RSVP UK
OLDER VOLUNTEERS

When I'm 64…….

Celebrating the contribution of Third Age activists

NOVEMBER 2008

WHY INVOLVE OLDER PEOPLE IN VOLUNTEERING?

- **Unlock a powerful force for community gain**
- **Provide an important opportunity for learning**
- **Increase the health & well being of older people**

How do older people as volunteers Benefit?

- Gain a sense of purpose and self-respect
- Discover opportunities for self-development
- Given structure to daily life
- Lessens the isolation felt by those cut off from social networks in the workplace and from their families
- Provides beneficial effects for physical and mental health

What do Older Volunteers bring to their communities?

- Maturity and experience
- Skills
- Availability
- Loyalty
- Well developed social networks
- Numbers

CSV's Retired & Senior Volunteer Programme

- Started in Kent in 1988 inspired by a visit to England by Arthur Garson
- Incorporated into CSV (Community Service Volunteers) an NGO charity in 1998 RSVP becomes UK wide
- "Volunteer led and managed" ethos promoted

2008

- RSVP UK covers England, Scotland & Wales
- 13,000 volunteers
- 480 volunteers who are organisers'
- 29 full-time equivalents (37 staff – 17 part-time)
- Annual turnover £2.2m

RSVP UK volunteers who are they?

- Over 50 – no upper age limit contribution of volunteers aged 80-100
- Non rejection policy – all welcome "everyone has something to give"
- Spread across all types of geographic area – suburban, isolated rural, inner city, county towns, villages and off-shore islands.
- Of the 450 organisers, 90% have professional/managerial backgrounds (survey 2006)

Who pays for RSVP UK?

- 1/3 central & regional government
- 1/3 trusts and foundations
- Other – Lottery, individuals & companies etc.

RSVP UK Volunteers What Do They Do?

Intergenerational Projects

- **Help in schools – nursing support – after school clubs – cooking/skills clubs -gardening**

Health Service Projects

- **Transport scheme to assist disabled people to health appointments – transport for rural areas – support to patients at health centres – activities for long term in-patients**

Social Care Projects

- **Befriending – teleconference book clubs – day centres – escorting – gardening**

Environmental Projects

- Walking / audit groups – clearing footpaths – developing wild flower sites

Heritage Projects

- Cathedral guides – creating historical memorials – archaeological digs- reminiscence projects

One off Innovations

- Bicycle recycling – cell phone recycling for seniors

Knitting

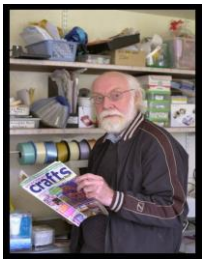
- Trauma teddies – toys – clothes – blankets -quilts

Who Organises RSVP UK Volunteers?.....

..... The Volunteers

- **The RSVP network is managed by volunteers whose skill & interest is in management**

- **Very attractive to baby boomers**
  - **the volunteer is at the creative heart of the project**
  - **planning the activity to suit local needs**
  - **retaining skills**
  - **developing opportunities to learn**
  - **developing new friendships**



How Does The Volunteer Organiser Network Operate?

- **Organiser recruited**
- **Induction by staff or experienced volunteer organiser**
- **Organisers' manual**
- **Organisers' directory – encourages new recruits to visit others**
- **RSVP HQ help given to develop local funds**
- **Resources CD**
- **Local bank account set up – in local control**
- **Regular staff support visits**
- **Quarterly national forum meeting's**
- **Monthly in-house newsletter**
- **Bi-annual Gathering**

Types of Organisers

Project Organisers

- Project manuals for Schools, Environment, Health & Social Care
- National support to knitting organisers

Area Organisers

- For a town, group of villages, London borough

Regional Organisers

- e.g. Yorkshire, Devon, W. Country, Highlands, North Wales
- Encouraged to have office & management group

RSVP UK National role for volunteers

RSVP Policy Group

- 10 volunteers + 5 staff
- Make all policy decisions for RSVP-from organisers' expenses rules to developing strategic plan
- Meets every 6 weeks

HQ Support Volunteer roles

- Publications are written edited and photographs sourced
- Events- high profile receptions – national Gatherings-seminars-workshops organised
- IT support of volunteer organisers' network provided
- Fundraising support and training developed
- Policy/strategy/impact research/ development & monthly policy update

Why isn't everyone volunteering?

- They have never been asked
- Negative perceptions about themselves
- Ageism
- Insurance limits-up to 85
- Family commitments
- Lack of income
- Cultural inhibitors
- Ill health and frailty

Conclusion

- Increased numbers of older people available to volunteer
- The skills of a lifetime should be harnessed
- Volunteering can help older people maintain a full, healthy and active life in later years.
- Older volunteers through intergenerational work aid community cohesion
- Older volunteers provide a most valuable service
- Older volunteers can can provide continuity through the history they embody.