



Retired and Senior Volunteer Program



Center of Essex & Hudson Counties

Special points of interest:

- Learn about current community needs and programs
- New trends in senior activities
- Find out who we spotlighted this edition
- New research shows volunteering decreases risk of dementia
- Are you prepared for an emergency?

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Vet Corps

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal agency that funds the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), announced a new national initiative called Vet Corps. Vet Corps will recognize veterans who have continued serving their country as a civilian through CNCS programs such as RSVP. Vet Corps will unite nearly 27,000 veterans from all eras – from World War II to the Vietnam War to the first Gulf War and the most recent Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts – who have dedicated themselves to public service as AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members.

Vet Corps members serve at hundreds of VA clinics and hospitals, and at veteran service organizations and nonprofits like Habitat for Humanity and Teach For America, across the country. Many of the most successful program models include veterans helping fellow veterans. These Vet Corps members connect veterans to job opportunities, help them access their benefits, provide peer counseling and mentor military kids. In our area, RSVP connects volunteers to the VA Hospital's East Orange Campus to serve veterans.

As part of National Vet Corps, RSVP Volunteers who served in the armed forces will receive a special Vet

Corps pin in time for Veterans Day.

“Our commitment to veterans and their families is deep and it's twofold: We serve them, and we ask them to serve with us. Both strategies have tremendous benefits and results,” said Wendy Spencer, CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service. “Veterans bring unique skills and leadership to solve problems at home. National service gives our heroes a new mission on the home front, a pathway to opportunity and a better transition to civilian life.”

National service is a unique and effective way to tap the talent and leadership skills of veterans to solve problems at home, and veterans of all ages have demonstrated a desire to serve their country both in and out of the service and this continues to be true for our youngest generation of veterans. A landmark report by Civic Enterprises found that younger veterans are eager to continue serving, and that veterans who volunteer have more successful transitions to civilian life than those who do not.

This Veterans Day, RSVP will be honoring veterans that actively serve in our program by sending them a thank you along with their Veterans Corps Pin.

Volunteer Station Spotlight: Succeed2gether

Succeed2gether, based in Montclair, exists to provide the skills, services, and resources necessary for the well-being and economic success of those most in need. Through their Resource Center they develop and implement education and youth empowerment programs, anti-violence initiatives and human needs activities, such as clothing distribution and social services. Their After-School Tutoring Program (ASTP) and Summer Enrichment Program (SEP) for families in need, comprise the cornerstone of their mission. These

free programs meet the academic needs of both low-performing and accelerated students whose low-income families are unable to pay for tutoring. Succeed2gether trains volunteers to help close the achievement gap in literacy and numeracy by providing tutoring services and educational support to the children they serve. With one hour a week, volunteers can make a huge impact in a child's life. To learn more about this opportunity, contact Stephanie Grove at 973-637-1766.

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Preparing for Emergencies

The likelihood that you and your family will recover from an emergency tomorrow often depends on the planning and preparation you do today. While each person's abilities and needs are unique, every individual can take steps to prepare for all kinds of emergencies from fires and floods to potential terrorist attacks. By evaluating your own personal needs and making an emergency plan that fits those needs, you and your loved ones can be better prepared. This guide outlines commonsense measures older Americans can take to start preparing for emergencies before they happen. Preparing makes sense for older Americans.

GET A KIT— The first step is to consider how an emergency might affect your individual needs. Plan to make it on your own, for at least three days. It's possible that you will not have access to a medical facility or even a drugstore. It is crucial that you and your family think about what kinds of resources you use on a daily basis and what you might do if those resources are limited or not available. Think first about the basics for survival – food, water, clean air and any life sustaining items you require. Consider two kits. In one kit put everything you will need to stay where you are and make it on your own for a period of time. The other kit should be a lightweight, smaller version you can take with you if you have to leave your home.

MAKE A PLAN — The reality of a disaster situation is that you will likely not have access to everyday con-

veniences. To plan in advance, think through the details of your everyday life. If there are people who assist you on a daily basis, list who they are, and how you will contact them in an emergency. Create your own personal support network by identifying others who will help you in an emergency. Think about what modes of transportation you use and what alternative modes could serve as back-ups. If you require handicap accessible transportation be sure your alternatives are also accessible. For every aspect of your daily routine, plan an alternative procedure. Make a plan and write it down. Keep a copy of your plan in your emergency supply kits and a list of important information and contacts in your wallet. Share your plan with your family, friends, care providers and others in your personal support network.

BE INFORMED — Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as assembling an emergency supply kit and making an emergency plan are the same regardless of the type of emergency. However, it's important to stay informed about what might happen and know what types of emergencies are likely to affect your region. For more information about specific types of emergencies, visit www.ready.gov or call 1-800-BE-READY. Be prepared to adapt this information to your personal circumstances and make every effort to follow instructions received from authorities on the scene. Above all, stay calm, be patient and think before you act. With these simple preparations, you can be ready for the unexpected.

RSVP Staff would like to thank all of the men and women who served in the armed forces and the veterans who continue to serve their country through SeniorCorps programs!

History of Veterans Day

On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918 an armistice between Germany and the Allied nations came into effect. On November 11, 1919, Armistice Day was commemorated for the first time. In 1919, President Wilson proclaimed the day should be "filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory". There were plans for parades, public meetings and a brief suspension of business activities at 11am.

In 1926, the United States Congress officially recognized the end of World War I and declared that the anniversary of the armistice should be commemorated with prayer and thanksgiving. Congress also requested that the president should "issue a proclamation calling upon the

officials to display the flag of the United States on all Government buildings on November 11 and inviting the people of the United States to observe the day in schools and churches, or other suitable places, with appropriate ceremonies of friendly relations with all other peoples."

An Act was approved on May 13, 1938, which made November 11 in each year a legal holiday, known as Armistice Day. This day was originally intended to honor veterans of World War I. A few years later, World War II required the largest mobilization of service men in the history of the US. In 1954, the veterans service organizations urged Congress to change the word "Armistice" to "Veterans". Congress approved this change and on June 1, 1954, November 11 became a day to honor all American veterans.



Volunteer Spotlight: Elaine Citron

RSVP volunteer Elaine Citron is proof that you can find time to make a positive difference in someone else's life while still professionally engaged. The busy owner/president of Cypress Fine Art Licensing, Elaine represents artists interested in merchandising their work and is a resource for manufacturers with a variety of product applications. Her volunteer work as a "Friend Advocate" allows her to leverage her professional background in teaching and sales, as well as her organizational skills as a small business owner. "I have an outgoing personality and I believe this translates well into motivating and having upbeat relationships with my clients," she explains.



Elaine's first Friend Advocate client was a woman in her 90s who was lonely and – as a mother of three sons – particularly in need of female companionship. The relationship was mutually beneficial, however, as Elaine had recently lost her own parents. "My connection with the client allowed me to fill a bit of the void left by their loss. I typically would visit with this client once a month for an hour or so. I enjoyed hearing about her life experiences." Her second client turned out to be a former classmate, so in addition to helping her with filing and organizing for the past four years, Elaine has rekindled a forty-year-old friendship. She typically visits around once a month for an hour and a half, and is easily able to fit this into her busy professional life.

Elaine finds it "so rewarding to stop for a little while to think about someone else and how she can help make their life easier." Elaine applauds the JFS Friend Advocate Program and RSVP for their professionalism and caring staff. She finds their organizational structure and consistent follow up helpful and enjoys being able to meet other volunteers and share experiences through these organizations.

Despite her professional commitments, Elaine manages to be generous with her time to help others.



Playgrounds for Seniors

There is a new craze overseas that is coming to the United States....playgrounds for older adults. The concept was originally created in the 1990's in China as an initiative to get seniors to be more active and to make them feel a part of the community, all while having fun. Senior playgrounds are built with older adults in mind to help target and stimulate specific areas of the body. The trend became so popular among local seniors that countries all over Asia and Europe have built them. Several towns and cities throughout the United States are now building them for their senior residents.

Senior playgrounds are built to improve agility, stability, flexibility, and strength. In parks based in England, seniors can find low impact equipment such as an elliptical machines, bicycles, and areas for sit ups. These machines are specifically designed to be less strenuous for those with hip or back problems. The new Senior Park in Galveston County, Texas, includes a walking bridge so seniors can improve their balance and agility, therefore, reducing their fall risk as they age.

The medical community has always recommended an active lifestyle, especially to older patients. There are many proven advantages to being active as a senior. It helps to reduce depression, increases socialization, regulate stress, improve a person's mood, and increase cognitive function. For seniors who suffer from diabetes and high blood pressure, exercising can help them manage their conditions.

In addition to all of these benefits, senior parks are free to everyone in the community. For older adults on a fixed income, paying for a monthly gym membership or personal training may not be an affordable option. Fees are a huge deterrent to seniors who are looking to exercise. Being public spaces, the parks are free and can be used at any time, around anyone's busy schedule. Be sure to check with your local parks department to see if a senior playground could be coming to your area. Always check with your primary physician to see if it is ideal for you to be exercising, what type of exercise would work best for you and for how long. For further information, you can contact Alexandra Nagy, LSW, at 201-926-9706 or anagy@jfsmetrowest.org.

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Center of Essex and Hudson Counties

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Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 

USA 
Freedom Corps

The President's Call to Service

The Retired and Senior Volunteer program is part of the Corporation for National and Community Service and the USA Freedom Corps.

RSVP Center of Essex and Hudson Counties is a comprehensive community service organization through Jewish Family Service of MetroWest New Jersey designed to mobilize members of the community who are 55 years of age and older in giving back to their own neighborhoods through volunteer service. We currently cover the counties of Essex and Hudson.

RSVP is a federally funded program of the Corporation for National & Community Service whose mission is to provide opportunity for individuals 55 years of age and older to provide volunteer service in their community. It has over 500,000 members nationwide.

For the potential volunteer, RSVP provides a single location where they can review a number of local volunteer opportunities and receive the help of a trained Volunteer Coordinator.

Does Volunteering Reduce the Risk for Dementia?

As we approach the retirement age, most of us will take preventative measures to slow down the aging process and reduce the risk of health and mental illnesses. Some will pursue exercise, learn a second language or continue to work past the retirement age, while others will choose to volunteer. Volunteering is known to many as a “feel good” activity that can reduce loneliness and give a sense of purpose to us, but not many people associate volunteering with preventing or reducing the risk for dementia.

Over the last few years, research has begun on the cognitive benefits of volunteering in regards to the prevention/reduction of dementia. One study conducted by the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, “found that volunteering can result in improvements in cognitive functioning and this was associated with significant changes in brain activation patterns.” Essentially, the intervention, which was volunteer activity, improved brain and cognitive function in these older adults.

social, mental, and physical; with an added benefit of altruism which other no lifestyle facet has. The combination of all four can also help to reduce dementia. In one study that examined the benefits of volunteering with seniors, researchers found that it improved “functional performance in older adults”. A study by the Aging Research Center in Sweden studied the lifestyles that can reduce/prevent dementia and found that “all three lifestyle components (social, mental, and physical) seem to have a beneficial effect on cognition and a protective effect against dementia”. Volunteering can increase a person’s social network by meeting new people and making friends with them. It can offer mental stimulation as volunteers are often trained in the new roles that they will be performing. Finally, traveling to and from the volunteer program can offer seniors physical activity by walking or taking public transportation.

The next time you are thinking of what activity to add to your busy schedule to help with preventing dementia, think about the types of volunteer opportunities that are available in your area or contact your RSVP at 973-637-1766 (Essex County) or 201-526-9706 (Hudson County) to learn more.

Volunteering offers people three lifestyle components: