

# A New Way to Serve

by Laura Breen Galante



*RSVP is coming to Seminole County, and it aims to match seniors and older adults with local nonprofit organizations that need their help*

A new volunteer program is launching in Seminole County that is sure to be a win-win. Active in Orange County since 1974, RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) pairs retirees with local nonprofits, giving retirees the chance to put their wealth of lifetime knowledge to use while helping the community.

“We recruit men and women to volunteer at a variety of nonprofit organizations,” says Nicole Preston, who serves as the new RSVP volunteer coordinator for Seminole County.



*Nicole Preston is the RSVP volunteer coordinator in Seminole County.*

In addition to its 35 years of service in Orange County, the program has been connecting volunteers with nonprofits in Osceola County since 2016.

Studies have shown that older adults who are isolated and do not foster relationships with others can suffer health decline, lower brain activity, and even premature death. RSVP hopes to address those problems by encouraging seniors to use their energy, creativity, and

experience in an effort to better the lives of other Central Florida residents.

“All we require is that the individual be 55 or older and be available to volunteer once a week,” explains Nicole. “We’re looking for regular volunteers at the same organization, as opposed to an episodic, one-time event.”

When residents register with the program, RSVP provides a number of benefits to the volunteers, including supplemental insurance and a life-insurance benefit in case of injury or death while serving the community. Nicole’s goal is to connect the volunteers with organizations that match their interests and values.

RSVP is coming to Seminole County, thanks to a federal grant, and planning has been underway since the summer. The grant calls for help in the following areas: veterans assistance, in-county school tutoring, job-placement assistance, and nutrition and food support, to name a few.

RSVP volunteers who are veterans may choose to help other veterans through the Seminole County Veterans Treatment Court. The goal of Veterans Treatment Court is to divert former servicemembers facing mental-health issues and homelessness from the traditional justice system and give them the treatment and tools they need for rehabilitation and readjustment. RSVP veteran volunteers will help these veterans on their journey through the court’s four-step program on the road to self-sufficiency.

Another organization that benefits from RSVP is Seminole County Public Schools. RSVP volunteers can spend one-on-one time with third-grade students to assist them with reading, developing educational and social skills, and general mentoring.

“Third-grade students are at a perfect age for people to reach them and to help improve their skills,” says Nicole.

Through RSVP, retirees who have experience in human resources may want to help with job placement through a number of job fairs held in Seminole County. RSVP volunteers can review résumés, prep job seekers for interviews, and provide general assistance at job fairs. RSVP will also be placing volunteers in various food pantries across Seminole County.

In September, RSVP will begin actively recruiting volunteers by hosting interest meetings at senior centers, health fairs, and via the Silver Sneakers program through the YMCA, for example. Those interested will undergo training before they are placed with nonprofit groups.

Some other organizations that have committed to partner with RSVP are Christian HELP, the Adult Literacy League, IDignity Seminole, and Pet Rescue By Judy.

RSVP is seeking people who want to lead with experience.

“This is the best population to volunteer,” says Nicole. “It’s a good match.”



To learn more about the program or become an RSVP volunteer, email Nicole at [NPreston@VCIFL.org](mailto:NPreston@VCIFL.org) or visit [VolunteersForCommunityImpact.org](http://VolunteersForCommunityImpact.org).