

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

The Senior Citizens Association (SCA) in Florence County is a private, non-profit, community-based organization. SCA's mission is to provide a full range of services to Florence County's senior citizens. The purpose of these services is to promote the physical, mental and social well-being of senior citizens, enhancing their quality of life and providing assistance in maintaining independence and personal growth.

SCA is requesting \$24,455 in federal funds to continue to support 200 volunteers for the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program. SCA will provide \$12,484 as non-federal matching funds. Volunteers will provide 25,531 hours of program activity that include: food distribution, medical transportation, emergency preparedness and disaster response, juvenile justice arbitration, recycling education for youth, tax preparation, and other human service needs. The primary focus area is: Healthy Futures. Without this commitment from our volunteer staff, Florence County would see much higher levels of: unsatisfactory resolution of juvenile criminal cases, senior food insecurity, loneliness and isolation that is faced by many in the target population.

RSVP volunteers stand ready to continue the good work they have been performing for many years.

At the end of the 3-year grant period outcomes of this service activity include:

- Improved access to primary and preventive health care for our Veterans;
- Increased green training opportunities that may lead to decreased energy and water consumption or improve at-risk ecosystems;
- Reduced levels of senior food insecurity and hunger;
- Increased ability for seniors to remain in their own homes independently with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible;
- Improved student outcomes through tutoring and mentoring.

## Strengthening Communities

Geographic service area

Florence has a rich history and an abundance of natural beauty however, it is the people of Florence that make the community strong. RSVP volunteers, diverse, passionate and dedicated contribute to the growth of Florence on a daily basis, through good times and hard times. These devoted individuals are part of the reason Florence is thriving. They represent the vibrant spirit that encompasses Florence.

Strategically located at the intersection of interstates 95 and 20, Florence is the principal city of

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the Pee Dee Region of South Carolina. Recently, the city has undergone a large downtown revitalization, which has included: a new Florence County Museum, the Frances Marion Performing Arts Center, refurbishing the historic Hotel Florence, the new City Center building and many other exciting projects.

Because of this growth, more industry has been attracted to Florence. Examples of new industries include, Otis Elevator, Florence Manufacturing and Business Incubator, expansion of Florence Darlington Technical College as well as several new financial institutions and restaurants.

Our sister communities include Coward, Timmonsville, Lake City, Olanta, Pamplico, Effingham and Johnsonville. These communities move at a slightly slower pace and offer businesses such as bean and tobacco farming, light industry and residential development. In the spotlight is Lake City, adding a new hotel/convention center and new restaurant. One of Florence County's greatest needs is to end senior hunger and foster senior independence.

Most readily available jobs are related to the service industry yielding a relatively low average wage of \$9.05 per hour, according to SC Works. Unemployment in Florence County is at 7.1% as compared with the State of South Carolina at 5.7%. Approximately 35.6% of all Florence County residents receive federally assisted medical coverage either Medicaid or the CHIP program as compared to 16% receiving Medicaid in the State of South Carolina. This means that there is a higher concentration of residents living below or just slightly above the poverty line. Many seniors who receive Medicaid do not qualify for the SNAP food assistance program, which contributes to increased food insecurity for this population. South Carolina ranks second in the nation for senior hunger risk.

### Area of Need/Primary Focus Area

Currently SCA in Florence County has 223 RSVP volunteers working to resolve community problems and filling the gaps in service identified through formal and informal Community Needs Assessments. Volunteer job descriptions are developed to meet specific community needs and National Performance Measures. For example, in the Healthy Futures focus area there are volunteer opportunities that range from meal preparation and delivery to providing veteran's transportation to medical appointments. SCA has 35 RSVP volunteer stations in operation at this point, and new volunteer stations will be selected and developed based on community needs. Stations are in place to address seniors ability to live independently, meet educational needs and to foster intergenerational projects.

RSVP brings skilled individuals from diverse backgrounds together by participating in and offering service opportunities through community projects: home delivered meals, AARP tax

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preparation, maintaining the Florence Cultural Garden, school-based recycling projects and other intergenerational programs, volunteering in the large local hospitals and providing a host of other vital services. These projects build support from schools, local government, funders/businesses, media and other community organizations.

According to the US Census Bureau, Florence County boasts a population of 138,326 (58% urban, 42% rural), representing a 1.1% increase from the 2010 Census results. In Florence County, there are 35,634 residents in the 55 and older population. This is 26% of the County's residents. Twelve percent of those 65 and older in Florence County live below the Federal poverty guidelines compared with 9.4% of all Americans 65 and over (US Census Survey 2008- 2012). Of those seniors, approximately 18.43% or 6,567 individuals combat hunger issues every day. Based on these facts, RSVP selected the Healthy Futures Focus Area as the primary focal point.

### Healthy Futures

RSVP volunteers prepared 43,143 meals in the past fiscal year for delivery to 357 homebound Seniors in Florence County. Homebound individuals are defined as persons unable to leave their personal residence due to disability, injury, or age; this may be a short or long term need. For example, a short-term client may have a broken hip that prevents them from driving for a few months but after the injury has healed they no longer require help to live independently. Whereas a long-term client may be confined to a wheelchair and unable to drive permanently and will need assistance on an ongoing basis.

Florence county veterans often need assistance with transportation to their medical appointments at the VA hospital in Columbia, South Carolina and the RSVP provides that transport four days per week. In the last fiscal year RSVP volunteer drivers assisted 642 patients to their medical appointments on time.

### Information Collection and Management

The Senior Citizens Association (SCA) and RSVP ensures local input into program design and evaluation by collaborating with local service providers, the United Way, area churches, and community leaders regarding the needs of the community at large. By fully participating with the area Chamber of Commerce, as well as with interagency groups and other community meetings, SCA can accurately assess where the greatest community needs reside. As a member of the Florence County Collaborative Council, a group that identifies and addresses needs throughout the SCA program area. The agency will keep abreast of current gaps in service and/or service delivery. SCA will also scrutinize community needs assessments as they become available in rendering program

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decisions; thereby creating responsive, dynamic volunteer opportunities tailored to the Florence County area. RSVP also conducts regular surveys of its volunteers, program recipients and volunteer station managers to ensure the appropriate services are provided to Florence County residents and to track the outcomes of the services provided. These surveys allow successful measurement and accurate outcome for program activities.

### **Community Awareness**

Working closely with the RSVP Advisory Council and SCA's Marketing Coordinator, the RSVP Director builds public awareness and support for the program. By utilizing Public Service Announcements, inclusion in the agency's quarterly newsletters, performing individual and group presentations and through an interactive presence at civic meetings, the RSVP Director provides a positive public face for the RSVP in Florence County.

### **Community Resources**

RSVP volunteers work to support existing community resources in the Florence County area. Without the hard work and dedication of the RSVP volunteers, some non-profits organizations would be unable to provide services to at-risk populations. At one local food bank, they were able to help distribute over 500 emergency food boxes to needy individuals with the help of three RSVP volunteers. This project helped to address hunger at a time of potential crisis.

Keeping accurate monthly records of all volunteer participation and comparing outcomes of the service for one reporting period to the next, RSVP ensures that our efforts in the focus area of Healthy Futures meet National Performance guidelines. RSVP receives monthly logs of all volunteer hours completed from each station manager. These hours are then transferred into the Volunteer Reporter system for use in reporting.

RSVP enhances the capacity of Florence County's community organizations and institutions by matching volunteers' skills and talents to meet the needs of the community partner; thereby allowing the organization to serve more of their target population. For example, RSVP partners with the Veteran's Affairs Office, the Pee Dee Veteran's Council and with the Pee Dee Veterans Resource Center to ensure that existing and upcoming needs for veterans in Florence are met by offering resource and referral services. According to SC Thrive, a benefits advocacy program, in the upcoming months an additional 50,000 veterans will be discharged from duty and will settle in South Carolina. In addition to providing transportation for these veterans, RSVP will also assist with advocacy and companionship programs.

## **Recruitment and Development**

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### Marketing and Recruitment

RSVP's plan is to create highly positive assignments where volunteers have the opportunity to share their experiences, abilities and skills to improve our community. RSVP recruits volunteers by using SCA's extensive marketing resources targeting the senior population. These include: the One Call Now automated telephone system, the RSVP article in the quarterly agency newsletter, an RSVP page on the agency website, Public Service Announcements on the local television and radio stations, and informational community and individual presentations. RSVP develops a community presence by participating in community meetings, disbursing professionally --designed, attractive flyers and business cards as well as other marketing materials. SCA is a sponsor of the annual Senior Expo, regional fair that attracts over 2000 senior citizens. In addition, SCA operates two senior centers with over 1000 members and this provides many opportunities for recruiting potential volunteers and maintaining positive relationships with current volunteers.

### Application Process/ Encouraging Diversity

All interested individuals are encouraged to apply for volunteer opportunities. Every effort will be made to offer reasonable accommodation so a volunteer can access the volunteer station and so they can work comfortably while performing their assigned tasks. By placing application information in key locations throughout Florence County, RSVP increases easy access to the volunteer experience. RSVP will use interpreters when necessary to engage new or current volunteers.

RSVP has an open door policy with regard to recruitment and represents all sections of society. We have many veterans in our volunteer pool, some of whom work directly with our area veterans and their families. There are all age groups 55 and over represented, however, we are looking to recruit those in the 55-59 group. Many of our volunteers do have certain disabling conditions, but they don't consider themselves to be disabled and this makes statistical tracking difficult. We encourage all applicants at RSVP.

RSVP ensures a high-quality volunteer experience from the beginning of the application Process with a Volunteer Interest Survey (VIS), conveniently attached to the Volunteer Registration form. Using this direct input method, RSVP encourages the applicant to define their ideal volunteer position. After the application and survey are completed, the potential volunteer is scheduled for a personal interview with the RSVP Director.

Throughout this interactive process, the broad goals stated in the VIS are developed and the individual's interests, skills and aptitudes are clarified and defined. Applicants are encouraged to detail their work history, volunteer history and current interests with the Director to ensure the volunteer's

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personal objectives are met. The volunteer also receives a Volunteer Handbook for future reference.

The next phase of the interview entails matching the volunteer's skill set to an existing volunteer station. When necessary, RSVP develops a new station that fits not only the new volunteer's profile but also fills a previously unmet community need. For example, volunteers are now in place working with the Pee Dee Veteran's Council to assist veterans in completing their applications for benefits, which has been a great need for our senior veterans.

### **Volunteer Station Development and Management**

When developing new volunteer stations, RSVP adheres to best practices for training volunteers. The potential stations must fit a need: based on a formal or informal Community Needs Assessment and in alignment with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) Strategic Plan. The RSVP Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) clearly and concisely outlines that the stations must provide volunteer orientation, in-service instruction and any special training as needed.

Station coordinators are expected to provide an up-to-date job description for each volunteer job they supervise. Often, the volunteer station coordinators refer new volunteers to the RSVP Director for additional training as needed. RSVP's plan is to keep open communication between the Director, the station managers and the volunteers to address identified community and provide ongoing training.

Volunteer station managers are usually the manager of the agency or as in some of the larger sites the volunteer coordinator would be the manager of the site. For example, at the SCA Home Delivered Meals program, the kitchen manager is the station manager and at Carolinas Hospital System the Volunteer Coordinator is the station manager. Volunteer station managers agree to track volunteer hours and to submit them to the RSVP Director monthly.

Volunteer stations are contacted at least quarterly to determine station needs and to keep the lines of communication open. Most stations are in contact with the Director on a monthly basis. These contacts may be to submit volunteer hours, to help define volunteer training needs, to review RSVP guidelines or to add new volunteers that have contacted the station supervisor. At these times, station supervisors are asked for input to improve the RSVP volunteer experience. An annual survey is sent to each volunteer station supervisor to ensure that RSVP is responsive to his or her needs. Also, any required training for the station supervisors is provided by RSVP.

### **Volunteer Development**

RSVP provides ongoing support and assistance for volunteers. RSVP has instituted a system of quarterly staff meetings for volunteers placed in similar assignments. The structure of these meetings consists of an invitation to attend with at least two weeks' prior notice, an agenda of discussion topics

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facilitated by the RSVP Director, an opportunity for each volunteer to share his or her current volunteer experience and any suggestions they may have for improving the delivery of services at their volunteer station.

### **Volunteer Recognition**

An annual recognition luncheon is held each year to honor RSVP volunteers and stations. At this event, volunteers are given a chance to look back at their accomplishments from the previous year and to participate in the excitement of the next year's goals. It is also an opportunity to interact with other volunteers, relax and have fun. The RSVP Director ensures that volunteer efforts and accomplishments are in the local newspapers (Golden Life, News Journal, Morning News, and the agency newsletter). The RSVP Director also features a bulletin board that highlights the activities and accomplishments of volunteers throughout the year.

Because of these efforts, about 50% of RSVP volunteers have served more than 5 years, and 20% have served more than ten years. Our extensive process of matching volunteering with the right opportunity and having open communication with the Director ensures that volunteers know they are valued which increases retention.

### **Program Management**

As the sponsor of RSVP, the Senior Citizens Association in Florence County ensures consistent and transparent management of all RSVP volunteers and each volunteer station. Together with SCA's community partners, the Project Director develops new volunteer stations to meet community needs and comply with RSVP program regulations. RSVP works directly with the volunteer station managers to modify and update volunteer assignments to assure smooth, effective program delivery. Currently, 35 volunteer stations are utilizing the skills and talents of 223 RSVP volunteers.

The process begins with a thorough review of Performance Measurement guidelines to make certain the stations can provide service in at least one of the six RSVP focus areas. In Florence County, we make sure that all of the recorded volunteer hours are appropriate by using a three-phase approach to volunteer/station management.

#### **Phase one: Recruitment of Volunteer Stations**

To ensure that volunteers are performing their assigned service activities, all prospective volunteer stations will provide the RSVP Director with a copy of their mission statement and give a general overview of what job/s they need RSVP volunteers to perform. Once this material is reviewed, the Director meets with the potential station manager and they review the RSVP Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) together. The Project Manager can highlight acceptable types of work that a

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volunteer can perform as well as those prohibited under the guidelines of RSVP. Once all roles under RSVP are clear to the potential site manager, and once the Director has determined that the potential station fits RSVP guidelines, the MOU will be signed and the volunteer station can begin utilizing eligible RSVP volunteers.

RSVP has been a vital presence in the Florence County community for over 40 years. Many times the potential station manager will make the first contact to begin the process of volunteer station development. In essence, the station manager may have already heard of the RSVP and reaches out to the project manager to initiate the volunteer station process.

There are also times when the need arises to research and find new potential stations as the result of a formal or informal community needs survey that highlights a Focus Area that requires additional attention. At that point, the Director will conduct recruitment activities. Telephoning or emailing area service providers to ascertain where a specific need could best be met and whether that service provider would be willing to be a volunteer station. Sometimes a group mailing to potential volunteer stations outlining the need and asking interested parties to contact the Director with questions or to set up an interview is used. Presenting the needs at community meetings is another effective recruitment strategy.

Phase 2: Station and Volunteer Development.

After the station is keyed into the Volunteer Reporter system, the Director examines the lists of current volunteers and determines if there are existing volunteers who can fill the opportunities at the new volunteer station. If there is a potential candidate already enrolled as an RSVP volunteer, the Project Director contacts the individual, then schedules and conducts a screening interview to assess their capacity to fill the new volunteer opportunity.

If no such candidate is currently an RSVP volunteer, the new volunteer opportunities are posted on the RSVP bulletin board and are made known to all volunteers and SCA members. The Project Director would also do basic volunteer recruiting to spread the word. The SCA quarterly newsletter is another tool for these new volunteer opportunities to be advertised.

As interested volunteers are registered and screened, either the volunteer or the Director calls or emails the station manager and provides volunteer contact information. The station manager, the volunteer and the Director are in contact throughout the process. In addition to the MOU, the volunteer handbook also outlines permissible RSVP activities. Volunteer Station files are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) are current and focus area guidelines are met.

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All volunteer stations fall within the program design for RSVP at this time. If at some future date, a participating volunteer station's mission changes to fall outside the parameter of the national performance measures for RSVP programming, then the volunteer could either choose to become a regular community volunteers in another program or could choose to join one of the other RSVP volunteer stations. Converting the service station to a capacity building station is an option and RVSP would certainly entertain that idea if the need arose during the confines of this grant period. During the transition between volunteer appointments, all efforts would be made to minimize disruption for the volunteer and the volunteer station as well ensure that all volunteers are eligible to participate in RSVP.

### Continuous Improvement

The RSVP Director analyzes volunteer needs, trainings and concerns on an ongoing basis. In addition, quarterly volunteer staff trainings on professionalism and other job--related issues are provided. Project staff and Advisory Council members are encouraged to attend all available and appropriate trainings on the local, state and national level.

Volunteer staff will be informed of upcoming SCA activities via the quarterly newsletter and through the events and activities calendar posted in the SCA senior center lobby. Informational brochures and links to webpages are available to all RSVP volunteers on such topics as: fraud prevention, financial planning, healthy living, and many other topics.

As interest is expressed, the Project Director offers trainings and informational presentations on a variety of topics for the volunteer staff. Many RSVP volunteers use email on a regular basis, so the Director is developing an email list as an additional point of contact. Additionally, RSVP is prominent on the SCA webpage and will be contributing to the SCA Facebook page.

### Phase 3: Reporting, monitoring and advisement

RSVP program data is recorded into a volunteer software system (Volunteer Reporter) by the Project Director. Volunteer Reporter contains a wealth of information critical for tracking the RSVP Performance Measures. The data is updated regularly and has proven to be an effective tool in information management. Individual volunteer paper files are audited periodically for a completed Volunteer Registration Form, a current job description and up-to-date contact information.

The RSVP Advisory Council is a group of persons that the project sponsor formally organizes to ensure community participation in the project. Membership is comprised of individuals capable of helping the sponsor meet its administrative and program responsibilities including fund raising,

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publicity, and evaluating programming for impact.

The Advisory Council meets monthly (excluding June, July and August) to review and enhance the quality of existing programming, and for strategic planning. The council members are encouraged and welcome to attend any of the state and local trainings. New Advisory Council members receive an orientation.

### **Primary Focus**

The Primary Focus area for RSVP continues to be Healthy Futures. Of the 25,532 total volunteer hours in our last fiscal year, 6,742 hours were dedicated to the Healthy Futures impact area. This represents 26% of the volunteer time spent delivering hours in the Primary focus area. Of these hours, 4,452 were spent in the Home Delivered Meals Program, 1,994 in the Veteran's Medical Transportation program and 296 were spent teaching aerobics classes at the senior center. In the Veteran's Transportation program, RSVP volunteers delivered 642 patient rides and traveled 24,939 miles in the past fiscal year.

### **Organizational Capability**

The Senior Citizens Association is known in the community and has been in operation over 45 years. The community is familiar with our history, service delivery, programs, volunteers services, and/or business performance that can attest to our past services and programs. SCA follows strict guidelines in the sound programmatic and fiscal oversight and day-to-day operational support of the RSVP program. It is also important that SCA complies with all RSVP program requirements and to ensure that accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources are used according to regulations.

Fiscal audits are an important part of the planning process and the audits have been performed by Burch, Oxner, & Seale Co. CPA'S, PA. It is also important that evidence of SCA's fiscal ability to assure those safeguards are provided by a certified audit. Our annual auditor's statement serves as our agreement that all funds including RSVP funds are accounted for in accordance with generally accepted accounting procedures. SCA has consistently received clean audits and continues to meet all financial requirements outlined in this proposal. The audit includes the agency capital assets, facilities, equipment, depreciation and supplies.

The SCA's financial software management system is QuickBooks for Non-Profits. The agency has been using this software at least 15 years. There are no delinquencies, bankruptcies or contractual cancellations or terminations with our organization due to our failure to meet any financial requirements or obligations. We have been successful in managing other federal grants in

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the past and have continued to maintain other federal grants to this day.

SCA understand that you are only as good as the players on the team and our goal is to create a productive team. We also understand the importance of creating a business structure in such a way that employees and volunteers are aware of their job responsibilities, receive ongoing training and know how to carry out their jobs/assignments.

The following current staff is assigned to the project and work together to accomplish the program objectives. Linda Mitchell Johnson, Executive Director, works with the RSVP Project Director to oversee the development of RSVP initiatives and to raise the profile of the program through the local, state and national networks of which she is a part. The Executive Director is responsible for the successful leadership and management of the organization according to the strategic direction set by the SCA Board of Directors. Linda has developed an operational plan, which incorporates goals and objectives that work towards the strategic direction of both SCA and RSVP.

Debbie Winchester is the RSVP Project Director and she supervises the day-to-day operations of the Project. Her responsibilities are: recruitment, development, placement and support of volunteers as well as the development and monitoring of volunteer stations. She also ensures that volunteer and volunteer station files are securely stored and privacy/confidentiality is maintained. Debbie also participates in community and regional groups to ensure that the RSVP is using the most current and accurate data available on which to make program decisions. Training is also provided to Debbie on a national, state and local level as needed.

Kaylee Porter, Accountant, is tasked with providing daily governance of all SCA funds including all RSVP funds, ensuring that the monies are spent according to fiscal policy. All processes and controls are in place to ensure that funds are assigned correctly, that safeguards are in place regarding the recording of transactions, that the reconciliation of accounts is accomplished on a monthly basis, and that expense conforms to the budget. The accountant ensures accountability in the use of federal funds and the local cash match.

SCA has a policies and procedures manual which outlines how funds will be accounted for when received. The manual also addresses financial management procedures. All funds, including federal, State, RSVP, donations, voluntary contributions and cost sharing are accounted for on a daily basis as described in the SCA's policies and procedures manual. All RSVP funds are recorded and receipted, through direct deposit to the account, general ledger records and financial reports are kept by the Accountant and are available at all times for any scheduled or unscheduled compliance review. The Accountant informs the RSVP Director through the profit/loss reports, receipts of all direct deposits,

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budget reports and any reports that need to be generated in QuickBooks.

The Accountant maintains these records in a current status and provides full monthly financial reports to the Board of Directors for their review and acceptance. These financial reports are discussed and reviewed on a regular basis throughout each month by the Accountant and Executive Director. After the monthly bank statement is reconciled by the Accountant, the Executive Director signs the statement each month. The RSVP Director is also given financial reports related to the RSVP when necessary to review for the Advisory Council or herself.

The Association has made every effort to develop and implement internal policies and guidelines to ensure the operational procedures to provide governance and manage risk in such areas of accounting, personnel management, purchasing and emergency/security plan that have all been approved by the Board of Director. All SCA policies are written and approved by the Board of Directors. All employees receive an updated copy of the Personnel Handbook as well as receive training on it annually. New personnel will receive training within two weeks of employment. SCA values the continuation of services and wants to keep the lines of communication open for our seniors, volunteers, members and staff.

RSVP has worked hard to recruit strong volunteers for the RSVP programs. Volunteers who are dedicated, focused, disciplined, have a positive attitude, organized, and have strong work ethics in working with the community are individuals we target. We have partnerships in the community with those who can provide references on RSVP's great services.

We take volunteer services seriously by working hard to create new ideas, an innovative approach to problem solving, community building and generating positive outcomes. SCA consider our service unique and different from other in this area because we offer a one-stop approach where volunteer services are offered, seniors receive nutritious meals; can socialize with others; receive the benefits of state of the art senior centers and obtain information, all while participating in a variety of other activities, programs and recreation designed to improve the older adults' quality of life.

SCA is working hard to improve the lives of others; to show value and respect to those we serve each day. We will continue to address unmet needs of our community and the RSVP program has played a vital part in this goal.

As the chosen provider, RSVP is confident that we can continue to provide outstanding volunteer service in our community. SCA is excited about the opportunity to apply for this grant, because the purpose of healthy futures will help us to build a long, happy, and meaningful experience for our volunteers and clients in Florence County.

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I believe that we are a strong candidate for this proposal based on the agency 45 years of experience, past performance, relationship with our volunteers, and our desire to make each one of our volunteer special. We are also true to our mission to RSVP and serving our volunteers to the best of our abilities through hard work, integrity, kindness and excellence.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration regarding this great opportunity.

### **Other**

NA

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

NA