

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The RSVP of South Central Texas sponsored by Texas Lutheran University has actively recruited and placed older volunteers since 1974. Since 1998, we have focused a large portion of our time and resources to sponsor and grow the RSVP America Reads Project. During the 2012-2013 School Year we involved 212 RSVP reading tutors in 38 schools in our four counties. Education K-12 Success is our chosen Primary Focus Area. Another focus area is Access to Care under Healthy Futures. Through our Senior Medicare Patrol Team we reach many seniors with health insurance information and information on how to avoid Medicare fraud and abuse. Other focus areas include AARP Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) helping low income families with tax return preparation, service at food pantries providing emergency food to families in need, and a friendly visiting program we call "Touch Another Person" for Veterans living at Frank Tejada Veterans Home in Floresville. Local Priority Objectives will include two Habitat for Humanity projects, three senior centers (where several RSVP Volunteers deliver meals to the homebound), an America Cancer Society Road to Recovery Program (transportation for cancer patients for treatment), and two Salvation Army county offices (disaster relief). Other local priority stations include service at libraries, museums, thrift stores, senior centers, children's programs and a variety of other human service agencies.

## Strengthening Communities

More than any other single skill, the ability to read -- and read well -- allows a child to succeed in school, learn about the world, function in society, and someday have decent job options. According to Richard Riley, former Secretary, U.S. Department of Education, "Literacy is about reading, but it is about more. It's also about participating in the community, understanding the world around you, becoming a better citizen, and taking advantage of opportunities...It is in the interest of all of us to do what we can to ensure the reading success of every young child by the end of third grade." Unfortunately, many children struggle when learning to read. This failure can have a tremendous long-term impact on their self-confidence, motivation to learn, future performance in school and success in life. School dropouts also represent a tremendous cost to society and the economy. According to a Texas A&M study commissioned by the United Ways of Texas, (2009), high school drop outs cost the State of Texas \$9.6 billion dollars annually. Quoting from "Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters" (KIDS Count Special Report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation March, 2009), "The current pool of qualified high school graduates is neither large

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enough nor skilled enough to supply our nation's workforce, higher education, leadership, and national security needs".

Please note the percent of 4th graders scoring below proficient and below basic on National Assessment of Reading Progress tests (2009) (SOURCE: Annie E. Casey Foundation analysis of data from the NAEP Data Explorer 2009): 67% below proficient and increasing to 83% for low income students, 33% below basic and increasing to 49% for low income students. Reading Horizons (April, 2011) cites research showing that a student who cannot read on grade level by 3rd grade is four times less likely to graduate by age 19 than a child who does read proficiently in 3rd grade. There is hope, however: Nord, Lennon, Liu and Chandler (1999) presented research which showed that children who were read to frequently were nearly twice as likely as other children to show three or more skills associated with emergent literacy.

The need for RSVP Volunteers to serve in the area of K-12 Success in our counties was presented originally in our 1998 Programs of National Significance grant, with the target schools all in the Seguin ISD. Seguin ISD identified 254 "at risk" first grade children in their schools needing one-on-one tutoring in reading to advance their reading skills. In following years we continued to find a huge need throughout our four counties for reading tutors and continued to focus on children's literacy for emergent readers in public schools as our primary focus area. We received two additional Programs of National Significance awards from the Corporation for National and Community Service. These grants allowed us to expand the RSVP America Reads Project to schools in Wilson County, Schertz, and the Comal ISD. We now work in 12 school districts throughout our four counties and these school districts indicate to us that over 50% of their children entering first grade would benefit from one-on-one tutoring. Three grants from the McKenna Foundation were especially helpful in helping us expand the RSVP America Reads Project to the New Braunfels ISD. We recently received an increase in financial support from United Way of Hays County to expand our reading tutoring program in Hays County.

The RSVP America Reads Program has as its goal to increase the percentage of children reading on grade level by 3rd grade. The specific goal is to provide a minimum of 12 hours of tutoring to at least 300 children and to document that at least 120 of these achieve grade level in their reading skills annually. Our tutors encourage their students to ask questions and to connect with what they are reading. Comprehending text is not passive, it is active. Students need to be interactive with the text. Children who learn to love books will be children who grow up to be good readers. According to Dr. Soledad Ramirez, a prominent Seguin ISD principal, "Once students read on grade level, they stay on

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grade level."

The RSVP America Reads tutor volunteers meet with students on a weekly basis in 30 minute increments and assist with reading related exercises and provide the children with additional motivation needed to succeed. They are trained to use "101 Ways to Praise A Child" during each lesson. Tutor volunteers serve as wonderful role models. RSVP tutors also teach their students the importance of using the dictionary and not skipping over words they don't understand. Students taught one-on-one learn faster and develop more confidence and self-esteem. They make progress in phonetic awareness and knowledge, vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. One of our main goals during the grant period will be to strengthen and increase the number of volunteers currently at schools with the most "at risk" children. This requires superior leadership on the part of RSVP staff. The Volunteer Coordinator contacts new volunteers, and interviews and trains the tutor volunteers in conjunction with the targeted schools. Managing the volunteers and the work stations requires excellent and open communication. This is done mostly through bi-weekly emails to tutor volunteers notifying them about orientation and training meetings, notification of deadlines for reporting their hours, and other necessary information. When appropriate, emails are also sent to staff at stations participating in the program.

When a person first contacts RSVP, the Volunteer Coordinator makes it a priority to schedule a meeting to meet the prospective volunteer in a face-to-face screening interview. The new volunteer is given an application to complete and attends an orientation meeting with other prospective volunteers. The program is thoroughly explained and there is the chance for the volunteers to ask questions and share their concerns and possible needs, as sometimes transportation or schedule is a concern to them.

Another aspect of management is tracking and summarizing the volunteers' work. One of the important items is documenting the hours served by each volunteer. This is done with timecards on a quarterly report form for RSVP. Another way we determine if the school or station is operating effectively is through surveys that we collect at the end of the school year from teachers and the tutor volunteers. Using data compiled from teacher surveys in the 2012-2013 school year, 97% of these surveys reflected an increase in student performance. This was determined through standardized pre and post literacy tests appropriate to each student's grade level. These results were gratifying and motivating to the RSVP Staff and volunteers.

A main reason that RSVP America Reads Program works effectively is because all our volunteers must meet certain qualifications. They must submit an annual application (in August or prior to

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beginning tutoring at the school) for a Criminal History Background check. As volunteers in the schools, they must respect the confidentiality of every child. If they have a concern, or feel that a serious or dangerous situation exists, they are trained to discuss it only with school officials. Volunteers are to develop a professional relationship with the classroom teachers and school staff. With the children, they are to have an encouraging and positive attitude to help the students achieve their best. By example, the volunteers are to give their best by being a dependable and caring mentor / tutor, and show the students hope and a "I can do this if I try" attitude. Another item that helps the program operate smoothly and effectively is the Memorandum of Understanding. This is discussed with and signed by the Principal at each school or station and the RSVP Director. It describes how RSVP staff and the school's or station's staff cooperate to make the program operate successfully.

Our RSVP Service Area continues to experience rapid population growth. San Marcos (the county seat of Hays County) made headlines recently as the fastest growing city in the United States with 4.9% growth in 2012 alone. Rapid and sustained population growth is a challenge for our entire region as all of our school districts are challenged to meet the needs of a growing population.

It is difficult to know how many military families are assisted by RSVP America Reads tutors. However, there are many military families in our service area, especially in the Schertz community located near Randolph Air Force Base. San Antonio is known throughout our nation as "Military City" and we are in the San Antonio Metropolitan District. All of our counties have a large population of military families both retired and not yet retired. A significant number of children from military families receive tutoring in reading at the Schertz schools. A number of RSVP reading tutors are veterans themselves or are the spouse of a veteran.

### **Recruitment and Development**

RSVP of South Central Texas, which includes the four counties of Comal, Guadalupe, Hays and Wilson, plans during this grant period to primarily focus on Education by means of the RSVP America Reads Program. Other areas where volunteers can share their experiences, abilities and skills to improve their communities and themselves are:

\* Healthy Futures by assisting Food Pantries in receiving, organizing and distributing foods to families in need. Volunteers will also help deliver Meals on Wheels to seniors and handicapped people who have transportation difficulties and/or are unable to prepare a meal.

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\* Healthy Futures by assisting with Health Insurance Information: RSVP will continue to work with Senior Medicare Patrol as it has done for the past three years. Through group presentations and booths at health fairs these trained volunteers will reach at least 2,000 seniors with important information on their Medicare benefits and with information on how to combat fraud and abuse in Medicare.

\* Veterans and Military Families by helping our Veterans at Frank Tejada Veterans Home. We will provide individualized activities for them through weekly visits by trained volunteers in our Touch Another Person Project.

\* Disaster Services by working closely with The Salvation Army to provide volunteers to assist in disaster relief efforts. RSVP will focus on recruiting medical professionals, construction workers, utility personnel and other types of volunteers to provide effective relief efforts during any disaster.

\* Disaster Services by working with the Guadalupe County Emergency Management Office with Voluntary Organizations Active In Disaster and with the Community Emergency Response Team to prepare for disasters. Monthly training meetings are held for the Community Emergency Response Team and periodic drills are also held.

\* Economic Opportunity by working with two local AARP Income Tax Aide Programs. RSVP will provide opportunities for volunteers good with numbers to assist low income families in preparing their tax returns at no charge.

\* Through our Local Priority Service Objectives many RSVP volunteers will provide needed service to libraries, thrift stores, senior centers, and a variety of human service agencies. RSVP works closely with these stations and uses the RSVP Monthly News Briefs (email to hundreds of RSVP Volunteers) to get the word out about ways to serve in our four counties.

RSVP uses a number of volunteer recruitment methods. We do regular newspaper articles in six area newspapers. We use KWED radio in Seguin for advertising events and periodic public service announcements for recruitment. We do group presentations including the RSVP-Making an Impact Video which features six of our local volunteers. We also encourage all RSVP Volunteers to recruit their friends and neighbors to join the program.

In the RSVP America Reads Project that we have sponsored since 1998, every tutor volunteer is provided an initial orientation to the program along with training and teaching techniques for dealing with "at-risk" students. The tutor is also given teaching materials to aid in the process. The RSVP

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Volunteer Coordinator provides training and support, in-service workshops and special recognition events each school year.

At the orientation meeting, the tutor volunteer is given a personalized orientation packet which contains the following:

- \* A personalized Welcome letter that encourages and thanks the volunteer and lists the qualifications for an effective tutor volunteer (e.g. mentions the necessity of submitting a Texas Criminal History Background Application)
- \* An Academic Calendar created by their particular school District
- \* Defines Tutor and the Hows and Whys the America Reads Program is successful
- \* The term "literacy" is defined and its importance is discussed
- \* The subject of CONFIDENTIALITY is defined and discussed -- Do's & Don'ts
- \* 101 Ways to Praise a Child
- \* Developmental Milestones at 5 years old -- includes speech, language and literacy development, plus intellectual, social-emotional and motor skills development.
- \* Other topics of discussion include: Tutoring Strategies & Helpful Hints, Getting to Know Your Student form (questions are provided), Steps in learning a language and how proper sequence is crucial, Steps Towards Better Reading, Helpful Phonics Facts for Teachers, Letter-Sound chart, and Consonant and Vowel Sounds,
- \* Academic goals to reach with your students

The RSVP Volunteer Program has various levels of support for the volunteers in each of the areas served. For example, the RSVP America Reads Program is a community partnership approach to literacy linking volunteer tutors with students in kindergarten through third grade throughout the 12 school districts in South Central Texas. Following registration with RSVP, the Volunteer Coordinator meets with the new volunteer. Then, the volunteer is introduced to a school contact who is often a Lead Teacher or the school Counselor. The School Contact helps coordinate with the teachers who need our help for their "at risk" students. The contact person also assists with matching tutor volunteers with students. The volunteers work with the contact and the teacher in providing effective help for the students. All these levels of support and information help to retain the reading tutor volunteers.

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During the school year, there are six training workshops available to tutor volunteers so that all of the reading tutors may attend one within easy driving distance. These are held at the public libraries or at some of the schools. The tutors are surveyed and choose from several areas of teaching techniques that we offer. Many of our tutor volunteers have not been teachers and are very appreciative of these workshops. These provide them with more "know-how and tools" to use in their job as tutors. The more "food" the tutors are given, the more they grow and become more helpful to their students. Also, they become more confident and secure as tutor volunteers. It's a wonderful chain reaction.

We recognize our tutor volunteers with an encouraging word and a "THANK YOU" at Thanksgiving and Christmas in the form of a card personally mailed to them. We hold two end of school luncheons to recognize RSVP America Reads tutors, one in New Braunfels and one in Seguin. Many of the schools have a Volunteer Appreciation breakfast or lunch at least once a year, usually toward the end of school.

RSVP of South Central Texas encourages the volunteers to invite their friends to help. We present an award to the volunteer who recruits the most reading tutor volunteers. RSVP also has a recognition event for all its volunteers. This year we had an ice cream social with musical entertainment.

The 2010 Census for Guadalupe County indicated a total population of 131,533 with the Hispanic or Latino population at 46,889 or 35.6%. The African-American population of Guadalupe County was 8,512 or 6.5% of the total population. It is imperative that RSVP reach out in a significant way to this population to involve a larger number of them to participate in our program. One advantage in reaching the Hispanic community is that one of our staff members is Hispanic and Spanish speaking and very familiar with the Hispanic community in Seguin. We plan to reach more Hispanic and African-American RSVP Volunteers by reaching out to the churches with large numbers of Hispanic or African-American members. To reach more volunteers from the Hispanic community we will also work with the Seguin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC), and Teatro de Artes de Juan Seguin (cultural center). The Seguin LULAC chapter is very involved in the Seguin community, even sponsoring a very active community garden, and will be a good organization to network with. We will reach out to other Hispanic and African-American churches and community organizations in San Marcos, New Braunfels, and throughout our service area. We will also target more veterans and physically challenged older volunteers for RSVP participation. Groups that we will contact include American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts, American

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Legion Auxiliaries, and Disabled American Veterans organizations. All of these groups will be invited to hear a presentation on RSVP and to view the video "RSVP--Making an Impact". At least 12 programs of this nature are planned each year. We work with a lot of physically challenged RSVP volunteers already, especially the hearing impaired. We work with our stations to make sure that they are prepared to receive RSVP Volunteers with all types of disabilities and have a variety of avenues for service.

### **Program Management**

RSVP of South Central Texas provides a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to all agencies that we work with, ensuring a clear understanding of responsibilities between RSVP and the Agency. This agreement covers a three year period. RSVP's responsibilities include recruiting, interviewing, and referring RSVP members to the agency, which makes the final placement decision; orienting station staff on RSVP benefits; providing publicity for station and volunteers; and volunteer management assistance. Agency responsibilities include providing orientation to the station, in-service instruction, special training, and a written job description; complying with the Civil Rights Act; providing supervision, materials and equipment and adequate safety; providing background checks as needed; reporting information to comply with RSVP Programming for Impact; and providing handicap accessibility to allow people with disabilities to participate. Both the agency representative and the RSVP Director sign the MOU and both keep a copy of it.

A review of our RSVP work plans will show that we have a wide variety of service opportunities and have identified five additional unmet needs and developed effective plans to address them. In addition to the focus on reading tutors in public schools, we will focus on supporting Veterans with disabilities, food distribution through six local food pantries, disaster preparedness , access to care (Medicare information), and income tax preparation for low income families (through AARP's VITA program). We have worked with all six of the area food pantries for many years and have a strong working relationship with all of them. We also have worked closely with the Guadalupe County VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster), the Guadalupe County Community Emergency Response Team, Senior Medicare Patrol, and the AARP Tax Aide Program (VITA) for many years. We are especially excited about working with Frank Tejada Veterans Home in Floresville to provide meaningful activities to older vets through trained RSVP Volunteers. This is a new initiative for us.

There is a good reason that the food pantries are a high priority in our four counties. According to the

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US Dept of Agriculture, 18.5% of Texans experienced food insecurity in the years 2009-2013. Texas ranks among the top 8 states in food insecurity. Food insecurity means "consistent access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year". The 2010 census documented over 33,000 people living below the poverty level in our four counties.

Senior Medicare Patrol has also been documented as a need. The US Office of Management and Budget estimated that Medicare lost \$10.8 billion in improper payments in 2007. We have a team of trained volunteers who educate other seniors on Medicare fraud and abuse. They teach seniors how to protect their Medicare card, detect fraud, and report fraud if suspected. These RSVP Volunteers also educate other seniors about their Medicare benefits.

We have a plan to responsibly graduate volunteer stations to meet changing community needs. We have already begun this process with 21 stations and over 250 volunteers receiving letters to this effect in February, 2013. These stations did not have volunteer assignments that aligned with National Service Priorities. A committee of community leaders from the RSVP Advisory Council met three times to make this very tough decision. Additional stations will be responsibly graduated over the next three years. The RSVP Staff and Advisory Council will take a hard look annually at which RSVP Volunteer Stations should continue to serve as partners with RSVP and which should not. RSVP staff will bring a list of recommended stations to drop to the May Advisory Council meeting. Stations that do not fit RSVP's mission will be responsibly graduated using a well worded letter which encourages volunteers to continue assisting those stations even though they will no longer be affiliated with RSVP.

To determine the progress of "at risk" students being tutored, the South Central RSVP area America Reads Program will obtain student's reading test scores collected in the classroom at the beginning (BOY) and end of (EOY) the school year. RSVP works with the schools and teachers to keep this information anonymous and confidential. With each school principal's permission, the RSVP America Reads Student Progress Report will be provided to the schools in the Fall and Spring to report the data. The teachers will complete the form to report the student's reading progress. Here is a sample of how the data is reported to RSVP.

Child # 1: B.O.Y. score: \_\_\_\_\_ E.O.Y. score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Child #2: B.O.Y. score: \_\_\_\_\_ E.O.Y. score: \_\_\_\_\_

In place of student's names, the teachers give each student a number to identify them.

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This tool for reporting the student's BOY and EOY reading test scores provides us with a true reading of the student's progress for the year. Should a student leave the school early in the school year, they are tested upon exit and the results will be provided. Another tool we will use to measure progress in the America Reads Program is the Quarterly Report form. This form will be completed by volunteers and approved by their RSVP Agency representative. All volunteers will report their hours served on this form. The form will be used to track the individual hours a student has been tutored. With these two forms of measure, RSVP can then provide the National Performance Measure with accurate and useful numbers and results.

Regarding management of project resources, Texas Lutheran University (TLU) has a 39 year track record of providing oversight of the RSVP Project. We have a check and balance system whereby vouchers and checks are prepared by RSVP Staff and TLU's Sponsor Executive or the VP for Fiscal Affairs are the only two people who may sign RSVP checks. Local funding of RSVP is extremely important and includes three United Way Agencies, two counties, and one city. Preparing periodic reports for local funding agencies demonstrates accountability and allows us to tell the RSVP story. The State of Texas is also a large supporter.

### **Organizational Capability**

Once a year, Texas Lutheran University (TLU), RSVP's sponsoring agency, undergoes an independent financial audit. The financial records of RSVP are included in this audit. All RSVP checks are signed by either our TLU Sponsor Executive or the VP for Fiscal Affairs. In addition, many of our funding sources require a quarterly financial report. The Corporation for National Service requires semi-annual Financial Status Reports and these are prepared from income and expense statements from RSVP's accounting software. The RSVP Director maintains the accounting data entries. The Director of South Central RSVP oversees all of the part time paid staff and monitors their work time. The RSVP Director balances the RSVP account and submits financial statements, by the tenth of each month, to the Vice President of Fiscal Affairs at Texas Lutheran University.

RSVP of South Central Texas uses the Volunteer Reporter, software which provides an unduplicated volunteer count that is now required. In addition, the Volunteer Reporter tracks the "active volunteer" at every station in terms of his/her hours served and reported to RSVP. These hour reports are reviewed and approved by the station's RSVP contact to confirm the hours served. The software also provides current status of stations regarding the MOU - Memorandum of Understanding. Per policy, this document must be signed by the Agency Representatives who serve as the Agency's liaison

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to RSVP.

The Human Resources department at Texas Lutheran University helps to oversee new RSVP staff hires. TLU makes certain that their background checks are performed and that the person is qualified for hire. The Payroll Department at TLU monitors and performs all payroll functions. The TLU Business Office works with an independent professional auditor annually and a complete audit of all University revenues and expenses is conducted each summer. Texas Lutheran University provides significant administrative support to RSVP. The Assistant to the President for Administration and Public Affairs, Stephen Anderson, oversees the Director of RSVP, Stephen Doerr. Doerr documents his work time monthly and delivers it to Anderson by the 10th of each month. Anderson also serves on the RSVP Advisory Council and makes certain that all TLU policies and procedures are followed. Anderson meets with the RSVP Director regularly to discuss RSVP goals and progress. The TLU Business Office and Post Office assist with RSVP bulk mailings to volunteers and the stations. The TLU IT department also assists the RSVP program and staff with computer issues that arise and need technical assistance.

RSVP office has four paid staff positions. The Director position, currently held by Stephen Doerr, performs primary administrative duties:

- \* Ensures appropriate staffing and proper training and supervision for the program.
- \* Prepares and develops grant proposals, reports, performance measures, outcome results, goals, objectives, work plans, and narrative statements to the Corporation for National and Community Services and other grant-making entities.
- \* Plans, organizes, and implements recruitment, enrollment, orientation, and placement of volunteers. Volunteers receive information and support once they are recruited and assigned.
- \* Develops and maintains a cooperative working relationship with a variety of community service organizations, such as Lions International.
- \* Develops, reviews, and updates Memorandums of Understanding and other appropriate documents with volunteer stations.
- \* Arranges for regular recognition of volunteers, organizations, and individuals who contribute to the support of the RSVP program.
- \* Provides assistance to the RSVP Advisory Council by discussing significant plans, local project policies, actions, changes, and problems affecting RSVP.

Stella Ozuna is our current Records Manager. She collects and tracks station information and RSVP

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volunteer hours. This includes the number of hours and skills for placement. She also assists the director in maintaining Memorandums of Understanding and current data with appropriate partners. Betty Niven is the Volunteer Coordinator for Comal and Hays Counties. She does all of the America Reads coordination for these two counties. Additionally, she identifies unmet needs of communities and, through collaborative efforts and volunteer participation, creates and implements direct service projects. Some of these unmet needs include food security, disaster preparedness or relief, veteran services, and health education. Betty maintains and enhances current direct service projects such as Senior Medicare Patrol. She creates and implements impact statements and outcome measures to evaluate progress of direct service projects. She also educates non-profit and governmental agencies, residents, and state and local officials regarding the services of RSVP. She attends various community events in an effort to build strong relationships with other agencies. Betty works hand in hand with the RSVP Records Manager to maintain required program documentation. She attends professional workshops, advisory council meetings, and professional growth activities.

The newly hired volunteer coordinator for Guadalupe and Wilson counties is Cathy Fennel. Cathy will perform the same duties as Betty Niven but for Guadalupe and Wilson Counties.

Sustaining RSVP Staff involves training and support. We are very fortunate that in 2014 the National Senior Corps Association has chosen San Antonio, Texas for its annual conference. This will make it very affordable for the entire staff to attend. For in-service training we hold regular meetings to decide on best practices that are working in the field. These are shared with the other staff. The Texas Association of Senior Corps Directors also holds an annual training conference to provide training and support for the RSVP Staff. In 2014, this gathering will be held just prior to the National Senior Corps Association Conference. Every other month a conference call is held, and annually the Corporation for National and Community Service provides a two day virtual conference with many great on-line classes. In addition, all RSVP programs have access to the Resource Center funded by CNCS with models and information very useful to our operation.

Since 1998, the South Central Texas RSVP America Reads Program has been operating effectively. The program has provided the communities and the schools, including teachers and staff, with trained and capable volunteers who provide knowledge and display integrity and concern for the "at risk" students who are struggling with learning to read. Training and orientations for new volunteers are held whenever needed throughout the school year. Annual training and sharing with tutor volunteers is held every August before the start of school. Also, special training workshops are held whenever necessary to inform all volunteers of new policies and procedures and/or when changes

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occur through the various school districts. Before any new tutor volunteer can work at a school/station, the volunteer must pass the Texas Criminal Background Check. This is conducted by individual school districts through their Human Resources Departments.

To track the volunteer hours served, the volunteer signs in and out at the school. They are always scheduled to meet with the students for a tutoring session. The school contact arranges the schedules with the various teachers who have requested help for certain students. At the end of each month or quarter, the volunteer hours sheet is reviewed and approved by the school contact to confirm that the tutor provided the expected hours of service. We then calculate the hours and number of students receiving a minimum of 12 hours of one-on-one tutoring time from these reports. These hours are reported to the RSVP Records Manager and she enters the data to the Volunteer Reporter System. During the 2012-2013 school year, 212 RSVP reading tutors in our RSVP America Reads Project donated 13,369 hours at 38 public schools in our four counties. Results from 15 of the schools (the schools in Comal County), 274 children were tutored by 98 volunteers, and 108 of these children (39.4 %) were at grade level or higher in reading at the end of school. An additional 79 children were tutored at four schools in the Seguin and Navarro Independent School Districts. Although beginning and end of year reading scores were reported by the teachers at these schools, we are still analyzing the results as several different scoring methods were followed.

The office space for RSVP is provided by Guadalupe County Commissioner's Court as an in-kind contribution. The location is the AgriLife Building at 210 E. Live Oak Street and our suite of offices are numbered 204-208. We value this space at \$9,600 annually, and it is adequate for our purposes. We own our own duplicating machine, four computers, a laptop computer, projector for video and power point presentations, and other office equipment and storage cabinets.

We have an active RSVP Advisory Council which meets in January, May, and September to advise and assist the project. We make sure that we involve active representatives from all four counties. The council has been especially busy this year with an active committee helping us focus RSVP service to align with national service priorities. We have a good check-and-balance system on all expenses. A voucher is prepared for every cost item and detailed information on each cost is attached. This gives the check signers (officials at TLU) the information they need to see that each cost is needed by the project before they sign each check.

This project has been blessed with wonderful community support from local funders. Currently we receive financial support from three United Way agencies, two counties, and one city. We also conduct fund raising in the form of two annual travel opportunities. Staff time spent on these two

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fund raisers is paid and tracked as excess local funds. We think all of this is sustainable as all of these sources have provided support for many years.

### Other

Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy:

Our project has a number of wonderful community partners that support the project in various ways. All three United Way agencies in our counties support RSVP not only financially but also in communicating RSVP's mission. The United Way of Hays County has linked up with "Get Connected" and through this website all residents of Hays County have an easy way to learn about our project. Guadalupe County Commissioners Court is a generous supporter providing office space as an in-kind donation and a cash contribution to support the RSVP Budget. Guadalupe County United Way, Wilson County and the City of Poth also support RSVP financially. State and local funding of our project currently amounts to 44.2% of our budget thus exceeding the required 30% local match.

RSVP of South Central Texas provides a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to all agencies that they will be working with so that there is a clear understanding of responsibilities between RSVP and the Agency. This agreement covers a three year period. RSVP's responsibilities include recruiting, interviewing, and referring RSVP members to the agency which makes the final placement decision, orients station staff on RSVP benefits, producing publicity for station and volunteers, and volunteer management assistance. The Agency representative and RSVP Director sign the MOU which both keep on file.

We provide meals for the RSVP Advisory Council which meets over lunch three times each year. Accident, Public Liability, and Excess Auto Liability is provided through CIMA to all RSVP Volunteers. We work closely with the schools to get all volunteer criminal background checks completed each year. This is one of the most important functions of the three part-time staff working with the RSVP America Reads Project.

A great deal of time and effort is focused on volunteer recruitment. We are in the process of updating our website which helps with recruitment ([www.rsvptlu.org](http://www.rsvptlu.org)). We frequently present a video to community groups, have tables at health fairs and other such venues, send out a monthly mass email entitled "RSVP News Briefs" to about 800 email addresses, do regular public service announcements on Seguin radio station KWED, compose, print, and mail semi-annual newsletter, and issue regular press releases to local newspapers. We also encourage our existing volunteers to recruit. We give a prize to the volunteer recruiting the most new reading tutors. All RSVP Staff are asked to recruit and

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are expected to bring additional volunteers into the program regularly.

Volunteer recognition also receives great attention. When a new volunteer joins RSVP and is placed in a volunteer job, he/she receives a welcome letter and laminated name badge. The RSVP America Reads Volunteers receive recognition in the form of an annual luncheon at which the RSVP Children's Literacy Volunteer of the Year is recognized. After holding a large recognition banquet for all RSVP Volunteers for many years, this year we decided to be less formal and hold an ice cream social with musical entertainment. The RSVP Gladys Strauss Award for Outstanding Community Service was presented. (Gladys Strauss was our project's founder.) RSVP Staff work closely with RSVP Volunteer Stations to ensure that RSVP Volunteers are recognized in other ways. RSVP Staff regularly participate in recognition events held by our stations and help with them. Another form of recognition is newspaper coverage on the service of RSVP Volunteers. Six of our RSVP Volunteers are featured in a national video produced in 2011 for the 40th anniversary of RSVP. These volunteers are proud to represent RSVP in this way.

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

Not applicable.