

# WestArk RSVP Newsletter

September/October 2009

## Special Points of Interests:

- Those needing assistance choosing a Medicare Part D pharmacy plan or a Medicare Part C Advantage plan may call the RSVP Center after November 1st for an appointment with a trained volunteer. Assistance is also available for new Medicare recipients.
- RSVP Community Outreach volunteers are now available to assist Medicare recipients who are **homebound** with applications for Extra Help and Medicare Savings Benefits.

## 'Breakfast of Champions' Honors Volunteers

WestArk RSVP members were honored for their volunteer service of the past year at the "Breakfast of Champions" the morning of Tuesday, August 18th. Over 375 members and guests enjoyed the buffet at Golden Corral.

Beverage service was graciously provided by RSVP Advisory Council members Debbie Huizenga (IRS) and Beth Presley (UAFS) and volunteer coordinators and non-profit directors including Sarah Saulsbery (Peachtree Hospice), Kathy Smith (Kistler Center), Tom Minton (United Way), Kim Montague (SEMMC), BJ Cobb and Hannah Owens (WAC&GC). All of these folks volunteered their time as servers to show their appreciation for the assistance RSVP members provide their agency.



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Issue 4

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

## New Members



Autumn is right around the corner and this time of year seems to increase the interest in volunteering. Please welcome the newest members of WestArk RSVP:

Ray Brunk  
Margaret Carter  
Pam Copeland

Helen Duran  
Alfred Guidani  
Emma Guidani  
Charles Hearn  
Tara Kifer  
Jesse Lewis  
Robert Marion  
Carla Mays  
Robert Neufell

Jean Ann Roddy  
AndaLea Shepherd  
Joy Sternberg  
Johnnie White  
Lizbeth Winford  
Charles Wingfield  
Darlene Worley  
James Worley

*“The provision allows direct gifts from IRAs without including the distribution in income.”:*



## Feeling Generous?

The Pension Protection Act of 2006 enabled retirees to take **tax-free** withdrawals from their IRA provided the money was donated directly to a qualified charitable organization. Originally set to expire in 2007, the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 extended this provision **through tax year 2009.**

**The provision allows direct gifts from IRAs without including the distribution in income.**

### Highlights:

- You must be at least age 70 1/2 when the gift is made.
- The gift may be from a Traditional or Roth IRA.
- The gift must be made directly from your IRA Administrator to a qualifying charity such as WestArk RSVP or your church.
- Gifts are limited to \$100,000 per tax payer for 2009.
- The gift is excluded from your income for both federal and Arkansas state income tax purposes.

•The gift counts toward your IRA minimum annual distribution.

Those choosing to support WestArk RSVP with a gift may contact Susie Reehl at the RSVP Center for information needed to comply with the provision of this act. Gifts to RSVP will be used to support the operation of the RSVP Center and will be greatly appreciated.

Donations (to take advantage of this act) must be completed by December 31, 2009.

# RSVP 101—Reporting Your Hours



**R**eporting your hours is a key element to your membership in RSVP. You probably don't realize the full impact of the volunteer hours you report .

The hours you report tell a story. These numbers speak of active, involved adult volunteers. The forms you fill in are tallied and the numbers put in reports that go to state and federal agencies. These numbers show just how much RSVP volunteers do, the impact it has on our community and

how valuable a resource RSVP members are.

So when we say EVERY HOUR MATTERS we mean it!

We need all your volunteer service time reported. If you have volunteer hours from the past that you haven't sent in - even back to January 1st of this year—we can still accept them. But we would appreciate you reporting your hours on a monthly basis.

Reporting hours is a hassle and most RSVP members are fortunate to have their volunteer station report their hours. If you volunteer for any of the organizations listed below you need to make sure they know you are a

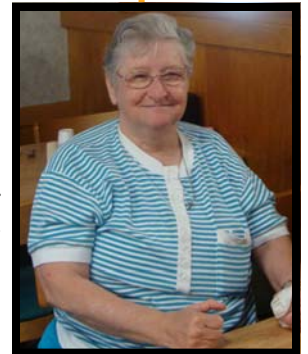
RSVP member and would like your hours reported. We will be working with our partners in the coming months to increase the number of volunteer station who directly report RSVP volunteer hours.

To be invited to the 2010 Breakfast of Champions you will need to again have reported at least 48 hours between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010—an average of 4 hours per month. New members will need to have a pro-rated amount equal to 4 hours of service for every month they are a member.

Your service is greatly appreciated. For many organizations your service allows their continued operation.

## *How Volunteer Hours are Reported to RSVP:*

- *50% by the stations*
- *30% by e-mail*
- *20% by phone.*



## Volunteer Stations Who Report Their Volunteers' Hours:

- Summit Medical Center Auxiliary
- St. Edward Regional Medical Center
- St. Edward Hospice
- Spark Regional Medical Center
- Senior Centers
- Crawford Co. Volunteers for Literacy
- Alzheimer's Association
- Ft. Smith Trolley Museum
- Fountain of Youth Adult Day Center
- Good Samaritan Clinic
- Habitat for Humanity
- Heart to Heart
- Kistler Center for Children
- Reynolds Cancer Support House
- We Care Foundation

## Tax Season Never Ends



**R**SVP members continue to serve with the VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) program. Services are being provided on Tuesday's from 9 a.m. —3 p.m. and will continue to be offered through October 15th.

West Ark RSVP is

going to continue to provide tax assistance in 2010 to low income individuals and families. The IRS has set next year's income limit for VITA assistance at \$49,000.

We plan to again request that the IRS allow an exception which would let the

volunteers provide tax assistance to the unemployed regardless of income and to those with earnings from oil and gas royalties. The area's unemployment rate continues to be higher than the state average which should justify the exceptions.

*Currently 44 RSVP members serve as VITA volunteers - 18 as tax preparers and 22 in support positions.*



## September Birthdays

- |                     |                      |                     |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Lee Cross         | 9 Hope Reed          | 16 Audrey Danis     |
| 1 Henry Oliver      | 9 Lisa Richardson    | 17 Nelda Glover     |
| 2 Ellen Karatzou    | 10 Lois Harris       | 17 Kathy McKee      |
| 2 Lillian Neckar    | 10 Anne Sayers       | 17 Helen Robinson   |
| 3 Suzanne Lewis     | 11 Liz Robinson      | 19 Lee Chadwick     |
| 3 Virginia Pankey   | 11 Jim St.Amant      | 19 Sid Donaldson    |
| 5 Gerald Cokely     | 11 Hilda Wallis      | 19 W.R. Knowles     |
| 5 Sue Hughes        | 11 Leon Woods        | 19 Kathryn Winfield |
| 5 Rudy Jorgensen    | 12 Jamie DeBates     | 21 Jeanne Thomas    |
| 5 Ruth McElroy      | 12 Eugene Lovell     | 22 Allan Crump      |
| 5 Preston Swofford  | 12 Jean Morse        | 23 Joyce Cokely     |
| 6 Barbara Bond      | 12 Linda Morse       | 23 Aggie Lensing    |
| 6 Sue Camfield      | 12 Ruth Anne Price   | 25 Grace Dehart     |
| 6 Betty Yancey      | 13 Judy Fraleigh     | 25 John Furstenberg |
| 7 Virginia Shaver   | 13 Thelma Hunt       | 25 James Moore      |
| 8 Louella Moore     | 14 Gerald Akins      | 25 Pearline Warren  |
| 8 Jeannie Neely     | 14 Dian Brisco       | 27 Nelda Baber      |
| 8 Norma Stockton    | 14 Alfred Guidani    | 27 Larry Goss       |
| 9 Kathleen Benjamin | 15 Delpha Rosson     | 28 Dave Galloway    |
| 9 Sue Ferguson      | 15 Maggie Wolford    | 28 Charlotte Hatwig |
| 9 Ruth Oelrich      | 16 Delmar Bullington |                     |

## Consider VITA Volunteering

Frequently when we approach a RSVP member about becoming a VITA volunteer we hear:

- “I don’t know anything about preparing taxes!”
- “I’m not good with numbers . . .”

“Good grief—you want me to learn tax code?”

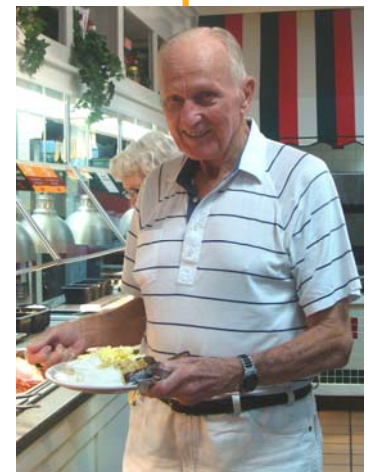
As intimidating as becoming a VITA volunteer may sound - the reality is very different. Most tax returns are fairly simple—a couple of W-2’s and \$11 in earned interest. VITA volunteers provide a much needed service to taxpayers who may be struggling to support their families.

All VITA volunteers receive training and can practice in the RSVP Computer lab prior to tax season. All VITA volunteers are tested yearly to determine the complexity of returns they are competent to prepare. All returns are reviewed by another preparer prior to being submitted.

*Training for VITA volunteers is available now. Trish Walker will be working with those who are interested in aiding families with modest incomes with their tax return..*

### October Birthdays

- |                      |                      |                       |
|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Ann Williams       | 10 L.A. Robinson     | 21 Mary Smith         |
| 2 Carl Kastenbaum    | 10 Eleanor Weir      | 22 Rose Lyons         |
| 2 Bob Laser          | 11 Retha Williams    | 22 Wanda Meadors      |
| 3 Lois Brandon       | 11 Bea Zemansky      | 23 Jeanette Daugherty |
| 3 Clarence Dewitt    | 12 Helen Duran       | 23 John Gibbins       |
| 3 Betty McLendon     | 12 Mel Santos        | 23 Mamie Mann         |
| 4 Shirley Freeman    | 13 Mary Jo Abernathy | 24 Steve Huffman      |
| 4 Suzanne LaFontaine | 13 Alda Rae Epperson | 24 Delois Spoon       |
| 4 Miles Taylor       | 15 George Beattie    | 25 Tricia Davis       |
| 4 Pauline Thomas     | 15 Lou Moreland      | 25 Darla Horn         |
| 5 Wanda Daniels      | 15 Donna Prough      | 25 Vester Hutchens    |
| 5 Martha Parsons     | 15 Edward Wofford    | 25 Nadine Mowris      |
| 5 Sylvia Varnadore   | 16 Jim Edwards, Jr.  | 26 Ruth Morrison      |
| 6 George Fritz       | 17 Gordon Chitwood   | 27 Ebba Jarvis        |
| 6 Trev Howard        | 17 Shirley Jacks     | 27 Forrest Slavens    |
| 6 Louise Nelson      | 18 Thomas Barnhardt  | 28 Betty Blair        |
| 7 Ruth Moser         | 18 Vyrl Nelms        | 28 Dorothy Sullivan   |
| 7 Susan Nelson       | 19 JoAnn Flocks      | 29 Emma Guidani       |
| 7 Johnnie Porter     | 19 Mary Jean Moore   | 29 Joanne Nipper      |
| 7 Marcella Robertson | 19 Robert Neufell    | 29 Mary G. Smith      |
| 7 David White        | 20 Ursula Raney      | 29 Joyce Wolf         |
| 8 Pat Coleman        | 21 Katsie Gibson     | 29 Carol Youngblood   |
| 8 Bobby Dean         | 21 George Jensen     | 30 Barbara Day        |
| 8 Junetta McCoy      | 21 Judy Oliver       | 31 Nancy Zornes       |
| 10 Cecil Greene      | 21 Nancy Peacock     |                       |



## Helping Hands are Needed



**M**ercy Hospice is in need of volunteers to aid hospice patients (outpatients and those being cared for in the SEMMC hospice) and their families. A training class for new volunteers starts Thursday, October 1st at Reynolds Cancer Support House.

Those interested should contact Diane Kitchen at 314-1156.

**S**utton Elementary School (RSVP's Partner in Education) and every elementary school in the area needs volunteers.

Assistance is needed to:

- Read a book to a class or to an individual student;
- Tutor

an individual student;

- Assist with class projects , assignments, field trips, and other activities;

- Share your career or hobby with a class;

- Practice vocabulary words with students;

**A**dditional volunteers are needed to join RSVP efforts to provide tax service and electronic filing without costs to working families with modest incomes and seniors.

No previous tax experience is required. Volunteers will be trained to use the software provided to RSVP by the IRS. Training will be provided individually to those interested in tax preparation. Volunteers may start training now by contacting Trish Walker at 783-4155 or trishrsvp@ipa.net.

This is a very hands-on type of volunteering with an immediate impact on

those you serve. Opportunities for service on Saturday and week nights are available.

**U**A Fort Smith Athletic Department needs volunteer concession stand workers during the home games. Volunteers will be responsible for working at the assigned concession stand, receiving monies for purchases, giving correct change, serving food products and possibly preparing deposits. Volunteers will report to the Athletic Director or Assistant Athletic Director , Beth Presley, to schedule hours and duties for the days working.

**E**ighth Street Community Vegetable and Fruit Garden is in need of volunteers, to work the garden by planting, weeding and harvesting the produce. The fresh produce is distributed to families in need.





## News Reehl by Susan Peacock Reehl

Let me start off by thanking the 100+ RSVP members who indicated they preferred viewing the RSVP Newsletter online instead of being mailed a paper copy. The advantage of the on-line version is that it is full color, arrives earlier than printed version and doesn't cost RSVP a penny!

Speaking of email addresses—a bunch of RSVP members must have changed Internet providers. If you did not receive an email from me the week before Labor Day, **RSVP does not have your current email address.**

Please send an email to [rsvp@ipa.net](mailto:rsvp@ipa.net) which includes your name. Not only will you receive the newsletter link but also last minute announcements about community events and last minute requests for volunteer assistance. Email is the least

expensive and most efficient way to get current information to our members and partners.

If you have moved please provide us with your new address. Mail forwarding doesn't last forever and we pay for every returned newsletter.

It is hard to believe the year is more than half over— it has been very busy. Over 87,000 hours of volunteer service have been reported so far this year. Unfortunately, 150 members have not reported any hours this year. Postcard reminders will be mailed in September and those who do not respond will be dropped as RSVP members.

Trish Walker and I will be working with our partners to increase the number of volunteer stations who report RSVP members volunteer hours to us. Reporting hours has always been a requirement for volunteer stations and is noted in the Memorandum of Understanding each partner signs with RSVP every three years.

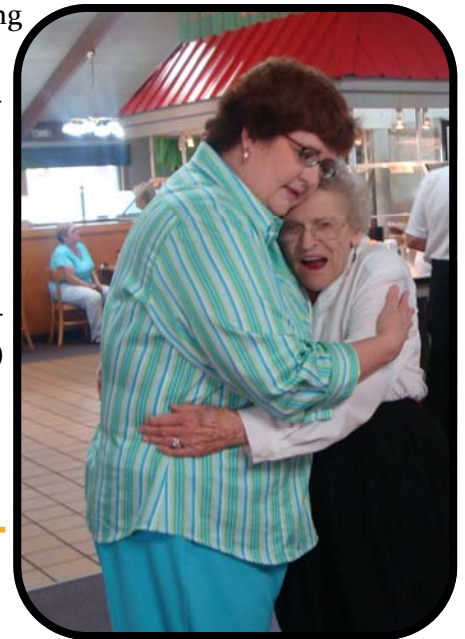
My thanks to the ten RSVP members who at-

tended training provided by Melissa Simpson, the director of SHIIP (Senior Health Insurance Information Program) of the Arkansas Insurance Department.

Serving as SHIP Advocates, RSVP members will help Medicare recipients apply for Extra Help (federal program which greatly reduces the cost of prescription medication) and Medicare Savings for Qualified Beneficiaries (state program that pays Part B premium for \$96.40).

Because of grant funding, volunteers will be able to travel with laptops, printers and Internet access cards and enroll those who are homebound. We hope to be able to offer this service in surrounding communities.

Thank you for volunteering—your service makes a difference in our community.





**WestArk RSVP**

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Fort Smith, AR 72901

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Fax: 782-2269

E-mail: [rsvp@ipa.net](mailto:rsvp@ipa.net)

Web site:

[www.WestArkRSVP.org](http://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

**Staff**

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**Trish Walker**

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- Fred Hander
- Ginger Helton
- Deborah Huizenga,
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- Bill Johnston
- Sandi Klein
- Madeline Marquette,
- Dorothy McCartt
- Kiel Norgard
- Don Palmatary
- Mary Lou Pointon
- Beth Presley
- Tim Randolph
- Liz Robinson
- Nancy Zornes
- Mayor Ray Baker
- Gary Luedloff