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Executive Summary

An estimated 500 RSVP volunteers will serve. Some of their activities will include working with food insecurities; tutoring in public schools; working in child safety and welfare programs; building safe affordable housing; supporting veteran's families; and working with disaster response. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. At the end of the three-year grant, households will have access to food and information to help alleviate food insecurity; students will be more academically engaged; children will be safer, with greater well-being; economically eligible families will move into healthy, affordable housing; veterans families will receive assistance with closure in the loss of their loved one; and refugees from catastrophic events will receive food and shelter. The CNCS federal investment of \$47,355 will be supplemented by \$38,654.

Strengthening Communities

Red River Valley RSVP serves a four county area in Northeast Texas which lies just south of the Red River. According to the USDA definition stating that a rural area is any county with less than 50,000 residents, each of the counties we serve is considered a rural county, with Lamar County being the most populous. While Paris in Lamar County and Sulphur Springs in Hopkins County have some industry, there is also farming and ranching in the four county areas. According to the Texas State Data Center at the University of Texas--San Antonio, the most populous county, Lamar is 75% white, 13% black, and 6% Hispanic; Hopkins County is 74% white, 6% black, and 15% Hispanic; Red River County is 73% white, 17% black, and 6% Hispanic; and Delta County is 83% white, 8% black, and 6% Hispanic. 18.05% of families area wide live below the poverty line.

An NBC 5 Dallas/Fort Worth publication quoting hunger relief charity Feeding America, provides statistics that show Food Insecurity in our four county area to be high. Each county in our service area is higher than the national average, with Lamar County having the highest percentage at 20%. With 18.05% of area families below the state poverty level and with food insecurities of 20%, the Primary Focus Area of Red River Valley RSVP is Healthy Futures. In each RSVP supported Food Pantry, volunteers will serve in the area of food distribution and pantry support (H10) beginning with interviewing individuals and determining valid need; once need is validated, interviewers will share educational and life skills information along with the opportunity to receive food through the distribution process; the proposed outcome will be families/individuals reporting increased food security. Information will report the number of unduplicated individuals receiving food and

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educational materials. Information will be gathered through questionnaires sent to the station directors.

Under the Healthy Futures Focus Area, Paris-Lamar County Health Department and the Diabetic Support Group provide information on chronic illnesses, and work to educate participants on ways to live with these conditions, or ways to assist loved ones with these conditions (H4). Unduplicated new clients will be counted and this information will be gathered through questionnaires sent to stations who deliver the services.

Healthy Futures is addressed through our meal delivery programs, Meals on Wheels and Meal A Day. In these stations, nutrition/hunger issues are addressed through meal delivery as volunteers serve in different style food delivery programs, which work to allow homebound or older adults/individuals with disabilities to remain in their homes (H8). In Lamar County, meals (500/day) are delivered by Meals on Wheels drivers to homebound individuals, and in Sulphur Springs, meals (150/day) are prepared, packaged, and delivered by Meal A Day volunteers. These meals are delivered to homebound, both of any age with a disability and to elderly who demonstrate an ongoing need. Weekend Meals on Wheels also delivers to those identified as 'most fragile' on Saturdays and Sundays. Unduplicated clients will be counted through direct contact with stations, Performance Measures will be reported through surveys completed by food recipients and returned to RSVP. Any appropriate analysis and statistics will be performed via entry into SurveyMonkey.

Finally, Healthy Futures Focus Area is addressed by RRV RSVP volunteers through Terrific Tuesdays, which is a program that provides Respite Care (H13) for Alzheimer patients. This program provides temporary relief to the patient's primary care giver by providing a hot meal and recreation, usually in the form of entertainment or games. The outcome of the Respite Care program is increased social ties for the caregivers. Performance Measure information will be gathered through surveys completed by the caregiver or family member and returned to RSVP. Appropriate analysis and statistics will be performed via entry into SurveyMonkey.

Currently 225 unduplicated volunteers or 47% of RRV RSVP volunteers will serve in the area of Healthy Futures.

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Education Focus Area is addressed as RRV RSVP volunteers work in area schools reading and mentoring students (ED4A) with a projected outcome of improved academic engagement. Volunteers serve in different ways, determined by the direct need of the school. In some schools, volunteers perform one on one tutoring and in other schools, they read and interact with entire classrooms. Information gathered will show the number of students tutored or mentored and will be acquired through direct contact with teachers/supervisors.

In addition to mentoring and tutoring, Education Focus Area is addressed as volunteers work through CASA for KIDS, Office of the Attorney General, and The Children's Advocacy Center to ensure the safety and welfare of children (ED29). Volunteers serve as advocates, going to court on behalf of the children, as well as working in the offices of the AG's Office and the Advocacy Center's office to help reduce the workload of underfunded public office and agencies. Information gathered will show the number of children served through these programs and will be acquired through direct contact with the directors of the agencies.

Veterans and Military Families Focus Area is served in the Red River Valley by Hopkins County Military Coalition, The Hopkins County Veterans Memorial Board, and the Red River Valley Veterans Memorial Board. These volunteers serve the families of area Veterans as they seek to honor the Veterans for their Service to our country. The volunteers of the Military Coalition serve the families of deceased Veteran's (V8) as they provide the Honor Guard to perform traditional Military Honors for deceased veterans of all military branches. Within the focus area this is accomplished under the area that promotes efforts to meet the unique needs of military families through working within the community to serve the needs of veterans. Since its inception, the Hopkins County Military Coalition has conducted over 800 military funerals. Their service helps to provide closure to families as they lay their loved ones to rest, whether the Veteran has been deceased due to deployment or a Veteran of years past. In addition, the two Memorial Boards work to bring honor and recognitions to area Veterans, both living and deceased, as they host events and seek to build memorials. Information gathered will count unduplicated families receiving services and information will be acquired through direct contact with the station representatives who tracks their activity.

Environment Stewardship Focus Area is addressed through Christians in Action, as they collect, process, and recycle newspapers/boxes, shredded paper, aluminum cans, plastic, and rags (EN6).

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After collection, items are delivered to appropriate recycling plants. Information gathered will show tonnage that is taken to recycling plants and will be obtained through direct contact with station personnel.

Economic Opportunity Focus Area is addressed through RRV RSVP involvement with Habitat for Humanity. According to the U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts, in Lamar County 17% of the population lives below the poverty level and the median income is \$40,050 (which according to Census Data Quick Facts is \$10,870 below the state average). These factors can make safe and affordable housing out of the reach for many residents. RSVP volunteers will work to build and repair homes through Habitat for Humanity for economically disadvantaged individuals/families (O11), allowing that family to be transitioned into safe, healthy affordable housing. To date, Habitat for Humanity in Lamar County has built 16 homes, and through their "A Brush with Kindness" program has painted/restored 20 homes with 3 additional houses scheduled for this painting season and 5 houses already on the schedule for next painting season. Performance Measure information will be acquired through direct contact with the executive director, which will show occupancy, involvement and satisfaction of clients. Analysis and statistics will be performed via entry into SurveyMonkey.

Additionally, Economic Opportunity is addressed through the Co-Ministry Program that seeks to assist economically disadvantaged area residents (O1). While the program seeks to assist individuals in need of financial assistance to meet basic living needs, they also work to share information that will help the individuals/families be better prepared for their financial needs. Information gathered will show unduplicated clients receiving financial assistance, along with educational information. Information will come from questionnaire completed by station representatives.

Disaster Focus Area is addressed as RSVP Volunteers work with the Lamar County Chapter of the American Red Cross to provide assistance to individuals and families in the event of a natural disaster, such as hurricanes or ice storms, or catastrophic events, such as a fire in an apartment building or an industrial event (D2). Trained volunteers provide short/long-term care and treatment of affected individuals by opening ARC sponsored shelters and by providing meals and other appropriate assistance. These efforts may include setting up and staffing call centers. Unduplicated recipients of services will be acquired directly from ARC workers in the event of activation of shelters.

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Red River Valley RSVP has identified other Community Priorities, not included in the above Focus Areas. The identified Community Priorities provide diverse volunteer opportunities that allow people of all interests and abilities to participate in our volunteer program. Volunteer locations are area non-profits and public agencies that work with a minimum of funds. Many of these organizations are operated totally by volunteers. These stations include area museums, including one State Historic Site; nursing homes, libraries, 2 Chambers of Commerce and one Economic Development Center to name a few. Agencies by name, included in our Community Priorities include: ARK-TX Area Agency on Aging, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lone Star, Bogata Public Library, Chaparral Rails to Trails Museum, City Drug Store Museum-Roxton, Clarksville Nursing Center, Cypress Basis Hospice, Delta County Museum, Dr. Lura Gregory Memorial Library, Hopkins County Historical Museum, Hopkins County Hospice+, Innovative Enterprises, Lamar County Chamber of Commerce, Lamar County Genealogy Library, Lamar County Historical Society, Lamar County Literacy Council, Paris Junior College Board of Regents, Paris Junior College Institutional Development, Paris Police Department, Paris Pregnancy Care Center, Paris Public Library, PRIDE of Red River County, Red River County Public Library Thrift Store, Red River Valley Honkers, Regency Healthcare and Rehabilitation, Roxton Community Development, Red River County Chamber of Commerce, Red River Valley Antique Tractors, Salvation Army, Sam Bell Maxey House Historic Site, Sulphur Springs First United Methodist Church, Tigertown Community Center, and Wesley United Methodist Church. Target goals will be identified and tracked through direct contact with the stations. This section will include not more than 30% or 150 of our unduplicated volunteers.

Red River Valley RSVP (RRV RSVP) will maintain a level of no less than 500 active volunteers, with a minimum of 350 or 70% working in one of six focus areas.

Recruitment and Development

A high quality experience is assured by placing volunteers in stations that are appropriate for their skills. Volunteers are recruited through presentations, participation in community events, volunteer events, and by existing volunteers. In addition to speaking engagements, we host biennial Volunteer Fairs in each county in our service area and we have a presence in area Senior Expos. It is our goal to place volunteers in assignments that have piqued their interest. By offering orientation through our office and by encouraging stations to offer adequate training and instruction, the volunteers have the opportunity to build new skills and develop leadership skills. Each fall we co-host orientation for

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volunteers interested in working in the schools as readers/mentors. We encourage each station to train and prepare volunteers for the volunteer job. An exemplary example of training provided by our stations is CASA for KIDS. They have an extensive training program which involves studying a prepared manual and videos with quizzes, along with courtroom training. By having an open line of communication with the stations, we can be assured that volunteers are properly trained and prepared for the task at hand. Red River Valley RSVP has an open door policy. We work diligently to make each volunteer feel comfortable discussing their experiences with us, and in doing so, they can come to us with any situation they may encounter during their volunteer experience, thus elevating our volunteer retention. As indicated in the Strengthening Communities Section, our demographics are largely white, with an average of 10.75% Black and 8% Hispanic. We reach out to diverse populations through speaking and community events, including the "Block Party" sponsored by the Lamar County United Way that is designed specifically to reach the diverse population of Lamar County. With no military installations in our area, and no large Veteran's programs such as a hospital or Veteran's home, our veteran population is small. We have 47 volunteers registered as Veterans and 26 of these volunteers work in our Hopkins County Military Coalition.

In the Red River Valley, recognition is an important part of RSVP. Currently, we host two awards banquets where Volunteer of the Year and Station of the Year for each county are announced. The Recognition Banquets are attended and reported on by the Paris News in Lamar County, the Sulphur Springs News Telegram in Hopkins County, and we have additional coverage in Red River County with the Clarksville Times. In the fall, we also host events in each county where we recognize Years of Service. In December 2005, we began recognizing qualified volunteers with the Presidential Volunteer Service Award. We are involved on a continual basis in planning small special events and sending appropriate correspondence (i.e. birthday cards and thank you notes, etc.). We host workshops and seminars that help familiarize volunteers with specific opportunities.

Program Management

We work to ensure compliance in all areas of RSVP as well as make sure that volunteers are performing assigned service activities in two ways. First and foremost, is through open communication with our stations. Each year we host a Station Representative Luncheon, where we review basic station information. In doing this, we can make sure that new station representatives are informed as well as reminding existing people of our guidelines. We make visits to stations and we include an OSHA safety guideline document with each MOU. We are currently hosting meetings in

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each county to discuss new guidelines. This enables station reps the opportunity to make adjustments to their programs that will allow them to remain a part of RSVP and for others to recognize that they have the ability to stand on their own.

Healthy Futures is a big part of our program, with 47% of our current volunteers participating in this area. This Focus Area is supported in each of our four counties. Several of these stations receive either state or federal funding, and data is easily collected from these stations. The stations that are faith-based have systems to report their work to their sponsors/funding sources. These systems count unduplicated clients and one food pantry even produces pie-charts and spreadsheets, thus telling intricate details of their service. We ensure local input into our program design and evaluation through our working Advisory Councils composed of local citizens who are nominated by a committee and approved by the remaining council. These councils serve in an advisory capacity, as well as a promotional capacity. Our Advisory Councils work together to build awareness and to invite members of all areas of the community to become a part of our volunteer force. Local input is utilized by analyzing surveys and outside evaluations as they are appropriate. As a United Way Agency, we work closely with the Executive Committee at the United Way in Lamar County and with the 17 other UW agencies, learning of area needs and solutions to area problems.

Each year, we use our Volunteer Reporter to identify any station that needs to renew their MOU. When these are identified, we contact the station representative and discuss any needs or changes required. In 2011, we began including OSHA Safety Guidelines with our MOU to help ensure the safety of our volunteers. Each volunteer is checked for age appropriateness, and in the event someone under age has returned a membership form, we send them a letter thanking them for their interest, encouraging them to continue volunteering, and to contact us when they reach their 55th birthday.

Organizational Capability

Red River Valley RSVP is sponsored by Paris Junior College. PJC's mission statement is, "Paris Junior College is an innovative and comprehensive community college that advances the life-long educational development of students consistent with their needs, interests, and abilities while strengthening the economic, social, and cultural life of its diverse community. The College provides high-quality, flexible academic transfer and career-focused educational programs and services through a commitment to teaching and learning excellence within an accessible and supportive environment." Paris Junior College is a full functioning community college, and as such, it includes all

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areas of management including accounting, human resources, public relations, computer technicians, print shop, and maintenance. Red River Valley RSVP is under the Department of Workforce Education which encourages the concept of 'lifelong learning'. It is the policy of Paris Junior College to perform Criminal Background Checks on all new hires. This insures that employees of the community college are in accordance with the standards set by the Board of Regents; it also provides Red River Valley RSVP with Criminal Background Check service at no charge to our program, as our employees are considered employees of the college.

Our program has a Project Director with thirteen years experience with RRV RSVP, and another 3 years of experience working with senior adult volunteers in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The current Project Director holds a BS degree in Psychology from Texas A&M University--College Station and is responsible for program management, including Performance Measures and Impact Statements. The Director plans, organizes, and implements recruitment, enrollment, orientation, and placement of volunteers. Additional tasks include developing and maintaining cooperative working relations with area organizations and agencies, project public relations, preparing an annual budget and adhering to the approved budget, preparing reports to meet administrative needs specified by our Sponsor, State, Regional, and Federal personnel, and others as necessary.

Our program also employs a Volunteer Coordinator who establishes and maintains department files and records, compiles monthly statistical reports for the program, enters new volunteers into the system making sure they are age eligible for the program. She also visits stations as needed and prepares and distributes monthly timesheets, logs information into Volunteer Reporter, and follows up on any delinquent timesheets.

Our record successfully managing volunteers is evident by the fact that our program consistently maintains a stable number of volunteers and stations. Between the RSVP staff and the accounting staff of Paris Junior College, there is vast experience in managing both grant and non-grant monies. The privilege of being sponsored by the community college also assures us adequate facilities, equipment, personnel management, and support for staff. Paris Junior College encourages information and education as a means to growth. We budget funds each year for travel to state and national conferences, as well as area meetings. Our budgeted travel funds are guided by the per diem and gas allowance of our sponsor; our sponsor also contributes in-kind vehicles for travel within our

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service area. Once again, as stated above, our sponsor Paris Junior College is a full functioning community college, and as such, it includes all areas of management including accounting, human resources, public relations, computer technicians, print shop, and maintenance. Staff evaluation is performed by the Human Resources Department of the college. In addition to the personnel evaluation, as mentioned above, we conduct a biennial evaluation, allowing volunteers to provide their input and comments. In addition to HR evaluation, as stated in the Program Management section, our sponsor conducts a Quality Assurance Evaluation each year. This assessment is required for all programs on campus, and focuses on mission, goals, and attainment of said goals. Red River Valley RSVP has been in the Red River Valley area for 40 years. We are a respected, vital part of the communities that we serve.

As stated in the first bullet, RRV RSVP will continue to work to update our program and to maintain a level that helps meet the compelling needs of our community. By dissecting the impact that each station has on the community and by specifically measuring activities and results, Red River Valley RSVP is able to ensure that we are in compliance with our RSVP program requirements. RSVP project information and data is maintained by RSVP Reporter Volunteer Software Data System. The software is updated annually with the latest version supplied to the Corporation of National Service. Technical support is available through Reporter technicians, as well as Paris Junior College technicians, who assist with any computer/software problems or difficulties. RRV RSVP continues to be sponsored by Paris Junior College and we have a grant through the Lamar County United Way that helps to sustain our project. Our sponsor provides full accounting services that ensure all monies are handled and processed according to the highest standards. PJC has a yearly audit and complies with all government regulations. It is through the structured process provided by this service that we are able to maintain our efficient and effective use of our resources, as well as ensure accountability.

Other

NA

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

NA