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Executive Summary

The Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Westmoreland County has been sponsored by Westmoreland County Community College (WCCC) since 1971. Based on our program's history, we project approximately 839 unduplicated RSVP volunteers will serve the community annually during the next three-year funding cycle. Volunteer assignments include preparing and delivering meals to the homebound; serving in food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens; providing free income tax assistance; serving as advisers in the APPRISE Telecenter, the state health insurance hotline for individuals on Medicare; and providing information to callers for the APPRISE state health insurance counseling program for Westmoreland County residents. The primary focus area for WCCC's RSVP is Healthy Futures. At the end of the three-year grant, program outcomes will demonstrate that participants receiving volunteer assistance will be more likely to remain living independently in their homes and increase their social interaction through meal delivery, telephone reassurance calls, and friendly visitors. The food security for low-income individuals will be increased, and PA Medicare beneficiaries will receive free, confidential, and unbiased information on Medicare and/or health insurance-related issues. These service activities will be accomplished through a network of 85 volunteer stations. The target populations to be served includes frail seniors, children, veterans, and individuals living in low-income situations. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) federal investment of \$63,497 will be supplemented by \$6,350 of non-federal funding.

Strengthening Communities

Located in Southwestern Pennsylvania, Westmoreland County provides a combination of suburban, urban, and rural living. The eighth largest county in the state in terms of acreage, it is comprised of 21 townships and over 280 boroughs, cities, towns, and villages. Westmoreland County has an estimated population of 363,395 people: 95.3 % Caucasian, 2.5 % African-American, and 2.10 % designated as other. The county's workforce includes skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled laborers. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of the population is age 55 years old and older, approximately 59,887 individuals are age 65, and 47,837 individuals receive Public Assistance benefits (source: U.S. Census - 2012 estimate).

As of July 2014, Westmoreland County's unemployment rate was 5.4% (source: PA Department of Labor and Industry; Center for Workforce Information & Analysis). The median household income was \$49,734, which is less than the median household income for Pennsylvania at \$52,267 (source:

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U.S. Census Bureau - 2008-2012 American Community Survey). State and federal budget cuts continue to have a significant negative impact on human service and non-profit organizations. Many are unable to meet their goals and provide needed services. The need for a vibrant network of volunteers to meet increasing community needs and assist the elderly is clear, and RSVP of Westmoreland County plays a significant role in helping to meet the community's needs.

RSVP's primary focus area will be Healthy Futures. WCCC's RSVP program will offer a targeted 839 volunteers the opportunity of providing assistance to seniors and low-income families with children various service activities. These opportunities include assisting with meal delivery, Medicare/Medicaid information, health screenings, in-home independent living, food pantries, veterans' assistance, and non-profit initiatives. The service activities will be accomplished through a network of approximately 85 volunteer stations including: Area Agency on Aging, food pantries, food bank, hospitals, libraries, Head Start centers, faith-based organizations, Red Cross, State Health Insurance Counseling program, and non-profit organizations. At the end of the performance period, RSVP expects to engage 839 volunteers who will support the achievement of the following outcomes: number of homebound or older adults and individuals with disabilities who report having increased social ties/perceived social support; number of caregivers of home-bound or older adults and individuals with disabilities who report having increased social support; and number of individuals who report increased food security for themselves and their children as a result of Corporation of National Community Service (CNCS) supported services. The outcomes will be accomplished with CNCS Federal investment of \$63,497, non-federal support provided by WCCC, and donations from our volunteer agencies.

Aging in Place is an initiative that strives to allow seniors and individuals with challenges the opportunity of living independently in their own homes for as long possible or as long as they desire. In order to remain in their homes, the individual needs to feel safe and secure in their home environment and the confidence that they will have access to nutritious meals, medical care, and other essential services. The companionship and support provided by WCCC's RSVP volunteers offers a means to accomplish this initiative. Social interaction, or lack thereof, can be a major obstacle to a senior remaining in their own home. An individual feels secure in their own home if they feel connected to others and to the outside world. Studies show that not only is an individual happier living in their own home, it costs significantly less than nursing home care.

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The goal of the Obesity and Food initiative is to provide support to local food banks, food pantries, and other feeding programs. According to the Westmoreland County Food Bank, there are 43,920 individuals experiencing food insecurity, and 7.1 % of these individuals are 65 or older. There is a growing need in Westmoreland County for food among all age groups; however, this need is the greatest among the county's senior population. Seniors tend to struggle daily with financial issues decisions such as which bills to pay, if they have the funds to purchase their medications, and whether they can afford to buy groceries. Many seniors are able to utilize the Meals on Wheels program or purchase groceries at food pantries, farmer's markets, and fresh express produce trucks.

Volunteers are the backbone of all of these programs and services being provided. The volunteers will assist with participant registration and with the sorting, packaging, and distributing of food. The output will be the number of individuals receiving food from these programs. The outcome for this activity will be the number of individuals that report increased food security for themselves and their family as a result of RSVP supported services. A survey will be given to the participants receiving food at least once a year. Surveys will be reviewed to see if the program is meeting performance goals. In the Feeding America Almanac 2007, volunteers were cited as the lifeline of the emergency food distribution system, citing 90% of all food pantries and 86% of all soup kitchens as utilizing volunteers.

The goal of Access to Care is to ensure that individuals are educated and informed about their health insurance options and programs. Pennsylvania has over 2,091,330 individuals age 65 and older (U.S. Census Bureau - 2013 Population Estimates). Each year it becomes increasingly more difficult for Medicare beneficiaries to understand the ever-changing laws, health insurance options, and drug coverage plans. Access to Care will be complemented by the State Health Insurance Program, APPRISE. The APPRISE Program has specially-trained volunteers to provide free, confidential health insurance counseling. Volunteers operate a state-wide telephone hotline on a weekly basis and answer local calls. These volunteers also assist beneficiaries with addressing prescription issues, comparing Medicare-related health plans, and assisting in Medicare appeals. The output will be the number of phone calls received, and the outcome will be the number of individuals who receive assistance/information.

RSVP will continue to provide and assist with local projects for veterans. Our project has worked

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closely with local student veterans' groups in hosting several joint programs for veterans. The Project has established a Valentines for Veterans program that involves local school groups making valentines for veterans. RSVP veteran volunteers then deliver these handmade valentines to veterans who live in nursing homes or are at the local outpatient and inpatient veteran facilities.

An RSVP veteran "POW's Escape Story" was presented at a veteran's event this year. The Project has also worked with a local veterans group in placing wreaths on veteran grave sites. These programs will continue to be offered. RSVP will continue to work closely with the Director of Veterans Affairs to assist in meeting the veterans' needs as they arise. Veterans will be placed in Healthy Futures activities or other identified focus areas. The output will be the number of veterans who participate in any RSVP activities or receive any RSVP supported assistance. There is no outcome for this activity.

Homebound seniors need access to healthy meals and a feeling of security in their own homes to remain independent. Three hundred twenty-one (321) volunteers will deliver meals through 15 stations in Westmoreland County to approximately 2000 seniors. These seniors will, in turn, remain living independently in their homes as well as have increased social supports.

Low income individuals, senior citizens, children, or the general public need food security. Forty-four (44) RSVP volunteers will serve through six (6) stations to provide approximately 550 individuals with food from the emergency food banks and, therefore, increase their food security.

Medicare-eligible individuals will be better informed of the application process, health insurance coverage options, prescription assistance, appeals, and plan comparisons through the APPRISE program. Individuals can then make more informed choices regarding health care coverage. Seventeen (17) RSVP volunteers will answer 1,400 calls through the state-wide APPRISE Telecenter.

The Project will also focus on Disaster Assistance. Since the terrorist attacks in 2001, there has been an increased awareness of emergency preparedness, especially for the elderly and handicapped living alone in rural areas. Three (3) RSVP volunteers will present Ready PA's Emergency Preparedness presentations to 125 seniors living in rural areas. They will assist in preparing a three-day emergency kit. The program participants will be surveyed to see if their safety awareness has increased. In alignment with being prepared for emergency situations, RSVP will have five (5) volunteers working

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in various areas of the American Red Cross blood drives. RSVP volunteers will assist the Red Cross at blood drives in support of Red Cross goals.

The VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Program will be aided by 34 trained RSVP volunteers who will assist senior citizens, low income individuals, disabled persons, military personnel and students with completion of their state and federal income taxes free of charge. Volunteers will assist approximately 1,500 individuals at 33 different locations. Individuals may be able to save additional monies through tax and rent rebates with this assistance.

One (1) RSVP volunteer will support the Head Start program which provides low cost childcare for those ages 3 - 5. This volunteer will assist in supervising the children and act as a role-model. The goal will be to have ten (10) children complete the Head Start program.

Three (3) RSVP volunteers will visit the elderly in nursing homes through the Ombudsman (patient advocate) Program. They will visit 600 residents in a year and inform them of their rights. Any patient problems will be directed to the Director of the Ombudsman Program. Through the assistance of this program, these seniors will be better informed of their rights.

Those seniors who live alone, are on a fixed income, and/or live below the poverty level can go to the Senior Centers to receive a hot meal and may participate in activities and socialize in a safe environment. One hundred thirty-seven (137) RSVP volunteers will assist Senior Center staff with preparing and serving the food and assisting with the activities/crafts/games at 18 locations.

Due to the declining economy, 40 RSVP volunteers will assist with activities that help local non-profits to remain open to the public. Pre- and post-assessments will be conducted to determine if volunteer management procedures are effective.

The RSVP Project Director, staff, and volunteers attend community meetings, serve on boards to assess community needs, bring together people, mobilize community resources, and promote volunteerism. RSVP project staff work closely with stations and their staff members in efforts to create positions that provide volunteers the opportunity to share their skills, experiences, and abilities. Volunteers enhance their own quality of life by giving back to their community. All stations provide

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volunteers with training and orientation activities. In some situations, more extensive training by professionals may be provided dependent upon the respective field.

Recruitment and Development

WCCC's RSVP Project offers diverse volunteer opportunities to accommodate volunteers of all abilities, skills, and interests and promotes volunteerism. Examples of some of the established quality opportunities are: APPRISE counselors, TAX preparers, Driver Safety Instructors, college tutors, ParentWI Se Bee Kind volunteers (a positive social skill development program for children), and program presenters.

Recruitment of skilled volunteers is a priority of capacity building for both RSVP and the volunteer stations. RSVP has been established in Westmoreland County since the funding agency's inception, and it has attained and maintained a solid reputation for its volunteer activities in the community.

Increased awareness of the program will be achieved through the development of news releases, public service announcements on volunteer/project accomplishments, educational programs offered, and through partnering with other agencies on community and national projects.

The Project's sponsor is Westmoreland County Community College. The college provides RSVP with the use of their professional Public Relations Department for advertising and marketing. RSVP is advertised on WCCC's website, at their seven (7) education centers, marquees, employee and student newsletters, free college tabloid advertisements, and information that is placed in all retiring employees packets. The program also has its own website, and is linked on the Westmoreland County, the Aging and Disability Resource Center, Westmoreland County's Volunteers, and the Volunteer Match websites. These websites help to inform individuals about our program and the available opportunities. Promotional materials, such as brochures, flyers, and ads that explain the program, the need for volunteers, the benefits of volunteering, and the benefits provided by RSVP have been developed. One of the program's brochures is designed to attract Baby Boomers since they are a unique group of potential volunteer recruits. Actual volunteer photos and events are used in advertising when possible. In addition, there are targeted recruitment campaigns to recruit volunteers for stations that are meeting critical community needs, such as disaster preparedness.

RSVP provides representation at Senior Expos and fairs, community and health fairs, WCCC, Area

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Agency on Aging events, farmers markets, golf leagues, and various other community events. The RSVP staff and volunteers give presentations to senior citizen, church, civic, and corporate organizations. The goal of RSVP's marketing strategy is to reach as many people as possible at all economic levels, ethnicities, abilities, education, races, and cultural groups in the Westmoreland County through various media formats. RSVP staff and volunteers also participate in group activities that introduce the program to the general public, i.e., Medication Take Back Day (old unused medications are collected and disposed of), Westmoreland County Food Bank food drive, United Way Day of Caring, Martin Luther King Day, the Make a Difference Day Sock it to Them hat, mitten, and sock collection, and Salvation Army collections. RSVP and AAA also co-sponsor a county-wide Older Adult Spelling Bee. The RSVP director and staff attend community meetings and serve on local boards and/or councils to remain current of community needs, mobilize community resources to enhance the project, and promote volunteerism. RSVP sponsors APPRISE and the APPRISE Telecenter, AARP Tax Counseling for the Elderly, AARP Driver Safety Program, the RSVP Emergency Preparedness Program, and RSVP's Environmental Education Program. The Program works with the Court Advocate Program, Meals on Wheels, tutoring, computer training, veterans programs, faith-based services to the homebound, and numerous other organizations.

Program Management

The Project has signed Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with over 85 volunteer stations which detail the responsibilities of being designated as a station. The Project Director will meet with volunteer stations to explain RSVP and its policies, procedures, responsibilities, job descriptions, recognition, and outcome data collection along with the requirements prohibiting religious, sectarian, and political activities. Staff will work with stations to maintain accurate records of volunteer hours and statistics. Timesheets will be entered monthly into Volunteer Reporter software. Late timesheets will be followed on a monthly basis. MOUs will be updated and reviewed every three years. The Project Director will monitor the volunteer stations through birthday calls made to the volunteers and by verifying their reported volunteer position, visiting stations, reviewing records, and periodic calls to stations. Staff and Volunteer Ambassadors and Advisory Council members will visit stations periodically to conduct a Station Safety Review, including the completion of an Accessibility and Safety Check List.

Statistics for performance measures will be collected semi-annually. Staff will ensure RSVP goals are being met through timesheets, surveys, and detailed record keeping. If it is determined that a station

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is not meeting a community need, it will be assessed and an alternate opportunity will be offered. The new opportunity will better meet Senior Corp priorities while incurring minimal disruption to the volunteers.

Organizational Capability

A full-time Project Director will be paid through CNCS funds and US Department of Labor grant funds awarded to the PA APPRISE Programs with WCCC as a sub-grantee. Amy Halula will serve as the Project Director assisted by a part-time Volunteer Specialist. Amy has a Masters of Arts Degree in Human Services from Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA. The Project Director has 29 years of social service related employment. In addition, a part-time Volunteer Specialist will be hired.

The Project Director attends trainings on a regular basis to improve and ensure quality project programming. The Director also serves on local advisory boards to promote volunteerism, increase program awareness, and expand the RSVP Project. The Project's sponsor, WCCC, is a fully accredited, two-year public postsecondary institution. WCCC operates a main campus in Youngwood and eight off-campus education centers. The community benefits from WCCC through its service to students, the community at large, and its relationships with local business and industry. WCCC supports RSVP in the following ways: by affording the project physical facilities in which to operate, access to a public relations/graphics department, social media, grants department, a fiscal department that provides the record keeping and financial reporting requirements of the grant, mailroom that provides bulk mailing rates, a purchasing department that has established procedures for purchases that ensures costs that are competitive and tax exempt, a human resources department that provides thorough job descriptions and evaluations for staff, and college vehicles available for program-related travel. The College supports ongoing professional development. WCCC employs a full-time Director of Grants, Grants Coordinator, Grants Technician, and Grants Accountant who all work cooperatively with the RSVP project staff and volunteers.

Other

The status of Required Supplemental Documents have been addressed in the Documents Section of this e-grant. Required documents sent to The Curtis Center, Philadelphia, PA.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

Not Applicable.