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Executive Summary

Lafayette County RSVP is sponsored by the Oxford Park Commission. The Oxford Park Commission (OPC) is part of the City of Oxford governmental structure. The Oxford Park Commission strives to improve the quality of life for citizens of Oxford by providing professionally designed, comprehensive recreational and leisure programs and services. To accomplish this mission, the OPC provides diversity in programming opportunities to meet the changing needs and interests of users, fosters the development of knowledge, interests and behaviors that promote a healthy lifestyle, and encourages the development of positive attitudes regarding participation and sportsmanship. During the next year, RSVP proposes our primary focus area to be Healthy Futures. We are requesting funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) in the amount of \$45,846 with non-federal resources totaling \$81,535.

RSVP volunteers will provide direct service or support to 42 non-profit organizations through a variety of service activities. These activities may include some of the following: conducting intake interviews with clients at Medical Ministries, delivering meals to homebound individuals, tutoring students in reading, distributing educational materials, conducting community outreach at fairs and senior programs, providing transportation for seniors, assisting veterans, coordinating public awareness and assisting with special events. RSVP will use surveys and volunteer logs to track the needs addressed.

RSVP volunteers will focus on homebound seniors and disabled receiving food, transportation and companionship to continue to live independently, assisting students in the City schools with

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healthy eating habits through the Good Food for Schools program and educating individuals on accessing food resources.

Strengthening Communities

Oxford, Mississippi is a rural town located in the North Central part of the State.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Oxford and Lafayette County community has a population of 47,586. The census also provides the following information about our community.

Geographic: Land area - 631.71 square miles

Male 49.2%, Female 50.8%, 65 years and over 4,836, 71.3% white, 24.3% black, 0.1% American Indian, 2.2% Hispanic or Latino and 1.2% are other races.

Household Data: Total 15,301 households

Householder living alone 4,892 (32.0%); 65 years and older living alone 1,412 (9.2%); Households with one or more people 65 years and older 3,312 (21.6%)

Veterans: Civilian veterans 2,549 (6.6%)

Language: Language other than English 1,968 (4.4%)

Economics:

Median household income (dollars) 42,688, Mean Social Security income 16,013, Mean Retirement income 25,985, and Mean Supplemental Security Income 7,857. According to the 2010 Census, 23.5% are below the poverty level. The State average is 22.3%.

The recent exposure that Oxford has received as "one of the great retirement communities in America" will help to provide a much larger base from which to recruit volunteers. This exposure indicates that the senior population will continue to grow but this growth also means that there is a need for a healthy senior population to provide support and companionship to the homebound and frail elderly that our volunteers will be serving.

A lack of resources to help frail and homebound seniors, many on fixed incomes, companionship to help alleviate loneliness and affordable transportation for medical related appointments are needs in our community that RSVP volunteers can assist in solving or making less of a problem for the individuals in these situations of need. Individuals that speak little or no English need access to medical or health care providers and often do not receive these services because no one can understand what the medical problem is due to the language barrier.

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Our primary focus area is Healthy Futures. RSVP will address access to care, aging in place and obesity and food. We will provide resources and support so that homebound and older adults with disabilities can remain in their homes with an improved quality of life. Translation services by an RSVP volunteer will assist non-English speaking individuals with getting proper health care when needed. Children and families will have access to healthy food choices and nutritious meals.

With almost a quarter of our community population at or below the poverty level, the need for assistance in providing healthy food and nutrition information, resources for access to programs that can be of assistance to those in need and actually helping individuals receive these services, will increase seniors ability to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for a longer period of time. Working with Meals on Wheels, the Food Pantry and the Springfield Life Center, RSVP volunteers will provide contact with peers and improved nutrition for the individuals receiving assistance from these programs. Companionship provided to homebound individuals and alleviating some of the loneliness they feel when isolated as well as the peer interactions when transporting homebound seniors to medical appointments, pharmacy, grocery stores, etc. is so important in helping these individuals live independently. There are 100 elderly, homebound and disabled individuals receiving assistance from the Food Pantry on Thursdays (elderly & disabled day) and 18 individuals served meals daily at the Springfield Life Center.

When the Oxford City Schools implemented their Good Food for Schools program, RSVP was asked to help by providing volunteers to assist with getting students to sample foods such as broccoli that they would not ordinarily enjoy eating. The Good Food for Schools is an initiative to improve cafeteria menus and simultaneously educate students and their families about healthy eating. They promote healthy diets through educating students on the importance of consuming more fruits and vegetables. There are 54% of the students receiving free or reduced meals in the City schools and 58% in the County schools. The need for food and healthy options for eating are needs for this community. Lovepacks, another program that provides food for children, sends home bags of easy-open food with school students on Fridays so that they will have access to food on weekends and holidays. RSVP volunteers will put together a food drive to benefit the organization and collect plastic grocery bags for their use. Lovepacks serves an average of 145 children per week during the school year. More Than A Meal serves people of our community with good food, encouragement and companionship and a

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sense of community. Once a week, More Than A Meal provides a warm meal, fellowship for families and tutoring for children. RSVP volunteers assist with the preparation and serving meals and tutoring. The food is for anyone that needs a meal. This program averages 50 participants each week throughout the year. For both programs, they are not necessarily the same individuals served.

Currently 25 RSVP volunteers spend 3,405 hours each year providing service to frail seniors and disabled adults which aids them in remaining in their homes. We encourage RSVP volunteers to provide assistance to their neighbors, family, members of their church or anyone they feel like needs these services. Telephone reassurance or phone mates (calling others who are homebound for companionship or to check their well-being), the RUOK telephone call each morning to check on individuals that live alone to make sure they are ok, friendly visiting, writing cards, transportation and attending to individual needs are all services that volunteers engage in to help these individuals remain in their homes.

If you live in a community where English is the primary language and you are non-English speaking, trying to explain to a doctor or health care provider why you are sick can be very frustrating. RSVP has one volunteer that speaks very fluent Spanish (the non-English language most spoken here). She gets calls all hours of the day and night to go to the emergency room or doctor's offices to translate for individuals that are sick. She logs an average of 200 hours a year translating.

All of these groups network well to help alleviate these community issues related to the Primary Focus Area but there are still needs that are unmet and need our assistance in trying to reduce the problem.

The RSVP program has a volunteer representative on the local Leadership Council on Aging that networks with 22 organizations that work with the elderly and homebound individuals. Critical needs for our community are discussed which keeps us informed of areas that we need to target with our volunteers. This network of community organizations and service providers allows us to communicate with key stakeholders to solve immediate needs and plan for needs of our community that we see are going to have to be addressed.

The RSVP Advisory Council is made up of 15 community and business leaders who support, promote and recognize our volunteers. They assist with surveys and annual assessments of our program, help guide program initiatives, offer ideas and resources and promote our volunteers. This group

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represents many social, charitable and community organizations interested in promoting volunteers in our community as well as the RSVP program.

Our TRIAD volunteers make our community a safer place for seniors to live in through community presentations, publishing a community resource guide, sponsoring the Yellow Dot program, safe driver classes, RUOK daily checks, telephone dialers for homebound to use if they fall, 911 and city markers for emergency vehicles to locate houses easier in case of an emergency, speakers bureau with information on scams and how seniors can protect themselves, sponsoring a Take Back Your Drug day with the local police department where individuals turn in old prescription drugs and working with the Memory Makers program for individuals with early Alzheimers. This group has been recognized with a Jefferson Award and GIVE (Governor's Initiative for Volunteer Excellence) Award for their efforts in helping seniors in our community.

The University of Mississippi is located in Oxford and has been a great resource for training for our education volunteers. Other departments such as Exercise Science have assisted RSVP with programs and trainings that benefit our volunteers.

Each year, RSVP looks for new ways to meet needs in our community. This year, TRIAD and the Oxford Police Department sponsored the Take Back Your Drug Day at the annual 50+ Health & Wellness Expo and volunteers have been teaching wellness classes for the City's Leisure Lifestyles Program. The Advisory Council and other community stakeholders assist our program in determining where we can offer assistance that best fits the community needs. RSVP strives to form new program initiatives that are meaningful to our volunteers - seniors helping seniors live independently, mobilizing resources and helping our children.

When disaster strikes, RSVP volunteers are trained and ready to respond. We have volunteers trained to open a Volunteer Reception Center to process community and outside volunteers, volunteers to help the Red Cross with telephone calls and volunteers trained to assist the Salvation Army with food distribution. The Oxford and Lafayette County Emergency Management Directors are partners with RSVP for disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

For the past three years, RSVP volunteers have assisted children in the elementary schools with

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getting the students to read at grade level. The University of Mississippi has trained our volunteers in techniques to use to help them understand better ways to assist the students.

For the past 12 years, RSVP volunteers have provided income tax preparation for low income seniors and individuals who cannot afford to pay to have their taxes filed. The average minimum cost is \$150 in our community for a paid individual or tax preparation agency to file your taxes. This is not affordable for people on retirement and poverty level incomes.

With a continued need for social interaction, many of our RSVP volunteers go to the VA Home and call bingo, assist with parties, read to the Veterans, provide socialization and lately, RSVP volunteers have assisted with a donations drive for items the residents need and can't afford to buy. Our local VFW utilizes RSVP volunteers for the activities they sponsor for veterans and for karaoke night. In the past year, RSVP has made an effort to recruit Veterans in to the program. Five Veterans have joined RSVP in the last few months. With the increased presence of our volunteers at the VA Home and VFW activities, we anticipate more joining our program.

RSVP will meet with key stakeholders to develop and refine current tools being used to develop a tracking system of homebound or older adults with disabilities that need assistance with food, transportation or other services that allow them to live independently. Surveys and logs will be used. The perceived outcomes will be accomplished with everyone working together for the common good of helping individuals stay longer in their homes, quick response to disasters, children reading at grade level, food access to alleviate hunger and income taxes filed correctly for low income individuals.

With a total of 42 volunteer stations, RSVP volunteers help solve compelling needs and enhance the capacity of other organizations within our community to help strengthen the community. As RSVP grows, other community programs grow which enables all of us working together to build a better community. As this is accomplished, RSVP volunteers will achieve their goals in the focus areas our volunteers will be assisting with for a better and thriving community.

The Oxford Park Commission has supported RSVP since 1972 while the Program Director and Sponsor Executive have maintained a very positive working relationship throughout this time. The Program Director has built and is continuing to build many partnerships with local agencies and

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businesses throughout the community. RSVP and the local Foster Grandparent Program continue to work well together to help address the volunteer needs in the community while conducting joint recognition programs, trainings and other activities for seniors. These partnerships enable the volunteers to interact and exchange ideas as well as work together on projects to benefit the citizens of Oxford and Lafayette County. Volunteer Oxford, the new Volunteer Center, is housed in the RSVP office and funding is provided by Volunteer Mississippi (MCVS). RSVP and Volunteer Oxford have partnered together for MLK Day, 9/11 Day of Service and other community activities.

It is very important that the program staff continue to build partnerships and a good network within the community for development of the program to its fullest potential. Community needs are always being assessed and the potential for new volunteer stations is constantly being looked at and developed. Great support is provided for the program and has been throughout the years, which has assisted in developing ideas to promote sustainability within the program and its volunteer stations. RSVP stations and volunteers represent a diverse group of individuals from within the community. Professors, educators, factory workers, business owners, clerical workers, bankers, farmers, executives, individuals with disabilities, government employees and individuals that have never worked outside of the home represent a few of the backgrounds associated with our volunteers. Each has their own expertise and talents that they bring to the program which has made for a great mix of volunteers over the years.

The program director has a great working relationship with the local newspapers and they do not hesitate to run items in the community news section of the paper and to do specific articles of activities RSVP volunteers are involved in each day. The program director has a background in journalism and makes sure the program gets good news coverage on a continuous basis. It is most important that RSVP is kept fresh in the minds of potential volunteers and throughout the community for support of the program. When the office recently had to move its location, the newspaper ran the headline article about "RSVP moves to new location". This is good exposure for potential volunteers to know where we are now located since the program had been located in the previous office for 38 years.

Recruitment and Development

Experienced and skilled volunteers are one of Oxford and Lafayette County's best resources. The University of Mississippi sponsors the Ole Miss Retiree group, the Chamber of Commerce sponsors the

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Retiree Attraction Program and they also work with the Newcomer's Program. All of these groups work with the RSVP program and provide a diverse group of individuals that are potential volunteers.

RSVP volunteers complete an application detailing their past work experiences and previous volunteer experiences. This helps the staff identify experiences, skills and talents that our volunteers can use to better serve the community. Welcome packets of information about the program are sent to the volunteers and they receive a call from the RSVP Volunteer Representative to discuss possible volunteer interests, suggestions for potential volunteer stations and how they would like to assist within our community. A detailed listing of volunteer stations is included in the packets so that the volunteers know what is available and can see the community needs we are addressing. Training is provided by the volunteer stations and RSVP so that the volunteers will have an enjoyable experience. With the primary focus areas being served, additional information will be included in the packets to stress the importance of these critical issues being addressed and how they as volunteers can help with these needs.

The RSVP Volunteer Representative (part time position provided by the City of Oxford) keeps in contact with our volunteers, keeps them active in the program and assist with recruiting. Some volunteers have specific skills that can be developed to benefit the community. As volunteers are recruited, they will also serve as good resources for other potential volunteers and aid in recruitment.

The City of Oxford provides funding for a part time Medical Reserve Corps/Disaster Coordinator for the program. This person works closely with our community partners and the Emergency Management Agency directors to fully develop disaster volunteers and their role in the community.

During the past years, RSVP has made a real effort to recruit baby boomers for the many activities and stations involved with the program. 25% of the current volunteers fall within the baby boomer age group and have found this to be a most rewarding experience after retirement.

Most baby boomers have been successful in their careers and volunteering offers an ideal opportunity for filling a significant community need. RSVP volunteers are part of an organized volunteer experience that not only benefits the community but provides social and community involvement for

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the volunteers. Once baby boomers and other volunteers needs are determined, they will be matched with the partnering agency needs. It is important that all volunteers recruited recognize and understand how their voluntary efforts contribute to making a difference.

RSVP and the Oxford Park Commission promote and publicize the program and activities of the volunteers on an ongoing basis. Most of the recruitment is done by "word of mouth" as well as posting announcements in the Community News section of the local daily newspaper. The Program Director speaks to various groups and civic organizations throughout the community to spread the word of how RSVP is making a difference in the community. A program brochure, fact sheet, website through the City of Oxford and Oxford Park Commission and a face book page are used to promote the program and communicate with the community. The program sends out a newsletter the first of each month also. The volunteer stations have been an excellent resource for training RSVP volunteers in specific areas for their respective stations. Requests are always made for additional volunteers to serve at current volunteer stations. Volunteers are always kept abreast of changes in the RSVP program and are trained with a full understanding of how the program is funded and the policies by which we operate. MOU's are signed with all of the volunteer stations detailing what the station obligations are and what is expected of RSVP and its volunteers.

Oxford has received much national exposure in recent years as one of the most attractive retirement communities in the country. RSVP benefits from this by receiving referrals from the Chamber of Commerce with retirees wanting information on how to become involved with volunteer opportunities in the community.

Recognition of the volunteers is an important aspect of the program. During Lunch n' Learn, National Volunteer Week, Senior Corps Week and at a recognition in December, volunteers are recognized for their contributions to the community. Lunch n' Learn also provides an opportunity to offer training to a large number of volunteers at one time.

By utilizing the methods of promotion mentioned above, RSVP has been well accepted over the years and will continue to do so due to the impact we are making on the community. We will continue to open new doors and provide new and exciting volunteer opportunities in the Oxford/Lafayette County

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community.

Currently, RSVP has 21 volunteers with a disability. All volunteers stations are handicapped accessible and the stations complete the handicapped accessibility survey each year.

Orientation and training of new volunteers is important so that they have a working knowledge of RSVP activities, their specific roles and expectations of our volunteers. This is done as new volunteers sign up but it averages being done on a quarterly basis. The volunteer handbook, job descriptions, guidelines for the program as well as volunteer stations and other pertinent information is discussed. RSVP has a diverse group of volunteers which reflect the social, cultural, economic and racial diversity of our community.

The following information about our community is important for recruitment:

Male 49.2%, Female 50.8%, 65 years and over 4,836, 71.3% white, 24.3% black, 0.1% American Indian, 2.2% Hispanic or Latino and 1.2% are other races.

Householder living alone 4,892 (32.0%); 65 years and older living alone 1,412 (9.2%); Households with one or more people 65 years and older 3,312 (21.6%)

Language other than English 1,968 (4.4%)

Median household income (dollars) 42,688, Mean Social Security income 16,013, Mean Retirement income 25, 985, and Mean Supplemental Security Income 7,857. According to the 2010 census, 23.5% are below the poverty level. The State average is 22.3%.

Veterans - 4,542 Veterans 65 years of age and older and of that number 2,014 have a disability

Program Management

The Oxford Park Commission, through the City of Oxford, has sponsored the RSVP Program since 1972. Additional funds are received from the Lafayette County Board of Supervisors.

The bookkeeper/coordinator has 12 years of knowledge and experience in record keeping and the Program Director has over 39 years of experience in working with the elderly population in the community while continuing to maintain relationships formed throughout the years by the previous director.

The Program Director meets with the Oxford Park Commission Board of Directors each month to discuss volunteer activities, get approval for expenditures and approval for travel (if needed). A

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monthly and quarterly report is made available to the Oxford Park Commission Board. The City of Oxford Board of Aldermen also receive a quarterly report detailing all of the activities for the quarter for RSVP and its volunteers.

Audits are conducted every year as required. The audits are submitted to the Oxford Park Commission Board and made available for the Mayor and Board of Alderman to review. Two signatures are required on all checks and the Oxford Park Commission bookkeeper prints checks for the program and reconciles bank statements and provides a monthly statement to the Program Director of all expenditures and account balances. All program expenditures are distributed in accordance with the Oxford Park Commission and RSVP policies and procedures.

The program director works closely with all agencies to match volunteer needs with the needs of the community. Volunteers specify on their application, areas of expertise and interest to help the staff identify volunteers that can assist with specific needs. This allows the volunteers to spend their time helping in certain areas they enjoy working with so that they have a meaningful volunteer experience.

Each month in the newsletter, new volunteer needs are expressed and volunteers have the opportunity to assist in these specific areas also. RSVP maintains an on-call list of volunteers that like to be called when the program has specific needs to address.

Each year, the volunteer stations are asked to complete a brief survey about RSVP and its volunteers, their potential value to the stations and in meeting community needs. This assists the program director in determining the impact of the volunteers to the community. Handicapped accessibility surveys and safety checklist are completed by all volunteer stations.

The City of Oxford provides valuable cash and in-kind support to the program and the local Board of Supervisors also provides cash support for the program. (\$88,850 total) Other local resources are limited but the program has received additional grants from MS Leadership Council on Aging for support of the TRIAD program, State Health Dept. and NACCHO grants for Medical Reserve Corps programs. All of this support provides valuable resources for the program.

The RSVP Coordinator uses the Volunteer Reporter Software to track volunteer service hours. This software can generate many selected reports on the stations, volunteers, hours served and other statistical information helpful in tracking data. RSVP will enhance the existing reporting and

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assessment procedures to document the National Performance Measures outcomes and outputs that are identified in this application. Volunteers report their hours and send time sheets to the office on a monthly basis. The director will request documentation from the volunteer stations on performance measures outcomes and outputs monthly and quarterly, depending on the station.

The Volunteer Recruiter makes an effort to obtain feedback on all volunteer service by phone or in person and especially with new volunteers. Volunteers are encouraged to share their experiences with staff and the site managers as well as the OPC Board and Advisory Council members.

Organizational Capability

The Oxford Park Commission (OPC) is a nonprofit governmental organization that provides recreational opportunities for persons of all ages in the City of Oxford and Lafayette County. The RSVP Program enables the Park Commission to benefit from a large group of citizens age 55 and older throughout the community. The OPC has a new seniors program called Leisure Lifestyles. RSVP is working closely with the OPC staff as we continue to make a positive impact on the community through volunteer opportunities and activities geared toward the 55+ generation. The OPC hired a Leisure Lifestyles Coordinator to work with RSVP and the volunteers to offer activities, programs, workshops, etc that individuals 55+ years of age and older would enjoy participating in at this time.

RSVP and AARP teamed up to provide the Stepping into Fitness program and as a result, RSVP and the OPC offer the Get Fit with RSVP program giving volunteers the opportunity to exercise during a structured program at no charge. This has been a great recruiting tool for the program as the exercise program is open to anyone 55+ and many of the participants have learned about RSVP and joined and are volunteering in different capacities. RSVP has two volunteers that teach exercise classes for the Leisure Lifestyles Program.

The program director has met with all of the partnering agencies that are involved with RSVP and MOU's are in place for recruiting and placing volunteers at the stations. As additional community needs evolve, RSVP will adapt and recruit additional volunteers as needed.

The 2006 PNS grant for Disaster Preparation allowed the program to expand into a new program area that is critical to the community and continue the tradition of meeting community needs.

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The Program Director has over 39 years of experience in working with volunteers in the community and is very capable of expanding the program to meet the needs of the community. The program coordinator does an excellent job of matching the volunteers with specific needs of the stations. The program director looks for new and innovative ways to recruit new volunteers. The volunteer representative/recruiter keeps in contact with the volunteers and stations to stay abreast of needs for each. All of this experience and expertise combine for a winning experience for the program and its volunteers.

RSVP is located in downtown Oxford and is readily accessible to the public with signs and a banner to attract visitors to stop by and see what RSVP is all about. The Oxford Park Commission provides adequate space for meetings and large gatherings for our volunteers at no charge. The staff with the City of Oxford and Oxford Park Commission provide adequate technical and financial support for the RSVP program overseeing expenditures, purchasing, travel and overall management of the grant. Each RSVP staff person has clearly defined roles and annual evaluations are conducted on each staff person.

RSVP has proven to be a continuous work in progress. Each day brings new volunteers, new opportunities for the volunteers and a broader scope of needs that are unmet within the community. A volunteer summed it all up - the following was addressed to the staff as follows: To all of you sweet things! A heartfelt "thank you" for inspiring all of us to offer our time and hearts to Oxford. You allow us to feel accomplished and useful. You are a blessing in our lives!

RSVP proves itself everyday within the community by its volunteers and reputation for "getting the job done."

Other

We are going to start a new program with our volunteers called RSVP Ambassadors. We plan to recruit two to four very active RSVP volunteers, sit down with them and train them on RSVP, our funders, volunteer opportunities available - basically all aspects of the program. They will attend speaking engagements with the Program Director as this will be a continuous learning experience for the volunteers. They will wear name tags that identify them as RSVP Ambassadors. and be available for events at Visit Oxford, Chamber of Commerce events, etc where they can promote the program and recruit potential volunteers. We feel the best recruiters are the volunteers involved in the

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program, so this should be a positive addition to our recruiting efforts and enhancement for our program.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A