

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Horizon Health Inc. is a 501c3 not-for-profit organization founded in 1991 and committed to providing healthy living options for older adults and people living with disabilities living in the rural communities served by Horizon Health. Over the 23 years of service, Horizon Health had developed and implemented a full line of services/programs that support and enhance independence, purpose and dignity for those individuals served by the programs.

Our full continuum of services include: Assisted Living specializing in Alzheimer's/Memory Care, Home Care and Hospice, Adult Foster Care Services, Board and Lodging with special services for gentlemen with psychological disabilities, Independent Housing, and volunteer services including Faith in Action and RSVP.

Our continuum of care starts with our RSVP program. It is the open door to our community members that invites everyone to engage in healthy living options, one of which is volunteering. We currently administer the RSVP program in four counties; Morrison, Cass, Beltrami and Lake of the Woods. There are currently 862 volunteers in the four counties. RSVP provides volunteers with a variety of opportunities to give back and support organizations that enhance the lives of people of all ages living in the rural communities served by Horizon Health RSVP.

An estimated 860 RSVP volunteers will serve. Some of their activities will include food distribution, providing transportation and respite services, and providing health education programs. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. At the end of the three-year grant, over 40,000 community members will receive food. Nearly 600 community members will engage in health education programs that will reinforce voluntary behavior conducive to healthy living. # Caregivers will be offered respite services including short term assistance with daily supports. The CNCS federal investment of \$20,500 will be supplemented by \$ \$96,304 in non-federal/local resources.

## Strengthening Communities

Horizon Health RSVP serves four counties in Minnesota: Cass, Morrison, Beltrami, and Lake Of The Woods (LOTW). All four of these counties are considered rural.

The chart below shows the newest information (2012) available from the U.S. Census Bureau.

## Narratives

### Cass

County Population 28,357

White 86%

American Indian 11%

In the Labor Force 60%

65 & over 22%

Veterans 3,475

Individuals Below Poverty 15%

### Beltrami

County Population 45,375

White 75%

American Indian 20%

In Labor Force 64%

65 & over 13%

Veterans 3,695

Individuals Below Poverty 20%

### Morrison

County Population 33,052

White 98%

American Indian 0%

In Labor Force 69%

65 & over 16%

Veterans 3,018

Individuals Below Poverty 13%

### LOTW

County Population 43,973

White 96%

## Narratives

American Indian 1%

In Labor Force 61%

65 & over 20%

Individuals Below Poverty 16%

The Central MN Council on Aging state that the senior population is expected to grow by approximately 6% in Morrison and Cass Counties.

According to the 2013 Minnesota Rankings Report at [countyhealthrankings.org](http://countyhealthrankings.org), Beltrami, Morrison, Lake of the Woods, and Cass Counties rank 80th, 82nd, 83rd, and 87th respectively out of 87 in Minnesota Health Outcomes.

The 2013 County Health Rankings report ranks Minnesota counties according to their summary measures of health outcomes and health factors. Our summary health outcomes rankings are based on an equal weighting of mortality and morbidity measures.

The summary health factors rankings are based on weighted scores of four types of factors: behavioral, clinical, social and economic, and environmental. The weights for the factors are based upon a review of the literature and expert input, but represent just one way of combining these factors.

Central Minnesota Council On Aging (CMCOA) 2013 gaps analysis identified transportation and nutrition as gaps in the north-central part of MN.

The following notations were made specifically for transportation:

- ¿ Services are limited by hours/days available and miles they can travel.
- ¿ Private companies are expensive and unaffordable to low-income residents.
- ¿ Rural areas are sparsely populated and transit providers (public & private) can't survive on the low usage even though the older adults who utilize the services say it is life alternating for them as they can get to their medical providers, purchase groceries, etc. and continue stay in their own homes.

## Narratives

¿ The State has a lack of understanding of living in rural areas with sparse population. People need to be served even through the utilization numbers are low.

The following notations were made specifically for nutrition:

- ¿ Senior dining sites are closing in the rural areas.
- ¿ Good nutritional food is too expensive for low income seniors.
- ¿ Funding for programs such as MN Extension have been cut.

By partnering with stations that offer transportation, homebound or older adults will receive transportation to doctor appointments, grocery shopping, or other venues that allows them to live independently.

Nineteen stations will supply food to individuals who are food fragile through emergency food banks, food pantries, co-ops, or other nonprofit agencies. This service increases household food security for entire families.

Stations in three counties will provide respite services to deliver temporary relief from care giving. By offering these services, individuals will also report having increased social ties and perceived social support.

Horizon Health RSVP will work with stations to create and administer surveys to collect data such as number of clients served, number of volunteers and hours, client satisfaction, and other data points to measure each outcome/output. These surveys will be created using our new survey tool called My Interview which is a survey contractor.

### Recruitment and Development

Our RSVP Director and two coordinators work closely with the stations to create high quality volunteer assignments and ensure proper training and opportunities where volunteers can share their time and talents in their communities.

For example, the Countryside Co-Op which brings in bulk food (nuts, cheese, herbs, and gluten free items) and redistributes them at discount prices (food pantry in Healthy Futures focus area), is completely administered by volunteers. The Co-Op needed to expand their volunteer base as well as

## Narratives

increase their retention of current volunteers. Since 90% of their volunteers are registered with our program, when they asked a volunteer to serve as their new volunteer coordinator they asked us to interview with them. Together we trained the new volunteer coordinator, and their volunteer retention increased 12% last year. We were also asked to assist in the review their volunteer policies annually.

Eight percent more volunteers indicated that they would like to see more health-based volunteer opportunities in our counties. While researching the need in the community, we discovered through the Minnesota Falls Prevention website that falls and fall-related injuries among adults over age 65 are on the rise. Currently, Minnesota ranks third among states in the number of fall-related deaths. Additionally, Minnesota had the nation's fourth highest fatal fall rate in 2005, nearly twice the national rate. Minnesota's fall death rate continues to increase. Having a fall can change one's life forever.

The Bone Builders program relies upon weight training to protect against fractures caused by falls and/or osteoporosis by increasing muscular strength and bone density. Bone Builders is designed to help prevent and reverse osteoporosis, improve balance, enhance energy and well-being, increase socialization and provide related health information. 80% of participants have stated that they have increased balance, muscle strength and bone density (when tests are available), and improved socialization as well as a better knowledge of important health issues. We measure this through an annual assessment at all Bone Builders sites. The senior participants also indicate increased energy, a better ability to complete daily routines, and which ultimately helps them to remain living in their own homes for a longer period of time.

Horizon Health RSVP knows that recruitment is all about relationships. We share with the community that the real benefit people get from volunteering is the satisfaction of incorporating service into their lives and making a difference in their community. Participants are encouraged to "Create their own experience" by sharing with us their enthusiasm for certain projects and why these are so important to them. By pairing a person's passion with specific volunteer opportunities, we create a stage for long-term growth for both the station and the volunteer.

We let volunteers know that the intangible benefits alone--such as pride, satisfaction and accomplishment--are significant reasons to serve. Moreover, when they share their time and talents, they:

\* Solve basic area needs

## Narratives

- \* Strengthen communities
- \* Improve lives
- \* Connect with others
- \* Transform our own lives

Of course the tangible results are significant as well.

\* Personalized matching: We work to find the right opportunity for their passions, skills, interests, and schedule by completing an enrollment process including an enrollment form and personal phone interview.

\* Travel reimbursement: The modest stipend helps defray the cost of service.

\* RSVP communications: Through our Constant Contact program, we keep in touch weekly and keep volunteers aware of new opportunities, events, and information.

\* Annual Recognition Events: Network with like-minded, civically engaged individuals who are making a difference in their community. We also acknowledge volunteer and station efforts annually at these events.

We share all of these benefits with the community through our marketing efforts.

Build a corps of volunteers, including recruiting, retaining and recognizing senior volunteers

We have recently realigned our staff to better serve the volunteers, stations, and communities.

We now have two area coordinators who are out in the community recruiting volunteers, visiting stations, and making community connections through personal communications. By splitting the territory and adding an area coordinator in Bemidji that is willing to travel to northern Cass County as well, we have increased our personal presence in the area, making marketing and recruitment more effective.

Provide training and technical assistance to project staff, volunteers, volunteer station supervisors, and community participation groups.

Horizon Health, Inc. offers ongoing training and in-service workshops that will be made available to RSVP program staff, volunteer station managers, and volunteers. In the past, these learning opportunities have included topics such as:

Beginner and intermediate computer skills

Boundaries in the workplace

Goal setting for your profession and yourself

Self esteem in the workplace

## **Narratives**

### Strength Finder

Horizon Health also offers on-line courses that covers a broad range of topics.

Volunteer stations are invited to attend an annual training in the spring where we share the newest volunteer support information, best practices, and answer questions or concerns.

These trainings encourage participants to work smarter, thus leaving us with more one-to-one time with stations and volunteers. Learning to work with our strengths and developing healthy communications both internally and externally enhances our credibility and professional image.

Doing this improves the services of our programs by increasing our abilities to recruit and train volunteers. We are also able to share new knowledge and improve client and volunteer satisfaction within the stations.

In 2014 we will be able to offer alternative opportunities for station supervisors to share experiences and ask questions through conference calls and Skype.

### **Program Management**

Horizon Health RSVP will utilize its director and coordinators to create working relationships with the station managers to share policies and regulations to strengthen and protect the program. A policy manual is given to each new station, and updates are shared via electronic modes when needed.

Stations will be visited annually to review standing policies, share new information, and identify any prohibited activities which can then be addressed in person. Volunteer job descriptions will be reviewed at these meetings as well. Updates can be made, and training options put in place to support any changes.

RSVP program staff guide and support volunteer stations in identifying their goals, assessing their volunteer needs, creating volunteer descriptions and recruitment plans to fill previously acknowledged community needs. RSVP program staff will have regular and ongoing contact with both volunteer station managers and volunteers through one-to-one site visits and the annual Station Managers meeting.

Horizon Health RSVP performs an annual station assessment tool to identify community needs. We use the tool to develop volunteer assignments that, coupled with community assets, we can create inventive solutions to the identified needs.

## Narratives

In January of 2013 we learned that food distribution sites were serving an average of 38% more clients than two years ago. To better serve their clients, these stations are asking for additional volunteers. The information we collected influenced our decision to continue to make food distribution a main focus for Horizon Health RSVP.

We recently moved our Beltrami County RSVP office into the new Bemidji Community Food Shelf. This partnership allows us to receive office space at a reduced rate, while supporting the station with volunteer recruitment at their site.

RSVP identifies all of the non-profits in the four counties we serve annually, and categorizes them to determine if they fall into our program scope with an emphasis on Healthy Futures, Education, and Economic Support. If this is the case, we contact them and share the RSVP philosophy with them and invite them to engage senior volunteers within their programs.

By doing this, we are offering a broad scope of volunteer opportunities from which our seniors can choose from. Once placement has been established, we survey the volunteer to ensure that their needs are being met and that they are indeed provided with meaningful volunteer opportunities.

Assessing project performance / performance measures are met and show a high-quality project. May include an annual assessment of project accomplishments

The station assessment is also used to determine project performance and to assure all goals and objectives are being met at the highest quality level possible. This data is then compared to the set measurements within the workplans to insure the full impact is being realized through the use of all of the resources including; financial, in-kind, volunteer performance, and program management. This information is shared back with the stations through a Volunteer Station Managers conference, and/or individual site meetings. These assessments show that 68% of stations are still lacking the volunteers they need to serve their clients properly.

Stations that no longer meet the current needs of the community or that no longer fall within the scope of the program, are graduated. This process includes a discussion with the station to explain why they are being graduated from the program. A formal letter is then sent stating the reasons for graduation. Volunteers are notified that the station is no longer an RSVP partner. We always encourage volunteers to continue their work with the station, but also inform them of other volunteer opportunities within the RSVP program.

After this course of action is completed, Horizon Health (as the sponsor) performs its assessment of the program processes to assure that the overall goals, accomplishments, and impacts on the community are computed and compared to the original need statements.

## **Narratives**

Currently Horizon Health RSVP has nearly 400 volunteers in 19 stations distributing food through food banks, co-ops, food pantries and other non-profit food sources. In 2013 nearly 40,000 individuals were served in some capacity by these food distribution sites. 100% of the sites stated that they expect an increase in need in 2015.

The RSVP program has 90 volunteers leading Bone Builders. Bone Builders is designed to help prevent and reverse osteoporosis, improve balance, enhance energy and well-being, increase socialization and provide related health information and reinforce voluntary health behaviors conducive to healthy living in rural areas. Currently the program serves nearly 600 older adults in the four county region.

Horizon Health RSVP presently has a Companionship and Outreach program that supports stations that offer transportation, respite and chore services to older adults that are homebound or living with disabilities. Currently 100 volunteers serve 480 people making it possible for them to continue to live in their homes independently.

In order to ensure the project stays in compliance with federal RSVP regulations, an Advisory Council has been established in three counties. The Advisory Council has completed the Stakeholder Survey and will continue to do so annually. In addition, we will be asking various local stakeholders (social services, public health, etc) in the community to complete the survey as well. By adding this information, we will garner a broader assessment of needs in the communities we serve.

Our placement process requires the potential volunteer to complete an enrollment form. This form includes all of the mandatory information to ensure the volunteer is eligible to serve in the program. Stations are required to sign an MOU when they register with the program. These MOU's are updated every three years as required by federal regulations. Data will be managed through the Volunteer Reporter system to insure that RSVP is in compliance and can accurately demonstrate the concrete impacts of the project and its volunteers.

### **Organizational Capability**

The RSVP Director will manage project resources by prioritizing according to our mission statement with the assistance of our Business Office Manager to assure accountability, as well as, efficient and effective use of resources.

Internal policies and operating procedures include each check request being reviewed by the Business Office Manager and is then signed by two officially designated signees. There is an annual audit

## Narratives

conducted by an outside CPA firm of Horizon Health that includes the RSVP program. There have been no audit findings in the last five years.

Horizon Health employs accounting principles generally accepted in the United States to manage all revenues and expenses associated with this RSVP project. Financial reports are reviewed by the Executive Director, Finance Director, and the RSVP Program Director on a monthly basis. All project resources both financial and in-kind are analyzed for accuracy to ensure the revenues and expenses are in line with the approved budget and federal regulations and applicable OMB circulars.

Bridget Britz, Executive Director

Ms. Britz holds a Bachelors Degree in Community Development and will oversee the direct financial aspects of Horizon Health, Inc. and RSVP project. She will annually review workplans, budgets, and project outcomes with RSVP program staff.

Accomplishments: Ms. Britz has been in roles of community service since 1995. She served as the RSVP Director for 5 years before accepting her current position, and thus would be able to continue the program seamlessly should the director step down.

Tiffany Pyka, RSVP Director

Ms. Pyka is ultimately responsible for fulfilling the mission of Horizon Health RSVP which is to provide a diverse platform of volunteer opportunities for volunteers 55 and better that will build a stronger community through partnerships that impact community needs.

Accomplishments: Ms. Pyka holds a Bachelors Degree in Communication Studies. Her additional knowledge comes from her many years of experience with volunteerism and working with seniors.

Jane Furuseth-RSVP Area Coordinator

Responsibilities: Support the program with recruitment, retention, and recognition of senior volunteers in Beltrami and Northern Cass Counties.

Accomplishments: Ms. Furuseth has been in the volunteer support role since 2004. She has served as a volunteer coordinator with special emphasis on children's mentoring.

Jean Flicker-RSVP Area Coordinator

Responsibilities: Support the program with recruitment, retention, and recognition of senior volunteers in Morrison and Southern Cass Counties.

Accomplishments: Ms. Flicker grew up with volunteerism in her family and comes to us after working for Morrison County with families and children in poverty.

Since originally hosting RSVP in 2003, we have become an important service to our communities; the program helps seniors remain active within their communities and gives them the opportunity to

## Narratives

provide a valuable 'service' that isn't necessarily measured by hours of volunteer labor, but instead through each and every opportunity one has to enrich the lives and well-being of those they encounter within their communities and themselves.

Sponsoring the RSVP program provides additional opportunities to expand Horizon Health's overall mission and goals. Our mission and services have been to sustain elderly in the communities in which they reside, create new jobs, retain local workforce, and provide worthwhile volunteer opportunities. Horizon Health, Inc. has always valued seniors as a resource. The wealth of wisdom within our senior volunteers is highly respected.

### Other

none

### PNS Amendment (if applicable)

none