Foster Grandparents
Making Inroads in Classrooms across Dane County
by Mary Schmelzer

Spend any time with children, and you quickly realize how important an extra set of hands can be to guiding them in a good direction. That's precisely what the RSVP Foster Grandparent Program is all about – a lovely pairing of people with life experience with children who are learning how to succeed in the big world around them.

The Foster Grandparent program, established in 1965, is celebrating its 50th anniversary of making an impact in areas such as tutoring and mentoring in local schools and community-based programs like Head Start: improving behavioral and educational outcomes for students with special or exceptional needs in day-care centers, grade schools, and for college readiness; teaching job skills to economically disadvantaged youth; and supporting children of veterans and deployed military members.

The people who become Foster Grandparents don't necessarily bring formal experience in tutoring or mentoring to the job. Instead they receive training from the organization they serve. These dedicated volunteers provide at least 15 hours every week in classrooms across Dane County – a big impact for a core of only 14 volunteers in Dane County, though it is 30,000 strong nationally. There is an even larger return in job satisfaction to the Foster Grandparents themselves.

When Maria Wolf came to the U.S. from Paraguay with her former husband Eric Wolf, she spoke no English and was deeply grateful for the help she was given to acclimate and succeed in her new home. Their daughter and son are now grown, so when the opportunity to become a Foster Grandparent arose she thought it was the perfect time to return the help she once received. Volunteering is a big part of both Eric and Maria's lives: Eric drives Dane County seniors with RSVP Drivers Service, and Maria works as a Foster Grandparent.

“I feel such gratitude for everything that was given to me, and working with the kids brings me happiness,” says Wolf. “They make me feel alive. They bring me back to my own childhood and allow me to be a child again, to play again! And it's rewarding to help them grow, to help their self-esteem and confidence, to share a hug, a kind word or whatever it takes to help them believe they can do it.”

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Board Notes...

Dear RSVP Members and Friends,

One of my fondest memories as a young girl was exchanging May baskets on May 1st. May Day was a big deal in my neighborhood. In fact, the sign at the end of the long block that made up the Seventh Street neighborhood stated, “Please drive carefully, 62 children playing.” So you can imagine how many youngsters were scampering back and forth, leaving May baskets on front porches, ringing doorbells, and running away with delight.

May Day this year was very special as well. Each year the United Way of Dane County presents Community Volunteer Awards to individuals and organizations addressing community needs through volunteer service. This special Community Volunteer Awards Day fell on May 1st, and we had a table of representatives from RSVP in attendance. Jim Jenkins, RSVP volunteer and board member, was nominated. I felt very confident that he would be the award recipient, and he was! Jim was awarded a Distinguished Service Award.

Jim began volunteering with RSVP in 2003 and since then has accumulated 8,184 volunteer hours through all his volunteer assignments. His first RSVP volunteer placement was at the American Red Cross as part of...
the Disaster Relief Team. For the last five years, Jim has been a Team Leader for one of the Disaster Action Teams (DAT) in Dane County. He has served on the RSVP Board of Directors for the past 10 years and has chaired the Nominating Committee. Last year, Jim took on the big task of coordinating and forming the Diversity PowerUP! Committee to address RSVP’s commitment to engage more diverse community members in volunteering to meet the needs in Madison and Dane County. Congratulations to Jim!

After individual recipients were brought forward for their awards, the Distinguished Service Nonprofit Award was to be presented. All award recipients are kept in the dark until the final “unveiling.” As the MC gave a description of RSVP! We were still in shock when they announced that RSVP was indeed the recipient of the Distinguished Service Nonprofit Award. This award recognizes a community organization that shows a commitment to increasing the impact of volunteer engagement in the community. As we headed up to the stage, I whispered, “You’re doing the talking!” Margie had a great short interview with Channel 27 Newscaster, Greg Jeschke, and we headed back to our group, carrying the award, still in disbelief.

We’re very honored to have received this award and applaud United Way for recognizing deserving individuals and organizations for the past 25 years. (RSVP’s Driver Escort Volunteers were awarded this honor in 1999.)

Alison Koelsch
President, Board of Directors

From the Desk of... Krishna Sijapati

I held 26 pennies in my right hand. As we were instructed in our Combatting Racial Conditioning session, I transferred a penny to my left hand if I agreed that the statement applied to me most of the time. You can find the questions on the internet if you google “White Privilege Survey.” Here are a few examples:

1. “I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.”

2. “I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the newspaper and see people of my race widely and positively represented.”

3. “I can comfortably avoid, ignore, or minimize the impact of racism on my life.”

After the twenty-sixth question, we were asked how many pennies we had in our left hand. As I expected, each of the white participants had transferred all 26 pennies. And, based on what I had learned, it was not surprising to find out that each person of color had so few pennies in his/her left hand.

For the past year, in addition to this session, I have been attending a variety of lectures and events as well as reading articles and books to try to learn as much as I can about racial inequity. I know now that my experience as a white person in this community is different and I wish it could be otherwise. It is difficult to know what we as individuals can do, when the issues seem so daunting. Here are a few ideas: attend community events on racism, read, find opportunities to interact with people of color, become advocates, and volunteer!

RSVP Intergenerational and Foster Grandparent Programs have 300 volunteers serving in public schools throughout Dane County, but more volunteers are needed to work with children. According to the Race to Equity Report, “In 2011, statewide tests revealed that black third-graders in Dane County were less likely to be reading at proficiency levels than other black third-graders across Wisconsin. Department of Public Instruction data for the same year also indicate that Madison’s black students were significantly less likely to graduate from high school on time (49.9%) than African Americans living elsewhere in the state (63%).” The data tells us that 48% of black third-graders were not proficient in reading!

As you consider your commitments for the fall, please add volunteering in the public schools and selected Head Start sites to your list! We need volunteers to read to children and to listen to them read! We need caring adults to work with children in our own community who are struggling. You can help make a difference to achieve racial equity, one child at a time.
Welcome New Volunteers

We enrolled 77 new volunteers from January 1 through April 30, 2015, serving in a wide variety of assignments throughout Dane County. Do you know someone who might like to volunteer? RSVP volunteers are our best recruiters as they spread the word about why they like volunteering and the need for more volunteers. For a sampling of current requests, see our Volunteer Opportunities sections. Please pass this newsletter on to a friend or neighbor and tell them what RSVP means to you!

Carol Anderson  Demetrios Gryparis
Daniel Anderson  Frank J. Heimbecker
Stanford H. Bang  Carole Helmer
Edward Barman  Norman E. Herfel
Danielle R. Behrman  William Hines
Scott A. Bigler  Shirley Hoeter
Betty Bilsky  Linda Hoverson
Walter Bilsky  Thomas A. Howells
Jim Black  Audrey Ihland
Jack Burns  Daniel J. Imhoff
Judy Ann Carlson  Ruth (Wirt) Jensen
Paul Carlson  Sandi Jensen
Debra Cass  Dick Josephson
Susan M. Chamberlain  Janel Karls
Archie T. Christensen  Maria R. Kluever
Bruce Dewey  Joan Kunz
Sara Drahn  Linda Lalor
Lea Gough  Mary E. Laufenberg
Barbara Green  Shirley A. Lewis

Diana J. Luethje  Diane Scharkey
Margie May  Barbara Schewe
Marlin Meffert  Don Schneider
Dori Milbrandt  Karlette K. Schoen
Virgina Nachreiner  Steve Shapiro
Bob Norcross  Donna A. Shriver
Kathleen Nussbaum  Rosemary Sprenger
Donna Pahlow  Mel Stark
Shelly Pare  Anne Stone
Sue Patterson  Mary Lou Sybert
Michael E. Paulus  Jeanette Treinen
Carol Pederson  Marilyn Turinski
Virginia Pippert  Karen Lee Weidig
Christine Reeb  Paula M. Wermich
Marjorie Reising  Garry A. Williams
Mary R. Reynolds  Lori J. Williams
Jay P. Ripp  Marie Williams
Richard Rydecki  Eric V. Wolf
Carol A. Sawyer  Karen Young
Carol A. Zoerb

Congratulations
to the following RSVP volunteers
in the news this past quarter:

RSVP volunteer drivers
Oakwood Lutheran Senior Ministries
Community Impact Report 2014

Jim Jenkins
Distinguished Service Award Outstanding Leadership:
RSVP of Dane County.

Distinguished Service Award Outstanding Nonprofit
2015 United Way of Dane County
Community Volunteer Awards

Fred Newmann
Community Volunteer Award winner

Joe Giordano, Don Ott,
Frank Pennypacker,
Ralph Pfeiffer, and Charlie Shoham
2015 United Way of Dane County
Community Volunteer Awards Nominees

Barb Abbott
Active Living, May 2015

Isabel Hubbard
100+ hours for Meriter
Unity Point Health;
125 hours for Attic Angel Association
Wisconsin State Journal
A Journey South
by Judy Suchman, RSVP Volunteer

This March, I had the privilege of traveling on a journey to the South with my daughter, Lisa, during her spring break. We had talked for more than ten years about touring the “civil rights” South. This year, the 50th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery March, seemed like the right time. I grew up in Maryland where, during my early childhood, I remember the “colored” and “white” restrooms and drinking fountains. But Lisa, who is 32 and a special education teacher in the Pacific Northwest, has not experienced any of the intensity of the period other than as a student of history. We both wanted to see and feel the places in the South that have molded our country’s racial history, from slavery to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and beyond.

Our journey began in Memphis, where we spent almost an entire day at the National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Hotel. This proved to be a remarkable place to start. During the past two years, this museum has been renovated and greatly expanded and for us was a “Civil Rights 101” history lesson. The exhibits were organized around significant events and periods of history from slavery, to the sit-ins, to the Montgomery bus boycott, to the Freedom rides – and much more. The endpoint of the museum was the room of the Lorraine Hotel where Martin Luther King stayed and was assassinated. It was a powerful moment when we realized that our path that snaked through the museum had led us to that spot. Across the street at the Legacy Building, we stood where James Earl Ray assassinated Dr. King. Looking out at the balcony across the street was a chilling experience. Both Lisa and I concluded that a visit to this museum should be a requirement for all Americans.

From Memphis, we journeyed to Montgomery, Alabama, where we spent two nights. Montgomery is a beautiful tree-lined city, a downtown filled with elegant antebellum homes and historical buildings. Nonetheless, it was difficult not to feel the complexities and ironies of this city: home of the first White House of the Confederacy; the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church where Dr. King preached; the Rosa Parks Library and the spot where she was arrested; Court Square Fountain, where slaves were bought and sold – all woven together in a complicated web. We met a volunteer at the Capitol building who told us he had participated in the original march from Selma to Montgomery. He gave us some suggestions of sites to visit as we headed out on the 54-mile drive to Selma. We walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, following the path of the marchers 50 years ago. Although there were no events scheduled during the time we were there, we crossed the bridge with many other visitors. It was frightening to realize how unprepared the marchers must have been for the barrage of violence they met on Bloody Sunday. The bridge arches in such a way that the first of the marchers must not have been able to see the police in front of them.

Before we left Montgomery, we stopped at the Civil Rights Memorial, created by Maya Lin, the designer of the Viet Nam Memorial in Washington, D.C. Pressed for time, we almost passed it up, but Lisa and I agreed that of all the places we visited, this was the most moving and inspirational. The structure is a monument to 40 martyrs of the civil rights movement. The attached museum, run by the Southern Poverty Law Center, is a small building but a powerful testimonial to the 40 people who lost their lives in the struggle to fight racism throughout the South. Forty plaques told each of their stories; it was impossible to pass by without reading every one. The second room contained exhibits of modern-day violence against people worldwide, persecuted because of their race, politics, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Finally, in the last room of the museum was the Wall of Tolerance, a digital display of the names of more than half a million people who have visited and pledged to work for justice and tolerance in their daily lives.

We were able to add our names to the wall.

From Montgomery we drove 350 miles across Alabama and Mississippi to Natchez, along the Mississippi River. Natchez is a city of beautiful plantations and antebellum homes, but also a significant port in the slave trade along the river. Once again, we were struck by the clashes in cultural heritage we encountered.

When we arrived in New Orleans, our final destination – 1,100 miles and one week later – we realized how much we had missed: the Mississippi Delta, Birmingham, Jackson, the Whitney Plantation Slave Museum in Louisiana, and much more along the way. Nevertheless, our whirlwind tour was an intense and humbling experience – and at times an uncomfortable one. It was a very personal reminder of our ongoing national struggle to achieve freedom and equality for people of color.
Janice Brunner, RSVP Length-of-Service Award Winner

by Jim Jenkins

Janice Brunner has accomplished a lot in her 86 years on this planet: she has 16 children, 49 grandchildren, 25 great-grandchildren; 50 years in Black Earth, and 20 years as an RSVP Driver Services driver.

This remarkable woman began as a driver in 1994, shortly after she retired from the State Department of Transportation where she worked with suspensions and revocations. When she retired, Janice wanted to do something worthwhile with her time. She began by driving a dialysis patient from Black Earth to Madison twice a week, and continued her service from there.

Janice has no plans to slow down – as long as her health is good. Her other volunteer activities include her church, St. Barnabas Catholic Church in Mazomanie, where she’s a jack-of-all-trades, doing whatever is needed, and the Heartland Nursing Home, where she helps with bingo games and reads the rosary prayers.

Why does Janice volunteer? Because it makes her feel good, she says. "God gave me health, and I think I should do something good with it. Nothing makes me feel more blessed than to go into a nursing home, help out, and then be able to walk home."

Janice’s most memorable Driver Services experience involves a passenger’s rebellious stomach right after dining at McDonalds. Without going into details, cleanup of Janice’s new car was nearly impossible, and she says, "I’ve never eaten at McDonalds since then!" Now that’s going the extra volunteer mile.

Another rider was a brilliant man who’d been a doctor in Germany. However, his bearings were a little off when Janice would drive him to appointments in Mt. Horeb. He kept looking at the bluffs around Black Earth and asking, "What mountains are those?" It seemed that he was remembering his earlier years in Germany.

Janice says that the biggest impact volunteering has had on her life is making her "thankful for what the Good Lord has given: your health and your family’s health!" She promotes volunteering to others by telling them, "Don’t be bored!" It’s pretty clear that after having 16 kids, 49 nine grandkids, 25 great-grandkids, and volunteering for 20 years, Janice Brunner is almost never bored!

RSVP is proud to have honored Janice Brunner for her many years of service. She received the 2014 RSVP Length of Service Award from RSVP of Dane County at the 42nd Anniversary Volunteer Recognition event held at Turner Hall in Madison.

County/Mayor’s National Service Day of Recognition

by Paula Reif

Tuesday, April 7, marked the second annual Mayor’s Day of Recognition for National Service. This year the Corporation for National and Community Service expanded the reach of recognition for Community Service beyond mayors to include the entire county. Dane County celebrated with a reading event at Chavez Elementary school. City of Madison Mayor, Paul Soglin, City of Stoughton Mayor, Donna Olson, and Dane County Executive, Joe Parisi, joined National Service Program volunteers in reading with kindergarten students at the school. A program followed the reading event, with each of the representatives reading a Proclamation from their community. The Stoughton Proclamation read by Mayor Olson highlighted the specific impact that RSVP volunteers are having in the community:

"WHEREAS, 78 RSVP volunteers addressing some of the most pressing challenges for Stoughton residents provide transportation to medical appointments, participate in home meal delivery, support the Stoughton Senior Center operations and tutor elementary students; and"

"WHEREAS, in 2014, RSVP volunteer drivers provided 644 rides and delivered 13,620 meals to support Stoughton area residents to stay healthy;"

Akeem Torres from the RSVP Foster Grandparents Program provided books for the event and the Farm to School program provided refreshments. Thank you to everyone who helped make this a great event. Special thanks to Beatrice Allen and Larry Orr who represented RSVP of Dane County and the FGP volunteers who are giving their time to serve the community.
Meet Victor Banks — A Shining Example

Victor Banks was a chronically homeless veteran who lived on and off the streets for almost 20 years while struggling with an alcohol addiction. Even while facing the challenge of being homeless and needing services himself, he wanted to volunteer his time to help other veterans in similar circumstances. He worked his way through the system, was able to get off public assistance and to obtain gainful employment. In four years, he earned a GED to become a college graduate who is very proud of his accomplishments, literally turning his life around. All of his hard work helped him to obtain his current position at the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs where he continues to help veterans.

Victor’s background has provided an important perspective on issues faced by homeless veterans. He is a long-time resident of Madison, has developed clinical social work skills and become a community advocate and, as a result, has a broad-based and in-depth knowledge of community service programs. He is able to work with and help those who are seeking employment, housing, child care, and legal aid as well as those who are looking for food pantries and/or free meal programs and AODA Prevention Programs.

His first connection with RSVP was as a passenger through the RSVP Vets Helping Vets Program (VHV). This inspired him to start volunteering with RSVP first at the Bethel Homeless Support Services day center and then at the Grace Episcopal Church homeless night shelter. In his work with homeless veterans, he was able to talk with them as one of their own. He also helped promote and volunteered at the Wayne D. Horner Stand Down Event for homeless veterans that was held in 2014.

His speech at the 2014 Porchlight Awards Banquet, where he received the Academic Excellence Award for his achievements, can—and should—inspire each of us: “I have realized that life can be so shallow and unrewarding if you are living each day with no plan for the future and little thought toward helping others… I come across people every day who haven’t had the opportunity to realize this truth for themselves just yet, and they are miserable because of it… I feel very fortunate that the goals I have formed for myself over the past several years are helping me make the most of every opportunity that presents itself, allowing me to live a life with true meaning.”

Yes, Victor Banks is indeed a shining example for every one of us!

The Stoughton Foundation Steps Up VHV Support

by Dick Hoffman

Having awarded its initial grant to RSVP in 2013, the Stoughton Area Community Foundation became so impressed with the RSVP grantee report given at their annual meeting in 2014 that one of their board members came forward wanting to donate $1,000 to establish a lasting endowment for the Stoughton RSVP veterans transportation program, Vets Helping Vets (VHV). Once it was approved by the foundation board, an endowment was established for RSVP’s benefit.

This year, at their annual meeting, a balance of $2,079 was reported. The endowment will receive a percentage of the foundation’s investment annual earnings, and donors to the foundation may earmark part or all of their donations to the endowment. It is anticipated that the fund will grow each year and eventually provide a lasting benefit to the Stoughton RSVP’s VHV program. What a win-win situation! This is truly a wonderful and gracious move by the foundation.

New Grants and Additional Funding

RSVP has recently received two grants to help fund program supplies and volunteer recognition for Group Projects/Homeworkers. We appreciate the $1,000 grant from the Madison South Rotary Foundation and the $1,000 grant from the Endres Manufacturing Company Foundation to help support the efforts of our volunteers who make beautiful handmade items including hats, scarves, mittens, quilts, nap quilts, and tote bags for those in need.

RSVP also received a $2,000 grant from Altrusa International, Inc. of Madison for training for our Foster Grandparents Program. FGP volunteers serve 15 – 35 hours/week in Head Start sites and elementary schools helping with school readiness, reading, and math.
**Foster GrandParents from front cover**

*Judy Rubiel-Perez* has invested a lot of years in helping children. After raising her own two sons and then three grandchildren, she went on to volunteer as a Foster Grandparent at South Madison Head Start. “I just enjoy kids. I love to see how happy they are when they accomplish things,” Rubiel-Perez says about her work in the all-day program at Head Start where she works with three-to-five-year-olds on Pre-K skills, teaching them colors, letters, numbers, shapes, pronunciation, and spelling – basic building blocks to successfully launch a child in school.

She likes it so much she often encourages friends to give it a try. “It’s rewarding, especially for seniors. Not only do you teach academic skills, but you teach life skills. Every day I come here, there are my kids shouting, ‘Miss Judy, Miss Judy!’ It just makes your day to be appreciated like that.”

And the impact isn’t just on the children being directly touched by Foster Grandparents, it ripples out to classmates, teachers, and beyond. Rubiel-Perez finds that as she’s teaching skills to the older students in the class, the younger ones are interested to learn the same things, giving them a leg up for the time they’ll be tested for kindergarten readiness.

Char Longino, South Madison Head Start Director says it best: “Grandparents are like having another teacher in the classroom – an extra set of hands that provide extra nurturing and one-on-one work on literacy and behavior. It’s great for kids to work with older people because not all of them have a grandparent locally, so they experience a wide variety of ages working together.”

Foster Grandparents can take time to give individual attention to students and nurture a connection that can translate into better cooperation from the kids in the classroom, an important element in classrooms where behavior is a significant focus.

Foster Grandparent *Melvin Hinton*’s lifelong love of words and language led him to pursue a degree in Spanish literature and linguistics and to live and work in Spain for several years. Being bilingual has allowed him to use his skills in many different settings, most recently as a Foster Grandparent at Lincoln Elementary, working with fifth-grade students who are bilingual – speaking English in school and Spanish at home.

“Teaching is one of my great loves,” says Hinton. “There is enormous satisfaction working with the children. I enjoy widening their imagination and expectations of what they can do, what they’re capable of producing in writing, in understanding and in reading.”

Hinton works with students on both sides of language use, helping them become more proficient in English and helping them maintain their ability to speak Spanish. Recently Hinton worked with his students on a poetry unit, helping them memorize and perform an Emily Dickinson poem for their classmates, an enormous feat for children who toggle between two languages. After the immediate relief of having their performance behind them, the kids asked Hinton to do another poem. To have students show a desire to keep learning is truly the ultimate compliment to a teacher! Hinton chose *The Dream Keeper* by Langston Hughes:

> Bring me all of your dreams  
> You dreamer,  
> Bring me all your  
> Heart melodies  
> That I may wrap them  
> In blue cloud-cloth  
> Away from the too-rough fingers  
> Of the world.

Exploring the Langston Hughes poem Hinton and his students discussed the phrase “too rough fingers.” Their own youthful hands served as a poor reference, so Hinton used his older, slightly rougher hands as an example that gave them a deeper understanding of what Hughes was saying. The many meanings of the word “dreams” led Hinton to share some of his own dreams and encourage the children to think about and share some of their own – serving as a prime example of how the arts can lead to a more enriched view of ourselves and the world around us.

“These kids love him so much they are willing to give up recess to work with Melvin. And if one of his regular kids is absent, the other kids clamor to work with him that day,” explained Amelia Ramirez, Lincoln Elementary School fifth-grade teacher. “And he’s no nonsense. He has high expectations of them and they work hard to reach them.”

After serving as a Foster Grandparent at Lincoln School for seven years, *Betty Dawson* was an institution; everyone knew who she was and loved her dearly. “Miss Betty was my right-hand Lady,” said teacher Carolyn Konkol. “She was here three-to-four days every week from 9 a.m. To 3 p.m. each day. She made a huge commitment to these kids.”

Miss Betty helped with math skills, with one-on-one reading skills, and worked on honing further literature skills through songs and poems. She went on school field trips, attended after-school programs and activities, and knew and loved the families in the Lincoln School community. She became a steady influence in her students’ days, and was often able to reach the “tough to reach kids.” Teacher Angela Turner states, “She had an impact on my grandson like no one else could.”

Her assignment was to work with the students, but reaching
out to the staff was also a big part of her impact at the school. Miss Betty’s and Ms. Konkol’s room became the adult “lunch-bunch” spot, a place where staff gathered to share, laugh, and generally support each other. “She taught me who I am as a white teacher; she taught me to be culturally relevant,” said Konkol. “Also, every student teacher that has been in this classroom was affected by Miss Betty and will take her lessons of cultural relevance with them to their own classrooms.”

Miss Betty passed away in November 2014, leaving an empty chair in Konkol’s classroom and a rich treasure trove of memories for her students and their parents, as well as the school staff and teachers to draw upon. “Anyone who knew Miss Betty had a story of love to share,” Konkol added.

Wisconsin’s Rich Tradition of Volunteering

by Mary Schmelzer

The time that each volunteer gives to their volunteer job works like a gear in a clock, each gear moving the next gear to make the clock tick. A ride provided helps to improve or maintain the health of a senior passenger no longer able to drive, helping them live independently longer. A lift to a job interview ends with a veteran finding employment and a path to independence. A meal delivered provides regular nourishment to keep an isolated neighbor strong enough to live alone.

The arrangement is simple: Volunteer drivers provide rides to seniors, veterans and their families, and deliver meals to seniors in rural Dane County. The real-life impact that rides and meals can have on our friends, family members, and neighbors is immense!

RSVP drivers are part of an intricate network that helps offer solutions to a wide range of challenges – the effects of living on a limited income, the desire to live independently, the experience of social isolation, and emotional and physical health – all of which are real and pressing issues that speak to the quality of life for seniors and vets across Dane County.

With the senior population in Dane County projected to grow 124% between 2010 and 2030 and funding for social services continuing to decrease, the need for a system of people helping people becomes all the more important and it’s cost effective too! In 2014, by contracting with RSVP instead of a for-profit service, Dane County saved an estimated $748,458. And as the demand for rides grows, which we know it will, these savings will grow with it.

Wisconsin has a rich tradition of people banding together through difficult times. According to the Corporation for National Community Service, 35.1% of WI residents volunteer, ranking Wisconsin 5th among the 50 states and Washington DC! We are being called to help our neighbors once again. Our volunteers repeatedly report how deeply satisfying it is to give their time. Please consider becoming a Drivers Services volunteer – your neighbors need you!

There are Three Ways to serve as an RSVP Driver

- **For Seniors:** getting them to medical and other important appointments – contact Gene Kundert, Driver Services Manager, 608.441.7896 or gkundert@rsvpdane.org.

- **For Veterans and their family members:** getting them to medical and other important appointments – contact Tom Poppe, Vets Helping Vets Coordinator, 608.238.7901 or tpoppe@rsvpdane.org.

- **For Home Delivered Meal programs** located in Senior Centers outside Madison – contact Gene Kundert, Driver Services Manager, 608.441.7896 or gkundert@rsvpdane.org.

Passengers who receive rides from RSVP Driver Escort and Vets Helping Vets volunteer drivers are oftentimes the best spokespeople for what the service means to them in real-life terms:

- “This service keeps me independent because it means that my husband does not have to give up his part-time job, which is very important to us at this time.”

- “My husband has Alzheimer’s – this gives him some independence and me, the caregiver, respite.”

- “I cannot drive any longer due to macular degeneration and live in the country so I don’t know what I would do without this program.”
A Very Busy Spring for Intergenerational Volunteers

by Diana Jost

It was this past Spring, which means teachers were busy planning last lessons of the school year and students were finishing projects and getting ready for exams. For some RSVP volunteers, Spring meant getting ready for two exciting school events.

In April, eight RSVP volunteers participated in the DeForest Middle School Bio-Links Project. This project started as a fun way to bridge the generation gap and has grown into an annual event that teachers, students, and volunteers look forward to. Students visit with and interview volunteers about their life experiences, families, traditions, influential people in their life, obstacles they may have overcome, historic events, career paths, and accomplishments. This year, Rollie Krogstad, William Payne, Bill Murphy, Donna Weissinger, Joy Erickson, Linda White, Barb Mathiot, Linda Ryan, and Ginger Pippert each shared their stories with the middle-school students. After talking with the guest speakers, the students used computer technology to produce a PowerPoint biography about the volunteer they interviewed. Volunteers were then invited back to view the students’ presentations/projects.

Seven volunteers also visited James Madison Memorial High School for their annual WW II History Project. Rollie Krogstad, Chuck Waity, Bette Barnes, Paul Kusuda, Robert Coffin, William Payne, and Fred Leidel each shared their own unique life experience about the WW II era. Teachers at Memorial High School were thrilled to have RSVP volunteers again be a part of this project. “The students learn so much more from talking with the volunteers than they would in a history book.” Volunteers spent the entire day at the high school speaking to students during five class periods. Students will complete a written assignment about their interviews, and the assignments will then be compiled into a booklet that will be shared with all.

With Spring we saw the wrap up of another year of our Computer Buddy Program. Students from three Dane County school districts – DeForest, Marshall, and Oregon – participated in the program. Third- and fourth-graders were matched 1:1 with a senior buddy, and the buddies corresponded weekly through email. Over the course of the year the student and senior buddy develop a real friendship and make a valuable connection. The RSVP Computer Buddy Program truly bridges the generations. The students love to have another older adult to talk with, someone who listens and cares about them. The senior buddies enjoy talking with students, comparing stories about school, family, friends, and activities. Many students and their buddies find quite a few similarities growing up today and some years ago.

“I always find the Computer Buddy Program very rewarding and a lot of fun. The kids have a lot to say and all of it interesting. Email conversations flow very easily.”

“arly computer savvy. Here are a few ends the Computer Buddy Program.

Fred Leidel with Memorial High School students

Fred Leidel with Memorial High School students

Maria Kleuver with Brooklyn Elementary School Computer Buddy students

Maria Kleuver with Brooklyn Elementary School Computer Buddy students

Fred Leidel with Memorial High School students

Fred Leidel with Memorial High School students

“It’s fun getting to know the children and to learn about what their school and home activities and interests are. I also think it’s interesting for them to learn about an older person, their lives and interests and accomplishments.”

At the annual end of the year party, the buddies finally get a chance to meet face to face. It is always so much fun to see the interaction as the buddies meet for the first time. Most students can easily pick out their buddy as they have grown to know them so well over the course of the year.

The Computer Buddy Program will start again next fall. If you are interested in becoming a Computer Buddy, please contact Diana Jost at djost@rsvpdane.org or call 608.441.1393.
Bus Buddy Trip to the Chazen a Big Success

On April 29th, Bus Buddy Tours kicked off its second season with a trip to the Chazen Art Museum. Eighteen participants along with their Bus Buddy Coordinators took the Madison Metro Bus to the museum. The participants were treated to a guided tour by one of the museum docents followed by lunch at the University Club. During lunch, the Bus Buddy Coordinators taught the participants how to navigate around all parts of Madison using the Madison Metro Bus System. The coordinators also talked about the accessibility of the bus system. Participants receive a free ten-ride bus pass and Madison Metro Ride Guide. The Bus Buddy Tours continue through October with a trip to Olbrich Gardens on August 5th to tour the Butterfly Exhibit and a trip on October 14th to Market Square Theater to see a movie. If you would like to participate in either of the remaining trips, please contact Diana Jost at djost@rsvpdane.org or call 608.441.1393.

Help Wanted

School tutors needed! Summer is here, and we are already planning for the next school year. All schools in Dane County, in particular the Madison Metropolitan School District, need more volunteers who are interested in tutoring students in grades K-12. Volunteers will be matched 1:1 or will work with small groups of children. The focus is on literacy and math. With your help the students will get the individualized attention they need to excel in the classroom. Tutoring is a great way for you to share your time, stay active, and make a great impact on the community.

MMSD Play and Learn Program is looking for volunteers for the Fall.

MMSD Play and Learn Program is a fun and engaging free-of-charge program offered by the Madison Metropolitan School District for children ages birth to three years and their parents or caregivers. Volunteers will interact with the children and help them learn early math, literacy, and social skills through play, while the adults learn about child development, the importance of play, and parenting skills. Play and Learn program sessions meet two-and-a-half hours a week at various sites throughout Madison. As birth to five is a critical stage of child development, the Play and Learn Program is an important resource for children, parents or caregivers in the Madison School District. Play and Learn needs eight to ten volunteers starting in the fall to help make this program a success.

Other programs looking for volunteers this Summer and next Fall include:

- Madison Senior Center Catch Healthy Habits
- Catholic Multicultural Center-child care volunteer
- Madison Children’s Museum
- Henry Vilas Zoo
- Middleton Pheasant Branch Conservancy
- YWCA of Dane County
- Commonwealth Development-Mock Interview

For more information on any of the above programs or to volunteer, please contact Diana Jost at djost@rsvpdane.org or call 608.441.1393.
VOLUNTEER OMBUDSMAN NEEDED. The Wisconsin Board on Aging and Long Term Care is in need of volunteers to visit nursing homes two to three hours a week advocating for residents, making sure their rights are being met while living in a nursing home. Training provided. No special background needed.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE tutors are needed Saturday mornings in the community literacy program this summer at LITERACY NETWORK. Tutoring sessions are 9:00 – 11:00 am and volunteers must be reliable, patient, have regular access to email, and be able to attend throughout the summer semester. Training provided.

CANOPY CENTER HEALING AND FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES would like help in their front office, greeting clients and making them feel comfortable, answering phones, and doing some light office tasks.

MADISON POLICE DEPARTMENT CENTRAL DISTRICT would like volunteers for their Information Desk to serve as greeters and provide information for visitors to the Police Department. They are located in the rear of the City County Building at 211 S. Carroll St. Peak hours are Monday – Friday from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. but if you need more flexibility, any time between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. during the week works perfectly! Training provided.

RSVP needs BUS BUDDY COORDINATORS! Many seniors do not use the Madison Metro buses because they haven’t had the opportunity to learn the bus system. If you are a seasoned bus rider, volunteer to teach someone else how to achieve more independence and mobility by using the bus system to get to senior and community centers, shopping, and entertainment! MADCSON SENIOR CENTER has First Floor Receptionist shifts available. Greet the public, answer phones, register folks for classes, and use your excellent communication skills!

SENIOR COALITIONS on all sides of Madison, need Home Chore volunteers to visit elderly folks and help with light chores such as taking out the garbage, washing a few dishes, etc. Many older adults can live independently in their own homes longer with just a little help from a friend!

An older adult in the SOUTH MADISON community is no longer able to manage paying bills such as rent, heat/electric, and phone. Consider “Paying It Forward” by volunteering to be a Representative Payee and ensuring that those monthly bills get paid. No experience necessary, just compassion, understanding and a desire to help. Training and support provided and only two to four hours a month as your schedule permits.

UW ARBORETUM is looking for a Horticultural Assistant to work independently to assist in duties such as plant maintenance, watering, transplanting, and weeding. There are team work sessions with the staff horticulturists each month May – October. Training takes place in March.

If you are interested in any of the volunteer opportunities above, please contact Jan Karst at 608.441.7891 or through e-mail at jkarst@rsvpdane.org.
Goodbye, Mary Dwyer

May 26th was Mary Dwyer’s last day at RSVP as a staff member. For the past three years Mary has been our Group Projects/Homeworker Coordinator working with our volunteers who make 9,000 – 11,000 handmade items each year for nonprofit and public agencies to give to their clients in need. In addition to coordinating the 170 volunteers involved in this effort, Mary has written successful grants to provide needed supplies not received through in-kind donations. She also serves on the Marketing Committee and has contributed her marketing and advertising expertise to help with new brochure development and the new website.

“I’ve had a great experience here, and have enjoyed getting to know many wonderful people – volunteers and staff alike. But, the time is right for me to focus on other things – traveling with my husband, dusting off creative projects (needlepoint, sewing) that have been on the back burner, doing more volunteer work, auditing UW classes, and getting in some serious gardening time! I’m looking forward to continuing on the RSVP Marketing Committee, so I’ll still be able to remain ‘in the loop.’”

We thank Mary for her contributions as a staff member and are happy that she will continue to serve as an RSVP volunteer!

Who will be coordinating the Group Projects/Homeworker program now? RSVP is pleased to report that Mary Schmelzer has taken on the role of Group Projects/Homeworker Coordinator in addition to volunteer recruitment for Driver Services.
MEMORIALS AND TRIBUTES

Memorial and tribute gifts to RSVP are a meaningful way to honor someone special and to extend the services provided by volunteers. Every dollar contributed allows us to enrich the lives of many children, families, and older persons.

CONTRIBUTIONS WERE MADE TO RSVP IN MEMORY OF

- Marcia (Richgels) Marks and Dale Wood by Dennis and Pat Wood
- Lou Ceil Dahlen by Julie Dahlen and Keith and Margie Zutter
- Betty Dawson by Keith and Margie Zutter
- Ruth Gierach by Keith and Margie Zutter
- Len Rush by Byron and Dorothy Peterson

CONTRIBUTIONS WERE MADE TO RSVP IN HONOR OF

- RSVP Drivers by Virginia Logsdon
- Jeanne DeBraal by Judith Tegtman
- Natalie Fischer by Keith and Margie Zutter
- Mar Jensen by Dale Wortley
- Tom Poppe and Jim (driver) by Thomas Gall

RSVP volunteer Lou Ceil Dahlen of Cambridge passed away on February 17, 2015. Lou Ceil volunteered 11,831 hours over 16 years with RSVP and received the President’s Lifetime Achievement Award. During this time she made thousands of tote bags for RSVP. She also helped RSVP receive service project grant funding through Thrivent Financial for Lutherans to help support Group Projects/Homeworkers. In addition Lou Ceil worked with us to enroll RSVP as a participating organization in Thrivent Choice* – a member-advised charitable grant program of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. As a Thrivent Choice member, Lou Ceil designated RSVP as a recipient of her funds and encouraged others to do so.

We really appreciate all that Lou Ceil did for RSVP. Julie Dahlen, Lou Ceil’s daughter sent a memorial contribution to RSVP and said in a card. “With appreciation for the work you do on behalf of so many in Dane County. Thank you for your many years of service and acts of kindness towards my mother.”

RSVP lost a good friend and strong supporter. We appreciate the many ways she helped us further our mission.

“SAFER, SMARTER SENIORS BECOME A PARTNER IN PREVENTION”

CRIME PREVENTION AND SAFETY CONFERENCE & EXPO

This one-day event includes speakers, workshops and resource tables with the purpose of providing valuable information on topics related to crime prevention and safety. The event is well-attended by law enforcement, older volunteers, aging network professionals, and community members. Presentations for this year include:

Brain Health  Domestic Violence in Later Life  Older Adult Bullying
Safe Driving  “Keeping the Keys”  After the Arrest–Next Steps
Dementia Education for Law Enforcement  Parent Addiction Network

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2015
7:45AM - 4:00PM

Hosted by:
AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE
6000 AMERICAN PARKWAY, MADISON, WI

Take advantage of the $20 Early Bird rate by registering before 8/01/15. After 8/01/15, registration is $25. This fee includes continental breakfast, lunch, and materials. Seniors, law enforcement, aging network personnel and the general public are invited to attend. Limited scholarships available upon request. CEUs—available for professionals.

For more information or to register, contact:
RSVP of Dane County: (608) 441-7897, mstamstad@rsvpdane.org
Memorials and Tributes

Please use this form to make a contribution to RSVP in memory or honor of someone special.

Enclosed is my gift of ____________________________

☐ In honor of ____________________________  ☐ In memory of ____________________________

Personal tribute ____________________________

☐ Check payable to RSVP of Dane County

Credit Card: ☐ MasterCard  ☐ Visa  ☐ PayPal

(Pay online with PayPal at www.rsvpdane.org/donateonline.html)

Card # ____________________________  Exp. Date ___ / ___  Signature ____________________________

Name ____________________________  Phone ____________________________

Address ____________________________  City/State/Zip ____________________________

E-mail Address ____________________________

If you would like, we will send an acknowledgement of your tribute or memorial to the person(s) listed below.

Name ____________________________

Address ____________________________  City/State/Zip ____________________________

Please return this form to: RSVP of Dane County; 517 N. Segoe Road, Suite 300; Madison, Wisconsin 53705.

Want to get in touch with us?

Simply dial 238-RSVP (7787) or e-mail us at info@rsvpdane.org – or you can reach individual staff members directly at the phone numbers/e-mail addresses listed at right. In the event we’re not available at the time you call, our 24-hour voice mail will ensure you receive a prompt response.

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RSVP of Dane County seeks to improve the quality of life for all Dane County citizens through significant volunteer service. Membership is voluntary. We are located at 517 N. Segoe Road #300, Madison, WI 53705-3100, Telephone: 608.238.7787, Fax: 608.238.7931, Email: info@rsvpdane.org, Web site: www.rsvpdane.org.

News Notes (Summer 2015 edition, Vol. 43, No. 2) is the official publication of RSVP of Dane County, Inc. It is published quarterly and sent to Volunteers and Friends of RSVP.

Barb Abbott was featured in the May 2015 edition of Active Living. Barb is a retired teacher who tutors students at Waunakee Prairie Elementary School and Lindbergh Elementary School in Madison. Barb also participates in the Computer Buddy Program with a student buddy at Eagle Point Elementary School in DeForest. Barb states in the article, “I love volunteering; I really do. I think kids are our most valuable resource.” A wonderful follow-up to this article written by Roberta Bauman, who has since contacted RSVP to tell us, “I was inspired by my visit to the school! I am now volunteering at Heritage Elementary School reading to a third-grader. I just started last week.”

Jason Mohoney, a student at UW Whitewater this past year, has been volunteering in the RSVP office most Fridays since October. He helps with a variety of office tasks, although his primary assignment is entering volunteer hours. We appreciate Jason's flexibility, his technical skills, and his kind and courteous professional manner.

As a nonprofit volunteer organization, RSVP relies on volunteers to help with administrative work in our office, enabling us to extend our services. Jason is supportive of the goals of our organization and the work of our staff. He will still be volunteering with us over the summer and we are grateful for his help! Good luck Jason as you pursue your studies at UW Madison this Fall.