



Greater Hartford & Central CT RSVP

September 2020

RSVP Focus:

- Education K-12: Public School tutoring—RSVP READs & RSVP Mentoring
- Healthy Futures: Aging in Place: Transportation & Home Delivery Meals & our new **Senior CARES Program**
- Adult Literacy
- Senior Fraud
- Other Community Priorities

Volunteer Programs:

- RSVP READs & Mentoring
- Medical Transportation
- Homebound Meal Delivery
- Senior CARES Program (NEW)
- Adult Literacy
- Attorney General-Advocacy – Senior Fraud
- Bradley Ambassador

Introduction

As I prepared to write this latest newsletter edition, I wanted to insure that we kept things as 'positive' as possible; as our local communities, state, and country as a whole continue to face extremely sad & difficult times with the COVID19 Pandemic; which started back at the beginning of 2020 and I'm saddened to say still continues to be with all of us. However, if anything, the pandemic has shown us and our country leaders just how valuable the volunteers in RSVP are **MORE THAN EVER!!!**

RSVP is America's largest senior volunteer network. The Greater Hartford & Central CT RSVP provides seniors 55+ with quality, well organized, meaningful volunteer opportunities that match their skills and interests. Locally, our own project is proudly serving over forty-five+ towns in Greater Hartford & Central Connecticut. Our 300+ volunteers have the gratifying opportunity to serve in a variety of capacities. We want to thank all of our current volunteers for all of their time, dedication, and support; Without you—our own local programs wouldn't be possible. We always welcome new volunteers to join us at any time during the year and promise to provide you with meaningful volunteer opportunities to keep you actively engaged, all while meeting community needs in your area.

Although the pandemic may result in our programs & engagement opportunities looking different for now, we are still in touch and trying our best to partner with our six school districts & 23 school sites for our **RSVP READs & Mentoring Programs**; along with many of the other partnerships in various communities in our geographic territory. See inside for details on options now available.

I am so happy to report that our **Volunteer Medical Transportation Program**; which we currently provide to 6 communities (Berlin, Cromwell, New Britain, Southington, Suffield, & Windsor Locks) - **has continues to serve throughout the pandemic**. At the time of this publication, I'm happy to report that rides being provided are now almost back to levels pre-pandemic. We also anticipate adding additional communities after October 1st—thanks to our grant award from the North Central Area Agency on Aging being increased; along with recent local municipal & individual donations.



Our **Meals on Wheels Program in Enfield and Vernon**—also has continued to serve throughout the pandemic, thanks to all of our dedicated volunteers at those sites, along with the staff overseeing the program, such as Caroline Clark, Coordinator for our Vernon Meals Program, who was recently highlighted in the Hartford Courant stating "It feels so good to be able to do this".

Inside this issue:

Lastly, we are very excited to announce that out of the pandemic, we are **starting a new program**, entitled the "**RSVP Senior CARES Program** to address a dire need of social isolation with older adults and are currently seeking any of our RSVP volunteers interested to reach out to me asap—see inside newsletter for details.

RSVP Introduction	1
RSVP Focus & Volunteer Programs	1
Recent Accomplishments	1
Signature Programs	2
NEW & Other Volunteer Opportunities	3
Photos, Looking Ahead & RSVP Staff	4



Community Renewal Team
Changing lives... Creating opportunity!

Greater Hartford & Central CT RSVP

RSVP READs & Mentoring Program



Elementary school-based programs where READS volunteers partner with students, providing reading guidance and support to students just below grade level for 1 hour per week from October-May of each school year. Our Mentors provide support for 1 hour per week at lunch to a student in need from a social service perspective. No previous professional educational background is required for READs. For mentoring, social service and/or educational background preferred.

RSVP READs tutors make reading interesting, fun, and also act as positive role models, all while

helping students improve their reading academic level. Mentors provide the much needed social services support to supplement school services being provided to students.

For 2019-20 –We had almost 200 tutors/Mentors volunteering in 6 school districts: Berlin, New Britain, Manchester, Portland, Vernon, & Wethersfield helping over 250 students improve their reading comprehension; along with 15 mentors providing guidance and support to students in the Vernon & Wethersfield districts

If you are interested in helping out with these program for the 2020-21 school year; we are still in the process of collaborating with our school districts to see how we can engage our volunteers due to the pandemic. They desperately need our help; but also need to keep everyone safe. We will be offering a few options depending on the school district: Doing Read-Alouds for students from home; working on-line virtual with students & then hopefully getting everyone back into school site setting as soon as feasible during the school year. **Please watch for RSVP READs/Mentoring application which will be sent out via email shortly after the arrival of this newsletter edition** and submit your form back ASAP

Attorney General's Office

The consumer advocacy unit at the State's Attorney General's office receives over 3,000 complaints annually, a majority that involve senior fraud incidents. Our RSVP Advocacy's work the front-lines to investigate and mediate these cases for the best outcome possible for the seniors.

Due to the pandemic, our volunteers haven't been able to serve in the Consumer Advocacy office since March. However, senior fraud scams are at an all time high with the pandemic and seniors feeling so isolated and just wanting a social connection. Therefore, **we are working with our volunteers to have them combat this issue working remotely from home to help educate seniors in local communities via senior centers and other agency partners**. If interested in joining us, please reach out to us and we can provide you with additional information **as we are seeking volunteers to work on this project from the safety of your home**

Adult Literacy

Our Partner—Siena Learning Center—New Britain—

Low literacy levels and a growing ethnic diversity in communities create challenges for many adults. To help struggling adults face these challenges and improve their quality of life, volunteers can facilitate free literacy classes in one-on-one or small group settings.

RSVP volunteers can assist students in New Britain by volunteering with the Siena Learning Center. This is a wonderful opportunity if literacy is 'your thing' but you'd prefer to work with adults, knowing you made a difference in helping them succeed.

We are happy to report that volunteers will return to in-person sessions with adult learners as of September 14th. Call Theresa if interested in this program. The reward for the volunteer seeing the outcomes of their effort is just as rewarding as what the adult learner gains!

Register as an RSVP Volunteer Today!

To volunteer with the Greater Hartford & Central CT RSVP Program:

- Contact us at [860-519-3484](tel:860-519-3484) or email Theresa Strong at strongt@crtct.org. We promise you will be glad you did. The # one thing we hear from current volunteers is that 'They feel they get back so much more than they give'. And for our current volunteers, please PASS the word, our best recruitment tool is YOU, our current volunteers!
- RSVP Staff meets one-on-one (or via a virtual meeting due to current pandemic) with all incoming volunteers to explain the program in detail and complete any required registration forms. Volunteers then any necessary training sessions.
- We can definitely promise that nothing will be more rewarding than that welcoming smile, or expression of appreciation from the people that you serve. The feeling that you get because YOU touched their lives and provided assistance!

Senior CARES Program (NEW)

New Program—RSVP Senior CARES Program—

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic this year, the serious issue of senior isolation across Connecticut and our nation has become even more of a concern. Many seniors are not getting the normal visits from family, neighbors, and/or friends & are not able to get out for activities like events at their local senior center or church. This social isolation in seniors causes many emotional issues such as depression, along with possible oversight of potential physical/medical issues.

The program is very basis and easy: Volunteers will have phone contact with the assigned client 2-3 times per week in order to provide a phone wellness check and offer companionship. In addition, volunteer will visit senior one time per week when feasible (with social distancing protocols in place until not warranted). This service will provide isolated seniors with needed wellness checks; while allowing the senior to maintain their independence.

At the same time, the feeling of satisfaction that is gained for volunteers in the Senior CARES Program, who readily assist those residents in their communities is a 'double' win to address this issue.

This is a very flexible program and we desperately need your help. If you can spare making 2-3 (10 minute) phone calls per/wk & 1 socially-distance visit per wk to a senior in your area.....please contact Theresa Strong, at either 860-519-3484 or email: strongt@crtct.org for more information.

Medical Transportation Drivers

There is a transportation gap facing seniors and aging veterans who experience challenges getting to non-emergency medical appointments in their hometowns or nearby.

Presently RSVP volunteer drivers meet the transportation gap for these individuals in the communities of Berlin, Cromwell, New Britain, Southington, Suffield, and Windsor Locks that cannot obtain rides from their local dial-a-ride services.



Medical transportation volunteers provide non-emergency medical transportation to ambulatory clients.

This free service augments the local dial-a-ride transportation services provided in communities & we strive not to duplicate services.

On-going training provided as well as mileage reimbursement. Last year, over 854 one-way rides were provided. A very self-gratifying opportunity.

Due to an increase in grant funding, we will potentially be adding to our geographic area served.. Stay tuned for details and if interested, **please reach out to Theresa—no requirements of minimum time per week—just when you are available.**

Meals on Wheels

Through CRT's Meals On Wheels program, volunteers can assist with the delivery of meals to homebound individuals (60+) who live in Hartford, Manchester, Vernon and Enfield areas. Hot/cold lunches & cold dinners which cater to special diets are delivered by Meals on Wheels volunteers. Volunteers also provide social interaction through their daily contact with these homebound seniors and provide wellness checks on a regular, consistent basis. Recipients are referred to CRT by doctors, hospitals, VNA's, local municipality departments, relatives, neighbors, and other concerned citizens. Rewarding for all participating volunteers. Volunteer time to donate can range from 1 1/2 hours per month to 1 1/2 hours per day (5 days per week) -

Due to the Covid 19 Pandemic this year, **this program needs volunteers more than ever**; as we see continue to see seniors even more isolated in their homes. **Contact Theresa to find out more if you can spare a couple of hours per week!**

Bradley Ambassadors-The Brady Ambassadors Program facilitated by RSVP, works in collaboration with the Connecticut Airport Authority (CAA) & Travelers Aid at Bradley International Airport (BDL). The role of the RSVP Ambassador Program is to ensure a positive experience for all passengers and visitors from the moment they enter the airport and to offer information assistance as applicable. Orientation training and on-going training are provided for all volunteers. Bradley Ambassadors are knowledgeable of the State of Connecticut, have their own transportation, a flexible time frame to volunteer a minimum of (1) 4-hour shift per week, possess the ability to speak clearly, and enjoy meeting and interacting with a variety of people. Volunteers are always needed in this capacity and again, you can choose to serve as a substitute Ambassador as well. If you love helping people, enjoy the airport environment, and have 4 hours to spare a week—why not give it a try? Our program assists 90,000+ annually.

Hartford Marathon Foundation- At HMF, RSVP volunteers have the opportunity to assist the foundation with organizing for healthy lifestyle events state-wide. Volunteers can assist with bib mailing, athlete shirt distribution, race course monitoring, or at athlete food/water stations. Volunteers serve before OR on event days for 1-3 hours; and although there are no physical fitness requirements, they are expected to stand for at least an hour while performing tasks. The best part is you can pick whichever events during the year to help with that work with your own schedule, even just one race per year, extremely flexible volunteer engagement opportunity.



The Greater Hartford & Central CT RSVP

Address:
160 Coventry Street,
Bloomfield, CT 06002

Phone: 860-519-3484
E-mail: strongt@crtct.org



Here's what our community partners and volunteers are saying about their experience with the Greater Hartford & Central CT RSVP's READs Program:

"Thank you for bringing this wonderful program to our school. The teachers like having their students meet with tutors. Likewise, students enjoyed the special attention and reading with their tutor."

"I enjoy participating in Vernon READs. I think the children enjoy the one-one-one attention that allows them to read aloud, make mistakes and ask questions in a supportive environment that ultimately improves their reading skills."



LOOKING AHEAD FOR 2020-2021

- ◆ *Although times have been difficult for us with the pandemic this year; we are creating new volunteer engagement opportunities to address issues brought about because of Covid 19—like our new Senior CARES Program!*
- ◆ *We will continue to work with our schools virtually to help the students through this difficult time with our RSVP READs and Mentoring Programs; until volunteers can return to schools in person safely.*
- ◆ *We will continue to seek out partnering communities in an attempt to enhance and bring our Volunteer Medical Transportation Program to more clients in more communities.*
- ◆ *Working with our Advisory Council, we will update our Policy Manual to contain specific informational sections for volunteers on each of our signature programs: RSVP READs, RSVP Mentoring, and the Volunteer Medical Transportation Program*

Visit us online at
www.crtct.org/



Meet the Greater Hartford & Central CT RSVP Staff



Theresa Strong/ RSVP Manager

Theresa Strong, RSVP Manager, has been in her role for (7) years now; with 25+ years prior municipal government experience (specifically Senior Center and Human Services operations). Theresa currently serves as President of the CT Senior Corp Association, a member of the State of Connecticut Commission on Community Service, and as a National Board Member on the National Senior Corp Association.



Yahaira Santiago/RSVP Coordinator

Yahaira Santiago, Program Coordinator, has been in her role with RSVP for 3 years and previously served as the CRT Home Bound Meal Delivery Coordinator at the Enfield Senior Center. Yahaira is the 'front' line for our Volunteer Medical Transportation Program and insures that all clients receive their rides on a daily basis and coordinates with our volunteers daily to insure the successful operation of the VMTP. In addition, Yahaira keeps up with all of our office updates including monitoring our volunteer and station site files. Yahaira can be reached at the office at 860-539-6233 or email : santiagoya@crtct.org