

AmeriCorps Seniors Program of the Year

RSVP of Dane County



Founded in 1972, RSVP of Dane County has made a lasting impact for people and organizations through the service of the AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers. Over the past 50 years, their RSVP volunteers have contributed over 8 million service hours to Dane County and grown into one of the largest RSVP programs in the nation. In 2021 alone,



1,021 AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers served 121,777 hours helping Dane County residents in need. Through service with numerous programs and over 90 sites, their AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve people of all ages, help nonprofit and public agencies maintain and extend their services, and help older adults remain independent and in their own homes.

With the overall growth of the senior population and its needs, including the risk of social isolation, the service by their AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers becomes even more important for both the populations they serve, and the RSVP volunteers themselves. Over 40% of seniors regularly feel lonely, which can be associated with a higher risk of dementia and shortened life. RSVP of Dane County eases loneliness by connecting volunteers with people in need in our community, with the volunteers themselves overwhelmingly reporting that their volunteer service keeps them active and gives them a more positive outlook because they help their community. They also provide opportunities for all ages with almost 10% of their volunteers being 85 or older and one of their newest volunteers starting just before her 102nd birthday.

While some senior meal sites and programs had to be suspended due to COVID-19, RSVP volunteers continued in modified ways. Over 140,000 meals were delivered to adults in need each of the last two years, and numerous additional deliveries from food pantries and groceries for those unable to leave their homes. Volunteers also created modified ways to connect with youth, many of whom also struggled with isolation and loneliness during the pandemic, through programs such as Computer Buddies and Pen Pals.

Describing their impact on the community, Area Agency on Aging of Dane County Manager Sridevi Mohan explains that “the entire aging network of service providers could not provide the level of services needed to older adults without RSVP volunteers...As the COVID-19 pandemic continued during 2021...(they) were instrumental in delivering meals and groceries to impacted older adults, private vehicle rides to essential medical appointments, and helping our youngest read by using remote learning platforms. Making facemasks, warm caps, mittens and blankets continued without a beat. Without the involvement of senior volunteers recruited and trained by RSVP, our older adults in need throughout Dane County would have suffered to meet even basic needs.”

