

RSVP Responds To Needs Of Older Volunteers

BY DOUG RUTTER

For the past eight years, Letha Mae Trear has been working about six hours a day, five days a week at the Shallotte Senior Citizens Center. She doesn't mind that she hasn't received one penny for her efforts. She's just pleased that she can volunteer her time and services and in

return, get the satisfaction that she has helped others her own age.

A 67-year old resident of Shallotte, Mrs. Trear is one of 50 Brunswick Countians involved in RSVP, a federally-funded volunteer program for senior citizens.

The Retired Senior Volunteer Program is designed to organize

volunteers and meet the basic human needs of people 60 years and older, said Kathryn Wray, RSVP director for Brunswick, Columbus and Pender counties.

"The program lets people over 60 know that they are wanted and needed and it gives them a feeling of self-worth," said Mrs. Wray. "That's the basic purpose of the program. Through the coordinating of volunteers, we achieve that."

Mrs. Trear helps set up tables for meals at the local senior citizens center and boxes meals that are delivered to homebound residents in the county.

"I enjoy being with a crowd, and I enjoy doing things for people who can't do it for themselves," said Mrs. Trear.

Volunteering also gives her a chance to get out of her own home and be with her friends at the center. "We're just like one big happy family in here."

Besides volunteering at the center weekdays, Mrs. Trear said she occasionally invites seniors to her home on Sunday. "I think I keep my life pretty well filled up," she said.

Mrs. Wray said that's one of the main goals of RSVP—to let seniors know they can still make a contribution to society through volunteering. People as old as 90 are involved in the program.

In Brunswick County, RSVP volunteers work with Hospice, Red Cross and in nursing homes as well as in the county's four senior citizens centers. Volunteers also help transport seniors to the centers and deliver meals to the homebound.

The hot meals mean survival to homebound people, but Mrs. Wray said the human contact with the volunteer delivering the meal is just as welcome.

"They are more excited about having someone come into their home and having someone to speak to," she said. "That sometimes is more important than the meal itself."

Mrs. Wray, RSVP director since July 1988, works out of an office at Southeastern Community College in

Whiteville. She visits Brunswick County the first and third Tuesday of each month.

While the program is much more established in Columbus County than the other two counties served, the program has been operating locally since 1983.

Last year, 304 volunteers worked approximately 33,000 hours in the three-county area. Ceremonies are held twice a year to recognize the volunteers.

To reflect recent growth of the program in Brunswick County, Mrs. Wray said December marked the first time a recognition program was held in Shallotte. In the past, ceremonies have always been held in Columbus County.

To recruit more volunteers, Mrs. Wray said she attends meetings of civic organizations where she spreads the word about RSVP.

Most volunteers, however, hear about the program from a friend. "My volunteers do recruiting just by being a part of RSVP and talking about it," she said.

In addition to federal funds, Mrs. Wray said the program also receives money from Columbus County. She said she hopes to receive financial support from Brunswick County Commissioners in the future. As funds become available, there are also plans to hire a staff person to coordinate the program in Brunswick County.

Although the Retired Senior Volunteer Program serves mainly retired people, Mrs. Wray said there are several volunteers in the program who are employed.

Edmae Jones of Ash has been volunteering at the Shallotte Senior Citizens Center for nearly two years. Every weekday for the past four months, she's delivered meals to the homebound in the Bolivia area.

"I enjoy it myself," she said. "If I have time, I stop and visit for a while. The people are just so happy to have somebody to talk to."

For more information on RSVP, call Mrs. Wray at 642-7141.



STAFF PHOTOS BY DOUG RUTTER

LETHA MAE TREAR sets up for lunch at the Shallotte Senior Citizens Center.



MARY SMITH, nutrition site manager at the Shallotte Senior Citizens Center, prepares meals for homebound residents of Brunswick County.

Literacy Council Holds Open House

The Brunswick County Literacy Council joined with state government this week in honoring VISTA Volunteers statewide.

Gov. James Martin proclaimed Wednesday, Jan. 31, as VISTA Volunteer Recognition Day. VISTA, a federally-funded program in its 25th year, stands for Volunteers In Service To America.

There are 65 VISTA volunteers in the state, including four who work with the Brunswick County Literacy Council at Supply. The countywide organization supports volunteer tutors who help adults

learn to read in free, one-on-one lessons.

The council had scheduled an open house from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 31, in honor of the day. The council office is located in the rear of the former BCC continuing education building just north of the N.C. 211 traffic light. The building now houses several county agencies in addition to the council.

In addition to the open house, the local VISTAs were also scheduled to visit the county's three high schools and Brunswick Community College Wednesday to provide information on the literacy council.



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