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Executive Summary

NAME: Marshall County Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, Inc.

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS: 400

FEDERAL GRANT AMOUNT: \$157,500 NON-FEDERAL RESOURCES: \$71,026

PRIMARY FOCUS AREA AND ANTICIPATED OUTCOME: EDUCATION

Marshall County RSVP will place 101 volunteers as Reading Buddies in all 12 elementary schools in our county working one-on-one with Kindergartner through Fourth grade students to help improve their academic performance. In 2013, 21% of Kindergartners, 24% of First graders and 20% of Second graders were classified as below grade level readers. 54.4% of children enrolled in Marshall County schools are eligible for either free or reduced lunches.

25% of our volunteers will work under this outcome work plan. Evaluation of the anticipated 101 students who complete the program based on pre- and post- evaluations for each child, RSVP's anticipated Outcome will be 90 students will show improvement in their reading skills.

To eliminate the summer reading loss, RSVP will partner with the 5 public libraries in the county to continue one-on-one reading in a unique way using our certified Therapy Dog teams. Once a week children will read library books to the dogs as part of "Dog Tales".

SERVICE ACTIVITIES: 48% of our volunteers will work in Other Focus Areas and 27% will work on local community priorities. Some examples are:

*ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY - Tax Counseling -- 48 Internal Revenue Service trained volunteers will prepare 1,500 federal and state tax returns for free for rural, elderly, low income and limited English taxpayers this year saving them over \$125,000 in tax preparation costs, freeing that money to be used for other family needs such as food, housing, utilities, medicine, etc.

- Job training and skill development -- 25 RSVP volunteers will provide 3,500 hours this year teaching over 50 computer classes to 200 economically disadvantaged individuals. 90% of the participants will self-report greater computer awareness and new job skills learned.

*ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP -- Improving Waterways - 43 Environmental Protection Agency trained water quality monitors will collect over 2,500 water quality data samples on 54 stream sites and 5 embayments during the year. Thus, 250 miles of waterways will be improved.

- Cartridge Recycling -- 4 RSVP volunteers will work with 25 community partners to collect recycle empty printer cartridges, keeping a ton of materials out of landfills and recovering 600 gallons of oil

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by reusing the empty cartridges.

*HEALTHY FUTURES -- Aging in Place -- 57 RSVP volunteers will provide 57 low income elderly living alone with food delivery, transportation and companionship allowing them to live independently in their own homes.

*VETERANS -- 3 RSVP volunteers will provide 1-on-1 Alabama Career Center Job Link computer help for 50 veterans to allow them to do on-line job searches and post resumes. 2 volunteers will drive the DAV van for veterans 80 miles to the VA Hospital for appointments. 5 volunteers will work with support groups for 50 veterans and family members.

Strengthening Communities

The Marshall County RSVP has been coordinating senior volunteers for 42 years (1972-2014) in a small rural county (567 square miles) nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains of North Alabama. 48% of its population of 93,019 is divided among four small towns and 52% live in rural areas. The average number of persons per household is 2.63. Six percent of the population is minority with 12.8 percent Hispanic or Latino. Eleven percent reported a language other than English is spoken at home. Our nearest metro area is Huntsville, Alabama 40 miles to the northwest in Madison County. The RSVP office is located in Guntersville, the county seat of Marshall County, known environmentally as a mountain-lakes region with a 41,000-acre recreational lake.

Marshall County benefits from its proximity to the high-tech center of Huntsville with its predominance of aerospace, computer and other technology-based industries in and around the city. The county's median household income is \$38,649, about \$1,000 less than the state average, with a per capita income of \$19,241, but 23.2% of people in Marshall County live below the poverty level.

Until the middle of the 20th century, farming was the main occupation among Marshall County residents, and the staple crops were cotton and corn. With the completion of the Guntersville Dam built by the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1939, the county moved from an agrarian economy to a more industrial economy. The dam made Guntersville the southernmost port of the Tennessee River navigation system, allowing the shipping industry to flourish and forever altering modes of transportation. It also made the area a desirable destination for recreational opportunities, especially camping, boating and fishing.

Even though the dam brought with it a navigable river, it split the county in half. The Tennessee River comes into the county from the northeast flows to the middle of the county turns and flows out of the county to the northwest, virtually splitting the county in half and there is only one bridge to cross the river in the whole county which makes access to services difficult.

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Guntersville has gained a reputation as a retirement community, attracting seniors from all over the country with its scenic lake property and convenience to Huntsville. The county population aged 55 and over is 27.5 percent. With retirees being drawn from across the country combined with those settling here from the high-tech industries in Huntsville, Guntersville has a multi-skilled population base from which to draw volunteers. Marshall County RSVP has 400 active volunteers in its database.

To meet our most pressing need in Marshall County, RSVP has chosen EDUCATION (ED2) as our primary focus area with one-quarter of our volunteers (101 volunteers), as Reading Buddies in all 12 elementary schools in the county to help disadvantaged students improve their academic performance.

Last year, 69 per cent of 4th graders ranked below proficiency in reading, according to the Kids Count Data Center. In Marshall County alone, 21.5 percent of kindergarteners through 2nd graders are classified as low readers. A contributing factor to poor test scores is poverty (23.2% of the total county's population). Children in poverty reflect an even higher percentage. County records show that about half of all students in Marshall County schools qualify for free lunches. Two schools where RSVP provides Reading Buddies report at least 70 percent of their students are eligible for free lunches. Two other schools have student populations that are 45 percent Hispanic, forcing cash-strapped schools to deal with early education demands compounded by nearly half of their students being limited-English speakers or having no English at all.

Marshall County has experienced transformative population shifts that began in the early 1990s. Immigrant workers from Central America have migrated to our county by the thousands to work in the large poultry processing industry. The children of this relatively new, hard-working population have had an enormous impact on the county and city school systems.

Over the past decade, due to the growth of the poultry industry, an estimated 5,000+ Hispanic or Latino families are now living in Marshall County. These families have no English or limited English and low literacy skills. With more than 21% of children under the age of 20 in the county, this has had a major impact on the reading scores in county schools. The classroom teachers have a need for one-on-one help for these low level readers.

The Reading Buddy program, which is 23 years old, brings together the two populations - retirees and struggling students - in an effort to bridge the gap created by poverty and educational needs. Retirees bring skills, experience, time and the willingness to serve in the community into schools

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where teachers are overwhelmed with crowded classrooms and have little time to provide individual help. With the availability of Reading Buddies, teachers can identify students having below grade level reading skills and partner them with a buddy. RSVP's team of volunteer Reading Buddies will serve 101 economically disadvantaged and special needs students. School personnel will make a diligent effort to include students who do not get one-on-one attention at home, such as single-parent homes due to death, divorce or incarceration. The individual attention they will receive from working with a senior Reading Buddy is intended to replace some of what may be missing at home, in addition to improving their literacy and social development skills. Reading Buddies instill the joy of reading into the lives of children and serve as positive role models for social development skills.

As the child benefits, so does the volunteer. Studies have shown that volunteering helps people who donate their time feel more socially connected, thus warding off loneliness and depression. A growing body of evidence (Dulin and Hill, 2003; Brown et al., 2005; Brown et al., 2003; Liang et al., 2001; Morrow-Howell et al., 2003; Midlarsky and Kahana, 1994; and Schwartz et al., 2003) suggests that people who give their time to others might also be rewarded with better physical health, including lower blood pressure and a longer lifespan. On a local level, Reading Buddies frequently are retired teachers or school personnel who miss the connection to the education system. They are grateful for an avenue back into the classroom and to work with children, especially those who are disadvantaged or neglected. One RSVP Reading Buddy is Hispanic and bilingual. Teachers place her with students whose first language is Spanish so that they are more comfortable and open up more readily to tutoring.

Once paired, the volunteer and the student work in a designated area outside of the classroom but remain in sight of school personnel. They spend a minimum of 30 minutes per week from September through May focusing on the child's reading. Students select a book on their reading level from the school library and bring it to read to their Buddy. The Buddy provides a consistent, caring adult who comes to be with them each week. This is something that is missing in so many of these children's lives.

Orientation meetings are scheduled at the beginning of every school year. These sessions are designed to train Reading Buddies in the proper way to read with a child. Simple instructions explain that the student reads aloud to the Reading Buddy, who is paying close attention to pronunciation. When the student stumbles over a word, they stop and sound it out. The volunteer frequently asks questions about the story to ensure the student comprehends what he/she is reading. This process is repeated weekly throughout the school year with a goal of the student reaching grade level for

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reading, guaranteeing that he/she will start the next year better prepared for success.

Every May, just before the end of the school year, RSVP hosts a luncheon to recognize volunteers who completed participation in the Reading Buddy program. During this event, volunteers are asked to complete an evaluation form they were given at the beginning of the year to measure progress made by the student during a year of tutoring. The evaluation requires volunteers to rate the child's abilities at the beginning of the year and to determine whether/how much they improved by the end of the school year.

The evaluation, which was approved by school reading specialists, is the data collection tool Marshall County RSVP uses to measure outputs and outcomes. It is divided into two sections: Social Development and Reading Skills. Reading Buddies are asked to rate each one from 1 - 5 with "1" being "not at all" and "5" being "most of the time." Questions involve whether the student makes eye contact, initiates conversation, demonstrates self-confidence, motivation, feelings of self-worth and speaks positively of themselves. Questions about Reading Skills focused on whether the student knows to read left to right, recognizes frequently used words, knows beginning consonants, pauses at commas and stops at periods.

The evaluation also queries whether the student's overall reading ability improved and whether the reading level increased, and it provides space for additional comments from volunteers. The goal is that at least 90 percent of students who completed participation in the program will demonstrate improved academic performance in literacy.

Results from the evaluations of the 2012-13 school year showed that 87 percent of students with a Reading Buddy showed improvement in both Social Development skills while 99 percent saw improvement in Reading Skills.

All young people experience learning losses when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer. Research spanning 100 years shows that students typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer vacation than they do on the same tests at the beginning of the summer (White, 1906; Heyns, 1978; Entwisle & Alexander 1992; Cooper, 1996; Downey et al, 2004). Low-income students lose more than two months in reading achievement. (Cooper, 1996).

To avoid the common loss of learning during the months when school is out, RSVP operates summer programs using volunteers. RSVP partners with all five public libraries in the county for their summer reading programs. Each year a team of volunteer puppeteers write a script based on old folk tales to align with that year's summer reading program theme and produce a puppet show with music and interactive learning experiences. Reading specialists informed us that most below-grade

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level readers are not read to at home. These children have never heard fairy tales and folk legends, so RSVP puppeteers offer a free creative reading experience for children who otherwise might spend the time in front of a television. After the show each library puts out a display of books with fairy and folk tales for the children to check-out and take home to read as part of the summer reading program.

Another team of volunteers from the Dog Therapy program offer "Dog Tales," in which they take certified pets to local libraries where children spend one afternoon a week for 6-8 weeks reading to dogs. This has proven to be a great program for below grade level readers. Dogs do not correct the students, but just sit and listen (or snooze) while the child reads them a book and shows them the pictures. The children actually run to their favorite dog when they come in, to read to them first. This has been especially successful with special needs children, such as children in the autism spectrum.

To become a part of the Dog Therapy team, dog/handler teams must complete the following steps under the supervision of the Therapy Dog trainer:

- * Handlers must attend a training course to learn about special needs, interaction, health and safety, and confidentiality.
- * Dogs must pass a health screening by the animal's regular veterinarian, have immunizations as required by state law and be free from parasites, disease, infections and illnesses.
- * Dog/handler teams must pass a skills test which shows whether the animal can be controlled by the handler and follow basic commands.
- * Dog/handler teams will be observed on three visits to a facility to determine if dog and handler have the ability, capacity, desire, and potential for participating in dog therapy.

Finally, volunteers also aid in a summer program for disadvantaged students in kindergarten through 6th grades at Marshall County's most rural school, using a theme that keeps the brain and body active during months off from school.

Our primary education focus output will serve 101 disadvantaged students in Marshall County and lead to improved academic performance in literacy for at least 90 students per year, as part of the CNCS National Performance Measure outcome ED5. Volunteers will commit approximately 3,200 hours during the year. 25% of our RSVP volunteers are serving in this outcome work plan (15% more than the minimum of 10%). Reading Buddy sign-in books will support data collection for output, the number of students completing the programs, and pre/post evaluations will document the outcomes.

OTHER FOCUS AREAS

RSVP's placement of 48% of our volunteers into other focus area work plans are based on

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community needs in Marshall County. Drawing on our volunteer strength of retirees with technical skills, RSVP has chosen two Economic Opportunity Work Plans.

*** ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY - Need for Financial Literacy - free volunteer tax preparation and electronic filing in Marshall County. 23.2% of Marshall County's population is below poverty and 27.5% are elderly. According to the Marshall County Department of Human Resources, the county's economically disadvantaged low income, minority, disabled and elderly residents do not receive the tax refund they are due because they fail to file. Some of the reasons for this failure to file are lack of income, inability to pay a preparer, fear of the system and inability to understand the tax forms.

48 RSVP volunteers will be certified by the Internal Revenue Service and the Alabama Department of Revenue to assist these taxpayers with free tax preparation and electronic filing. Volunteers will train for 36 hours and serve approx. 1.5 days per week for a period of 12 weeks from the end of January to April 15 (approximately 5,000 hours). Five local city governments will provide "tax office" space during the tax season as an in-kind contribution to the program. In addition to walk-in service at the local sites, volunteers will be available by appoint to make home visits to shut-ins, nursing homes, hospice and assisted living. RSVP's program is the only IRS program in a nearly 150 mile radius to be available to do prior year returns for IRS during non-tax season. We serve taxpayers from Tennessee, Georgia and all over Alabama referred to us by the IRS.

Our economic opportunity focus output (O1) will serve 1,500 disadvantaged individuals in Marshall County per year, as part of the CNCS National Performance Measure output. Daily tax site logs of filing type of return, electronic or paper return, number in household and current or prior year return will support the data collection.

*** ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY - Need Employment. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Marshall County, Alabama's unemployment rate is 7.9%, Iraq/Afghanistan returning Veterans rate is 12.1%, and Veterans age 18-24 is 30% where their peer rate is 17.6%. Many individuals want to become computer literate and gain job skills, but often have trouble finding suitable training that is affordable and geared to adult learners, especially learners who have no prior computer or typing experience, nor access to a computer at home.

RSVP's Community Technology Center offers open lab time and computer classes to support the needs of economically disadvantaged adult learners. 25 RSVP volunteers will manage the lab, schedule classes and secure instructors for at least 10 classes each quarter, maintain the computers each Monday morning, run to PC Users groups once a month, develop curriculum, select class books

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and maintain class evaluation database (approximately 3,500 hours per year).

Class prices are based on cost recovery to cover the cost of class materials making them affordable for low-income residents. Veterans and CWJC women (ladies who are trying to get their lives back on track after incarceration, drugs, etc.) are taught for free to help them gain job skills.

Our economic opportunity focus output (O2) will serve 200 disadvantaged individuals in Marshall County per year gain job training or other skill development, as part of the CNCS National Performance Measure output. Class attendance logs will support the data collection.

Because of our Mountain/lakes Environment and our desire to preserve it, RSVP has chosen two Environmental Stewardship Work Plans.

*** ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP Need for Improving Waterways in Marshall County. From the description of our mountain/lakes county with 41,000 acres in Guntersville lake and 250 miles of major creeks located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains of North Alabama, RSVP volunteers want to protect their natural environment and the source of the county's drinking water. Because Marshall County is a small rural county it has no Environmental Education Center to serve as an umbrella for planning and integrating community resources into a cohesive environmental education and protection effort.

RSVP is also concerned about countless Pharmaceutical and Personal Care Products (PPCP) pollutants that are occurring as micro-contaminates in our water. The issue of proper disposal of unused and out-of-date prescription and over-the-counter drugs which are currently being flushed down the toilet which effects our water supply or placed in household garbage which will eventually end up in landfills and contaminate ground water.

To address our water quality issues, RSVP will train 43 volunteers in partnership with Alabama Water Watch (AWW). They will receive 6 hours of a basic chemical certification course to maintain Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) protocol. Fifteen stream teams composed of 2 to 4 volunteers will monitor 45 stream sites monthly for at least 10 months per year for 6 chemical parameters. Five embayment teams will go by boat to five locations on the lake at least 5 times a year during the summer months. Data collected will be shared with the Tennessee Valley Authority, Alabama Department of Environment Management and Auburn University.

Once a year in partnership with the Marshall County District Attorney, DEU and all county police departments, RSVP will conduct an education campaign and "Medicine Roundup" to give citizens a place to dispose of unused or out-of-date medicines so they will not end up in local waterways and

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contaminate ground water. The District Attorney is responsible for incineration of these drugs to safely dispose of them. Due to national law the District Attorney's office is the only agency allowed to support the roundup, because of the chain of command necessary for unused narcotics brought to the roundup.

Our environmental stewardship focus output (EN5) will improve water quality for 250 miles of waterways in Marshall County per year, as part of the CNCS National Performance Measure output. Volunteers will spend approximately 1,700 hours per year. Alabama Water Watch has developed a monthly survey instrument protocol for water quality assessment approved by the Environmental Protection Agency that will be used by volunteers to measure water quality.

*** ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP Need for recycling. 53% of the county's rural population does not have recycling pickup. According to Planet Green only one out of every 500 plastic copier and computer printer cartridge cases are recycled. 2.5 ounces of oil are used for every inkjet cartridge and 3.5 quarts of oil are used for every laser cartridge. Help is needed to conserve oil as a valuable natural resource - 2 quarts of oil is conserved for every laser cartridge recycled.

4 RSVP volunteers will contact local businesses and industry to form partnerships where partners recycle their empty cartridges with RSVP. Volunteer recycling teams will pick up empty cartridges from partners, pack and ship them to a recycling agent. Volunteers will spend approximately 200 hours per year.

Our environmental stewardship focus output (EN6) will collect and recycle one ton of printer cartridge cases in Marshall County per year, as part of the CNCS National Performance Measure output. RSVP collection logs will weigh cartridges, because the buyer receipts specific toner cartridges by the piece and not by weight, to measure and manage output.

Being a rural Southern project, volunteers have a strong sense of neighbor helping neighbor and RSVP has chosen two Work Plans to help homebound seniors and disabled and be prepared to help neighbors in times of disaster.

*** HEALTHY FUTURES Need Aging in Place for Homebound Seniors and Disabled Individuals. According to the US Census (2010) Marshall County, Alabama has a senior population of 28%. 37% of these seniors live alone and 23.2% live in poverty. Marshall County has no public transportation system making it hard for many elderly who are no longer able to drive to get to medical appointments, grocery stores and necessary errands.

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57 RSVP volunteers will provide 57 low income elderly individuals living alone with food delivery, transportation and companionship. RSVP volunteer will have contact with each client at least once a week for 16 weeks (approximately 1,000 hours). "Social Relationships and Mortality Risk", published in 2010 by Julianne Holt-Lunstad and others, indicates a 50% increased likelihood of survival for participants with stronger social relationships.

Our Healthy Futures focus output (H8) will help 57 individuals receive independent living services in Marshall County per year, as part of the CNCS National Performance Measure output. RSVP developed a Companionship/Assistance Log for volunteers to complete each day that they assist, indicating date, the client by code name, type of assistance and hours assisted.

*** DISASTER SERVICES Need Disaster Preparedness. Alabama ranks third in the nation in the number of tornado deaths and injuries with Marshall County being in the top 5 counties in Alabama for the number of destructive tornadoes. The national Weather Service reports that 180 trained storm spotters are needed to cover Marshall County's 567 square miles. Trained volunteers and citizens are needed to move from disaster preparedness to response when a tornado strikes out county.

4 RSVP volunteers will spend 240 hours being trained and educating 250 individuals of the general public in basic severe weather preparedness plans over a twelve month period. During Severe weather Week volunteers will set up information booths in high traffic public stores, hand out packets and talk with shoppers about safety rules. Volunteers will take weather spotters training from the National Weather Service and serve as storm spotters, the early warning system for Marshall County.

Our Disaster Services focus output (D1) will educate 250 individuals in Marshall County per year in disaster preparedness services, as part of the CNCS National Performance Measure output. Disaster Outreach Tracking Log will be used to track the number of individuals receiving disaster preparedness information and outreach.

Since Marshall County is rural many small staffed government agencies and nonprofits need strong volunteer support to meet their missions and RSVP is there to help.

*** COMMUNITY PRIORITIES Need 16 state, county, city, healthcare and nonprofit organizations in Marshall County provide needed social services to senior and low-income families.

RSVP will place 27% of our volunteers with these agencies. 112 RSVP volunteers will serve an average 3 hours per month, for 10 months totaling approx. 3,360 hours over the year providing direct service or support to include some of the following: conducting intakes with clients, working in day

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treatment facilities, assisting clients at the courthouse and in district court, community policing, scheduling tutoring sessions, tutoring English; teaching youth job skills; researching, compiling and distributing educational materials; staffing small public libraries; alleviating loneliness by visiting patients who have no family or visitors in health care facilities; conducting community outreach at fairs and senior centers, and coordinating public awareness events.

Our Community Priorities output (OT1) will reach 2,500 individuals in Marshall County per year with a variety of services, as part of the CNCS National Performance Measure output. Instruments will vary based on agency to track the number of individuals receiving services and outreach.

VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES

Experience shows that veterans and military families make ideal volunteers. At least 25 percent of Marshall County RSVP's Reading Buddies (primary focus area) are veterans or spouses of veterans. Half of RSVP's male volunteers are veterans. Marshall County is home 7,446 veterans.

*** VETERANS SERVED Need to support veterans in rural communities

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Marshall County, Alabama's unemployment rate is 7.9%, Iraq/Afghanistan returning veterans rate is 12.1% and Veterans age 18-24 is 30% where their peer rate is 17.6%. Due to financial cutbacks the Alabama Career Center, an arm of the State Employment Service, has had their staff reduced from 20 to 7 employees, which leaves no one available to help veterans with computers and job searches.

RSVP received a veteran's augmentation grant in 2012 to serve veterans in the area. To determine the needs of veterans, RSVP hosted a roundtable needs assessment by bringing together all the stakeholders in the county, including representatives from VFW, American Legion, Alabama National Guard, Alabama Department of Veteran Affairs, Disabled American Veterans, counselors with skills for dealing with PTSD and state employment officials, as well as our own retired military volunteers. RSVP polled these stakeholders to determine the biggest needs facing veterans and how we could partner to meet those needs. They identified the three most pressing needs and designed a program around them - The Number one need - re-entry into the work force.

RSVP partnered with the Alabama Career Center to place volunteers there to assist those who lack the computer skills to navigate online job sites and to upload a resumes for potential jobs.

Number two need - job and computer skills. RSVP's computer lab offers free computer classes to

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unemployed veterans and their family members, as well as one-on-one assistance creating resumes that help them transition their military skills into the private sector.

Number three need - support and counselling for veterans and families. RSVP has licensed counselors who made themselves available for 8 weeks and currently peer-to-peer groups aid returning veterans in their adjustment to civilian life.

10 RSVP volunteers will serve veterans as their primary job assignment others will serve as needed. 3 RSVP volunteers will take 8 hours of training in how to use the on-line Job Link services and be available to help the 1,500 Marshall County veterans who are currently registered to use the system. Our target is to serve 50 veterans over the year (approximately 360 hours during the year). 2 RSVP volunteers will drive the DAV van (approximately once a month for an average of ten hours each trip) to pick up 60 veterans and return them home from the VA Clinic or VA Hospital in Birmingham to doctor's visits (approximately 200 hours/year). 5 RSVP volunteers will spend 4 hours a month for 10 months working with 50 veterans and family support groups in VFW and DAV posts (approximately 200 hours per year).

Our Veterans output (V1) will reach 160 veterans in Marshall County per year with a variety of services, as part of the CNCS National Performance Measure output. Volunteers will spend approximately Career Center computer use activity log, DAV van scheduling trip log and VFW and DAV monthly logs will be used to track the number of veterans served.

In summary 25% (101 volunteers) are serving in our primary focus area, Education, and these 25% of unduplicated volunteers are serving in outcome work plan ED5. This is 15% more than the required minimum of 10%. 191 volunteers are serving in other Focus areas with Output measures only. 108 volunteers are serving to meet other Community Priorities.

Recruitment and Development

Volunteers are recruited from Marshall County's 24.5% 55 years and older population, from all towns and rural areas of the county (Albertville, Arab, Boaz, Douglas, Grant, Guntersville and Union Grove) to be placed on one of the numerous technical, educational, outreach and out-door team opportunities where they serve in their communities or on county-wide service projects to impact basic human needs across all focus areas and selected community priorities. The work plans have been designed to provide opportunities for people with disabilities, professionals, boomers, and limited-English speaking volunteers.

Marshall County is a retirement community with 40% of the households headed by a senior.

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RSVP recruits individuals who have lived in the South or have moved here from across the nation bringing with them a diversity of cultures and experience. Our best recruitment tools are volunteers who recruit others. Others are recruited via three local newspapers, local radio, recruitment teas, open house and activities offered at RSVP. Because NASA and the space industry are in the adjacent county, many engineers and related occupations retire to our mountain/lakes area. This is a challenge for us to find meaningful volunteer opportunities, but gives us tremendous leadership potential. RSVP volunteers have designed, man and maintain our senior computer lab, water watch and therapy dog programs. They form corps teams, support their own leadership, research needs, maintain equipment, schedule classes, testing and outreach visits. This type of corps teams allows for a high quality volunteer experience giving them the opportunity to create the meaning of their service experience for personal growth and a high retention rate. Our retention plan is to place volunteers correctly, train and recognize them.

At the initial interview, new volunteers complete an application, are screened on the National Sex Offenders database, receive orientation to RSVP and a Volunteer handbook from the staff. New volunteers fill out a volunteer form that includes a checklist of interests from which the recruit can choose. Based on this list of experiences, skills and hobbies, volunteers select and are assigned to a specific station of their choosing. Volunteer coordinators work carefully to match up the right volunteer to the right assignment. They discuss time commitments for some assignments, weekly or monthly, for others as needed.

One corps team is the Lifelong Learning Academy team. Because so many volunteers were coming to RSVP with teaching ability and skills to share, the Academy was formed to enhance the quality of life for students as well as teachers. Each quarter at least 10 learning opportunities are offered by the Academy to develop new skills ranging from health to history, from foreign language to sign language for elderly who lose hearing, FA/CPR to disaster readiness, music and art. These are in addition to the senior computer lab classes which range from basic to advanced. These trainings and technical assistance seminars are available to volunteers, volunteer stations, general public and our community partners.

Volunteer station supervisors and community participation groups are oriented to RSVP on a one-on-one basis, with on-going work station supervisor's teas or meetings once a year. Supervisors are called on to help develop impact work plans and for data collection. Advisory council has monthly meetings where they are trained as new issues come up with the federal grant. New council members have an orientation with the director and receive new member packets from the council.

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The Academy has proved successful in recruiting boomers who come to take a class, find out about RSVP through "Boomer Committee" designed recruitment brochures and then volunteer. It has allowed us to appeal to people nearing retirement by offering topics of interest to retirees that bring them to RSVP for a closer look, then take a brochure and join us after retirement.

RSVP partners provide up-to-the-minute information and training to their volunteers for personal growth and development. Leadership roles built into all work plans give volunteers management and supervisory opportunities to work with their peers which builds capacity for the partner by recruiting additional community volunteers for the agency. Our RSVP staff and volunteer station managers coordinate and supervise all volunteers and provide appropriate recognition of them at each step of the projects. Our media partners make it easy for us to provide instant recognition for a job well done by providing print media space to show pictures of volunteers 'Getting Things Done', as well as corps and annual volunteer recognitions, Facebook photos added weekly, Constant Contact (a weekly email newsletter) to over 800 seniors and our website. Constant Contact is used to recruit new volunteers and to quickly reach current volunteers when a community need arises. Recognition is on-going at RSVP. Notes are sent to individuals who are recognized by other groups, coffee and munchies are always available for volunteers who come to RSVP for Academy classes, for a training or just to drop in. Get Well cards, sympathy cards are sent to volunteers, calls are made to check on volunteers after surgery or accidents.

Reading Buddies, our primary focus, are trained during an orientation held at the school where they will be volunteering, each fall before Buddies meet for the first time. Program operations, such as signing in and out of the Reading Buddy book, how to read with a struggling child, how to report any issues the child discussed to the appropriate school staff member.

48% of our volunteers will be recruited and trained for other focus areas. Many volunteers receive specialized training such as 6 hour chemical training for Water Watch Volunteers, 36 hour training each year for tax volunteers, 8 hour training for therapy dog/handler teams, and 4 hour weather spotter training for disaster volunteers. Others receive job specific training on-site.

RSVP has designed work plans to work toward four of the objectives of the Corporation for National and Community Service's Strategic Plan 2011-2015:

* Increase the Impact of Service -- Disaster Response, Reading Buddies, Water Watch, Disposal of Unused and Out-of-date Medicines

* Volunteer Service for life-time learning -- Academy of Lifelong Learning, Citizen's Police Academy

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- * Evaluate Community Need and how we address it -- Tax Counseling, Therapy Dogs, Veterans, Recycling
- * Fortify management operations -- Computer lab

The 27% of our remaining volunteers will be placed in Community Priorities. RSVP plans to maintain an average of at least 250-300 out of 400 active volunteers in impact programming. The work plans have been designed to provide opportunities for people with disabilities who can volunteer from home if needed due to mobility or illness, professionals, boomers, and limited-English speaking volunteers. Our project demographics reflect the demographics of the senior population of the county with special emphasis on recruiting veterans. Half of our male volunteers are veterans.

Retention with RSVP is high because we try to make the best placement for the volunteer in the beginning, check with them early into the placement to make sure it is a good fit and recognize the volunteers for special work during the year with notes, media spotlight, photos on Facebook or Constant Contact and annually at our Volunteer Brunch. At the volunteer brunch volunteers who have at least 500 hours of service during the year are recognized with the President's Gold Award, those with 4,000 hours over their lifetime with RSVP are presented the President's Lifetime Award. Our Alabama District 4 United States Representative attends the Brunch to present the awards.

Program Management

As the Corporation's Strategic Plan for 2011-2015 has placed emphasis on using critical resources to support local initiatives, Marshall County RSVP has selected new volunteer stations to complement our work plans or has built capacity for existing stations. Work plans are created to meet community needs by choosing a piece of the emphasis area which is measurable, reasonable and attainable by RSVP volunteers. RSVP always looks at the mission of the volunteer station and designs the plan to help the station meet its mission's goals. RSVP works with these stations to make high quality volunteer placements.

Marshall County RSVP works with stations to develop evidence-based volunteer placements. Compliance for program regulations is spelled out in the Memorandum of Understanding. Each station agrees to these management activities prior to volunteer placement and signs the Memorandum and a Handicapped Accessibility Certification. On-going dialogue between the station supervisor, RSVP program manager and placed volunteers ensures that no prohibited activities occur. Yearly each volunteer station signs a form stating that they have assessed RSVP placements to ensure the safety of the volunteers, that adequate health and safety provisions for the protection of volunteers

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are in place, that no person was denied the opportunity to volunteer because of discrimination and that they have made reasonable accommodation for RSVP volunteers, if needed. Volunteer stations are recognized informally during the year when they have a special event and yearly at the annual volunteer recognition.

The RSVP Volunteer Handbook informs volunteers which volunteer activities are allowable at a volunteer station, what is expected of the volunteer and if a conflict or problem arises with the assignment, how to proceed with the complaint process.

Many work plans incorporate the team concept with volunteers working in teams of 4 to 20 volunteers. Each team will have a captain which will provide leadership opportunities for volunteers who wish to commit more time and skills to the project. Teams will train together building esprit de corps and mutual support for the job assignments, meet on an as needed basis for additional training, progress reports, and goal reassessment.

To ensure that volunteers are performing their assigned service activities, team captains will telephone or email team members on a regular basis to see what problems they are encountering and how they might be resolved. For stations where no team captain is in place, volunteers (via email or telephone) or station's sign-in logs report hours quarterly, this gives program staff the opportunity for direct feedback from volunteers should any questionable situations arise. If members are not satisfied with their team, another team placement will be found for them. RSVP's selection and placement of volunteers will ensure that volunteers have a meaningful experience.

In executing the Strategic Plan Marshall County RSVP tries to build long-lasting capacity to solve community problems. Our board of directors is constantly monitoring the use of our resources. Whenever possible, volunteers have been graduated from one activity to another impact related activity, to minimize disruption of service to Marshall County residents. As community needs change some volunteer stations have become inactive and new partnerships have been formed.

RSVP's primary focus area, the Reading Buddy program, has shown success every year since its inception in the early 1990's. The program has grown from Reading Buddies in one school and now includes Reading Buddies in all twelve elementary schools in the county. Its success is evidenced in the evaluations that Reading Buddies complete at the end of each school year based on their individual experience with students. Each year Reading Buddies have documented at least 80-90% of their children have improved in social development skills making them more engaged in learning and 95-99% have dramatically improved in literacy skills. Teachers and reading coaches make positive comments about the number of children attaining grade level reading by the end of the Reading

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Buddy program so they can be promoted to the next grade level and are anxious to get the program started each Fall. State testing showed a six percent improvement in reading for 4th graders in the 2011-2012 Alabama Reading and Mathematics test, the last complete year published test results.

To reach more volunteers the project will develop or maintain at least 35 work stations during the budget period to provide opportunities for volunteers of all skill levels and educational backgrounds, develop or maintain short-term and on-going volunteer assignments in each of the following areas to meet basic human needs in Marshall County: Education, Healthy Futures, Veterans and Military Families, Environmental Stewardship, Economic Opportunity, and Disaster Services, define the working relationship between the project and the station with a Memorandum of Understanding to be renewed every three years and invite station managers to meet at least once a year to coordinate data collection for impact work plans.

The fifteen member RSVP Advisory Council that is representative of the project's geographic area is involved in work plan development of goals and objectives, monitoring compliance of project and their interaction with stations and volunteers, receiving work plan updates at monthly council meetings, evaluating project performance and reassessing work plan goals and objectives. Each grant cycle the Advisory Council completes a written assessment of project accomplishments and performance measures by interviewing station supervisors, volunteers, beneficiaries and the general public. The Council ensures that project resources are accounted for by disbursement of staff accounting duties, maintaining separate grant funds, reviewing daily account transactions at each meeting, making long-range plans for project funding, keeping funders informed with annual reports and securing grants for special RSVP projects. RSVP's Annual Report is presented to all city councils, the county commission and local legislators each year.

Volunteer stations sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with RSVP agreeing with the terms set out therein according to corporation requirements. The document is reviewed and signed every three years. All of our stations have current MOUs on file at RSVP. All of RSVP's 400 volunteers are 55 years of age or older, have a signed volunteer form and job description, as well as a permission slip and a completed search of the National Sex Offender's database.

To ensure high quality program management, RSVP works with the local print, radio and television media to manage information and data to demonstrate to the community the impact of projects as they unfold. RSVP has great credibility with the press and they are anxious to report our volunteer efforts and the impact they have in meeting community needs.

Organizational Capability

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Marshall County RSVP, Inc. was incorporated in 1992 and granted non-profit 501(c)3 status making them eligible for United Way funding and grants open to non-profits. 22 years of non-profit grant resources allowed RSVP to grow, develop unique volunteer opportunities, meet community needs, and create a solid funding base. Starting with a Corporation Summer of Safety grant and then being recognized as a Program of National Significance 7 times has increased RSVP's federal funding capacity to support volunteers. During Katrina, RSVP managed 2 Corporation grants with 10 VISTAs across the state and a foundation grant for Katrina recovery work. RSVP received a Veteran's Augmentation to our federal grant in 2012 to help serve the over 7,000 veterans in rural Marshall County.

In our small rural county resources are limited. RSVP works to develop partnerships which combine human resources with in-kind and grants to achieve the greatest impact for quality of life in Marshall County. Adequate facilities and equipment for the project will be provided by RSVP, Inc. under the federal grant. RSVP is currently located in a 5,000 sq ft facility which is rented. Due to the program's long history in Marshall County since 1972, the program has equipment and other furnishings to adequately support the project.

RSVP uses Quickbooks Pro for accounting, Maverick database program to manage project and volunteer information and to gather data necessary to support the volunteers working in impact programming. Other Excel databases have been created and are maintained to track and collate data for work plan measurement data.

Marshall County RSVP, Inc. has written Accounting Policies, RSVP Policies and Procedures, Personnel Policies, Conflict of Interest, Ethics Guidelines, Whistle Blower Policy and Document Retention Policies to comply with federal statues, regulations and OMB circulars.

As local United Way, state and city government funding has decreased, the Advisory Council has looked more and more to in-kind contributions to meet our federal match, ie, city governments provide van insurance, meeting space, utilities, phone for tax program, etc.. Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in lieu of taxes money is a strong monetary support to RSVP which was an outgrowth of our volunteer water quality monitoring program. Annual in-kind contributions are secured from TVA the for water quality monitoring equipment and chemicals for 22 stream kits and 5 embayment kits, from Alabama Water Watch for EPA protocol water quality testing training and re-certification, the Albertville Municipal Water Treatment Plant provides equipment, chemicals and manpower to run water nutrient samples each month for the monitoring teams.

Our director in place for 22 years has proven her sound programmatic and fiscal oversight by

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securing and managing 84 grants, in addition to corporation grants, to enrich volunteer opportunities in our rural county. Because the director and the board have sought to diversify our revenue sources with other public and private funding, RSVP has made new partnerships and has received greater standing in the community. With more organizations providing in-kind and monetary support the quality of programs has increased and training opportunities have expanded.

RSVP's staff will be responsible not only for program development, but also for administrative support, record-keeping and financial management. Principal staff are already in place and functioning at a proficient level which will allow this sponsor to keep consistent high quality volunteer programming in Marshall County:

** Director, Jean Ann Moon, responsible for the overall programmatic and fiscal management of the project. 35+ years experience working with volunteers and community needs. And 23+ years with RSVP.

** Program Coordinator, Rose Myers, coordinates volunteer recruitment and training, oversees development of work plan opportunities, outreach programs and evaluation. 25+ years experience.

** Program Assistant/Volunteer Resource Coordinator, Ricki Martin, recruits, places, and supervises volunteers, collaborates with partners. 15 years administrative and volunteer management experience.

** Administrative Assistant, Judy Burgett, provides clerical, statistical, volunteer data management and accomplishment documentation for the project. 23 years with the project.

** Bookkeeper, Janet Heath, coordinates expense and income activity for all assigned accounts. Audit requisitions, purchase orders and invoices for correct coding and verification of funds. Issue checks. Reconciles bank statements and assists auditors. Prepare reports and maintain related records. 20+ years accounting experience

Marshall County RSVP, Inc. will be the fiscal agent for grant funds using generally accepted accounting procedures. RSVP, Inc. has been managing federal grants since 1993. Each year, 1993-present, has managed an IRS Tax Counseling for the Elderly grant (TCE). This year managing 4 federal grants: Corporation for National and Community Service RSVP, TCE, IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and National Endowment for the Arts grant.

RSVP's track record in successfully managing programs is seen not only in the number of competitive grants they receive, but in the growth in the number of volunteers. Funders see the measured impact of senior service and continue to fund RSVP. By providing human resources to partners RSVP helps them accomplish their missions, which builds their organization's capacity. When RSVP volunteers get to know the organization and its mission, they recruit additional

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volunteers by "word-of-mouth" and get involved in fund-raising for those organization which builds capacity.

Our sponsor has clearly defined segregation of duties for staff members responsible for financial management of our project, as well as capital assets. Staff members follow written policies (listed in paragraph four of this section) for accounting, purchasing, personnel polices, travel and internal control procedures to cover allowable grant expenses in the budget. RSVP has built capacity to provide adequate equipment and supplies for the project, but is struggling to get a new facility that will accommodate our project growth. Project resources and capital assets will be managed daily by RSVP staff under the direction of the RSVP, Inc. Board of Directors. At each month's board meeting each expenditure and disbursement will be approved and future expenditures approved for project accountability.

RSVP's Advisory Council, along with additional volunteers and specialists they recruit, will provide the support needed to manage the program, evaluate its progress and provide training and technical assistance for continued improvement. Each community need being addressed, such as the computer lab, has its own team of volunteers who run the program. For example, the computer team meets weekly to maintain the computers and address IT issues from the past week. Have monthly tech team meetings to design the curriculum for the next quarter, go over student evaluations and make improvements. Most of our projects are volunteer driven and assessment is done by the team and the Advisory Council using input from clients, users and volunteers.

Yearly an independent CPA audits Marshall County Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, Inc., (and, if applicable, applies Government Auditing Standards and OMB Circular A-133), has found the financial statements to present the financial position fairly and in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. RSVP has no cash flow issues, makes good use of its resources and has a robust financial management capacity.

Other

Not Applicable

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

Not Applicable