

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Senior Friendship Centers (SFC) mission is "To promote health, dignity and quality of life throughout the journey of aging." Aging is from youth to elderly, thus the programs offered not only focus on the stability and well being of seniors but encourage inter-generational learning opportunities that allow the wisdom of seniors to impact the potential of youth. Since its inception in 1973, founder Brother William Geenen desired a place where the basic emotional and social needs of the community could be met; Senior Friendship Centers has become that and so much more; unquestionably "People Helping People."

SFC has and will continue to promote and support the health and wellness of seniors in six counties of Southwest Florida: Sarasota, DeSoto, Charlotte, Collier, Lee, and Manatee. Sponsoring the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) for Sarasota and Manatee Counties is symbiotic with the aforementioned SFC mission while offering the two counties the expertise and resources of SFC.

A proposed 175 unduplicated RSVP volunteers will serve Sarasota and Manatee communities in relevant and impactful stations. Some of the Service Activities include Tutoring in Public Schools, Community Based Mentoring, Access to Health and Respite Care, Companionship to Homebound or Older Individuals, Employment and Life Skills Instruction, Financial Literacy Education, Prevention of Elder Abuse, and many more.

The Primary Focus area for this project will be Economic Opportunity. At the end of the three-year grant cycle an unduplicated total of 350 beneficiaries will have been served by many volunteers within the Primary Focus Area. Due to the proliferate nature of SFC (sponsoring agent) and other stations, RSVP will have an opportunity to impact well over 3,000 lives in all Service Categories.

The CNCS federal investment of \$90,829 will be supplemented by approximately \$39,000 provided by in-kind and non-federal resources.

## Strengthening Communities

Strengthening Communities

The Counties of Manatee and Sarasota cover a significant portion of prime Gulf Coast Florida real estate; starting at the base of Tampa Bay's Hillsborough County and stretching to the top of Charlotte

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County. The counties have a combined land area of 1,299 square miles, Sarasota having 556 and Manatee completing the total with 743. These square miles house a Census 2012 estimated population of 333,895 for Manatee and 386,147 for Sarasota. Although the total 720,042 population may have an averaged median income of \$48,697, this does not preclude poverty. Manatee has 13.6% (45,410) of its residents below poverty level and Sarasota closely follows with 11% (42,476). Of those living in these communities, current Florida Department of Elder Affairs county profiles shows Sarasota has an estimated 32.5% (125,498) over the age of 65 with Manatee following up with 24.5% (81,804).

To take a snapshot of these combined communities it must be presented that although picturesque and tropical, Sarasota and Manatee Counties have a high elder population ripe for elder abuse or fraud and a great percentage of citizens living without shelter or economic stability.

### Elder Fraud

Due to the high percentage of seniors living in the combined Sarasota and Manatee communities it is predictable that those who would prey on age vulnerabilities would migrate to this area. If a shark wants to feed they go where the fish are. SFC (sponsoring agency and station, being aware of this, has many programs which address and inform disadvantaged seniors of the perils they may face. The financial literacy programs empower seniors to say "no" and self-advocate; the technology courses inform and change the behaviors of seniors. RSVP will provide volunteers to these programs as mentors, teachers, and advocates. Being aware, changing behaviors and the adjustment of attitudes will help elders within the communities navigate with more confidence and stealth.

### Housing

According to the January 2013 Point-In-Time Census conducted by Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness, the number of people counted as homeless in this RSVP region was 2,054, an increase of 40% over the 2011 count. This number is inclusive of Sarasota and Manatee Counties with Sarasota accounting for 61% (1,253) and Manatee, the remaining 39% (801) of the total.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to get an accurate count for a variety of reasons -- many do not want to be found, rightly or wrongly fearing repercussion from authorities. Additionally, outreach efforts lack adequate volunteers in some areas. Of the people counted, 64% stated their homelessness was due to unemployment and/or financial hardship.

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Through Harvest House (Sarasota / Manatee station) and Turning Points (Manatee station), economically disadvantaged families, children, and veterans who find themselves lacking permanent shelter can get assistance searching for temporary homes, be housed, or get the help needed to transition to a permanent (rental or purchase) home.

Specifically to the service and assistance given veterans and their dependents, assistance with housing while paramount is only one of the services these organizations provide the forgotten heroes. RSVP volunteers at Turning Points will also aid in procurement of DD214's (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active United States Military Duty), help veterans process VRAP (education benefits) applications, and provide means to food and resources which restore dignity. Harvest House will use RSVP volunteers to teach Financial Literacy classes and provide mentoring for employment skills to its veteran residents.

### Employment

The growth in the homeless population is directly tied to limited employment opportunities and financial prosperity within Sarasota and Manatee Counties. The statistics listed in the Homeless section above validate the need for the community to be nurtured and strengthened via the Economic Opportunity Service Activities proposed in this project.

CareerEdge (station) is changing the face and trajectory of the under-represented employee, the individual who is working multiple jobs and / or multiple shifts and still not making ends meet. The classes offered through CareerEdge are transforming the person who has attempted and been unsuccessful in obtaining employment due to lack of experience, poor technology skills, inept life / employment skills, or a lack of understanding about the job search process. By working with RSVP mentors and completing the program, graduates are expressing an increase in confidence. They report a change in outlook and overwhelmingly are gaining employment.

### Data

To ensure that RSVP volunteers are engaged in pertinent and relevant activities that produce outcomes conforming to the National Performance Measures, data will be collected in a variety of

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ways depending upon the station. In an effort to assure adequate program progress data collected will be input every three months into a database created specifically for each station.

To measure outcomes for the homeless an initial survey will be administered to ascertain not only living conditions, but will also gauge ability to gain and retain housing. Once determined what level of permanency is possible, RSVP mentors will work through station resources to place individuals in specific housing. Follow up will initially be conducted weekly (via technology or in person) to ensure stability has been achieved, then taper to monthly.

The employment measurement will be determined through a post participation survey questioning whether the ultimate goal of employment has been met. The acquired employment must be either temporary to permanent or permanent and reflect a positive change in initial condition of the recipient. RSVP volunteer mentors will remain in monthly contact with mentees to reinforce the foundation the program created. Through this contact the mentor will be able to complete data for post survey.

### **Recruitment and Development**

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead

One of the concerns with recruitment within this community is statistically the majority of willing volunteers are not reflective of those who receive the services through the volunteer stations. The Sarasota and Manatee volunteer community is well over 90% Caucasian; this demographic has been the historic volunteer pool from which all agencies draw. This poses a disconnect when the majority of the beneficiaries of services (over 95%) are not Caucasian. The demographic being served must show a vested interest in the growth and well being of its own cultural segment. There needs to be a reflective percentage of each served demographic active in service.

To achieve the targeted diverse volunteer pool it will be necessary to move outside the normal recruitment strategies. Meeting each group of potential volunteers where they are and educating them to the benefits of service will be pivotal to a successful diverse volunteer pool. Revealing the possibilities of active volunteering: employment, increased skill level, and community re-investment as well as explaining the value to the community: changed conditions, increased educational

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achievements, and comfort to the aging, will be standard procedure in recruitment and development.

Spotlighting the various gifts each demographic could provide is imperative. Targeted recruitment will be directed at the following communities and sub-systems: African Americans, Hispanics, persons with disabilities, individuals going through the Veterans Court Systems, and those who have been released or soon to be released from prison. (It is understood that service location will be predicated on passing a background check, this is not prohibitive for those serving with non-vulnerable individuals.) Origin does not denote a lack of possible positive impact on need, thus all should be considered valuable to RSVP service.

Frequenting places of congregation-- parks, churches, assemblies, and meetings allows the opportunity to recruit and educate. The Project Director will be joined in these recruitment events / excursions by members of the Advisory Council.

To recruit this diversity of volunteers, the Advisory Council must understand and embrace this goal. It is intentional and purposeful that this Council will be comprised of people who have an affiliation and understanding of the volunteers and those they serve. Each member should possess a specific and unique set of community ties. It is the intent of this program that the Advisory Council be comprised of a diverse grouping, strategically selected to provide this project an influential team. All areas of advertising are represented: television, radio, and print. The racial, gender and age compilation was created to encourage debate amongst members which will promote progress within the program. The demographic breakdown is 14% African American, 57% female, with an age span from 30 to 80. The intent is to recruit one more African American and two Hispanic representatives. As the the Advisory Council grows and becomes more diverse it will develop a solid understanding of community need and recognition of its role in the proposed direction of RSVP.

Additional efforts for recruitment will be Public Service Announcements on radio and public television. BlogTalk Radio will be used and posted to educate on the purpose and objectives of RSVP. This platform will allow volunteers to be interviewed and share stories to inspire philanthropic participation.

Branding of the program will come through corporate partnerships highlighting volunteer

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opportunities via mailed customer bills / statements. A marketing dossier will provide a complete overview of the program, allowing for a succinct understanding or explanation by all who read it. The dossier alone could be used to propel the branding throughout the local business community even in the absence of the Project Director's personal presentation. Corporate partnerships will allow for recruitment of employees and garner presence on non-traditional websites. These partnerships reveal the corporations' validation and endorsement of the program and will offer the Project Director multiple forums to speak and promote.

Because the aim is to diversify the volunteer pool, the continued assessment of stations will assure all populations placed are engaged. Understanding that different people feel engaged in different ways, it will be necessary for the Project Director to monitor the effectiveness of each station and the quality and quantity of the direct impact available. If a station is not affording the level of contact needed to maintain volunteer engagement it will either be improved or replaced. The engagement of a volunteer is closely tied to the level of training received at each station. Once a job description is reviewed and accepted by a volunteer the specific station training must be relevant. The Project Director will attend trainings to assure consistent and comprehensible instructions. The objective of the trainings should be discussed with each station so an agreement on presentation is formed. Administering post surveys to volunteers will be invaluable to help in this determination.

Every effort will be made to assure a high quality experience for volunteers through continued communication and appreciation. Volunteers will be offered enrichment opportunities that focus on building new skills and developing leadership potential while enhancing the quality of their own lives and the meaning of service to their community.

Recognition will have an individualized approach. Each volunteer serving will be recognized with a letter of celebration, a certificate of appreciation, and a small gift. Recognition letters and certificates will be printed in-house to maximize funds. Birthdays of volunteers will be occasions to personally recognize each volunteer for their service. Throughout the year recognition events will target focus areas of volunteers; the RSVP Advisory Council will be tasked to find cost effective ways to communicate appreciation of volunteers through these recognition events.

### **Program Management**

The program will be managed by the RSVP Project Director, Advisory Council Members, and Senior

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Friendship Centers' leadership. Input on volunteer recruitment training, recognition, goals, and outcomes will be gleaned from all components of the management team.

Management of volunteers will be accomplished through bi-monthly specific and personal communication via email or telephone. Through the bi-monthly conversations, Program staff will determine relevancy of station assigned job duties, volunteer satisfaction, and level of engagement. Outgoing communication will occur quarterly through distribution of the RSVP Newsletter. Keeping volunteers connected to the program will ensure continued affiliation. Periodic surveys will be administered to different segments of the volunteer pool to increase effectiveness of the Program.

Project Director will visit stations quarterly to gauge activities and their alliance with Program goals. If an issue is detected visits will become more frequent. Reinforcement of responsibilities from Program and station will take place during the visits. Stations can voice concerns and or discuss programmatic inconsistencies at this time. Staying in contact with a station will diminish the need to graduate.

Unfortunately graduation of a station can arise even with contact. Community needs change or the station could lose its ability to effect the RSVP desired outcome. In the event a station needs to be graduated, Program staff will contact volunteer to discover their desires. Once those desires are communicated implementation will take place and the decision will be made whether to remain with the graduated station or re-assignment. If a volunteer requests termination from RSVP a survey will be administered so Program staff can gain valuable insight from the volunteer's experience.

The organizational structure of Senior Friendship Centers offers a broad support scope. The fiscal department, led by a CFO and Controller, provide experienced tracking and reporting of financial and in-kind resources. Monthly reports are evaluated and distributed to assure compliance with policies and standards set forth in the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) funding guidelines.

Weekly communication will take place between SFC management and the RSVP Project Director to manage information and monitor progress. The RSVP Sarasota / Manatee Project Director will regularly meet with Advisory Council and sub-committees to emphasize the goals and assure the

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planned course is maintained.

### Organizational Capability

Since 1973, Senior Friendship Centers, Inc. has served seniors and their families throughout Southwest Florida. From day one, the heart of the mission has been "People Helping People," referring to the core of volunteers giving their time and talent to make a difference in the lives of others.

SFC has a rich history of engaging high level volunteers, such as the nationally recognized and modeled medical clinics staffed and operated by volunteer retired physicians, nurses, dentists, and other medical professionals. This program successfully lobbied to change State law to allow retired medical professionals to practice with limited license under the county health departments in Florida. The limited license allows for quicker approval to serve the indigent population in Florida.

Senior Friendship Centers, Inc. currently manages another RSVP in Lee County, Florida.

### Key Staff-

LeeAnn Alexander, Program Assistant, is accomplished as a professional artist. Her abilities provide the creativity required to effectively produce the marketing materials and volunteer communications.

Jerri M. Sutton, RSVP Director, has worked in corporate America as well as the nonprofit sector. She has been a Recruitment Manager as well as a classroom instructor. Most recently as an Administrative Site Director for a Supplemental Education organization, she extensively enhanced personnel management skills. Through personal philanthropic experiences she has worked to increase the graduation rate among minority students (secondary and post-secondary). She has served as Co-Chair for Multicultural Advisory Council and board member of The Thurston Group (scholarship organization). She has written a diversity curriculum, been the speaker at many Washington State diversity trainings, and is a certified First Aid CPR/ AED and Yoga instructor.

Tricia Keelan, Director of Operations, has exercised her skills in the nonprofit arena working with the homeless, and now with SFC for seven years. As the agency's supervisor of RSVP and AmeriCorps she has responsibility of monitoring compliancy of governmental grant programs. She currently serves

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on Sarasota Memorial Hospital's Senior Advisory Committee and United Way's Local FEMA/EFSP Board.

Erin McLeod, Senior Vice President, holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Florida in Communications. She has been with Senior Friendship Centers for more than 9 years and oversees many of the day-to-day operations including Human Resources, Fund Development, Health/Dental Services and Communications/PR. Her diverse administrative background includes corporate, communications and nonprofit management. She holds board and advisory positions in several regional and community-based organizations.

David Blehar, Chief Financial Officer, holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Finance from the University of South Florida and has been with Senior Friendship Centers for more than 20 years. He oversees all fiscal and government-funded operational programs for the organization, assuring compliancy and sustainability.

Robert Carter, CEO, is a recognized leader and advocate for older adults. He is past President of the Florida Council of Aging and served as a Delegate to the President's White House Conference on Aging. He has served as President of the Florida Association of Aging Service Providers, President of the Sarasota County Aging Network, Initial Chairman of the Sarasota County Seniors Advisory Council, and President of the Glasser / Schoenbaum Human Services Center. He holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Suffolk University in Boston and has lead Senior Friendship Centers since 1987.

SFC places a major emphasis on cost-effectiveness and program efficiency without the loss of quality. General administrative management positions are combined to support the multi-county areas in which work is done including Executive, Fiscal, Human Resources, Resource Development, and IT departments. Members of these departments have significant experience with state and federal grantor agencies. This includes the President / Chief Executive Officer - 26 years, Senior Vice President - 9 years, Chief Financial Officer - 20 years, and Controller - 17 years.

RSVP offices are housed on the main campus of Senior Friendship Centers in Sarasota. The office is strategically located mid-way between the farthest South portion (North Port) and the farthest North

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portion (Parrish) of the project service area.

Organizational policies, procedures, job descriptions, staff roles, and management oversight are all in place to ensure federal resources will be managed and used according to guidelines provided by CNCS.

### Other

N/A

### PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A