



## National Senior Service Corps Women's Health Issues

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### Alaska

#### Alaska Community Services FGP, Anchorage

1999

Two Foster Grandparents serve at AWAIC (Abused Women's Aid In Crisis), an emergency shelter that provides a safe residential and non-residential place for women and children who have been living in abusive homes. In an average month, 50 children are provided with shelter, of whom about 13 are known or suspected abuse victims. The Foster Grandparents are positive role models who provide encouragement and support for families at the shelter. They assist staff and mothers in appropriate behavior of the children in a non-abusive atmosphere. AWAIC has a strict "no hitting" policy in which the Foster Grandparents are able to provide advice and examples to the mothers on how to handle their children without resorting to violence.

### Arkansas

#### North Central Arkansas RSVP

In North Central Arkansas, over 75 percent of women diagnosed with breast cancer are age 50 or older. Breast cancer is the leading cause of death among women ages 40 to 55 in the area, mirroring national statistics. Women in rural areas throughout North Central Arkansas generally do not have mammograms, lack knowledge of breast-examination techniques, and remain at high risk. RSVP participates in a health-focused project to help older women in the rural service area understand how to conduct self-examinations. The Susan B. Komen Foundation helped to launch the project, providing funding for transportation, materials and supplies. RSVP staff were first trained through the American Cancer Society; in turn they trained 54 RSVP volunteers to serve as actual ambassadors to the communities. The RSVP volunteers provided training, handouts and materials to 584 rural women during 1997. Eighteen women reported that the training allowed them to discover cancer early enough to enhance chances of survival and require less invasive surgery. Three women reported a direct result of the training: immediate treatment which literally saved their lives. The Susan B. Komen Foundation recognized the project for its high rates of participation.

### Colorado

#### St Mary's FGP

2000

- **Eloise DiGiallonardo** is making a difference in the lives of domestic violence

victims. As a Foster Grandparent with St. Mary's FGP, Ms. DiGiallonardo serves at the Latimer House, a counseling and advocacy center for victims of domestic violence. Latimer House received 2,215 crisis calls in 2000, and serves as a safe refuge for women and children to escape violent home situations. Since 1993 Ms. DiGiallonardo has served the children, who have witnessed or experienced sexual, physical, emotional, and mental abuse. She serves approximately 70 children annually. She is also a sounding board to the mothers, and helps them to maintain emotional balance. In addition, she provides child care assistance so the mothers can go to court, abuse counseling, and employment and public assistance appointments.

- **Concho Valley SCP, San Angelo**
- **South Plains SCP, Levelland**
- **SCP of La Fe, El Paso**
- **City of Corpus Christi SCP, Corpus Christi**
- **SCP of Bexar County, San Antonio**

More than 114 Senior Companions on 3 projects provide respite care to 287 families. This in-home service allows family members caring for frail elderly and other homebound relatives to have the time to shop, keep personal doctor appointments, work and even take much needed naps without worrying about their loved ones. By enabling family members to keep working, they were able to pay their bills and buy groceries and medicines.

In projects, 186 Senior Companions provide in-home services to 302 clients that allow them to remain in their homes and live in the least restricted environment. For example, the project in San Angelo uses a Texas Department of Human Services evaluation form to assess the clients' abilities to accomplish activities of daily living. Feedback from the persons assisted by Senior Companions is that the support has increased their quality of life, and has relieved the sense of isolation and loneliness that often affects those living alone. Senior Companions help clients maintain their dignity and self-esteem and increase their desire to become more active and self-reliant. The Companions often prevent neglect, abuse and exploitation of their frail elderly clients as well. Another service provided by San Angelo Senior Companions is provision of more than 100 homebound elderly with a meal each day of service, or some 12,480 meals annually.

## **IDAHO**

### **VALCAN RSVP, Valley Christian Aid Network, Lewiston**

**2000**

RSVP volunteers in the Lewiston, Idaho area are compiling names and stories of women who served in the armed forces or provided support services in World War II. These veterans are beginning to pass away, and their stories with them. The volunteers are collecting photographs, journals, diaries, and written mementos of these women. The

finished product will be presented to the historical society at a formal recognition event, with a Governor's proclamation and speakers from the community.

### **RSVP of Southern Maine**

**1998**

As part of a statewide network, Southern Maine Medical Center in Biddeford developed a Breast and Cervical Health Program for all of York County. Four RSVP volunteers serving as Peer Educators for the program presented information sessions to over 700 women on the importance of breast and cervical screenings and early detection of cancer. When surveyed, participants indicated that after hearing one of the peer educators' presentations, they planned to talk with their doctors about scheduling mammograms and cervical screenings.

### **RSVP in the Capital Region – Albany, NY**

Twenty percent of the population that is over age 60 has osteoporosis. A U.S. Department of Agriculture/Tufts University study has shown that weight-bearing exercise can increase bone density by one percent. In February 1997, RSVP in the Capital Region applied for a grant to purchase weights, provide training and produce a newsletter about osteoporosis. Sixteen RSVP volunteers were trained to lead seven free classes at six sites. Each class teaches 10-14 participants over age 50 about osteoporosis and leads them through both weight-bearing and balance exercises. A total of 70 to 90 participants reported increased mobility, more energy, improved eating habits and no fractures after four to eight months of classes. Area endocrinologists are beginning to prescribe the classes to their patients.