



A member of the University of Maine System



***SENIOR VOLUNTEERS
RESPONDING TO
COMMUNITY NEEDS***

**VOLUNTEER
HANDBOOK**

Prepared by the
UMaine Center on Aging *RSVP*
Serving Maine in
Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis,
and Washington Counties



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WELCOME TO *RSVP*

You are now one of thousands of people nationwide, age 55 and older, with a lifetime of experience to share as a member of the Senior Corps. We appreciate your making the choice to generously give of yourself to others, which will improve the quality of life for those in your community.

UM Center on Aging *RSVP* considers each volunteer a valuable asset to be respected and appreciated in all their volunteer efforts. No matter how many places you volunteer or how many hours you devote to volunteering, you are certainly making a difference in the lives of others. In your commitment to volunteering, you are serving as a role model to others and are leaving a legacy behind for generations to come.

The *RSVP* staff, Advisory Council, and our sponsor the Center on Aging are all here to support you in your volunteer service. We want your volunteer experience to be meaningful and beneficial to YOU. Whatever can be done to make your volunteering more satisfying, we will be there for you. One way to accomplish this is with a Volunteer Handbook designed to highlight policies, features and benefits of *RSVP*. Please read and keep this handbook to refer to as needed. We hope we have answered all your questions; if not, please contact us.

Thank you for all you do!

From the Staff at *RSVP*,

Director: Paula Burnett

Coordinators: *Chevelle Marshall, Jason Charland*

MISSION STATEMENT

The UMaine Center on Aging - *RSVP* is dedicated to reinvesting the skills and experience of individuals aged 55 and older into community service through stimulating volunteer opportunities in the non-profit and public service agencies of their communities.



WHAT IS *RSVP*?

RSVP is a program sponsored by the University of Maine's Center on Aging. It is one of five *RSVP*'s in this state and has numerous counterparts throughout the country as it falls under the auspices of the Corporation for National and Community Service in its Senior Corps division. *RSVP*

places and supports volunteers in their efforts to make a difference in the lives of others as well as to increase their own life satisfaction.

WHO CAN BE A *RSVP* VOLUNTEER?



Anyone can! Once one becomes age 55, he or she can become a member of *RSVP*. No dues or fees for membership. Special accommodations can be made for those who

weeks from the date the form is received at *RSVP* headquarters. A volunteer's service hours for the month need to be recorded in order for checks to be sent out to the recipient. If you have a question regarding your mileage reimbursement check, please call a program coordinator.

Recognition: Upon enrollment into *RSVP*, volunteers receive the National Senior Service Corps *RSVP* lapel pin and a laminated membership card. Additionally, the UMaine Center on Aging-*RSVP* holds an annual Recognition Luncheon each autumn in appreciation to the many *RSVP* members, and to recognize and present Years of Service awards, certificates and pins to the volunteers.

Newsletter: The UMaine Center on Aging-*RSVP* newsletter *The Volunteer Times* is published quarterly and is mailed to all members and volunteer stations in February, May, August, and November. The newsletter contains information of service opportunities and volunteer station highlights, as well as helpful information for seniors. *RSVP* members and station supervisors are encouraged to submit items of interest such as volunteer stories, photos, articles, poems, etc., for publication in the newsletter.

Access to information on aging related issues as a result of our being sponsored by the Center on Aging. Please be sure to visit the Center on Aging website at: www.mainecenteronaging.org for important information and calendar of events related to seniors and aging.

The satisfaction of knowing how important you are in the lives of the people you assist. *RSVP* members have a lifetime of experience that can enhance the lives of young and old while providing personal growth and stimulation to the volunteers.

BENEFITS OF *RSVP*

Volunteers receive:

Support and assistance with volunteer placements.

If at some point, you no longer find your volunteer service meaningful or satisfying, please talk with your station supervisor or program coordinator who will assist you in arranging for a change of assignment. *Note: there are certain types of volunteer activities that *RSVP* volunteers are limited from participating in as assigned volunteer placements: political, labor and anti-labor, and religious practices. While you are certainly welcome to volunteer in those areas just remember, *RSVP* cannot count any hours volunteering in those activities.

Insurance: Supplemental accident and liability coverage to and from the volunteer's residence to their volunteer station, as well as while volunteering is provided. This applies to personal as well as vehicular related damage. Should an accident occur during a volunteer assignment, the volunteer must report the mishap immediately to their station supervisor and to their *RSVP* coordinator. If the accident occurs while traveling to or from a volunteer station, the volunteer should contact their program coordinator as soon as possible.

Volunteer Travel Reimbursement: At present, volunteers who feel they need mileage reimbursement in order to maintain their volunteering activities are eligible to receive mileage reimbursement at the rate of 25 cents per mile up to \$20 per month. Please request a mileage reimbursement form from a program coordinator if this is necessary for you. Forms may also be found on the website: www.mainecenteronaging.org Volunteers may receive their reimbursement checks one to two

are disabled. As a volunteer, you choose where, when and how you want to participate in volunteer service. Whether you are currently volunteering or are a prospective volunteer, *RSVP* can assist you.

WHAT DO *RSVP* VOLUNTEERS DO?

Our members serve their neighbors and communities in a multitude of ways. *RSVP* volunteers can be found at hospitals, nursing homes, meal sites, chambers of commerce, museums, public schools, government agencies, hospices, housing authorities, libraries, art centers, TRIAD's, food cupboards, and many other sites that stimulate the interests and passions of our senior volunteers.



Others members may be reading at childcare centers, leading Bone Builder exercise classes, or teaching their peers about senior safety and emergency preparedness. Then there are those who have discovered or created unique niches for themselves within the volunteer community, such as being entertainers for senior care facilities or doing feasibility studies for local institutions.

There are numerous ways to volunteer and *RSVP* staff will gladly assist those seeking new volunteer opportunities.



VOLUNTEER CODE OF RESPONSIBILITIES

As a volunteer you should:

Be sure – You will do your best voluntary work if you apply yourself and enjoy what you have accomplished.

Be Loyal – Do your assigned tasks to the best of your ability.

Accept the rules – If there is something you do not understand, ask. Doing things “your way” may not accomplish the established goals.

Be willing to learn – Training is essential to doing any task, if you do not understand what is expected, ask for additional training.

Keep on learning – Continued improvement is important in any situation.

Welcome supervision – You will do a better job and enjoy it more if you are doing what is expected of you.

Be dependable – You are judged by what you do and how you do it. Do what you have agreed to do and do not make a promise you can not keep.

Be a team player
– Find a place for yourself on the team. The lone operator is pretty much out of place in today’s complex society.



CONFIDENTIALITY

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information about staff, clients, volunteers and other persons at the volunteer site where he or she is serving. It is crucial that as a volunteer, you honor and respect client privacy at all times. Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in termination of your relationship with the volunteer site.

WHAT IS A VOLUNTEER STATION?

The term “station” refers to the sites or partnering agencies where *RSVP* members are volunteering. Over ninety percent of the sites have a Memorandum of Understanding with us to support existing and new volunteers in their programs. In a few situations, the Center on Aging *RSVP* headquarters serves as a station. Stations primarily are responsible for reporting the hours that volunteers have served and to complete periodic surveys about the volunteer experience as they see it. By the way, many *RSVP* members volunteer at more than one station.

REPORTING VOLUNTEER SERVICE TIME

Volunteers report their hours on a monthly basis, usually through the volunteer’s station supervisor. We identify your supervisor(s) when you receive a welcome letter as a new member. Also, many volunteers serve in more than one capacity.

RSVP tracks your hours because these records demonstrate to the community and the nation that seniors, 55 and older, are a great contributing resource. Also, the hours serve as an indication of program effectiveness and helps provide a justification of dollars spent on volunteer programming.

Another reason to collect volunteer hours comes from the insurance that covers all *RSVP* volunteers. We can only pay claims where there is proof of service.