

Narratives

Executive Summary

The Friends Program is the sponsoring organization of the Friends Retired and Senior Volunteer Program. The Friends Program is a community service agency operating since 1975 whose mission is to "strengthen communities by building relationships that empower people, encourage community service and restore faith in the human spirit." The Friends Program is recognized in the geographic area as a leader in volunteerism through its programs and its work with volunteers assisting citizens of the community and the specific needs of citizens that may need extra assistance with day to day living such as seniors, disabled, veterans, and refugee clients.

From 04/01/13 through 04/01/14 Friends RSVP volunteers completed approximately 82,626.30 hours of service to their communities.

Through this grant, an anticipated 515 volunteers will serve their communities and some of their activities will include: Adult Education and Literacy, Veterans and Military, Delivery of Health Services, Food Distribution/Collection, Health and Nutrition, and Senior Center Programs.

The Primary Focus of this project is Healthy Futures.

At the end of the 3 year grant, Friends RSVP will annually provide 515 volunteers to over 130 organizations, for 85,000 hours of service to approximately 35,000 clients. The Corporation of National and Community Service federal investment of \$142,311 will be supplemented by \$157,205 in anticipated level of non-federal resources.

This grant will assist Friends RSVP in achieving outcomes including better health and independent living for seniors, the disabled, veterans and families; increased educational achievements for children, adults and refugees; increased public safety and environmental protection and increased opportunities for New Hampshire and its citizens.

Strengthening Communities

By 2030, nearly 500,000 residents of New Hampshire will be over the age of 65, representing more than one-third of the population; compared to about 10% in the year 2000 (N.H. Center for Public Policy Studies, 2012). The growth and aging of New Hampshire's population have important implications for the future health of New Hampshire residents, for the development of our medical and public health systems, and for our natural environments.

Rural Health and Primary Care (RHPC) estimates that, approximately 38% of New Hampshire's population lives in rural areas that cover 84% of the state's land area.(2012)

Residents of rural areas face unique challenges in maintaining and improving health. These include

Narratives

physical distances between people and resources and health issues that come with an older population. Rural residents also must cope with reduced access to care arising from less insurance coverage (due to unemployment or employment in small industries) and provider shortages.

Friends RSVP operates in four counties of New Hampshire: Merrimack, Belknap, Rockingham and Strafford counties. Rockingham and Strafford are located in the southeast region. This area includes 43 communities. Population growth is some of the greatest in these towns which border Massachusetts. Strafford County has several of the poorest towns in the state. Belknap County also has relatively high rates of poverty. New Hampshire's poverty rate is growing along national rates, currently approximately 8.6%, or 33,000 people, as of the 2010 census.

The Hispanic population is also growing in New Hampshire, up about 67% since 2000, to about 28,000 residents. African Americans in N.H. have increased as well, by about 30%, though remain a small number. Asians in the state have doubled since 2000, to about 37,000 people.

Community Partner RSVP coordinators have longtime relationships with hundreds of community partners and public and non-profit agencies throughout our catchment area. These coordinators regularly network and receive feedback and information from the people and communities served. Town and county needs always influence our programming. Through market research, Friends RSVP has worked to bring transportation services to seniors and citizens needing access to healthcare and basic needs. Surveys of the organizations and clients we serve are used to improve our services to them. We follow up on suggestions and requests and adapt our programming to meet their needs. Community partners are selected by determining their status as public or non-profit agencies that meet important community needs. We familiarize ourselves with community assessment reports, state needs assessments and plans, and coalitions, councils and associations of service providers to remain educated on critical issues and the organizations that best provide solutions to them. RSVP volunteers are valued and requested by hundreds of public and non-profit organizations to help them meet their missions.

The Friends Program has had a notable presence in Merrimack County since 1975, expanding its service area statewide through the sponsorship of a statewide Foster Grandparent Program (1986), RSVP of Rockingham County (2006) and RSVP in Merrimack County (2008). The agency is experienced in providing high impact volunteer opportunities for seniors in multiple counties across the state. It has more than 150 well-established community partnerships (human service, educational, youth development, senior services) in Merrimack County. It also has more than 130 well-established community partnerships in Rockingham, Strafford, Belknap counties. Therefore,

Narratives

significant awareness of this program is already in place. Further outreach to untapped community partnerships is a priority of the Friends RSVP program. Through mailings, meetings, and personal one-on-one talks, the Friends RSVP has high hopes to increase its community partnerships.

Friends RSVP has created effective brochures, fliers, mailing pieces, letters to faith communities, presentations to numerous civic organizations, senior centers and senior housing buildings and other locations. Program Coordinators spend most of their time visiting sites, building relationships and networking to get the word out to as many people and agencies as possible. Support also comes in large part by word of mouth and good quality services.

Efforts to build diversity within RSVP programming are a natural part of our operations. In Merrimack County, where there is a high rate of refugee resettlement, we are always excited to be able to help with the difficult challenges they face adapting to this country.

Friends RSVP has begun to work with the communities it serves so as to be able to recruit individuals of all races so that its volunteer base can better assist with the need for helping refugees and other persons that now call New Hampshire home.

A big priority currently is to find and place volunteers with the New African Americans, a new non-profit that offers a wide range of cultural and logistical supports for refugees from Africa.

Friends RSVP has established consistent, reliable community resources that illustrate the region's regard for the accomplishments of the program for their residents. Funding comes from 30 municipal budgets in Rockingham County, the County of Rockingham, the County of Merrimack, Granite United Way, Lincoln Financial and the Alexander Eastman Foundation. All of these entities have contributed to RSVP for multiple straight years; in many cases, for 20 or more years. We also receive large in-kinds, particularly in space for senior exercise classes that are held twice per week throughout the year at 17 different sites.

Volunteers participate in community activities, first, significantly, through their volunteerism. They also support our recruitment and outreach efforts at senior and community fairs and conferences and participate in public outreach to educate public officials. Enhancing Organizations' Capacity: The program enhances the capacity of organizations and institutions in the various communities by providing direct support and services to their clients and constituents, thereby increasing the number of clients served and increasing the quality of services provided.

Volunteers also provide administrative support functions to the organizations which would otherwise have to be handled by the agencies' staffs. As a result, they save money on staff time and enable their limited staffs to address other critical needs of the organizations toward growth, resource

Narratives

development, expansion of services and other needs. Integrating Senior Service into Other Programs: By increasing the presence of seniors at the programs they volunteer with, organizations and the population at large increase their knowledge and appreciation of the value of their senior neighbors. Through volunteerism, people develop close relationships with the seniors and often become lifetime friends. They include them in family activities, help them with personal challenges and, as a result, make decisions to engage other seniors in programming and activities for their agencies and at other public and private venues.

Friends RSVP is a community based program that works on its strongly developed programs and over 38 years of experience to provide the very best in assistance that it can to its volunteers and the surrounding community.

Recruitment and Development

Friends RSVP provides a high quality volunteer experience through a wide range of operational functions throughout the process so that expectations are met and both volunteers and station staff are satisfied. It begins with volunteer screening and the pre-service training process that identifies applicants' interests, talents and experience and places them according to those qualities and wishes. Staff provide clear, documented descriptions and expectations for volunteers and station supervisors; initiate regular communication with volunteers and stations to address issues and resolve problems. Volunteer assignments are reviewed so each volunteer has the opportunity to be engaged in meaningful activities that make a real difference to people and also meet the volunteers' expectations and personalities. We work with volunteer station staff to assess and design volunteers' assignments to help ensure maximum use of the individual's gifts and talents. Several volunteers serve in leadership roles for the program, which others are aware of in case they wish to do so as well. We reach out to volunteers that show leadership potential and try to utilize those skills where possible. We encourage volunteers to try new things, utilize newsletters and recognition events to express appreciation for their work and ask them to think about and share their experiences and stories of change and success in clients. Friends RSVP is committed to establishing a comfortable, safe environment for everyone to participate in, including those with disabilities and diverse backgrounds. All staff are aware that the concept of diversity includes but is not limited to age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, religion, gender expression, educational background, income, marital status and work experiences. We try to find a comfortable placement for everyone where they are appreciated and encouraged to try new things and expand their opportunities for contributions. Staff provide training of volunteers and stations on reporting procedures, time-sheets, surveys, sign-in

Narratives

procedures, station responsibilities, etc. We provide training on direct activities relative to our signature programs operated by us. Stations provide task and activities training for volunteers assigned to their organizations. Volunteers and stations are supported by regular contact. From surveys we know there is no doubt that the lives of our volunteers change for the better as a result of their contributions and the relationships they develop during service. They tell us they have made new connections, feel more purpose and achievement, are healthier, happier, more satisfied with life and feel an overall sense of gratitude for the opportunity. Recruitment and marketing strategies include use of on-line volunteer match services; print media, radio, community television; direct mail; distribution of agency and program promotional materials (newsletters, brochures); presentations to civic groups, senior oriented organizations, faith communities, United Way events and other businesses; word of mouth through current volunteers, site personnel and constituents of stations; networking relationships with other programs; and leveraging the Friends Program's existing partnerships. Attracting adults over age 55 requires a customized message. Direct mail has been very successful for our agency's Foster Grandparent Program and hopefully can be emulated by RSVP if funding is available. Friends RSVP will use recruitment strategies from all of the agency's programs to recruit baby boomers and older individuals. To increase volunteer retention, existing stations will be visited by RSVP staff, offering support to station personnel and senior volunteers, reviewing memorandums of understanding and volunteer role descriptions, and assessing station and volunteer satisfaction. All of the above strategies including good placements, training, information, support and recognition aide in retention. The agency's belief is that volunteers, regardless of the role, must feel appreciated and be acknowledged. We hold an annual recognition event that brings together volunteers, station staff, community stakeholders and beneficiaries of service. On-going informal recognition includes personal notes, words and tokens of appreciation and nominating volunteers for local, state and national awards.

Program Management

Friends RSVP staff continually assess current volunteer stations and assignments and seek ways to fill gaps in needs by creating new volunteer assignments at high impact service organizations. Program coordinators monitor stations and evaluate whether stations are meeting needs as stated. Friends RSVP utilizes strategic planning that incorporates critical needs identified in needs assessments conducted by agencies such as the United Way, local healthcare facilities and provider networks is used to help focus energies on certain types of organizations to partner with. Program staff benefit from the experience of the agency's over 38 year history of providing services through volunteer-

Narratives

driven programs addressing the needs of children, families and adults such as community-based transportation programs, reducing isolation, basic housing, access to healthcare and basic needs, education and mentoring.

Training, development of new programs, and new volunteers, including expanded community access is a strategic vision of a new Program Director and the Friends RSVP program.

New training programs are being developed to access and put forth information and training to volunteers to assist them in their scope of tasks and how they in turn present information to the clients that are served. The Friends RSVP is responsible for volunteers that are knowledgeable, have fact based information, and are aware of the specific goals of the program. The goal is to provide training for all of the volunteers in their assignments and evaluate this training so that volunteers remain a focused team member of the Friends RSVP. The information gathered will also allow Friends RSVP to monitor how to better serve the community in its constant need for qualified volunteers.

The continued work by coordinators to focus on the need for new stations are determined on an individual basis depending upon the local needs addressed, the Corporation for National and Community Service's priority areas, the priority areas of other local funders and volunteers' places of residence, interests and skill sets. The program implements the planning and evaluation processes currently operational in all programs in the agency.

RSVP uses a variety of evaluation tools that measure outcomes, performance, volunteer satisfaction, and partner/site satisfaction. Program evaluation processes benefits from staff's personal experiences and institutional knowledge of the agency and the demands of many funders.

Continuous improvement is an integral part of staff's philosophy and operations. The Friends Program's Board of Trustees and Executive Director require annual program goals for internal and outcome-based performance measures.

RSVP is responsible for establishing, with the Executive Director these annual goals and reporting results to the Board. In addition, monthly reports to the Board are submitted by each program including activities, accomplishments, challenges and environmental opportunities and/or threats. All of our funders, like CNCS, require regular reports on outcomes. For example, United Way and other local funders require a formal logic model for the program including specific, measurable goals and an assessment plan to track if goals are met or not. United Way and others require quarterly reports on the progress of attaining the goals. Volunteer Reporter software and to a lesser degree Excel spreadsheets are used to compile and analyze counts of clients, volunteers, service hours, activities and

Narratives

other data like rides, meals, Pen Pal letters and class participants. Volunteer service hours are tracked using time-sheets signed by volunteers and station supervisors. The time-sheets also obtain information about the type of activities performed, important data specific to the activities and clients served, as well as in-kind information. Other data collection instruments used are station surveys, volunteer satisfaction surveys, volunteer leader surveys and client surveys. Regarding our signature programs, RSVP Caregivers Program uses a care receiver outcome survey and a caregiver volunteer satisfaction survey.

Friends RSVP Bone Builders Senior Exercise Program uses volunteer leader and client surveys. The agency's Youth Mentoring Program which has enrolled some RSVP members, designed their mentoring impact data collection around the National Mentoring Association's instruments to assess the youth's, the mentor's and the parent's perception of the effects of the mentoring relationship. The Friends Program has demonstrated success in operational and financial management through sound programmatic and fiscal oversight for more than 38 years.

The agency manages 15-20 grants per year, including a CNCS RSVP grant and a CNCS FGP grant. Each Program Director is responsible for their program budgets, which are developed by them with the Executive Director. Program staff are acquainted with their program budget and are aware of keeping expenditures within budget. The Executive Director is responsible for all program budgets and finances, with the help of an onsite accountant, to the Board of Trustees. The Board has a Finance Committee with 4-5 committee members that monthly review agency finances and help the Executive Director with direction and recommendations as appropriate. Several members of the committee are always accountants or banking/financial professionals. Independent financial audits are obtained annually to assure donors and stakeholders of strong fiscal oversight of monetary and in-kind contributions. The auditing firm contracted is changed every few years, as recommended for sound fiscal practice. The development office and Board of Trustees work to generate cash and in-kind contributions to sustain and grow the agency's programs, raising about \$300,000 annually from fundraising and agency grants which is allocated or passed through to the programs.

The agency generates approximately \$250,000 annually in in-kind donations. Program staff assist with some of the planning and implementation of the two main agency fundraising events. However, the primary responsibility for the planning and implementation of the annual fundraising activities falls to the administrative staff, trustees, and volunteers.

Organizational Capability

The Friends Program provides four programs, three of which are volunteer-driven: a youth mentoring

Narratives

program, the Foster Grandparent Program which pays a small federal stipend to low-income seniors for working with at-risk children and youth; and RSVP. It also operates an emergency housing shelter for families with children and provides services and transitional housing aimed at ending their homelessness permanently. The Friends Program has a 38-year history of successfully managing volunteer programs, all of which have included seniors. As a result, the agency's culture is highly responsive to volunteer needs, primarily middle-aged to senior individuals. The agency has extensive experience and success expanding into new geographic areas and integrating well into communities. The program started in Merrimack County only and has expanded into eight counties out of 10 in the state, with one program (Foster Grandparent Program) granted a statewide catchment area.

The Executive Director has been with the agency for seven years. He brings demonstrated skills in the areas of business and operational management as well as extensive community contacts. Prior to assuming agency leadership he served as Chief of the Concord Police Department and held Board posts with a number of human service non-profits. The Program Director has managed senior programs for more than fifteen years throughout Merrimack and other counties; He was recently made Director of Senior Programs where he became the project director for RSVP as well. Prior to The Friends Program, he was the Director of Operations-Chief Deputy for the Merrimack County Sheriff's Office where he had numerous local and statewide contacts as well as experience in organizational management.

The three Program Coordinators have numerous years of experience in the human services field serving the numerous communities served throughout the region. The Friends Program has demonstrated success in operational and financial management through sound programmatic and fiscal oversight for more than 38 years. The agency manages 15-20 grants per year, including a CNCS RSVP grant and a CNCS FGP grant. Each Program Director is responsible for their program budgets, which are developed by them along with the Executive Director. The Executive Director is responsible for all program budgets and finances, with the help of an onsite accountant, to the Board of Trustees. The Board has a Finance Committee with 4-5 committee members that monthly review agency finances and help the Executive Director with direction and recommendations as appropriate. Several members of the committee are always accountants or banking/financial professionals. Independent financial audits are obtained annually to assure funders and stakeholders of strong fiscal oversight of monetary and in-kind contributions. The auditing firm contracted is changed every few years, as recommended for sound fiscal practice.

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Narratives

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The Friends Program has been recognized for providing cost-effective, community based services and has received the following awards: Business NH Magazine's 2006 Nonprofit Business of the Year Award; NH Business Review's 2003 Business Excellence Award; Volunteer NH's 2003 Volunteer Champion Award; and The Corporate Fund's 2003 Walter J. Dunfey Award for Excellence in Management. Peer agencies and funders recognize each agency program for consistently producing excellent outcomes and for the meaningful incorporation of seniors into services and volunteer activities. Annual planning includes reviews of each program's current status, strategic view, new initiatives, measurable impact, external factors, leadership and evaluation. The agency is currently in the process of creating a new 3-5 year strategic plan.

The Friends Program has all the internal policies for effective management in place. There are extensive personnel, purchasing and risk management policies, which are reviewed regularly. Several policies were reinforced recently with the updating of the personnel handbook and additional risk management guidelines. The agency provides adequate space, equipment and supplies for programs to operate effectively and efficiently.

Other

Friends RSVP continues to focus on building upon existing programming and developing new initiatives and projects that assist the Corporation for National and Community Service achieve its goals. These goals are the Friends RSVP goals.

During the last year (June 2013 - July 2014) Friends RSVP worked to make further partnerships with the community, and partnered with Dial-A Ride Henniker (NH) and Dial-A-Ride Hopkinton (NH) to enhance and increase the amount of services provided.

New sites were also added that include the Pittsfield Senior Center, Cornerstone VNA, Operation Blessing, Portsmouth Recreation Department, Seabrook Recreation Department, Rockingham Community Action Program and the Town of Windham.

Narratives

An example of what the Friends RSVP means to the geographic area and those clients served is a story from Donna Boyer-Carney, who is the recipient of RSVP Caregivers Program assistance. Donna is a 69 year old woman who lives in Somersworth, NH and receives transportation and companionship for shopping and medical appointments once or twice per week.

Donna is legally blind and therefore cannot drive. Her husband died last year and now she lives alone in her home. She depends on friends, RSVP, and public transportation.

With Friends RSVP, Donna has a companion to help her shop, find what she needs, read labels and ask a clerk for assistance. She even must rely on someone to help her use the credit card machine.

Donna says the companionship of having someone you trust to help you is comforting. She cannot see to fill out paperwork at doctors appointments. She has to trust the person with information that, as she says, should be private but when you are a senior or disabled, you do not have a choice.

Donna is extremely grateful to have the help she needs with a trusted person, and the companionship of new friends. She puts it this way: "I appreciate all that the RSVP volunteers do for me while I am adjusting to a new life alone, isolated and with a disability. The sociability, friendship and companionship they provide, for maybe just a few hours a week, is so needed and welcomed in my life."

The Friends RSVP provides assistance to Donna and many other citizens, keeping to the goals set forth for such programs to provide a priority community need for those citizens needing extra assistance.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

Not applicable