



Retired and Senior Volunteer Program of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois

Sponsored by Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging

RSVP Volunteer Handbook



Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois

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WELCOME TO RSVP!

Thank you for joining RSVP of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois. We appreciate your generosity in sharing your time and talents, and we look forward to linking your skills with the needs of our eastern Iowa and western Illinois communities. Rest assured that your experience, knowledge, wisdom, skills and time will be appreciated greatly by community agencies and programs.

RSVP MISSION STATEMENT

RSVP works with men and women, 55 years of age or older, and community groups to promote and increase volunteerism and the potential for making a difference in the lives of people and communities.

RSVP ON THE LOCAL & NATIONAL SCENE

When you join RSVP, not only are you part of the local RSVP, you also are part of a nationwide network of RSVPs, coordinated by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), which came into being with the signing of the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993.

CNCS coordinates three programs:

- The *National Senior Service Corps* (NSSC), which incorporates *RSVP*, the *Foster Grandparent Program*, and the *Senior Companion Program*
- *Learn and Serve America* (promoting service-learning opportunities in schools, universities and communities)
- *AmeriCorps/VISTA* (the national service program which engages thousands of Americans of all ages and backgrounds in full-time and sustained part-time community service, providing education awards in return for their service)

A WORD FROM OUR LOCAL SPONSOR

RSVP of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois is sponsored by Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging (WIAAA), a nonprofit organization which funds services to seniors in 10 counties in Illinois: Bureau, Henderson, Henry, Knox, LaSalle, McDonough, Mercer, Putnam, Rock Island and Warren.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging is to ensure coordinated, accessible services for older persons to live independent, meaningful and dignified lives.

VISION STATEMENT

FirstStop for Seniors: Information and resources for quality living.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF RSVP

RSVP is rich in history, both local and national. Nationally, RSVP's roots extend to the White House Conference on Aging, 1961, which noted the value of useful activity for seniors. This conference led to the passage of the Older Americans Act of 1965, which brought new programs for seniors such as the promotion of multipurpose senior centers throughout the nation. In 1969, an amendment to the Older Americans Act created the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (which later was renamed the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program to reflect the growing number of seniors who are still in the workforce but want to volunteer too).

Nationally, RSVP was launched in the spring of 1971 under the auspices of the Administration on Aging (AoA). In July 1971, RSVP was transferred from AoA to ACTION, the Domestic Volunteer Agency. This reflected a growing focus on the value of senior volunteers to the community. Eleven RSVP projects were started in the summer of 1971.

In 1974, the Volunteer Action Center was approved as a sponsor for RSVP in the Quad Cities, Iowa and Illinois, and remained its sponsor for two decades.

In 1994, ACTION was merged into the Corporation for National Service, which administers AmeriCorps/VISTA, Learn and Serve, and Senior Corps. RSVP became part of the Senior Corps, along with Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions. RSVP continues to be administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service today.

Locally, in 1996, the Great River Bend Area Agency on Aging, Davenport, Iowa, became the sponsoring agency for RSVP, with Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging (WIAAA), Rock Island, as co-sponsor.

In 2001, sponsorship of RSVP was transferred from Great River Bend Area Agency on Aging (now Generations Area Agency on Aging) to Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging. WIAAA continues as the RSVP sponsor, with Generations continuing as a collaborative partner.

In 2002, RSVP expanded services to Warren County. Currently, there are 103 volunteers serving 23 stations in Warren County. The number of stations and volunteers in Warren County continue to increase.

RSVP PROVIDES SERVICE TO COMMUNITIES

RSVP enhances volunteer programs by recruiting and placing volunteers for public and private non-profit organizations. In 2007, nearly 1,000 RSVP members contributed more than 148,000 hours.

These agencies and programs must sign a Memorandum of Understanding with RSVP which describes program requirements, working relationships and mutual responsibilities.

Along with recruiting and placing volunteers, RSVP processes volunteers' monthly timesheets, records the service hours, supplies reimbursements, provides supplemental insurance and hosts recognition events for its volunteers.

RSVP also distributes information which is beneficial to older persons, as well as providing technical assistance to other volunteer programs.

RSVP plays a major role in several projects in the Iowa and Illinois Quad Cities, including Angel Tree (holiday gifts for children who otherwise would get few or no gifts), Youth Fest, and Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.

RSVP also directly administers several programs including “Reading for Understanding” (tutoring in elementary schools), “Amigos Para Todos” (tutoring elementary students for whom English is not the primary language), and “Seniors for Freedom” (a program focused on contributions seniors can make to homeland security) and disaster preparedness.

Seniors for Freedom opportunities include but aren’t limited to:

- Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)
- TRIAD Senior Safety
- Emergency Volunteer Registration
- Staffing emergency drills
- Volunteers of Agencies in Disaster (VOAD)
- Citizen Corp Councils
- Direct service to emergency service providers

RSVP ADVISORY COUNCIL

The RSVP Advisory Council consists of dedicated RSVP members, representatives of volunteer stations and other organizations promoting the well-being of older adults and the communities we serve. At least 50% of the members of the Council are 55 years of age or older. The RSVP Advisory Council meets on the second Monday of each month. All meetings except for executive sessions are open to the public. For additional information, contact the RSVP Director, 309-793-4425 or rsvp@wiaaa.org

FUNDING SOURCES

RSVP of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois, sponsored by Western Illinois Area Agency on Aging, is funded in part by the following sources:

- The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)
- United Way of the Quad Cities Area
- Iowa Department of Elder Affairs (IDEA)
- Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA)

RSVP and WIAAA are appreciative for the funding provided by these organizations. We also continue to seek additional funding sources for our senior volunteer program.

We also are appreciative of the collaborative partnerships we have with the following community agencies and programs: Generations Area Agency on Aging; the Center for Active Seniors, Inc. (C.A.S.I.); Project NOW; and United Neighbors.

VOLUNTEERS: THE OF EVERY COMMUNITY

Who is Eligible to Become an RSVP Volunteer?

Men and women 55 years of age or older who live in eastern Iowa or western Illinois and are willing to serve their respective communities on a voluntary basis are eligible to be registered with RSVP.

Volunteers Represent All Walks of Life in Our Communities

There are no restrictions based on income, race, education, experience, gender, disabling conditions, religion, national origin, employment history or political affiliation. We make a conscious effort to recruit volunteers who reflect the diversity and richness of our communities.

Benefits – Material & Otherwise!

- **Supplemental Insurance:** While participating in community service, RSVP volunteers are covered at no cost by three kinds of insurance: accident, personal liability and excess automobile liability while volunteering or traveling to and from volunteering. This is considered secondary coverage, supplemental to the volunteer’s primary auto insurance coverage.
- **Reimbursement for Transportation to Volunteer Work Assignments:** Personal car mileage reimbursement, bus and taxi fare is paid up to a fixed limit, if requested – see “Reimbursement,” page 10.

- **Reimbursement for Meals:** If volunteering four consecutive hours at one site, volunteers are eligible to request reimbursement for some out-of-pocket meal costs, subject to program budget – see “Reimbursement,” page 10.
- **Communiqué from the RSVP Office:** Registered RSVP volunteers receive the RSVP newsletter and other communications from the RSVP office.
- **Recognition Activities:** Active RSVP members will be invited to events at which their contributions to their respective communities will be recognized.
- **Awards:** RSVP membership pins are given to all RSVP members, and various awards may be given for outstanding volunteer work.
- **Personal Benefits:**
 - Learning new skills
 - Making new friends
 - Engaging in new activities
 - . . . and knowing that you are needed and are making a difference!

TYPES OF VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE AVAILABLE

The RSVP staff makes every effort to match the prospective volunteer’s skills and interests with the needs of the community agencies and programs registered as RSVP “stations” (sites where volunteers will work).

There is a great variety of service opportunities available in non-profit agencies and programs. These opportunities are available for individuals, couples and groups. Volunteers also can request to be called for one-time assignments, special events, etc. These events provide opportunities to work with a variety of people, including children, teenagers, seniors and people with disabilities. Some in-home activities also are available.

General fields of opportunities include but are not limited to:

- Communication/Information
- Crafts/Hobbies
- Education/Tutoring/Mentoring
- Disaster preparedness and response, Emergency Assistance, Accident Prevention
- Entertainment/Fine Arts
- Environmental Awareness/Gardening/Animals
- Health/Medical/Counseling
- Legal/Enforcement
- Nonprofit Administration and Clerical Assistance
- Recreation/Sports
- Senior Citizen Assistance
- Transportation
- Visiting/Companionship

EXPECTATIONS OF OUR RSVP VOLUNTEERS

- Report for volunteer service as scheduled
- Be positive, upbeat, appropriate in behavior
- Perform the duties to the best of your ability
- Be confidential – Keep records, personal information and conversations concerning the agency or program, its employees and the people it serves confidential
- Dress appropriately for the agency or activity where volunteering and maintain good hygiene
- Contact RSVP if any problems or unsettling situations arise
- Report volunteer hours to RSVP in a timely manner on a signed document or personal email

GETTING REGISTERED

Prospective volunteers are invited to contact the RSVP office to arrange for a personal interview or request a registration/information packet. An RSVP staff member will schedule a visit to the RSVP office or arrange a phone interview or a meeting at a location convenient to the prospective volunteer.

A registration form can be filled out either during the visit or mailed to the office. RSVP will contact the new member upon receiving and reviewing a completed and signed registration form.

When the prospective volunteer is accepted into the RSVP program, a brief orientation about RSVP will be given by phone or in person and the available volunteer opportunities will be discussed.

Once the new member chooses the jobs of interest to him or her, the RSVP staff will assist in coordinating with the community agency or program for an appointment to discuss job openings. Volunteers are under no obligation to accept any position unless they wish to do so. The volunteer calls the RSVP office to confirm his or her decision regarding the prospective volunteer job.

SCHEDULING VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENTS

We make every effort to accommodate the scheduling preferences of our volunteers. We are able to accommodate the needs of “snow birds” (people who vacation in warm climates during the winter), people who have family obligations, etc. We have a variety of volunteer opportunities: one-time, short-term, long-term, etc. We can tailor a schedule for any volunteer’s situation.

REIMBURSEMENT FOR TRAVEL AND/OR APPROVED MEAL EXPENSES

Volunteers are offered reimbursement for the following:

- *Auto mileage and/or bus/cab fare* for travel to and from the volunteer site, at the rate of \$0.15/mile, with a maximum of \$15 per month
- *Meals* – a maximum of \$4 per meal and \$8 per month for meals eaten during a volunteer time period of four hours or more. **Note: Receipt must accompany request for meal reimbursement.**

RSVP timesheets have columns for reporting car mileage and bus or cab fare. Make sure to report entire mileage both directions.

Reimbursement checks are issued quarterly. It is WIAAA agency policy not to issue a check for less than \$10. Volunteer reimbursement may be accumulated until the amount reaches at least \$10, at which time a reimbursement check will be issued.

MAINTAINING VOLUNTEER RECORDS – WE NEED YOUR HELP!

RSVP is required by the Corporation for National and Community Service to maintain accurate records of individual volunteer hours. While we attempt to keep volunteer recordkeeping to a minimum, we do require that volunteers report volunteer hours monthly to the RSVP office.

Hours reporting is essential for showing to the community as well as to our current and prospective funders the valuable amount of service that RSVP volunteers provide, as well as documenting service for the purpose of insurance and reimbursement for the volunteer.

Volunteers are requested to send a signed timesheet or personal email to the local RSVP office by the 10th of each month, reflecting dates and hours of volunteering for the preceding month. **Please report hours promptly.** Late reports create an extra difficulty and expense. If, for some reason, hours are not reported on time, it still is important that they be reported. Your time is valuable and we want to record it.

Timesheets for volunteers who are seeking reimbursement for transportation and/or meals must have two signatures: the volunteer's signature, as well as the signature of either the station supervisor or an RSVP volunteer coordinator. Volunteers who are unable to obtain the station supervisor's signature are asked to call RSVP and we will assist with getting the appropriate signature. Emails requesting reimbursement must be copied to the station contact so RSVP can verify validity of reports.

ASSIGNMENT TERMINATION

All volunteer assignments terminate eventually. If, for any reason, a volunteer no longer wants to remain at a station (volunteer site), the volunteer may request reassignment. RSVP also may separate a

volunteer for cause, including but not limited to frequent or unauthorized absence, misconduct, lack of confidentiality and inability to perform assignments or accept supervision. We will work with the volunteer to identify a more appropriate volunteer assignment.

**Thank you
for Joining RSVP!**

**You are the  of your Community
And you are needed.**

***Your Experience*
Your Knowledge
Your Wisdom
Your Skills
and
Your Time
Will be Greatly Appreciated.**

Invite a Friend to Join RSVP Today!