

NEWS

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of the Red River Valley Connects Seniors to Their Communities

Written by Adria Peters - April 9, 2024

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of the Red River Valley connects volunteers ages 55 and over with impactful service opportunities in their communities that match their skills and availability. RSVP is funded by AmeriCorps Seniors, Minnesota Board on Aging, University of Minnesota Crookston, United Way of Crookston, and surrounding counties including Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Red Lake, Roseau, Pennington, and Polk. Combined, these seven counties have 640 active volunteers. RSVP has 121 active stations that house and welcome the volunteers to assist with seniors and communities. Jennifer Manole is the director of the Red River Valley RSVP.

“Being part of this wonderful program and helping the needs of the communities is unbelievable,” Manole shared. “I can’t believe there are all of these volunteers that are still active.”

For over 45 years, RSVP of the Red River Valley has matched problems to be solved with people willing to help. Today, thousands of seniors participate in RSVP, making it one of the largest volunteer efforts in the nation. RSVP of the Red River Valley is looking to recruit new volunteers ages 55 and older in the seven counties they serve. They are partnering with more sites including senior centers, libraries, food shelves, etc.

The Grocery to Go program and the Handy Person program both refreshed after a break from the COVID-19 pandemic isolation period.

“Many seniors in our community need someone to pick up groceries for them as well as come into their home to do simple fixes,” Manole expressed.

RSVP’s largest program is Stay Active and Independent for Life (SAIL), formerly known as Bone Builders. SAIL has over 20 active sites in the seven counties that include exercising twice a week for one hour. This is a free class led by volunteers, and many doctors, chiropractors, and therapists recommend SAIL.

Another popular RSVP program is the Reading Buddy program where volunteers go into kindergarten and first grade to help children read and listen to them read. This includes active volunteers in four different schools.

“Socialization is a big piece of RSVP,” Manole stated. “It keeps our volunteers active and meeting new people.”

As of today, RSVP has recorded 40,915 volunteer hours served in Polk County, 8,089 hours in Red Lake County, 3,307 hours in Pennington County, 7,885 hours in Marshall County, 3,325 hours in Kittson County, 9,108 hours in Roseau County, and 7,839 hours in Norman County.

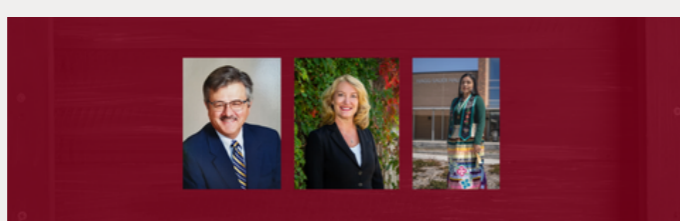
If you or anyone you know is interested in joining RSVP of the Red River Valley, please fill out the [form](#). For more information, please visit <https://crk.umn.edu/ameri-corps-seniors-rsvp-red-river-valley> or contact Jennifer Manole at 218-281-8289 or rsvprrv@crk.umn.edu. Often there is mileage reimbursement for volunteers who have to drive, especially when traveling to or from rural areas. The RSVP advisory board meets in Thief River Falls, Minn.

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