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2008

MetLife Foundation
Older
Volunteers
Enrich
America
Program
Awards

Promising Practices in Recruiting and Engaging Older Volunteers

Presented by
MetLife Foundation
in partnership with
the National Association of
Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.

MetLife Foundation
Older Volunteers Enrich America
Program Awards

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Acknowledgment

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) is pleased that MetLife Foundation sponsors the *Older Volunteers Enrich America* Program Awards. The awards honor volunteer programs that are creating meaningful opportunities for older adults and strengthening communities. The awards for volunteer programs were first launched in 2006 as a companion to the *Older Volunteers Enrich America* Awards for exemplary individual volunteers, which began in 2003.

Through this awards program, MetLife Foundation provides n4a an excellent opportunity to recognize and showcase promising practices for recruiting and engaging older volunteers. “The growing older population represents a valuable, but largely untapped volunteer resource,” said Sibyl Jacobson, president of MetLife Foundation. “We are pleased to join n4a in recognizing 13 programs for excellence in recruiting and engaging older volunteers to build healthy communities.”

Sandy Markwood, CEO of n4a, agreed. “Older volunteers offer incredible resources to community agencies, and by learning more about ways to seek and use their services, we hope to help other organizations harness the energy of older adults who stand ready to give back to society. We are delighted to partner with MetLife Foundation to disseminate the promising practices of outstanding volunteer programs.”

MetLife Foundation and n4a wish to acknowledge the members of the program’s Advisory Board for their invaluable guidance and support:

- Carol Croll, Executive Director, Interages, Montgomery County, Maryland
- Tess Scannell, Director, National Senior Service Corps, Corporation for National and Community Service, Washington, D.C.
- Donnia Smith, Director of Volunteer Programs, Area Agency on Aging of Palm Beach/Treasure Coast, Inc., West Palm Beach, Florida
- Jackie Trainer, Program Manager, Senior Companion Program, Seniors Inc., Denver, Colorado

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) is the leading voice on aging issues for Area Agencies on Aging across the country and a champion for Title VI Native American aging programs in our nation’s capital. AAAs have more than 30 years of experience administering and coordinating services for older adults. For additional information about n4a visit www.n4a.org.

MetLife Foundation was established by MetLife in 1976 to carry on its longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. Grants support health, education, civic and cultural programs throughout the United States. For additional information about the Foundation visit www.metlife.org.

Introduction

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), in partnership with MetLife Foundation, initiated the 2008 Older Volunteers Enrich America Program Awards to recognize organizations that are effectively recruiting and engaging older adults in volunteer services.* The awards build on the two organizations' shared commitment to healthy aging and volunteerism by strengthening the capacity of service organizations to successfully capitalize on the knowledge, skills and time of older adults.

This booklet provides a snapshot of promising practices offered by our 13 recipients — three top-echelon **Awards of Excellence** recipients and 10 **Awards of Achievement** recipients. These programs provide a plethora of ideas for harnessing the talents of older adults, who stand ready to “give back” to society with their volunteer time and energy, and to remain productive and involved in their communities.

The purpose of *Promising Practices in Recruiting and Engaging Older Volunteers* is to disseminate proven approaches to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of volunteer programs through recruitment, training, retention and recognition of older volunteers, and program sustainability. These programs can serve as a model for others, and are highly replicable in most areas.

Among this year's honorees are programs that utilize older volunteers as Life Skill coaches in mentoring youth in foster care; enlist older adults to mentor children of incarcerated parents; and train volunteers to help potential workers prepare for and find employment. They also provide consultant services to nonprofits; and utilize peer-to-peer programming to assist older adults in learning to use computers, understanding complex benefits programs or preparing their taxes. Another innovative program enlists first and second grade students who have self-esteem issues to teach older adults how to use a computer.

Some of the keys to successful programs include offering flexible hours for volunteers; providing opportunities that are fulfilling and that utilize the volunteers' skills and interests; giving volunteers an opportunity to “move up” through the organization; reaching computer-savvy volunteers via websites, online bulletin boards, and blogs; and, of course, recognizing and rewarding volunteers. Other winning volunteer programs note that “word of mouth” was their best recruiting tool, showing that if you build it, and build it well, they will come!

We hope this publication will promote additional innovations to harness the experience and wisdom of older volunteers!

*The term “older volunteers” refers to individuals age 50 years and older.

2008

Awards of Excellence
Volunteer Program
Profiles

Senior Adults for Greater Education

Richboro, Pennsylvania

Number of volunteers in 2007: **175**
Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**
Number of older volunteers recruited in 2007: **50**
Volunteer retention rate in 2007: **99%**
Stipends for volunteers: **No**
Staff size: **1 full-time equivalent (FTE)**
Number of program manager volunteers: **0**
Year program launched: **1999**



Program Idea: Use intergenerational activities, such as a Veterans History Project, to get older adults to come to the school, become comfortable being there and decide to volunteer.

Senior Adults for Greater Education (S.A.G.E.) is an intergenerational program that links older adults and youth at all grade levels in three school districts in Pennsylvania. Volunteers read to or listen to students read, assist with math, or edit students' writing. The older adults are not held to a specific number of volunteer hours and those who cannot make set weekly commitments can serve as guest lecturers, share life experiences, play chess, or teach knitting. One program utilizes first and second grade students, who are struggling with self-esteem issues, to serve as "computer buddies" to teach seniors how to use a computer for 6 one-hour sessions.

These intergenerational relationships help dispel false stereotypes. Seniors learn that media representations of youth are inaccurate, and youth come to see seniors as resources for knowledge and experience. Surveys indicate that adults between 50-75 years of age have a new view of retirement than earlier generations, as 40% indicate that volunteering and community service are of great importance.

"Older adults are an underutilized and a growing resource that can make a difference in our community. S.A.G.E. can be their vehicle," commented Kathi Sherzer, associate director. S.A.G.E.'s mission is to leave a legacy for future generations, with a goal to expand to additional schools within the currently participating school districts (Bensalem, Council Rock and Neshaminy) and to establish new partnering schools throughout Pennsylvania.

Founded in 1999 and incorporated as a nonprofit in 2003, the Board of Directors consists of 12 community leaders, along with an Advisory Board, which includes the governor, a hospital CEO, and the Director of Temple University's Coming of Age initiative.

Recruitment. Intergenerational activities hosted throughout the year become excellent recruiting forums. These include a Veterans History Project (in conjunction with the History Channel), a Spelling Bee, and an Intergenerational Choir, which get seniors in the door, comfortable around the children, and interested in volunteering.

Training and Retention. In addition to a regularly updated volunteer manual, a quarterly newsletter, and educational sessions offered throughout the year by guest experts, an Annual Multi-District Volunteer event provides a forum for volunteers from all school districts to exchange ideas with district personnel and school liaisons. A blog provides a forum for seasoned volunteers to mentor new ones. Teacher evaluations are conducted regularly to monitor volunteer performance. S.A.G.E. staff members call volunteers to monitor their satisfaction levels. Students write thank you notes and perform music at an all-district banquet that honors volunteers with certificates and service pins.

Accomplishments. S.A.G.E. volunteers contribute over 250 hours per week to their partner school districts. Using the current Independent Sector calculation of \$19.51 per volunteer hour, this equals a savings of \$165,000 for the school districts. S.A.G.E. has received funding from the Department of Community and Economic Development, and has been invited to apply for federal funding. It is seeking private foundation funding as well.

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Seniors Out Speaking on Medicare

Mt. Vernon, New York

Number of volunteers in 2007: **51**
Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**
Number of older volunteers recruited in 2007: **15**
Volunteer retention rate in 2007: **77%**
Stipends for volunteers: **No**
Staff size: **2.5 FTEs**
Number of program manager volunteers: **0**
Year program launched: **2001**

Program Idea: Attract volunteers by publishing articles about the volunteer program in community newspapers.

Sponsored by the Medicare Rights Center (MRC) in Westchester County, NY, the Seniors Out Speaking on Medicare (SOS Medicare) program seeks to educate county residents about their Medicare rights and benefits, and to assist them in making individual health care decisions. Volunteers serve a minimum of 12 hours monthly. They bring information to clubs, centers, nutrition sites, and senior housing about the new Medicare Part D prescription drug program and how to select a plan, which often requires computer skills.

“All SOS Medicare volunteers were initially enrolled to become Medicare educators. Several new roles have evolved in response to volunteer interests and the wealth of experience of the Baby Boomer generation,” said Director of Operations Laura Bolotsky with Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services, who nominated the program. Volunteer roles include public speaking trainers, educational consultants, strategic planners, marketers, software consultants and community researchers for future sites.

The SOS Advisory Board meets biannually, with board members from many constituents, including county and state government, offices for the aging, community organizations, and the general public. The program received grants from Westchester County, and from state legislators, with additional grants being pursued from county legislators. A federal appropriations request was made for FY2009. The program receives its primary support from the Helen Andrus Benedict Foundation.



Recruitment. The program director recruits and manages volunteers, and pursues project funding, with support from MRC. A deputy director coordinates assignments for volunteers at the project sites. The Board provides community contacts, and the program receives publicity in Westchester media outlets and community newspapers. Articles attract retired professionals interested in public speaking and group-focused work. The program grew from 30 volunteers in 2001 to more than 50 in 2007.

Training and Retention. There is an initial training program consisting of five half-days. Most volunteers are assigned to a partner or a team. An update meeting is held monthly. Annually, 15-16 new volunteers receive training, with 11 out of the 16 from 2007 remaining in the program. The new MRC website will feature volunteer stories. There is an annual thank you luncheon, and volunteers receive modest appreciation gifts during the holidays. The SOS Medicare Program Director interviews senior center directors and leaders regularly to monitor the program quality and outcomes. The program director also observes selective programs, and evaluates presenters on knowledge of the subject matter and presentation skill. The program solicits feedback from volunteers as well.

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Accomplishments. In 2007, volunteers reached an audience of more than 18,000 people (some participants attended multiple times) with 327 short “Medicare Minutes” presentations. Hour-long programs reached another 700 people. Fifty patrons received counseling through a new library-based program begun in November 2007. Volunteers received the 2006 Volunteer Spirit Award in Westchester County, and acknowledgement from the County Executive in 2005. The program director received a 2006 Purpose Prize Fellow by Civic Ventures, and induction into the County’s Senior Citizen’s Hall of Fame with Special Recognition.

Workforce Academy for Youth

San Diego, California

Number of volunteers in 2007: **22**

Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**

Number of older volunteers recruited in 2007: **22**

Volunteer retention rate in 2007: **100%**

Stipends for volunteers: **Yes**

Staff size: **0.5 FTE**

Number of program manager volunteers: **0**

Year program launched: **2006**

Program Idea: Pay close attention to the skills, experiences, interests and knowledge of mentors to better match them with the interests and career aspirations of the mentees.

The Workforce Academy for Youth (WAY) provides six-month paid internships for youth, ages 17-21, who are aging out of the foster care system, and who have completed high school. Life Skill Coaches help young people to acquire work and life skills that enable them to be successful in their internship with the County and be better prepared to seek employment and/or continue their education. Serving as both role models and support, volunteers promote and encourage higher education and quality work performance. Coaches teach money- and time-management skills, as well as interpersonal skills, and they advocate for proper etiquette. They help with transportation, child care, wardrobe, homework, and/or cooking needs, and identify resources that could further benefit the interns. Coaches work with interns for a minimum of six months and are expected to spend three - five hours a week with them.



Recruitment. The County of San Diego Aging & Independence Services recruits and trains Life Skills Coaches through retiree organizations and senior-focused programs, coalitions, and action networks. There is an application form and an interview process. "In addition to ensuring the program is a good match for the older volunteer, revealed within this process are special skills, talents and interests of the potential coach," said Program Manager Judy Joffe. For example, an intern who desires to become a lawyer is matched with a retired lawyer to mentor him or her during an internship with the District Attorney's office.

Training and Retention. "A critical component for retention in the WAY program is the training and support that volunteers receive," Joffe noted. Following a background check, orientation training begins with a half-day program for Life Skill Coaches on issues facing foster youth and the resources available for them. Ongoing monthly meetings provide additional training and resource sharing. Coaches must set goals and submit a monthly activity log. They participate in conferences and community events, have the flexibility to arrange their own mentoring schedules and receive a monthly stipend. After every six-month session, a program performance evaluation is held.

Coaches receive monthly recognition at meetings and at an annual graduation ceremony held at the main County Administration Building. As WAY youth receive their certificates, their Life Skill Coaches also receive a certificate of appreciation. WAY youth express their appreciation for the program during their graduation. The County Television Network produced two segments about a WAY graduate, which air periodically on the County channel. Articles about the program appeared in the Aging & Independence Services monthly bulletin, as well as in local newspapers.

Accomplishments. Among the committee members who designed WAY are representatives from numerous county departments: the Library, Parks and Recreation, Child Welfare Service, Farm and Home Advisor, Department of Animal Services, Human Resources, and Aging & Independence Services. The program aligns with the county's strategic plan, and has won the support of department heads, offering more than 40 job sites. Since the program began in 2006, there have been 52 youth participants and 39 volunteer coach applicants. Life Skill Coaches contributed to the success of 19 youth, who graduated in 2007. Of these graduates, 89% were hired in county departments, and 26% not previously enrolled have registered for college.

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2008

Awards of Achievement
Volunteer Program
Profiles

Baltimore County Volunteer/AARP Tax Aide

Towson, Maryland

Number of volunteers in 2007: **116**
Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**
Number of older volunteers recruited in 2007: **20**
Volunteer retention rate in 2007: **82%**
Stipends for volunteers: **No**
Staff size: **0 FTE**
Number of program manager volunteers: **15**
Year program launched: **1995**

“As volunteers become experienced they move into leadership positions as site coordinators, trainers and administrators.”

— Arnold Eppel,
Director

Program Idea: Allow experienced volunteers to move into leadership positions.

The Baltimore County Volunteer/AARP Tax Aide Program is a partnership between the Baltimore County Department of Aging and AARP, in cooperation with the IRS, to assist the estimated 5% of the Baltimore County population over 60 who need assistance in preparing tax returns. Volunteer leaders assume a variety of managerial and administrative tasks, including Tax Aide Program policy-making, training, and assisting seniors with electronic filing, and computer or software questions. Volunteers counsel from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. twice weekly between February 1st and April 15th, and many continue counseling in May to help clients file tax return extensions.

There are 19 senior centers throughout Baltimore County. Volunteers keep a daily log describing whom they counseled, what assistance was given, and whether they electronically filed for the client. Many volunteers counsel at multiple sites or are floaters.

In addition to providing counseling services, site coordinators review all returns, report on the site's achievements, and maintain all needed materials. Tax Aide leaders visit each site regularly during tax season to guarantee quality assurance.

Recruitment. As a Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) partner, Tax Aide actively recruits individuals 55+. The average age of a Tax Aide volunteer is 62. They recruit individuals with good communications skills who work well with numbers, and though not required, computer skills are a plus. Recruitment tools include personal referrals, a website (Baltimore County Volunteer Solutions), advertising in the department's senior newspaper, and news releases. Site placement is decided by the volunteer's location and by site needs.

Training and Retention. The training program has separate components for new recruits and returning volunteers. New recruits attend an eight-day initial course in January, which includes computer training. Recruits complete a training course and must pass a written exam before being assigned to a Site Coordinator. Every October, returning volunteers attend a computer session regarding updates or changes in software and, in January, they attend a two-day course regarding IRS forms and procedural changes. The program has a high retention rate, with 82% of volunteers returning annually.

There is an annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon, where volunteers receive lapel pins and certificates of appreciation. They receive free tickets for the Governor's "Day at the Fair," and outstanding volunteers are eligible for the Governor's Service Award.

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Accomplishments. The number of volunteers increased 22% in 2007, with 116 in service. Volunteers counseled and provided tax preparation for 3,622 seniors, with an additional 833 seniors seeking assistance in response to the President's Economic Stimulus Package rebate. Volunteers helped 95 home-bound seniors to file for that rebate. Seniors who had not filed in 2006 received information about the Telephone Tax rebate, and were able to receive an additional \$30. As of September 2007, the IRS estimated that 10,567 Baltimore County seniors had not filed for the Stimulus Rebate, so volunteers provided services at the Senior Expo/Baby Boomer Expo in late October 2008.

Foster Grandparent Program

Owensboro, Kentucky

Number of volunteers in 2007: **74**
Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**
Number of older volunteers recruited in 2007: **14**
Volunteer retention rate in 2007: **91%**
Stipends for volunteers: **Yes**
Staff size: **1.45 FTEs**
Number of program manager volunteers: **0**
Year program launched: **1983**

“Research indicates that Baby Boomers will never fully retire.”

— Robyn Mattingly,
Senior Service Corps Director

Program Idea: Explain in recruiting materials that volunteering as a Foster Grandparent will benefit both the volunteer and the child.

The regional Foster Grandparent Program in Owensboro, KY, is administered by Audubon Area Community Services, Inc. and federally funded through the Corporation for National and Community Service. The program is also funded by United Way and local government sources on the county level.

The program matches adults aged 60+, who are at or below 125% of federal poverty guidelines, with children who are at-risk academically, behaviorally and/or developmentally. In exchange for a volunteer commitment of 20 hours per week, participants receive benefits including a tax-free stipend of \$2.65/hour, which will not be counted against their Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, food stamps, or rent.

The Foster Grandparent Program provides transportation, if necessary, or volunteers receive a mileage reimbursement for use of their own vehicle.

The local health department provides a free annual physical exam, and volunteers receive supplemental accident and liability insurance.

Recruitment. The most successful recruitment tool is personal contact from active volunteers. Speaking engagements at senior centers, community events, senior housing complexes, churches and civic organizations provide forums for discussions and distributing brochures. Targeted audiences include retired teachers and teacher aides, Licensed Practical Nurses and Certified Nursing Assistants, as well as people from other occupations.

Training and Retention. Volunteers attend a 20-hour orientation, followed by 20 hours of mentored training by an active volunteer, and four hours of in-service training each month. Program staff encourage communication with volunteers, and monitor and assess performance semi-annually. Performance evaluation includes the volunteer's skill in relating with children, constructive use of time, personal appearance, and improvement in children's self-esteem. Volunteers complete annual satisfaction surveys. Inspiration may be drawn from the national organization's motto, "Share Today, Shape Tomorrow."

Each Foster Grandparent receives annual recognition and a gift of appreciation. Volunteer photographs and stories are used in promotional materials, and human-interest stories about volunteers appear frequently in the agency's monthly newsletter. Meals and door prizes are given at the monthly in-service trainings, and volunteers receive greeting cards from staff members. Memorial gifts are given when appropriate.

Accomplishments. For 36 years, Audubon Area Community Services, Inc., has provided regional services. In 2007, 74 Foster Grandparents mentored 245 children in elementary and middle schools, Head Start programs, pre-schools, daycares, and a residential treatment facility for disturbed youth. Volunteers provided 65,350 hours of one-on-one and small group assistance.

Teachers reported that 88% of mentored children showed moderate to significant improvement in academic skills, and 86% showed moderate to significant improvement in behavioral skills. Among children in residential treatment facilities, 70% showed significant improvement in academic and social behavior.

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Mature Worker Connection

Tucson, Arizona

Number of volunteers in 2007: **90**
Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**
Number of older volunteers recruited in 2007: **11**
Volunteer retention rate in 2007: **85%**
Stipends for volunteers: **Yes**
Staff size: **3 FTEs**
Number of program manager volunteers: **67**
Year program launched: **2005**

“We motivate our volunteers by providing them with flexible schedules, by making them aware of the positive impact we are having on the community, and by making their work fun.”

— Robert Kirkpatrick,
Development Director

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Program Idea: Fulfill volunteers' needs to give back to their communities while utilizing their skills and experience.

Mature Worker Connection (MWC) volunteers help potential workers prepare for and find employment. They connect local job seekers and local employers, and emphasize the value of mature workers. Services are provided at low cost, with the needs of low socio-economic level job seekers considered. There is an interactive website and automated applicant tracking system. Job searches focus on training and hiring mature workers. The Pima Council on Aging (PCOA) helps make new business connections for MWC. PCOA board members serve in an advisory capacity.

Most paid positions are held by former volunteers, and volunteers rotate assignments and can achieve lead volunteer status, participating in steering committees and implementation teams, preliminary planning, identifying training resources, accessing media channels, and accessing funding. Volunteers often hold significant community positions, such as Mayor, City or Town Manager, Town Clerk, etc. Volunteers receive written job descriptions and must commit to a minimum of eight hours a week for one year. There are three paid employees: a program administrator, a career services manager, and an administrative assistant. Most volunteers who provide direct services have advanced degrees or equivalent experience and middle to upper level management experience. Job seekers often volunteer until they are hired.

Funding sources include government, private sector, and local foundations, such as the Arizona Department of Commerce, Quest, Community Foundation for Southern Arizona, Pima County, City of Tucson, Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona, and the towns of Marana and Oro Valley. Partnerships also include the Arizona Governor's Council on Aging, Pima Community College, Pima County One-Stop Career Centers, the YWCA and Goodwill Industries, The Women's Foundation, and Tucson Pima Public Libraries. Initiatives to increase sustainability have been made in five adjacent communities.

Recruitment. The Pima Council on Aging Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) recruits volunteers through newsletter as well as the Tucson Volunteer Center, newspaper articles, current volunteer referrals, and a MWC website (matureworkerconnection.com). Candidates are matched with volunteer jobs through an interview that verifies good interpersonal skills, compassion and an ability to transmit confidence.

Training and Retention. The formal orientation program includes a checklist outlining performance standards, and training includes the teaching of technical skills, interpersonal relations, a review of processes and documentation standards, and job shadowing. MWC monitors outcomes and changes procedures responsively, providing additional training or shifting volunteer responsibilities as needed. Flexible schedules ensure retention. At two or more annual social events, certificates of achievement are presented in a formal recognition program. Volunteers may speak at conferences, and represent MWC at civic groups, Rotary Clubs and Kiwanis. Volunteers share best practices with other volunteers at monthly in-service trainings.

Accomplishments. In fiscal year 2007-08, MWC recorded 597 job seekers, with 176 job placements. With the addition of 178 new employers registered, the total number of registered employers reached 442. A customer survey indicated an 80% approval rating.

Meals-On-Wheels Drivers

Portland, Oregon

Number of volunteers in 2007: **7,500**
Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **70%**
Number of older volunteers recruited in 2007: **300**
Volunteer retention rate in 2007: **85%**
Stipends for volunteers: **No**
Staff size: **131.5 FTEs**
Number of program manager volunteers: **0**
Year program launched: **1970**

“Our vision is that no senior will go hungry or experience social isolation.”

— Julie Piper Finley,
Director of Marketing and
Communications

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Program Idea: Recognize a volunteer by donating a needed piece of equipment in the volunteer's name.

Loaves & Fishes Centers provide volunteer opportunities for Meals-On-Wheels drivers, who deliver meals to homebound seniors throughout three counties and are often the only person a homebound senior will see on an average day. Loaves & Fishes Centers receive 35% of funding from the federal government, and obtain the remainder through fundraising. Meals are available to anyone in the service area, aged 60 or older, regardless of income. In addition, meals are sold to mission-related businesses, e.g. adult foster care programs and senior residential facilities.

Volunteers donate as little as an hour a month, up to 30 hours per week. More than two-thirds of volunteers are retired, and volunteer work provides them a social network and sense of purpose. Volunteers can serve in a number of capacities, from greeting seniors at one of 31 neighborhood meal sites, to registering other volunteers, working in the kitchen, serving meals, or working as volunteer drivers. Senior volunteers lead exercise classes, or teach painting, knitting, wood carving, and other crafts and skills. Volunteers also lecture on travel, provide blood pressure monitoring, and lead field trips. The majority of volunteers serve as Meals-On-Wheels drivers, and they often help with other tasks such as mail and newspaper collection, changing of light bulbs, reading prescriptions, etc., when they are in a senior's home.

Recruitment. Seniors at the 31 meal sites are encouraged to volunteer, and church groups and service organizations, composed of many senior members, regularly volunteer as well. The program recruits businesses and service organizations to adopt a specific Meals-On-Wheels route near their neighborhood meal site, and have their employees or members share in deliveries. Most volunteers begin as drivers and become more involved later, either on the Board of Directors or on other specialized committees. Each volunteer must undergo a criminal background check and pledge not to solicit recipients for business or church purposes.

Training and Retention. All drivers first ride a route with another experienced driver and also receive a handbook. Each of the 31 meal sites offers recognition events every spring. Meals-On-Wheels recipients are surveyed annually regarding their volunteer drivers and center managers. Centers have steering committees composed of senior participants and volunteers. A member from each Steering Committee becomes a delegate to the agency's Centers Council monthly meeting. Considered a position of honor, this task rotates among volunteers annually. Center managers work closely with volunteers.

An annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner is held in August. The center where a volunteer serves receives a piece of equipment or needed item in honor of the volunteer's achievement. The agency recognizes corporate volunteer teams by listing them on the website and recognizing them in monthly publications and a quarterly newsletter, *Prime Time* (an in-print and electronic media format). The executive director writes thank you notes to volunteers annually, and volunteer groups receive nominations for local and regional awards.

Accomplishments. More than 7,500 volunteers enable this secular, non-profit agency to provide 5,000 meals daily, totaling more than 1.4 million meals served to 12,000 seniors annually. There is no waiting list for meals. Loaves & Fishes Centers increased its funding base by approximately 10% over the past decade through an aggressive grant-writing effort.

Red Tape Cutters

Oak Park, Illinois

Number of volunteers in 2007: **56**
Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **90%**
Number of older volunteers recruited in 2007: **15**
Volunteer retention rate in 2007: **97%**
Stipends for volunteers: **No**
Staff size: **5 FTEs**
Number of program manager volunteers: **0**
Year program launched: **1995**

“Retaining volunteers can be an art form in itself... Volunteers receive the benefit of seeing their efforts directly improve the lives of their ‘cliente’.”

— Elizabeth Lough,
Red Tape Cutter Specialist

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Program Idea: Give volunteers opportunities to update their knowledge of resources through training.

Age Options, the Area Agency on Aging of suburban Cook County, Illinois, oversees the Red Tape Cutters program, which utilizes older volunteers to assist seniors in obtaining Food Stamps, Low-Income Home Energy Assistance, Medicaid, Medicare Savings Programs, and other benefits. Well-trained, closely supported volunteers help seniors overcome barriers that would impact their participation in public programs that provide support and assistance.

With a total budget of \$15 million, Age Options works with 40 community agencies and provides assistance to over 100,000 individuals annually. The agency has led coalitions within Cook County, metropolitan Chicago and statewide.

Since 1999 Age Options has received general revenue funds from the state of Illinois to administer the Red Tape Cutters program. The program specialist oversees the program and monitors the activities of 10 local senior service agencies that are contracted to implement the program in their area. Each of the 10 is responsible for setting its own volunteer schedules. Some ask volunteers to commit to a routine schedule but others do not require any specific time commitment.

Age Options overcame the proposed elimination of this program from the state budget in 2008 because of support from clients, volunteers and community agencies.

The program helps thousands of older people to remain independent within their communities as a result of receiving assistance in obtaining benefits. Web-based tools have been developed, and volunteers serve in many capacities: completing applications, photocopying documents, transporting and accompanying clients to appointments, and sending out reminder mailings.

Recruitment. Word of mouth recruitment by friends and family is most effective, with efforts made at health and senior fairs, or during presentations for seniors and caregivers. Agencies host breakfasts, lunches, or coffees to attract potential volunteers. Volunteer centers, community colleges, United Way, newsletters, articles, and local business contacts are also utilized.

Training and Retention. Volunteers choose from among numerous activities, and can assume more responsibility as they wish. They receive comprehensive initial training on benefits programs, along with continuing support and trainings at both host sites and Age Options. The agencies create a welcoming environment for the volunteers, cultivate team spirit, and value the suggestions of volunteers. Volunteers participate in challenging and satisfying work, are made to feel that their thoughts and ideas are valued, and are considered to be part of a team. Volunteers receive certificates of appreciation or small gifts at annual breakfasts or luncheons, hosted by all of the 10 agencies. Each spring, Age Options holds a volunteer recognition luncheon, allowing volunteers from various sites to interact. Most of the agencies send thank you cards and other special greetings.

Accomplishments. Cook County legislators support the program, which leveraged over \$23.7 million in benefits to seniors in need and provided assistance to 9,746 clients. The current fundraiser is expected to bring in \$50,000.

RSVP—Mentoring Children of Incarcerated Parents

New York, New York

Number of volunteers in 2007: **50**
Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**
Number of older volunteers recruited in 2007: **60**
Volunteer retention rate in 2007: **90%**
Stipends for volunteers: **No**
Staff size: **2 FTEs**
Number of program manager volunteers: **0**
Year program launched: **2006**

“The most satisfied volunteer experience for older adults is one in which the volunteer feels competent and enjoys what he/she is doing.”

— Mary Anne Flanagan,
Project Director

Program Idea: Provide volunteers with job descriptions that include title, required tasks, transferable skills needed for each task, and training and schedule requirements.

Sponsored by the Community Service Society of New York (CSS), the Mentoring Children of Incarcerated Parents (MentorCHIP) program enlists older adults to help build social skills and academic confidence of children ages 6-16 whose parents are incarcerated. CSS, which works to enhance the potential of low-income families and individuals, conducted research that revealed a more than 100% increase in the number of children with an incarcerated parent. From 1990 to 1999, the number of children with an incarcerated parent increased from about 900,000 to two million. The MentorCHIP program was developed in response.

The program’s goal is to significantly improve the cognitive, social, and lifelong learning of children who are affected by incarceration. Fifty Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) volunteers serve 50 children at youth sites in a one-on-one capacity, as well as in small groups. RSVP recruits, trains, and supports the older volunteers. Mentors use a Developmental Asset Portfolio for information gathering and tracking the progress of each child being mentored. Volunteers use reading, music, and art forms like puppet shows and plays to promote learning. Through a strengths-based approach, role modeling, and the teaching of appropriate self-expression, volunteers help children to enhance their socialization skills.

Volunteers meet on-site with their matched child for three hours weekly, serve at least six hours each month, and commit to the project for a minimum of one year. In addition to practicing reading and other skills, volunteers take trips with their assigned child to cultural and education sites, such as the Museum of Natural History, the Brooklyn Botanical Garden, and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Recruitment. The program uses volunteer job descriptions, which include a job title, delineation of tasks, requisite skills, and training and scheduling requirements, to recruit volunteers. Mentors and children complete interest surveys to determine matches based upon personal preferences, common interests, geographic proximity, personality characteristics, and similar gender, ethnic and sexual orientations. Volunteers tour the facility and meet with agency staff before matches are made and placements confirmed.

Training and Retention. All volunteers complete an 18-hour CSS/RSVP mentoring training program including topics such as intergenerational communication, stages of development, asset building, and portfolio design. A successful match story is featured each quarter of the year in a newsletter. Volunteers take part in focus groups held throughout the year, and can assist with the facilitation of monthly committee meetings. An annual recognition event is held for mentors and their children, parents/guardians, and agency partners. Awards are given for length of service.

Accomplishments. MentorCHIP is continually evaluated to meet the changing and emerging needs of its targeted populations. Now in its third year, the program has already secured funding from the New York City Department for the Aging. Outcomes include 70% of participating youth having received a minimum of 120 hours of mentoring for a one-year period; 70% achieving at least two self-identified goals; and 50% having demonstrated improvement in their social competency, e.g. respect for others and positive self-identity. The program will continue to use detailed prospecting, proactive fundraising, and community partners to secure diverse funding.

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RSVP—The Senior Volunteer Force of Generations

Vincennes, Indiana

Number of volunteers in 2007: **464**
Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**
Number of older volunteers recruited in 2007: **52**
Volunteer retention rate in 2007: **97%**
Stipends for volunteers: **No**
Staff size: **1 FTE**
Number of program manager volunteers: **0**
Year program launched: **1973**

“Many of the newer programs appeal to the Baby Boom generation’s need to share their knowledge and experience.”

— Anne Jacoby,
Executive Director

Program Idea: Utilize the life skills and knowledge of seniors to meet community needs through volunteering.

RSVP—The Senior Volunteer Force of Generations receives recognition on both state and national levels for innovative and intergenerational volunteer programs. The Knox County, Indiana, RSVP generates many new volunteer opportunities for retiring Baby Boomers. Sponsored by Generations, which is affiliated with Vincennes University, RSVP receives funding from the National Senior Service Corps. Fundraisers and in-kind contributions make up the required 30% match. The program also receives grant money from foundations and service clubs. The program has tremendous community support.

Active volunteers provide 50 hours annually, with hours reported monthly to comply with federal grant funding. Last year, Advisory Council members (active RSVP volunteers) donated 7,900 hours of service. The Advisory Council organizes RSVP’s largest annual fundraiser, an RSVP Style Show and Bingo. The Edna Tague Community Service Scholarship was created in honor of a long-time RSVP volunteer who bequeathed funds for Knox County high school students involved in community service.

In June 2007, the Advisory Council decided to support Knox County military personnel by sending WE CARE Military Support Packs, with a goal of assembling and sending 50 boxes. As of August 2008, 353 had been sent, with assistance from numerous donors, including Sunday School classes, businesses in the community, a Bible school, and Vincennes University’s mailroom, which furnishes boxes.

Recruitment. Word of mouth remains the most effective recruitment method. Recruiting venues include the Knox County RSVP quarterly newsletter, a weekly newspaper column, a monthly radio talk show, and an annual recognition banquet. Generations magazine, distributed three times a year, and speaking engagements throughout Knox County provide additional sources for communication. RSVP volunteers inform potential volunteers about various projects, such as the Kids Read and WE CARE programs.

Training and Retention. Starting with the application form, which features a Volunteer Interest Checklist, the program matches volunteers with opportunities that reflect their interests. A Volunteer Handbook describes various opportunities and expectations, and the RSVP director and/or station directors provide orientation and training for each facet of the work. Formal training sessions, with guest speakers and refreshments, are provided for special projects (Vision Screening, Kids Read and Kids Write). Assignments rotate so that volunteers can try a variety of jobs.

An RSVP Volunteer Recognition Banquet is held annually, with a luncheon and entertainment. Volunteers with five, 10, 15, 20 and 25 plus years of service receive service pins. In 2008, volunteers received special Presidential service awards. The RSVP director also nominates volunteers for local, state, and national awards.

Accomplishments. RSVP’s 464 active volunteers served a total of 64,028 hours, valued at \$1.2 million in fiscal year 2007-08. The Kids Read program grew from eight volunteers tutoring 30 students (grades 2-3) in 1997, to 57 volunteers tutoring 258 students (grades K-3) in 2008. In the same time period, the Kids Read program expanded from two schools to 10, with 72 participating teachers. Out of 160 students tested before and after participation, 146 made gains, with 60 reaching or exceeding grade level goals. The program gained national recognition by the Accelerated Reader Program at the 2008 Renaissance Learning Symposium.

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RSVP—Your Invitation to Volunteer

Kalamazoo, Michigan

Number of volunteers in 2007: **808**
Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**
Number of older volunteers recruited in 2007: **76**
Volunteer retention rate in 2007: **95%**
Stipends for volunteers: **No**
Staff size: **2.9 FTEs**
Number of program manager volunteers: **0**
Year program launched: **1973**

“We retired the words ‘Retired and Senior’ from RSVP’s tag line, replacing it with ‘RSVP—Your Invitation to Volunteer.’ This one change has been a great recruiting tool especially for Baby Boomers who cringe at joining a group labeling them as retired or senior.”

— Kathleen Kelleher,
Marketing Director/Volunteer
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Program Idea: Avoid the words “retired” or “senior” in your program name to better attract Baby Boomers (who do not want to be considered retired or senior) and focus on varied and numerous opportunities.

The RSVP—Your Invitation to Volunteer of Senior Services, Inc., Kalamazoo, MI, provides a multitude of different volunteer options through several partner agencies and RSVP Signature Programs. Bulk mail volunteers process mail for nonprofits; Stroke Support volunteers assist stroke survivors and their families; and Triad volunteers (including police officers and neighborhood watch volunteers) promote community safety. The Triad Speaker’s Bureau makes presentations about safety issues, and members publish a quarterly newsletter.

Mentor Academic Success tutors and mentors support students in classrooms, and Helping Hands knit and crochet clothing items for children and seniors, providing baby caps for newborns and chemo caps for cancer patients. Home Safety Checks provide free 47-point assessments for low- to middle-income older adults, suggesting improvements and providing free smoke detectors. Many former police officers, engineers and handymen serve in this capacity.

Peer Prevention Players, a reader’s theater troupe, performs in churches, colleges, and retirement communities, promoting older adult wellness. Their light-hearted skits relate to topics such as medication abuse, fraud, addiction, and the importance of exercise. In-Home Support is a program that offers transportation, shopping assistance and other supports to seniors in their homes.

Scheduling for volunteers is flexible, and there is no set time requirement in terms of service hours.

Recruitment. Program staff removed the words “retired” and “senior” from the RSVP tag line, and in so doing immediately expanded their recruiting pool. Baby Boomers respond more readily to an emphasis on varied and numerous volunteer choices. Newspaper articles, TV and radio advertising, websites and volunteer fairs, community presentations, and peer recruiting have been successful venues. Volunteers fill out a Skill and Interest sheet, and meet individually with staff, and receive two to four potential volunteer options. Email communication about potential volunteer opportunities is very effective with the 30% of volunteers who use this forum.

Training and Retention. Staff and partner agencies provide ongoing support and training. There are opportunities to advance and supervise volunteers, as well as to serve on the RSVP Advisory Council. Monthly time sheets, satisfaction phone inquiries, and an open door policy by staff members all contribute to good communication with volunteers.

Accomplishments. Last year, 808 RSVP volunteers donated more than 93,000 hours of service in Kalamazoo County through 81 partner agencies. Using the Independent Sector’s value of \$19.51 per volunteer hour, this service’s value is \$1.8 million. Over 100 homebound seniors were able to remain in their homes through the support of 27 volunteers who donated 730 hours; 25 Mentor Academic Success volunteers donated almost 1,500 hours tutoring students in 12 schools; 48 Bulk Mailers donated more than 1,000 hours helping nonprofits with 66 projects; 16 Helping Hands knitting volunteers donated almost 6,500 hours; three Home Safety volunteers conducted four safety checks; and five Triad volunteers donated 113 hours distributing 11,230 newsletters, conducting a workshop, and making 14 presentations to 268 people.

SOAR 55 Management Consulting Group

West Newton, Massachusetts

Number of volunteers in 2007: **15**
Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**
Number of older volunteers recruited in 2007: **10**
Volunteer retention rate in 2007: **90%**
Stipends for volunteers: **No**
Staff size: **0.2 FTE**
Number of program manager volunteers: **0**
Year program launched: **2006**

“SOAR 55 provides Boomers a meaningful, challenging volunteer experience that includes the opportunity to learn additional skills through state-of-the-art training, to work collegially as part of a team, and to contribute time according to their schedules and interests.”

— Jan Latorre-Stiller,
Director

Program Idea: Utilize volunteers to contribute operational and management expertise and guidance to nonprofits.

The SOAR 55 Management Consulting Group (SMCG) involves volunteers, aged 55+, who provide needed consultant services at no cost to nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit leaders often do not have extensive skill in marketing, strategic planning, and Board development, and the costs to hire consultants is prohibitive, as mid- to small-sized nonprofits exist in an increasingly difficult fiscal environment. Volunteers, in turn, benefit from project-focused, team-oriented work that is both challenging and meaningful, and from the training that is provided.

Volunteer consultants must agree to commit to a minimum of two projects over two years. They work in the SMCG program under the direction of SOAR 55, part of a national network of volunteer agencies under the Corporation for National and Community Service that matches older volunteers with meaningful local opportunities.

There is a waiting list of agencies that need SMCG’s help, and a consistent stream of qualified individuals, particularly Baby Boomers, who are interested in the mission and goals of the program.

Recruitment. Interest in further training for volunteer consultants was part of the stimulus for SMCG’s creation, and volunteers were readily available prior to the program’s creation. Due to the well-established nature of SOAR 55, and their strategic outreach program, the SMCG enjoys a large influx of well skilled, business-oriented individuals who seek flexible and challenging assignments. SOAR 55 created a Nonprofit Scan Group to market the program; letters and questionnaires are sent to organizations that could potentially benefit from a team of consultants, and then a team is assigned. Project assignments for each team last generally between three to six months. A final report is prepared at the conclusion of the project assignment.

Training and Retention. Two separate interviews help to determine volunteer suitability. Those selected receive 32 hours of training in basic consulting skills, preparing them for a wide variety of projects. Training includes case study combined with didactic materials, and once trained, a consultant is placed with a team. The team meets with a Trainer/Supervisor in regard to a specific project. The team works independently but has access to the supervisor for guidance whenever needed. The team regularly reports progress to their program supervisor and to the Director of SOAR 55. An annual recognition event honors all SOAR 55 volunteers, and SMCG volunteers receive individual thanks upon project completion. The website features some programs and consultants, and there have also been articles in the local media, a host agency newsletter, and the program newsletter. Volunteer feedback about training, supervision, and consulting is highly regarded.

Accomplishments. In 2007, eight additional SOAR 55 volunteers received training as consultants. Five nonprofit organizations received services from a SMCG team. One was able to expand services with a new program. Another attracted funding sources by raising its profile. A third established a new blueprint to increase program participation and attract additional funds. Both nonprofit and volunteer surveys demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with the program.

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Southwest Michigan SeniorNet Computer Learning Center

St. Joseph, Michigan

Number of volunteers in 2007: **41**
Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**
Number of older volunteers recruited in 2007: **3**
Volunteer retention rate in 2007: **98%**
Stipends for volunteers: **Yes**
Staff size: **0.2 FTE**
Number of program manager volunteers: **1**
Year program launched: **2000**

“We feel our program is unusual because our method of retention involves ownership of the program by the volunteers.”

— Richard Martin,
Chief Information Officer

Program Idea: Encourage volunteers to take ownership in the program.

The Southwest Michigan SeniorNet Computer Learning Center uses older volunteers to teach seniors how to use computers. This program assists seniors who have tried to learn computer skills in community education or college classes without success. The Region IV Area Agency on Aging (AAA), St. Joseph, MI, is an advisor to the organization, which operates independently of the AAA.

Volunteers are 50 years of age or older, and each class of 10-12 students has two volunteer coaches who closely monitor the students. If someone falls behind, the class stops until that student's understanding is adequate to proceed. Volunteers serve as instructors or coaches, and write their own course descriptions for the program newsletter.

Volunteers compose course materials, install software and/or maintain computers, set up email accounts, prepare newsletters for mailing, etc. Volunteers must commit to two hours of service, once or twice weekly. Volunteers often take on additional responsibilities as well, including preparing newspaper advertisements, investing study time prior to teaching or coaching, and doing public speaking about the program at service clubs.

The SeniorNet Round Table, comprised of seven to eight SeniorNet volunteers, meets quarterly to decide which courses to offer next. Course selections are based upon student requests, availability of expert volunteer instructors and lab equipment, and current computer trends.

Funding for rent, Internet connection, manuals, and new computers comes from course fees, ranging between \$10 and \$60 per course. The program also receives grants from service clubs, with shortages underwritten by the AAA. That agency acts only in an advisory capacity when budget issues arise, and does not decide about computer set up, curriculum, or advertising, all of which are decided by the Volunteer Coordinator and the SeniorNet Roundtable.

Recruitment. Volunteer recruitment takes place among class attendees, with instructors providing feedback about a student's potential as a volunteer. Those selected receive an orientation and placement with a mentor. A coordinator monitors the volunteer's work through feedback from the instructor and student evaluations. Volunteers and students are recruited at an annual Senior Expo in Benton Harbor, Michigan, and a local newspaper column about the program appears semi-annually.

Training and Retention. In the center's eight years of existence, 40% of the original 20 volunteers are still active. The belief is that ownership of the program results in retention of volunteers. Volunteers decide essential facets of the program, from which courses to offer, to how the courses are written and taught. The Volunteer Coordinator meets with volunteers to correct any reported problems or deficiencies, and is responsible for sending out emails in order to assemble volunteers and assure that tasks, such as the sending out of 1,500 newsletters, are accomplished efficiently. Volunteers receive recognition at an annual luncheon, as well as through newspaper articles and other publicity.

Accomplishments. A high volunteer retention rate and 2,500 seats filled attest to the success of this program. Volunteer instructors, often recently retired executives or IT professionals, write many courses in their entirety. In 2007, 309 students attended classes, with many reporting that they began or increased use of email, or learned to use a spreadsheet. Students often return for a second, third or fourth course.

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Highlights of Nominated Programs

The 2008 *Older Volunteers Enrich America* Program Awards recipients were among many outstanding nominations submitted by programs nationwide. All offer lessons in volunteer recruitment and management. Here are some of the lessons learned.

Older volunteers can be utilized in diverse programs and places. For example:

- In West Newton, Massachusetts, volunteers provide free consultant services to nonprofits (SOAR Nonprofit Management Consulting Group).
- In Oak Park, Illinois, volunteers assist seniors in obtaining Food Stamps, Medicaid, and other benefits (Red Tape Cutters, Age Options).

Other programs and settings using volunteers included:

- classrooms
- employment centers
- computer learning centers
- tax assistance programs
- community safety programs
- in their own homes (knitting).

Lessons learned included the fundamentals of volunteer management.

Recruiting and Matching Volunteers:

- Several projects (Red Tape Cutters, RSVP, SAGE, SOAR) found that volunteers enjoy a plethora of opportunities that enlist their advanced skill sets, life experience and knowledge.
- SOAR and other programs found that volunteers respond well to opportunities to improve their skills and to interact with colleagues. Team spirit seems to be a draw.
- The Foster Grandparent Program utilizes a meaningful motto (“Share Today, Shape Tomorrow”) to attract volunteers.
- One RSVP program found that deleting the words “retired” and “seniors” from its tagline resulted in a great influx of interested Baby Boomer volunteers.
- Mature Workers Connection, SOAR, Workforce Academy for Youth and other programs use a job description and interview process to make the volunteer task seem more professional and attractive.
- Foster Grandparents Program, MentorCHIP, SAGE, Workforce Academy for Youth and others offer intergenerational programs with careful matching of mentors and mentees.

Retention:

- Mature Worker Connection provides volunteers a sense of “ownership” by allowing them to determine which courses to offer next and participate in planning.
- Meals-on-Wheels Drivers, SAGE, WAY and other programs send thank you notes to volunteers. SAGE students sing to their mentors at a recognition ceremony.
- SAGE enlists a blog for seasoned volunteers to mentor new ones.
- WAY offers open channels of communication (monthly meetings, routine telephone contact with volunteers).
- AARP Tax Aide, Red Tape Cutters, SAGE and other programs use good in-service training to help retain volunteers.
- Mature Worker Connection has a pathway for volunteers to become paid staff.
- The Foster Grandparent Program, Mature Worker Connection, SeniorNet and WAY use a stipend and other benefits to keep volunteers.
- RSVP— The Senior Force of Generations uses a Volunteer Handbook.
- Meals-on-Wheels Drivers, RSVP, SAGE and other programs offer flexible hours and tasks.

Sustainability, Recognition and Performance

- Meals-on-Wheels Drivers increased its funding by 10% over the past decade through an aggressive grant writing effort.
- RSVP—The Senior Force of Generations relies on an annual Style Show and Bingo program to raise money.
- The Meals-on-Wheels Drivers program donates a piece of equipment or needed item in a volunteer’s name.
- Red Tape Cutters and SOS Medicare make sure legislatures are aware of, and support, the program.
- SeniorNet uses low course fees to attract clients.

Conclusion

We hope that this year's *Promising Practices in Recruiting and Engaging Older Volunteers* provides some useful ideas for your volunteer program. Many of these innovations that prove successful to volunteer programs are universal in their thrust, and are adaptable to the needs of any organization, in any geographical locale.

The most successful aspect of volunteer management seems to be to help an older volunteer to serve to the best of his or her capacity. That means providing opportunities that give a sense of purpose or even “ownership” in the program, letting volunteers know how important they are to the organization or program, and offering flexible schedules to accompany other time commitments they may have. Even older adults with physical limitations can be volunteers, performing tasks such as knitting caps at home for babies or chemotherapy patients.

Successful volunteer programs also report success with allowing their volunteers to serve on advisory and financial boards, or letting volunteers climb a hierarchical ladder of opportunity and responsibility over time. Volunteer motivation is also important. Their need for recognition and respect is the same as for paid workers.

Other great ideas for volunteer programs appear in the “Program Idea” box for each award winner. Here you will find excellent programming tips, such as:

- Use job titles and descriptions to carefully outline the volunteer's responsibilities and contributions;
- Encourage volunteers to take “ownership” in the program by contributing their own ideas;
- Carefully match the skills and interests of mentors with their mentees;
- Allow experienced volunteers to move into leadership positions;
- Use innovative ways to reward and recognize a volunteer, such as donating needed equipment in the volunteer's name to a Meals-on-Wheels kitchen; and
- Allow volunteers to update their knowledge through training.

We thank and applaud every organization that submitted nominations, and hope that reading about these innovative programs taking place across the continent will help you create your own successful volunteer programs.

