



RETIRED AND SENIOR
VOLUNTEER PROGRAM
(RSVP)
of Monroe & Livingston
Counties

Volunteer Handbook



Members of RSVP are making a difference in Monroe & Livingston Counties by getting involved, using their talents, experience and energy to help solve problems and meet community needs.

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Lifespan/RSVP

Lifespan of Greater Rochester (RSVP Sponsor)

Mission Statement

- Lifespan helps older adults & caregivers take on the challenges and opportunities of longer life. Lifespan is a trusted source of unbiased information, guidance, services and advocacy for older adults and caregivers. We also provide training and education for allied professionals and the community.

Brand Values

- Knowledge & Expertise
- Integrity & Trust
- One-Stop Assistance
- Amazing Client Service
- Operational Efficiency
- Passion for Older Adults
- Great Place to Work

RSVP of Monroe & Livingston Counties

Mission Statement

- To provide volunteer opportunities for people 55 and older that effectively utilize their life experiences as well as enrich the quality of their lives.
- To recruit and refer volunteers to activities that meet critical community needs.
- To develop volunteer programs that focus on critical community needs.
- To promote and support the valuable contribution that older adults make to society.

What is RSVP?

RSVP – the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program - is one of the largest national senior volunteer organizations providing volunteer opportunities for people 55 years of age or older. RSVP encourages older adults to bring a lifetime of talents, experiences, skills, and hobbies to community projects and organizations needing volunteer assistance. With RSVP, individuals choose how and where they want to serve. Volunteers choose the amount of time they want to give, and whether they want to draw on existing skills or develop new ones. In joining the program, individuals become part of a national movement of hundreds of thousands of volunteers striving to help their local communities.

RSVP is an outgrowth of efforts by both private groups and government agencies to address the continuing needs of older Americans for useful and satisfying activity. One of the first outcomes of those efforts was the passage of the Older Americans Act of 1965. In 1969, the United States Congress amended the Older Americans Act, creating the original program called the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). The first RSVP projects were launched in 1971. Today, the national RSVP is one of three existing volunteer programs for seniors known collectively as the Senior Corps and is administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency. Since the inception of those first projects in 1971, RSVP has grown tremendously. Today there are over 685 RSVP projects throughout the United States, and over 296,100 volunteers serving their local communities.

The local programs include RSVP of Monroe County (which was started in 1971) and RSVP of Livingston County (started in 2010). Both are

sponsored by Lifespan of Greater Rochester. RSVP receives financial support from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and the New York State Office for the Aging. For more information, visit www.nationalservice.gov.

What is a Volunteer Station?

A volunteer station (community partner) is where RSVP members serve as volunteers. It can be any non-profit organization, proprietary health care agency or public organization. The volunteer station's designated agent must complete and sign the RSVP Station Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which lists all policies, and is renewable at least every three years. By signing the MOU, the station agrees to offer appropriate and specific assignments on a regularly scheduled basis. All assignments will be explained and any specific questions individuals may have will be answered. In addition, no one at a volunteer station will ask potential volunteers to do anything that the staff itself is unwilling to do, and volunteers will not be used to supplant (replace) paid staff. The station further agrees to provide supervision and training for its volunteers and the materials needed for them to work effectively.

RSVP Overview of CNCS priority areas

In 2009 Congress passed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, which laid the foundation for restructuring Senior Corps – especially RSVP. Volunteer service is concentrated in specific areas nationally, as well as having local priorities.

There are 6 focus areas for service:

- Healthy Futures
- Education
- Veterans and Military Families
- Environmental Stewardship
- Economic Opportunity
- Disaster Services.

RSVP of Monroe and Livingston have chosen the *Healthy Futures* focus area to be the primary concentration for placement of volunteers as it very closely aligned with the mission of our sponsor, Lifespan of Greater Rochester. Healthy Futures includes volunteer opportunities which support older adults' independent living, which address food insecurity and which help lead to healthy lifestyles. RSVP also has many opportunities available locally in the other focus areas listed.

Who Can Be an RSVP Volunteer?

Any person 55 years of age or older who wants to share the knowledge and skills of a lifetime is eligible. There are no restrictions. Anyone who wants to see their contributions make a positive change in their community, feel useful, needed and valued will benefit from becoming a part of RSVP. There will be no discrimination on the basis of race; color; national origin, including limited English proficiency; sex; age; political affiliation; religion; or on the basis of disability, if the volunteer is a qualified individual with a disability.

What Do the RSVP Volunteers Do?

RSVP volunteers serve without pay on a regular basis in community assignments at local, non-profit organizations.

Services they provide may include:

- visits to older adults
- respite for caregivers
- tutoring to functionally illiterate adults
- tutoring/mentoring to students in grades K-12
- transportation to medical visits and other appointments
- home delivery of meals
- work in food pantries
- advocacy for long term care residents
- financial counseling
- working with veterans
- tax preparation
- coaching healthy living and balance classes
- hospital aides
- Other opportunities available – call the RSVP office for information.

What volunteers do depend upon their individual interests, talents and schedule.

RSVP does not require a minimum number of service hours. The decision of hours and days available depends on the volunteer. All contributions of time are valued. RSVP strives to maintain flexibility in scheduling assignments and will tailor the assignment to fit the volunteer's needs and preferences, if possible. If, at some point, the volunteer becomes interested in changing their assignment – or taking on an additional assignment –the RSVP office may be called to discuss and make arrangements.

Benefits of Volunteering with RSVP

EXPERT ADVICE AND PLACEMENT

- Coordinators offer guidance to determine the volunteer job that satisfies the individual's spirit. They will work with the volunteer and with the volunteer supervisor at the station chosen to find the right job.

OPPORTUNITY TO MEET CRITICAL NEEDS

- RSVP assesses critical community needs and seeks volunteers to address those needs. RSVP volunteers will receive information concerning critical needs when seeking volunteer placement and in the RSVP newsletter, or by calling the office.

SATISFACTION: MEETING/ SERVING OTHERS

- By volunteering individuals will have the opportunity to interact with other volunteers and staff striving to help those in need. Working together to bring about a change is a great way to bond with others and become part of a community. When an opportunity is located that matches the individual's interests, the volunteer will have a good chance of having fun while giving their time and helping others.

FREE SUPPLEMENTAL INSURANCE

All actively enrolled RSVP members are covered for excess automobile liability, accidental medical and volunteer liability insurance at no cost. Benefits include:

- Excess automobile liability insurance up to \$500,000 combined single limit
- Accidental death & dismemberment coverage
- Excess accidental medical insurance up to \$50,000
- Excess volunteer liability insurance up to \$1,000,000

The insurance coverage applies while performing the volunteer assignment, as well as while en route to and from the assignment. In order to be covered by the excess automobile liability insurance, valid driver's license information must be on file with RSVP, and volunteer service hours must be documented. If using their own vehicle, the volunteer must maintain minimum levels of liability insurance mandated by the State of New York. More specific information on insurance coverage can be found in the insurance brochure.

In the event of any accident, please contact the RSVP office and Community Partner Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible after the incident. The volunteer's primary insurance agency must also be notified. RSVP will work with the volunteer and the CIMA Insurance Companies, Inc. to process all claims in a timely fashion.

TRAVEL EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

- Volunteer travel reimbursement is modest and limited. Please consider applying for reimbursement only if unable to volunteer without it. Eligible transportation is defined as mileage from the volunteer's home to an RSVP volunteer station and back unless otherwise indicated. In order to be eligible for travel expense reimbursement, a completed and signed RSVP *Travel Options Form* **must** be on file with RSVP. Please see the Volunteer Coordinator to request reimbursement. Mileage is reported on monthly timesheets, and must be signed by the volunteer's station coordinator as well as the volunteer claiming reimbursement. Forms must be received in the RSVP office by the 10th of the month following when the expense was incurred to be eligible for reimbursement. There is a maximum monthly reimbursement, based upon funding availability. Reimbursement is paid

quarterly. Checks less than \$5.00/quarter will not be paid, nor carried forward.

- As another option, volunteers may request that their mileage be documented by the RSVP office for tax purposes by so indicating on the mileage request form. This will be mailed to those requesting it during January of each year.
- The option for mileage reimbursement may be changed at any time by contacting the Volunteer Coordinator and completing an updated *Travel Options Form*.

RECOGNITION EVENT(S)

- Once a year, RSVP sponsors a recognition luncheon to honor its RSVP volunteers in both Monroe and Livingston Counties.
- Other special events and days of service are scheduled throughout the year.

- Timesheets should be completed and submitted in a timely manner.

Responsibilities for RSVP Volunteers

- Perform volunteer duties to the best of ability. Observe the days and hours agreed upon, cooperate with staff and other volunteers, and follow the policies set forth by the volunteer station. If a problem should arise, speak with the volunteer station supervisor and/or someone at RSVP.
- Volunteers should inform the station supervisor if unable to report to their assignment, will be late, or must leave early. It is understandable that emergencies or conflicts will occur, but it is understood that the station is relying on volunteers to be prompt and dependable.
- The volunteers are expected to inform the supervisor of the station in advance if there are plans to be away for any extended period of time or if they choose to discontinue their assignment. If the decision is made to discontinue the volunteer assignment, the RSVP office should be notified as well.
- Maintain the confidentiality of any information encountered at the volunteer assignment concerning the volunteer station, its employees and/or the people it serves.
- Volunteers should inform the RSVP office for a change in assignment. Whatever the reason for the change, RSVP will work to find a rewarding assignment.
- Notify the RSVP office of any changes in personal information – name, address, phone number, driver’s license renewal date, etc.
- Reporting Hours and Mileage
 - Volunteers report their hours and mileage by using a timesheet or signing in on a Group Timesheet at their volunteering site. Service is verified by the volunteer station coordinator, and sent to RSVP by the 10th day of the following month. Many volunteers serve in more than one capacity; volunteer hours may be credited to different stations. However, if a volunteer serves at more than one station, their time and mileage should be reported separately.
 - RSVP needs volunteers to report all their hours because those reported hours demonstrate to the community and to the nation that volunteers age 55 and older make significant and meaningful contributions to their communities. Also, by keeping track of where and how often volunteers work, RSVP may identify critical gaps in service to the local community. It is also critical to keep the supplemental insurance in effect.

Special Projects

Realizing that many volunteers want to serve their community but still want to have the ability to enjoy free time, RSVP offers short-term, episodic assignments. Many stations need help with mailings, office work, special events and other projects at only certain times of the year.

There are also peer health coaching opportunities available, which are assignments of 6-8 weeks. RSVP tries to fill these requests for “now and then” assistance. If interested in assisting with short-term volunteer projects, please inform the RSVP staff, and the office will send out alerts as such assignments become available.

Other Information

Special Limitations

- RSVP volunteers shall not promote their religious/political beliefs while on duty.
- Under no circumstances shall an RSVP volunteer receive a fee for service.
- RSVP volunteers are not employees of the sponsor (Lifespan), the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal government, or the volunteer stations.
- RSVP volunteers are not a replacement for employed workers. The volunteer is limited to activities that would not otherwise be performed by employed workers and which would not result in the displacement of employed workers.
- Eligibility to be an RSVP volunteer may not be restricted on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, or on the basis of disability.

Background Check Policy

Lifespan is committed to protecting the well-being and safety of all clients served. To ensure the safety of these clients, criminal background checks will be conducted on all new and current employees and volunteers.

Applicants, employees and volunteers will be required to read and sign the Criminal Background Check Consent Form. A conviction will not necessarily result in the denial of employment or placement as a volunteer. Each case will be evaluated on its own individual merits.

Refusal to consent to a background check, or any misrepresentation or omission of a fact regardless of when or how discovered, will be cause for denial or immediate termination of employment or volunteer position.

Confidentiality Policy

RSVP volunteers will comply with the policy of Lifespan that all staff, volunteers and student interns will adhere to the strictest standards of confidentiality. Information pertaining to clients, staff or agency operations will only be discussed with appropriate individuals and in appropriate locations

Separation Policy

Any of the participants in the process: RSVP, the volunteer or the Community Partner may discontinue their volunteer service relationship at any time for any reason. Decisions to discontinue should be handled with due consideration and mutual respect.

If, for more than six months, hours are not reported, either by the volunteer or the community partner for which they are

volunteering, that volunteer will be placed in the inactive file. Inactive volunteers are withdrawn from all RSVP rolls and will not be eligible to receive any RSVP benefits. The **exception** will be for volunteers who are primarily involved in episodic roles, but routinely are active in those roles: e.g. tax preparers. Volunteers may re-enroll in the RSVP program by reactivating the volunteer work or contacting the RSVP Volunteer Coordinator for placement options.

Grievance Policy

Appeals for adverse actions may be brought before the Lifespan RSVP Advisory Council. Any appeal must be in writing directed to the RSVP Advisory Council at the address for the RSVP office.

Advisory Council

The Advisory Council is made up of RSVP volunteers, professionals in the field and other

people in the community who value the impact of RSVP volunteers. Council members provide perspective and assistance from the larger community. The Council advises staff in the areas of assessing community needs, fostering partnerships, evaluating the RSVP administration and implementation, planning recognition events, recruiting new volunteers and directing the future of the program. If interested in serving on the Advisory Council, call the RSVP office at 287-6428.

In conclusion

We hope that you have found this handbook helpful and encourage you to call the RSVP office any time you have questions or concerns. We appreciate your commitment to volunteer and hope that it provides you with a quality experience that will enrich your life and the lives of those you serve. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance.

Thank you for your service.

Contact Information – RSVP Office

RSVP/Lifespan
1900 S. Clinton Ave.
Rochester, NY 14618

585-287-6428 (Director)
585-287-6377 (Volunteer Coordinator)
585-244-9114 FAX