



NEWS NOTES

Spring 2022

*Retired and Senior Volunteer Program and Foster Grandparent Program
...where volunteers make a difference*



The Bridge Builder by Will Allen Dromgoole

An old man going a lone highway,
Came, at the evening cold and gray,
To a chasm vast and deep and wide.
Through which was flowing a sullen tide
The old man crossed in the twilight dim,
The sullen stream had no fear for him;
But he turned when safe on the other side
And built a bridge to span the tide.

“Old man,” said a fellow pilgrim near,
“You are wasting your strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day,
You never again will pass this way;
You’ve crossed the chasm, deep and wide,
Why build this bridge at evening tide?”

The builder lifted his old gray head;
“Good friend, in the path I have come,” he said,
“There followed after me to-day
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm that has been as naught to me
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be;
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building this bridge for him!”

RSVP Board Notes

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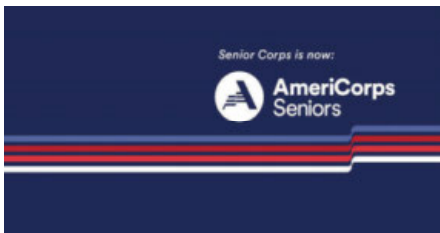
Is Spring really on the way? The robins are back, and the geese are flying North. Hoping warmer weather will give everyone an incentive to consider getting out and about. You might want to check on the welfare of a neighbor or friend. Do you feel compelled to help others? RSVP has a need for Driver Escort volunteers as well as other opportunities that will keep you busy! And, maybe you can recommend someone you know who would like to share the “RSVP Experience.”



Can you believe RSVP will be celebrating its 50th anniversary this year? This type of achievement is the product of so many volunteers, staff members, and Board of Directors who have lived the “RSVP Experience” and have benefited countless numbers of individuals and made a meaningful impact on their daily lives. A “Big Thank You” to all who have helped in one way or another in making this happen! Watch for more information on this event.

I find nothing more rewarding in daily life than helping those in need. Thomas Jefferson once said, “Those in need, need us indeed.” That still applies each and every day. May Spring put a smile on your face and give you bountiful health.

Richard Hoffman
 President, RSVP Board of Directors



From the Desk of...

*Margie Zutter
Executive Director*

In June of 1972, I graduated from West High School in Madison, WI. I was excited and nervous about going to college and deciding on a career. Little did I know that about this time, the first RSVP program in Wisconsin was being established in Madison. A federal grant was awarded and the program started in August. Four years later I was accepted for a UW School of Social Work internship with RSVP and then in 1977 was hired as a program coordinator working with 30+ RSVP group projects. I met with each group throughout the county, delivering materials and picking up finished items.

Fortunately, my 1969 Buick LeSabre had a very big trunk!

RSVP of Dane County has always felt like a second home to me with a large extended family of volunteers and staff. Like a regular family there has been plenty of excitement as new volunteers have joined us and new programs have started. And, sadly there have also been losses as volunteers have faced health problems or passed away including RSVP Director Bob Suhr. (Bob Suhr and Mary Stamstad, Assistant Director at the time, hired me.) Like a family, everyone serving through RSVP is unique and has a wonderful



Krishna Sijapati

story to tell and share with others. The volunteers I have met over the years are truly inspiring, showing courage and strength to continue to help others despite any challenges

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they are facing.

I have served in various capacities (Program Coordinator, Assistant Director, Interim Director, and Executive Director) over the years and am thrilled to be part of this 50th Anniversary celebration in 2022. Although we have experienced difficulties during our history, these past two years with COVID-19 have been extremely challenging. This pandemic has been frightening for most people, but especially for older adults. Staff have worked hard to create or modify volunteer opportunities to make them as safe as possible through social distancing, masks, vaccination requirements, etc. Despite the pandemic, over 1,000 volunteers have been able to serve through RSVP and FGP, and new volunteers have joined our ranks.

On October 6th, we will be holding an indoor volunteer appreciation event, our first time together in three years! We will be inviting all volunteers who have served since January 1, 2021 to our 50th Anniversary event at The Fields Reserve in Stoughton. Please make sure we receive your volunteer hours so that you get an invitation. Everyone will need to provide proof of vaccination when they register for this event. Looking forward to celebrating RSVP's Golden Anniversary with you!

RSVP's Bus Buddy Program 2022 Season

By Diana Jost and Jan Karst

RSVP of Dane County's Bus Buddy Program teaches inexperienced bus riders how to open a whole new road to independence. The Bus Buddy Tour Program started in August of 2014 offering seniors the opportunity to learn to navigate the bus while creating a fun social outing for those involved. Not only do these trips help teach participants how to navigate the bus system, but these trips also facilitate the integration of all participants forming a wonderful community promoting friendships, support, and understanding. The program was on hold during 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021, the program resumed with one trip to the Madison Senior Center for the Health and Resource Fair. Channel 3000's *Buzzed into Madison* host Emmy Fink and videographer Tim Getting joined us for this trip. Follow this link to watch the fun video segment: <https://youtu.be/WizEy5vabqg>

The 2022 Season will kick off in June with a trip to Olbrich Gardens. Other trips this season will include the Henry Vilas Zoo in July, UW Memorial Union Pontoon ride in August, Willy Street Coop Cooking Class in September, and a trip to the Point Cinema in October.

All participants will be asked to follow any current COVID-19 safety guidelines.

The Bus Buddy Program also offers individual training for those that prefer not to be in a large group.

If you would like to join us for one of the Bus Buddy Tours or for more information, please contact Jan Karst by email Jkarst@rsvpdane.org or by phone 608-441-7891.



Want to get in Touch with Us?

Simply dial 608-238-RSVP (7787) or e-mail us at info@rsvpdane.org—or you can reach individual staff members directly at the phone numbers/e-mail addresses listed at right. In the event we're not available at the time you call, our 24-hour voice mail will ensure you receive a prompt response.

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RSVP Volunteers Featured in Zoom Events

By Margie Zutter

During the first three months of 2022, our monthly Zoom events would not have been possible without RSVP volunteers. Thank you, Mary Odell, Melvin Hinton, and Dick and Lori Kalnicky!

On January 27th, Mary Odell gave a presentation on Rail Fans. She created a PowerPoint slide show including photos of trains and points of interest on some of her many adventures locating trains in Southern Wisconsin. The name Rail Fan is used to describe people interested in rail transport. Mary combines her interest in photography to capture photos of trains as they are going about their daily business. Over the years she has taken many beautiful and interesting pictures of trains at crossings, on bridges, coming around bends, traveling through towns, etc.

In honor of Black History Month, RSVP Board member Melvin Hinton was the moderator for our February 24th Zoom event conversation with Sarah Collins Rudolph. And, we had a generous donation from a new volunteer, Lori Stoneking, to purchase enough copies of Sarah's book *The 5th Little Girl* for our Zoom event participants. Sarah is the lone survivor of the 16th Street Baptist Church Bombing on 9/15/63 in Birmingham, Alabama during the Civil Rights Movement and the beginning of desegregation in Birmingham. Sarah is both a survivor and a victim who has experienced lifelong injuries yet has never received compensation. As stated in *The Fifth Little Girl*: "Sarah is a living legend that is currently cleaning homes to pay for the ongoing medical bills that still remain as a result of the bombing." Despite this Sarah is still glad to be a helping hand: "Sharing my story with the youth and teaching them that even through tragedy and struggle, there is always hope during the journey of life."

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RSVP of Dane County is hosting our 2nd “Essentials Drive”

By Diana Jost



The Allied Wellness Center distributes needed essentials to residents in the Allied Dunn's Marsh Neighborhood each week. They have worked hard during the pandemic to identify neighbors in need and provide locations where essentials, (personal care products, diapers, soap, detergent, etc.) can be picked up.

In honor of National Volunteer Week, RSVP is hosting a drive through donation collection to help with gathering these items for the Allied Wellness Center! Please join us on Thursday, April 21st between the hours of 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. in the parking lot behind our office building at 6501 Watts Rd. to drop off any donations of items on the following list:

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| All size Diapers, i.e., 1 to 6 | Detergent | Bleach if possible |
| Baby Wipes in individual packets | Fabric Softener | Paper Towels |
| Deodorant | Shaving Cream | Toilet Paper |
| Toothpaste | Masks | Garbage Bags |
| Lotion | Hand Sanitizer | Sandwich Bags |
| Body Wash | Bars of Soap | |
| Razors | Hand Soap | |

Thank you for participating! If you have any questions, please contact Jan Karst at jkarst@rsvpdane.org 608.441.7891 or Diana Jost at djost@rsvpdane.org 608-441-1393.

Located at RSVP and many other Dane County Locations

Volunteer Drivers needed for Seniors & Veterans

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- * Receive reimbursement at 58.5 cents/mile
- * Set your own schedule, weekdays only
- * Receive extra liability insurance

"I could not afford taxi service to Madison, where my primary doctor & specialists have their offices. If not for RSVP, I would have to move to a facility in Madison."

— RSVP passenger

Pay it Forward Now
So it's there for you tomorrow!

For information on driving seniors: Steve Jaeschke, 608-441-7892 or sjaeschke@rsvpdane.org

For information on driving veterans: Lorrie Hylkema, 238-7901 or lhylkema@rsvpdane.org



(continued from page 5)

On March 24th, Dick Kalnicky showed a PowerPoint slide show including photos and charts about his book *Global Warming Wisconsin Style*. Dick shared his research leading to four major concerns of Wisconsin climate change: 1) Rapid northward movement of climate zones (currently two miles/year); 2) Hot summer nighttime temperature minimums increasing; 3) Increasing heavy rainfall events and flooding; and 4) Variability is increasing. Mary Odell used Dick's information with Lori Kalnicky's assistance to create the PowerPoint presentation.

RSVP's Zoom events cover interesting topics and include an opportunity for participants to ask questions and share their own experiences. There is always something new to learn, and we at RSVP look forward to each event. If you haven't joined us yet, please do so for future Zoom presentations!

RSVP Calendar

April

Monday, April 18, 1:30 - 3:30 PM. RSVP Board Meeting

Wednesday, April 20, 1:00 - 2:30 PM. In honor of National Volunteer Week 2022, we salute our true stars, our RSVP volunteers!

Claudine Kavanagh will give a presentation on the night sky.

Thursday, April 21, 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM. Essential Pantry drive through donation collection

May

Volunteer Zoom Event Program in May, Older Americans Month presentation. Date/Time TBA

June

Volunteer Zoom Event Program in June, National Safety Month presentation. Date/Time TBA



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Outreaching Dane County – FGP’s Postcard Pen Pal Program

By Dick Russell

Like so many activities in 2020, our Foster Grandparent Program’s in-person tutoring came to a quick halt. RSVP, FGP, and so many other volunteer organizations had to pivot to new and varied ways to engage volunteers and keep them in contact with RSVP and each other. In the midst of this backdrop, a beautiful opportunity appeared and presented an unforeseen collaboration.

Local Beginnings

As the 2021-22 school year was starting, Chávez Elementary School and our Foster Grandparent Program (FGP, for short) began a paper-and-pencil postcard pen pal exchange. Every other week FGPs send postcards to five Kindergarten classrooms, and every other week they receive responses from the students. The pen pals share things about themselves like hobbies and interests, and they also discuss themes like food, favorite activities, and talents. This exchange has promoted both reading and writing skills and has been a wonderful outreach opportunity for our FGP’s. When this exchange began, no one had any idea how far it could actually reach.

Broader Outreach

The five Kindergarten classrooms FGP’s exchange postcards with are part of the Dual Language Immersion Program, which means students learn both English and Spanish. One of the Kindergarten teachers in this program is Ms. Ana Luisa Roque Espinosa, and her sister, Ms. Blanca Estela Espinosa, an employee of Arthur Martorell Elementary School in Puebla, Mexico. Over the holidays, these sisters had conversations about this postcard exchange between Chávez Elementary and the Foster Grandparents. Upon returning to Mexico, Blanca discussed this program with her students in grades 4, 5, and 6. These energetic students wrote cards and Valentines and pleasantly surprised the FGP’s! The FGP’s sent cards in reply, and the students sent a couple pictures of themselves and a short video greeting in March. In early April, the FGP’s will send bags that will contain some local postcards, colored pencils, and stickers, and the actual bags have been made by our Group Projects volunteers!



Triad Spring Programming Update

By Mike Thomsen, Triad Coordinator

Triad strives to bring together older adults, law enforcement, and the community to promote safety and reduce the fear of crime. Providing vital information about personal safety and crime prevention is key to our mission. Thus far in 2022, our monthly programs have taken-on topics ranging from preventing falls to crime prevention through environmental design to adapting to vision changes as we age.

Our upcoming programs will continue this effort. The April program will have Madison's Fire Marshall talk about finding safe housing for older adults. A Medicare fraud expert will join us for our May program. And in June, a Doctor of Audiology will speak about hearing loss and safety issues as we age. We are also working on the next issue of our Triad Newsletter. There is a lot to do, and we could use your help.

Triad's success depends on volunteers to come up with the ideas and the speakers for its programs. Volunteers also research, write, and publish the Triad Newsletter. Volunteering to work with Triad is ideal for anyone who enjoys reading, researching, and writing, and who is interested in promoting safety and crime prevention. You can even do the work from the comfort of your home. If you are interested in learning more about Triad and possibly joining us as a volunteer, please email our Triad Coordinator, Mike Thomsen, at mthomsen@rsvpdane.org. He can also be reached by phone at 608-441-7897.

| Date | Speaker | Topic |
|----------------------|--------------------|---|
| April 27, 10:00 a.m. | Ed Ruckriegel | Choosing Safe Housing as We Age |
| May 18, 10:00 a.m. | Ingrid Kundering | Important things to Know About Medicare Fraud |
| June 22, 10:00 a.m. | Dr. Veronica Heide | Hearing Loss—A Public Health Concern |

WELCOME New Volunteers

We enrolled 95 new volunteers from December, 2021, through February, 2022, serving in a wide variety of assignments throughout Dane County. Do you know someone who might like to volunteer? RSVP volunteers are our best recruiters as they spread the word about why they like volunteering and the need for more volunteers. Please pass this newsletter on to a friend or neighbor and tell them what RSVP means to you!

| | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| John C. Albert | Vernon F. Flesch | Ricky L. Kiesling | Joan P. Peterson | Ryker Swenson |
| Debra Alldredge | Dennis C. Garfoot | Rose King | Carlos B. Pimentel | May Thao |
| Debra Anderson | James T. Gustafson | Sue Koleczek | Vi Pivo | Pai Lee Thao |
| Sandra Atkinson | Miriam Hansen | Gene Kundert | Kayann Radke | Verna Toliver |
| Steven M. Atkinson | Carol Haumschild | Karen Lavsa | Ronald G. Reeder | Vanessa K. Tortolano |
| Helen Badowski | Fran Heisey | Morgan E. Lee | Marty Reynolds | Sandie Turczyn |
| Susan Baez | Shirley Helvey | Chor Lor | Ruben Rodriguez | Kay B. Utrie |
| Lauren E. Bartels | Jo Hershberger | Barbara Loman | Thomas O. Roe | Jennifer M. Utter |
| Barbara A. Baumgartner | James Hildebrandt | Sandra Marcus | Mary H. Sanderson | Audra Van Valkenburg |
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| Lisa L. Brown | Melanie Humke | Crystal J. Murkve | Karen K. Schultz | KaYing Xiong |
| Daniel D. Cady | Jack Jackson | Margaret Nelson | Larry W. Schultz | Mai Yang Xiong |
| Patricia M. Cady | Larry W. Jacobson | Jeanne A. Nye | Alice Shuman-Johnson | Pa Xiong |
| Johanna M. DeKeyser | Douglas L. Johnson | Robert B. Oakey | Alora Spiegel | Yer Lor Xiong |
| Tracy R. Donohue | John G. Kats | Mary Beth Olsen | Clara Stapleton | Mai Chor Yang |
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| Sue Felder | Bruce L. Kiesling | Timothy D. Perko | Steve R. Stockdale | M. Sandra Yost |

Waunakee Driver Believes in Service to Others

By Mary Schmelzer

Muhammad Ali has a well-known quote that goes, “Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.” By that measure Waunakee driver Leroy Adler has paid his rent in full! At the age of 17 years old, he graduated from high school and immediately signed up for the Army Reserves. He put in six months of active duty, celebrating his 18th birthday at boot camp. Within a month of returning from his six-month stint of active reserve duty, he was hired by American Family Insurance. He worked there while he fulfilled his reserve duty and eventually retired from American Family after 41 years of employment.

Around the time of his return from active duty, he reconnected with high school girlfriend Virginia. They were married in 1965 and enjoyed 51 years of marriage before Virginia passed away in 2016. The pair raised 2 daughters and a son and welcomed seven grandchildren and one great grandchild along the way.

As often happens, couples involve each other in one another’s pursuits, which was the case when Virginia worked as an activities coordinator at a local nursing home and recruited Leroy as a driver so the residents could attend Waunakee Community Band concerts. Leroy may have returned the favor during his 20-year involvement with the Lions Club, where he received their highest award for service.



Leroy Adler

“After I retired, I was talking with Jim Hellenbrand, who delivered meals, and he thought this would be a good job for me. I thought, ‘You’re right,’ so I signed on,” Adler said. “It wasn’t long after that when someone asked me to drive passengers and I’ve been doing it ever since.”

“You meet so many nice people doing this,” he said. “They are so grateful. After you’ve given someone a ride a few times you develop a comfort level. And it’s funny how things circle back to you, and you end up knowing someone in common. It’s a small world, even though it’s a big country.”

In addition to driving passengers, Adler can often be found at the Waunakee Senior Center cookouts throughout the year acting as grill master. And he has devoted around 15 years to tending the landscaping around the four “Welcome to the only Waunakee in the World” signs – charged with planting annuals, replacing roses, trimming the grass and painting – sort of a “green thumb ambassador” to Waunakee!

Adler encourages people to consider driving. “It’s doing a great service to people who need the extra help to get places,” he said. “Consider it helping a neighbor or helping a friend!” The Driver Escort and Vets Helping Vets passenger services need drivers in the Waunakee area and in all Dane County communities. Drivers are offered reimbursement at .58.5 cents/mile and additional liability insurance. RSVP provides PPE supplies. Drivers and passengers must be fully vaccinated. The service operates weekdays, 8:30-am to 3:30pm.

RSVP to RSVP!

By Jen Roth

The familiar acronym RSVP – appearing at the bottom of formal invitations – stands for the French “repondez, s'il vous plait,” meaning “respond, please”. It’s a classic call-and-response.

That same spirit shines through *our* acronym RSVP, which stands for Retired and Senior Volunteer Program of Dane County. It’s an invitation to be of use, to share our time and enthusiasms with others. Here is a sampling of RSVP’s volunteer opportunities:

- Become a math tutor, computer buddy, or Foster Grandparent
- Transport seniors to medical appointments
- Deliver meals or library books to shut-ins
- Make scarves, blankets, quilts, dolls

... and there are many other ways to make a positive difference in our community.

Both meanings of RSVP bring to mind the life-motto of Danish writer Isak Dinesen engraved on her family crest – “Je Responderay” – meaning, “I will answer.”

We hope you will!

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Meet the Fitchburg Quilters!

By *Kate Seal*

The Fitchburg Quilters are one of thirteen active RSVP Group Projects groups that are currently meeting and producing handcrafted donations for Dane County. As the name suggests, this is a group of RSVP volunteer quilters that meet weekly at the Fitchburg Senior Center. Their meetings are not only a great social time, composed of worldly and warm volunteers, but they are highly efficient and organized! There are various quilting stations set up in their designated room within the center. There's a station for ironing, one for cutting, a couple for sewing, one for picking out backings/sorting fabrics, and one for tying and binding. It's a well-oiled machine. They are famous for making beautiful quilts that are 60" x 72", though they also make smaller quilts and contribute to the making of tote bags or other requested donations that require a sewing machine.

Jane Burkholder has been a volunteer in the Fitchburg Quilters for over 20 years! She taught herself how to quilt when her six children were young so she could make them each a handcrafted quilt. When she joined the group as a volunteer many years later, she was able to bring her experience and skills. On the other hand, the sister-team of this group, Sharlene Palmer and Carol Sutton, had zero experience in quilting before they began their RSVP volunteer journey around a decade ago. They are now skilled quilters and continue to come to the Fitchburg Quilters group meetings, even after moving to Portage and Wisconsin Dells in recent years. Kobra Habibpour has been coming to these group meetings for the past seven years so she can visit with her quilting friends, tie quilts, and practice her English. Micky Braun speaks three languages, always has a smile on her face, and joins the group each week because, "...They are all really good friends! I enjoy the company and coming here gives me somebody to talk to!." Marlene Gruendler makes quilt tops and comes to the meetings to admire and coordinate fabrics for quilts, but most of all, she loves the coffee break at the end of the group meetings, where they sit, talk, and enjoy each other's company.

I asked the volunteers who were present at a Fitchburg Quilters group meeting in March of 2022

what they liked best about volunteering their time. While they all professed their fondness for the craft of quilting, there was a resounding theme of friendship and togetherness. They are always welcoming new volunteers (of all skill levels) to join in their efforts. If you are interested in volunteering your time by making quilts that get donated to local nonprofit organizations, please contact Kate Seal, RSVP Group Projects Coordinator kseal@rsvpdane.org or 608-310-7280. The Fitchburg Quilters meet at the Fitchburg Senior Center every Tuesday from 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.



Sharlene Palmer and Carol Sutton



Kobra Habibpour (background),
Micky Braun and Jane Burkholder



Energy-Smart Landscaping for Your Home

From Madison Gas and Electric Company

Save Energy and Conserve Resources With Simple steps for Your Home and Garden.

Did you know smart landscaping can save up to 25% of the energy a typical household uses, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

For example, large, leafy trees or vine-covered trellises help block the sun, especially if you have windows facing west. Shading windows is more important than shading walls because windows let in more unwanted heat.

Researching watering tips and which plants work best for our area also can help reduce your need to water in the summer, which is another part of creating a more sustainable home.

Conserve Water

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Dane County Extension Water Conservation for Home and Gardens guide includes indoor and outdoor water conservation and planning advice.

According to Dane County Extension, using mulches helps to cool and protect soil and minimize evaporation. They also recommend keeping grass 3 to 4 inches high when mowing—nothing that longer grass develops more drought-resistant roots.

Plant Safely

If you live near power lines, MGE has a planting guide at mge.com with trees and shrubs that can be planted safely near or under power lines. And, don't forget to call Diggers Hotline at 811 before you dig!

Get Free Energy Expert Advice

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Jon E. Smith, A Specific Look into a Veteran Passenger's Remarkable Life

By Lorrie Hylkema

Jon E. Smith, a U.S. Marine Corps Vietnam Combat Veteran, was born on the west side of Chicago from 1947 until moving to Madison in 1995. At a very early age, Jon was recruited to play for Major League Baseball's (MLB) LA Dodgers, served as an infantry soldier for the United States Marines, worked for Jerry "The Iceman" Butler, fathered seven children by the age of 25, took up a lucrative hobby of drawing and eventually wrote a book about his life called **Seven at Twenty-Five: Hooked on Hitting** published in 2020.

What is unique about Jon's story is that through all of the hardships and bad breaks, he managed to persevere and continue to represent his courageous image.

Jon was an excellent baseball player. However, when he was being recruited to play for the big leagues, he was convinced by a local marine recruiter that he should join the Marines and play for the Marines' baseball team while in service to avoid being drafted. In the end, Jon ended up receiving a waiver to only serve six months in the Marines, then was sent to Vietnam and missed the opportunity to play baseball for the MLB or for the Marines.

Jon had an opportunity, from a friend who lived in Portland, Oregon, once out of the service, to move to Portland to finish writing a book. Jon took this opportunity to move, but soon after he moved he found out that his mother had a heart attack in Chicago. Sadly, after Jon left Portland to move back and help his mother in Chicago, she passed away a few years later in 1983. Jon says he believes she died of a broken heart when he moved to Portland. This unfortunate event delayed Jon's mission of writing a book for almost 17 years.

Upon his return to Chicago to be with his mother, Jon went through a dark period in his life. In addition to playing amateur league baseball, fathering seven children from four different mothers, and working several jobs, Jon almost committed suicide. During this time, despite his troubles, Jon worked as a valet for a blues singer-songwriter and Chicago politician, named Jerry Butler. As part of this work, Jon met famous people, such as Mohammed Ali, Cab Calloway, Leslie Uggams, Nancy Wilson, Dionne Warwick, and Arethra Franklin. Getting an autograph was always a challenge for Jon, since Jon

was often too caught in the moment to remember to ask for an autograph. By the time Jon was near the deep end of his journey in Chicago, Jon managed to run into a former neighbor and friend, named Evelyn. Evelyn talked Jon into moving to Madison to continue working on writing his book and drawing, which was a hobby he picked up after he returned from Vietnam. Jon says "she saved my life. I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for Evelyn."

As a result of moving to Madison, getting established in the community, and his connection with the veteran community, Jon was able to have his own self portrait made into a mural at the Veterans Museum downtown. Jon informed me of a write-up of this mural and his story as a black combat veteran written in the Capital City Hues e-newsletters on November 16, 2020 and January 25, 2021.

Jon is truly a self-made man who struggled with making decisions throughout his life and made it his own way. Jon's life is an inspiration and reminder that RSVP VHV volunteers serve veterans with interesting and honorable lives who struggle and come out ahead, in spite of themselves and their circumstances.

For more information about how to volunteer as an RSVP Vets Helping Vets volunteer driver, contact DSRecruitmentMgr@rsvpdane.org. If you are a veteran or a family member of a veteran and you are needing rides to medical appointments anywhere in Dane County, contact Lorrie Hylkema at 608-238-7901 to establish eligibility and to schedule a ride.



Upper middle: self-portrait displayed as a mural at the WI Veterans Museum in Madison, WI

Bottom left: current picture of Jon E. Smith.

Volunteer Driver Carries on Mom's Commitment to Senior Center

By Mary Schmelzer

Seeing things come full circle can be one of life's little pleasures. When volunteer Nancy Johnson retired from her 33-year career as a teacher, she turned to the Oregon Area Senior Center, following the example set by her own mom, who had made the senior center in Marquette, MI the hub of her senior years.

"I'm not sure the public is aware of all the services available at the senior center," Johnson said. "My husband and I got advice making social security decisions, and I borrowed equipment when I had two hip replacements last year. They serve meals, provide meal delivery, exercise classes, card playing, and so much more. I know my mom went to her senior center every day and I know I'll be using this place someday in the future."

Johnson turned to the senior center to find volunteer work right away after her retirement in 2008. Starting out, she delivered meals for the Home Delivered Meal program, and within months added driving passengers



Nancy Johnson

to medical appointments to her schedule. Along the way she also worked in the adult day care program, providing support to staff and program participants. "I enjoy working with seniors – they all have a different story to tell," Johnson adds. "And I always seem to have a connection with them somehow: I knew their

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RSVP VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

...where volunteer make a difference

Life is never so busy that there is no time to serve. - author unknown

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AT THE MADISON SENIOR CENTER

FRONT DESK RECEPTION

This is the focal point of the Madison Senior Center. MUST have computer/phone/office skills and experience. Shifts needed: Tuesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

MUSICIAN

We have a number of opportunities for volunteers to perform for special events, play in unorganized jam sessions, and offer music instruction throughout the year. There are pianos on site but encourage any instruments.

LINE DANCE INSTRUCTOR

Dancers socialize online, practice advancing their skills, and improve their mood (have fun!). Turn your love of line dancing into a great volunteer role!

MULTI-LINGUAL PROGRAM LEADERS

If you are a multi-lingual person and would like to lead a program in an area in which you have expertise, we would love to talk with you. Learning about healthy aging and making it happen, should be available to anyone. A few program ideas we have are yoga, tai-chi, art, and healthy eating.

MODERATOR/HOST FOR BOOK CLUB

Are you a person of color who is excited about advancing racial equity and social justice? Help MSC pick books, formulate questions, and lead a monthly hour-long book club. This new book club will offer different perspectives. A minimum five - six-month commitment is required. This is a grassroots program, and it will be dependent on input from the facilitator.

SEWING HELPER

Many older adults either don't sew or are no longer physically able to do even basic mending. This would be a new service at the Senior Center, and it would include things like sewing on buttons, hemming pants/skirts, replacing zippers, and making alterations. We have three sewing machines, but you could use your own. The plan is to have this be a social experience at the Senior Center, but we will adapt as needed for the pandemic.



SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK needs lots of hands to help sort and pack food boxes to be distributed to many food pantries! Work together with other volunteers in a safe environment at the Madison warehouse or at the Stoughton warehouse. Must be able to stand for lengths of time and may need to lift products weighing anywhere between 10 – 40 lbs. No one will be asked to lift more than they are comfortable with.

COMMUNITY ACTION COALITION needs help in their warehouse sorting food, cleaning, and assisting pantry shoppers with shopping and check out procedures. **COMMUNITY ACTION COALITION GLEANERS** also need volunteer drivers to pick up donated food from various places and deliver it to several food pantries and community centers around Madison and Dane County.

(Continued on page 17)

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES CONTINUED

UNITY POINT MERITER HOSPITAL is now ready to welcome back Volunteers for several assignments including: **At Your Service** – welcoming patients and visitors, delivering flowers and mail; **Volunteer Office Support** – greet and welcome volunteers, answer phones, and assist with data entry. As a **Central Scheduling** volunteer, help the Volunteer Team prepare patient materials (at the Beltline Building). Or be a volunteer **Concierge Pilot** helping to welcome new Meriter employees and get them plugged into the Meriter Community.

HABITAT RESTORE needs volunteers to help sort and shelve used and new building materials and supplies, assist shoppers, and work at the cash register with purchases. Morning and afternoon shifts are available Tuesday – Saturday.

SSM ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL needs help with their **At Your Service** program (escorting patients and families, delivering belongings, etc.), **Patient Registration** (welcoming patients and escorting them to their destination), **Surgical Waiting Area** (supporting families while their loved one is in surgery), and **Hand Massage** (offering caring presence and support through touch and conversation).

AMERICAN RED CROSS welcomes donors, helps them register, provides friendly support, and assists them with refreshments as a **Blood Donor Ambassador**. As a Red Cross **Blood Transport** driver, you can make sure blood is available for patients in need in Wisconsin.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SPECIALIST volunteers are needed with United Way 211. Assist callers in finding ways to get help when they are in a difficult situation and connect them with resources in their community. Must have excellent computer skills, laptop, and WiFi to work from home! Training is online and virtual.

RSVP BUS BUDDY COORDINATORS are needed! Are you a seasoned Madison Metro bus rider who could teach others how to ride the buses?! We need Bus Buddy Coordinators who can work with individuals who want to become more independent by learning how to ride the buses comfortably and help with small groups of new bus riders taking trips to local places of interest like gardens, art museums, theaters, and events.

SOCIAL JUSTICE CENTER, on the near Eastside, houses 14 local organizations critical to our community, and is a vibrant hub of social justice activity. A Volunteer Greeter is needed at the front desk. Greet visitors, answer questions, provide directions, answer phones. Must be patient, non-judgmental, and have basic computer skills. Two-hour shifts to fit your schedule. Training and support provided.



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children or their grandchildren. And I think this service gives them a secure feeling, knowing that their driver will get them there and back home again.”

Johnson and her husband Roger have been married for 40 years and are an active pair who put in a lot of time on the pickle ball court, walking, biking and playing cards with their big group of friends. And like many of today's grandparents, they pitch in to occasionally babysit their grandchildren. With all that, Johnson still finds time to drive passengers. “I love the flexibility of this volunteer job,” said Johnson. “If you're busy you can say no, but really it doesn't take much of your day to help someone. And it is good for the soul and good for others, so it's a win-win.” Johnson's mother would no doubt, love to see this connection to the senior center carried on!

The Driver Escort and Vets Helping Vets passenger services need drivers in the Oregon area and in all Dane County communities. Drivers are offered reimbursement at .58.5 cents/mile and provided with additional liability insurance. RSVP provides PPE supplies. Drivers and passengers must be fully vaccinated. The service operates weekdays, 8:30-am to 3:30pm.

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We gratefully acknowledge donations received from the following individuals and organizations since our last newsletter, and extend our thanks to each for their generous support.

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Volunteers in the News

On March 16th, RSVP volunteer Dick Ihlenfeld received the Rotary Club of Madison Senior Service Award for his volunteer work with RSVP (19+ years), West Madison Senior Coalition (10+ years), CSCI, American Red Cross, his church and neighborhood association.

“Dick’s passion for volunteerism is truly inspirational. He’s made a difference in hundreds of lives.” – Katie Gallagher, NewBridge Madison



L to R: Katie Gallagher, Dick Ihlenfeld, Margie Zutter

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