

# **THE NEWTON/JASPER RSVP VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**



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**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
University Extension

**Locally sponsored by the ISU Extension, Jasper County**

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# Welcome to RSVP

RSVP would like to thank you for your commitment to helping others. Without people like you, Jasper County would be a bleak place to call home.

RSVP's mission is to impact and benefit citizens, of all ages, in Jasper County utilizing the experience and wisdom of individuals age 55 and above.

It is the intent of RSVP to provide meaningful activities, which benefit both the community and the volunteer.

You are part of a program that has a long tradition of helping others. You are not only a member of a local program, you are part of a movement that started in 1971 and has continued to gain momentum throughout its years of success.

RSVP volunteers bring skills, talents, and years of experience to the communities in which they serve. RSVP volunteers make a difference. And, **YOU** will make a difference through the skills, talents, and experience that you share with the citizenry of Jasper County.

Thank you  
and welcome!

# Newton/Jasper RSVP

## Mission

To impact and benefit citizens, of all ages, in Jasper County utilizing the experience and wisdom of individuals age 55 and above.

## Funding

Funding for the Newton/Jasper RSVP comes from:

- Corporation for National and Community Service
- City of Newton
- United Way of Jasper County
- Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service
- Jasper County
- Fundraisers and private donations

## History of RSVP

RSVP began in 1971 as a Federal program under the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973. Since 1993, the Corporation for National and Community Service has administered RSVP.

As of September 30, 2000, there were 764 RSVP active projects in the United States. 24 of those projects are in Iowa. Newton/Jasper RSVP began August 15, 1973. Each year, more than 455,000 individuals over the age of 55 serve as RSVP volunteers, through more than 63,000 public and non-profit community organizations, contributing more than 85 million hours of service throughout the country.

The Newton/Jasper RSVP has had four sponsors:

- Newton YMCA from 1973 to 1989
- City of Newton from 1989 to 2003
- Newton United Way from 2003 to 2005
- ISU Extension, Jasper County beginning in 2005

## **Who can become an RSVP Volunteer?**

Any person at least age 55 who is interested in sharing their skills and talents with their community can become an RSVP volunteer. There are no membership fees to join.

## **What can RSVP Volunteers do?**

RSVP volunteers can do a wide variety of things! Including:

- Being an elementary student's friend
- Driving disabled, low income, and/or elderly persons to doctor's appointments
- Preparing Taxes for low income and elderly persons
- Environmental protection and education
- Disaster Assistance/Preparedness – Homeland Security
- Ensuring elementary students have adequate literacy skills
- Ensuring low income and elderly persons are properly nourished

## **What if I am already volunteering in the community?**

People who are currently volunteering in the community are welcome to join RSVP, however they must be placed by RSVP staff to a new position. There are numerous benefits to joining your local RSVP program, including:

- Group activities and opportunities to meet new people
- Excess accident medical coverage, excess volunteer liability, and excess automobile liability insurance
- Recognition activities for active volunteers
- Mileage reimbursement for driving
- Monthly newsletter
- Belonging to a nationwide group of over 480,000 RSVP Volunteers

## **Enrollment**

Anyone interested in learning about RSVP is encouraged to contact the RSVP office at (641) 792-6433. It's simple:

1. Complete the RSVP enrollment forms.
2. Meet with the RSVP staff to discuss interests, skills, and possible placements.
3. Complete the mandatory background check forms.
4. Meet with a representative from the volunteer station to discuss your new position.

## **Volunteer Positions**

Volunteers are matched with positions according to the preference of the volunteer and the needs of the position. Each position has a position description to clarify the specific duties to be performed, the training required, location of station, etc.

## **Background Checks**

ISU Extension, Jasper County performs background checks on all new volunteers that must be approved by Iowa State University.

## **Volunteer Stations**

A volunteer station is an organization that accepts the responsibility for a position and supervision of RSVP volunteers. It is the organization that you will report to and turn in hours at.

## **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is the cornerstone of a trusting relationship between volunteers and clients. As an RSVP volunteer, personal information must be held in the strictest confidence. It is important to never release the name, address, phone number, or any other information that may identify the person to anyone except the volunteer station and/or RSVP staff.

**Breaching the code of confidentiality, as set forth by the Newton/Jasper RSVP, will result in the termination of all volunteer assignments.**

## **Fitting in at your Volunteer Station**

Do not be shy...ask questions about the organization you are placed with.

Below is a list of “things” you will want to know about your volunteer station.

- Know your supervisor at the volunteer station. This is the individual who will answer your questions and address any concerns you may have.
- Know what policies and procedures you are subject to as a volunteer (i.e. attendance, dress code, etc.).

- Know the types of clients the organization serves.
- Understand the mission or purpose of the volunteer station.
- Learn the history of your volunteer station.
- Know and understand what your role is at the volunteer station.
- Know what change you are working to create or the problem you are working to address.
- Understand what you are entitled to while providing service to the volunteer station.
- Learn the little things...location of restrooms, coat racks, workspace, parking, the lounge or lunch area, and know the check-in procedure for your volunteer station.

**Insurance** -See blue packet for complete details of policies

All active RSVP volunteers are provided with excess accident medical, excess volunteer liability and excess automobile liability insurance, which supplements existing insurance policies at no cost to the volunteer. The coverage protects an RSVP volunteer during volunteer assignment (Travel to the station, while you are performing station duties, and travel back to your home). For volunteers using a personal auto, it is required to keep up-to-date the minimum levels of liability insurance required by the State of Iowa.

In case of an accident, auto or otherwise, the RSVP volunteer must notify the following entities as soon as possible following the incident.

- RSVP Director
- The RSVP Director will, in turn, notify CIMA (the supplemental insurance company)
- The volunteer's primary insurance company

Please keep your insurance statement and bills, as they will need to be filed with CIMA.

**Reimbursement**

Volunteers are reimbursed for mileage at a rate of 25 cents per mile, up to \$30.00 per month. Allowable mileage is the distance to and from the volunteer's home to the volunteer station. **Mileage accrued while "on the job" will not be reimbursed.** Mileage is logged on the RSVP monthly timesheet.

Requesting reimbursement for travel is the choice of the volunteer and must be requested. RSVP volunteers seeking reimbursement must have volunteer hour sheet properly filled out, signed, and turned in by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. Reimbursement checks will be mailed on the second Tuesday of the second month when mileage was traveled.

The federal and state mileage reimbursement rate is different than what RSVP reimburses. Mileage for volunteers can be claimed on federal and state income taxes. This includes the difference between the federal/state rate and what you are reimbursed. Consult your tax advisor for further information. RSVP will send an annual report with mileage reported, reimbursed, and the difference thereof to volunteers each January.

Meals and parking are not reimbursed by RSVP.

### **Reporting Volunteer Hours**

RSVP volunteer hours are required for volunteers to remain active, eligible for the excess insurance coverage and for the program to receive continued funding. In order to continue the success of RSVP, it is most important that volunteers record every minute of volunteer service they perform. Volunteers must follow the procedure below:

- Volunteers will receive next month's timesheet in the monthly newsletter. For example, January's newsletter will have February's timesheet.
- Active volunteers must complete monthly time sheets (From the first of the month to 31<sup>st</sup> of the month) and submit their time sheets by the 15<sup>th</sup> of following month. For example, February's timesheet is due by March 15<sup>th</sup>.
- It is required by the federal government that all timesheets be signed.
- To request additional time sheets, contact RSVP at (641) 792-6433.
- Please report hours in .25 increments and only hours volunteer service was performed, not travel time.

Your support in returning time sheets is greatly appreciated.

## **Conduct**

When volunteering, an RSVP volunteer must be in accordance with the volunteer station's guidelines for staff and/or volunteer staff. This includes requirements for training, attendance, dress code, or any other guidelines established by the volunteer station. Any concerns regarding the volunteer station should be taken first to the volunteer station supervisor. If concerns are not resolved, please contact the RSVP Director.

RSVP volunteers are subject to volunteer station policies regarding absenteeism and bad weather.

## **Non-Discrimination**

No person, based on race, color, sex, age (if at least 55), religion, handicap, national origin, military reserve or veteran status, marital status, sexual orientation, limited English proficiency, or political affiliation shall be excluded from participation in RSVP.

## **Volunteer Safety**

RSVP volunteers, at all times, must be fit for the roles they perform, in order to complete their duties safely. Should medical, physical, or other conditions change, at any time, it is the duty of the RSVP volunteer, to inform the RSVP Director so that appropriate changes may be made, with regard to volunteer activities.

The use of illegal drugs or alcohol, or being under the influence of the same, while performing hours of service is strictly prohibited and shall be cause for termination of all volunteer placements through the Newton/Jasper RSVP.

Volunteers of the Newton/Jasper RSVP must always report truthfully hours of service performed as well as mileage to be reimbursed.

## **Special Limitations for RSVP Volunteers**

- A. Political Activities: No RSVP volunteer may be involved in political activities when serving in the capacity of an RSVP volunteer. No RSVP volunteer shall involve the use of funds, the provision of services, or the employment or assignment of

personnel in a matter supporting or resulting in the identification of such project with: i) Any partisan or nonpartisan political activity associated with a candidate, or contending faction or group, in an election; or ii) Any activity to provide voters or prospective voters with transportation to the polls or similar assistance in connection with any such election.

- B. Religious Activities: RSVP volunteers shall not give religious instruction, conduct worship service, or engage in any form of preaching as a part of their duties.
- C. Non-Displacement of Paid Staff: An RSVP volunteer may not perform any service or duty, or engage in any activity which would replace a paid staff person. (i.e. if the receptionist goes on vacation, a volunteer may not perform all of the duties of the receptionist, but could perform a part of that position.)
- D. Non-compensation for Services: Under no circumstances shall an RSVP volunteer receive a fee for service from service recipients, their legal guardian, members of their family, or friends. No person, organization, or agency shall request or receive any compensation for services of RSVP volunteers.
- E. Volunteer Status: RSVP volunteers are not employees of Jasper County Extension, the Newton United Way, State of Iowa, Jasper County, the City of Newton, the volunteer station, the Corporation for National Service, or the Federal Government.

### **Volunteer Termination**

Volunteers who do not report at least 1½ hours during each quarter of the year for on-going assignments become terminated as an RSVP volunteer. Volunteers who become terminated, will be withdrawn from all RSVP roles and be sent a letter confirming the termination. Terminated volunteers may be re-enrolled in the program by contacting the RSVP Director for placement.

Once a volunteer becomes terminated, the volunteer is no longer covered by CIMA insurance, eligible for reimbursement, or able to participate in recognition events.

Volunteers in positions that are not year round will remain active, unless they do not return to that position. For example, persons volunteering as Tax Aides mainly volunteer during the first four months of the year. Tax Aides would remain active year round, unless the volunteer decided not to be a Tax Aide the following year. This also applies to volunteers in schools, etc.

Volunteers may terminate their volunteer assignment at any time, by notifying the RSVP Director. The RSVP staff will assist the volunteer in locating an alternate volunteer placement, when requested.

The RSVP Director or an RSVP volunteer station may separate an RSVP volunteer for cause, including, but not limited to, excessive or unauthorized absences, misconduct, a breach in confidentiality, inability to perform assignments or accept supervision. All decisions regarding separation will be discussed and agreed upon by the RSVP Director, the County Extension Education Director, and the RSVP volunteer station supervisor.

### **Policy Changes**

Policies in this hand book are subject to change, without notice. The most recent volunteer handbook will be posted on the RSVP website: [www.seniorservice.org/newton\\_rsvp](http://www.seniorservice.org/newton_rsvp).