

Narratives

Executive Summary

An estimated 260 RSVP volunteers will serve in DeKalb, Noble and Steuben Counties. Some of their activities will include: Support for Veterans in Rural Communities by providing transportation to and from hospitals and medical appointments in Fort Wayne and Indianapolis; Financial Literacy VITA, preparing Federal and Indiana Income Taxes; Housing, working with Habitat for Humanity to build new homes; Obesity and Food, providing education and food resources to low and moderate income families; Tutoring children in public schools; and Community Based Mentoring. The primary focus area of this project is Healthy Futures. At the end of the three-year grant, 2,000 individuals will receive healthy food education and resources from community gardens, 20 students will increase academic performance in literacy and math, 10 children will have improved academic engagement, 12 economically disadvantaged individuals will be transitioned into new housing, 25 rural veterans will have transportation to and from medical appointments in Fort Wayne and Indianapolis, 15 volunteers will be trained to assist in disasters, 600 individuals will have Federal and Indiana Income taxes prepared, 1,200 children will receive one or more of the following: eye screening, warm winter coats and/or backpacks filled with school supplies; 1,500 individuals will receive emergency food, and 1,000 families will be educated in how to create family disaster kits. The CNCS federal investment of \$82,048 will be supplemented by \$59,476 in local resources.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Inc. is a state licensed, accredited social service agency providing a comprehensive range of services to families and individuals since 1922. The mission statement of Catholic Charities is as follows: "Catholic Charities serves those in need as Christ would have us do." The agency is a member of Catholic Charities USA, the Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC), and is accredited by Council on Accreditation, Inc. Additionally, the agency is recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals, fulfills the requirements of the Better Business Bureau, and complies with United Way Standards.

Strengthening Communities

Primary Focus Area-DeKalb, Noble and Steuben are rural northeast Indiana counties consisting of mostly flat lands used primarily for farming. The area also contains many small lakes and rivers and has a temperate climate. However in the winter the area is often affected by lake-effect snow from Lake Michigan, often causing emergency snow and ice conditions. In the spring and summer months the area has in the past also produced tornados and high winds which may cause downed trees and loss of electrical service. RSVP taps the skills and talents of volunteers aged 55 and older to meet a

Narratives

wide range of important community needs to make a dramatic difference in their communities. Research conducted by Indiana Youth Institute (IYI) reflect that in 2012 food insecurity was present in 20.2% of children in DeKalb County, 21.6% of children in Noble County and 20.9% of children in Steuben County. This same research showed that 11.5% of DeKalb residents, 11% of Noble residents and 11.6% of Steuben residents received food stamps. During that same time IYI research showed poverty rates in the counties as DeKalb 12.8%, Noble 14% and Steuben 13.2%, however the number of children living in poverty is 17% in DeKalb, 21.2% in Noble and 20.5% in Steuben leading to the large percentage of children on free or reduced lunch to reach 43.3% in DeKalb, 53.2% in Noble and 47.6% in Steuben. Food insecurity also affects active and retired military families. According to the 2014 Feeding America report, one in five (20%) of households served by the Feeding America network has at least one member who has ever served in the military. According to Brian Lamm, the DeKalb County Veterans' Service officer, there is a food security issue for handicapped veterans as well as older veterans.

CANI (Community Action of Northeast Indiana) reports that a high number of their current clients (whose income is at, or below than 120% of poverty) are working two low-paying jobs with no benefits. A part-time, temporary, or low- wage job doesn't mean there is enough money to support a family-especially if something else goes wrong. People make choices between food and medicine, transportation, utilities, education or housing. Jane Avery, Executive Director of Community Harvest Food Bank of Northeast Indiana reports that hunger is a volatile issue. "You break your arm. Your car engine goes out. Your furnace goes out. That's just called life," Avery said. "But when you're living paycheck to paycheck, it doesn't really allow you to build up a nest egg for some of these issues."

The Feeding America Northeast Indiana Report 2011- of clients served at Community Harvest Food Bank:

- 44% report having to choose between paying for food or paying for utilities,
- 40% had to choose between paying for food or paying for their rent or mortgage
- 35% had to choose between paying for food or paying for medical care
- 39% had to choose between paying for food or paying for transportation
- 40% of families report at least one member of the household is a veteran or active military member

Focus groups held with the United Ways and Community Foundations in all 3 counties have identified nutrition and food security as a top priority. Children with food security issues were

Narratives

identified as a priority as children often will go without or are limited to only one meal a day during the weekends when schools are not in session. Some of the families indicated that the children receive most of their nutritional needs from the schools at the free-and reduced-lunch and breakfast programs.

As President Obama stated on August 26, 2014 "The bond between our forces and our citizens has to be a sacred trust ... upholding our trust with our veterans is not just a matter of policy, it is a moral obligation." The Department of Veteran Affairs 2013 statistics reflect that 7% of the residents of our 3-county service area are veterans or a total of 8,650. According to the 2014 Feeding America report, one in five (20%) of the households served by Feeding America has at one member who has served in the military.

Primary Focus Area Outputs and Outcomes- Volunteers in Healthy Futures will provide education and increased food security to families in the community through efforts including providing healthy meal planning, working with fresh vegetables from community gardens, cooking classes, recipes and by providing increased food security to families in need of fresh produce, lean meats, non-processed foods, and locations where they may access these services. Families in need of food will feel that through this process they will be able to achieve a greater level of food security. Lead volunteers who have achieved and been recognized as master gardeners will instruct other volunteers in the process of community gardening including design layout, crop selection and harvesting. Volunteers will also solicit vegetable seeds and seedlings which will be used in the starting of the garden. Fresh produce will be made available to individuals and families experiencing food insecurity. RSVP volunteers will receive instruction and also work with Purdue Extension agents and lead volunteers who would include retired home economic teachers to offer classes to individuals who are using the fresh produce. Classes would include canning, freezing and cooking of fresh produce, and provide recipes and meal planning for these families. Lead volunteers will also train volunteers in community services available to assist families in obtaining services including but not limited to SNAP benefits, food pantry locations and referrals to healthy eating/cooking classes that will be available at different locations throughout the 3-county areas. Food insecure families will be served at food banks, community gardens and soup kitchens. One hundred volunteers will serve an average of 20 families per month spending an average of 15 minutes for a total of 500 hours per month x 12 months per year for a total of 6,000 hours. Volunteers will assist food pantries in stocking shelves, collecting and distributing products for clients and identifying emergency needs of the client. Lead volunteers will continue working with Walmart Distribution Center, Tyson truckers, E.R. English truckers and independent truckers to obtain surplus

Narratives

fresh food for the food pantries. Volunteers will also work with area service organizations, churches and industries to collect food on a regular basis. Families will indicate that this food will provide them with emergency food, thereby increasing their food security level. Beneficiaries of emergency food will include first-time clients at food pantries, who have had a personal emergency such as a lay-off, job loss, fires or natural disasters. Seventy volunteers will serve 1500 first-time emergency clients with food assistance. Volunteers who serve will receive instructions from the food pantry supervisors. Seventy volunteers will serve an average of 4 hours per week stocking, collecting and distributing products to clients x 52 weeks per year for a total of 14,560 hours per year.

Statistical Data Collection- The DeKalb, Noble and Steuben County RSVP Statistical Data Collection Handbook contains data collection procedures, schedules and protocols. This handbook will be utilized to maximize uniformity in the procedures and adherence to the annual data collection schedule. Surveys are designed to measure the approved CNCS Performance Measures included in the RSVP grant. In the past trained RSVP Volunteer Data Collection Specialists have overseen data collection and will continue serving in this leadership capacity by administering CNCS data collection instruments and supervise collection of surveys data. All RSVP volunteer statisticians will receive training in current data collection to eliminate bias and ensure uniformity in the procedure. Surveys will include written, verbal and computerized data collection. Sample surveys will be distributed to a test group to analyze the questions and assure that those being surveyed understand the information that is being requested. Upon review of the first results corrections, if needed, will be made to the surveys before administering them to the target area. Data will be collected during March, April and May or when services are rendered as appropriate, analyzed and reported to the Statistical Review Committee. Committee members will certify the results obtained from clients responses and present the results to the RSVP director and staff member assigned to data collection for verification of outcome results. Results will be retained for a period of 7 years for possible review from CNCS.

Recruitment and Development

Station assignments will utilize the strengths of volunteers, provide meaningful service and assist with documentation and statistical data collection in CNCS Focus areas. Station Managers will receive a RSVP Station Manual including information on the CNCS Focus areas and RSVP volunteer benefits. Stations sign a formal Memorandum of Understanding and agree to allow data collection which is used to evaluate and demonstrate volunteer impact in achieving CNCS work plan goals. Stations are required to submit documentation of nonprofit status, agency handicapped accessibility, safe environment statement and volunteer job descriptions when requesting volunteers.

Narratives

Serving through RSVP offers maximum flexibility and choice to its volunteers. The program matches the personal interests and skills of older Americans with opportunities to help solve community problems, and invites participants to serve for as many hours as they are able and willing to serve. The program also offers important benefits to participants, including supplemental insurance while serving, leadership opportunities, and pre-service orientation and recognition of their volunteer service. RSVP staff will recruit volunteers through several venues, including but not limited to the following: civic organizations, churches, community and faith-based organizations, governmental units, local clubs, newspaper articles, radio and pamphlets. Each new volunteer completes an interview process to discuss opportunities for service in their areas of interest including leadership capacity. Stations will provide diverse opportunities, allowing volunteers the opportunity to take leadership roles in such areas as resource development, lead volunteer, trainers and project managers. Training opportunities will include IRS Tax Certification, Healthy Food Planning with Purdue Home Extension Agents, Volunteer Reception Centers through COAD, disaster training including First Aid/CPR, Mass Care, Shelter Management, and Emergency Response Vehicle training through the American Red Cross, Master Gardeners, training in available community resources that may be utilized by clients needing nutritional resources and RSVP Volunteer Data Collection Statistician. Trainings will include curriculum, written materials and surveys to measure effectiveness. Many stations offer training unique to their mission. CNCS outcomes will be reported to volunteers to demonstrate the change that their service has made in the community. Volunteers will feel that they are making a difference and hence feel the quality of their lives being enhanced. An annual volunteer survey will be utilized to improve programming and to measure volunteer satisfaction with volunteer assignments. RSVP will use every effort including social media, print media, and local radio to show the volunteers that provides measurable and documented improvements to their community. Our strongest recruiting tool is the experienced, trained and enthusiastic RSVP volunteer as they often bring in friends to volunteer as well.

Demographics-The 3-county area has a combined population of 124,235, according to the U.S. Census Bureau 2013 estimate the population from each county are as follows; DeKalb, 42,307, Noble, 47,570 and Steuben, 34,358. Estimates from the U.S. Census for 2013 shows the following percent of white population per county is Steuben, 97.3%, Noble, 97.4% and DeKalb, 97.6%. The Latino population is Steuben, 3.3%, Noble, 9.9% and DeKalb, 2.7%, and the African-American population is Steuben .8%,

Narratives

Noble .7% and DeKalb .5%. The larger cities include Auburn, Angola, Kendallville, Garrett and Ligonier. The 2013 US Census quick facts statistics reflect that 7.7% of the residents of our 3-county service area are veterans with 3,231 in DeKalb, 3,444 in Noble and 2,872 in Steuben for a total of 9,547. Indiana.gov stats Indiana 2013 has listed unemployment rates in the 3-county service area as follows: DeKalb at 7.3%, Noble at 7.6% and Steuben at 7.5%. RSVP has a current base of veterans who serve as volunteers. Through the leadership of Advisory Council members who are themselves veterans and through working with local American Legions, RSVP will continue to develop opportunities to serve veterans and to have veterans serve as volunteers. RSVP, with the assistance of the Noble County Community Foundation and its division of Celebrate Diversity, is able to assist with any translation needed to reach out to the Hispanic community. RSVP also strives to reach out to all socio-economic groups, having volunteers who have been CFO's, banking officers, retired educators, business owners, handicapped persons, and those who have had to struggle with finances all their lives.

RSVP conducts both formal and informal recognition of volunteers throughout the year. A formal recognition luncheon is held in November recognizing volunteers for their service. Stations are also encouraged to provide recognition for their volunteers. Informal recognition includes thank-you notes, luncheons, a quarterly newsletter, and through the Catholic Charities website and newsletters which highlight volunteer achievements. Outcomes are reported to volunteers on a regular basis to demonstrate the change that their service has made. This message will also be conveyed through articles that will be submitted to local papers.

Program Management

Stations will sign a formal Memorandum of Understanding with RSVP and agree to allow data collection which is used to evaluate and demonstrate volunteer impact in achieving CNCS work plan goals. Stations are required to submit documentation of nonprofit status, agency handicapped accessibility, safe environment statement and volunteer job descriptions when requesting volunteers. Stations will also be informed through the Memorandum of areas that volunteers are unable to participate in including: not being allowed to replace paid workers or staff and not participating in political activity. The RSVP Volunteer Interview process will verify age and eligibility of each RSVP volunteer. A copy of the CIMA Volunteer Insurance Policy will be provided to RSVP Volunteer Stations. An annual Station Training workshop serves as a refresher course in accountability. Station staff will become part of a collaborative partnership to ensure compliance with RSVP Program

Narratives

Regulations. RSVP staff will make regular visits to ensure that volunteers are performing their assigned service activities as described in their job descriptions.

To minimize the disruption of volunteers, any graduated volunteer station would no longer be an active service station for the RSVP grant. Volunteers associated with these stations will be provided other service opportunities in new service areas. RSVP will also assist stations with recruitment information to replace any RSVP volunteers who choose to stay with RSVP in current focus areas. Volunteers will also know that they will be able to stay with their current assignment and also add a new assignment that will allow them to continue serving in areas that they have in the past and also continue with RSVP through a new assignment.

Healthy Futures is our primary focus area. Our successful Signature programs have concentrated on RSVP volunteers working with the low-to moderate-income population for the last 9 years. RSVP was approached by the United Way in DeKalb County to develop and manage a county-wide food pantry. The United Way funded the program and RSVP provided the lead volunteers and community volunteers to manage the pantry. One of the RSVP lead volunteers arranged with Wal-Mart Distribution Center to receive donations of fresh produce, meats and fruits which account for over \$128,000 of donations each year. Other volunteers have assisted in soliciting both cash and in-kind contributions. Volunteers also pick up food from the food bank in Fort Wayne, the Wal-Mart Distribution Center in Garrett, and at Kroger's, as well as organizing food drives to assure that the shelves are always stocked. Last year RSVP volunteers served over 5,000 families (this is not an unduplicated number as families may receive service once a month) reflecting over 20,000 individuals (this is not an unduplicated number as individuals may receive service once a month). RSVP partnered with Purdue Home Extension Service to offer cooking classes due to the client's unfamiliarity with some fresh produce such as eggplant, artichokes and squash. Lead volunteers have assisted with this program and have also produced recipes for vegetables that they have received. Working with this low income population lead volunteers to expand services to low income children through our Pack a Backpack program, which distributes backpacks filled with school supplies to children on free or reduced lunch program. Supplies for these backpacks include pencils, pens, paper, crayons, glue, folders, erasers and scissors. These backpacks ensure that children will be able to start schools with the tools that they need.

RSVP has an active volunteer Advisory Council which includes individuals who have served and

Narratives

represent the following areas: a bank vice-president, business owner, government city manager, education retired principal, Habitat for Humanity director, hospital dietary services, other agency directors, volunteers as well as veterans.

Organizational Capability

Catholic Charities has been an agency with federal grants including grants from the Corporation for National and Community Service, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Urban Development, a pass-through Senior Service America with the U.S. Department of Labor and a pass-through Catholic Charities USA with the U.S. Department of Justice. Catholic Charities provides services with elderly, youth, low income, senior volunteers, senior employment, adoption, refugees and emergency services. Catholic Charities has had an RSVP program since 1973, with programs in Allen, DeKalb, Noble, DeKalb, Elkhart and Saint Joseph Counties. Although Catholic Charities no longer sponsors the Allen County project, it has had over 40 consecutive years of sponsoring RSVP. Past achievement in successfully managing and expanding the RSVP grant program demonstrates our ability to continue in this role.

Audits are conducted on an annual basis and standard accounting practices are maintained at all times. Proper documentation for in-kind contributions is maintained, cash donations are documented, and proper acknowledgements are made to all donors. Donors are also listed in RSVP's year-end report as well as Catholic Charities year-end report, thanking them for their support of the program. Catholic Charities Board of Directors has a finance and audit committee to review financial trends of the agency in order to proactively address financial needs of the agency. Annual audits are submitted to the federal clearing house on an annual basis. The Catholic Charities and RSVP staff work to ensure compliance with RSVP program requirements (statutes, regulations, and applicable OMB circulars) and to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources.

Under the leadership of the present staff, RSVP has gained the trust of community partners by meeting goals and objectives with the service of talented RSVP volunteers. RSVP has received local grants from the United Ways, Olive B. Cole Foundation, Wal-Mart Foundation, Noble County Community Foundation, DeKalb County Community Foundation Steuben County Community Foundation, Beacon Bank, People's Federal Bank, Noble County REMC, Alcoa Foundation, Lincoln National Employees Foundation, Journal Gazette Foundation, and Judy A. Morrill Foundation.

Narratives

Partnerships have been made with area businesses including Wal-Mart, Kroger's, Eaton Corporation, Steel Dynamics Inc., Pharma Care, Walgreens, Italian Grill, DeKalb Health, Parkview Noble Hospital, Auburn Gear, Metal Technologies, RM Auctions and Downtown Auburn Business Association.

Project Director: The RSVP Director is responsible for the management of the RSVP program and reports to the Executive Director of Catholic Charities. The Director is responsible for preparation of Federal CNCS reports including data collection systems and statistics, funding proposals, public relations, and maintenance of program records.

Present staff: Patti Sheppard-Director has served as the director of RSVP since October of 1979, serving under both ACTION and CNCS regulations. She has a degree from Ball State University with a triple major in Political Science, American History and World History with post-graduate work in Public Administration. She has been a delegate to the White House Conference on Aging, has worked in Washington D.C., for Congressman Phil Sharp, is a graduate of Noble County Leadership, served as a City Council member for 12 years, chaired the Ligonier Plan Commission for 24 years, chaired the Board of Zoning Appeals for 6 years, served on the Ligonier Economic Development Commission for 9 years, the Board of Works for 3 years, Congressman Dan Quayle's Senior Issues Committee, Congressman Dan Coat's Senior Issues Committee, Congresswoman Jill Long's Senior Issues Committee and Indiana Community Service Commission. She is knowledgeable about community services available and has taken several grant writing classes. She also serves/served on many boards of directors in the community including Noble County FEMA Board Chair, DeKalb County FEMA Board Chair, Aging and In-Home Services of Northeast Indiana, Noble County Council on Aging President, DeKalb County Council on Aging, the Northeastern Center, Ligonier Festival Chairperson, Ligonier Sesquicentennial Chairperson, and has been recognized as Citizen of the Year in Ligonier. The Project Coordinator, Shirley Johnson has been with RSVP since October of 1985, has a degree from Manchester College in Education with a double major in Psychology and Home Economics and a Master's degree from Indiana University in Education. She has been a public school teacher and serves/served on many boards including DeKalb County TRIAD, DeKalb County Extension, DeKalb County FEMA, 4-H leader, DeKalb County Extension Board and Farm Bureau.

Catholic Charities has an active Operations Department that assures that facilities, equipment, supplies, purchasing procedures and personnel management issues are addressed on a regular basis. The sponsor also has committees such as facilities committee that addresses that may come up at any site that houses a project, including disaster plans that cover relocation and set-up operations at other

Narratives

facilities in case of disasters including weather floods and fires. Equipment, supplies, and purchasing procedures are clearly defined and in place. Personnel policies are reviewed on an annual basis with an in-house training on any changes. Staff job descriptions, salary ranges and evaluations occur annually and are well defined. All areas of operations are assessed on an annual basis with any changes being discussed at all staff meetings/in-service. Personnel policies have clearly defined internal policies that include both local and long-distance staff travel and are updated on a regular basis. The organization is constantly updating procedures/systems for self-assessment, evaluation and continuous improvement to maintain their certification through COA (Council on Accreditation) a nationally recognized, independent accrediting organization. Staff at all levels are included in this procedure and serve on in-house committees to assure that areas needing improvement are brought to the attention of the Administrative Team that reviews and makes necessary changes to maintain their certification. RSVP staff participates on all committees including the PQI (Performance and Quality Improvement) and the Administrative Team.

Other

N/A

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A