



*RSVP Volunteers:  
Keeping Communities Strong*

# **Green Mountain RSVP Volunteer Handbook**

**Approved by SVCOA Board March 18, 2014 and CNCS on March 20, 2015**

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## **Welcome Green Mountain RSVP Volunteer!**

It is our pleasure to welcome you to Green Mountain RSVP (GMRSVP). Today, more than ever before, there is a need for volunteers in many of the non-profit organizations throughout Bennington, Windham and Windsor Counties. Volunteers are asked to share their time and efforts with others in response to the pressing issues our communities face. RSVP volunteers choose how, where, and how often they want to serve, with commitments ranging from a few hours to 40 hours per week. Your gifts of time and talent will be appreciated and valued by those you touch with your service.

### **Every Volunteer Assignment Makes a Difference**

This handbook was written for you, the volunteer, to familiarize you with Green Mountain RSVP and to use as a reference tool. We encourage you to take the time to read the information, which, along with your orientation, will prepare you to begin your volunteer assignment. Please feel free to share any volunteer questions with a Green Mountain RSVP staff member so that we can respond to you in a helpful manner.

### **Green Mountain RSVP is here to serve you, our volunteer**

Office and staff contact information is on the last page of this handbook for easy reference. Remember to visit our website ([www.rsvpvt.org](http://www.rsvpvt.org)) as well as our newsletters to stay up to date on Green Mountain RSVP events and learn details about additional volunteer opportunities available to you. Below are the current Green Mountain RSVP sponsor and staff email addresses.

### **Green Mountain RSVP Sponsor & Green Mountain RSVP Staff Contact Information:**

**Cathy Aliberti** – Director, Green Mountain RSVP ~ [caliberti@svcoa.net](mailto:caliberti@svcoa.net)

**Lenora Volkmer** - Bennington County Volunteer Coordinator ~ [lvolkmer@svcoa.net](mailto:lvolkmer@svcoa.net)

**Steve Ovenden** - Windham County Volunteer Coordinator ~ [sovenden@svcoa.net](mailto:sovenden@svcoa.net)

**Corey Mitchell** - Windsor County Volunteer Coordinator ~ [cmitchell@svcoa.net](mailto:cmitchell@svcoa.net)

## **What is RSVP?**

RSVP is an “Invitation to Serve” for people age 55 and over who want to make a difference in their communities, get involved, and realize the satisfaction that comes from volunteering. Nationally, RSVP is one of the largest volunteer efforts in the nation, which began in 1971 as part of the Older Americans Act. Today, RSVP is part of the National Senior Service Corps, which also includes the Foster Grandparent Program and the Senior Companion Program. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) provides federal dollars as well as policy guidelines and regulations. There are over 500 Senior Corps programs throughout the country, with over 200,000 volunteers.

Founded in 1972, Green Mountain RSVP was the first RSVP in Vermont. Now 43 years later, that program, which began in Bennington County has grown to include Windham and Windsor Counties. As a volunteer, you will have the opportunity to serve at one of many non-profit partner organizations or program choices in these counties or become a Seniors Promoting Independence and Companionship for Elders (SPICE) volunteer.

Green Mountain RSVP volunteers mobilize and engage as needs arise for their services. What does this mean to our communities? RSVP is a catalyst for positive change, because you, the volunteer, deliver a positive impact via your dedicated service. Professional volunteer coordinators will assist you in selecting from hundreds of interesting and diverse choices to find what suits your needs best. You can be sure their personal support will make your volunteer experience successful.

## **Who is Eligible to be a RSVP Volunteer?**

Anyone over 55 years of age with a desire to explore the world of volunteering is eligible to be a Green Mountain RSVP volunteer. There are no educational, income, or experience requirements nor any barriers related to race, citizenship, creed, nationality, gender, disability or political affiliation. There are also no dues or membership fees.

## **Why Become a RSVP Volunteer?**

When you volunteer, you are not just helping others, you are helping yourself. Volunteering will lead to different discoveries, interesting challenges, and new friendships. RSVP volunteers do not receive any stipend for their time, but have broad flexibility as to scheduling, type of service, hours, etc. based on their desires, talents, and needs. There are conclusive studies that show volunteering helps you live a physically and mentally healthier life. This is no surprise to us. Green Mountain RSVP has been witness to this for many years!

### **As a volunteer with RSVP you are entitled to a number of benefits:**

- Supplemental insurance that covers you while actively serving at a volunteer station from whom we receive documentation of hours worked
- Professional intake, placement and ongoing support from our trained volunteer coordinators
- Recognition events where we honor your service
- Social interaction and opportunity to meet new people
- Newsletters full of information relative to volunteering and other topics of interest to you
- Opportunity to learn new skills and develop new talents
- Full details on hundreds of volunteer options in your community
- The chance to make a real difference in your community

## **What are RSVP Programs?**

Green Mountain RSVP programs support, develop and implement ongoing projects we call ***Healthy Futures*** in response to well-defined community needs. These programs attract volunteers called Seniors Promoting Independence and Companionship for Elders (SPICE) looking for a unique challenge and an opportunity to respond to gaps in service through an identified need within our communities. Green Mountain RSVP SPICE volunteers provide service in the following areas: food delivery, food pantry support, transportation, and companionship. Other program areas include: school based mentoring, tax assistance, and many local non-profit supports. Our website [www.rsvpvt.org](http://www.rsvpvt.org) has extensive information about each of our program opportunities. Additional information providing more details is available at our offices. Give us a call, stop by for a visit, or view our website today.

## **What is a Volunteer Station?**

A volunteer station refers to a non-profit that has a written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Green Mountain RSVP to provide volunteer assignments. Green Mountain RSVP works with many organizations throughout southern Vermont. Each volunteer station has a supervisor designated to provide you with orientation and training for your particular volunteer assignment. The supervisor will be your regular contact person at that site and will provide you with ongoing information and details of your service. Additionally, she or he will listen and attempt to accommodate your needs as a volunteer. The relationship that develops between a volunteer and a station supervisor is an ongoing process of communication, support, and respect.

## **Station Responsibilities**

Our volunteer station supervisors have responsibilities for ensuring that the volunteer has a safe, satisfying, purposeful experience. They agree to:

- Provide adequate orientation and training for the volunteer
- Provide safe working conditions for the volunteer at all times
- Provide, if possible financially, meals and/or refreshments to volunteers as an in-kind donation and to report this information annually to Green Mountain RSVP for their records
- Recognize the contribution of time and effort provided by Green Mountain RSVP volunteers. (This can be informally such as a verbal thank you or more formally through an event for volunteer recognition. Green Mountain RSVP encourages volunteer station supervisors to attend our regional recognition luncheons as a way of showing support to their volunteers.)
- Not displace a paid worker. Green Mountain RSVP volunteers are meant to expand organizational capacity by offering assistance to non-profits
- Track/collect/submit hours, impact, and accomplishments of volunteers at their site and report that data to Green Mountain RSVP as required
- Acknowledge that financial support is not a pre-condition for the station to obtain volunteer services
- Assure that volunteers do not engage in any political activities
- Assure that volunteers do not receive any financial compensation

## **Volunteer Responsibilities**

- Identify yourself as a Green Mountain RSVP volunteer. (This helps with our ongoing efforts to recruit new volunteers)
- Cooperate with your volunteer station supervisor and abide by all rules and policies of that organization such as confidentiality

- Conduct yourself in an appropriate, professional manner at all times
- Avoid unsafe or risky tasks and report any such issues to your site supervisor and Green Mountain RSVP staff
- Report any incidents of personal injury to your site supervisor and Green Mountain RSVP staff
- Notify Green Mountain RSVP of a change of address, telephone number, or assignment
- Notify the staff supervisor at your station if you cannot volunteer
- Notify Green Mountain RSVP staff if you have any type of problem or concern and need assistance

## **Why is it Important to Collect Volunteer Hours?**

Hours and data collection is federally mandated as part of our agreement to accept federal funds to support our programs. Hours and data represent a statistical snapshot of our accomplishments as a volunteer placement/management organization. As a federal program, outcome goals must be met and reported. This allows legislators and other funders to get a numerical summary of our work.

Hours and other outcome data also validate that registered Green Mountain RSVP volunteers have been active over the course of the fiscal year under review. Only active volunteers are eligible to enjoy RSVP benefits (e.g. supplemental insurance, recognition events, and newsletters). Without this documentation our supplemental insurance policy does not cover you.

Accurate records about the volunteers serving at local sites means non-profits realize cost savings for already tight budgets and may represent in-kind matches. Such leveraging of funds is critical, especially when potential or ongoing funders look positively on capable and resourceful fiscal management. Collecting and sharing hard data also ensures that the world knows the true impact of our volunteers and their incredible contribution to the well-being of our communities.

RSVP, through both national and local marketing and public awareness efforts, demonstrates the true story of today's older adults as vibrant, contributing community members. This powerful impact of volunteers benefits everyone by saving taxpayer dollars, reducing healthcare costs and strengthening civic participation. We continue to tell the story of your service to others so our communities know what a difference RSVP volunteers make!

## **Prohibited Activities for Volunteers**

Volunteers may not engage in any of the following activities during their scheduled RSVP service time:

- Participate or engage in any political or electoral activities, voter registration, voter transport to polls or efforts to influence legislation
- Displace a paid worker
- Receive a fee-for-service or compensation of any form
- Finance labor or anti-labor organizations or related activity
- May not perform any religious activity

Please feel free to contact Green Mountain RSVP staff in the event you have questions regarding these policies.

## **Green Mountain RSVP Advisory Council**

The Green Mountain RSVP Advisory Council consists of individuals from the community-at-large within the counties we serve. They come from our corps of volunteers as well as sites we serve or other community

partners and/or stakeholders. Council members provide feedback, program advice, evaluation, and assistance with events and activities such as our annual recognition luncheon. They are advocates and spokespersons for RSVP. They are priceless ambassadors raising awareness about our services and sharing the story of Green Mountain RSVP volunteers in our region.

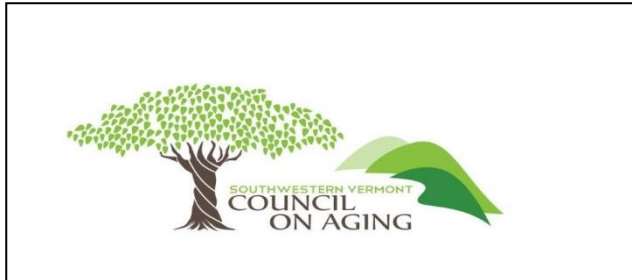
## **RSVP Roots and History**

RSVP is part of the triad of senior volunteer programs known collectively as the National Senior Service Corps. We are regulated federally by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), which provides programmatic and fiscal oversight.



Visit the Senior Corps website at [www.seniorcorps.gov](http://www.seniorcorps.gov)

## **Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging: Sponsor of Green Mountain RSVP**



Green Mountain RSVP is sponsored locally by the Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging (SVCOA). The Council is a private, non-profit, community organization whose mission is to be a community force in creating and sustaining opportunities for elders and caregivers in our region to help assure that elders are able to maintain maximum independence and quality of life. Visit SVCOA's website at [www.svcoa.org](http://www.svcoa.org) for more information regarding services and supports for elders and younger individuals with disabilities.

## **Green Mountain RSVP Grievance Procedures**

The goal of Green Mountain RSVP's grievance policy is to give the volunteer an opportunity to present any grievance without fear of reprisal. Green Mountain RSVP realizes all volunteer assignments are not a perfect fit between the volunteer and the station where they may serve. RSVP will do its best to communicate as effectively as possible between these parties. However, problems can arise that cannot be resolved by discussion and/or mediation. If this happens, a volunteer will receive written notice of their termination. The volunteer has the right to request an appeal to the termination on the phone or in writing to their Green Mountain RSVP Coordinator. If not satisfied with the decision, she or he may then request an appeal meeting with the Green Mountain RSVP Director. The Green Mountain RSVP Director will respond in writing within ten days or less on their decision. In the event that this decision is still an unacceptable resolution, the volunteer may request, in writing, a meeting with the Green Mountain RSVP Advisory Council for a final determination.

## **RSVP Insurance Information**

To minimize the risks associated with volunteering, all non-profit agencies that utilize RSVP volunteers have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to be a Green Mountain RSVP volunteer station. These agreements are filed in our office and updated per compliance regulations.

While volunteering at a designated station, your RSVP supplemental insurance is in effect. **Only those assignments for which we track hours are covered by this insurance.**

## **Disability Accessibility**

Title V, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (as amended) prohibits discrimination against disabled persons in all programs, services and activities receiving federal funds. It is a policy of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) that its programs be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

## **Making a Difference**

We invite you to share your feedback with us regarding your experiences as a volunteer and any issues or concerns you may have. Green Mountain RSVP is here to serve you, our volunteer. Our mission is to ensure that you have a completely successful, satisfying and rewarding volunteer experience while serving the community you live in. With that said, we thank you for becoming a Green Mountain RSVP volunteer and we look forward to working with you in making your volunteer experience as enjoyable and enriching as possible.



## **Green Mountain RSVP Contact Information**

**You are always welcome to visit our offices:**

**Bennington County:**  
**Green Mountain RSVP**  
**160 Benmont Avenue, Suite 90**  
**Bennington, VT 05201**

**Phone 802-447-1546**  
**Fax: 802-447-2846**

**Windham County:**  
**Green Mountain RSVP**  
**974 Western Avenue**  
**Brattleboro, VT 05301**

**Phone: 802-254-7515**  
**Fax: 802-447-2846**

**Windsor County:**  
**Green Mountain RSVP**  
**20 Ascutney Park Road**  
**P.O. Box 145**  
**Ascutney, VT 05030**

**Phone: 802-674-4547**  
**Fax: 802-447-2846**

**Our hours of operation are: 8:00 am until 4 pm Monday - Friday**

**For additional information please feel free to:**

**Email: [gmrsvp@svcoa.net](mailto:gmrsvp@svcoa.net)**

**Visit our Website: [www.rsvpvt.org](http://www.rsvpvt.org)**

