

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Established in 1974, Carroll County RSVP (CCRSVP) challenges people age 55 and better to use their energy, skills, innovative spirit and experience to respond to critical needs of the community through volunteer service. The primary CNCS focus area selected for volunteers to serve in is Education. Volunteers will also serve in Healthy Futures, Disaster Preparedness, Capacity Building and community priorities. Populations served include homebound elderly, children and families, economically disadvantages individuals and people with physical, emotional or mental disabilities. In the primary focus area, Education, 95 or 28% of unduplicated volunteers will serve as tutors and mentors in public and faith based K-12 schools. 29% or 99 unduplicated CCRSVP volunteers will serve in projects that result in an outcome. At the end of the three-year grant anticipated outcomes will include ED5: Number of students with improved academic performance in literacy and/or math; ED4A: Number of youth/mentor matches sustained; H9: Individuals receiving independent living services. Students receiving RSVP volunteer help will show improvement in literacy, math, communication skills and social/behavioral skills. The number of homebound or older adults and individuals with disabilities receiving services may report increased social ties/perceived social support and increase in general nutrition. CCRSVP staff will utilize current outcome tools as well as work with partner agencies developing tools and surveys that best measure and reflect the project outcomes.

CCRSVP is requesting a CNCS Federal investment of \$22,795 to provide volunteer opportunities for 341 unduplicated volunteers. Those federal dollars will be supplemented by but not limited to Carroll County - \$9,000, City of Carroll - \$9,500, United Way - \$8,000, State of Iowa - \$7,272 to name a few of the largest funders. Many local service organizations, community chests, foundations, private donors and staff fundraising round out the additional \$8,647 funds needed to fulfill the proposed budget. With the funding investment made by many entities and through long standing partnerships with sites, community leaders and citizens of Carroll County, CCRSVP will continue to provide meaningful volunteer opportunities that improve and impact the lives of residents.

## Strengthening Communities

The project area served by CCRSVP for the past 39 years is Carroll County, which is located in west central Iowa. It is 576 square miles, which includes 2000 acres of parks. Even though the area is primarily rural there is a small mixture of industrial, medical and retail services located in the incorporated cities. Carroll County is comprised of thirteen incorporated cities of Carroll, Glidden,

## **Narratives**

Manning, Breda, Templeton, Halbur, Coon Rapids, Lidderdale, Lanesboro, Ralston, Arcadia, Dedham and Willey. According to the 2010 US Census Bureau 20,816 people reside in Carroll County. The population is 96.1% Caucasian, 1.9% Hispanic or Latino. The remainder of the population is comprised of African American, Asian and Native American. Older Americans, age 65 and older, comprise 18.7% of the population. The median income is \$48,038 with 9.4% of the people living under the federal poverty guidelines.

Within Carroll County there are four Title 1 Schools where 35% of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunches. An additional 20% of students are reported as having an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) addressing problems with reading, math, speech and learning disabilities. Based on these statistics CCRSVP selected Education as a primary focus area to provide resources that improves the educational outcomes of students that not only are economically disadvantaged but also have special or exceptional needs. The programs set forth in the work plans can help students in the preparation and increased prospect of success in post-secondary education institutions. 95 unduplicated volunteers (28%) will participate in the selected Education Focus Area. Over 300 children will be served in work plans addressing the CNCS National Performance Measure outputs and outcomes. The Anticipated output will be ED2: Number of students who completed K-12 education programs and ED4A: Number of youth/mentor matches sustained. The measurable outcomes as outlined in CNCS National Performance Measure will be ED5: Number of students with improved academic performance in literacy and/or math. CCRSVP has partnered with area schools tutoring and mentoring students with special and exceptional needs for 15 + years. The CCRSVP staff, teachers and school administrators have worked closely developing tools to collect and measure data to ensure the impact on students is a positive one. Current data collection tools include Attendance logs of student participants, CCRSVP Assistance Login Sheets and volunteer hour's reports that will be utilized by school staff and volunteers alike to track students mentored and hours served. These sheets will be turned in monthly to the CCRSVP office. Volunteer data will be maintained by using the Volunteer Reporter database. Teachers and school administrators will utilize standardized testing, pre and post questionnaires/quizzes to measure the improvement of students mentored by CCRSVP volunteers. Data will be reported at the end of each school year to the CCRSVP Director. That information will be compiled by the CCRSVP Director to be used to help fulfill the reporting requirements in the anticipated outcome portion of the CNCS Project Progress Report. Current data collection tools are in place but the CCRSVP staff will continue to collaborate with stations to improve the tools as

## Narratives

necessary.

CCRSVP volunteers, 169 unduplicated volunteers or 50% will serve in additional focus areas and capacity building. Focus areas include Disaster Assistance Provided, Healthy Futures and capacity building of Garnering Donations and Leverage. Disaster Services activities include volunteers responding for Red Cross and Siouxland Blood Banks with local blood drives helping to collect more than 1000 units of blood products annually for emergency situations as they may arise. CCRSVP volunteers will be involved with project in preparation for disasters. Volunteers will participate in the American Red Cross curriculum "Be Red Cross Ready" and participate in disaster preparedness plans that have been developed by the Emergency Management Director of Carroll County. Healthy Futures will place volunteers in food delivery allowing frail homebound seniors to age in place and maintain independence by remaining in their own homes. CCRSVP volunteers will assist with food pantry support assisting two local food pantries with stocking shelves, box food packages and assist with providing food to individuals and families in need. Volunteers will help build the capacity of a local partner by helping garner donations and leverage needed dollars to assist individuals with physical and mental disabilities.

Local community priorities will include but not be limited to regular or episodic projects. Volunteers will serve in local hospitals, nursing homes, congregate meal sites, present information to avoid investment fraud, guiding tours at historical sites/museums, assist local nonprofits with mailings or general office duties and provide handmade items for the comfort of children and families in need.

CCRSVP volunteers will also participate in a minimum of three CNCS National Days of Service. In honor of the September 11th Day of Service CCRSVP will partner with the Carroll Public Library and Carroll County Foster Grandparent (CCFGP) program to fold small flags in the Pocket Flag Project. The project's intent is to distribute the flags to deployed service men and women to carry in their pocket as a small reminder of home. Each flag has a note tucked into it stating that their service is appreciated and they are remembered. The American Legions located in Carroll County will be contacted with invitations to engage local veterans by joining CCRSVP and CCFGP volunteers in the Flag Folding Project. Make a Difference Day will find CCRSVP collaborating with the Elderbridge Agency on Aging and the local Hy-Vee grocery store in the collection of shelf stable food items to create "Blizzard Packs". The Elderbridge Agency on Aging organizes the local home delivered meals

## **Narratives**

program and provides the list of items needed to create a nutritionally balanced, shelf stable sack lunch or Blizzard Pack. CCRSVP volunteers will spend time at HyVee maintaining a table and handing out flyers listing food items needed to the fill lunch bags. Food items along with cash donations are utilized to complete each meal. Volunteers sort the items and pack the lunch bags for distribution. The Blizzard packs are distributed with the help of CCRSVP volunteers to home delivered meal recipients in November. All Blizzard Packs include a note instructing recipients that these meals can be kept to be eaten on days when the weather is too inclement for meal delivery. Last year 200 meals were provided for 100 homebound seniors supplementing their home delivered meals and providing needed food security. In January CCRSVP volunteers participate in MLK Day of Service by collecting items for the local food pantries. Volunteers distribute flyers listing critical items needed by the food pantry. Flyers are given to neighbors and friends asking for the donations and a follow up date that the volunteer will return to collect. In past years 300 plus items were collected to help restock shelves with necessary items for individuals and families in need. Along with items collected CCRSVP volunteers make mittens, caps and blankets that are donated for adults and children utilizing the services of the food pantry. The Executive Board and CCRSVP staff continues to research local needs in the effort to organize projects for other days of service throughout the year to mobilize and involve additional volunteers.

### **Recruitment and Development**

CCRSVP has 39 years of established community partners helping to provide volunteer opportunities at 40 stations allowing volunteers a wide variety of service activities to choose from. This variety of diverse, meaningful and worthwhile activities helps assure a high quality experience for all volunteers, keeping them interested in volunteer service. Volunteer service allows volunteers to maintain professional and social contacts, allow retirees ways to stay active and challenge them intellectually. Volunteers are able to share their experiences, abilities and skills while improving communities and themselves. Currently the program has 92 active volunteers who have belonged to CCRSVP for 20 or more years and 152 with over 10 years' service to the program and community. Those numbers speak highly of the quality of volunteer experiences long-term volunteers have been provided over the years. The primary reasons volunteers ever leave the program are deterioration of health or relocating to another area. CCRSVP continues to educate volunteers through the monthly newsletter, appreciation events and annual reports. Volunteer satisfaction surveys are utilized to identify satisfaction of volunteer opportunities, ask for valuable input and identify any problems that need to be addressed and resolved. All of these items outlined above help in the recruitment and retention of volunteers.

## Narratives

CCRSVP staff and stations provided necessary training for volunteers to ensure they are comfortable with their duties. Volunteers involved in the primary focus area of Education receive in-service trainings twice per year for the fall and spring semesters of school. Speak Up! is a public speaking program brought to the schools by CCRSVP staff and volunteers. Training is provided by CCRSVP staff for multiple teams of volunteers twice annually. After training, volunteers will demonstrate the ability to provide support in all areas of the program for children that may be economically disadvantaged or have exceptional or special educational needs. Volunteers serving as mentors will be instructed and trained by school staff and teachers on materials utilized to help ensure the success of student matches. Other focus area training will be conducted by American Red Cross staff, the Emergency Manager Coordinator of Carroll County and station supervisors as necessary to fulfill the desired outcomes needed to implement and insure project success. The CCRSVP Director and volunteer coordinator conduct follow up contact with volunteers accepting new placements and assigned station coordinators to maintain the open channels of communication and safeguard that the match is a positive one for all involved. The follow up confirms the volunteer has received the proper training needed to complete the assignment. CCRSVP staff strives to meet the needs of both the volunteer and station. If a match for any reason is not a positive, mutually satisfying one; the Director and volunteer coordinator work with both the volunteer and station to smoothly transition them to more appropriate matches.

The population of Carroll County has very low ethnic diversity with 96.1% of the population Caucasian. However, according to the 2009-2011 American Community Survey 62% of people aged 60 and better in Carroll County is female. CCRSVP's current volunteer enrollment reflects this demographic in that 88% is female. The director continues to expand projects to encourage and interest male participants. One recruitment method will consist of making contact with organizations where the membership is predominately male, to highlight volunteer opportunities in the hope of creating more male involvement. Additional recruitment for the program is handled in a variety of ways. The most successful tool has been volunteers sharing their experiences with others. The CCRSVP director utilizes ecumenical newsletters, community bulletins and local newspapers as a way to reach out to new volunteers. Presentations made by CCRSVP Director and staff at local service organizations helps to ensure awareness of current volunteer opportunities throughout the county. One plan in reaching out and engaging veterans and their family members is to have CCRSVP

## **Narratives**

Director and staff speak at local American Legions and VFW's highlighting available volunteer opportunities while encouraging veterans to utilize their knowledge and skills to improve their communities and help fellow citizens. CCRSVP encourages volunteers with physical and mental challenges to participate in community activities by offering a wide array of opportunities that may include but are not limited to things such as stuffing envelopes, helping schools by collating workbooks for K-3rd grade students, marking and cutting material to be used in quilts given to economically disadvantage families and nursing home residents. Many of these activities can be completed with minimal physical effort and can be accomplished by people with limited mental capacities, providing these volunteers with a real sense of inclusion and giving back to their communities.

Volunteers are recognized each year in a variety of ways. Two primary events are held annually. In the spring, staff hosts a lunch that includes a catered meal, door prizes for everyone and a Shining Star presentation recognizing 5 volunteers whom have been nominated by their peers as outstanding volunteers. A volunteer nominating a fellow volunteer for the Shining Star is asked to write why they believe the individual is deserving of the award. During the Shining Star Presentation the nomination is read and a description of volunteer activities is announce for each recipient. All recipients receive a certificate and a gift card donated by local businesses. In December, a winter party is held in the afternoon that includes snacks/refreshments and a fun game of Jingo Bingo with prizes for volunteers in attendance. CCRSVP staff hosts a quarterly birthday party at the office for all volunteers celebrating a birthday during the quarter. Volunteers share stories of their volunteer service and memories of special birthdays. Staff organizes party games with prizes donated by local businesses. A local grocery store provides cake, ice cream and refreshments for the event. These events give CCRSVP staff a chance to meet personally with volunteers and thank them for their past and continued volunteer service. Additional recognition is accomplished through articles in the local newspapers, personal contact with volunteers by visiting sites and stations while they engage in service and personal note cards or phone calls. Individual CCRSVP stations recognize volunteers with events such as ice cream socials, salad luncheons, bingo parties and quarterly drawings for prizes. It is the goal of CCRSVP staff and Executive Board to confirm in volunteer's minds that they are valued, critical parts of the success of programs and the community they live and serve in.

### **Program Management**

The responsibilities of the CCRSVP Director are to continue to maintain and develop strong

## **Narratives**

relationships with volunteer stations and volunteer station supervisors. These relationships assist the program in engaging volunteers to meet specified community needs throughout Carroll County while providing meaningful volunteer opportunities. The program has 40 current stations in which a memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is kept on file at the CCRSVP office. The signing of the MOU begins the partnership between the station and the program and allows CCRSVP staff to begin recruiting volunteers. The MOU, renewed every 3 years, outlines what is expected of the station, lists prohibited activities for volunteers and outlines program regulations. Stations are asked to provide volunteer requests in accordance with all RSVP rules and regulations to the CCRSVP office on a monthly basis. This information is then listed in a newsletter sent each month to all current volunteers. These detailed requests ensure meaningful service for volunteers by providing them with information regarding volunteer opportunities before they begin. This process helps match volunteers and stations, thus providing mutual satisfaction. CCRSVP Director and volunteer coordinator meet with station coordinators on a quarterly basis to spend time reviewing volunteer placements to assure that volunteers are performing their assigned service activities in a satisfactory manner. Volunteers may join the program by filling out volunteer enrollment forms that ensure they meet eligibility requirements as outlined by federal regulations. Volunteers receive orientation and are provided with a packet that includes a handbook outlining lists of prohibited activities that include special limitations on political activities, religious activities and replacement of an employed worker, policies, procedures and general guidelines of the program. The packet contains a Job Description book listing stations and the job description of volunteer activities in focus areas, capacity building and community priorities. Additional material on supplemental volunteer insurance, RSVP history and volunteer testimonials are included. Volunteers are instructed that under no circumstances they should receive a fee for service but may receive mileage reimbursement, meals or other benefits offered by the station.

CCRSVP's community involvement of 39 years continues to meet changing needs through the longstanding partnerships with local schools, elected officials, healthcare facilities, faith based organizations and of local service organizations such as United Way, Kiwanis, Rotary and Lion's Club. The members of these organizations help the CCRSVP staff and Executive Board identify current critical community needs. Volunteer placements for new and current volunteers will continue to be meaningful, meet community priorities and fulfill the outputs and outcomes as outlined by CNCS in the Primary Focus Area of Education. Through the established partnerships disruptions to volunteers and the stations receiving their services will be kept to a minimum.

## Narratives

Selecting the Primary Focus Area of Education was an easy choice with the most impact as CCRSVP has 15 plus years partnering with schools in the mentoring of students with exceptional or special educational needs or those that come from economically disadvantaged families. Past students involved with volunteer mentors have shown improvement of ½ to 1 ½ grade levels in reading or math by the end of the school year. Based on 2011/2012 pre/post questionnaires students participating in the Speak UP!™ program showed an 84% improvement in knowing 2 important points in giving a speech, 84% felt more confident getting up in front of a group of peers to give a speech and 73% showed an improvement of knowing the 3 parts of a speech. These improvements by students suggest a successful track record in the efficiency of CCRSVP providing important educational programs and meaningful mentor matches. The continuation of such programs helps students prepare for and find success in post-secondary education institutions.

CCRSVP has an Executive Board that meets bimonthly to assess program needs, review financials and outline activities and training that may be necessary for staff to effectively manage the program. An annual evaluation of the program director is performed by the Executive board for overall effectiveness and program management. The director is responsible for the project activities to ensure that compliance of RSVP federal regulations are maintained.

### Organizational Capability

Stacy Venteicher has held the position of CCRSVP Director for 4 years. She has a two year Associates in Science Degree with a focus on business management. She has 25 years of accounting and management experience as well as working managing the program funds for 16 years. Although she is fairly new to the director's position she was employed as the program office manager for 12 years. Her previous duties included financial management, volunteer coordinating and general office management. She has attended CNCS volunteer conferences, Corporation trainings and required meetings. Trainings include program management, grant writing and management, volunteer management, senior citizen issues, strategic planning, budgets and programing for impact. It is the director's goal to continue to pursue additional training to respond to the growing and changing needs of the program. According to the job description for the CCRSVP Director she is responsible for the program's financial management, grant management, file maintenance, program initiatives/work plans, compliance of federal and CNCS regulations and general program management. The CCRSVP Director ensures compliance with RSVP program requirements through the review of statues,

## **Narratives**

regulations and applicable OMB circulars. The CCRSVP Director will manage financial resources through Quick Books Pro and various spreadsheets. Federal funds are drawn down through the Payment Management System (PMS) as funds are expended. Quarterly FFR (Federal Financial Reports) cash draw down reports are filed in the PMS as per requirements. Semi-annual FFR expenditures reports are reported through the e-grants system in accordance with CNCS requirements. Monthly financial reports include information detailing financial status of federal, non-federal and excess grant amounts, total funds expended and unspent balances. Financials are provided to all Executive Board members prior to meetings for review. Upon request the budget committee meets to discuss changes and management of the program budget. Two signatures are required for all expenditures. The designated signors are not the person that prepares checks. An additional board member, who does not participate in check signing or preparation, review all paid bill files for any discrepancies. Annually the books are audited by an outside accountant. Project Progress Reports (PPR) are completed by the CCRSVP Director by compiling necessary data from surveys, annual test scores, volunteer hours reports and in accordance with CNCS rules and regulations.

The CCRSVP Volunteer Coordinator, Melanie Miller, joined the program in 2010 but has 20 years' experience as a public servant. She also worked for an organ and tissue donation company working with families on both sides of the donor process. Her experience has given her the patience, compassion and empathy needed to work with senior volunteers and agencies utilizing those volunteers. As outlined in the Volunteer Coordinator Job Description duties will include assisting the Director in the recruitment, training and placement of volunteers. The coordinator will maintain monthly contact with volunteer stations to coordinate volunteer activities. Additional responsibilities include data maintenance of volunteer's hours through the use of the Volunteer Reporter database, volunteer files and monthly newsletter preparation. The coordinator will assist with volunteer recognition events by helping plan and organize.

The CCRSVP Director and volunteer coordinator will attend CNCS approved training to provide continuing education of program requirements and changes occurring within the corporation. The CCRSVP Executive Board of nine members has successfully operated the program for 39 years in Carroll County. The board meets bi-monthly to provide guidance and assistance to the director in an effort to comply with outcome based programming. Staff is responsible for managing volunteer programs and reporting to the Executive Board at regular meetings. Volunteer data is managed with

## Narratives

the Volunteer Reporter software. This software enables staff to create reports that help provide information used in reporting progress to CNCS. CCRSVP continues to work with volunteer stations, local agencies and organizations to collect measurable data that can be utilized to document the impact volunteers are making in Carroll County. This information is utilized in goal setting for project staff and Executive Board members.

The CCRSVP Executive Board and staff are responsible to assure the program has adequate facilities, equipment, supplies, purchasing procedures and personnel management support, including clearly defined roles for staff and board members. The budget ensures that the program will have financial resources for all needed expenses.

The board and staff members work together to update equipment and computer software to assure the office is managed in an efficient manner.

Each new board member receives a board member binder with outlined roles, definitions and expectations. The binder includes background information about RSVP. Each staff member receives a handbook when hired with clearly defined employee roles and policies. The CCRSVP Executive Board and staff have procedures and systems in place for self-assessment, evaluations and continuous improvement. The Executive Board completes annual staff assessment and review for the director and volunteer coordinator. Each year in January, the Executive Board discusses and assesses the programs and sets goals for the coming year. The board reviews job descriptions, bylaws and the staff handbook. These are updated as needed. Many of the board members are involved with other community programs and are aware of RSVP can network with the senior population and services in Carroll County to improve volunteer opportunities. Planning, implementing and measuring impact is the responsibility of the CCRSVP Director. Some required measurement data is requested from the stations to assist in reporting for outcome based results. This data is used to make necessary improvements for stations and volunteers.

### Other

N/A

### PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A