

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

RSVP Henry County matches volunteers age 55 and older with service stations throughout the community that target the unique needs and challenges of the county. As a long-standing supporter of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), The Fellowship Cup took note when word spread of a potential relinquishment. Recognizing the importance of programs offered by RSVP, the Board of Directors of The Fellowship Cup voted to partner with RSVP of Henry County. With the encouragement of local leaders, The Fellowship Cup is applying for RSVP in 2014.

Since its inception in 1981, The Fellowship Cup has evolved to match changing community needs. The Fellowship Cup actually began as a coffee house for retired seniors. A few years later, these seniors recognized the need for a county food pantry. In 2007, an addition was built for the growing food pantry, clothing program, prison program, and seasonal giving, and a local building was purchased for the expanding clothing program in 2012.

Today, The Fellowship Cup is a non-profit organization that provides food, clothing, and shelter to the under-served of Henry County. While the food pantry is the primary focus, The Fellowship Cup offers 28 distinct programs ranging from summer lunches for students to senior meals to holiday giving to community gardens. Volunteers serve the organization in numerous capacities and are essential to all of its programs. In 2012, The Fellowship Cup recorded 16,844 volunteer hours.

When RSVP transferred to The Fellowship Cup in July 2013, the program was not performing according to Fellowship Cup standards. The RSVP Performance Measure Requirement was 94% in Community Priorities. Expediently, the executive director, RSVP director, and summer interns began recruiting volunteers for newly signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). As of September 1, 2013, the primary focus of RSVP Henry County is Education with several work plans within other focus areas.

When RSVP partnered with Fellowship Cup on July 1, 2013, the program had 52 volunteers and 2 Service Categories. As of September 1, 2013, the program has 138 volunteers and 4 Service Categories. The progress made in the past two months demonstrates the capacity for growth in RSVP through its partnership with The Fellowship Cup. Through evidence-based programming with measurable outcomes, RSVP can and will help Henry County residents in need of extra support with programs including teaching, mentoring, food security, and capacity building.

The Henry County RSVP project will address these community needs:

- \* Education
  - o School Readiness

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- o K-12 Success
- \* Healthy Future
  - o Aging in Place
  - o Obesity and Food
- \* Economic Opportunity
  - o Housing
- \* Community Interests

### Strengthening Communities

RSVP Henry County has been a part of the community since 1989. Throughout the community, volunteers are making a difference in programs like Club M, Old Threshers, and the school reading program. RSVP is dedicated to addressing community needs by matching the interests, experience, and talents of individuals age 55 and older.

Henry County is a non-metropolitan county in southeast Iowa comprised of 11 incorporated communities and their surrounding rural areas. Census data from 2010 indicates that the county population is 20,145. Mt. Pleasant is the county seat with a population of approximately 8,751. The other major towns with a population of less than 3,000 are New London, Wayland, Winfield and Salem. There are six smaller incorporated towns.

Henry County experiences high rates of poverty and food insecurity, and low rates of educational success. Henry County's poverty rate is 16.8%, a full 4.9% above the state average ([quickfacts.census.gov](http://quickfacts.census.gov)). This poverty rate is topped by only seven other counties in the state of Iowa. In Mt. Pleasant, this rate is even higher with 19.1% of the population living below the poverty line. The median annual household income in Henry County is only \$43,510 as compared to the state average of \$50,451 ([quickfacts.census.gov](http://quickfacts.census.gov)). Such low levels of income and high incidence of poverty exacerbate problems like food insecurity and a lack of educational success.

Food insecurity is, of course, closely tied to poverty and, therefore, it is unsurprising that Henry County has one of the highest rates of food insecurity in the state. Only one of ten counties to have food insecurity rates over 14%, Henry County's food insecurity rate of 14.5% is well above the state average ([feedingamerica.org](http://feedingamerica.org)). Child food insecurity is even more appalling, with 24.7% of Henry County children described as food insecure, the highest rate in the state. Food insecurity contributes to a variety of health problems and, in children, may have a negative effect on scholastic achievement.

As a state, Iowa faces educational needs that are simply not being met. Reading and math proficiency rates are low across grade levels, and socioeconomic status often has a negative effect on

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these measures of scholastic success. In fact, only 61.4% of fourth graders receiving free and reduced lunch are proficient in reading, while 83.6% of students not receiving free and reduced lunch are considered proficient (Iowa's State Report Card for No Child Left Behind, 2012). Clearly, low-income students need additional support to reach educational goals. Five of seven schools in the Mt. Pleasant School District are listed as Schools in Need of Assistance by the Iowa Department of Education, indicating the depth of need in Henry County schools.

In addition to the challenges described above, Henry County continues to experience steady minority growth, particularly in the Hispanic population. This group currently comprises 3.8% of the county population, approximately three times the Hispanic population recorded in the 2000 census (censusviewer.com). The Asian population is also growing with a 20.4% increase between 2000 and 2011. Likewise, the African American community in Henry County has expanded with a 48% increase since 2000. Ethnic diversity is rapidly increasing and is highly concentrated in younger generations. Nearly all individuals from minority backgrounds are under age 40 and the Mt. Pleasant School District's minority population makes up 11% of its student body. While diversity is a benefit to the community in many ways, minority students often have unique educational needs and immigrant and move-in families may have higher rates of poverty, food insecurity, and other needs.

Along with diverse and often underprivileged younger generations, Henry County must meet the needs of a large elderly population. According to the 2010 census, 16% of Henry County residents are over the age of 65 as compared to only 14.9% of the total state population. This population, too, is growing with a 7.96% increase in the number of elderly since 2000.

RSVP Henry County will help to meet the diverse needs and emergent challenges of this evolving community. Through continual evaluation of changing community needs, assessment of annual reports and research, and input of the Advisory Council, RSVP Henry County will ensure that its priorities are aligned with the realities of the county. With a primary focus on education, RSVP Henry County seeks to promote sustainable solutions to the persistent problems of poverty and food insecurity. Lower reading levels are associated with higher rates of poverty and an increased likelihood of incarceration while quality education provides opportunities for the attainment of better jobs, better financial management skills, and a break with the cycle of poverty. With an understanding of the depth and breadth of community needs in Henry County, RSVP Henry County believes that focusing on Education, through both School Readiness and K-12 Success, is the key to alleviating these issues in the long-term. In order to do so, RSVP will partner with area schools, preschools, and mentoring agencies to provide maximum educational benefit to the community. Tutoring in K-12 schools, RSVP

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volunteers will address the issues of low reading and math proficiency, working closely with teachers to ensure their assistance meets with current educational methods and objectives. In addition, volunteers will work with the area HeadStart program to provide classroom support to the teachers and the more than 500 children enrolled in the Southeast Iowa program. Finally, RSVP volunteers will work with the Club M mentoring program to provide role-modeling and assistance to at-risk youth, promoting success not only in the classroom, but also in relationships, self-concept, and long-term success.

While education is a fundamental step toward sustainable solutions, RSVP Henry County also recognizes that steps must be taken to address the current community needs. For this reason, RSVP Henry County will expand its focus to include Economic Opportunity. In order to aid those with a dearth of economic resources, RSVP volunteers will work with the internationally acclaimed Habitat for Humanity organization to construct homes for families in need. By providing homes to families in need, Habitat for Humanity also gives stability to these families and their children, allows them a sense of pride and dignity, provides physical safety and security, and improves job and educational prospects ([habitat.org](http://habitat.org)). RSVP believes that this partnership is a critical component of improving lives throughout Henry County and volunteers will partner with Habitat for Humanity to build two to three houses each year.

Various nonprofit organizations in Henry County work to address the myriad needs of the Community Interests. Organizations like The Fellowship Cup tackle issues of poverty; Old Threshers and Henry County Heritage Trust preserve the history of the area and provide educational opportunities; and the Southeast Iowa Symphony promotes the arts and culture. Through partnerships with various local organizations such as these, RSVP volunteers will help to promote a vibrant, healthy community--one in which the needs of the underprivileged are accounted for and history, arts, culture, and education are supported.

RSVP Henry County will also focus on another vital community need: Healthy Futures. RSVP Henry County will address this need in various ways. First, it will take on the serious issue of food insecurity in Henry County. As seen above, food insecurity is a major concern for many in Henry County. RSVP volunteers will serve in four capacities to mitigate this problem. They will assist with food collection from area grocery stores. They will then help to distribute this food to families in need every Thursday through a county food pantry. Third, they will provide assistance with the Pantry Plus program, an educational program for food pantry recipients designed to help families find solutions to the problem of food insecurity and become less dependent on support services. Finally, RSVP

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volunteers will fill needed roles in the maintenance of the community garden--caring for the garden throughout the year and educating participants on efficient use of the garden.

In addition to the issue of food insecurity, RSVP Henry County will address one other principal issue of Healthy Futures: the needs of the large elderly community. The elderly face many unique needs, and RSVP Henry County aims to concentrate on these needs in 4 primary ways. For many years, RSVP volunteers have provided medical transportation to the elderly and disabled of Henry County. Under new leadership, RSVP will continue to fill this vital role, with 19 unduplicated volunteers providing transportation to medical appointments. RSVP volunteers will also continue to deliver meals to shut-ins through the Congregate Meals/Home Delivered Meals program. As a final measure to promote Aging in Place, RSVP volunteers will provide companionship to the elderly and dying through both the local hospice program and the Mt. Pleasant Public Library. Lastly, in support of the elderly, RSVP volunteers will help to distribute information about Medicare services through the Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP), enabling the elderly to receive much needed medical care with knowledge about Medicare benefits and coverage.

By addressing this broad array of community needs, RSVP Henry County aims to aid those in need in both the short- and long-term. While devoting resources to the current needs of the community, the primary focus of RSVP Henry County on Education will help to solve long-term community needs with effective, sustainable solutions.

### **Recruitment and Development**

The first step to ensuring ease of volunteer recruitment and retention is partnering with service organizations that match the needs of the target volunteer population. Recent research by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) reveals that Baby Boomers' top preferences for volunteer opportunities are religious organizations and education or youth-focused organizations (A Research Brief on Volunteer Retention and Turnover). RSVP Henry County provides opportunities for both kinds of volunteering with religiously affiliated partners like The Fellowship Cup and a wide range of education and youth-focused volunteer opportunities from HeadStart to area public schools to mentoring opportunities. Volunteer retention is highest for those projects to which volunteers have a great deal of attachment and Baby Boomers tend to have high retention rates for volunteer activities like mentoring and tutoring (A Research Brief on Volunteer Retention and Turnover, CNCS). By understanding the implications of this research, RSVP Henry County is taking steps to both facilitate the recruitment of volunteers and to retain those volunteers already involved. The programs described above fit well with the interests of the target volunteer group and will make it easier to recruit and

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retain volunteers age 55 and older.

Besides providing opportunities to which older volunteers are naturally drawn, RSVP Henry County has outlined specific steps to recruit new volunteers. Recruitment of volunteers will occur in a variety of ways:

- \* RSVP Henry County believes that word of mouth is the best method for recruitment. Seniors recruiting others to join them in fulfilling activities will yield the most volunteers. RSVP will encourage enthusiastic volunteers to recruit friends and neighbors as this method is already yielding results.

- \* The Volunteer & Activity Fair on July 23 showcased many station opportunities. Approximately sixty seniors attended the Fair, leading to a plethora of new signups.

- \* A Menu of Opportunities book will be distributed in large gatherings of seniors, including, but not limited to, health fairs, community meals, coffee gatherings, etc. This book provides detailed descriptions of volunteer opportunities, allowing potential volunteers to select those opportunities in which they are most likely to be engaged and facilitating the RSVP Director's matching duty.

- \* The Fellowship Cup's website will feature areas in need of volunteers, the Menu of Opportunities, and testimonies of successful volunteer experiences. Providing access to information will allow seniors to make educated choices and increase volunteer engagement.

- \* Service group presentations will help disseminate information to volunteer-orientated people. CNCS research finds that volunteers already engaged in one organization are likely to have high retention rates with other volunteer commitments as well (A Research Brief on Volunteer Retention and Turnover). For this reason, RSVP Henry County will target groups like The Fellowship Cup volunteers, service-oriented church groups, local Rotary clubs, the area Lions Club, Kiwanis, and PEO. Recruiting from these pools will likely lead not only to a large number of interested seniors, but also to volunteers with high retention rates and deep commitment.

- \* A monthly "Breakfast Club" on local radio will highlight volunteer opportunities and attract area listeners.

Prospective volunteers will be matched to opportunities based on interest and experience in order to maximize engagement. With the variety of service stations, RSVP Henry County offers something for everyone. Noting the high level of retention and engagement among volunteers in educational and youth-oriented activities, RSVP Henry County offers many such opportunities. RSVP aims to match new volunteers with stations within three days of signing up in order to capitalize on the enthusiasm of new recruits.

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## VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION AND RETENTION

Volunteer recognition and retention go hand in hand.

\* Volunteers will be celebrated on the first Monday of December with an appetizer and dessert evening event and in early May for a recognition picnic. At this time, a brief volunteer survey will be distributed in order to garner feedback, improve programs, and address the needs and concerns of volunteers in order to boost retention rates.

\* Birthday cards and bi-annual thank you cards will be sent to each volunteer as a simple gesture of appreciation.

\* Words of appreciation will be spoken often by both the RSVP Director and by station staff.

\* Radio and other media may be used to keep volunteers informed about the impact of their work, giving them satisfaction and encouragement to continue.

Successful volunteer experiences require regular site visits and evaluations from the RSVP Director. The Director will inquire about the effectiveness of volunteers, concerns, and ideas for additional stations. Addressing these issues will help retain volunteers by regularly improving their experiences. Station needs and impacts will be highlighted on the "Breakfast Club" radio program.

Volunteers leaving the program will be asked to participate in an exit interview. The focus will be learning about stations, evaluating RSVP management, and gathering testimonies. Again, this procedure will enable the RSVP Director to work with stations in order to improve volunteer experiences and retain volunteers.

### **Program Management**

Since acquiring management of RSVP Henry County in July, Carol Dustman, RSVP Director, has made great strides toward organizing an effective and well-managed program. Local non-profit agencies and schools have been asked to serve as stations for volunteer work. Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) have been signed. Volunteers have been matched. Each station will be participating in the collection of data for performance measures and volunteer effectiveness.

Each volunteer station is required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding before volunteers are placed. The basic provisions of these MOUs include:

1. Agreement on the part of RSVP to assign as many volunteers as possible and as requested to the volunteer station and recognition of the right of volunteer stations to interview and accept or reject volunteer candidates.

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2. The responsibility of volunteer stations to provide necessary orientation, supervision, and instruction to volunteers.

3. The agreement of the volunteer station to provide certain services, potentially including transportation, meals, and out-of-pocket expense reimbursement.

4. The agreement of the volunteer stations to assist with data collection.

5. The right of volunteer stations to dismiss volunteers and the recognition of volunteers' legal rights and liberties.

Volunteer stations are also asked to submit a written description of their organization and the volunteer position. These descriptions facilitate volunteer-site matching and also help to ensure that volunteers and stations have a mutual understanding of the tasks and time required for the position, minimizing conflict.

Time will be devoted to monitoring the areas where volunteers are serving. The RSVP Director will regularly visit and evaluate volunteer stations in order to ensure the program is running smoothly and to address any issues or concerns that may have arisen. RSVP Henry County aims to maintain no less than 25% of the volunteers within the primary focus of education and will devote particular energy to management of this volunteer area. Recruiting, appreciation, and teacher communication will help ensure that these programs are performing effectively.

In addition to the day-to-day recruitment, recognition, and maintenance of volunteer sites, the RSVP Director will devote some time to preparation for Days of Service that involve multiple volunteer stations and individuals. The Director may also spend time improving methods for the dissemination of information, the recruitment of new volunteers, and recognition of outstanding volunteer efforts or partner sites.

On the technical side of program management, The Fellowship Cup has recently begun using the management software Community Event Registration & Volunteer Information System (CERVIS). Volunteer contact information and monthly volunteer hours can be entered into this system and CERVIS will print the necessary information for required reports.

### Organizational Capability

The program sponsor for RSVP Henry County, The Fellowship Cup, provides food, clothing, and shelter to the under-served of Henry County. A partnership with RSVP exemplifies one of The Fellowship Cup's core values: collaborating with others to serve our community and empowering people to rise above the need for our services. The Fellowship Cup will oversee fiscal management of RSVP Henry County. Operating for over 30 years, the organization has a long history of sound fiscal

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management. Its 990 is done by an external auditing company TD&T, the organization uses Quickbooks as its financial management software, and a Certified Public Accountant sits on the board of directors and signs off on every monthly bank statement. Checks for any amount require a dual signature and monthly funding statements are provided to the County Supervisor. The Fellowship Cup also has an explicit statement on "Fiscal Procedures and Responsibilities." Stable financial management is evident in the growth of The Fellowship Cup's generated income. A rapid increase in generated income, from \$103,628 in 2009 to a projected \$303,625 in 2013, reveals the strong management of The Fellowship Cup finances. With this background in responsible, orderly fiscal management, The Fellowship Cup is well-equipped to handle the financial aspects of RSVP.

Along with the program sponsor and the personnel described below, RSVP Henry County has an outstanding Advisory Council to guide and direct RSVP. The Advisory Council is comprised of six community leaders from a variety of organizations and perspectives. These individuals have deep connections to the Henry County community and many years of experience in guiding successful programming, recruiting and retaining volunteers, and addressing community needs.

### **PERSONNEL**

Fellowship Cup Executive Director: Melisa Bracht-Wagner

Melisa Bracht-Wagner began as executive director of The Fellowship Cup in April of 2011. In 2008, Bracht-Wagner coordinated a "classic FEMA storm recovery station" in Cedar Rapids for 10,000 volunteers over the course of 22 months with the United Methodist Church. Bracht-Wagner graduated from the 2010 Iowa State University non-profit academy and the 2009-2010 nonprofit summit. Bracht-Wagner is a state and regional trainer for volunteer management with the United Methodist Church. Bracht-Wagner is responsible for budget development, oversight, grant-writing, and volunteer recruitment.

RSVP Director: Carol Dustman

Carol Dustman is the new director of the Henry County RSVP as of July 1, 2013. Dustman holds a Bachelor's degree in Public Relations from Mt. Mercy College. Dustman worked at Rockwell Collins in Cedar Rapids for 36 years as Quality Engineer, Quality Manager, and Project Manger.

Dustman is responsible for the daily operation of RSVP. Responsibilities include filing required reports, station recruitment, and volunteer recruitment, retention, and appreciation. In addition to

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her RSVP duties, an amendment to the grant for a waiver of 4% of her full-time status will be filed so that Carol can assist with walk-in client concerns in late afternoon.

### **Other**

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

SPONSOR AGENCY: THE FELLOWSHIP CUP

The program sponsor is a non-profit organization established in 1981. The Fellowship Cup oversees all the fiscal management of RSVP. The Fellowship Cup utilizes Quickbooks as its financial software. TD&T accounting service prepares the 990 each year.

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

Henry County RSVP believes this is Not Applicable.