



# Heroes of Compassion

The quarterly newsletter for volunteers and donors of RSVP of Central Oklahoma

## RSVP Volunteer Rita Culver Helps Community Thrive

When Rita Culver retired, she wanted to use her free time to make a difference, so she decided to look nearby for places to volunteer similar to the Regional Food Bank where she had previously volunteered through her employer. She found the Mid-Del Food Pantry, and Bonnie Waldrop, the Assistant Director at Mid-Del, connected Rita with RSVP of Central Oklahoma in 2021.

“Once I joined RSVP, I found out about other places I could volunteer. Although I was already volunteering at Mid-Del one day a week, I wanted to do a little more, and do something meaningful while being outside in nature,” Rita said.

When she heard about the opportunity to volunteer at Skyline Garden, she talked with Jamie Williams at RSVP to get connected, and soon began volunteering at Skyline as well. Now, during the spring, summer, and autumn season, Rita helps plant, harvest, wash, and package the fresh, organic produce

grown in Skyline’s Garden, which is then distributed to qualifying clients through their Food Resource Center. This winter, while the garden wasn’t producing, Rita added yet another volunteer role to her repertoire — setting appointments for people who need vision exams at Skyline’s Eye Clinic.

**“I volunteer because I want to get to know my community, and also, I want to help people,”** says Rita. **“Helping people—giving them better lives—actually helps me too, and helps our community. We want our community to thrive.”**

When asked what matters to her about being an RSVP member, Rita says, **“RSVP gives me opportunities to volunteer, meet new people, make new friendships, and learn what I am capable to do. It makes me happy to be able to help the community. If the community is doing good, we are doing good as people.**

**We have to help each other. That’s what it is all about!”** ★



RSVP volunteer Rita Culver holds a freshly harvested cabbage grown at Skyline Garden in support of their Food Resource Center.

### Meet Our Partner: Mid-Del Food Pantry

Mid-Del Food Pantry has partnered with RSVP since 1992. Since that time, over 125 RSVP volunteers have served over 180,137 hours at the Pantry, including serving on the board of directors, offering computer help, stocking and organizing food and materials, and assisting clients. 26 RSVP volunteers currently serve at Mid-Del, and you can join them! Mid-Del currently needs additional volunteers to help greet visitors and assist with the intake process, and also needs volunteers to drive box trucks.

*Interested in joining the crew at Mid-Del Food Pantry? Call Jamie at (405) 605-3110 to learn more!*

# Looking Back...





## Community Impact in 2024



43,294 Hours  
Making a Difference

### Areas of Service & Impact

<p> <b>Capacity Building</b> 49 members served 2,335 hours</p>	<p> <b>Disaster Services</b> 3 members served 263 hours</p>	<p> <b>Economic Opportunity</b> 20 members served 923 hours</p>
<p> <b>Environmental Stewardship</b> 3 members served 338 hours</p>	<p> <b>Veterans &amp; Military Families</b> 16 members served 2,941 hours</p>	
<p> <b>Healthy Futures</b> 156 members served 20,800 hours</p>	<p> <b>Other Community Priorities</b> 75 members served 8,457 hours</p>	<p> <b>Education</b> 38 members served 7,238 hours</p>

**57 Partner Agencies**

**351 Members**

### New to RSVP in 2024

- **RSVP Neighborhood Connection**, community meetings held across the OKC metro that provided opportunities for education and dialogue between RSVP volunteers, RSVP partner organizations, and local community leaders and subject matter experts.
- **The RSVP Response**, a monthly publication featuring the newest curated volunteer opportunities along with an events calendar.
- **KnitServe**, a program for crafters to meet, learn, and create specific supportive items or teach the skills of knitting and crocheting via workshops at partnering non-profits.
- The first-ever **RSVP Volunteer Fair**, preceding the annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon

### What RSVP Volunteers Say\*

- 100% Agree RSVP offers ways to make a difference in others' lives
- 100% Agree RSVP involvement increases awareness of volunteer opportunities
- 100% Agree RSVP involvement improves overall quality of life
- 99% Agree RSVP involvement allows volunteers to try new things
- 99% Agree RSVP involvement boosts confidence
- 99% Agree RSVP involvement helps connect with others socially

\*According to the results of the 2024 Volunteer Survey as of March 7, 2025

# ... and Looking Ahead

## RSVP OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA HAS EXCITING THINGS UNDERWAY IN 2025, INCLUDING:

### A New Logo & Redesigned Branding

RSVP of Central Oklahoma is proud to debut our new logo! The rebranding effort began in May of 2024 after receiving feedback that the original logo, which was intended to reflect RSVP's ties to AmeriCorps, was not communicating the mission and work of the organization effectively. This project was led by a Strategic Rebranding Subcommittee comprised of RSVP volunteers Jim Watson, a retired Professor of Design from UCO; Betsy Fry, owner of FryPan Partners tradeshow and event consulting and management company; and Karen Jacobs, RSVP Board member, retiree from Oklahoma DHS, and long-time Oklahoma non-profit advocate. The design itself was created by RSVP staff member Andrea Post following research on best practices for branding and many interactive brainstorming sessions, concept development meetings, reviews, and fine-tuning of the final design concept by the Subcommittee.

"The new logo conveys RSVP's focus on connection and all the ways RSVP, our volunteers, and our partners connect and engage around service and in community. Gold represents our golden years—the richness that comes from the expertise and commitment of our volunteers, which is the basis of all we do—while royal blue conveys the sky-like vastness and professionalism of RSVP, and nods to our continuing connection to our past, to AmeriCorps, and to the Oklahoma flag," said Andrea.

RSVP is especially grateful to the Subcommittee and all who contributed to the project. Please look for the new logo on our website, social media, and publications in the months ahead. ★

### Enhanced Neighborhood Connection Gatherings

In 2024, RSVP hosted several Neighborhood Connection gatherings, which provided members an opportunity to meet, learn about local resources, and enjoy fellowship with other RSVP volunteers and non-profit community partners. This year, these events are back and will include a meaningful service project, and thanks to generous sponsorship from OG&E, will offer complimentary lunch. The first of these events in 2025 will be held **Thursday, March 27th, from 11 am to 1 pm at Belle Isle Library.** ★

...See the back page for more about the upcoming Neighborhood Connection gathering.

Thank you for supporting our work!

## Same RSVP Staff, New Titles

After leadership reviewed job descriptions & duties at the end of 2024, staff members Jamie and Andrea received new titles to better reflect the enhanced level of work they are doing for RSVP.

**Jamie Williams**, Volunteer Coordinator, is now **Director of Volunteer Programs**. This new title takes into account her work not only to coordinate volunteers, but to develop RSVP's community partnerships along with managing RSVP's volunteer programs and events.

**Andrea Post**, Outreach Coordinator, is now the **Communications & Outreach Specialist**. Under the guidance of the Strategic Rebranding Subcommittee and RSVP leadership, Andrea is expanding her focus and role, using her technical skills to streamline RSVP's branding, communications, and outreach efforts. ★

## Welcome New Board Members

### J. DEREK MILLER

J. Derek Miller joined RSVP's Board of Directors in February 2025 and serves as Treasurer. His professional career includes over 20 years of experience in business consulting with a focus on STEM outreach, leadership and workforce development, program management, and change management. Derek is also a PADI-certified Master Trainer SCUBA instructor and an Emergency First Response CPR, Primary & Secondary Care instructor. He enjoys performing improv and dinner detective theatre. Derek lives in Midwest City with his dog, Lucy. ★



### CHRIS MOSTEK

Chris Mostek joined RSVP's Board in March 2025. He works in consulting for oil & gas financing and lending, and is a former banker and business manager with expertise in energy lending, profitability analysis, financial analysis, and process change management. He holds a B.S. in Business Management and an M.B.A. from OSU, and has over 25 years of professional experience in management, sales, banking and lending, team management, and decision making. Chris and his wife live in Oklahoma City, and in his spare time, he enjoys running and reading. ★



## Reflections from the Road: Commitment

BY JAMIE WILLIAMS, DIRECTOR OF VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

During a recent Advisory Council Meeting, I asked Doug Miesse how long he's been a VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) volunteer. He said, "Oh... about 18 years."

When she's not volunteering at the Choctaw Senior Center through the OK County Senior Nutrition Program, Treva Ragland also serves as a VITA volunteer. When I caught up with her, she mentioned how much she looks forward to the three months she volunteers for VITA. This year will be her third tax season. Mary Geiger, a volunteer at MidDel Food Pantry, commutes nearly an hour twice a week to serve. She started there five years ago, right before the pandemic.

You will find stories of commitment like these if you get the chance to chat with any RSVP volunteer. It's not hard to appreciate the critical role that volunteers play in making community programs happen, the ability to help meet needs with care and compassion. It's stories of commitment that also guide our program. Service isn't always easy. Sometimes you're connecting with a community member during a really hard day of their life. Sometimes your impact isn't always obvious. No doubt there are days that you leave more tired than fulfilled. But the spirit to keep at it, recognizing that it takes all of us to make a difference, is at the heart of why we serve and speaks to the character of RSVP volunteers.

When we say that volunteers lead the way, it's the example of commitment that inspires our work. Whether you're just getting started, or returning to volunteering after a life change, or maybe adjusting your volunteer site to better meet your availability, all of these things demonstrate a spirit of service and commitment. It's a privilege to get to serve with you! ★



Thank you to our partners and friends at OG&E for making these monthly luncheons possible.

*We hope that you can join us at our next RSVP Neighborhood Connection gathering. These gatherings are intended for all volunteers, seasoned and new, to meet each other, learn about community programs, and to celebrate our shared commitment to serving.*

### **RSVP Neighborhood Connection**

**Thursday, March 27 at Belle Isle Library**

**11am-1pm**

**Enjoy a light lunch and the company!**

Contact Jamie Williams at (405) 605-3110 or [jamie.williams@rsvpokc.org](mailto:jamie.williams@rsvpokc.org) to let us know you're coming.

## In Fond Remembrance

In loving memory of our volunteers whose generosity in service touched all our lives.

**Robert Bisel, Jr.**

**Charles "Chuck" Brimer**

**Roger Goeller**

## Hours Drawing

Congratulations to

**James Hill, Jr.**

Enjoy your gift card!

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COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Consider giving to RSVP's OKC Community Foundation Endowment Fund to help ensure enduring support for our mission! Call (405) 605-3110 for details.

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