

Narratives

Executive Summary

The purpose of the Greater Texarkana RSVP (Retired Senior and Volunteer Program) is to provide a recognized role in the community and a meaningful life in retirement for older people through significant volunteer service. In doing so, volunteers not only keep themselves active but also provide their community with a wealth of knowledge and experience. By sharing their time, skills and talent as a RSVP Volunteer, they enjoy better health, make new friendships, stay active and involved, affording them a feeling of worth to their community. The outcome of their commitment and generosity of time and talent is of extreme value to the community and results in life changing improvement for those they serve. At the end of the three year funding cycle, Greater Texarkana RSVP will provide opportunities for meaningful service to an estimated 176 senior and veteran volunteers. Primary Focus area will be Healthy Futures, secondary focus areas will include Disaster Services and Veterans and Military Families.

Healthy Futures: (70 volunteers)

1 Aging in Place (Neighbor to Neighbor)- 56 volunteers will provide delivery of meals to 280 homebound seniors which will ensure availability of nutritious meals for homebound seniors and those with disabilities.

2 Obesity and Food (Food Pantries and Food Banks) - 14 volunteers assisting 500 families in achieving long term food security.

Disaster Services: - Assistance Provided (35 volunteers)

1 Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) - 21 volunteers in 7 counties trained to staff VRC's during aftermath of Disaster.

2 Disaster Planning - 14 volunteers involved in presenting 7 (one in each county) public workshops to inform, educate and prepare area residents for eventuality of occurrence of disaster.

Veterans and Military Families: - Veterans and Military Families Served (35 volunteers)

1 "Letters from Home" - a letter-writing campaign conducted by RSVP volunteers for 500 active or disabled service men and women from our communities

Community Priorities: (36 volunteers)

Meeting community needs and interests.

The CNCS Federal investment of \$49,134 will be supplemented by \$61,526 provided by the sponsor, City of Texarkana, Arkansas, and \$6,550 provided by the State of Arkansas, Division of Aging and Adult Services.

Strengthening Communities

Narratives

Geographically, the area served by Greater Texarkana RSVP is located in the southwestern corner of the State of Arkansas. The service area is comprised of 7 counties: Hempstead, Howard, Lafayette, Little River, Miller, Nevada and Sevier. Miller County shares its western border with the state of Texas and southern border with Louisiana. Lafayette County, due east of Miller County, shares its southern border with the state of Louisiana. Little River county, due north of Miller County shares its southwest border with the state of Texas and western border with the state of Oklahoma. Sevier County is located north of Little River County and shares its western border with the state of Oklahoma. Howard, Nevada and Hempstead are located in the central area of the southwestern corner of the state of Arkansas. These seven (7) counties total 3,863 square miles of territory to be served by Greater Texarkana RSVP.

The office of Greater Texarkana RSVP is located in the City Hall Building at 216 Walnut Street, Texarkana, Arkansas. The City of Texarkana is our sponsoring organization. Texarkana is located 150 miles west of Little Rock, Arkansas; 180 miles east of Dallas, Texas; 79 miles north of Shreveport, Louisiana and is the county seat of Miller County, the only metropolitan area in the seven counties served. Texarkana sits on I-30 and is part of the largest urban area between Dallas, TX and Little Rock, AR. It is part of the Texarkana, Arkansas - Texarkana, Texas, Metropolitan Statistical Area. Although Texarkana, Arkansas and Texarkana, Texas have separate governments under different states, we have always shared many commercial and cultural interests, which includes our Post Office where you can stand with one foot in Arkansas and the other in Texas. Stateline Avenue is one of the "main drags" of the area with northbound traffic in Arkansas, southbound in Texas. The question once asked on the popular TV game show, Jeopardy: "what city has a street with a posted speed limit of 40 northbound and 30 southbound". The answer, of course, was Texarkana.

Major employers located in Miller County are Cooper Tire and Rubber (manufacturing) with 1,653 employees, Southern Refrigerated Transportation (cross country/long haul refrigerated transport) with 1230 employees, Texarkana Arkansas School District (public education) with 792 employees. Six (6) of the top nine (9) employers in the area are located on the Texas side of Stateline. They include: Red River Army Depot (area's largest employer with 4872 employees), CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System (1777 employees), Texarkana Independent School District (1219 employees), Wal-Mart/Sam's Club (1100 employees), International Paper Company (777 employees) in Bowie County, TX; and Domtar Paper Mill at Ashdown in Little River County, AR (975 employees). Texarkana USA has the largest job market within our service area and draws employees from all seven (7) of our service area counties.

Narratives

Total population for the seven (7) counties in Southwest Arkansas served by Greater Texarkana RSVP is 126,850. Racial composition is: 86,330 (68%) white; 29,021 (22%) black; Hispanic/Latino (8%) and all other (2%). In regards to age: 18,953 (15%) are 65 years of age or older.

Miller County covers 626 sq miles. Based on 2013 data, Miller County has a population of 43,462 with 30,049 (69% of county population) residing within the city limits of Texarkana. Racial composition for Miller County is 31,134 (71.63%) white; 10,667 (24.54%) black; 1,038 (2.38%) Hispanic or Latino; 723 (1.06%) other. County statistics reveal that 5,982 (13.8%) of the population are 65 years or older.

Nevada County covers 618 sq miles. Major employers are: Firestone Building Products (630 employees); J.D. & Billy Hines Trucking, Inc. (180 employees); Prescott School District (151 employees). Based on 2013 data, Nevada County is rural with a total population of 8,997 with 1840 (20.4%) living within the two small cities of Prescott (county seat) and Emmett; 7,157 (79.6%) live in the county consisting of farm and timber land. Racial composition for Nevada County is 5,933 (65.94%) white; 2,764 (30.72%) black; 1,038 (2.38%) Hispanic or Latino; 723 (1.06%) other. Statistics reveal that 1,588 (17.65%) of the population are 65 years or older.

Little River County covers 532 sq. miles. Major employers are: Domtar Paper Mill (975 employees); Ashdown School District (approximately 250); Little River Memorial Hospital (approximately 175). Based on 2013 data, Little River County has a population of 13,171 with 5,627 (42.7%) living within the two small cities of Ashdown (county seat) and Foreman; 7,544 (57.3%) live in the county consisting of farm and timber land. Racial composition for Little River County is 9,948 (75.53%) white; 2,519 (19.13%) black; 357 (2.7%) Hispanic or Latino; 347 (2.64%) other. Statistics reveal that 2,253 (17.11%) of the population are 65 years or older.

Lafayette County covers 545 sq. miles. Major employers are: Lafayette County School District (approximately 175 employees); Homestead Manor Nursing Home (approximately 75); Bradley School District (approximately 75). Based on 2013 data, Lafayette County has a population of 7,645 with 2,903 (37.9%) living within the two small cities of Lewisville (county seat) and Stamps; 4,742 (62.1%) live in the county consisting of farm and timber land. Racial composition for Lafayette County is 4642 (60.72%) white; 2845 (37.21%) black; 131 (1.7 %) Hispanic or Latino; 27(0.37%) other. Statistics reveal that 1483 (19.4%) of the population are 65 years or older.

Hempstead County covers 741 sq. miles. Major employers are: Tyson Foods (approximately 1,500 employees); Hope School District (approximately 350); Southern Bakeries LLC (approximately 250). Based on 2013 data, Hempstead County has a population of 22,609 with 10,515 (46.5%) living within the small cities of Hope (county seat) Blevins and Washington; 12,094 (53.5%) live in the county

Narratives

consisting of farm and timber land. Racial composition for Hempstead County is 13,339 (59%) white; 6,556 (29%) black; 2,486 (11%) Hispanic or Latino; 226 (>.008 %) other. Statistics reveal that 3396 (15.02%) of the population are 65 years or older.

Howard County covers 595 sq. miles. Major employers are: Tyson Foods (approximately 1500 employees); Husqvarna Home Products (approximately 1500); Nashville School District (approximately 380). Based on 2013 data, Howard County has a population of 13,789 with 5,857 (42.5%) living within the small cities of Nashville (county seat) and Dierks; 7,932 (57.5%) live in the county consisting of farm and timber land. Racial composition for Howard County is 9293 (67.4%) white; 2,812 (20.4%) black; 1,349 (9.8%) Hispanic or Latino; 334 (2.4%) other. Statistics reveal that 2104 (15.26%) of the population are 65 years or older.

Sevier County covers 581 sq. miles. Major employers are: Pilgrim's Pride (approximately 1750 employees) and DeQueen School District (approximately 370). Based on 2013 data, Sevier County has a population of 17,177 with 6,629 (38.6%) living within the city of DeQueen (county seat) and 10,548 (61.4%) live in the county consisting of farm and timber land. Racial composition for Sevier County is 11,949 (70%) white; 734 (4%) black; 4494 (26%) Hispanic or Latino. Statistics reveal that 2147 (12.59%) of the population are 65 years or older.

According to data available from Veterans Administration at va.gov there are currently 10,229 veterans residing in our combined service area or 8.07% of total population. County data is as follows: Miller County 3569 (8.21%); Nevada County 838 (9.3%); Little River County 1021 (7.75%); Lafayette County 1352 (17.68%); Hempstead 1402 (6.2%); Howard 946 (6.86%); and, Sevier County 1101 (6.45%).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau all seven (7) counties in our service area have striking percentages of population falling below the poverty line. They are as follows: Miller County - 19.0%; Lafayette County - 25.7%; Nevada County - 21.5%; Hempstead County - 27.3%; Howard County - 19.6%; Sevier County - 22.9% and Little River County - 15.1%. With a statewide average of 19.7%, Arkansas ranks 5th the nation in the number of households living below the poverty line. In accordance with the Census figures, the average for the counties in this service area are significantly higher than the state's with a percentage of 21.6% with persons 65+ having a food insecurity rate of over 13%.

In the past 5 years, the economy of this area has been adversely effected by the reduction of approximately 2500 jobs at Red River Depot in Texarkana; 400 at Domtar Paper in Little River County; and 1500 construction jobs with the completion of the Turk Hydro Power Plant in

Narratives

Hempstead County. The economic impact caused by the loss of these jobs is magnified throughout the area with loss of business at local retail, service providers, hospitality, medical providers, local tax base, etc.

The Priority Focus Areas chosen by Greater Texarkana RSVP for this funding cycle will begin with the Primary area being Healthy Futures: 1. Aging in Place; and 2. Obesity and Food.

1. (Healthy Futures - Aging in Place) Studies and surveys indicate that most homebound residents desire to remain in their homes rather than moving to a facility that will provide for their daily care. However, seniors living independently at home often lack the desire to cook balanced meals for themselves, or the funds to do so, or transportation to and from the supermarket. Some are unable to cook themselves, but are still able to take care of most of their needs at home. In such situations, programs such as "Neighbor to Neighbor" offer options for balanced, nutritional meals for seniors. The research into the tangential benefits of home delivery meal programs finds that they allow seniors to stay in their own homes longer and lower overall healthcare costs for those seniors (and the public as a whole). With the coming of age of the Baby Boomer Generation, our senior population is escalating daily. As these numbers dramatically rise so will the need for services and programs to support their independent living, such as, home meal delivery.

Without a doubt there is a huge need in the seven counties served by Greater Texarkana RSVP for home delivered meals. In the past, the primary supplier for home food delivery for homebound seniors has been "Meals on Wheels". Over the past 2 or 3 years, the cut in federal funding and especially sequestration of 2013 has greatly limited the scope of the program in our area. Therefore, through the assistance of the faith-based organizations in our service area, RSVP, Arkansas Department of Human Services, veteran organizations and similarly interested organizations, we are initiating a new opportunity entitled "Neighbor to Neighbor", to provide home delivery of nutritious meals to our area seniors and persons with disabilities, including but not limited to area veterans. The main objective of this program will be to increase the quality of life while maintaining and increasing ability for independent living for recipients of this program. RSVP volunteers are an integral part of the "Neighbor to Neighbor" home delivered meals program as they are the main avenue for delivering the meals.

RSVP volunteers will also provide a regular check on the well-being of the meal recipients, helping to obtain timely assistance in the case of a medical emergency. Many times, the volunteer will be the only person in contact with the meal recipient on a regular basis and therefore could be the only person to recognize when and if the senior or person with disabilities requires aide or assistance from

Narratives

others for medical or other reasons.

This program requires that the volunteer commits to delivery of no less than one nutritious, hot meal to their assigned recipient(s) per week. The output performance of this program will be tracked by activity logs that record the dates of delivery, the name of the recipient and will be signed by the volunteer and approved by the designated agency personnel. The activity logs will then be submitted monthly to the Greater Texarkana RSVP staff for review and entry into the Volunteer Reporter database. The outcome measurement for this program will be made through the use of an annual survey that will compare the status of the recipient's food security prior to and since becoming a recipient of "Neighbor to Neighbor". The information gathered through the use of this survey can be obtained from the recipient either in writing, and/or by personal visit or phone call from the community agency or RSVP staff. The results of the survey will be submitted to RSVP staff and entered into the Reporter data.

2. (Healthy Futures - Obesity and Food) Food insecurity exists when people do not have access, at all times, to enough nutritious food to support an active and healthy life and negatively affects dietary intake and increases stress, which can compromise health and well-being. Moreover, because of limited resources, people in food insecure households often are forced to choose between food and medication, postpone preventive or needed medical care, or forgo the foods needed for special medical diets (e.g., diabetic diets). In general, one out of three chronically ill adults is unable to afford medicine, food, or both. Such forced choices can exacerbate disease and compromise health, leading to increased expensive physician visits, emergency room visits, and hospitalizations.

With a rating of 19.7 percent, Arkansas ranks #5 in America in the number of households without children that are food insecure. That means Arkansans - more than almost any other Americans - are often unsure of where they will get their next meal. Arkansas children, for whom school lunch may be the only meal they can depend on, are at risk. The working poor and those on fixed incomes whose paychecks will not buy a month's worth of groceries, must find alternative sources of food. The elderly, who too often must choose between prescriptions and groceries are going without enough food to eat. In fact, Arkansas has a higher rate of food insecurity among seniors than any other state in the nation.

RSVP volunteers will serve at one of the 41 food pantries throughout our seven counties associated with the Harvest Texarkana. Harvest and their partner agencies are committed to providing programs, food resources, education and support to feed Arkansas' Hungry. More than 560,000 people in Arkansas are food insecure. Food insecurity refers to lack of access to enough food with the

Narratives

correct nutritive values to support an active, healthy life. Food insecurity may or may not be a constant state for any given family, with some going back and forth between having enough food to eat and not. Through programs such as Food Pantries, corrective action begins with educating families about nutrition and stabilizing the availability of food. A recent study by Baylor University came to the conclusion that: "the relationship between food insecurity and obesity in a high-risk population, may be due to income and demographic variables. Individuals in a rural high-risk population with high cholesterol, heart disease, and metabolic syndrome have a high likelihood of being food-insecure. Nutritional interventions targeting high-risk populations should address food insecurity."

Volunteers at the food banks will be assisting recipients with supply and choice of food, ensuring that well rounded nutrition values are taken into consideration within the supply of food stuffs on hand. Monitoring of outcome performance will occur through use of client evaluation and survey used to establish the supply and stability of food prior to services of the local food bank/pantry and the impact that those services have made on the life and well-being of the clients. Depending on literacy skills of the client, surveys will be in written format, one on one visit or phone interview by food bank or RSVP staff. Results of evaluation and survey will be input into the Volunteer Reporter data. Due to the nature of the situation of food pantry clients, we are aware that not all clients will be willing to participate in survey measurement efforts. We will respect their right to privacy and will not intrude if they express concern about this. Output performance will be monitored and supported by volunteer sign-in sheets and activity logs which verify hours and duties performed. These documents will be approved by the station staff and then forwarded to the RSVP staff for review and data collection and storage.

Secondary FOCUS AREAS will include: Disaster Services; and, Veterans & Military Families
Disaster Services - Assistance Provided

1. VOLUNTEER RECEPTION CENTER (VRC) TEAM TRAINING

Arkansas is ranked 9th out of the 10 states in the USA with most natural disasters. Over the years, Arkansas has been walloped by heavy rain, snow, ice, tornadoes, flooding and wildfire. Even though it is not a coastal state, it has felt the impact of Gulf Coast hurricanes with associated tropical storm systems and tornadoes littering the streets with debris, damaged buildings, roads and bridges and loss of electrical power. Since 1953, Arkansas has had 54 major disaster declarations. When disaster strikes, the stricken area fills with an onslaught of well-meaning, unaffiliated, untrained volunteers. Successful management of unaffiliated volunteers after a disaster is essential. Objectives for managing

Narratives

these volunteers are straightforward, but developing ways to achieve them is difficult. Strategies vary and depend on the extent of the disaster, available resources and size of the volunteer response. To be as effective as possible, these strategies require planning and an established community disaster response network.

RSVP Volunteers, veterans and persons with disabilities that are interested and committed to being the local "hands on" response team for a VRC will receive training throughout the seven counties for the effective implementation, operation and administration of a VRC as it is needed. These volunteers will be trained, supplied and ready to work together in order to efficiently and effectively process unaffiliated volunteers in the aftermath of disaster. Training will be conducted by the Arkansas Dept. of Human Services (DHS) State Volunteer Liaison; Arkansas Disaster Emergency Management, County Office of Emergency Management; first responders and a list of many other agencies and organizations that have a role to play in disaster rescue and recovery.

The training process will be ongoing with monthly training sessions with each session focusing on a different topic or process for successful VRC implementation.

Volunteers will need to complete applications and sign a commitment of service agreement. At each monthly workshop/training event, volunteers will complete the sign-in sheet but also will be asked to complete an evaluation form concerning the training they received that day, as well as an assessment of progression of the training. They will be encouraged to express their opinion or observation about what upcoming training should include. These attendance and evaluation forms will be reviewed by the DHS Liaison and the RSVP Director. Attendance information will be entered into the Volunteer Reporter database. These documents will be used as supportive output documentation.

2. Disaster Preparedness Workshop

Arkansas sits in the middle of tornado alley. We have had 54 major disaster declarations since 1953 and share borders with 4 other top ten natural disaster states. It is not the question of "IF" disaster will strike Arkansas again only a question of "when". Being prepared for disasters is a shared responsibility. It takes the entire community working together to effectively prepare for, respond to, and recover from the destructive forces of nature and other emergencies and disasters. When citizens prepare and practice for an emergency in advance of the event, it makes a real difference in their ability to take immediate action, which in turn, enables them to recover more quickly.

Working with the local Office of Emergency Management, RSVP Volunteers will plan, coordinate, media and public relations for disaster preparedness workshops for residents in their communities. On the day of the workshop, they will be responsible for setting up the workshop and registration of

Narratives

attendees. The goal of these workshops will be to increase the number of local citizens who understand which disasters could happen in their community; know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage; take action to increase their preparedness; and learn what to prepare for an emergency disaster tool kit. Advance preparation is the first step to disaster recovery.

For output measurements, volunteers will need to keep a log detailing their activities in regards to the planning and execution of their community workshop. Activity logs will be approved by local OEM designee and forwarded to Greater Texarkana RSVP for review and entry into Volunteer Reporter.

Veterans and Military Families - Veterans and Military Families Served

Arkansas soldiers are deployed to countries all over the world. Without the presence of family and friends a soldier can become lonely and feel detached from the people and places he/she once knew so well. It can be both frightening and boring. Many times letters and care packages from home are the very things that keep a soldier's spirits up. Correspondence from home not only gives the soldier something to look forward to but it also helps him to feel connected to his home. More importantly, letters of support and thanks help a soldier to feel valued and appreciated for the sacrifices he makes. Many soldiers do not have a lot of family back home to send letters and packages. Writing letters to a soldier is a great opportunity to become active in giving back.

"Letters from Home" is a program in association with the Arkansas National Guard, Family Readiness Groups that will utilize RSVP Volunteers, veterans, and persons with disabilities in supporting Arkansas soldiers through regular correspondence. Volunteers will be able to make a positive impact in the lives of those soldiers who are deployed or wounded/disabled through supportive and uplifting correspondence. The performance measurement for this Focus Area will be the number of pieces of mail to military personnel.

Recruitment and Development

To harness the power of volunteerism in the seven southwest counties of Arkansas served by Greater Texarkana RSVP, recruitment will begin with identifying agencies in the counties of Miller, Hempstead, Nevada, Lafayette, Little River, Howard and Sevier whose work includes one or more of the targeted service areas. Selection will be based on their volunteer needs, the beneficiaries of their programs, potential funding, current volunteer pool and mutual benefit.

Prospective volunteers will be recruited thru local Volunteer Recruitment Cafes which will be held at volunteer stations, faith-based organizations, shopping venues and local senior centers. The agenda will include mission of the local work stations, activities and volunteer needs and testimonials of current RSVP volunteers (the most effective recruiters) about their experience in providing positive

Narratives

impact in their community. Volunteer information packets will be distributed including registration forms and information encompassing the RSVP service area goals as well as the needs, missions and services of local agencies.

RSVP staff and/or Advisory Council members will be available to conduct interviews with each prospective volunteer to further explore their interests, talents and availability. Those who are unable to attend interview at that time will be initially contacted by phone or email within 2 business days. Our goal is to conduct all interviews within 5 business days following the Recruitment Café. It is our goal to match volunteer skills and interests with appropriate opportunities thus producing a high rate of success and satisfaction with placement of volunteers. Volunteers subject to working with vulnerable population will be required to undergo a criminal background check, including fingerprint analysis and Department of Justice National Sex Offender Public Registry (NSOPR) as required by the Serve America Act.

Within 10 business days of interview, volunteers will be matched with an impact assignment which will offer opportunities to build new skills, develop leadership potential and enhance the quality of their lives, providing opportunities resulting in positive impact on those they serve.

Volunteer recruitment for disaster service activities will be recruited through Arkansas State Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) organizations, Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM), Assistance from local Office of Emergency Preparedness (O.E.M), churches and civic organizations. Selected volunteers will be trained utilizing resources such as: county O.E.M.'s, ADEM, Arkansas State Department of Human Services; American Red Cross, emergency response teams and local governmental and non-profit organizations.

Volunteer recruitment for "Letters from Home" will include all fore-mentioned venues, as well as, local veteran and veteran support organizations.

Recruitment for "Neighbor to Neighbor" volunteers will extend to women's groups, neighborhood and faith-based organizations.

Our seven county service area is considered a rural area with our largest city (Texarkana - Miller County) having only a population of 30,049. Therefore, we do not have the diversity that large and more urban areas experience. Total population for our service area is 126,731 with 34% (43,462) of the population living in Miller County. US Census Bureau demographics by race for this area are as follows: 69% of population is white, 23% is black, 2% is mixed, 5% other, Native American 1%. In order to achieve greater diversity with our volunteers, Greater Texarkana RSVP will be reaching into the community seeking opportunities to make presentations concerning volunteerism to civic

Narratives

organizations, faith-based congregations, and special interest groups; such as, Veteran's organizations, fraternal groups and persons with disabilities.

Upon acceptance and placement as a RSVP volunteer, a member of the RSVP staff will conduct orientation training on the requirements of the volunteer, as well as the station. During orientation training RSVP volunteers are made aware of Station MoU compliance requirements, receive a program handbook that outlines very specific information including assignment do's and don'ts. The handbook also includes local and national history and mission of RSVP program, qualifications required to serve as RSVP volunteer, types of service opportunities benefits, prohibited activities, grievance policy, a listing of all agencies that have a signed MoU with Greater Texarkana RSVP and a copy of the Volunteer Insurance Service. Confidentiality is discussed with the volunteer and is included as a condition of placement on the RSVP volunteer application. Greater Texarkana RSVP will meet annually with each volunteer station to obtain input and insight into program development and to strengthen partnerships and provide guidance in volunteer service activities.

After assignment of volunteers, RSVP staff will maintain regular contact with volunteers, including phone calls or e-mails at least once a month to ensure that the volunteer is satisfied with their experience. Volunteers will be encouraged to share their volunteer experience in recruiting friends, family members and neighbors to join the family of Greater Texarkana RSVP as volunteers.

Volunteer stations will receive orientation and ongoing support, including annual site visits. Individual stations are required to provide RSVP volunteers the specialized training necessary for fulfillment of station services and mission. Provision of adequate training, knowledge and information ensures the success of the Volunteer and the agency.

Ongoing recruitment of volunteers will be conducted through quarterly newsletters, email announcements, participation in Senior Expo events, health fairs and community events, as well as local media, such as TV and radio talk shows and newspaper articles. We will seek opportunities and respond to requests for volunteer placement from qualifying organizations; and invitations from faith-based organizations, community and civic groups to provide presentations about Greater Texarkana RSVP volunteer opportunities.

As important as recruitment of new volunteers is, retention of those who have given so much to the community is essential to sustainability of programming. Opportunities to give the RSVP volunteers "a voice" in their efforts; such as regular contact with RSVP staff and/or website chat rooms, updated information re: RSVP program and opportunities which allow Volunteers to tell their personal stories are crucial to keeping volunteers involved and active.

Narratives

Acknowledgement of their contribution through public and private recognition can be the "make it or break it" in retention of valuable volunteers. Recognition of the gift of time and talent that RSVP volunteers give to their community is of paramount importance and will be done year-round by means of our annual event that recognizes volunteers, individual birthday cards, phone calls, emails, site visits, website pictures and articles, thank you's and spotlight articles in newsletter and local newspaper. A Facebook page will be developed to allow volunteers access to respond by posts and chats about their volunteer experience which spreads the goodwill of RSVP beyond our immediate area and provides a widespread forum recognizing the value of impact service throughout our nation.

Program Management

Greater Texarkana RSVP has an involved, hands on, Advisory Council consisting of representatives from each of the seven Arkansas counties served by the program. Currently, we have 17 Council Members who bring a very diverse well-rounded knowledge of our service area. This Council currently consists of 12 white and 5 black representatives from State and local governments, non-profit agencies, private enterprise, and active RSVP volunteers. Their skill sets include management, social services, education, ministerial, public relations, health care, event planning and fundraising. Staff and Council Members are actively seeking additional members, especially veterans, persons with disabilities and of diverse race and cultures. This Council is very interested in fulfillment of prescribed performance measurements and the celebration and recognition of volunteer service. Currently, the racial composition of the Advisory Council is 71% white and 29% black. This is a rather true representation of the area we serve. The combined demographics of the seven counties served by Greater Texarkana RSVP are as follows: 69% white, 23% black, 2% mixed, 1% Native American and 5% other.

The project director is newly hired but has 20+ years in management of non-profit organizations, volunteers and programming and has served as a member of the Greater Texarkana RSVP Advisory Council. She has an indepth understanding of the social and economic needs of the community and has an established relationship with current and prospective station agencies and personnel. She has had extensive training and experience in non-profit management, leadership, financial and programmatic management, performance tracking, outcome based evaluations and grant writing. All Volunteer Stations associated with Greater Texarkana RSVP must meet the requirements as defined in the RSVP Program Regulations: a public agency, secular or faith-based private non-profit agency or proprietary health care organization that accepts responsibility for assignment and supervision of RSVP volunteers. Stations are required to maintain sign-in documents and/or records

Narratives

for RSVP volunteers. Volunteer hours are to be submitted to the RSVP office on a monthly basis. The RSVP secretary receives all records and works closely with volunteers and stations ensuring that records are updated and accurate. Statistical volunteer records are maintained with Volunteer Reporter software.

Recruitment of new volunteer stations and retention of existing stations will be based on critical community needs as identified in the Greater Texarkana RSVP Work Plans. Suitability and compatibility of volunteer stations will be determined by evaluation of agency services and mission in accordance with the identified needs of our impact service areas and appropriate RSVP performance measurements. Each station will complete the Safety and Accessibility Checklist which will be maintained in the station file maintained at the RSVP office.

Memorandums of Understanding (MoU's) will be developed and/or revised to strengthen station responsibilities in the supervision of volunteers, as well as data collection and reporting. The RSVP Director will ensure that the MoU which is negotiated with staff at stations meets program requirements to ensure that prohibited volunteer activities (proselytizing, displacing paid workers and political engagement) are addressed along with handicapped accessibility and volunteer safety. In addition, RSVP staff members will maintain contact with station personnel through email, phone calls and on-site visits to ensure compliance of MoU requirements and to observe RSVP volunteers in-action performing assigned tasks. Stations will be routinely visited to ensure that volunteer assignments are appropriate and in accordance with RSVP guidelines and that stations are making progress toward defined goals and reporting requirements as needed.

All volunteers will serve in one of RSVP's impact assignments. Greater Texarkana RSVP uses specific software to manage volunteer data that demonstrates the concrete impact of volunteers in our service areas. Working with each station to ensure that the service provided by station volunteers meets National Performance Measure outcomes and outputs is imperative. Measurements will be obtained and evaluated through use and review of activity logs, surveys, sign-in sheets, feedback and personal testimony.

RSVP staff will work with station coordinators to ensure the volunteer assignments are appropriate and that the service activity will result in the outputs and outcomes in the Primary Focus Area - Healthy Futures. We will work together to determine and make sure that data needed to measure progress in achieving Focus Area accomplishments and impact goals.

Under current Corporation of National and Community Service regulations and guidelines some stations that have been associated with Greater Texarkana RSVP for many years may have to alter

Narratives

the way they are utilizing RSVP volunteers or will no longer qualify as a RSVP Volunteer Station. If change is not within the scope of the station mission, then the station and Volunteers will need to be graduated out of the RSVP program. The Director will meet with staff members and volunteers at each of those stations helping to identify areas of service within the station agency that will qualify and/or offering to find new placements for volunteers that wish to remain in as a RSVP volunteer. Once qualifying service is identified, stations will be given 6 months to initiate changes. Should all attempts fail, then the RSVP Director and an Advisory Council Member will meet with volunteers and station staff, recognizing them for their service to the community and extending them an invitation to rejoin our organization in the future should their service delivery or RSVP regulations change. During new volunteer orientation training RSVP volunteers are made aware of Station MoU compliance requirements, receive a program handbook that outlines very specific information including assignment do's and don'ts. The handbook also includes local and national history and mission of the RSVP program, qualifications required to serve as RSVP volunteer, types of service opportunities benefits, prohibited activities, grievance policy, a listing of all agencies that have a signed MoU with Greater Texarkana RSVP and a copy of the Volunteer Insurance Service. Confidentiality is discussed with the volunteer and is included as a condition of placement on the RSVP volunteer application. Greater Texarkana RSVP will meet annually with each volunteer station to obtain input and insight into program development and to strengthen partnerships and provide guidance in volunteer service activities. Annual evaluations of volunteer station will be conducted at this time. Our current volunteer application and registration does not include collection of data as is required by the current regulations; such as diversity of race, ethnicities, sexual orientations or degrees of English language proficiency. Another issue with current collection of data is lack of military and disability status. We are aware that currently we have volunteers that represent all of these diverse populations, however, we have had no vehicle with which to attribute numbers and percentages. Applications will be modified to reflect the collection of required information. These modifications of the application will enable Greater Texarkana RSVP to accurately reflect the diversity of our program, giving us a truer picture of our program and services. Greater Texarkana RSVP has been successfully serving the needs of our community for nearly 40 years.

Organizational Capability

As employees of the City of Texarkana, Arkansas, sponsoring agency for Greater Texarkana RSVP, staff must follow all City policies which are reviewed, revised and updated by the seven (7) members

Narratives

of the City Board of Directors and the City Manager. Policies include but are not limited to: Accounting and Financial Management (accounts payable, budget, travel, expenditures, cell phones, inventory control, etc.); Administrative: Human Resources (personnel procedures, defined job descriptions, employee benefits, etc.);

The City has defined policies and procedures for assessing employee performance, office policies, departmental assessment and evaluation and a strong and efficient financial department that is always willing to assist RSVP staff. The City's personnel policy handbook clearly defines procedures that relate to travel and purchases. An independent audit is completed annually which includes the RSVP program. Each position has a defined job description. Though not a City policy, all new RSVP staff candidates will undergo a criminal background check, fingerprint analysis and check from the Department of Justice National Sex Offender Public Registry (NSOPR) prior to reporting to duty as required by the Serve America Act.

Each month receipts/invoices for all purchases must be coded to the proper account and category with a description of purchase, have an attached receipt and be approved by the purchasing technician and if warranted by amount of purchase, approved by Controller, Finance Director and City Manager. The City's Finance Department pays all bills, reconciles all accounts and submits monthly reports to the RSVP Director. Any discrepancies are discussed and reconciled. This allows for thorough management of all funding and keeps the RSVP Director continually aware of budget status. Office space, furniture, equipment, phone system, pcs, laptop, printers, fax, shredder and cell phone are provided by and property of the City of Texarkana. All RSVP computers have been replaced and upgraded within the last 12 months.

The City of Texarkana has been the recipient of Federal Grant funding annually for over 60 years. In 2012 and 2013, the City received and administered a total of 21 Federal Grant Funding Awards totaling \$1,875,577.91. These Federal grants were awarded from the following departments: HUD, Dept. of Justice, Dept. of Transportation, National Endowment for the Humanities, Corporation for National and Community Service, Center for Disease Control, National Parks Service and Department of Homeland Security.

Through the use of the software program, Volunteer Reporter, the RSVP secretary tracks volunteer information, hours of service, service areas, performance data, volunteer station data, media, Advisory Council, mailing databases and more. A new procedure and tracking system for receipt of in-kind donations is currently being developed. As part of assigned duties, the secretary composes and distributes quarterly newsletters; is in charge of volunteer birthday calendar sending birthday cards as

Narratives

required; day to day correspondence.

The Director is charged with oversight and management of all daily operations including budget, volunteer management, and performance measurement and compliance. Daily duties include public relations, presentations, recruitment and retention of volunteers and volunteer stations, training of volunteers and station staff. The Director has the responsibility to seek out and/or establish programming within the service area that is compliant with the CNCS identified Focus Areas.

Director has the responsibility of relationship building in the 7 county service area.

The RSVP Director provides a written report bi-monthly to the City Manager and Board of Directors.

The Director has ready access to the City Manager and meets with him on a regular basis to discuss strategies, budget, programming and updated CNCS requirements and policies.

The RSVP Director meets with the Advisory Council monthly. The Council provides advice and assistance with fundraising, event planning, public relations, volunteer recognition, recruitment, programming and grant compliance.

Other

N/A

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

N/A