

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

United Way of Porter County is a nonprofit 501(c)3 corporation, serving Northwest Indiana for 57 years. Our mission is to lead, unite and inspire our community to improve lives! We are proposing to recruit, train and place 300 RSVP volunteers in Lake, LaPorte and Starke Counties in Northwest Indiana. For the fiscal year 4/1/15 - 3/31/16, the CNCS federal investment of \$105,000.00 will be supplemented by \$31,500.00, a 30% match. Our primary focus area will be Healthy Futures with the objective of Aging in Place. We will specifically focus on transportation, food delivery, and companionship. Our other community priorities will be Education, Veterans and Military Families, Economic Opportunity and Disaster Services. Within our other community needs, we will focus on K-12 success, other education (early childhood development, and helping young families), financial literacy, services to support veterans and military families, and disaster assistance through training and outreach. We will place volunteers in other focus areas and Capacity Building at our RSVP stations, as well as CNCS supported organizations. The volunteers will assist with garnering donations and food pantry support/collections. We anticipate 4,500 meals delivered to older adults and persons with disabilities, 1,000 older adults will increase their social ties in the community, 1000 veterans and their families will received services, 1000 income tax forms will be filed, 250 students will receive tutoring and mentoring, 500 pre-school students will show improvement in social and emotional development and readiness for school, 150 Disaster kits will be assembled and 150 community members will be trained in disaster preparedness by the end of our 3-year grant cycle.

## Strengthening Communities

RSVP volunteers have and will continue to strengthen the communities in Northwest Indiana by providing service activities in the primary focus area of Healthy Futures: Aging in Place, as well as the community needs of: Education, Veterans and Military Families, Economic Opportunity, Disaster Services and Capacity Building. The geographic area served covers Lake, LaPorte and Starke Counties in NW Indiana.

The combined total population of these counties is 630,934. One in every eight Hoosier lives in Northwest Indiana (the Region). We are a racially and culturally diverse region according to the US Census. The Region has a 38% minority population: 22 % African American, 14% Hispanic, 1 % Asian American, and 1% of other ethnicity. In the Region, 45,393 veterans live within Lake, LaPorte and Starke Counties, which is 10% of all veterans in the state of Indiana. (Source; STATS Indiana, U.S. Census)

## Narratives

Due to the large geographical area of the counties served, the Region has a very large urban core which contrasts with a rural population of 40.6 %. (Source U.S. Census)

The NW Indiana region has a severe risk of flooding and weather-related risks. In 2008, Lake and LaPorte Counties sustained over \$15 million worth of damage to local businesses and homes due to a major flood. The winter of 2013/2014 was the third worst winter in NW Indiana history since the 1950's due to the effects from the polar vortex. The polar vortex brought arctic wind chills as low as negative 40 degrees. In February of 2011, we received the third largest snow fall in Chicagoland history at 21.2 inches in two days. Also, according to the 2015 edition of the Farmer's Almanac, the coldest winter weather will be found from the Northern Plains to the Great Lakes, with temperatures that could drop to 40 below during the coldest outbreaks: the final weeks of January into beginning of February. (Source; LARRI report, WBEZ 91.5 online report, and National Weather Service data)

The population of residents who are 45 to 64 years of age is 172,406, which is 26.5% of the state total. The population of residents ages 65 and older is 88,408 which is 13.6% of the state total. LaPorte County has the second largest senior population in the state of Indiana. Currently, 23,140 of our seniors who are over the age of 65 are considered homebound or disabled. By 2015 that number is predicted to grow by 1,500. By 2030, it will nearly double in size in Northwest Indiana alone. (Source; Personal Assistance Service, STATS Indiana, U.S. Census.)

Since 2010 in Northwest Indiana, the ranking of the services provided to older adults over 60 has dropped 7%. Information about community services provided to this population has dropped from 58% to 47% in the past three years.

The most common mental health issue for seniors in 2013 was feeling bored, depressed and lonely or isolated, 33 % experience this feeling. There is a definite lack of transportation for seniors in Northwest Indiana which adds to the feeling of isolation, with 57% of our senior population grading their ease of travel poor. (Source; CASOA)

The health outcomes ranking of Northwest Indiana (meaning how long people live and how healthy people feel while alive) is 79 out of 92 counties, with Starke County showing our lowest ranking at 88 out 92 counties. In these counties our senior population cited major problems with Arthritis, Diabetes and Heart Disease. During the months of June and July 2014, over 4,350 Northwest Indiana residents were on the wait list for in-home services. (Source; IndianaIndicators.org, Northwest Community Action In-Home Services Stats and CASOA)

According to the 2013 Community Assessment Survey for Older Adults, 61% of our seniors in Northwest Indiana provide care to someone in their community. Drawing upon this larger senior

## Narratives

population, we plan to recruit 300 volunteers who will share their skills, education and lifetime of experience to help strengthen their community by:

Assisting the homebound, elderly or disabled receive food, transportation, or other services that allow them to live independently

Helping caregivers of homebound, elderly or disabled individuals receive respite services that will increase their social support.

Increasing education for young mothers and care for infants.

Improving student (adult and youth) attendance, academic engagement and increasing the number of students, who are acquiring a GED.

Assisting with VITA and increasing the number of economically disadvantaged individuals receiving financial literacy services.

Assisting our veterans and military families through transportation, community-based activities and access to services.

Being trained to assist during a natural or manmade disaster and assemble the tools to help others.

Recruiting volunteers, collecting food and assisting local food pantries with their services in their communities.

All volunteer activities cover our primary focus area of Healthy Futures: Aging in Place and the community needs of: Education, Veterans and Military Families, Economic Opportunity, Disaster Services and Capacity Building. With CNCS outcomes for Healthy Futures: Aging in Place, Education: K-12 success, and Capacity Building and Leverage.

We plan to place 90 unduplicated volunteers to assist with our Primary Focus Area, Aging in Place. These 90 RSVP volunteers will help with transportation, companionship and respite care and food delivery for the elderly, homebound and disabled in NW Indiana. Another 120 unduplicated RSVP volunteers will assist with our community needs of: Education, Veterans and Military Families, Economic Opportunity, and Disaster Services. These 120 RSVP volunteers will help with: the VITA program, early childhood development, assisting young family education, mentoring programs of academic achievement, assisting veterans with transportation, serving our veterans and military families through other community outreach, training in disaster preparedness and first aid, and by creating disaster kits. The rest of our unduplicated volunteers will assist in capacity building and leverage by recruiting new volunteers, by garnering donations of food and community need items, and through food pantry support.

Our program has an advisory group which is composed of representative nonprofit organizations and

## **Narratives**

businesses representing all three counties. The group will be involved in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the RSVP program. United Way of Porter County (UWPC) has strong community partnerships that include nonprofit providers, faith-based groups, healthcare providers, educational institutions, media outlets, business and corporate leaders, governmental entities, and voluntary organizations. UWPC has a history of mobilizing resources to meet critical needs, including volunteers, materials, and financial resources.

UWPC plays a leadership role in many community coalitions including: the Coalition for Affordable Housing, the Veteran Services Coalition, the NWI COAD, and Empower Substance Abuse Initiative. UWPC also plays a leadership role in programming such as United for Children, AmeriCorps and the Hardest Hit Fund. UWPC partner organizations are selected on the basis of services and programs that meet community needs, past performance, fiscal responsibility, and capacity to provide meaningful volunteer opportunities with supervisory support in our target areas. Roles and responsibilities are defined in a memorandum of understanding.

United Way of Porter County is also a recipient of other grants such as AmeriCorps, Hardest Hit Fund, and a Kindergarten Readiness Grant from IAUW and has the staff experience to fulfill the performance measures and terms of this grant.

RSVP will enhance the capacity of community organizations and institutions through various trainings for the volunteers. Training will include Volunteer Management training, consisting of 6 modules: Planning, Recruitment, Retention, Supervision, Integrating Senior Services into Volunteerism, and Orientation. RSVP will continue its relationship with AmeriCorps of United Way of Porter County through joint services projects; such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day, September 11th Day of Service, and Mayor's Day of Recognition, community disaster drills and other social/educational activities.

We will continue to utilize local multi-media websites throughout all three counties, public presentations, and a quarterly newsletter which reaches 6000+ residents in Northwest Indiana.

### **Recruitment and Development**

The combined total population of Lake, LaPorte and Starke Counties is 630,934. One in every eight Hoosier lives in NW Indiana. We are a racially and culturally diverse region, according to the US Census. We have a 38% minority population: 22% African American, 14% Hispanic, 1% Asian American, and 1% of other ethnicity. There are 45,393 veterans living within Lake, LaPorte and Starke Counties, which is 10% of all veterans in the state of Indiana. Just over 50% of our residents are female. Our population of residents who are 45 to 64 years of age is 172,406, which is 26.5% of the

## **Narratives**

state total. The population of residents ages 65 and older is 88,408 which is 13.6% of the state total. LaPorte County has the second largest senior population in the state of Indiana. (STATS Indiana, U.S. Census) Pulling from this larger senior population, we plan to recruit 300 volunteers.

The recruitment process will begin with presentations at public meetings, social group affiliations, retirement group meetings, and a variety of other means to find the right volunteers to fill our primary and other community needs. All forms of social media such as website information and multi-media outreach will also be utilized. Each volunteer will fill out a volunteer application and be interviewed by the RSVP Director or staff. Past experience, willingness to be trained, and proximity to Primary Focus Area or other community need station will be taken into account before placement. After the volunteer is placed at a station, they will be trained on how to report back to RSVP on the outcomes of the program as well as receive any additional training from the Station Supervisor. In the case of a volunteer with a disability, alternate stay-at-home volunteer assignments have been established to allow the volunteer to participate in the program. All stay at home assignments will fit within the CNCS community need or capacity-building guidelines.

United Way of Porter County sponsors the Regional Volunteer Center (RVC) of NW Indiana and has access to other non-profits which are outside of our primary focus and community need areas. If a volunteer is not suited for the program or their volunteer need does not fit into our primary focus areas or if they cannot assist with capacity building, they will be placed with a RVC agency.

Each RSVP Volunteer will be subject to review on an as needed basis. Each volunteer will receive an evaluation yearly from their station manager based on specific position characteristics. If there are any problems or concerns voiced by the Station Supervisor or the RSVP volunteer, the RSVP Coordinator will schedule a meeting to resolve any issues as soon as possible. After completion of the application/interview process, all volunteers will receive a welcome packet containing the RSVP guide book, a recent copy of the Newsletter, two reporting sheets, program brochure, and a RSVP membership lapel pin. The volunteer will also receive a RSVP uniform, consisting of a program t-shirt or sweatshirt. In recognition, all RSVP Volunteer and station supervisors will be invited to an annual Volunteer Appreciation Lunch and Awards Ceremony, and quarterly social and education events.

### **Program Management**

All Stations will have a signed MOU, Volunteer Safety Form and Volunteer Assignments with RSVP that will be renewed each grant cycle. Stations will have volunteer assignment descriptions that fit with the Primary Focus Area or other Community needs. Capacity Building volunteer descriptions will be allowed but only on an as-needed basis. Bi-annual visits and volunteer safety check at the RSVP

## **Narratives**

Station will be conducted by the RSVP Director. These checks will insure that their services are within our primary focus area or community need; station supervisors understand their role and responsibilities regarding volunteers and reporting; and that the volunteers are provided relevant orientation and training on the volunteer assignment to which they are assigned.

Each station will be responsible for giving RSVP data needed for their volunteer job assignment, which will fit with either our primary focus area or community need. Resources such as surveys, standardized testing and other reporting tools will be provided by the RSVP Director or staff. Signed time sheets for the volunteers' hours and numbers served will be sent to RSVP on the second Monday of each month.

If a station is found not in compliance with our primary focus area/community need, or is delinquent with reporting sheets, they will receive a written warning from the RSVP Director and instructions how to correct to avoid termination. If the station doesn't become compliant within 30 days of the warning, they will be graduated from the RSVP station roster and current RSVP volunteers will be removed from the station in question. They will receive a letter explaining their removal from RSVP and will be able to reapply after year probation; with documentation they have corrected outstanding issues.

\*All above statements will be covered in the signed MOU between station supervisor and the RSVP Director.

We have an Advisory group formed that is composed of representatives of nonprofit organizations and businesses for all three counties. They will be involved in the planning and implementation and monitoring of the RSVP program. United Way has strong community partnerships that includes nonprofit providers, faith-based groups, healthcare providers, educational institutions, media outlets, business and corporate leaders, governmental entities, and voluntary organizations. We have a history of mobilizing resources to meet critical needs, including volunteers, materials, and financial resources.

### **Organizational Capability**

Primary Contact: Sharon A. Kish, President, ([sharonk@unitedwaypc.org](mailto:sharonk@unitedwaypc.org)) with 37 years of non-profit management experience will act as administrator for the grant. Secondary contacts: Michael Glorioso ([michael@unitedwaypc.org](mailto:michael@unitedwaypc.org)) with over 5 year of non-profit program management experience will be responsible for the overall operational management of the RSVP grant, and Dawn Thostesen, Finance Manager ([dawn@unitedwaypc.org](mailto:dawn@unitedwaypc.org)) will coordinate all accounting needs.

Administrator of Federal Funds: United Way of Porter County has been the sponsor of an AmeriCorps program for the past 8 years. We started with 10 members in 2007/08, primarily placed

## **Narratives**

in Porter County. This current program year, we have 53 members who are serving in sites throughout Northwest Indiana. We are also grant recipients of the Hardest Hit program for Lake, LaPorte, and Starke Counties.

Organizational Background: United Way of Porter County was incorporated in 1957. In our 57 years of operations, we have raised and distributed over \$65 million dollars for health and human services. We currently fund 38 health and human service organizations. A 40-member volunteer Board of Directors sets policy and provides oversight. United Way conducts and prioritizes community needs assessments, develops the necessary resources to fund the community safety net, provides fiscal oversight and accountability, and evaluates program results. The work of United Way as a community-building leader has prepared us to manage the RSVP grant. Our Regional United Way Volunteer Center, serves seven counties in NW Indiana, including Lake, Porter, LaPorte and Starke Counties. Through this Center there have been over 10,000 volunteer referrals made to the agencies. We host the Day of Caring, the Youth Day of Caring, the Reading Buddies program, the Power of Youth program and the Young Leaders United Affinity Group, along with Disaster Response as needed. United Way of Porter County has demonstrated our ability to recruit and support a diverse group of volunteers. The work of United Way as a community-building leader has prepared it to manage the RSVP grant. The administrative, fiscal and programmatic expertise is established and proven.

### **Other**

United Way of Porter County is currently administering an RSVP grant for Lake, LaPorte, and Starke Counties in NW Indiana. We were originally asked to be the interim sponsor of this RSVP grant in 2011 when another organization relinquished the program. Currently, we have 200 RSVP volunteers actively serving throughout those counties. In our first year our volunteers served 67,052 men, women and children in those areas and put in 10,597 hours of service at RSVP Stations. RSVP volunteers have helped show an improvement in the clients they serve. According to a recent client survey, 75% of the Meals on Wheels clients served by our RSVP volunteers have reported they now received regularly scheduled meals and 83% have reported that they feel less lonely and have developed close ties to more people because of the RSVP volunteers' service. Also, our current RSVP Stations have reported a 91% satisfaction rating with their RSVP volunteers.

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

N/A