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Executive Summary

SMILE Community Action Agency proposes to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement by providing service and volunteering in four of the six Focus Areas identified by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009: Disaster Services, Education, Healthy Futures, and Veterans and Military Families. The Agency, incorporated in 1968 to address poverty as part of the Economic Opportunity Act, has served four decades as a leading provider of social services that promote independent living for disadvantaged populations in south Louisiana.

Through its RSVP, SMILE will place 400 volunteers at work stations across Lafayette Parish, including parish seat and metropolitan hub Lafayette, and its smaller adjacent cities and towns, which are more rural in nature. By utilizing a cadre of committed volunteers, SMILE will make a difference in the community that has experienced rapid economic prosperity in recent years, resulting in a tendency to void--or dwarf--pockets of poverty still in existence, as well as socioeconomic needs still pending. Volunteers will provide tutoring to disadvantaged students, including homeless children living in neighborhood shelters. Volunteers will also serve as tutors and mentors for a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) Camp for low-economic children. Volunteers will also participate in the region's civil defense for disasters, particularly for hurricanes, and also assist in senior preparation. In addition, volunteers will enhance the quality of life through hospital visits, nutritious meal deliveries, and an independent living health and information fair targeting seniors. Volunteers will meet the needs of the veterans by serving as contact points to identify veterans, and provide assistance and referrals.

SMILE's budget totals \$59,188, including federal fund of \$41,392 (69.9%) and non-federal funds of \$17,796 (30.1%).

Strengthening Communities

The St. Martin, Iberia, Layette Community Action Agency, known by its popular acronym name SMILE representing the three parishes it covers, is headquartered in Lafayette Parish, the hub of an eight-parish region in south Louisiana known worldwide for its spicy cuisine and powerful zydeco and Cajun music. It recent years it has been experiencing the heyday oil boom days of decades past. Unemployment is less than the state's low rate of 4 percent. Yet pockets of poverty still exist. According to the Lafayette Economic Development Authority, the number of estimated families below poverty is 13.4% or 7,821 families for 2014. LEDA figures also show that the parish, which is relatively small geographically at only 269.83 square miles, has a population of 230,847, which includes 69

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percent white, 26 percent black, and 5 percent other. LEDA figures also show that 51 percent of the population is female, and 49 percent of the population is male. Persons, ages 65 and over, account for 11 percent of the population, and nearly 12 percent of the population is between ages 55-64. When it comes to the education of those age 25 and over, 6 percent have less than a 9th grade level, 7 percent have some high school, 31 percent have a high school degree or GED, 23 percent have some college, 5 percent have an associate degree, 19 percent have a bachelor's degree, 5 percent have a master's degree, 2 percent have a professional school degree, and less than 1 percent have a doctorate degree. LEDA figures show that of the 91,475 estimated households, 17 percent have an income less than \$15,000, 11 percent have an income \$15,000-\$24,999, 23 percent have an income \$25,000-\$49,999, 17 percent have an income \$50,000-\$74,999, 10 percent have an income \$75,000-\$99,999, and the remaining have an income over \$100,000. One percent of this last figure have an income of \$500,000 or more.

There are other socioeconomic and community issues as well that have resulted in SMILE focusing on four Focus Areas, including Disaster Services, Education, Healthy Futures, and Veterans and Military Needs. First, Lafayette Parish's proximity to the Gulf has made it vulnerable to disasters, ranging from hurricanes to oil spills. Remnants of Hurricane Katrina and Rita are still present today in population redistributions, and no one knows for sure the environmental impact of BP's infamous oil spill and its aftermath. What is known is that SMILE is committed to have its volunteers serving like history's minute men--ready at a moment's notice. The RSVP will collaborate with the city-parish's Emergency Preparedness, and have volunteers able to heed when disasters strike. The volunteers will be trained by United Way of Acadiana, which assists in leveraging resources in case of an emergency. If a hurricane hits the Lafayette area, RSVP volunteers by assigned to various sites by United Way of Acadiana Volunteer Organization Active in Disaster (AVOAD). The volunteers will staff the call centers, transport victims, and assist in setting up shelters, distributing medical supplies, and handing out meals. RSVP volunteers will attend the AVOAD training in collaboration with the Emergency Preparedness for Lafayette Parish. The RSVP volunteers will also assist in obtaining information from the families so that they can be contacted later to ensure that their needs were met during and after the disaster. Volunteers will assist in making referrals for available housing if needed and sending victims to the right resources to receive services. SMILE also plans to ensure senior shut-ins do not go without during emergencies, as well as those seeking refuge at area shelters, by providing emergency preparedness kits. Such action can be identified as a community need simply because of the area's proximity to the Gulf.

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On the other hand, SMILE's community assessment shows that the low-paying jobs, lack of jobs, crime and lack of education were among the top concerns. This illustrates how a region experiencing prosperity is complaining about the pay and lack of employment. What has become obvious is that the influx of jobs in the region are skilled jobs, which low-income individuals do not have. It become necessary to provide training if the disadvantaged population is to succeed, and that training needs to start with young at-risk children who are more susceptible to becoming a dropout. That is why SMILE's Education element will utilize volunteers to address this concern, and provide tutoring and mentoring. The afterschool program will also focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) by having volunteers assist in a summer camp. Just as recently as the 2012-2013 school year, three of Lafayette Parish's eight middle schools and two of five high schools received a "D" grade for 2012-2013, according to La. Department of Education. The lowest ranking schools also had the highest percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunches. In other words, these children were from disadvantaged families, and in need of intervention. RSVP volunteers will be able to assist them in improving their grades, so that they pursue further schooling, and receive the education necessary to enjoy the fruits of their labor when they enter their higher paying careers.

Issues concerning health were also part of the Agency's community assessment although they fluctuated on the list in terms of importance. Lack of affordable care ranked higher than lack of health care. That may be a result of Lafayette having an immense showcase of hospitals and health care providers. But health has always been an issue in the state. It has a high cancer rank, and statistics on high blood pressure and diabetes rank high particularly among minority populations. To address these issues, SMILE proposes to provide companionship for hospital patients and nursing home clients. The volunteers will be available to the health care industry, including hospice, to provide comfort as needed. The RSVP volunteers will provide dependable care for patients, and serve as a support for the healthcare staff. Patients will receive extra care and attention as a result of the volunteer in the patient's room. Many patients do not have any family, so the volunteers will become like family or friends immediately. Also, downsizing in health care facilities results in staff not having extra "caring" time for patients whereby the RSVP volunteers will be available to patients with the little extras that they appreciate so much. Staff will provide ongoing training so the volunteers will be able to meet the varied patient needs.

What also ranked high was nutritional needs, and that is why the RSVP will address such needs of the elderly by having volunteers involved in Meals-on-Wheels Program in Lafayette. They will provide nourishing hot meals daily to shut-ins, as well as provide companionship and transportation to ensure

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independent living. Also on tap will be RSVP's popular Expo, which serves as a health and information fair, and draws more than 600 senior participants, and their family members and caretakers. This beneficial event provides information on health care services, types of medical treatments, hospitals, doctors, clinics, hospice care, and medical equipment suppliers. It also provides drug screenings, as well as hearing and eye examinations, information on retirement benefits, insurance, social security, medical transportation, fraud and scam seminars, diabetic shoes and equipment. Information will also be available on nursing homes and retirement homes in the area. During the event, there will be a Health Village whereby flu and pneumonia immunizations will be administered. The Health Village will also have dieticians, mini-massages, blood pressure checks, cholesterol fat analysis, and other health screenings.

The project also will target Lafayette Parish's 14,709 veterans, including 13,606 men and 1,103 woman, as well as military families, in need of medical care, referrals for housing, education, tutoring and mentoring, employment training, financial assistance, counseling, other services. RSVP will utilize its veteran volunteers to canvas Lafayette Parish for veterans and military families in need of assistance. RSVP volunteers, who are veterans, will identify veterans and military families through outreach, and assist them with available services. RSVP volunteers will also canvas the bus station, city bus terminal, homeless shelters, diners, Salvation Army and other areas to find homeless veterans in need of some type of assistance. RSVP volunteer veterans will offer their assistance to new and returning veterans to coach them and provides services to them and their families. The volunteers will be available to share experiences and to encourage the veterans in the healing process. The volunteers will offer counseling or direct the veteran and their families to services that may help the veteran to cope with his/her experiences and daily living so that they can become a productive part of society again. The RSVP volunteers will assist in completing applications for services, for financial awards, social security, Medicare or Medicaid applications, food stamps, and/or other resources. The volunteers will assist identified veterans in applying for schooling under the Veterans Administration, as well as for housing services and stipends. The veteran volunteers will receive ongoing training by the VA staff, who assist them in learning how to identify veterans and military families who may need assistance. By implementing this as an objective, SMILE will assist in decreasing veterans from missing out on benefits, and in turn, improving their lives, and even their environments.

Recruitment and Development

SMILE will build a cadre of committed volunteers by publicizing the program and recruiting volunteers from all facets of life. According to recent figures by the Lafayette Economic Development

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Authority, known as LEDA, Lafayette Parish's population for 2014 was 230,847 residents. This figure includes 69 percent white, 26 percent black and 5 percent other. LEDA figures also show that 51 percent of the population is female and 49 percent of the population is male. Persons, ages 65 and over, account for 11 percent of the population. Figures also show that there are 14,000 veterans in Lafayette Parish.

The Agency will publicize the program in the local media, including print and broadcast. Advertisements will encourage persons to consider volunteering and explain/promote RSVP. Print promotion will include advertisements and articles in newspapers, particularly the Council on Aging's newspaper that targets seniors. Print promotion will also include brochures and flyers distributed at businesses, senior centers, churches, volunteer stations, organizations, etc. It will also include the RSVP newsletter, which is sent to volunteers, volunteer stations and organizations. Broadcast promotion will include radio spots, as well as appearances on radio talk shows and TV news shows (Good Morning Acadiana and Passe Partout) to promote the program. Also, the Agency will utilize the public access channel.

SMILE will specifically target Baby Boomers, educators, veterans and medical personnel to implement activities in its Focus Areas. The staff will also target disabled persons. The program will utilize volunteers in these fields who are already aboard to help recruit others through PSAs and elsewhere. They will be featured on radio spots, news programs and print newspapers. In addition, active volunteers will be highlighted on the RSVP brochures and newsletters.

To also target volunteers, will make presentations to the Chamber of Commerce, Junior League, LEDA, civic groups, fraternal organizations, churches, Greek organizations, and alumni. This will also enable the Agency to target volunteers who have expertise in business and other outlets. The Agency will also work the area university, community colleges and technical colleges to recruit.

To recruit disabled volunteers, SMILE will contact local organizations such as Affiliated Blind. SMILE will also contact members of the gay Apollo Mardi Gras krewe in order to recruit members of different sexual orientation. The region also has an active Latino organization, which will be used to recruit persons with limited degrees of English language proficiency.

Brochures and flyers will be handed out explaining the program and requesting volunteers to become involved. The Agency will also send out letters to non-profits, businesses and schools seeking volunteers to become involved in RSVP.

To retain volunteers, SMILE will ensure that their needs are met, and host regular meetings to receive input. It will accomplish this by encouraging volunteers to call or visit the local office if they have any

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concerns. To retain volunteers, staff will also conduct regular evaluations to determine if volunteers are satisfied with the program, and to ensure input from volunteers so that they can be better served. In addition, the Agency will recognize volunteers on a regular basis. Volunteers will be sent birthday cards, and their birthdays will be highlighted in the RSVP newsletter. The Agency will spotlight volunteers as well. The RSVP will also host an annual recognition luncheon for volunteers that will honor their services. The luncheon will also pay tribute to the volunteer with the most hours and the oldest volunteer. SMILE is committed to ensuring that its staff excel in each position, and therefore, is an advocate of training and technical assistance. The Agency will also promote service opportunities in its brochures and newsletter. The RSVP will assure a high quality experience for volunteers by identifying quality organizations and agencies in need of services, and matching those services with volunteers. Through the recruitment process, SMILE will assess the needs, skills and expertise of volunteers. The recruitment process also will determine where volunteers want to serve. Staff will also encourage volunteers to serve in places in need of their skills and places that will serve as positive challenges. Volunteers will be interviewed, and their goals and objectives identified. The recruitment process will provide the opportunity for volunteers to build new skills, develop leadership potential, reflect on the meaning of service to the community, and enhance the quality of their own lives. Throughout the year, SMILE will offer in-service training to develop quality volunteer experience and leadership, as well as to enhance these skills. The Agency will also utilize the university, community colleges and technical colleges to provide training. The higher education institutions will also be utilized to develop a super senior database, which is discussed in Program Management.

Program Management

SMILE's RSVP is indicative of cost-effective program management when compared to other programs that have a larger budget but a smaller number of volunteers. What should be noted is that the RSVP budget of \$59,188, which includes a line-item for only one staff member--the project director, averages less than \$150 per volunteer per 12-month period. However, what made the program management viable for decades is that the Agency has had a support system. That support system has enabled the program to exist as an invaluable community resource. While today's plans stress leveraging community partnerships in order to meet community needs, future plans call for development of a super senior volunteer database. This will enable the Agency's RSVP to place--or rather, match--its professional, dedicated volunteers with Focus Areas and workstations best suited for them.

Just like an online dating service or job bank, SMILE's proposed database will input volunteers, their

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skills, and their experiences so that they coincide with proposed activities and services in the workplans. The Agency will also input information from workstations it has recruited. As part of the process, volunteers will undergo an intake assessment and orientation to ensure their skills and goals are matched with workstations. The assessment will also include volunteers establishing individual goals and objectives, which will be used to further measure the success of the program. The data will enable the Agency to track and measure outcomes. The Agency is located in a region that has not only one of the nation's leading computer campuses, but also has a community college, as well as an economic center that will be utilized to make the database a reality. The Agency will request student interns and guidance to create the database, and seek a professor who may be interested in having it as class project.

Program management will also include volunteers completing and turning in their sign-in sheets so that the RSVP office can keep track of their hours. During orientation, staff will explain the role of volunteers so that the program operates effectively and efficiently. Volunteers will receive training on what it means to be a volunteer, including their responsibilities. They will also be trained on RSVP and Agency policies and procedures.

Many RSVP volunteers are retirees from education, oilfield industry, military, medical profession and technology. Some are housewives. They mostly prefer to volunteer in service activities where they can interact with others, including mentoring/tutoring young people, counseling, delivering meals or volunteering in community kitchens, computer training, and greeting visitors. Therefore, volunteer in-service training also will include the importance of fulfilling assignments, the importance of reporting to the workstation on time, and calling the supervisor if they are unable to report to the workstation. Volunteers will also be informed of the importance of reporting their hours, as well as changes to their address, telephone numbers, etc. They also will learn what benefits they can receive, such as transportation, meals and insurance. They also will be told about the annual recognition in their honor. In addition, volunteers will be told about their rights, such as their right to appeal decisions. They will also learn about civil rights and their rights if they have been discriminated against at the work station.

The volunteers will receive training at their workstations in collaboration with area diners, Council on Aging, United Way, disaster services training by Emergency Preparedness, Veterans Administration, Diocese of Lafayette, hospitals, nursing homes, retirement homes and others.

Program management will also include staff providing ongoing outreach services to the workstations. Staff will keep volunteers abreast of important issues through a newsletter and other mailouts. The

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program will be monitored throughout the year. On an annual basis, as well as quarterly intervals, the Agency will conduct a survey to ensure goals and objectives are met. Volunteers will be surveyed and volunteer evaluation forms sent in. The staff will utilize the information to enhance program operations. This process will ensure that volunteers are given an opportunity to provide feedback. An annual assessment will be done to ensure that workstations are meeting their goals and objectives. The workstations will also be required to conduct an annual performance of the volunteers sent to work at their stations. This will ensure that workstations are meeting their goals and objectives of recruiting and managing volunteer stations that address community needs.

Program management will also call for community feedback. An example of this would be the evaluations completed on the Connections to Independent Living Expo. The RSVP Advisory Council will also conduct an evaluation, and assist in providing goals and objectives for the program. The RSVP's annual assessment will ensure that National Performance Measure goals and objectives, reflected in the biannual report, have been met. The annual assessment will also highlight project accomplishments and their impact on the community. The results of the evaluation process, including the volunteer survey, the staff assessment and the Council's assessment will be published in the RSVP newsletter, which is sent to all volunteers, as well as to volunteer stations and community organizations. Feedback of the evaluation process will also be noted when RSVP staff makes presentations to groups during its public awareness process.

The program management will also include utilizing current RSVP software to keep track of the volunteers, and maintaining updated files on both volunteers and workstations in the RSVP office. Staff will also participate in implementing the Agency's overall strategic plan, which includes goals from each department. RSVP will continue to increase volunteers, and recognize them for their service. Generalized goals of the Agency have always been to make a difference, and to help persons to become more self-sufficient. RSVP activities will coincide with these general goals because the program has made a difference in the community--not only to the volunteers who participate, but to the volunteer stations and the numerous activities they sponsor.

RSVP has helped persons to become more self-sufficient, particularly seniors who receive invaluable information at its annual expo.

Program management will also include the management of the project resources. The Agency's Accounting Department will provide monthly financials to the RSVP. It will be the responsibility of the Project Director to track her budget, and make recommendations for budget revisions.

In addition to its CNS funding, SMILE also plans to seek funding, including grants and donations,

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from local sources. The Agency also will seeks funding from other sources. RSVP volunteers and Agency staff members will be involved in obtaining funds, including cash and in-kind, to sponsor events. This will also serve as fundraising revenue for the RSVP. The annual expo also will continue to serve as a match fundraiser for RSVP.

The strategy for ensuring compliance with federal regulations is for the Agency's Quality Control/Special Project Manager to review the files, the rules governing the program, and the MOUs. The CFO will monitor expenditures and the Director of Field Operations will supervise the Project Director for RSVP.

The Advisory Council will be composed of individuals from all facets of Lafayette Parish, including retired nurses, teachers, oil industry workers, coaches, housewives and veterans. The Project Director will ensure that MOUs for workstations are current and all RSVP volunteers are eligible.

The Project Director will make random visits to the workstations to ensure that the stations are in compliance with RSVP program regulations and that volunteers are performing their assigned duties.

Organizational Capability

For 46 years, SMILE Community Action Agency has served as the primary tri-parish provider of social services promoting self-sufficiency for disadvantaged populations in south Louisiana. Chartered as a 501 (c)(3), tax-exempt corporation in 1968, the Agency abides by its motto, "People Helping People," stemming from the Economic Opportunity Act's goal to uplift the nation's disadvantaged, and to assist them in obtaining independent living.

RSVP is part of the wide array of programs SMILE has provided during its four decades of existence, which would not have been possible without sound programmatic and fiscal oversight. That sound programmatic and fiscal oversight was recently reaffirmed when SMILE received notification of a five-year renewal designation for its flagship--its \$12 million Head Start/Early Head Start Program. The coveted designation was bestowed on the Agency while other organizations across the state and nation were forced into re-competition after their programs failed to meet quality standards and monitoring compliance. To ensure sound programmatic and fiscal oversight, SMILE abides by all policies and procedures, including program requirements, performance measures, and applicable OMB circulars. SMILE's Accounting Department, which has received intensive training on the respected Whifley software operating its system, is currently undergoing training in preparation for the super-circular anticipated in 2015. Staff, from the Chief Executive Officer on down, have attended state and national conferences in recent months in order to receive training on the latest guidelines, regulations and trends impacting programs, services and funding.

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SMILE's commitment to ROMA--or Results Oriented Management and Accountability--was ingrained long before it became mandated by the federal and state governments. According to its website, ROMA is described as "a performance-based initiative designed to preserve the anti-poverty focus of community action and to promote greater effectiveness among state and local agencies receiving CSBG (Community Services Block Grant) funds." CSBG helps to fund many of the Agency's non-Head Start Programs, particularly salaries. CSBG funds will be used for a match for the RSVP grant. But what makes CSBG so important is that it drives the outreach and case management system of the Agency. Its ROMA emphasis serves as both the foundation and mindset for the Agency, and helps to solidify the Agency's organizational capability.

Including Head Start funds, SMILE maintains an annual budget of more than \$21 million. All its accounts are maintained separately, and audited annually by an independent firm, which also provides quarterly reports. There have been no audits findings in the past decade. Also, it can be noted that the Agency is in good standing fiscally and programmatic. The Agency has policies and procedures in place, including internal policies and a travel policy, and abides by all federal, state and local regulations. It follows checks and balances, and procurement procedures, and provides monthly financial statements and credit card reviews for the Board Treasurer to sign off on. The governing body, which includes a Finance Committee, is kept abreast of finances on a regular basis. The Accounting Department is also responsible for assessing Agency risk, and maintaining inventory on equipment and major supplies. Staff recently met to discuss measures to enhance communications, ensuring technology protection, and to minimize data failure and/or destruction. SMILE is also implementing a texting system to increase communications with staff, volunteers, clients, parents, governing bodies, and the general public. This step ensures that the Agency will have the means to meet challenges in the years ahead. To ensure that these challenge are met programmatically and fiscally, SMILE has a Quality Control section, which monitors programs.

SMILE documents the needs and desires of the service area through regular community assessments, which identify and analyze the concerns in the region. The community assessment sets the agenda for the Agency's programs and activities. In addition, collaboration has been an intricate part of the Agency. Not only does the Agency collaborate, but it has also been instrumental in the development of important programs in the region, including the Council on Aging and Meals-on-Wheels, which serve elderly populations. Its four and a half decades of experience has enabled SMILE to reach out to numerous resources in order to make its programs succeed. The Agency's experience also ensures that it will be able to continue to provide adequate facilities, equipments, supplies, purchasing procedures

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and personnel management support that RSVP needs and requires.

SMILE operates under the direction of Chief Executive Officer Royal Hill, Jr., who was recently hired and brings management experience from a community action agency in Natchez, Miss.

He is committed to both community and civic service, and has spent his few months in office reaching out community leaders to create new bonds for the Agency. Hill's management staff includes the Chief Financial Officer, Director of Field Operations, Director of Human Resources, Director of Head Start/Early Head Start, Director of Grants/Communications, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer. These supervisors work together to ensure the success of the Agency. All staff members have defined job descriptions, which have been approved by the Agency's Board of Directors and its funding sources, particularly CSBG.

The RSVP is a part of the Agency's Field Operations, which is headed by Irma J. Bourgeois, who has been with SMILE for 40 years. She has served in several positions through the years, which have provided her with firsthand knowledge on program operations and experience in working in both supervisory and subordinate positions. The RSVP staff includes one full-time position--Project Director Angella McZeal, who previously served as RSVP Outreach Worker/Secretary. Prior to RSVP, McZeal worked in the Agency's Human Resources Department. As Project Director, McZeal is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the program, and works closely with the RSVP Advisory Council. She oversees the recruitment and assignments of RSVP volunteers, and is responsible for their development and training. She works closely with the workstations, as well as other community organizations and media to promote the program. In addition to conference training, she is among staff receiving in-house training. She is evaluated on an annual basis, and her reports are reviewed by her supervisor to ensure that she is meeting the program's objectives. If she were not, she would be placed on an employee assistance plan. Other oversight for ensuring a quality program are the RSVP Advisory Council and the Agency's Quality Control/Special Projects Manager.

SMILE is governed by an 18-member Board of Directors, representing a cross-section of the public, private and low-income sectors of St. Martin, Iberia and Lafayette Parishes. The volunteer Board serves as the legal entity of the organization, and is committed to its success. Program reports, including RSVP's, are submitted to the Board on a monthly basis which also provides oversight.

Other

To harness Baby Boomers' experience, SMILE has made the population group one of its main focuses of its recruitment campaign. To ensure a brighter future for all of America's youth, SMILE proposes to bring retired educators into afterschool programs to serve as mentors for at-risk students. It also

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proposes to bring volunteers to serve as guideposts due to disasters, and as companions due to health issues. To mobilize more volunteers, SMILE has implemented an intense recruit program, which will target veterans, disabled persons, persons with different sexual orientation, as well as those with limited English proficiency. SMILE will also honor volunteers for their devoted service during recognition programs.

PNS Amendment (if applicable)

Non-applicable.