

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

United Way of the Piedmont, sponsor of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program of Spartanburg County, envisions a community where individuals and families achieve their human potential through education, income stability and healthy lives.

Established in the late 1930's as the Community Chest of Spartanburg County, United Way of the Piedmont boasts a 75 year history of support for our community that includes a fundamental commitment to fostering volunteerism. During this rich history, the organization grew to serve as a conduit for volunteer and financial resources for over 75 non-profit organizations in Spartanburg, Union, and Cherokee Counties of South Carolina. United Way seeks to create lasting changes in community conditions that improve lives. We do this by connecting various community resources with agencies that provide services to vulnerable populations.

RSVP of Spartanburg County has well over 200 active volunteer participants. Some of the program's activities will include delivering and serving meals in soup kitchens. Additional activities include mentoring and tutoring, delivering health care services, preparing taxes for the low income and elderly, and writing letters to active military personnel. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. Other areas of the project will include Education, Economic Opportunity and providing services for veterans and military families. Carefully utilizing the requested \$26,899 in grant funding, the result of the three year grant will be an outstanding RSVP Spartanburg program which has retained all 200 active volunteers as well as actively recruited new volunteers to join our diverse efforts.

## Strengthening Communities

Spartanburg County occupies 811 square miles of land in the Upstate region of South Carolina. Settled as a textile community in the 19th century, Spartanburg struggled economically during the mid 1990's as the textile industry began to decline. Today, our community is experiencing growth in several non-textile industries including information technology and hospitality. The County has a population of 286, 822 with 100,462 unique households. 14.3% of our community is age 65 or older, representing the fastest growing segment of our population. The community includes more than 200 non-profit organizations that rely heavily on volunteer service.

Currently, only 19% of adults (ages 25 and above) living in Spartanburg County, South Carolina have earned a bachelor's degree. This number falls far below the national and state averages and represents

## **Narratives**

a critical issue that is limiting the future of our young people and stifling Spartanburg's economic potential. Realizing the crisis at hand, the Chamber of Commerce commissioned a taskforce on College Degree Attainment in 2007 to propose recommendations to put Spartanburg back on track to compete for jobs and industry. The Chamber turned to The County Foundation to serve as a catalyzing force for implementing the 40/30 Challenge, a goal of increasing the number of adults holding post secondary degrees to 40 percent by the year 2030. Multiple agencies, businesses, schools, and the faith community are all involved in this initiative.

According to the 2007-2011 Census Bureau facts, 16.2% of the population lives below the income poverty level. Generally speaking, Spartanburg County does not fare as well as the other larger SC metropolitan areas on measures of income, and we do not fare nearly as well when we look at national numbers. According to Spartanburg Community Indicators project, the poverty rate exceeds the national poverty rate.

The Primary Focus Areas that this project will address are Education, Healthy Futures, and Economic Opportunity.

Healthy Futures -- Health and wellness improvement is one anticipated outcome of the RSVP project. As a result of RSVP volunteers delivering and serving meals to over 1500 residents of Spartanburg County on a daily basis, lives will be saved due to the fact that recipients will have received a balanced, nutritional meal at least five days a week. In addition, the number of doctor and hospital visits as well as nursing home and assistant living admissions will be decreased due to a change in the diets and lifestyles of our homebound Senior population. In many cases, socialization needs will be met by daily contact with a volunteer who delivered or served a meal to a home bound person that did not previously have contact with the outside world due to an ailment or condition.

Education - RSVP volunteers will work with young adults and children through a variety of non-profit organizations providing mentoring, homework assistance companionship and GED preparation. With seven institutions of higher education located within Spartanburg County, the topic of higher education carries a tremendous physical presence for our young students.

Economic Opportunity - Income taxes can be confusing for people of any age. Senior and low income individuals often need assistance in accessing tax preparation resources. The U. S. Census predicts that the Spartanburg County population of individuals 65 and older will continue to grow from one in

## **Narratives**

eight (2010) to one in six by 2020. Life expectancy for the average 65 year old has increased by one tenth of a percent according to preliminary 2009 death statistics released by CDC in March 2011. Based on these facts, there will be an even greater need for tax preparation for the elderly. Several experts have described how our older population is in the process of doubling in size, and how decision makers and policymakers may find both opportunity and challenge as they make choices about how our community will react to the tremendous demographic changes that are occurring in the state.

Maturing Baby Boomers have joined a senior community which is growing in two directions: the relocation of retirees to our community and our indigenous aging population. These demographic changes will result in two senior communities with different expectations and needs for services. The American Community Survey (ACS) is a new nationwide survey designed to provide communities with a fresh look at how they are changing. The recent Survey indicated that about 1.1 million people who are 65 and over are expected to live in South Carolina in 2030, compared with 485,333 people in 2000.

Led by a United Way staff project coordinator, RSVP volunteers will work through the Spartanburg County Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) initiative to prepare Federal and State taxes at no cost for low-moderate income families and the senior citizens.

RSVP Spartanburg will participate in the 2013 Upstate Stand Down for homeless veterans, veterans at risk for homelessness, and any other veterans in need on October 17, 2013. Veteran families are encouraged to attend as well. Collectively, this entire event will focus on empowerment. Like other homeless individuals, these veterans are typically avoided and often shunned in their day-to-day struggles to survive. At Stand Down, homeless veterans are afforded dignity and respect; they are treated as individuals with the capacity for making decisions that are in their best interest and consistent with the goals of recovery and reintegration into society. Because of the availability of multiple services offered at one location in an atmosphere of trust and possibility, veterans who have lost hope can begin the process of rehabilitation and recovery. We plan to serve all veterans and their family members in need. Including Spartanburg, this program will serve eleven surrounding counties. Services, activities and goods provided include showers and haircuts, clothing (military surplus and civilian), ruck sacks, blankets and sleeping bags, hot meals (breakfast and lunch) and meals to go, comfort kits toiletry kits, tablets and pens, children's items, "phone rooms" where veterans can try to contact family members, medical screenings: blood pressure, flu shots, etc. and

## **Narratives**

health education materials. Services will also include: HIV/AIDS counseling, AA/NA counseling and on-site meetings, mental health screenings, employment opportunities, VA benefits, social security benefits, housing, social services and chaplaincy services.

### **Recruitment and Development**

Plan for Assuring Training & Other Opportunities for Senior Corps Volunteers

Ensuring a quality volunteer experience is paramount in the successful implementation of this program. This begins with the careful recruitment, selection, and training of volunteer sites. Special care will be taken to assess sites for the infrastructure necessary to support matched volunteers. This infrastructure must include well-established volunteer policies and procedures, sufficient agency/site orientation, training opportunities that enhance volunteer skills, and mechanisms for volunteer input into their agency relationship.

The Project Director will conduct a one-on-one training of all volunteers to ensure that assignments are matched to their interests, abilities, preferences, and availability. Volunteer stations will also provide training which will include a description of assignments or duties and responsibilities.

Additional training opportunities may be offered throughout the year as needed.

Sufficient training and ongoing evaluation of the volunteer/site experience is critical to a quality experience for both parties. The ultimate goal of all these efforts is to ensure a meaningful, positive, and mutually beneficial experience for all parties involved.

#### **Strategy For Recruitment**

Building a corp of quality volunteers is vital to the success of the RSVP program. The United Way of the Piedmont employs a variety of recruitment techniques to involve interested seniors in the program. These activities include participation in health and agency fairs, formal presentations to senior and civic groups, recruitment brochures strategically distributed throughout the county, and focused outreach within the faith community.

Training the volunteers and volunteer sites is equally important to building a quality corp of volunteers. Once recruited, volunteers and sites participate in a one-on-one orientation coordinated by the RSVP Program Director that educates them to program structure, purpose, and policies. Orientation includes a training manual that serves as a guide for navigating their RSVP experience. Ensuring appropriate recognition and ongoing educational opportunities is key to retaining RSVP volunteers. An annual recognition luncheon will be held during Senior Corp week to celebrate RSVP

## **Narratives**

participants' impact on their community. Ongoing training relative to maximizing individual experiences is made available to active volunteers and volunteer sites as deemed necessary and feasible. We send each volunteer a birthday card on their special day and use "missing you" cards for volunteers who have not submitted hours for several months.

Following trends at the national level, RSVP in Spartanburg places emphasis on the recruitment and retention of "baby boomer" generation volunteers. We are among the first RSVP projects in the Southeast to develop an active Facebook account which allows us to connect with RSVP volunteers through social media.

### **Program Management**

#### Management of Volunteer Stations & Assignments

Developing and managing quality volunteer sites is key to the program's success. When recruiting and working with volunteer sites, RSVP Spartanburg County's current work plan will serve as the foundation for volunteer assignments and their relationship to established community needs.

While we will support a variety of volunteer placements to meet the skills and interests of all potential volunteers, it is our intention to focus much of our efforts around Healthy Futures needs. Community Indicator efforts in Spartanburg County point to poor health, as well poor school performance (including high rates of drop-out that research shows can be alleviated through meaningful mentor relationships with adults).

#### Assessing Project Performance

Volunteers and volunteer sites will complete an annual evaluation of the program. Sites will complete quarterly reports to show progress toward established goals. Data from these evaluations, aggregated quarterly volunteer/site reports, and ongoing feedback will be utilized by the project staff and RSVP Advisory Board to assess the project's success. This data will also prove useful in establishing the work plan for the following year.

#### Information & Data Management

With assistance from United Way staff and our experience with previous RSVP projects, including that of Union & Cherokee Counties, the RSVP Project Director will develop monthly and quarterly volunteer and volunteer site reports to collect data on the amount of volunteer time invested, the outcomes achieved, and the satisfaction of involved parties. This information will be entered into

## **Narratives**

Volunteer Reporter and/or Excel spreadsheets for aggregation and analysis. Resulting reports will provide the RSVP Advisory Board with concrete data for performance evaluation and improvement.

### **Managing Resources**

The RSVP Director will be responsible for overseeing the effective management of project resources.

The Director will have access to United Way's in-house accounting system and finance staff.

Resource utilization will be reviewed on a regular basis with the Senior Director of Volunteerism & Advocacy, President/CEO, and RSVP Advisory Board and evaluated for efficiency.

### **Resource Development**

United Way of the Piedmont has a demonstrative background in resource development throughout our community. The organization will appeal to a myriad of sources for support of RSVP operations. These include senior service providers (medical equipment companies, assisted living facilities, pharmacies, and retirement communities), agencies benefiting from volunteer investment, and additional corporate sponsors. Sponsorship opportunities for the annual recognition reception and the printed training manual will entice senior service providers to support the program. Last year, we received a grant from JM Smith Corporation Foundation for \$12,000 and a second grant from Broad River Electric Company Electric Charities, Inc. for \$1,000. These funds were used for volunteer mileage reimbursement.

## **Organizational Capability**

United Way of the Piedmont was incorporated in the late 1930's as the Community Chest of Spartanburg County. Over the last 75 years, the organization grew to serve as a conduit for volunteer and financial resources for over 75 non-profit organizations in Spartanburg, Cherokee and Union Counties.

### **Key Staff**

#### **RSVP Director**

The RSVP Director is an established staff member on the United Way of the Piedmont team.

Currently a part-time commitment and responsible for the day to day operation of the program (see attached job description).

#### **Senior Director of Volunteerism & Advocacy**

The RSVP Director will report to the United Way's Senior Director of Volunteerism & Advocacy (Senior Director). The Senior Director will provide administrative oversight for the provision of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program of Spartanburg County and will assist the RSVP Director as necessary with administrative tasks including performance improvement and fundraising. The Senior

## Narratives

Director is a native of the Upstate South Carolina region that will be served under this grant and has seven years experience working with non-profit volunteers.

### Financial Management Systems

United Way's finances are managed by our Vice President of Finance and Administration. The finance staff uses current information technology to develop and maintain our financial statements and has an annual audit conducted by a local accounting firm.

United Way of the Piedmont successfully managed an Early Head Start federal grant from 1998 to 2003 with total funds in excess of \$5.7 million.

### Organizational Track Record with Volunteer Management

Serving as the community's primary advocate for volunteerism has been one of our 5 strategic organizational goals since 1988. In addition to RSVP, United Way serves as the project sponsor for the Piedmont Area AmeriCorps\*VISTA program (14 active VISTA placements). United Way organizes quarterly Days of Caring which bring together over 600 community and corporate volunteers with 40 agencies to complete special projects. These projects include the coordination of in-kind drives. In 2013, United Way of the Piedmont coordinated well over \$7,000 in school supply donations from local corporations to be shared with our partner agencies serving Spartanburg, Cherokee & Union Counties. In addition, we manage a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Coalition which annually engages 60 volunteers in preparation of over 1,100 tax returns. On a regular basis, the United Way refers interested community members to agencies who will benefit from their skills and time by using the online volunteer matching program, Get Connected. To date, almost 3,000 volunteers and 150 agencies are actively matching with opportunities. United Way of the Piedmont coordinates over 73,000 hours of volunteerism annually.

### Organizational Track Record with Seniors

United Way of the Piedmont has a long-standing history of supporting senior service programs in the community. We annually provide over \$300,000 in program support funding to senior focused services. As mentioned earlier, we currently manage RSVP of Spartanburg County which supports the needs of over 200 active volunteers investing close to 30,000 volunteer hours annually in their community.

### Organizational Track Record with Impact-based Programming

United Way of the Piedmont was one of the first United Way's in the Southeast to move from an 'agency-funding model' to a 'program-funding model.' Since the early 1990's, we have required all funding partners to collect outcomes data and use that information to improve their service delivery.

## Narratives

United Way of the Piedmont continues to develop community agencies' ability to collect, interpret, and use outcomes in an effort to achieve true positive community impact. Our commitment to identifying and addressing those issues most pressing in our community is evident in the Community Indicators initiative in all three of our service counties.

### Organizational Capacity

In preparation for continuing the RSVP grant for Spartanburg County, senior leadership reviewed the organization's capacity to assure the program would have adequate resources for effective service delivery. As outlined in our budget, appropriate provisions have been made for space, information technology, administrative support, printing, and communications.

The organization has clearly defined job descriptions for all employees as well as an annual performance appraisal process. We have established and enforced policies and procedures surrounding purchasing and travel. The RSVP Director will have sufficient support and access to the United Way's professional team to assist with program management.

### Organizational Assessment & Improvement

United Way of the Piedmont feels that thorough assessment and continuous improvement are at the core of an effective non-profit organization. We seek feedback on an ongoing basis in the form of surveys from our donors, our agencies, our volunteers, and the community at large. Organization staff and appropriate subcommittees of the board identify opportunities for improvement by analyzing the results of these evaluative activities. The United Way regularly uses taskforces, subcommittees, and focus groups to develop strategies that address identified opportunities for improvement.

### Other

N/A

### PNS Amendment (if applicable)

Not Applicable