



CATHOLIC
SOCIAL
SERVICES
OF WASHTENAW COUNTY



RSVP

LEAD WITH EXPERIENCE

Semi Annual Newsletter | 2022 Issue 1

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

RSVP Washtenaw is moving through 2022 with optimism. This year we shifted focus to re-engagement of volunteers and partners who had suspended service due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, we took time to evaluate the changing needs of Washtenaw County and sought new partnerships to reach underrepresented communities. Today, RSVP is in the midst of a recruitment and outreach campaign to broaden RSVP's recognition and reach, and to support community partners providing vital services in Washtenaw County.

RSVP would not be where it is today without the patience and adaptability of our volunteers and community partners. The impact of volunteer service in Washtenaw County, in particular to meeting the increased needs of thrift shop and pantry support, has been significant. To date, 128 RSVP volunteers contributed 8,458 hours of service to 30 agencies. Since partnering with Kiwanis in February of this year, 27 of their volunteers joined RSVP and have contributed 1,774 hours of service to community members in need of household items and furnishings.

We'd like to extend a warm welcome to our new volunteers and sincerely thank each and every RSVP volunteer for what you continue to bring to your communities in friendship, spirit, and service. Your compassionate actions contain multitudes best described by Helen Keller's quote —

***“Alone, we can do so little;
together, we can do so much.”***

In the future, we would like to provide more opportunities for connection, community building, and input to RSVP Washtenaw. Stay tuned for our upcoming recognition event, socials, and community forum!

In service,

Amber Fellows

RSVP

*Letter from the Volunteer
Coordinator Emma*



Senior Services team tabling at the WCC Fitness Center's Senior Health & Service day on May 25, 2022. Pictured (left to right): Jeannette Matthews of Caregiver Services, Emma Beltowski, and Amber Fellows.

Reflecting on my first year as RSVP (Retired & Senior Volunteer Program) volunteer Coordinator, I am immensely proud to be a part of such a strong program. I have learned so much within my first year about community, volunteerism, and what it means to be a member of RSVP. I am looking forward to my future role in this program and to continuing to build strong relationships with our partner stations and volunteer members.

~ Emma Beltowski

New Ways of Recruitment

In 2021 RSVP Washtenaw reached an all-time low of 80 volunteers in contrast to the 200+ volunteers that served prior to pandemic-related service suspensions. To bolster our volunteer base and address the enormous service needs of Washtenaw County residents, in July and August of this year RSVP rolled out a direct-mail recruitment campaign with a focus on outreaching Black, indigenous, and other historically underrepresented communities of color.

Along with the mailer, we have updated our website (check it out at csswashtenaw.org/seniors/rsvp), included an interest form, and have expanded outreach to our Senior Center partners, our volunteers, and community listservs. Did you know that personal referrals are the best way to recruit new volunteers interested in serving? RSVP volunteers are our best advocates so please let your friends, family, and neighbors know about how to sign up!

RSVP staff have also been out in the community, tabling events for Washtenaw Health and Fitness Center's Senior Health & Fitness Day, the Ypsilanti Senior Center's Corn Roast fundraiser, and Ypsilanti Jazz Fest in Riverside park.



(Pictured left to right): Amber and Jeanette at Ypsilanti Jazz Fest at Riverside Park.

Come by to say hello! Below are some of our future events, free to the public, that we will be tabling for volunteer recruitment:

- **Ypsilanti Summerfest at Parkridge Park**
Saturday, August 27, 12–2pm
Harriet St., Ypsilanti 48197
- **Ann Arbor Farmers Market**
Wednesday, August 31 and
Wednesday, September 14
8am–2pm
315 Detroit St., Ann Arbor 48104
- **Pittsfield Township Senior Center's Annual Health & Resource Fair**
Friday, September 16, 9am–12pm.
Door prizes, community resources,
and flu shots available on site!
- **Chelsea Senior Center's Health & Wellness Fair**
Wednesday, October 19

RSVP

Advisory Council

Would you like to help guide the direction of the RSVP program? Join the Advisory Council! RSVP Advisory council provides guidance to the Director and Volunteer Coordinator with the direction of the program. RSVP volunteers who are on the advisory council are allowed to count the meetings as RSVP volunteer hours! Meetings are held quarterly either via zoom or in person. In the latest meeting in May, advisory council members discussed new ideas for volunteer recruitment and engagement, advisory council recruitment, and the future goals of the RSVP program.

If you would like to be a member of the advisory council, please email Amber Fellows at:

afellows@csswashtenaw.org
or call 734-971-9781 x364.



A message from RSVP Advisory Council member Linda Klimach:

I first joined RSVP as a volunteer when I retired in 2010. It was a wonderful way to identify non-profits where I could utilize my new free time

to contribute and make new friends. Over the years I have volunteered at many different sites and projects. I have seen firsthand what a valuable resource the program is to connect senior volunteers with the needs in the community. I joined the RSVP Advisory Council in order to help increase the membership and participation, particularly post-COVID when so many of our most senior volunteers have retired due to health concerns. It's a very worthwhile effort and could certainly use additional members with ideas on ways to enhance the RSVP support to the existing and marketing for new volunteers.

Future meetings are being held virtually on August 17th at 10:30am and November 9th at 10:30am. If you'd like to see what an RSVP Advisory Council meeting is like, or attend to make comments at the meeting, contact us and we will get you the zoom link.

Welcoming New Community Partners!

In the latter half of 2021 and beginning of 2022, RSVP embarked on an engagement project that prioritized outreach to underrepresented communities in RSVP's volunteer base and station opportunities.

- **ICPJ:** Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice is looking for volunteers to help document public meetings. Volunteers will attend select public meetings and take notes.
- **Avalon Housing:** Avalon Housing is looking for volunteers to help with their food pantries and the front desk at the main office. Food Pantry volunteers will help with set up, distribution, and client food pickups. Front desk volunteers will help greet visitors, answer phones, data entry, and accept rent payments.
- **Kiwanis:** Kiwanis is looking for volunteers to help on Thursdays with their voucher program. Volunteers will assist clients and caseworkers around the shop to select items for the client's home. Volunteers are also needed to help sort, price, and display donations on Monday–Saturday.
- **Connected Companions:** Connected Companions is looking for volunteers to provide friendly conversations with isolated older adults via weekly phone calls.

If you would like to learn more about these opportunities please email rsvp@csswashtenaw.org or call 734-971-9781 x377



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THANK YOU
VOLUNTEERS!

Contact information & 2022 Directories

RSVP will keep its volunteers up-to-date via a bimonthly listserv for new volunteer opportunities, events, celebrations, recognition, and any important information or reminders. To be a part of this listserv please contact us and leave a message with your name and email address.

RSVP STAFF

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Pictured: Jenny Vandermeulen was spotted at WCC Fitness Center's Senior Health Day. Here she showed us the crochet work she does for Ypsi Senior Center.

Looking for a comprehensive list of community resources?

Well look no further! The 2022 Senior Resource Directories are in and available to anyone. If you would like to receive a free paper copy of the directory, please fill out this form at <https://tinyurl.com/2022CSSWdirectory>.

The directory can also be found on the Senior Resource Connect/Ahead of the Curve website <https://getaheadwashtenaw.org>. Check out Senior Resource Connect/Ahead of the Curve's monthly blog post covering topics related to older adults in Washtenaw County.