year. There are six very active committees involving RSVP members, partner agencies, business representatives and others not actively serving on the Council. These committees keep the program on task. Committees include Supplies for Seniors/Walk-A-Thon, By-law Review and Nominating, Recruitment/Marketing, Scholarships, Fundraising and Recognition. The Council members have creative ideas on ways to work cooperatively with others, how to mobilize community resources, and how to serve as our ambassadors in the community. Much of our success is due to a strong working relationship that the Director and Program Assistant have with the Council, which provides much needed support to the staff in carrying out their duties.

## Narratives

We chose Healthy Futures Aging in Place and Access to Care activities because of our longstanding track record and partnership with the New River Valley Agency on Aging. It serves older adults, which often include our volunteers. For at least eight years, they have utilized RSVP volunteers in leadership roles to address critical needs for which they lack adequate staff. Five volunteers currently help coordinate the Medicare Part D open enrollments (VICAP) and Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP). They are invaluable in helping people navigate the complicated systems of Medicare and Medicaid because most Medicare beneficiaries find the procedure confusing and cannot change drug plans other than during annual open enrollment. The Agency on Aging provides training, supervision and coordination of clients; however, the volunteers meet with many of the clients themselves. Montgomery County Government's Human Services Department has enhanced the partnership by providing a private office space, telephone, and a computer for volunteer counselors to meet with these clients. The Christiansburg and Blacksburg Senior Centers have also provided space and computers. We conducted satisfaction surveys with the clients served as part of our performance measures for the past six years. 100% of the seniors and disabled individuals have stated that the counseling sessions were helpful. We have conducted a follow-up survey after the selected plan has been in place to determine if it was the best plan for their needs.

We have also placed volunteers with the Telephone Reassurance Program helping individuals live independently. Med-Ride is a transportation program under the umbrella of the Agency on Aging, and RSVP volunteers have been transporting individuals to non-emergency medical appointments since the program's inception over 20 years ago.

The remaining unduplicated volunteers will be placed in Education, Capacity Building, Economic Opportunity, and Veterans and Military Families Focus Areas. 30% will be placed in Other Community Priorities.

As we have begun to prepare for the 2014 RSVP Competition grant during the past six months, we have looked closely at the missions of existing work stations and active volunteers to decide which activities would align with the national focus areas. We have identified sixteen work stations that we plan to graduate from our program during the next year because they will not fit into our primary focus area or future activities in the remaining focus areas. We have reviewed volunteer placement

## **Narratives**

descriptions to determine whether they will fit into the new criteria. The non-impact stations or volunteers will be graduated by March 31, 2015 to allow them adequate time to adjust to the change and to consider other volunteer placement possibilities.

### **Organizational Capability**

The Montgomery County Board of Supervisors, the local government entity, has officially sponsored RSVP of Montgomery County and Radford for the past 35 years. The Montgomery County Government (MCG) manages an annual budget totaling \$137.1 million dollars through a strong, hierarchal management structure. They employ 350 full-time and 25 part-time individuals. The RSVP budget includes federal and local government funds. The County's Financial and Management Services (FMS) oversees all budgetary and financial transactions for the RSVP project. RSVP is a department within the County's Human Services Division, which answers directly to the Deputy County Administrator as portrayed in the organizational chart. Each December, RSVP submits an annual budget request to the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors for local public funds to be used as matching funds required for the operation of the RSVP project. Its providing more than 60% of our operating budget, which is double the required match, indicates the level of the County's commitment to RSVP. The in-kind support is substantial as well and is included in the following paragraphs.

The RSVP program is guided by two full-time staff positions and one part-time position, all of whom are County employees receiving the same benefits as all County employees. The project director's and program assistant's positions are full-time with 95% of their time spent solely on the development and administration of the RSVP project, leaving 5% of their time to develop and implement fundraising projects, including grant writing, that support the program and its community outreach projects. The current director, who holds a B.A. in Social Work, has been employed in this position for 13 years. She had worked in local social service agencies for 21 years prior to this position, including the New River Valley Agency on Aging, New River Community Action, Montgomery County Department of Social Services and Voluntary Action Center. These established working relationships have been advantageous, as most of the agencies are current work stations. She is the current secretary of the VA/DC Senior Corps Directors Association and has served on several boards of local agencies. The director supervises the RSVP staff and performs the administrative functions of the program, by coordinating and managing volunteer training, recruitment and recognition, maintaining an active advisory council, promoting volunteerism, preparing grant applications, preparing reports, and

## **Narratives**

monitoring all aspects of the program including finances, public relations, and work station requirements. She is supervised by the County Human Services Director who has been employed in the social services field for 33 years. In addition to RSVP, she oversees the Comprehensive Services Act, the Community Alternative Programs, and other Human Services activities assigned by the County. The current full-time program assistant, Amanda Hayes, has extensive experience with RSVP, and has been employed with our program for 10 years. Prior to that, for 7 years she was the director of the Pulaski County RSVP, which received a state award under her direction. She provides office assistance support to the program, prepares and maintains files of volunteers, work stations, financial records, as well as the volunteer database. She also maintains communication with volunteers and work stations, the program's website and Facebook page, and assigns and trains volunteers. A part-time van driver works an average of 20 hours per week, has been employed with the program for 20 years, and is semi-retired and is a veteran. He provides transportation for the RSVP volunteers to and from their assignments. He is also responsible for the data entry of volunteer hours, preparing reports and helping with office coverage. He was employed with the Department of the Army as a quality assurance supervisor for 26 years. Each position operates under a clearly defined job description. There has been no staff turnover in ten years, thus helping us maintain program stability. On their respective anniversary dates, the RSVP staff receives annual job performance evaluations including assessments of county/core competencies and specific position competencies. Merit raises are based on these performance evaluations. All staff is required to attend continuous improvement trainings provided by the sponsor and the director is required to attend Corporation for National and Community Service trainings.

MCG provides training for staff in the areas of safety, personal growth, customer service, supervision and technology. The Human Resources Department works with us to meet training needs identified by RSVP staff.

MCG provides the RSVP program with three offices, a kitchen, and an activity room for projects, meetings, and regular activities. These offices are located in the Health and Human Services Building and are maintained by the County Building and Grounds Department. In 2005, the County purchased a new van for RSVP's exclusive use when the old van became unreliable. The County Garage regularly services our van to ensure that it is safe to transport seniors.

## **Narratives**

The Human Services Division shares its staff, resources, equipment and supplies with RSVP as needed and oversees the program.

FMS and RSVP follow written grant administration policies and procedures. All grant and local funds are drawn down from the Health and Human Services Department by an FMS accountant assigned to manage the RSVP budget. These funds are electronically deposited into the County Treasurer's office. The Board of Supervisors appropriates all funds into the RSVP operating budget. FMS was awarded a certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Report by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ended June 20, 2012. This was the 26th consecutive year that the county has received this prestigious award. The Certificate of Achievement is a national award recognizing conformance with the highest standards for preparation of state and local government financial reports. The accountant assigned to RSVP also completes the Federal Financial Reports and maintains records separating the federal funds from the local funds. Staff report any time spent on fundraising activities on a separate timesheet that is monitored by the accountant, division director and payroll supervisor. Compliance monitoring visits from the State office have never shown any serious findings of noncompliance.

The RSVP Program Assistant scans all invoices and volunteer reimbursements into the County's MUNIS (the accounting software) system for payment, and FMS processes the checks. Most of our purchases are made by using a MCG credit card issued to each RSVP employee. Each purchase is entered into a log with receipts attached and submitted to the FMS monthly when the credit card bill is paid. Staff completes a mileage reimbursement form for any miles traveled locally and are paid the county employee rate of .565 cents per mile. If travel is required out of the area for training, the county's travel policy is that we must complete forms requesting travel permission from the Division Director and provide specific information concerning method of transportation, mileage estimates, lodging and meals, as well as an agenda for the event. Once approved, we can then make reservations with the County credit card. A County purchasing agent assists with any major purchase for our program if the need arises. We must obtain three bids and utilize state contracts when possible.

The Information Technology (IT) Department provides 5 computers and a Ricoh copier to the RSVP project along with technical support for all of the equipment and software. Each staff person has a computer, one is used by student interns and volunteers, and one is used exclusively with clients

## **Narratives**

receiving assistance with Medicare issues. RSVP's website is housed on the County's website server. The Program Assistant maintains the site.

We also utilize VA Tech and Radford University students to assist with our program. They have students who perform Service Learning and internships and we are able to gain valuable help every semester from the students. The volunteers enjoy doing intergenerational projects together.

### **Other**

N/A

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

N/A