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Volunteers are the Heart of the Community



# Annual Report 2015



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## 2015 in Review - Al Volmut, Executive Director

**"We are all searching for positive affirmation of our existence,** some indication that it matters whether we are alive. Volunteerism is a right, and we volunteers are carrying out the heritage of this country.

**"I, therefore, challenge the people here not to be passive.** Rather than saying "how wonderful we are", the whole job is to get more people to go out and do it not only because volunteering is rewarding, but because it is our responsibility."

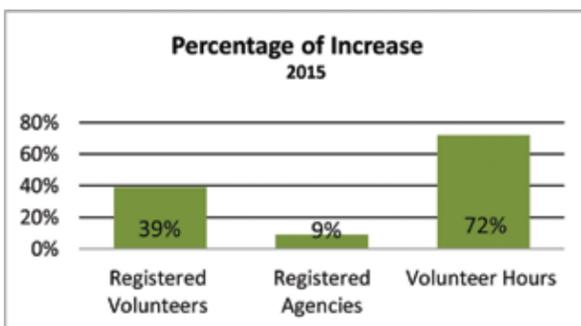
**Singer/Songwriter Harry Chapin addressing a Volunteer Conference in 1977.**

**People in the business of non-profits** often wonder what would happen to this world if service or volunteering was considered a responsibility to the community in which we live. We all make choices to utilize our time in the most productive way. The choice made to:

- \* Ring the Salvation Army bells
- \* Provide shelter and food for the homeless
- \* Shelter the abused and forgotten
- \* Mentor those striving to learn
- \* Feed the hungry
- \* Counsel youth
- \* Work toward social justice
- \* Provide security and independence for seniors
- \* Identify and promote the needs of veterans
- \* Promote the safety and security needs of youth

**The Volunteer Center is the catalyst towards action in meeting the needs of Racine County.** But we are only a reflection of the quality of individuals that live here. There is only one choice, and that is to serve our neighbors. And the choice is yours.

Al Volmut, Executive Director



## Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Continues to Serve Racine County in 2016 Bruce Davis - RSVP Director

**As the 2015 holiday season rapidly recedes,** so do the daily stories in electronic, print and social media recounting many year-end acts of kindness.

**Concurrently, the on-going projects** of Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) members regularly, systematically and without fanfare continue to serve Racine County residents.

**In 2015, over 230 RSVP – Racine County members recorded** an average of 1200 volunteer hours a month through 32 job descriptions. RSVP – Racine County concentrates on five Focus Areas designated by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS): Healthy Futures, Education, Disaster Services, Veterans and Military Families and Community Priorities.

**Healthy Futures projects are divided into two areas:** "Aging in Place", represented by Senior Companion, Inc. and ADRC's Meals on Wheels, and "Obesity and Food", served by St. Vincent DePaul Food Pantry. Healthy Futures has the largest percentage of RSVP – Racine County volunteers.

**Some RSVP members are steady,** trusted companions of elementary and middle school students in Racine Unified School District's Mentoring Program. RSVP volunteers also participate in disaster preparation through amateur radio organizations, the Wisconsin Blood Center, the Racine County Sheriff's Patrol substation and the Medical Reserve Corps.

**RSVP – Racine County members provide military-to-civilian** transition services through the Navy Operational Support Center and the new Racine Area Retirement Council (RARC).

**Agencies and projects associated with Community Priorities activities include:** AARP Tax-Aide, the Caledonia Historical Society, Friends of the Wind Point Light House, MyRIDE Senior Transportation, Racine Literacy Council, Wheaton Franciscan, Wisconsin Veterans Home, SafeAssured™ID and the RSVP Advisory Council.

**RSVP – Racine County operates under a federal grant awarded** to the Volunteer Center of Racine County, Inc. by CNCS. RSVP matches 55+ volunteers with service opportunities in Racine County. RSVP members are eligible for mileage reimbursement and complimentary, supplemental accident and liability insurance while volunteering.

**As 2016 dawns, RSVP welcomes 55+ volunteers** interested in joining projects serving their Racine County neighbors year round.



## SafeAssured™ID Update Dave Voss - RSVP Outreach Coordinator

**2015 has been a productive year for SafeAssured™ID.** We collaborated with Kenosha TRIAD and trained their volunteers to operate the systems. We were invited to many county fire and police safety fairs. Preschool and elementary schools loved having SafeAssured™ID at their schools. Their parents were very appreciative.

**Among the many events attended this year were** All Saints Safety Fair, Little Saints Preschool, Evergreen Elementary, 21st Century Prep, Burlington Home and Garden Show, Racine Expo Show and a return to Cops-N-Kids at Festival Hall.

**Anticipated next year is a move with Racine PD** to a large office with SafeAssured™ID events.

**High school Key Club members were a big help.** They provided many volunteers for SafeAssured™ID. Materials are running low and we are looking for more funders to provide grant funds.

## Volunteer Racine County Judie Nielsen - Volunteer Coordinator

**2015 ended on a high note;** there were 4675 registered volunteers or a 39 percent increase in registrations. We transitioned our host site from Volunteer Solutions to Galaxy Digital. The transition was basically seamless for our volunteers and registered agencies. Agencies began using the new EVENT feature, by entering information to promote their special events on this site. We have only received very positive feedback since implementing the change. We look forward to more volunteers and agencies to take advantage of this FREE tool. Check out our web site today.

[www.volunteerracine.org](http://www.volunteerracine.org)

## "Service Learning", a Strategy for Committed Youth Lynn Wells - Youth Coordinator

**There is a growing trend in our area high schools to require community service hours as a prerequisite to graduation.** Service Learning is a teaching and learning concept which connects students with identified community issues and needs. Service learning engages students in projects that serve the community and at the same time builds their social and academic capacities. The three components identified in the process are preparation, action, and reflection. The Volunteer Center's Youth Program is incorporating this philosophy as we relate to and provide opportunities to serve.

**Summer learning camp locations are identified and vetted through a "Youth Committee".** This cross section of representatives from public and parochial schools select sixteen sites where groups of youth spend a week learning the goals and services provided by the agency. Tasks and action plans are

## "Service Learning", a Strategy for Committed Youth Lynn Wells - Youth Coordinator (continued)

developed to suit the needs of the site. Following completion of each camp, the participants examine their role in enhancing the effectiveness of their effort. Episodic Days of Service (Martin Luther King Day, Earth Day, Make-A-Difference Day), gives young volunteers an opportunity to apply "service learning" in relation to national initiatives.

**Our Youth Program is a viable option for students** seeking volunteer hours which leads to many life-changing experiences. Thanks to SC Johnson for a generous grant which allows the youth to participate and enhance their lives and the quality of living in Racine County.

## MyRIDE Senior Transportation Jenni Chap - Senior Transportation Coordinator

**What is MyRIDE?** MyRIDE is a senior transportation program in Racine County for seniors aged 55 years and over, who live in Racine County, and who are no longer able to drive. MyRIDE provides transportation to medical appointments, grocery shopping, and other destinations as needed. Our hours of operation are Monday thru Friday, 8:00 AM until 5:00 PM.

**The MyRIDE program began in February 2015,** and we have provided more than 700 rides to seniors during the year. These rides include, for example, 337 rides to Wheaton Franciscan alone. Our goal is to provide transportation for seniors to allow them to remain independent in our community, the community that they call home.

**As the need for rides increases,** the need for volunteer drivers has also increased. Some benefits of driving for MyRIDE include meeting nice people, providing a service to a senior who otherwise wouldn't be able to make it to appointments, and the feeling of satisfaction knowing that you are providing a service to a senior who is in need to get to the doctor and can't. If you are 55 years and over and drive for MyRIDE, you will receive mileage reimbursement and RSVP-Racine County supplemental insurance. If you are interested in volunteering for the MyRIDE program, please call 262-417-7544.

