

Ralph Turner – Ex RSVP Coordinator – Current Volunteer

The advertisement read – Wanted! RSVP Program Coordinator, 20 hours per week. I must admit that at the time of that ad, I had never heard of an organization called RSVP of Eastern Maine. After having worked 50 to 60 hours per week as an Elementary and Jr. High teacher and principal, the idea of working only 20 hours per week appealed to me.

The position was even more appealing after I had interviewed with Director Eunice Rescott and she explained that RSVP worked with seniors 55 years of age and older. When she offered me the job I didn't imagine that for the next 6 years I would travel Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties talking to and working with a wonderful group of people who unselfishly gave of their time and talents helping others.

RSVP Volunteers are seniors who have had a lifetime to develop an unbelievable variety of talents and skills and who willingly give of these talents and time. There are an unlimited number of positions where these volunteers can use time volunteering at nonprofit and service organizations. These volunteers choose where and when they will volunteer their time and the basic reward they receive is a thank you for a job well done.

I personally became an RSVP volunteer a dozen years ago and have had many wonderful experiences volunteering at a number of RSVP Stations. I have eaten in just about every senior meal site in the two-county area, served on a number of Boards of Directors, and shamelessly promoted our state and area serving in information booths for the Visitor and Convention Bureau. As a volunteer, I helped wait on tables at fund raising functions and during one of the banquets put on for volunteers, I recall quickly carrying a large mum plant outside when it was discovered that a hornets nest was hidden under its blossoms, and they became very active after having been in a warm room.

One of our special projects involved selling hot dogs and other associated items at the Bangor State Fair. Working with many crews of RSVP volunteers we had the opportunity to really get to know each other. I also developed a taste for peanut butter fudge which was provided yearly by two "sweet" ladies from the Newport area.

I cannot write about RSVP without a "thanks and a tip-of-the-hat" to the numerous Station Supervisors who not only keep the hours of their volunteers but also recruit, train (when needed) and supervise the volunteers who serve at their stations. I was always warmly received and enjoyed the friendship of these special individuals. Without the assistance of these dedicated supervisors the RSVP program would not be as effective as it is.

The RSVP Program holds a very special place in my life. My wife and I still work at special projects and help several widows who need transportation to shop and go to doctor appointments. We usually take a meal and spend several hours each week helping with chores that are hard for them to do. If anyone who reads this is not a RSVP member or knows someone who is 55 or older, who is not a volunteer, I strongly recommend that you urge them to join this very worthwhile organization.