

RSVP Frequently Asked Questions

What is RSVP?

RSVP stands for Retired & Senior Volunteer Program and is a program under the United States Senior Corps program. This volunteer network is operated under the Corporation for National and Community and is geared towards organizing the retired 55 and older populations of the United States to help their communities. We recognize that these volunteers have years of experience and can provide valuable assistance and wisdom to their communities. The program works closely with local organizations to build a network of volunteer opportunities for volunteers to choose from and focuses on supporting those volunteers. When needs arise we tap into our network of volunteers in order to fulfill that need. Locally we help operate the volunteergreatfalls.com website which is an online listing of volunteer needs throughout the Great Falls area.

Who can be a member of RSVP?

RSVP membership is available to anyone aged 55 or better regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, political affiliation or religion. RSVP is also open to those with disabilities and there are no income limits or requirements. Anyone aged 55 or better who wants to make a difference in his or her community is welcome to join RSVP. Certain volunteering positions may have additional requirements such as undergoing a background check.

How do I benefit?

You'll forge new relationships with people in your community and make a significant difference in the lives of others. RSVP opportunities provide a chance for volunteers to learn new skills or continue to use their existing ones with a wide range of different positions available. Recent studies have also shown that volunteering helps you live longer and promotes a positive outlook on life. Volunteer often live longer and report high quality of life. Additionally as a volunteer in the RSVP program you are insured by the program while traveling to and from your volunteer position as well as while you are volunteering.

Why become a RSVP member when you already volunteer?

When you volunteer through RSVP programs, you receive insurance coverage while you volunteer. This gives you extra protection for the time you spend traveling to and from your volunteer site and back home. Additionally RSVP works with local sites to provide more volunteering options to you and organize volunteers for special events in the community that you may not know about otherwise. Volunteers with emails also receive weekly updates on the program, volunteering events that you might not otherwise hear about and local nonprofit news. RSVP also has an annual recognition event for our volunteers each April to say thank you.

Is RSVP a good place to learn new skills?

Absolutely! RSVP volunteers often tap their wealth of experience and wisdom and channel it in new directions. For example, some volunteers learn how to be effective tutors to young children; some organize community recycling programs or environmental protection projects; others help nonprofit organization boards with planning or resource development. What you learn depends on the sort of volunteering position you take and your interests.

Who decides what RSVP volunteers do?

You decide how you volunteer. RSVP volunteers work closely with our local staff in order to gather information on how they would like to serve. We provide suggestions on local organization who are looking for volunteers, but the final decision of where to volunteer and how often is yours.

Can I count my time volunteering at my church?

It depends on what you are doing at your church. RSVP is under the Corporation for National and Community Service which places the program under the Establishment Clause of the United States Constitution. Activities at your church that are directly tied to your faith should not be reported to RSVP and cannot be counted. We do not accept hours for activities like Altar Guild, making Prayer Chains or Prayer Shawls or teaching Sunday School.

That said if your church runs a soup kitchen or offers child care to low income families regardless of their religious affiliation or other community activities that are not inherently religious then you can certainly report those hours.

What if the place I'm currently volunteering at isn't a worksite?

Don't stop volunteering there! If you think that partnering with the RSVP program would benefit the organization you are volunteering for then bring it up with whoever you currently report to. They can contact us and we will gladly go through the information on RSVP with them. Partnering with us gives an organization access to more avenues for contacting volunteers, access to reports on volunteering hours and connections to other organizations in the area. It also provides their RSVP volunteers with insurance in case of accidents while they are volunteering.