

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

An estimated 240 RSVP volunteers will serve. Some of the activities will include mentoring and food distribution. The primary focus area is Education. At the end of the three grant 75 students will have improved engagement in school and 69 students will have completed their high school equivalency diploma. The CNCS federal investment of \$83,982 will be supplemented by 12,914 dollars of non-federal resources.

## Strengthening Communities

The Primary focus area for the Hamilton County Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) will be education.

The evidence for this community need is best summarized in the executive summary from the Ochs Center for Metropolitan Studies', State of Chattanooga Report: Education; May 28, 2013 available at : [ochscenter.org](http://ochscenter.org).

What is the state of public K-12 education in Chattanooga? It depends on your address. In schools with low levels of economic disadvantage, pupils perform relatively well on standardized tests and they are unlikely to be suspended from school. In schools with high levels of economic disadvantage, elementary, middle and high schools perform poorly on standardized tests and the relative number of student disciplinary problems is high.

Because African Americans are disproportionately lower income in Chattanooga, urban schools with high concentrations of poverty and African American students score particularly low on all measures of academic performance. The disparities are pronounced in elementary school and persist through high school completion.

The education data dovetail with other quality of life measures and reinforce the notion that Chattanooga is a divided city. One city is healthy and affluent where children attend private and public schools that prepare them for postsecondary opportunities. The other Chattanooga is poor and detached where children attend racially and socioeconomically isolated schools that typically fail to prepare students for future success.

As the report points out, the weak performance data in our schools is not the sole blame of the Hamilton County Department of Education (HCDE). Schools are not designed to solve long-standing racial and community development problems. However, innovative pedagogical approaches to the unique challenges of urban schools are needed. Community leaders need to engage urban residents in a dialogue to truly understand the needs and problems affecting impoverished neighborhoods.

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The disparities highlighted in this report provide additional data on the challenges facing Chattanooga. The socioeconomic, health, crime and education disparities in Chattanooga are a call to action. The overwhelming majority of gang members interviewed in the Chattanooga Comprehensive Gang Assessment were high school dropouts. The delivery of high quality education is critical to solving complex community problems.

### Recruitment and Development

The volunteers will be placed as mentors with Chattanooga Goodwill's, YouthAdvantage Program, as mentors, with Chattanooga State Community College in their high school equivalency diploma program, and with The Grove Street Settlement House's BRIDGES project as mentors to women preparing to enter community college and as tutors in the After-School Program at East Lake Courts. The YouthAdvantage Program will have three stations in schools where they currently provide career path mentoring programs. The youth are referred into these programs by the school guidance counselor as at risk of dropping out of school. Volunteers will be asked to commit to the school year. The volunteers will meet with their students at the school in classroom sessions.

The first station will be at East Lake Academy of Fine Arts which is a middle school located in East Lake in Hamilton County. East Lake Community (zip code 37407) is located southeast of downtown Chattanooga. Census data (2010) indicates that demographically, the community is approximately 36% African American, 17% Hispanic, and , 47% Caucasian. Approximately 55% of female headed households meet the poverty threshold and nearly 50% of the residents do not have high school diplomas. According to the Ochs Center report previously cited, East Lake Academy has 439 students and serves grades 6-8, 95% percent of the students are economically disadvantaged, 75% of the students are African American, 16% are Caucasian, and 9% are Hispanic. The second station will be at Tyner Academy located in the Tyner Community (zip code 37421) which is located northeast of downtown Chattanooga. Census data (2010) indicates approximately 73% of the population is Caucasian, 18% is African American, and 5% is Hispanic, and 13% of the population does not have a high school diploma. According to the Ochs Center report previously cited , the school has 542 students and serves grades 9-12, 61.1% of the students are economically disadvantaged, 90% of the students are African American , 5% are Caucasian, and 3% are Hispanic. The third station will at Brainerd High School located in the Brainerd Community (zip code 37411) which is in almost the exact center of the city and is located east of downtown Chattanooga. According to the 2010 Census data, approximately 59% of the population is African American, 36% is Caucasian, 5% is Hispanic and 18% of the population does not have a high school diploma. According to the Ochs Center report

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previously cited Brainerd High School has 635 students, serves grades 9-10, 81.6% of the students are economically disadvantaged, 97% of the students are African American, approximately 2% Caucasian, and approximately 1% Hispanic.

The volunteers for these stations will be trained in one day training for mentors who work with youth.

This training was developed by Goodwill International for use with their GoodGuides Program and is used with their permission. There is a pre test and post test. Volunteers must score an 85 on the post test to be accepted into the program. The training materials can be provided on request. The program also requires a background check the cost of which will be covered by RSVP. The outcome measure will be improved academic engagement.

Our second placement of volunteers in the focus area of education is, Chattanooga State Community College in their High School Equivalency Diploma Program. The volunteers will serve in two stations at Chattanooga State. The community need for this program is substantial as over 35,000 Hamilton County residents over 21 do not have a high school diploma.

Chattanooga State reported that 40% of their students in the High School Equivalency Diploma program are under 21. According to Local School Directory.com the graduation rate for Hamilton County, TN schools is 71.6% and the dropout rate is 6.4% compared to the state of Tennessee's graduation rate of 74.9% and dropout rate of 3.9%. The volunteers will commit to mentor the students in four week terms and be given the opportunity to renew or take a break and come back in 12 weeks or more or less. This will give the volunteers flexibility. The volunteers will be located at two stations one at Chattanooga State's main High School Equivalency Diploma Program located in the East Gate Mall in the Brainerd Community of Hamilton County. The description of this community has been previously discussed in this narrative. The mentors will meet with their assigned students at the open space in the mall. The second station will be located in the Highland Park Community of Hamilton County. Highland park is located very near to downtown Chattanooga. According to 2010 Census data 46.8% of the community is Caucasian, 38% is African American, 18.5% are Hispanic, 16.9% have a female head of household with children under 18, and 29.7% do not have a high school diploma. This is the main site for Chattanooga State's English as a Second Language Program and many of the students in the High School Equivalency Diploma Program are Hispanic. The volunteers will be trained on the Goodwill International Mentor Training or one provided by Chattanooga State. The volunteers will require a background check paid for by the RSVP. The outcome measure will be students who complete the High School Equivalency Diploma Program.

The third site is the Grove Street Settlement House's BRIDGES project where volunteers will serve as

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mentors to women preparing to enter community college and as tutors in the After-School Program at East Lake Courts. The East lake Community has been previously described. East Lake Courts is one of the oldest public housing projects in the city.

The volunteers working in the classroom will need to have background checks and they will be provided by the RSVP. The volunteers will be trained by Grove Street staff.

Our other community focus area will be Healthy Futures and will focus on emergency food. Our volunteers will serve at the Chattanooga Food Bank in food distribution and at the food pantry. According to Feeding America, the total number of food insecure people in the Chattanooga Food bank Area is 159,640. The outcome will be the number of people reporting increased food security. Training for the volunteers will be provided by the Chattanooga Food bank. Our other volunteers will serve in Community Priority areas.

Volunteers will be recruited through various means such as senior centers, corporate retirement groups, churches, local AARP chapters, the United Way, and the Goodwill stores on their weekly Senior Day. We will also do public service announcements and advertise in the Goodwill Stores on Goodwill Radio. We will give out information at the numerous senior fairs and community events we attend. The Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist with the Chattanooga Outpatient Clinic has agreed to serve on the RSVP Advisory Board. Chattanooga Goodwill has a work training contract with the Veterans Administration. It may be possible to place some of the Veterans that go through the work training program in volunteer positions. We also sit on an advisory board of agencies in the area that provide services to Veterans and their families. The Senior Employment Services Program also prioritizes Veterans.

We have a contract with Tennessee Vocational Rehabilitation to provide employment services to persons with disabilities. We will make them aware of the RSVP. The Director of International Community Outreach at Chattanooga State Community College has agreed to serve on our Advisory Board and we have a plan for a volunteer station at their English as Second Language Program. We will meet with volunteers bi-annually and more often if needed to update them on community needs and trends. At some point within the three years of this grant we would like to establish a Community Volunteer Training Program much like the city leadership programs. The Vice President of Mission Services has previously assisted in developing one of these programs and has worked with Mark Freedman through programs at the National Council on Aging. We charged for this program in the past and it could bring in additional income. We will graduate sites and add new sites keeping

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within the policy of the RSVP as the community needs and focuses change. We will make every effort to retrain volunteers if needed and help them find a new volunteer site where they will be able to use their skills and talents.

Volunteers will also receive recognition through awards and events. We will highlight volunteers on our website and in our newsletter.

### **Program Management**

The RSVP will be located in the Mission Services Department of Chattanooga Goodwill Industries, Inc. This Department reports to the Vice President of Mission Services who has a Masters Degree in Sociology and a Graduate Certificate in Gerontology. She has served as Chair of the National Institute of Senior Centers and on the Board of the National Council on Aging. Chattanooga Goodwill will hire a full time Director to manage the program. The program Director's job description has been attached to this grant proposal. That person will be in charge of recruiting volunteers, managing volunteers, working with volunteer stations to ensure all volunteers are performing as expected, that they have received proper training and are working in a safe environment. The Director will also ensure all MOUs are in place with our partner agencies. The Director will ensure that the RSVP is in compliance with all RSVP Federal Regulations. Chattanooga Goodwill is a United way Agency and is certified by CARF. We have a long tradition of successfully completing performance measures.

Chattanooga Goodwill currently has the Senior Community Services Employment Program and it is envisioned that the Director of that program will be able to work with the Director of the RSVP to create a synergy. Chattanooga Goodwill has applied for the Hamilton County, TN-4X as well as the TN- 3X. If we were to receive both grants we would like to combine them. We would have a Director in Hamilton County and an Assistant Director located in the TN-3X counties who is from that area. Chattanooga Goodwill's territory consists of 23 counties 17 of which are located in Tennessee and six in Georgia. All of the counties we have applied to provide the RSVP are in our territory. Many of the agencies and programs that are located in Hamilton County also provide services in the TN-3X counties. The Food Bank and the YouthAdvantage Program have sites in the TN-3X area.

### **Organizational Capability**

Chattanooga Goodwill Industries, Inc. is a ninety year old agency that serves a 23 county territory. The counties located in Tennessee are: Hamilton, Bradley, Marion, Sequatchie, Bledsoe, Van Buren, Warren, Cannon, Moore, Coffee, Franklin, Rhea, McMinn. Meigs, Grundy, Monroe, and Polk. Our counties in Georgia: Catoosa, Dade, Fannin. Murray, Walker, and Whitfield County. Chattanooga

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Goodwill serves populations from 12 years of age to 65+. We operate employment and training programs, job readiness training, vocational evaluation, youth mentoring programs, durable medical equipment loaning program, a furniture bank, assist in disasters, provide emergency clothing, clothing for persons who need clothing for job interviews, the National Council on Aging's Benefits Checkup Program, the Senior Community Services Employment Program, and we train mobility service dogs for people with disabilities. We have a long and good standing image in the communities we serve and multiple partners. We are a United Way Agency and we are certified by CARF. We use volunteers in our programs and have policy and procedures established for volunteers. We have fourteen retail stores and in 2013 had a budget of 16 million dollars. We have provided a list of Federal grants we have administered in the past and we currently have the Senior Community Services Employment Program for Hamilton, Meigs, Rhea, Polk, McMinn, and Bradley Counties. We have a large financial staff which consists of a Vice President of Finance, a controller, an accounts payable accountant, an account receivable accountant, a risk management accountant and a payroll clerk. Financial statements are given to the Board and staff on a monthly basis. We have a Corporate Compliance Manager who is responsible for making sure Chattanooga Goodwill is abiding by all Federal, state, and local policies. She also maintains the Corporate Compliance manual.

### **Other**

N/A

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

N/A