



WestArk RSVP is a program of the Western Arkansas Counseling & Guidance Center, Inc.

WestArk RSVP Receives VITA Grant from the IRS



Notification was recently received of the award of a \$23,500 VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) grant to WestArk RSVP. Funds will be used to reimburse RSVP members for their travel, purchase equipment and pay program operating expenses.

The Internal Revenue Service awarded almost \$8 million in matching grants to support its Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. The 379 organizations who submitted applications requested more than \$30 million in matching funds.

“This is the first time we’ve been able to provide matching grants to support the VITA program. These grants can be used to expand free services to some of the millions of taxpayers served each year by these VITA sites and their volunteer tax preparers,” said Richard E. Byrd, Jr., IRS Commissioner.

The funds will be used to:

- Enable VITA programs to extend services to underserved populations and hardest to reach areas, both urban and non-urban
- Increase the capacity to file returns electronically
- Heighten quality control
- Enhance training of volunteers

- Significantly improve the accuracy of returns prepared by the VITA sites

For tax year 2008, individuals and families with an adjusted gross income of \$42,000 are eligible for VITA assistance.

The VITA program will be in addition to the services already provided by RSVP through the Tax Counseling for the Elderly, another volunteer return preparation program sponsored by IRS for individuals 60 years of age and older.

Emphasis will be on increasing the number of returns for low income families who are eligible for Earned Income Credit and on providing assistance in rural areas currently without access to free tax service.

Special points of interest:

TRAINING FOR RSVP MEMBERS INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING WITH VITA/TCE IS STARTING. CONTACT TRISH AT 783-4155.

EIC TAX PREPARATION EVENT ON FRIDAY, JANUARY 30TH AND SATURDAY, JANUARY 31ST.

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New Members

Membership in WestArk RSVP currently stands at 887 members of whom 838 have reported 140,040 volunteer hours this year. 133 have joined RSVP since the first of the year. Please welcome our newest members to RSVP:

Maureen Brown

Aleto Burge

Arvilla Garrett

Lance Haines

Barbara Hanna

Faye Hicks

Mary Ann Jacobs

Bobby Martin

Ruthie Martin

Joanne Nipper

Kay Pope

Pearl Robertson

Jimmy Rogers

Joyce Wolf

To qualify for Earned Income Credit incomes must be below:
Individual w/o children \$12,880.
Individual with a child \$33,995.
Individual with two children \$38,646.
Married without children \$15,880.
Married with a child \$36,995.
Married with two children \$41,646.

Earned Income Credit Event—January 30th & 31st

WestArk RSVP, as part of its VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) grant activities, will host a tax preparation event on Friday, January 30th and Saturday, January 31st. Free tax preparation services and electronic filing will be available for individuals and families whose adjusted incomes are no greater than \$42,000.

The EIC Event will be held at the Elm Grove Community Center, Martin Luther King Park, 1901 North Greenwood Road in Fort Smith, Arkansas. The event will

start at 9 a.m. and continue to 5 p.m. on both days.

Individuals without children whose incomes are below \$12,880 and families with incomes under \$42,000 may be eligible for an Earned Income Credit.

Those wishing to have the VITA volunteers prepare their taxes need to bring the following with them:

- Photo identification
- Valid Social Security cards for the taxpayer, spouse and dependents
- Birth dates for primary, secondary and dependents on the tax re-

turn

- Wage and earning statement(s) Form W-2, W-2G, 1099-R, from all employers
- Interest and dividend statements from banks (Forms 1099)
- A copy of last year's federal and state returns, if available
- Bank routing numbers and account numbers for direct deposit
- Other relevant information about income and expenses
- Total paid for day care
- Day care provider's identifying number



“Top 35” Volunteers of the 3rd Quarter

The names of WestArk RSVP members who ranked in the “Top 35” for the Third Quarter follow. These members volunteered over 7,000 hours of service July

Bobby Abbott
First Tee

Rita Bowen
Summit Medical Auxiliary

John Brown
Baker Senior Center

David Callahan, Sr.
Rudy Jorgenson
Preston Swofford
Mary Tausinger
St. Edward Mercy Medical Center (SEMMC)

Clyde Chaney
Lorina Garner
Golden Rule Clothes Closet

Robert Cockreham
Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE), American Red Cross

Pauline Cole
Barling Senior Center

Roberta Elliott
We Care Foundation

JoAnn Flocks
Good Samaritan Clinic

Fred Hander
Baker Center, Girl Scouts, First Presbyterian Church, SEMMC

B.G. Hendrix
AARP

Anita & Don James
Crawford County Volunteers for Literacy (CCVL)

Bill Johnston
RSVP Advisory Council and Community Outreach, CCVL, Habitat for Humanity, Community Service Clearinghouse, TCE

Ellen Karatzou
Mercy Hospice, Reynolds Cancer Support House, SEMMC

David Kerr
Bradley Martin
Trolley Museum

Ruth Ann Lucker
First Tee, Community Service Clearinghouse

Kathy Luedloff
*WAC&GC, RSVP
UA Fort Smith*

Jeanne McKim
Ft. Smith Schools, Good Samaritan Clinic, St. Paul United Methodist Church (UMC), COTS, Little Theatre, Christ the King School

Louella Moore
Van Buren Senior Center
Mary Jean Moore
Midtown Senior Center

Don Palmatary
TCE, RSVP Advisory Council, Barbara's Computer Lab

Jim Rose
Goddard UMC, Habitat for Humanity

Vernon Stewart
Project Compassion, South Sebastian County Historical Society

Iyla Stranahan
Heart to Heart, Good Samaritan Clinic, SEMMC

Sister Dolorita Thompson
Mercy Hospice, Fountain of Youth

Rod Tschetter
Southside Senior Center

Ruby Wolf
Barling Senior Center

Ava Zachary
We Care Foundation, Reynolds Cancer Support House

Nancy Zornes
Peachtree Hospice, RSVP Advisory Council, Mercy Hospice, Project Compassion,



Birthdays

DECEMBER

11	Art Martin
1	Ethel Baker
1	Doris Barney
1	Linda Donberger
1	Mary Fletcher
1	Clara Rubarth
2	Ilah Barnhardt
2	Bill Smith
2	Ralph Smith
3	Lois Elledge
3	Nita Geren
3	James Rogers
3	Becky Sanburg
4	John Furlow
4	Dudley Little
4	Edward Meyer
5	Wilma Brisco
5	Lillian France
5	Charles Kleck
5	Joan Stratmann
5	Mary Talley
6	Ellen Edwards
6	Kay Williams
7	Charlene Adamson
7	Barbara Hanna
7	Don Palmatary
7	Bert Ross
8	Barbara Delong
8	Esther Holland
9	Chuck Gartner
9	Bob Prough
10	Cathy Bain
10	Linda Gabriel
10	Lucille Hart
10	Sandy Linimon
10	Jim Olienyk
10	Gerald Primm
11	Evalyn Burton
11	Douglas Fletcher
11	Kenneth Glover
11	Lucille Goforth
12	Bill Beall
12	Wanda Blaylock
12	Lysbeth Manuel
12	Ann McMahan
12	Dories Shuttleworth
13	David Callahan, Sr.
14	Joseph Silva
14	Barry Takei
15	Marilyn Bullington
15	Jo Frances Miller
16	O M Free
16	B.G. Hendrix
16	Carmen Holt
17	Gordon Kuykendall
17	Margaret Parks
17	Mary Peterson
17	Jeannie White
18	Betty Breedlove
18	Sharon Szgiel
18	Allie Whitaker
19	Nancy Heflin
19	Betty Mulkey
20	Beverly Davis
20	Jean Kastenbaum
20	Ben Maxey
21	Nadine Harlan
22	Carol Bracken
22	Betty Ingels
22	Bertha Swindell
23	Bertine Rozelle
24	Muriel Lovell
24	Jeff Nusbaum
25	Iva Darling
25	Betty Tindall
26	Mary Goebel
28	Dorothy Snyder
29	Jerry Clemons, DDS
29	Mrs. Dortha Gruver
30	Denetta Tyler
31	Virginia Roberson

JANUARY

19	Lou Knowles
1	Alice Caulkins
1	Dortha Dyer
1	Joyce Lee
1	Janice Mallen
1	Joseph Reznik
1	Jacqueline Rogosch
1	Chizuko Washio
2	Paul Jackson
3	Glenda Conway
3	Helen Tauriainen
4	Dennis Cash
4	Ruby Cochran
5	Layton Jackson
6	Shirley Brisco
6	Roberta Elliott
6	Blanche Smith
6	Bob Reather
7	Janet LaForce
8	Marie Pate
9	Richard Harris
10	Blanche Blodgett
10	Sid Martin
10	Arkley Mullinax
12	Mary Eversole
12	Betty Sterling
12	Joyce Ward
12	Ava Zachary
13	Florence Cotner
14	Dorothy Dewitt
15	Pearl Gartrell
15	Mary Lee Kulin
15	Phyllis Mann
15	Sandra Pearson
16	Samuel Landrum
16	Anna Loring
16	Shirley Rowe
17	William Ketchum
17	Louann King
18	Ruth Corbin
19	Larry Kennedy
19	Shirley Septer
19	Jim Shepherd
19	Garnet M. Watts
19	Jean Woodward
20	Bobby Martin
20	Clara Meyer
20	Eugene Weisenfels
21	Mary Weaver
21	Richard Rhodes
21	Norma Strang
22	Ruth Davis
22	Ben Frietsche
23	Betty Beck
23	Natascha Lee
23	Nelda Marshall
23	Patsy Rogers
23	Sister Dolorita Thompson
25	Toka Beall
25	Shirley Mikaly
26	Mary Bruce
26	Vernon Stewart
27	Ray Cannon
27	Jim Rose
28	Joann Acord
28	Helen Hallum
28	Phyllis Rollans
29	Ralph Riley
30	Jo Ann Hooper
30	Mable Smith
30	Pauline Weisenfels
31	Janet Leverette
31	Harold Miller
31	Delma Woosle



Medicare Enrollment Event

WestArk RSVP and the Dallas Regional Office of CMS (Center for Medicare/Medicaid Services) sponsored a local Medicare Enrollment Event at the Elm Grove Community Center on November 19th.

In addition to the sponsors, Melissa Simpson, Direction of Arkansas SHIIP (Senior Health Insurance Information

Program) and Sally Johnson, Director of Beneficiary Relations for Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care participated.

Information booths were hosted by RSVP Community Outreach, Fountain of Youth Adult Day Services, the Western Arkansas Center on Aging, Arkansas and Western Arkansas Counseling & Guidance Center, Inc.



Santa's Helpers Needed



Suggested Socking Stuffers:

- Pencils, Crayons
- Notebooks
- Coloring books
- Markers, Yoyos
- Band-aids
- Small toys
- Barbie dolls
- Play-doh
- Hair ribbons
- Barrettes
- Mittens or gloves
- Matchbox cars
- Winter hats
- Silly putty
- Socks, Candy
- Playing cards
- Small games
- Bubble soap

Once again, RSVP has offered to fill stockings for needy children. If you wish to participate you may pick up empty stockings at the RSVP Center along with a list of suggested “stuffers” or just drop off your donation and we will stuff the stockings for you.

Stuffed stockings and/

or gifts need to be returned by Monday, December 8th.

Feel free to share this project with your friends or Sunday School class. These stockings will be given to children age 0-12 whose families have qualified for assistance with the Salvation Army. The empty stockings are

provided by the Salvation Army and are smaller than last year.

Over a 1,200 local children received Christmas stockings last year.

Nearly 400 of those stockings were provided



through the generosity of our RSVP members and friends.

Last Chance to Report Volunteer Hours

RSVP members are asked to report all 2008 volunteer hours to the RSVP Center no later than Friday, January 9th. Final numbers are due on the 2008 federal RSVP grant at the end of January. Volun-

teer hours for 2008 will not be accepted after the reporting deadline.

RSVP members with questions about their volunteer hours may contact Trish (783-4155) at the RSVP Center.

Beginning with the

2009 Breakfast of Champion, invitations will only be sent to RSVP members who have 48 reported hours of service in the preceding year (July 1, 2008—June 30, 2009)—an average of four hours per month.



Community Wish List

The Fort Smith Area United Way has published their **2008 Holiday Giving Guide**. This booklet lists volunteer needs and resource requests for over 50 area

non-profit organizations (including WestArk RSVP). Copies of the booklet are available at the United Way office, 320 South 18th Street in Fort Smith or you can access the information

on their website at www.unitedwayfortsmith.org.





News Reehl by Susan Peacock Reehl

the previous eight years! I had to attend an IRS meeting for new VITA grantees in Atlanta. I hope you had a great time at the party—it is always my favorite event of the year.

The economic news is not good. It seems like every time you open a newspaper or turn on the news another local business is laying off folks. Hard times are going to have the greatest effect on those members of our community who were just barely getting by *before* the recession. I am expecting increases in the request for volunteer assistance.

I want to apologize for not being at the Holiday Open House to greet you and thank you for your service. I've never missed a minute of the party for

By the time you receive this newsletter, Medicare Open Enrollment will be nearly over. Please take advantage of the assistance at the RSVP Center comparing plans. Even if you are satisfied with your current plan, a lower cost choice may be available. Of the eighty or so people we have helped so far this year, only one stayed in the same plan for 2009.

Here we are at the end of another year.

WestArk RSVP volunteers have now provided thirty-four years of service to our community. My best guess is that those 34 years equal over 5 million hours of volunteer service!

Many charities will need extra help as the Holiday Season approaches—please be generous with your time and talent. Fill a stocking for a needy child, provide a gift to Project Compassion for a nursing home resident, make a donation to the local Foodbank, visit a shut-in, or take someone without transportation to a holiday church service so that everyone can enjoy this special season.

It is a privilege to spend my working hours with RSVP members. I hope your Holidays are joyful and blessed.



This newsletter will be available on-line in full color at www.WestArkRSVP.org. RSVP members are being mailed a black and white copy of the newsletter. Because of time constraints (ill staff members, holidays, etc.) the newsletter was copied in house. We apologize for the quality of this edition and expect to return to our usual printing practices after the first of the year.



Breakfast of Champion
August 19, 2008



WestArk RSVP

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www.WestArkRSVP.org

WestArk RSVP is sponsored
by the
Western Arkansas Counseling
& Guidance Center, Inc.

Hours of Operation

Monday—Friday
8:30 am—4:00 pm

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