



Celebrating
Years of
30 RSVVP

The
History
of
RSVP

1977

1978

1979



For 30 years, the RSVP program has been evolving to meet America's needs. RSVP grew from a seed first sown in the early 1960s when the 1961 White House Conference on Aging called attention to the continuing need of older people to stay active through service to their country. The Conference also promoted the passage of the Older Americans Act of 1965, which established a range of programs offering services and opportunities for older Americans at risk of losing their independence.

Shortly thereafter, the Community Services Society of New York launched a pilot project on Staten Island called SERVE (Serve and Enrich Retirement by Volunteer Experience). Through SERVE, a small group of older adults volunteered their skills in service to their community. The success of the program demonstrated the value of older volunteer service and led to an amendment in 1969 to the Older Americans Act that established the Retired Senior Volunteer

Program, or RSVP, to help create volunteer opportunities for retired persons.



As a locally directed, but federally legislated grant program, RSVP has always focused on motivating older Americans to find ways to help their communities.

Another federal agency, ACTION, was established to support the concept of volunteerism

1980

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as a resource to address community needs. RSVP was created and funded in 1971 as a part of ACTION.

The original philosophy of RSVP, “People Helping People,” ensured its longevity and success. On September 23, 1981, RSVP celebrated ten years of service, and that date in September was designated National RSVP Day.

Eleven years later, with the election of Bill Clinton in 1992, the Older Americans Volunteer Program (OAVP) was reauthorized as the National Senior Volunteer Corps (NSVC) under the National and Community Service Trust Act. In addition, the agency known as ACTION was converted into the Corporation for National and Community Service.

RSVP, a part of senior programs of the NSVC, was renamed the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program to reflect the new reality that not all older volunteers were retired. Additionally, the age required to join RSVP was lowered from 60 to 55 years.

The changes that the RSVP program has experienced throughout the years reflect the changing faces of senior volunteerism in America. The program continues to grow, and as it grows, RSVP will continue to provide opportunities for all seniors to answer the call to service.

- The Retired Senior Volunteer Program was authorized in 1969 under Title VI of the Older Americans Act.
- Although RSVP was created in 1969, it wasn't launched until 1971. The Administration on Aging (AOA) developed the original eleven RSVP projects with a budget of \$500,000.
- RSVP was eventually transferred from AOA to the federal agency ACTION, which had oversight of federal domestic volunteer programs.
- Following the transfer of RSVP to ACTION, the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 was enacted, and RSVP has operated under Title II of this Act ever since.
- In the first half of 1973, the country was divided into regional offices under the ACTION administration.
- In 1993, Congress passes the National and Community Service Act of 1993, changing the name to “The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program” to reflect the new reality that not all older volunteers were retired. At this time, the age required to join RSVP was lowered from 60 to 55 years.

RSVP LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

1986

1987

1988

The Future of RSVP

1998

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RSVP is proud of its heritage

as a program that constantly evolves to meet the ever-changing needs of America's communities as well as the older citizens serving them. Since its inception more than 30 years ago, RSVP has grown from 11 projects to over 750 nationally, including Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands.

The myriad of skills our volunteers share with their communities has grown during the past three decades. Today's volunteers tutor and mentor children, teach Internet skills and help build stronger family ties in their communities. Today, RSVP volunteers use advanced business and computer expertise in unique ways that befit the information age. And they strengthen small businesses with expert advice or even tax counseling.

We hold to our original motto: People Helping People, but we look to a future that expands that idea so we continue to grow to help our communities in ways that best fit their needs. With the energy and experience of our current volunteers and the newest wave of older Americans from the baby boomer generation joining us, we see the ability to expand our reach farther than ever before.

RSVP project directors will continue to challenge their volunteers with new opportunities to use and expand their skills. They will work to attract new volunteers from all stages and walks of life, who can continue to help the many in our country whom



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