

Narratives

Executive Summary

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Volunteers of America (VOA) is a national, faith-based Human Service Organization with 36 affiliates across the US including Western Washington. For over 100 years, Volunteers of America has provided high quality services in the Puget Sound region. Our mission is to serve people and communities in need and create opportunities for people to experience the joy of serving others. To accomplish our mission, VOAWW is committed to delivering quality programs that utilize volunteers and assist people in leading a more satisfying, quality life. Each year more than 350,000 people contact VOAWW for services. VOAWW has a history of providing services for seniors. As a sponsor agency for the CNCS funded Senior Companion Program, we also have a strong understanding of regulations guiding Senior Corps programs.

VOAWW operates six programs in Skagit County -- RSVP, Northsound 211, Care Crisis Response Services (a regional mental health crisis line), the Dispute Resolution Center of Skagit County, Disability Services (serving adults with intellectual disabilities) and Youth and Child Development Services. Skagit County is a County in Washington State, named after the Skagit Indian tribe. As of the 2010 census, the population was 116,901. It is included in the Mount Vernon-Anacortes, Washington, and Metropolitan Statistical Area. The Skagit Maritime Valley has over 93,000 acres of active farmland. The Skagit River comprises the third largest watershed on the west coast of the continental United States with a delta graced by working farms and wildlife refuges. The Skagit Flats is one of the most popular areas for birding in Washington State. The Valley's culture is rich in farming, fishing, nature, and art.

An estimated 700 RSVP volunteers will serve in Skagit County through this grant. Some of the activities will include: trail maintenance, food distribution, tutoring, building homes, blood drives, and vacation home checks. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. In a community known for its agricultural abundance, the highest risk for premature death is the lack of fresh fruits and vegetables. 75.3% of the adults in Skagit County report eating less than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day (Community Status Risk Indicators, US Dept. of HHS, 2013).

Poverty is closely linked to hunger and food insecurity. Having the resources to obtain necessary food is critical to reducing hunger and food insecurity. In fact, federal poverty guidelines are the determining factor for many food programs, including food stamps and free and reduced lunches for school age children. Not having the resources to obtain food is one of the primary reasons people skip meals and slip from food insecurity into hunger. This is why connecting RSVP volunteers with

Narratives

meaningful ways to serve is so vital.

At the end of the three-year grant, we anticipate that recruiting and placing volunteers in these areas will help increase the capacity of local organizations that address hunger and food insecurity issues. RSVP volunteers will enable these organizations, such as Meals-on-Wheels programs, food banks, food pantries and community gardens to increase food security and reduce hunger in Skagit County.

Strengthening Communities

Strengthening Communities

Skagit County is a mostly rural community, located in Northwest Washington between the ocean waters of the Puget Sound and the Cascade Mountains. Just over 1,700 square miles, Skagit County maintains a relaxed, small-city atmosphere with a population of just over 118,000.

Farming is an important part of Skagit County's economy which is best known for its tulip bulb industry. Washington Bulb Company is headquartered here and is the nation's largest producer of tulip, daffodil and iris bulbs. During the month of April, many tourists come to Skagit Valley to see the beautiful tulip fields and take part in the annual Tulip Festival. Over the years, the Skagit Valley has been recognized as having some of the most agriculturally productive and valuable farmland in the world--ranked in the top 2 percent of soils. More than 80 different crops plus livestock and dairy products are produced here. Farming is valued and economically successful in Skagit County. The County is an economically and ecologically healthy and dynamic region because of farming and its associated benefits.

Skagit County offers a wide array of outdoor recreational opportunities for its residents. You don't have to go far to get to beautiful forests, fresh water lakes, and scenic trails either. There are 137 lakes, 229 streams, and hundreds of miles of trails featured within 10 major trail ways. There are numerous county and state parks perfect for fishing, hiking, camping, and exploring the outdoors. Skagit County is also the gateway to the North Cascades National Park with its scenic wilderness and beautiful mountain vistas. The 1,200 mile Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNNST), running from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean, ranks among the most scenic trails in the world; and comes right through Skagit County.

With Despite all the beauty Skagit County has to offer, many individuals and families are in need and struggle daily. Poverty is closely linked to hunger and food insecurity. Having the resources to obtain necessary food is critical to reducing hunger and food insecurity. In fact, federal poverty guidelines are the determining factor for many food programs, including food stamps and free and reduced lunches for school age children. Not having the resources to obtain food is one of the primary reasons people

Narratives

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Looking at poverty in the county, residents under 18 that were living below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) averaged 18.7% in the 2009 through 2011 time period. During the same period, 11.4% of all residents in Skagit County were living below the FPL.

Poverty among children in our counties is even higher. During the 2010-2011 school year the share of children in the county that were eligible for the USDA free and reduced lunch program was 44.32%.

The number of students, in the State of Washington, eligible for reduced-price meal benefits has decreased from 78,546 in school year 2010--11 to 73,888 in school year 2011--12 while the number of students eligible for free meal benefits has increased from 373,015 in school year 2010--11 to 393,391 in school year 2011--12 (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2012).

Figures for families with children on food stamps show the same trends, with food stamps for households in Skagit County increasing from 17.3% in 2007-2008, to 22.3% in 2008-2010 (Kids Count Data Book, 2013).

In a community known for its agricultural abundance, the highest risk for premature death is the lack of fresh fruits and vegetables. 75.3% of the adults in Skagit County report eating less than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day (Community Status Risk Indicators, US Dept, of HHS, 2013).

Healthy Futures is Skagit RSVP's Primary Focus Area. Clearly poverty and the resulting hunger and food insecurity caused by poverty are critical issues and Skagit County. Recruiting and placing volunteers to help increase the capacity of local organizations to address hunger and food insecurity issues will enable those organizations to increase food security and reduce hunger in Skagit County. RSVP Skagit County partners with Community Action Agency Food Distribution manager Dave Shields; warehouse assistant Rita Ordonez, and AmeriCorps member Cole Bitzenburg whom is in charge of the new Gleaner program for the food banks. Attending quarterly meetings with Foodbank managers helps RSVP to understand the current needs and support these programs by recruiting quality volunteers

According to the 2010 US Census there were an estimated 12,714 veterans living in Skagit County. Over 500 homeless vets live in this county. RSVP Skagit is committed to creating a network and collecting information county-wide to provide a referral site for veterans. Current services available for veterans in Skagit County are limited and RSVP can be the referral or coordinating agency to assist veterans when they seek assistance. We plan to seek out new partnerships with the local VFW, Legions and Lions groups since they predominantly have veterans as members. Currently, a great number of veterans or veterans' families are served by senior congregate meals, Meals-on-Wheels,

Narratives

and food banks.

The RSVP Advisory Council have had discussions on has discussed ways to increase the number of veterans serving as volunteers, as well as and veterans and their family members being served by RSVP programs. Currently, RSVP Skagit has 91 veteran volunteers serving in areas such as: reading to children, tutoring, delivering meals to homebound seniors, trail maintenance, and building/repairing homes. Our efforts will increase the number of veteran volunteers serving and also receiving services.

Seniors are increasing in Skagit County - the current census lists persons 65 years and over at 16.6% of the Skagit County total population (118,000), a .5% increase from last year, and well above the Washington state average of 12.7%. The median household income in 2009, was \$55,555. Skagit County is primarily agricultural area. Latinos represent 17% of the population, which is about 4% higher than the state average.

RSVP engages experienced volunteers in towns and rural communities across Skagit County. We have focused on aligning with the new CNCS focus areas and current strategic plan, and increasing our engagement in the local community, to ensure local input into the design of the program. To this end, RSVP staff attends, presents, and networks at many state, regional, and local community events which include:

WARSVDP Conference in Olympia, Food Bank Coalition meetings, Senior Corps Virtual Conferences, Senior Day in the Park Senior Resource Fair, Project Homeless Connect (provided volunteers and staff), Navigating the Future Senior Fair, North Region Healthy Aging Coalition, Washington State Older Adult Fall Prevention Coalition. RSVP is involved in monthly Skagit County Community Resource meetings, presentations to Service Groups and United Way presentations to local businesses.

We partnered with the Mount Vernon Police Department for a Rrecognition Eevent for community patrol volunteers last year, and visited most stations in December to distribute a longstanding RSVP traditional gift - a datebook/ calendar/ pen gift set. This year we will have an annual Volunteer Recognition Ice Cream Social event at the Burlington Senior Center and will honor volunteers with a gift card and desk top note caddy.

Our plan to capture data is to work closely with agencies that perform their own evaluations of the current community; such as Skagit Community Action Low Income Needs Assessment, and also support RSVP surveys of clients and volunteers. The next survey we complete is a survey on volunteers Emergency Preparedness.

Narratives

Recruitment and Development

Recruitment and Development

RSVP volunteers are recruited through various ways, such as: newspaper ads, Facebook, the VOAWW website, Local TV channel 10, newsletters, emails, senior information fairs, volunteer fairs, and Senior Center newsletters. When a potential volunteer shows interest, we go over the opportunities best matched to the volunteer based on location, time requirements, skills, physical abilities, and personal interest. Enrollment into the program includes a one page enrollment form that allows for the Washington State Patrol background check to be conducted. Once enrolled, we refer them to the station of their choice and provide a job description and contact information for the volunteer supervisor. Volunteer opportunities are aligned with the CNCS focus areas including Education, Healthy Futures, Veterans, Environmental Stewardship, Economic Opportunity, Disaster Services, and Capacity Building. Volunteers contact the station for orientation scheduling. Each volunteer station provides the orientation process for their volunteers. Volunteer managers provide timesheets for volunteers and explain the process of submitting hours. RSVP staff periodically addresses groups of volunteers at different location to offer ongoing training on the RSVP program and the community needs we are trying to address.

The demographics of Skagit County include a high population of non-English speaking residents including migrant farm workers and their families. RSVP has made an effort to recruit in this demographic by getting our enrollment form translated into Spanish as well as polling stations on their needs for non-English speaking volunteers or volunteers who can translate.

RSVP takes special effort in placing volunteers with disabilities in positions suitable for their needs. We have had success in placing volunteers with limited abilities with agencies in our community. Our volunteer pool has increased its diversity and we have goals set to improve the possibilities available for people with special needs.

RSVP Skagit retains volunteers by providing new and meaningful volunteer opportunities, offering consistent support and communication, ongoing recognition, and providing high quality training. For example, this fall we will be offering First Aid/CPR classes as a new volunteer training opportunity. Volunteers are recognized regularly for their service to the community, including an annual volunteer recognition event. Volunteers are given gifts such as gift cards to help with travel expenses and an RSVP monogrammed desk caddy as thanks for participating in the program.

Program Management

Narratives

Program Management

The RSVP program in Skagit County has been managed by Volunteers of America since 2011, and recruits and mobilizes over 700 volunteers at 55 locations. Understanding the changing demographics (the senior population in Washington State is expected to double by 2025) we help seniors find the right volunteer placement, whether it is a one-time commitment, or on-going volunteer service that utilizes the volunteer's life experience and skills to meet community needs. Volunteers to work with community-based not-for-profits, schools, city and county government programs, hospitals, libraries, police departments, volunteer centers, Senior Centers, Meals on Wheels, Food Banks, at a total of 55 work stations. In an era of declining government funding and dwindling traditional resources, the work of RSVP volunteers makes it possible for community partners to continue their vital work in a cost effective way with emphasis on the CNCS focus areas:

1. Education
2. Healthy Futures
3. Veterans and Military Families
4. Environmental Stewardship
5. Economic Opportunity
6. Disaster Services

The program is supported by one full time manager and a part time program assistant. Brandy Young is the Program Manager. She is supervised by Michelle Winters, Operations Director of Volunteer Services. The Program Assistant is Lacey Stevenson. The Program Manager will identify potential volunteer placement sites throughout the county where, through their service, volunteers will be able to address the identified needs of the county residents, as well as fall within the six identified focus areas. The Program Manager will formalize partnerships with those identified volunteer placement sites through Memorandums of Understanding (MOU), provide training on Senior Corps programs, and other topics as noted. RSVP Skagit is committed to recruiting a diverse group of volunteers age 55 and over who are willing to make a difference in their community. RSVP provides periodic station visits as well as ongoing communications with site supervisors, assisting in evaluating volunteer effectiveness and overseeing volunteer placement to ensure that volunteers are performing their assigned service activities. We will also provide training opportunities to station managers on topics such as volunteer retention, leadership and communication.

The Program Assistant maintains the volunteer database, processes volunteer enrollment forms, performs Washington State Patrol background checks on all enrolled volunteers, and records

Narratives

volunteer hours in Volunteer Reporter. She also reviews Memorandum of Understanding status, pursuing renewals as needed every 3 years.

The RSVP program is also assisted by an Advisory Council that includes diverse people, knowledgeable about human and social needs in our community. This council helps the program meet its administrative and program responsibilities including fund-raising, publicity, and programming for impact. The RSVP program operates out of VOAWW's Mount Vernon Integrated Service Center , which has offices for 2 RSVP staff, a reception area, and a training/conference room. Through a grant from the Boeing Employees Fund, the technology in the Mount Vernon office was replaced and upgraded in 2012. The office now has new phone and computer equipment, new printers/copiers/scanners, electronic timekeeping, and a great technology backbone, including an electronic active board, which is used for remote meeting access and training.

The program has great facilities, policies/procedures, equipment/supplies, and HR support, including clearly defined roles for all staff and volunteers. In addition, the Development team assists with fundraising ensuring that the program has adequate resources to serve the Skagit Valley with professionalism and excellence. The RSVP Program Manager researches opportunities to help with operational costs.

RSVP receives financial support through United Way, the Skagit Community Foundation, VOAWW as the sponsoring agency, private donations, the state through affiliation with WARSVPD (receives funds through the Dept. of Commerce), and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Donations are also made privately by the recipients of the home watch program.

Our VOAWW website includes an RSVP section where interested volunteers can access information and forms, as well as donate to RSVP. VOAWW in Skagit Valley has developed a website at www.voaww.org/rsvp.

We ensure the management of volunteers is in compliance with RSVP rules and regulations by recruiting volunteers based on specific job descriptions. Enrollment includes identifying prohibited activities. We allow for volunteers to describe their volunteer duties on the timesheets.

We have minimized disruption of current volunteers by including as many as possible in our plans to implement the focus areas. We refer volunteers to Skagit community Action Agency Volunteer Center for volunteer placement if they are under age 55 or interested in opportunities outside of the focus areas of Environmental Stewardship, Education, Veterans and Military Families, Economic Opportunity, Disaster Services, or our Primary Focus Area, Healthy Futures.

RSVP Skagit operates in compliance with RSVP federal regulations. All stations have signed a

Narratives

comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding and have a clear understanding of the rules and regulations of the RSVP program. Memorandums of Understanding documents are renewed every 3 years and are reviewed when there is a new volunteer coordinator named at the station. Skagit RSVP is sustained with an Advisory Council and full support of the Volunteers of America Board of Directors.

Organizational Capability

Organizational Capacity

Volunteers of America (VOA) is a national, faith-based Human Service Organization with 36 affiliates across the US including Western Washington. For over 100 years, Volunteers of America has provided high quality services in the Puget Sound region. Volunteers of America Western Washington's (VOAWW) vision is a community where all people live in safety, with social, emotional and physical well being, spiritual fulfillment, justice and hope. Our mission is to serve people and communities in need and create opportunities for people to experience the joy of serving others. To accomplish our mission, VOAWW is committed to delivering quality programs that utilize volunteers and assist people in leading a more satisfying, quality life. Each year more than 350,000 people contact VOAWW for services. VOAWW has a history of providing services for seniors. As a sponsor agency for the CNCS funded Senior Companion Program, we also have a strong understanding of regulations guiding Senior Corps programs.

Additionally, VOAWW has a long history of successfully engaging community volunteers throughout western Washington. Over 1,200 volunteers work with the overall organization each year, in programs throughout the agency including food banks, mentoring, housing, mediation services, preschools and more. VOAWW operates six programs in Skagit County -- RSVP, Northsound 211, Care Crisis Response Services (a regional mental health crisis line), the Dispute Resolution Center of Skagit County, Disability Services (serving adults with intellectual disabilities) and Youth and Child Development Services.

About 86 cents of every dollar directly impacts the individuals, families and communities we serve. VOAWW provides administrative support to all programs which includes functions such as: accounting, audits, administration, fundraising/development, IT, marketing, and human resources. VOAWW has documented purchasing procedures. The Program Manager writes purchase orders and has spending authorization. Supplies and purchasing are managed through the main VOA accounting office, which processes requests for office supplies and equipment. RSVP benefits from donations of equipment and discounts on supply purchasing through VOAWW. The financial systems are managed

Narratives

by the main office in Everett. VOAWW has over 20 years of experience managing 39 federal grants worth three million dollars, and many state and local grants.

VOAWW travel policies are clear and well documented. Staff is reimbursed for expenses incurred and long distance travel must be pre-approved in accordance with the VOAWW budget for the program.

The Program Manager attend relevant local, regional, and national conferences and trainings as permitted by the budget to learn best practices for connecting data to outcomes.

The overall organization, VOAWW, has a review system for its executive leadership and directors. HR collects survey feedback on each of the Directors and Vice Presidents. The results are then shared with each by their supervisor, with action plans for improvement as needed.

Other

N/A

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A