

**Senior Corps Volunteer Participation:
An Effective Means to Improve Life Satisfaction**

“The best tunes are played on the oldest fiddles”

(Sigmund Z. Engel (1869–?))

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- Learn and Serve America, which helps link community service and learning objectives for youth from kindergarten through college as well as youth in community-based organizations; and
- The National Senior Service Corps (Senior Corps), the network of programs that helps Americans age 55 and older use their skills and experience in service opportunities that address the needs of their communities. Senior Corps includes the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Foster Grandparent Program, and Senior Companion Program.

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Abstract

Life satisfaction, or one's 'quality of life', has been described as an individual subjective measure of factors that contribute to happiness and the goodness and meaning of life. Promoting means for people to live lives that are both meaningful and enjoyed is a method to improve their quality of life. Participation in volunteer service has been shown to be an effective contributor to this end.

Study Goals

The study hypothesis was that participation as a volunteer in Senior Corps programming contributes to improved life satisfaction for elder volunteers, as quantified by reports of improvements in those variables known to contribute to a satisfaction with life, and which consist of both life quality and successful aging factors. Further, it was also my goal to demonstrate that such positive change to life satisfaction among volunteers can be quantified through the use of an appropriate instrument.

Study Questions

- Does participation in Senior Corps Programming include personal and emotional benefits to senior volunteers?
- If elder volunteers benefit from participation in Senior Corps programming, do these benefits contribute to their improved quality of life?
- Are there differences in the levels of reported satisfaction by members of the three Senior Corps programs, namely - Foster Grandparents; Senior Companions; and Retired Senior Volunteers?
- Can we 'affirm' that Senior Corps programs meet CNS Strategic Goal No. 3 - "the lives of those who serve will be improved through their service experience?"

Findings / Conclusions

- Participation in Senior Corps programming does result in quantifiable changes to factors that lead to improved satisfaction with life among its volunteers.
- Participation enables volunteers to satisfy both basic and self-actualizing needs that lead to improved life satisfaction.
- Senior Corps appears to be an effective means for providing volunteers with opportunities to contribute to the meaning and enjoyment of their lives.
- Therefore, Senior Corps appears to be an effective method for improving the quality of life for elder volunteers.

Beneficiaries

The Corporation and program directors can use this information and the accompanying scale to periodically test how well their local programming contributes to the improved life satisfaction of volunteers.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Corporation For National Service has, since its inception, stressed a two-fold goal for its programming, stated as: *"to provide structured service opportunities with visible benefits to participants and to communities."* In support of these efforts, the Corporation and local Senior Corps programs are working diligently to develop measures to demonstrate the impact of programming on communities. This study was designed to suggest a method for demonstrating the benefits to the volunteers.

When considering ways to measure benefits to elder volunteers resulting from participation in Senior Corps programming, research on aging strongly implies that such measures might utilize the concept of 'Life Satisfaction', which includes the concepts of life quality and successful aging.

Study Need

Senior Corps programming has generally relied on qualitative reports by volunteers to confirm its provision of benefits to them. Up to this point, no systematic form of measure has been available to quantitatively demonstrate how Senior Corps volunteers benefit from their volunteer experience, and further, no attempt has been made to relate Senior Corps volunteer benefits directly to life satisfaction variables found in literature.

Secondly, although studies exist that compare volunteers to non-volunteers with regard to life satisfaction, they do not address the components of programming that contribute or detract from that construct. Therefore, another objective of this study was the development of a method to determine what aspects of Senior Corps programming provides benefits to volunteers, and also examine program factors that might also influence volunteer satisfaction.

Research Questions

There are four questions to be answered by this study:

- Does participation in Senior Corps Programming include personal and emotional benefits to senior volunteers?
- If elder volunteers benefit from participation in Senior Corps programming, do these benefits contribute to their improved quality of life?
- If we observe that participation in Senior Corps programming contributes to improved satisfaction with life, are there differences in the levels of reported satisfaction as demonstrated by members of the three Senior Corps programs, namely - Foster Grandparents; Senior Companions; and Retired Senior Volunteers?

- Can we ‘affirm’ that Senior Corps programs meet CNS Strategic Goal No. 3 - “the lives of those who serve will be improved through their service experience?”

Study Methodology

This study utilized the following methodology:

- A multivariate study, using a random sample design of Atlantic Cluster volunteers.
- Use of a self-administered ordinal scale consisting of key variables known to be associated with ‘satisfaction with life’ for elderly populations, along with key demographic characteristics.
- Statistical testing which included: comparison of means; correlation, regression and ANOVA.
- Qualitative interviews of randomly selected volunteers.

Sample segmentation was completed using the following demographics: age; years of Senior Corps volunteer service; gender; education level; annual income; level of volunteer activity (av. hours per yr); type of volunteer activity (using CNS 3 digit issue area and service category codes); zip code; marital status; income.

Research Subjects

Senior Corps volunteers were selected as research subjects because they were seen as the most accurate source for the identification of changes in their lives as a direct result of their participation in Senior Corps programming.

Discussion of Data Analysis / Key Findings

- A clear majority of volunteers (93 percent) report that life is better since they began to participate in Senior Corps programming.
- Among the demographic characteristics found to influence quality of life scores among volunteers was income.
 - However, in sharp contrast to national studies on life satisfaction and elders, we observed an inverse relationship of income to life satisfaction, where volunteers with lower incomes report higher overall life satisfaction change scores since participation in programming.
- Although all tested variables demonstrated positive change scores, volunteers report highest positive changes in:

- Pleasure gained from daily activities
 - Feeling they make a positive difference in another person's life
 - Feeling they have a purpose in life
 - Having a sense of accomplishment
 - Looking forward to each new day
- Correlation analysis confirmed the existence of relationships, or patterns of association between improved quality of life since participation in Senior Corps programming and improvements in both Successful Aging and Life Quality variables.
 - Tests of regression demonstrate
 - A predictive relationship between perceived improved overall life quality since participation in Senior Corps, and positive changes to Life Quality variables of health, safety and welfare.
 - A predictive relationship between positive change to Successful Aging factors (self-actualization variables), and positive change scores for overall life quality since participation in Senior Corps.
 - FGP volunteers demonstrated a slightly higher degree of positive change, overall, than SCP or RSVP volunteers.
 - RSVP volunteers demonstrated the highest degree of correlation between positive overall quality of life change scores and positive change scores for both Successful Aging and Life Quality factors.
 - All three programs demonstrated correlation between quality of life change and satisfaction with program staff indicating a high degree of influence by local program staff on volunteer life satisfaction.
 - RSVP volunteers demonstrated the highest degree of predictability for positive change scores in both Successful Aging and Life Quality factors when reporting positive change to the overall quality of their life since participation in Senior Corps programming.
 - FGP and RSVP volunteers rated Successful Aging factors (higher order variables), on average, as having changed more positively since initiating participation in Senior Corps programming. SCP volunteers ranked the Life Quality factors (lower order variables) as having experienced the most positive average change.

Implications / Recommendations

- ❑ These findings indicate that Senior Corps programming is an effective contributor of meaning and enjoyment to life, and therefore is an appropriate means for improving the life satisfaction of its volunteers.
- ❑ Having a method to periodically test for the impact of programming on volunteers will provide the Corporation with a mechanism to support continuous improvement of its programming.
- ❑ Recognizing the impact staff have on volunteer satisfaction with life should result in the development of new ways for staff to improve upon the volunteer experience.

By using the scale developed for this study, program directors across the country can administer the instrument and test for their program efficacy with regard to volunteer benefits. The availability of this study sample provides program directors with a normative sample against which they can compare local results.

Moving forward

Products developed during the course of this study, and made available to the Corporation for use in the field include:

1. A national methodology and capability to test the accomplishment of Strategic Goal #3
2. The development of impact measurement tools/methods that Senior Corps programs may use to demonstrate benefits of programming on volunteers. These tools will also reflect changes to volunteer satisfaction should programs develop methods designed to enhance the volunteer experience.
3. A video essay investigating program benefits on volunteers, discussed in their own words.

"Affirm that the lives of senior service volunteers will be improved through their service" (CNS Strategic Objective for Strategic Goal #3)

Introduction

Studies are now available to demonstrate that close to 36 percent of people age 55 and older engage in volunteer service, or provide assistance to volunteer organizations (Independent Sector, 1998). Many researchers have concluded that volunteering acts to fill in for lost roles of work, and acts to inoculate or protect older people from hazards encountered in retirement such as physical decline and inactivity. (Chambré, 1987; Fischer & Schaffer, 1993). Other studies report that elder persons who participate in volunteer activities *"are significantly more satisfied with life, have a stronger will to live, and report fewer somatic, anxious and depressive symptoms than those who do not engage in volunteer work"* (Special Committee on Aging, 1970)

Many organizations encourage and/or actively recruit elders to volunteer service. One such organization is the Corporation For National Service (CNS). In addition to its other programs, CNS sponsors the elder volunteer programs known as Foster Grandparents, Retired and Senior Volunteers, and Senior Companions.

The Corporation For National Service has, since its inception, stressed a two-fold goal for its programming, stated as: *"to provide structured service opportunities with visible benefits to participants and to communities."* With the passage and implementation of the Government Reporting and Performance Act of 1993 (GPRA), the Corporation has invested considerable resources in the development of methods to demonstrate its programming impact on communities. In Senior Corps, this effort is known as Programming For Impact (PFI).

PFI is strategically focused on community impact, and generally does not, at this time, address the benefits to volunteers. Yet, it is important to consider how well the Corporation meets the expectations and needs of its volunteers in order to ensure their satisfaction and continuation in its programming. Just like in the everyday world of work, where employee morale is an important consideration, so too, in the world of volunteers, we are finding that our ability to match actual volunteer experience to expectations is important from both a recruitment and retention standpoint. Since participating organizations spend considerable resources in the recruitment, training, and supervision of their volunteers, assessing how well we meet volunteer needs might be considered an activity to protect our investment.

I. Quality of Life

When considering methods to measure benefits to elder volunteers, resulting from participation in Senior Corps programming, research on aging strongly implies that such measures might utilize the construct known as Life Satisfaction, which includes the concepts of life quality and successful aging.

The study of Life Satisfaction (also referred to as Quality of Life Studies) has focused on the examination of conditions, characteristics and factors that contribute to the goodness and meaning of life, as well as people's happiness. It also explores the inter-relationships among these variables. Researchers from the University of Toronto have described the study of quality of life as: "*study to promote means for people, within their environments, to live in ways that are best for them. The ultimate goal of quality of life study, and its subsequent application to people's lives, is to enable people to live quality lives — lives that are both meaningful and enjoyed.*" (www.utoronto.ca/qol/index.html-10/00)

As society works to find ways to improve upon the 'quality of life' of its members, it seeks to promote means for people to live lives that are both meaningful and enjoyed. Studies on volunteers, in general, have demonstrated that participation in volunteer service results in reports of improved life quality among volunteers. Therefore, volunteer service appears to be an effective mechanism for providing a means to improve quality of life (Independent Sector, 1998; Menec & Chipperfield, 1997; King, 1996; Chambré, 1993; Herzog & House, 1991). How well, and in what ways Senior Corps programs contribute to improved quality of life for their volunteers is the question under study.

II. Problem Being Addressed

Unlike quantitative provisions currently used by the Corporation to assess program participation benefits to AmeriCorps volunteers, the Corporation has generally relied upon qualitative reports by program directors and volunteers, or on studies of volunteers in general, to infer the benefits of Senior Corps programming on its Senior Corps volunteers.

As a result, there is ample qualitative evidence to support the assertion that Senior Corps programming provides benefits to its volunteers. Discussions with Senior Corps program staff often confirm that volunteers speak enthusiastically about their volunteer experiences, and that participation in Senior Corps programming contributes to their improved sense of well-being and satisfaction with life. From this qualitative evidence, one might suggest that participation in Senior Corps programming results in positive changes in conditions and/or characteristics associated with a sense of well-being, and overall satisfaction with life.

In previous CNS studies that have identified personal impacts on volunteers, little attempt has been made to relate volunteer impact to life satisfaction factors, as identified in literature on elders. In addition, no prior study completed on Senior Corps participants was found to compare and contrast volunteer impact by Senior Corps programs.

Senior Corps programs throughout the country are using various methods to measure the impact of programming on communities. As a result, many creative and effective tools and methods have been developed to dramatically demonstrate how much impact senior volunteers make on community issues. However, to-date, few programs have conducted quantitative studies on the benefits derived by volunteer participants.

With regard to assessing whether it is meeting its strategic objective for its senior volunteers, the Corporation has generally relied on anecdotal evidence, supplemented by periodic national studies that oftentimes include volunteer responses to program satisfaction questions.

Such studies have included the following:

Previous Work on CNS Volunteer Assessment

Date	Author	Title	Findings - Impact on Volunteers
1984	ACTION	Impact Evaluation of the FGP Program on the Foster Grandparents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved mental health • Improved social resources • Improved socialization • Improved satisfaction with life
Undated	CNS - University of Michigan	Unknown (In P/PV's Seniors in National & Community Service (4/94)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased self-esteem • Renewed feelings of health • New & satisfying social relationships with peers • Greater financial security • Satisfaction with life's direction
Sept 1985	SRA Technologies /ACTION	SCP Impact Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in mental health • Positive functioning
1988	Sociometrics, Inc. / ACTION	SCP - Evaluation of SCP Homebound Elderly Demonstration Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives volunteers something useful to do
May 1994	CNS / AoA	Evaluation of the SCP/AoA Joint Initiative for Vulnerable Elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased purpose in life • Increased self-esteem • Helping others in need
March 1994	Action	An Evaluation On The Foster Grandparent Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleasure working with children • Feeling more useful • Making new friends • Feeling better physically • Having a new purpose • Receiving additional income

December 1996	WESTAT	RSVP - Final Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helped community / others • Made new friends • Kept busy / useful • Achieved personal goals • Learned new skills • Learned about / served with other ethnic groups • Learned about social issues • Enjoyment • Better health
July 1997	Westat, Inc.	RSVP Summary Evaluation	Not addressed
1998	WESTAT	Foster Grandparents in Head Start Centers	Not investigated
May 1999	Aguirre	FGP Accomplishment Report	Not investigated
May 1999	Aguirre	SCP Accomplishment Report	Not investigated
May 1999	Aguirre	RSVP Accomplishment Report	Not investigated

By their nature, national studies produce data at a national level, and results are not often readily applicable to local program directors. Consequently, they are left to infer results, or rely on volunteer comments to assess whether their programming is actually meeting their volunteers' needs.

Program directors have also voiced additional reasons to want to know whether their volunteers receive beneficial outcomes. When asked why she thought it important to measure the benefits of the volunteer experience to the Senior Corps volunteer, one Program Director responded with:

"What the seniors get out of the program is important to me. I've seen elder men and women enter the program saying they had little to no purpose in life - they might be locked away in their apartment, they had no contact with the outside world, or had a disability and felt they didn't have anything to give. As they volunteered, and started interacting with children along with their peers at volunteer sites, I would see them have a complete turnaround. So I knew first hand the benefits of a senior becoming a volunteer. I felt the impact on the volunteer was an important thing to measure because in many cases it is incredibly positive. After all, this was the original purpose for developing this [FGP] program, and it was something I didn't want to see lost." (Susan Lavigne, FGP Director, Portland, ME)

Another Program Director stated:

"It's important [to me] to measure the impact the programs have on the lives of the volunteers - their quality of life, including the emotional and physical aspects, and also the financial impact of the stipend. We have found that as a National Senior Service program, that to be truly effective, we need to seek non-Federal funding in greater proportion. Also, because of the times in which we live, funders are very willing to approve grants that serve the elder population in a meaningful way. However, they are becoming much more selective about which programs they fund. Therefore, having a means to measure the impact on both our 'customers' and on our volunteers helps us make our case to potential funder organizations." (Kati Allen-Caballero, FGP/SCP Director, Rochester, NY)

This study set out to develop just such a proof. The goal was to find a quantitative method that could be used by program directors that wanted to test how well their programming meets volunteer expectations, and whether reported beneficial volunteer outcomes could be the result of participation in Senior Corps programming.

Study Purpose

In their efforts to comply with requirements of the Senior Corps' framework for identifying and reporting on program outcomes, both the Corporation and its program directors have identified the provision of opportunities that provide senior citizens with means to participate in activities that satisfy both their need to feel useful, and in some cases, their need to earn supplemental income, as a compelling reason for the existence of Senior Corps programming.

Although studies exist that compare volunteers to non-volunteers with regard to life satisfaction and/or life quality, they do not address the specific components of the programming that contribute or detract from those constructs. Therefore, another objective of this study was to develop a way to identify factors specific to Senior Corps programming that may influence volunteer satisfaction. For example, does volunteer perception of staff impact their level of satisfaction with programming, and therefore impact the contribution made by the experience to their satisfaction with life?

This study attempts to measure the benefits of Senior Corps programming on both issues of quality of life and successful aging. The research reported here had two purposes:

- The first was to identify characteristics of volunteer participation that could be used to assess the benefits derived from participation in programming on the life satisfaction of Senior Corps volunteers.
- The second purpose was to devise an easily administered instrument that may be used by program directors to measure the benefits to volunteers, thus enabling program staff to continue to strive to ensure that their programming consistently meets CNS strategic goals as they pertain to the volunteer cadre.

III. Programs Defined

The origins of this study are found in the origins of the three Senior Corps programs themselves.

Foster Grandparent Program (FGP)

The Foster Grandparent Program began on August 28, 1965 as a national demonstration effort to show how low-income persons, aged 60 and over, have the maturity and experience to establish a personal relationship with children having either exceptional or special needs. Among the stated goals of the program is the following:

- *“To enable low-income persons aged 60 and over to remain physically and mentally active and to enhance their self-esteem through continued participation in needed community services.”* (Year 2000 FGP Handbook)

Retired and Senior Volunteers (RSVP)

The 1961 White House Conference on Aging called attention to the continuing need of older people for useful activity. One of the outcomes of the conference was the passage of the Older Americans Act of 1965. In the same year, the Community Service Society of New York launched a pilot project on Staten Island that involved a small group of older adults in volunteer service to their communities. The success of that program, which demonstrated the value of the services of older volunteers, led to an amendment to the Older Americans Act in 1969 which resulted in the creation of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program. Among the listed goals for the RSVP program are:

- *“To develop a variety of opportunities for community service for older people willing to share their experience, abilities, and skills for the betterment of their community and themselves.”*
- *“To ensure that volunteer assignments are made consistent with the interests and abilities of the volunteers and the needs of the community served.”*
- *“To ensure that volunteers are provided needed orientation, in-service instruction, individual support and supervision, and recognition for their volunteer service.”* (Year 2000 RSVP Handbook)

Senior Companion Program (SCP)

At the 1971 White House Conference on Aging, state and national organizations voiced recommendations that the concept of the Foster Grandparent Program be broadened to include services by older persons to older persons. On December 2, 1971, President Nixon announced his intention to request Congress to authorize expansion of person-to-person volunteer service to enable older persons to “*work with older persons who might need their help.*” As a result, the Senior Companion Program was authorized under Title II of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973. Among the goals for the SCP program is:

- “*To enable low-income persons aged 60 and over to remain physically and mentally active and to enhance their self-esteem through continued participation in needed community services.*” (Year 2000 SCP Handbook)

The reader is asked to note that all three programs make reference to the delivery of benefits and services to both communities and to the volunteers.

For two of the three Senior Corps programs, namely Foster Grandparents (FGP) and Senior Companions (SCP), both of which recruit from among low-income elders, participation in Senior Corps programming provides volunteers with supplemental income and modest health benefits. In these instances, FGP and SCP volunteer participation in CNS programming may, as a result of receipt of these benefits, actually contribute to one’s ability to maintain a safer and healthier lifestyle. In addition, opportunities exist to also contribute to one’s altruistic needs, such as feeling of value to others.

IV. Literature Review

By design, Senior Corps programming provides important opportunities to volunteers. First, for low-income elders, it assists them to satisfy more basic health, safety and welfare needs by providing a stipend and annual physicals. In addition, all volunteers have opportunities to develop personal relationships with other elders, relationships with clients, and relationships with program staff. For the purpose of this study, the health, safety, welfare and personal relationship needs addressed by the programs have been defined as “life quality” factors.

Secondly, the program provides volunteers with opportunities to satisfy higher level needs, such as social, esteem and self-expression needs. The literature refers to the satisfaction of higher level needs as ‘self-actualization’ (Maslow, 1954), which, in turn, is often referred to as ‘successful aging’. In combination, attainment of conditions associated with both ‘life quality’, and ‘successful aging’ are said to lead to the satisfaction of human developmental needs, which in turn, leads to satisfaction with life.

There have been various attempts to define and measure the psychological well-being of older people, usually with the goal of using such measures as operational definitions of ‘successful aging’ (Neugarten, B., Havigurst, R., & Tobin, S., 1960). Researchers have reported utilizing both objective as well as subjective measures to identify quality of life.

Objective measures are those which can be measured externally, such as physical health, socio-economic levels, and living conditions, among others. Whereas subjective measures of well-being include those which are best measured by an internal judgment by the individual himself, and include things like self-esteem and sense of purpose.

The use of subjective measures of quality of life relies upon the subject’s perception of reality. For example, where objective standards might indicate that elders with lower economic incomes have fewer opportunities to improve their quality of life, as defined by their physical environment, they may in fact perceive their lives to be rich and fulfilling despite their economic status. As a result, many researchers believe when considering the quality of life of individuals, subjective perceptions are considered to be more appropriate measures of satisfaction with life (Olson D., & Barnes, H.L., 1994; Campbell, Converse & Rogers, 1976). Stated another way, the individual is the only proper judge of his well-being (Neugarten, et. al., 1960).

Factors of Life Satisfaction

Many variables, from within many domains have been examined to determine their impact on life satisfaction. Researchers like Campbell, and Stockler and Gage identified life satisfaction variables to include individual satisfaction with: marriage and family life; friends; extended family; home; education; time; religion; employment; financial well-being; neighborhood and community; impact of mass media; and health.

Other scholars have identified ‘activity’ as an essential ingredient of a ‘quality’ life. In his studies on the quality of life of elders, Eisdorfer includes among his identified factors that “*make life worthwhile for the aged*,” the variables of: economic security, a meaningful role in life, access to options and resources, and health.

However, Neugarten, et. al., (1960) suggested that it was not appropriate to measure quality of life of older persons by the same standards that have been applied to middle age, namely activity and/or social involvement. Instead, her research suggests the perceived level of quality of life in older individuals is the result of:

- The extent to which one takes pleasure from the activities that constitute everyday life
- The extent to which one accepts that which life has been
- That one regards his/her life as having meaning
- One feels they have succeeded in achieving their life goals
- One holds a positive personal image
- One maintains a happy and optimistic attitude and mood

In a Canadian study, from which researchers developed a ‘Quality of Life Profile’, University of Toronto researchers conducted a validation study with 205 seniors. They observed that seniors were concerned with specific areas related to their quality of life, including: purpose and meaning, social relationships, and community involvement. They also found an association between quality of life and health status (www.utronto.ca, 2000).

In her study on factors associated with depression and low life satisfaction in elders, Rogers (1999) found that increased social supports, better perceived health, and higher levels of self-esteem were strongly associated with life satisfaction.

In fact, because age-related events and stresses in late life can alter an older individuals’ self-esteem, some researchers, like Schwartz, (1975) have argued that self-esteem is the “lynchpin” of quality of life for the aged.

In her study of predictors of elderly happiness, Kehn (1995) found that good health, being married and living with your spouse, and having a religious commitment were ‘good predictors of elderly happiness.

Stevens (1993), in her study of ‘usefulness’ and its impact on life satisfaction, found that the constructs of usefulness, identified as: continuity in respect from younger ages; involvement with family; involvement with a significant other; and meeting one’s own expectations of old age, “*combine into a scale that correlates with satisfaction in later life.*”

Ardelt (1997) suggests that objective measures of well-being, like physical health, socioeconomic status, financial situation, the physical environment, and social involvement cannot fully explain the well-being of an older person. Instead, for her, 'wisdom', defined as "*an integration of cognitive, reflective and affective elements*" has a profoundly positive influence on life satisfaction, independent of objective circumstances.

Wynne and Groves (1995) found the following variables to be 'strong' indicators of life satisfaction among retirees: health, socioeconomic level, income, socialization, attitude, and retirement satisfaction.

Larson (1978) suggested that life satisfaction was an individual subjective measure of well-being and is strongly influenced by: physical health, socioeconomic status (income, education, and occupation); social interaction; marital status; and certain areas of a person's living situation.

Madigan, Mise and Maynard (1996), and King (1996) suggest that for the elderly, it is 'level of activity' (purposeful activity), described as leisure time activity, which influence feelings of well-being, and leads to improved life satisfaction. They include participation in volunteer activities within the definition of leisure-time activities.

In support of this research, Hersch (1990) also found volunteer activities to be correlated to life satisfaction, work satisfaction, and feelings of usefulness. Glass (1995) also found that paid volunteer work correlates to 'successful aging'. Glass further notes that motivation for continuing to remain at activity levels experienced in middle years are related to fulfilling any one or combination of needs, such as: rendering a socially useful service; being considered part of the community; the occupation of leisure time; enjoyment of companions (companionship); recognition; opportunities to self-express; opportunities to experience achievement; to obtain health protection and care; to achieve mental stimulation; to obtain suitable living arrangements and family relationships; and for spiritual satisfaction.

Additional studies on locus of control and leisure-time activities, including volunteer activities, were positively correlated to well-being in seniors, and were predictive of perceived better health and greater life satisfaction (Menec & Chipperfield, 1997).

In support of these stated motivations, along with the significance of activity on life satisfaction, this author heard similar comments from elder volunteers in interviews conducted for this study. A clear majority of Senior Corps volunteers interviewed for this study noted that their pre retirement lives were busy with work and/or family, and they could not envision retirement without purposeful activity.

Although varied and rich in context, the preceding review of the various measures of well-being and life satisfaction identifies a number of variables common to many researchers. These include:

- Economic security (adequate income, material well-being, financial security)
- A meaningful role in life (participation in worthwhile activities)
- Health
- Socialization
- Accomplishment
- Self-esteem – (a general sense of self worth)
- Generativity –(the passing of knowledge to a younger generation)
- Congruence (wisdom) – the matching of what life is to one's life expectations
- Optimism (a continued forward looking view of life – continuing to anticipate the future).

Life Quality and Successful Aging – Constructs For Measure

The construct, known as 'quality of life' is often used by social scientists to assess the effectiveness of services delivered to elder populations because changes in it can be measured. Therefore it seems appropriate to also use quality of life as a measure to assess what contributions, if any, participation in Senior Corps has on volunteers.

For this study, I chose to view the concept of 'quality of life' from within the conceptual framework of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Abraham Maslow). Maslow's model provides a succinct way of presenting human psychological growth as a continuous process, and recognizes that life is a series of transitions – of satisfying needs, then releasing on to other needs.

From the developmental psychology literature, (Maslow, 1954), life satisfaction is generally related to one's quality of life, and is further defined as the "satisfaction of human developmental needs." Maslow believed that human needs could be viewed as existing within a hierarchy. Lower order needs, such as food, safety and shelter are located at the base of the hierarchy, whereas so-called 'higher order' needs, such as social needs, esteem needs, and self-expression needs, are found higher up in the structure.

Maslow also suggested that fulfillment of lower order needs must be achieved before a person can, or will focus on fulfilling their higher order needs. This is so because lower needs are more potent, and take precedence over higher needs in terms of gratification.

Maslow observed that people within western societies typically strive to achieve upward movement through the hierarchy of needs. He defined this movement as one's desire to 'self-actualize', meaning one's attempt to achieve his/her full potential. The extent and progress of self-actualizing activity will vary from individual to individual, based upon their own definition of their personal full potential. Again, a significant point of Maslow's theory is that self-actualization cannot be achieved until lower order needs are met.

Maslow's approach appears to be particularly useful and relevant for discussions of life satisfaction, as the aging process can be viewed as a continuous process of growth, characterized by passage through stages in life.

For purposes of this study, characteristics associated with the first segment of life satisfaction, that is one's 'life quality' is taken from the literature on life satisfaction and the elderly. These characteristics tend to fall within the so-called lower order of needs. Elder life quality has been defined in terms of adequacy of finances, general personal welfare and well-being (safety, shelter, food), and physical health.

Characteristics associated with the second set of life satisfaction variables, those termed collectively as 'successful aging,' are taken from Fisher's work on 'generativity,' successful aging and life satisfaction among elder volunteers (Fisher, 1995). These include higher order needs of social, esteem and self-expression needs. The 'Successful Aging' factors are further identified as: "*those conditions under which aging is [either] satisfying or debilitating.*"

Research has concluded that combined, the two sets of conditions (life quality and successful aging) act to influence the perception of one's overall satisfaction with life.

For this study I focused characteristics associated with life quality (LQ) on one's measure of his/her:

- Adequacy of finances
- General personal welfare and well-being (safety, shelter, food), and
- Physical health

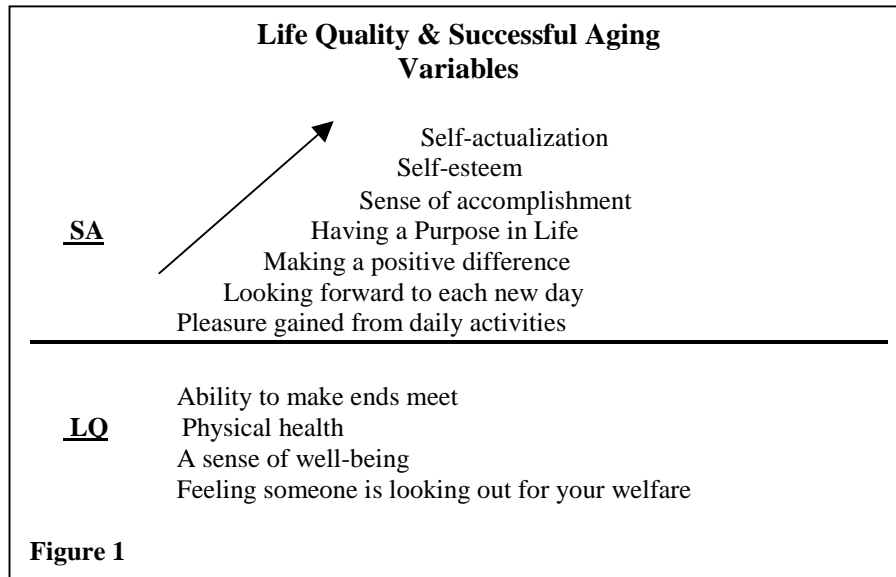
My characteristics associated with 'successful aging' (SA) include:

- A sense of the future
- Still being involved in addressing current problems of identity and development
- Continuing to grow and learn
- Continuing to express a need to know one's own self-worth
- To be useful and worthwhile to others
- To feel one will be remembered and cherished
- To continue to move toward self-actualization (developing to one's fullest potential)

The combination of Maslow's hierarchy and Fisher's definition of successful aging appear to be a good match when considering the development of measures for Senior Corps contributions to volunteer life satisfaction. The stated goals of Senior Corps speak directly to both constructs of life quality and successful aging. These programs have components directed to basic issues of life quality, and also attempt to provide opportunities to impact subjective characteristics of life that contribute to the process known as successful aging.

In the case of both FGP and SCP, one might even say that participation in these two programs, which specifically address key factors of life quality (income and health), may actually enable elder volunteers to proceed to successful aging factors, and in so doing, perhaps they make self-actualization more attainable for them.

The life quality and successful aging factors identified here were converted to concepts to form the basis of survey questions, and resulted in the hierarchical construct provided here, in Figure 1.



(Note: the arrow represents upward movement through the hierarchy which is movement toward self-actualization)

V. Methodology

The Measurement Challenge

The initial challenge of this study was to decide on what to measure with regard to volunteers. In other words, we needed to determine a way in which we could "*affirm that the lives of senior service volunteers are improved*" as a result of their service experience.

CNS program goals and purpose statements offer us a start by referencing targeted benefits to volunteers, including: enhanced self-esteem; remaining physically and mentally active; bettering themselves; and enriching their lives. Further, in the case of both SCP and FGP, where eligibility is premised on low-income status, we know that low-income elders are often at-risk for a number of debilitating conditions resulting from any one or more of the following of: poor nutrition, a lack of preventive health screening, isolation and loneliness, and other maladies associated with having an income at or below a level of poverty. In these cases, it may be argued that measures of volunteer impact should also address health, isolation and loneliness.

These CNS goals and purposes have their basis in aging research, which has found that as people age, the need to continue to feel productive has been proven to be essential to maintaining a personal sense of well-being, good physical health, and a positive outlook on life. Further, research has found that when seniors report feeling useful and productive, they are less likely to report feelings of depression and physical maladies, and are more likely to demonstrate lower mortality rates. Additional studies of elders show that people continue to express a need to know their own self-worth, to be useful and worthwhile to others, and to feel they will be remembered and cherished (Fry, 1984).

These efforts at impacting the volunteer appear to be focused on an improved life experience. Perhaps it is appropriate then to measure the impact of programming on one's life experience, or as it is referred to in the literature, one's satisfaction with life.

Research Questions

I set out to answer the following four questions:

1. Can we identify the factors that lead to high measure of life satisfaction among elders?
2. Are these factors impacted by participation in Senior Corps programming?
3. Are there differences among volunteer impacts based on program affiliation, or other factors, such as demographics, assignments, etc?

4. Can we demonstrate that Senior Corps programs are effective means for providing volunteers with opportunities to live lives that are both meaningful and enjoyed, and therefore contribute to their satisfaction with life?

The Survey

Since much of the literature reported on the subjective nature of life satisfaction factors, it appeared that an appropriate method for this study would be personal interviews of elder volunteers. Through these interviews I would have the volunteer make a judgment of whether life has worsened, stayed the same, or improved as a result of his/her involvement in Senior Corps programming. To accomplish this, I devised a self-report survey instrument to be completed by selected volunteers. Self-report measures have been successfully used in both basic and applied research, and appeared particularly well suited to this study.

This study presented a significant challenge with regard to test design. Ideally, a study like this one would be set up with a test cohort and a control group. The two groups would be matched demographically. No participant would be involved in Senior Corps programming prior to the start of the study. Control cohort members could enter into other volunteer programming, or no volunteer programming, while test subjects would enter Senior Corps programming. In such a study, the sample would be pre tested, then tracked for a number of years, perhaps 3 to 5, and tested periodically during that time. Test results would be compared to see if Senior Corps volunteers demonstrated any differences from the controls.

In this study, which had a maximum time period of 9 months, it was necessary to seek input from existing volunteers. Further, there was no available control group against which we could compare test results. The challenge was to find a way to test for change to life conditions among volunteers with varied lengths of service, and compare that experience to a time when they did not volunteer.

To accomplish study objectives, I developed a recollection testing method where volunteers were asked to recall life conditions prior to their Senior Corps experience and compare them to life conditions at this point in time.

The form of the survey instrument was based on a form I had used in the past to measure volunteer program impact. This form had been extensively field tested in New England over the previous two to three years, and asks the volunteer to recollect their life before volunteering as compared to their life now.

Revised for this study, primarily to include additional demographics, the survey form contained an introductory statement of purpose, and two basic questions (see survey form in appendix). The statement of purpose was worded as:

“You have been selected, at random, to participate in a regional study of Senior Corps volunteers. Results from this study will be used to assess what impact the volunteer experience has on one’s quality of life. Your responses to the following questions will be kept confidential. It is not necessary to place your name on this form.”

Respondents were then asked to supply some demographic data. The first impact question was worded as follows: *“We would like to know if your participation in this program has made any change to your life. Please read each of the following conditions, and tell us if your participation in the (FGP) has made any change or not to the following.”* Where appropriate, FGP was replaced with SCP or RSVP, depending on the volunteer’s program affiliation.

This question was followed by a list of factors that constituted the two sub scales of ‘life quality’ and ‘successful aging.’ Volunteers were presented with the following factors:

- Sense of accomplishment
- Having a purpose in life
- Making a positive difference in the life of another
- Looking forward to each new day
- Pleasure gained from daily activities
- Sense of self-esteem
- Physical health
- Sense of well-being
- That someone is looking out for them
- Their ability to make ends meet (not included for RSVP)

The second survey question posed to the volunteer asked about his/her satisfaction with three aspects of the program:

- Satisfaction with their assignment
- Satisfaction with the program staff
- Satisfaction with the station site supervisor

Station site supervisors are individuals assigned to monitor and sometimes supervise volunteers in the field. These supervisors are often employees of the institution or organization that hosts the volunteer.

Volunteers were then asked to rate the “overall quality of their life since they began their participation in” the Senior Corps program.

Both the FGP and SCP surveys were identical. The RSVP survey was slightly different in that it had one less question. Where FGP and SCP volunteers were asked if there was any change to their “*ability to make ends meet*,” RSVP was not asked this question since those volunteers do not receive a stipend. Aside from this difference, the instruments were the same.

Each instrument was translated into Spanish, and made available to programs with Spanish-speaking volunteers.

Randomized Survey Methodology

With the help of the Corporation, I focused my study geographically on the Atlantic Cluster. This area of the country, stretching from Maine to Maryland, and including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, claims 113,239 Senior Corps volunteers: (RSVP – 103,403; SCP – 3,251; and FGP – 6,585).

In total, the volunteers are engaged in service through 268 programs: (RSVP – 155; SCP – 48; and FGP – 65).

Considering sample segmentation and its impact on statistical validity, I established a sample size of 1,050 completed surveys. To accomplish this, I selected 105 program sites – 35 from each of the three Senior Corps programs.

The sites were selected at random from among all available sites. Program Directors were then contacted, and asked to supply me with the names of their enrolled volunteers. From these names, I randomly selected 10 primary and 5 secondary survey participants, for a total of 15 volunteers from each program location.

Directors were asked to supply each of the initial 10 selected participants with a survey form, a copy of the study explanation (supplied by me –see appendix), along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope that contained my mailing address. Prior to distribution to volunteers, Directors were asked to pre code each survey with the appropriate assignment code number for each of the selected volunteers. This number identifies the area in which the volunteer provides service, and is also known as a BHN code.

The Corporation has pre-defined six areas of volunteer assignment, including: Health / Nutrition; Human Need Services; Education; Environmental; Community and Economic Development; and Public Safety. The BHN code identified to which area of service the volunteer was assigned.

Program Directors were then supplied with 15 copies of the survey, and asked to distribute these, along with accompanying materials to the selected volunteers. They were also requested “to ask” each volunteer to complete the survey form.

Scales

For each of the two basic questions on the survey, I established ordinal scales. I chose to use scales because they have been found to be particularly well suited when attempting to test on larger numbers of conditions (variables). Scales have been found to be less burdensome by subjects, and are also suited to mathematical calculations used in higher order statistical analysis.

For the first question, which asked volunteers to identify any change to the presented life satisfaction and life quality factors, I used a five (5) point scale, set up as:

1	2	3	4	5
It's A Lot Worse	It's Worse	No Change	It's Better	It's A Lot Better

For the second question, that asked about their level of satisfaction, responses provided included:

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Definitely Satisfied

Demographic questions included: gender, age, length of service, average hours per week of volunteer service, marital status, ethnicity, living status, and annual income.

With the exception of one question, respondents simply had to circle their selected answer. The only question requiring a written response asked the volunteer to identify the average number of hours per month he/she volunteered.

VI. The Study Population

Atlantic Cluster Distribution

The final number of completed surveys returned by volunteers was 1,075. Ten of the eleven states in the Atlantic Cluster were represented, along with Puerto Rico. Of the ten responding states, New York had the highest representation, with thirty-three percent (33%) of the sample. Pennsylvania was second with twelve percent (12%), and Massachusetts third with eleven percent (11%) of the returns.

Gender and Program

Eighty-five percent (85%) of the respondents were female, fifteen percent (15%) were male.

Thirty-eight percent (38%) were FGP, twenty-eight percent (28%) were RSVP, and thirty-four percent (34%) were SCP.

Sample Ethnicity

The following chart demonstrates the sample ethnicity in relation to the national population, ages 55 and older. Our sample is more ethnically diverse than the national population, with ten percent (10%) Hispanic, twenty-one percent (21%) Black, and just sixty-five percent (65%) Caucasian.

	Am Ind / Alas Nat	Asian / Pac / Isl	Hispanic	Black	Caucasian
Atlantic Cluster Sample	2%	1%	10%	21%	65%
National Population	1%	2%	6%	8%	84%

Source: 2000 census

Age

The sample age range was 52 to 97 years. The average age of respondents was 72.96 years. Our sample population was more heavily weighted with individuals in the 65 to 84 year old range than the national population of elders.

	55 to 59	60 to 64	65 to 74	75 to 84	85 +
Atlantic Cluster Sample	1%	9%	49%	37%	4%
National Population	23%	18%	31%	21%	7%

Source: 2000 census

By BHN Code

As noted above, program directors were asked to pre code surveys by volunteer activity code (the BHN number). Of the six available activity areas, thirty-seven percent (37%) of the sample volunteer in Education, thirty-five percent (35%) in Health / Nutrition, twenty-two percent (22%) in Human Need Services, five percent (5%) in Community and Economic Development, two percent (2%) in Public Safety, and one-half of one percent (1/2%) in Environmental.

Health	Human Need	Education	Environmt	Comm Dev	Pub Safety
35%	37%	37%	0%	5%	2%

Marital Status

The majority of respondents were widows / widowers (53%). Twenty-five percent (25%) were still married, seventeen percent (17%) were divorced, and five percent (5%) had never married.

Household Status

Sixty-five percent (65%) of respondents reported living alone.

Average Years of Service

Fifty-three percent (53%) of respondents had volunteered for five years or less. Forty-seven percent (47%) had volunteered for over six years.

< 1	1 to 5	6 to 10	10+
10%	43%	24%	23%

Volunteer Hours Per Week

Seventy-one percent (71%) of the sample reported volunteering for over 16 hours per week. Seventy-two percent (72%) of the sample was FGP or SCP volunteers, required to complete 20 hours per week. RSVP volunteers have no minimum hourly requirement, and seventy-one (71%) of them reported volunteering for 10 or fewer hours per week.

0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 15	16 - 20	20 +
13%	10%	6%	50%	21%

Annual Income

The sample population was low-income. Seventy-five percent (75%) reported annual income of less than \$14,500. This is the upper limit of the income eligibility, as established by the Corporation, to qualify FGP and SCP volunteers for a service stipend.

0 to 14.5	14.5 to 20	20.1 to 30	30.1 to 45	45.1 to 60	60+
75%	9%	6%	5%	2%	2%

An analysis of the annual income responses resulted in an unexpected finding with regard to RSVP volunteers. Roughly one third of all RSVP volunteers are very low income, reporting annual incomes of \$14,500 or less. This would, if they were enrolled in either FGP or SCP, qualify them for an hourly stipend. Of this number of very low-income RSVP volunteers, roughly one third (31%) also reported volunteering for 16 or more hours per week.

To put this into perspective, of the 103,000 RSVP volunteers in the Atlantic Cluster, roughly 32,000 have annual incomes of \$14,500 or below. Of this number, almost 10,000 volunteer for 16 or more hours per week or more.

VII. Data Analysis / Findings

A. Scale Validity

Testing for scale validity included the ten variables that made up the life quality and successful aging sub sets. Combined, these variables demonstrated a high degree of validity and internal consistency. The scale achieved an Alpha score of .891. Deletion of any single variable would have resulted in a weaker Alpha score.

B. Response Frequencies

Based on the results observed during this study, Senior Corps volunteers overwhelmingly report that life is better now than before they began to volunteer with the program. Ninety-three percent (93%) of all respondents said the overall quality of their life is now 'Better' to 'A Lot Better' than before they began participating in the program.

1. For Life Quality Factors

With regard to the Life Quality factors of: Physical Health, a Sense of Well-Being, Feeling Someone is Looking Out for Them, and their Ability to Make Ends Meet, each of these conditions were perceived as improved since participation in Senior Corps. Even Physical Health, among a population that averaged 73 years of age, and where the majority were now six years older than when they started to volunteer, sixty-seven percent (67%) of respondents perceive their health to be better now than before volunteering.

LQ Factors	It's Better	A Lot Better
Your sense of well-being	38.2%	47.7%
Your ability to make ends meet	42.8%	43.7%
Your feeling someone is looking out for your welfare	35.4%	44.3%
Your physical health	36.6%	30.1%

2. For Successful Aging Factors

For the Successful Aging factors, the reports were even more positive. Eighty-seven percent (87%) or more of respondents reported that every one of these conditions have improved since they began to participate in Senior Corps programming.

SA Factors	It's Better	It's A Lot Better
Amount of pleasure gained from daily activities	31.0%	62.1%
Feeling you can make a positive difference	35.2%	59.3%
Your feeling you have a purpose in life	33.0%	58.2%
Your sense of accomplishment	38.0%	55.6%
Your looking forward to each new day	31.1%	55.9%
Your sense of self-esteem	35.5%	53.4%

B. Mean (Avg) Scores

A mean score was calculated for every factor tested, using an ordinal scale, with assigned values of from 1 to 5. On this scale, any score of 3.5 or higher is interpreted as a positive change to the condition. When ranked by mean score, the Life Quality factors receiving the highest positive change scores were: Volunteers' Well-Being; followed by an improved Ability to Make Ends Meet; Feeling Someone is Looking Out for Them; and their Physical Health.

Life Quality

Your sense of well-being	4.34
Your ability to make ends meet	4.29
Your feeling someone is looking out for your welfare	4.24
Your physical health	3.94

For the Successful Aging factors -- Pleasure Gained from Daily Activities was ranked as having improved the most since participation, while Making a Positive Difference in Another Person's Life; feeling they Have a Purpose in Life; a Sense of Accomplishment; Looking Forward to Each New Day; and Sense of Self-Esteem, followed closely behind.

Successful Aging

Amount of pleasure gained from daily activities	4.55
Feeling you can make a positive difference	4.54
Your feeling you have a purpose in life	4.49
Your sense of accomplishment	4.49
Your looking forward to each new day	4.43
Your sense of self-esteem	4.42

You will also note that Successful Aging scores, on average, demonstrated higher values than Life Quality scores. This was more readily apparent when we calculated a mean score for Successful Aging (combining the average scores for all SA variables), and compared that to the Life Quality mean score.

Successful Aging calculated to a mean of 4.57 (*It's a Lot Better*), while Life Quality calculated to a mean of 4.25 (*It's Better*).

	Mean
Successful Aging	4.57
Life Quality	4.25

C. Volunteer Satisfaction

With regard to satisfaction levels of volunteers, responses indicate they are very satisfied with program staff, their assignments, and with their station site supervisors. The following chart demonstrates volunteer reports of satisfaction. Staff satisfaction ranked first among the three tested variables.

	Definitely Satisfied
Satisfaction with Senior Corps program staff	84%
Satisfaction with assignment	82%
Satisfaction with volunteer station site supervisor	82%

D. Associations

Also called ‘correlation analysis,’ testing for associations is a technique for identifying relationships or patterns between two or more variables. This is done to help determine whether responses to one or more variables are having a corresponding influence on observed responses to other variables. In this study, correlation analysis was performed for the purpose of testing for relationships between ‘overall change to volunteer quality of life since participation’ and each of the demographic, SA, and LQ variables to determine which, if any, may have influenced the overall change in quality of life scores as recorded by volunteers.

A dependent variable is hypothesized to be influenced, explained (in part), or predicted by another variable. Whereas, an independent variable is hypothesized to influence, explain, or predict the patterns of values, responses or proclivity of reactions in the dependent variable (LaPlante, 1995). However, associations do not demonstrate causality, meaning they do not determine the value of another variable. Instead, associations demonstrate influence rather than cause.

Pearson’s Chi-Square was used to test for statistical significance at the 95% confidence level on all tests of association. Pearson’s Chi-Square is used to confirm that observed relationships are not simply the result of chance.

Gamma was used as the measure of strength of the association since the scales in use are at the ordinal level, and some variables are at the nominal level. Gamma is a measure of from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates no association, while 1 indicates a 1 to 1 relationship between the tested variables -- meaning the value of one variable is coupled to the value of another.

The ‘Somers’ d’ calculation was used to test changes in the strength of the association when tested variables are alternated into the dependent / independent role. This test helps us to understand which of the tested variables is exerting the most influence within the tested relationship.

1. Quality of Life Change to Demographics

The first set of tests for association looked to see if any of the demographic variables had an influence on how respondents answered the overall quality of life question. The question, “*Since you began your participation in this program, the overall quality of your life is*” was crossed tabulated with the following demographic variables: Program; State; City; BHN Code; Gender; Age; Years of Service; Marital Status; and Race.

None of these demographic variables demonstrated measurable association with the posed question, indicating that these factors made no difference in how a respondent answered the overall quality of life question.

The demographic factors that did demonstrate influence on the overall quality of life question included: Hours Per Week of Volunteer Time; Living Status; and Annual Income.

Variable	Gamma	Approx Sig (p)
Hours per week	.563	.000
Live Alone	-.333	.008
Income	-.584	.000

The ‘*hours per week engaged in volunteer activities*’ demonstrated a relatively strong association with quality of life improvement. Those respondents reporting higher volunteer hours per week were observed reporting higher overall quality of life scores. It is important to note that seventy-two percent (72%) of the sample were FGP and SCP volunteers, and required to provide twenty (20) hours per week, on average, of volunteer service.

As you can see, both ‘Living Alone’ and ‘Income’ demonstrated inverse relationships, as evidenced by the negative value of Gamma. This means the demonstrated association is in a direction opposite that which was expected.

Those volunteers living alone demonstrated higher improvement scores in the overall quality of their lives than their counterparts living with someone else in the household. This finding is in direct contrast to other studies on quality of life that report living with a spouse (or significant other) is highly correlated to high life quality scores.

As noted above, sixty-five percent (65%) of our sample reported they live alone. It is possible that our observed inverse relationship is due to the fact that those living alone, and who may have experienced loneliness before participation in Senior Corps programming, have found that the volunteer experience provides them with peer associations with other volunteers, and relationships with clients and program staff. This re-entry to the mainstream of life, associated with its high level of activity, may actually act to help volunteers deal more effectively with their solitary living situation.

The observed inverse relationship of quality of life to income indicates that those volunteers with lower annual incomes demonstrated higher positive change in their overall quality of life since participation in Senior Corps programming.

This is of particular interest because low-income individuals heavily weight our sample. Both SCP and FGP volunteers are qualified for participation based on low-income status. In addition, the inverse relationship held true for the RSVP program where just about 1/3 of the volunteers reported having low-incomes (G .298, p .018).

This observation is important because it also runs contrary to national studies on quality of life among the general elderly population. National studies consistently demonstrate a positive correlation between high quality of life scores and high income. Therefore, if Senior Corps volunteers demonstrate the inverse -- that low-income volunteers demonstrate higher overall quality of life change scores -- perhaps we are observing a phenomenon unique to these programs, where participation somehow ‘compensates’ for lack of income, in terms of its impact on overall quality of life.

2. Quality of Life Change to SA and LQ Variables

All six SA variables and all four LQ variables demonstrated strong associations to overall quality of life change in volunteers. The following chart lists each variable, along with its association measure, in order, from highest to lowest.

A personal ‘sense of well-being’ demonstrated the strongest association to overall improvement in quality of life, followed closely by ‘pleasure gained from daily activities’ (strength of association is measured from 0 to 1 – the closer the value is to 1 is an indication of a stronger relationship).

Variable	Gamma	Sig (p)
SA – Successful Aging		
Amount of pleasure gained from daily activities **	0.931	0.000
Your looking forward to each new day	0.914	0.000
Your sense of self-esteem	0.886	0.000
Your sense of accomplishment **	0.882	0.000
Your feeling you have a purpose in life	0.873	0.000
Feeling you can make a positive difference **	0.845	0.000
LQ – Life Quality		
Your sense of well-being	0.939	0.000
Your ability to make ends meet	0.918	0.000
Your feeling someone is looking out for your welfare	0.892	0.000
Your physical health	0.860	0.000

** - Observed association is strongest when independent

For three (3) of the tested variables, namely Sense of Accomplishment; Making a

Positive Difference in Another Person's Life; and Pleasure Gained from Daily Activities; the measured strength of the association was strongest when these variables were considered as independent variables. In other words, in these three instances, when a volunteer perceived a positive change to any of these three variables, s/he was also likely to demonstrate a positive change to their overall quality of life.

This indicates that when a program provides Senior Corps volunteers with opportunities to: improve their sense of accomplishment; make a positive difference in the lives of others; and gain pleasure from their daily lives; their overall sense of an improved quality of life is also positively influenced.

Whereas with the remaining variables, if the Senior Corps volunteer perceived his or her overall quality of life to have changed for the positive since participation, s/he was more likely to score each of the remaining variables with positive change scores. This indicates that perceived positive overall quality of life change, attributed to participation in Senior Corps, influences corresponding positive changes to those variables associated with improved quality of life among elder populations.

Both tests of association appear to reinforce our hypothesis that Senior Corps programming is an effective means of providing elders with ways to experience self-actualization, which consists of both successful aging and the satisfying of life quality factors.

3. The Association Between Staff and Improved Quality of Life

One other variable demonstrated strong and significant association with perceived positive change to overall quality of life for the study sample. This variable was the level of satisfaction among volunteers with Senior Corps program staff.

Volunteers who responded that they were most satisfied with program staff were also likely to report higher positive change to their overall quality of life since participation in Senior Corps ($G = .586, p = .000$). Further, the association was strongest when staff was assigned as the independent variable, indicating they influence the volunteer's perception of the experience, and therefore influence resulting perceived change to volunteer life satisfaction.

This observation is important for program directors and staff, since they apparently exert, directly or indirectly, influence on how the volunteer perceives his/her volunteer experience. Armed with this knowledge, program staff should be aware of their influence, and might work to find additional ways to improve the volunteer experience through improved staff / volunteer relations.

Volunteer satisfaction with assignment also had a positive association with overall change to quality of life (G .31, p .069), as did satisfaction with station site supervisor (G .37; p -.025). However, the strength of these associations is less than that for satisfaction with staff.

E. Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is conducted to help explain observed associations among variables. In addition, regression, using Beta as the measure of association, will demonstrate whether a predictive relationship exists among variables.

By this we mean, does the scoring of one variable predict a resulting score for another? For example, by using regression we can test whether a positive change score in overall quality of life by Senior Corps volunteers is predictive of positive changes to successful aging and life quality variable scores, thus resulting in improved life satisfaction among Senior Corps volunteers since participation in this programming.

We did observe a predictive relationship between overall positive change in quality of life since participation in Senior Corps programming and positive change to both Successful Aging and Life Quality scores. This finding reinforces our conclusions, from our review of associations among variables, that a positive change to overall quality of life since participation in Senior Corps will predictably result in an improved level of satisfaction with life for volunteers, as measured by the use of both successful aging and life quality factors.

Predictor (Constant)		
Since your participation in this program, the overall quality of your life is:		
	Standardized Coefficients	
	(Beta)	Sig
Dependent Variables		
Successful Aging	.679	.000
Life Quality	.675	.000

F. Observed Differences By Program

The final question to be examined by this study was to determine if differences exist between the three Senior Corps programs with regard to volunteer impact.

Some differences were observed among the three programs. With regard to sample demographics, RSVP demonstrated the most apparent differences from both FGP and SCP, which turned out to be relatively similar.

Some of these differences are highlighted here. In general, RSVP has:

- A higher percentage of male volunteers (25%)
- Volunteers with more longevity (58% with 6 or more years of service)
- Volunteers contributing far fewer hours, on average, per week (71% < 10 hrs / week)
- A higher percentage of volunteers still married (46%)
- Less ethnic diversity (84% Caucasian)
- A higher percentage living with another (53%)
- Higher average incomes (69% over the stipend qualifying income level)

Sample Demographic Differences

	Total Sample	FGP	RSVP	SCP
Gender				
Male	15%	8%	25%	13%
Female	85%	92%	75%	87%
Mean Age	72.96	72.4	72.3	71.8
Age Distribution				
55 to 59	1%	0.3%	4%	0%
60 to 64	9%	11%	5%	9%
65 to 74	49%	51%	44%	49%
75 to 84	37%	34%	44%	37%
85+	4%	3%	5%	6%
Years of Service				
< 1 Year	10%	12%	7%	12%
1 to 5 Yrs	43%	46%	35%	47%
6 to 10 Yrs	24%	23%	25%	24%
10+	23%	19%	33%	18%
Hours per Week				
0 to 5	13%	3%	40%	3%
6 to 10	10%	3%	31%	3%
11 to 15	6%	3%	12%	4%
16 to 20	50%	69%	7%	61%
20 +	21%	22%	9%	29%
Marital Status				
Married	25%	17%	46%	17%
Widowed	53%	56%	42%	55%
Divorced	17%	20%	8%	22%
Never Married	5%	84%	5%	6%

	Total Sample	FGP	RSVP	SCP
Race				
Amer Ind / Alaska Nat	2%			
Asian / Pacific Isl	1%	1%	1%	1%
Hispanic	10%	8%	9%	14%
Black	21%	32%	5%	23%
Caucasian	65%	56%	84%	60%
Live Alone	65%	74%	47%	70%
Annual Income				
0 to 14,500	75%	88%	31%	94%
14,501 to 20,000	9%	10%	14%	5%
20,001 to 30,000	6%	2%	20%	0%
30,001 to 45,000	5%	0%	19%	1%
45,001 to 60,000	2%	0%	8%	0%
60,000 +	2%	0%	9%	0%

Frequency or Responses By Program

In answer to the question: “since your participation in this program, the overall quality of your life is”, a higher percentage of RSVP volunteers reported experiencing ‘no change’. Seventeen percent (17%) of RSVP volunteers reported no change in their overall quality of life since participation as compared to just 3% for FGP, and 5% for SCP volunteers.

	No Change	Better	A Lot Better
FGP	3%	40%	57%
RSVP	17%	45%	38%
SCP	5%	42%	54%

1. Life Quality Factors By Program

With regard to the Life Quality factors of: Physical Health, a Sense of Well-Being, Feeling Someone is Looking Out for Them, and an Ability to Make Ends Meet, both FGP and RSVP volunteers experienced the highest positive change in their sense of well-being, while SCP volunteers ranked ‘someone looking out for them’ as the highest positive change experienced since participation.

Life Quality	FGP	RSVP	SCP
Scale 1 to 5 (3.5 + = positive change)			
Your sense of well-being	4.51	4.02	4.39
Your ability to make ends meet	4.32	N/A	4.25
Your feeling someone is looking out for your welfare	4.39	3.84	4.40
Your physical health	4.17	3.55	3.99

2. Successful Aging Factors By Program

For the Successful Aging factors, again, FGP and RSVP volunteers agreed that the ‘amount of pleasure gained from daily activities’ saw the most positive change since participation in Senior Corps programming. SCP volunteers ranked ‘making a positive difference’ as having the highest degree of positive change to their lives.

Successful Aging Scale 1 to 5 (3.5 + = positive change)	FGP	RSVP	SCP
Amount of pleasure gained from daily activities	4.68	4.34	4.58
Feeling you can make a positive difference	4.62	4.28	4.66
Your feeling you have a purpose in life	4.61	4.22	4.59
Your sense of accomplishment	4.58	4.27	4.58
Your looking forward to each new day	4.58	4.05	4.56
Your sense of self-esteem	4.55	4.12	4.52

3. Overall Change to Quality of Life By Program

In terms of overall change in their quality of life since participation in Senior Corps programming, FGP volunteers demonstrated the highest score for change, followed by SCP, then RSVP. However, all three groups report that life is now better than before.

	FGP	RSVP	SCP
Overall impact on quality of life since participation Scale 1 to 5 (3.5 + = positive change)	4.64	4.20	4.49

4. Successful Aging and Life Quality Impacts By Program

As in the above example, FGP and RSVP volunteers also agreed that Successful Aging factors (higher order factors), on average, experienced the most positive changes since participation. Whereas SCP volunteers ranked the Life Quality factors (lower order factors) as having experienced the most positive average changes.

Since all three programs report positive scores for life quality factors, we can say that participation in Senior Corps has demonstrated effectiveness in improving volunteer quality of life, and in so doing, has enabled volunteers to move on toward self-actualization.

	FGP	RSVP	SCP
Successful Aging Score	4.73	4.33	4.71
Life Quality Score	4.60	3.78	4.87
Scale 1 to 5 (3.5 + = positive change)			

In terms of Successful Aging factors, all three programs demonstrate effectiveness in providing volunteers with opportunities to self-actualize -- move to improved levels of satisfaction with life.

Correlations By Program

I conducted an investigation of relationships, for each of the three programs, for volunteer positive change to overall quality of life against the two sub sets of factors I have defined as Successful Aging and Life Quality. Correlation was observed for each Senior Corps program between the two tested variables.

For Successful Aging, the relationships were strongest when ‘overall quality of life since participation’ was considered the dependent variable, and therefore was being influenced by response scores for successful aging factors. In other words, as each of the successful aging factors was considered to have improved since participation in Senior Corps programming, the perception that their overall quality of life has improved was subsequently influenced in a positive fashion.

	FGP	RSVP	SCP
Successful Aging change / Overall Quality of Life Change (positive)	G = .860 (p .000)	G = .899 (p .000)	G = .804 (p .000)

Conversely, in the case of Life Quality, associations were strongest when ‘overall quality of life since participation’ was considered the independent variable, influencing change scores for the life quality variables. This result indicates that when volunteers perceive that the overall quality of their life has improved since participation in Senior Corps, they were likely to perceive positive change to the life quality variables of health, safety and security. In other words, participation in Senior Corps programming appears to make volunteers feel better, both physically and emotionally.

	FGP	RSVP	SCP
Life Quality change / Overall Quality of Life Change (positive)	G = .819 (p .000)	G = .845 (p .000)	G = .836 (p .000)

The observation of these relationships reinforces our hypothesis that in all three programs, participation in Senior Corps acts to satisfy life quality factors, while at the same time provides opportunities for volunteers to self-actualize, and experience improved satisfaction with life.

Satisfaction and Its Relationship to Quality of Life Change By Program

The data was also reviewed for the presence of associations between ‘overall quality of life change since participation’ and ‘satisfaction with assignment, staff, and station supervisor’ to determine what impact, if any, these satisfaction variables had on the overall perception of improved life quality. Of the three tested variables, ‘Satisfaction with Program Staff’ had the most significant and strongest influence on overall quality of life change in volunteers. This was particularly true for SCP volunteers.

Satisfaction with Program Staff By Program

In all cases, the strength of the association was greatest when ‘overall quality of life’ was dependent to satisfaction with program staff, demonstrating that staff exert an influence on volunteer quality of life perceptions.

Although all three programs demonstrated levels of association between program staff and overall quality of life positive change scores, SCP demonstrated the strongest association between these two variables.

Satisfaction with Staff / Overall quality of life Change	FGP	RSVP	SCP
	G = .309 (p .000)	G = .356 (p .000)	G = .664 (p .000)

Satisfaction with Assignment By Program

SCP also demonstrated the strongest level of association between ‘satisfaction with assignment’ and overall positive change to quality of life. FGP demonstrated no statistically significant relationship with assignment.

For both SCP and RSVP, the association was strongest when quality of life scores were dependent - influenced by satisfaction with assignment scores.

Satisfaction with Assignment / Overall Quality of Life Change	FGP	RSVP	SCP
	**	G = .368 (p .004)	G = .597 (p .000)
	(** Results were not statistically significant)		

Satisfaction with Site Supervisor By Program

Only SCP volunteers demonstrated a significant association between overall quality of life change and station site supervisor satisfaction.

Satisfaction with Site Supervisor / Overall Quality of Life Change	FGP **	RSVP **	SCP G = .6 (p .000)
	(** Results were not statistically significant)		

Regression By Program

To assist in the explanation of the strength of observed associations, I ran regression analysis to determine if relationships had a predictive quality. In each of the three programs of FGP, RSVP and SCP, where volunteers reported positive change to their overall quality of life since their participation in Senior Corps programming, a predictive relationship was observed for both Life Quality and Successful Aging factors.

This indicates Senior Corps programming is an effective and predictable method of improving the life satisfaction of its volunteers in each of the three programs.

Life Quality Factors	Beta	Sig
FGP	.531	.000
RSVP	.628	.000
SCP	.602	.000
Successful Aging Factors		
FGP	.510	.000
RSVP	.705	.000
SCP	.521	.000

VIII. Study Conclusions

Based on the evidence collected and observed during this study, the following conclusions were drawn.

Q. *Does participation in Senior Corps Programming include personal and emotional benefits to senior volunteers?*

A. Yes

- A clear majority of volunteers (93%) report that life is better since they began to participate in Senior Corps programming.
- Demographic characteristics were found to influence quality of life scores among volunteers. More specifically,
 - Volunteers who serve for higher numbers of hours per week (up to 20+) report higher overall improvement in quality of life since participation in programming.
 - Volunteers who live alone report higher overall quality of life scores since participation in programming.
 - In sharp contrast to national studies of elders and quality of life, I observed an inverse relationship of income to quality of life change, where those volunteers with lower incomes report higher overall quality of life scores since participation in programming.
- Although all tested variables demonstrated positive change scores, volunteers report highest positive changes in
 - Pleasure gained from daily activities
 - Feeling they make a positive difference in another person's life
 - Feeling they have a purpose in life
 - Having a sense of accomplishment
 - Looking forward to each new day

Q. *If elder volunteers benefit from participation in Senior Corps programming, do these benefits contribute to their improved quality of life?*

A. Yes

- Variables tested were taken from literature on life satisfaction and elders, and include both Successful Aging and Life Quality factors, which, when combined, can be used to measure improved satisfaction with life (self-actualization) among volunteers.

- Every variable tested demonstrated a positive change since participation in Senior Corps programming was initiated.
 - Eighty-seven percent (87%) or more of the sample reported improvements to ‘successful aging’ factors since participation in Senior Corps.
 - Sixty-seven percent (67%) or more of the sample reported improvements to ‘life quality’ factors, including physical health, since participation in Senior Corps.
- Although both demonstrated positive change since participation, positive change scores for Successful Aging were higher than those for Life Quality factors.
- Correlation analysis confirmed the existence of relationships, or patterns of association between improved quality of life since participation in Senior Corps programming and improvements in both Successful Aging and Life Quality variables
- Tests of regression demonstrate a predictive relationship between perceived improved overall life quality since participation in Senior Corps, and positive changes to Life Quality variables of health, safety and welfare.
- Tests of regression also demonstrate a predictive relationship between positive change to Successful Aging factors (self-actualization variables), and positive change scores for overall life quality since participation in Senior Corps.

Q. *If we observe that participation in Senior Corps programming contributes to an improvement in satisfaction with life, are there differences in the levels of reported satisfaction as demonstrated by members of the three Senior Corps programs, namely - Foster Grandparents; Senior Companions; and Retired Senior Volunteers?*

A. Yes

Differences between the three programs were observed, yet every program demonstrated positive change in all tested variables. Differences were primarily observed in the demographic characteristics among volunteers for each of the three programs, and in observed correlations among key variables.

- FGP volunteers demonstrated the highest degree of positive change, overall, followed by SCP, then RSVP.

- RSVP volunteers demonstrated the highest degree of correlation between positive overall quality of life change scores and positive change scores for both Successful Aging and Life Quality factors.
- Although all three programs demonstrated correlation between quality of life change and satisfaction with program staff, SCP volunteers demonstrated the strongest relationship between these two variables
- SCP volunteer quality of life change scores were also influenced by volunteer level of satisfaction with assignments and with their site supervisors.
- RSVP volunteers demonstrated the highest degree of predictability for positive change scores in both Successful Aging and Life Quality factors when reporting positive change scores to the overall quality of their life since participation in Senior Corps programming.
- FGP and RSVP volunteers rated Successful Aging factors (higher order variables), on average, as having changed more positively since initiating participation in Senior Corps programming. SCP volunteers ranked the Life Quality factors (lower order variables) as having experienced the most positive average change.

Q. *Can we demonstrate Senior Corps programs meet CNS Strategic Goal 3# - “the lives of those who serve will be improved through their service experience?”*

A. Yes

Qualitative Reports of Program Impact

Although the survey was not designed to collect qualitative reports of impact on volunteers, many respondents added their comments, or sent an accompanying letter to further express their opinions. Some of these comments are included here to assist the reader in understanding the depth of feeling many volunteers have for their assignments.

“I’m so much happier since I began to volunteer.”

“I enjoy being a Foster Grandparent – I love the children.”

“It’s (volunteering) the best thing I did in my lifetime.”

“My mental health is much improved since working with these children.”

“I experienced no depression this winter.”

“This is one of the most rewarding, exciting, and fulfilling things I have done.”

“These have been the best 21 years of my life.”

“The little I do makes me feel useful to others.”

“The staff and the children make my day. It’s great going to school each day.”

“This program alleviated my depression after my husband’s death.”

“This program is my home away from home.”

“When I’m volunteering I feel very much alive.”

IX. Study Limitations

Geographic Limitation

Since the study was limited to the Atlantic Cluster, and although I utilized a random sample methodology, study results can only be attributed to Atlantic Cluster volunteers, in general. Although I suspect that similar findings would be observed in other parts of the country, this study can only speak to the 113,000 volunteers located within the Atlantic Cluster.

Methodology

A limitation to the methodology is the lack of a control, or matched sample. Although the information collected from the sample of volunteers strongly indicates that it was participation in Senior Corps programming that was responsible for the observed positive changes in all of the tested variables, without a control, or matched sample, I cannot say definitively that it was Senior Corps programming that made the difference.

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Appendices

Instrumentation

Program Director Study Information

Volunteer Contact Information

5. Since you began your participation in this program, the overall quality of your life is:

A Lot Worse	Worse	No Change	Better	A Lot Better
----------------	-------	--------------	--------	-----------------

6. In general, to what extent do you credit any change to your quality of life to your participation in this program?
(Please circle your answer)

It has had No Contribution						It is Totally Responsible
1	-	2	-	3	-	4
						5

7. Please tell us how satisfied you are with your current FGP assignment

Definitely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Definitely Satisfied
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8. Please tell us how satisfied you are with the FGP Program staff

Definitely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Definitely Satisfied
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9. Please tell us how satisfied you are with your Volunteer Station site supervisor

Definitely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Definitely Satisfied
----------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------

10. Please tell us how satisfied you are with the volunteer training you receive

Definitely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Definitely Satisfied
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11. Overall, please tell us how satisfied you are with this volunteer experience

Definitely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Definitely Satisfied
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Comments? Feel free to provide us with additional comments and suggestions

Thank you for participating in this survey

BHN Code: _____

5. Since you began your participation in this program, the overall quality of your life is:

A Lot Worse	Worse	No Change	Better	A Lot Better
----------------	-------	--------------	--------	-----------------

6. In general, to what extent do you credit any change to your quality of life to your participation in this program?
(Please circle your answer)

It has had No Contribution						It is Totally Responsible
1	-	2	-	3	-	4
						5

7. Please tell us how satisfied you are with your current RSVP assignment

Definitely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Definitely Satisfied
----------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------

8. Please tell us how satisfied you are with the RSVP Program staff

Definitely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Definitely Satisfied
----------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------

9. Please tell us how satisfied you are with your Volunteer Station site supervisor

Definitely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Definitely Satisfied
----------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------

10. Please tell us how satisfied you are with the volunteer training you receive

Definitely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Definitely Satisfied
----------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------

11. Overall, please tell us how satisfied you are with this volunteer experience

Definitely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Definitely Satisfied
----------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------

Comments? Feel free to provide us with additional comments and suggestions

Thank you for participating in this survey

BHN Code: _____

5. Since you began your participation in this program, the overall quality of your life is:

A Lot Worse	Worse	No Change	Better	A Lot Better
----------------	-------	--------------	--------	-----------------

6. In general, to what extent do you credit any change to your quality of life to your participation in this program?
(Please circle your answer)

It has had No Contribution					It is Totally Responsible
1	-	2	-	3	-
				4	-
					5

7. Please tell us how satisfied you are with your current SCP assignment

Definitely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Definitely Satisfied
----------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------

8. Please tell us how satisfied you are with the SCP Program staff

Definitely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Definitely Satisfied
----------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------

9. Please tell us how satisfied you are with your Volunteer Station site supervisor

Definitely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Definitely Satisfied
----------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------

10. Please tell us how satisfied you are with the volunteer training you receive

Definitely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Definitely Satisfied
----------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------

11. Overall, please tell us how satisfied you are with this volunteer experience

Definitely Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Definitely Satisfied
----------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------

Comments? Feel free to provide us with additional comments and suggestions
Thank you for participating in this survey

BHN Code: __

Memo

To: Atlantic Cluster Program Directors
From: Peter Gartland, CNS Fellow
Date: August 24, 2001
Subject: Fellowship Assistance Request

Mal Coles contacted you a few weeks ago regarding my Fellowship project in the Atlantic Cluster. I was fortunate to be selected as a CNS Fellow because it is enabling me to conduct a study of Senior Corps volunteers in an attempt to assess how much their volunteer experience contributes to improving the quality of their lives, as measured by changes in characteristics associated with both satisfaction with life, and successful aging among elder populations.

Results from this study will provide the Corporation with a method to quantify the positive impact on volunteers resulting from their participation in your program. This information can then be used to demonstrate how well programs are meeting the Corporation's strategic goal number 3 which states: "*The lives of those who serve will be improved through their service experience*".

In addition, results from this study should also help you with your volunteer recruitment efforts, and it may gain positive publicity for the Senior Corps.

Your program was randomly selected from among all programs in the Cluster for participation in this study. In total, I am going to require completed surveys from roughly 350 volunteers from each of the three (3) Senior Corps programs of RSVP, FGP, and SCP. To achieve this overall total number, I estimate I will need just 10 to 15 completed surveys from each selected program location.

To accomplish this, I need your help. I have made every attempt to keep your time commitment to a bare minimum. Here is what I need:

I need for you to send me a current list of your volunteers **. You can mail the list, fax the list, or email the list to me at 51 Pine Hill Road, Casco, Maine 04015; Fax # 207-627-3145; email address is peterg@maine.rr.com. I need the list as soon as possible.

****** I am going to use the list to randomly select 15 volunteers to participate in a survey. As an alternative to sending me your entire list of volunteers, you can simply let me know your total number of active volunteers and my selection can be accomplished by number.

(continued on reverse side)

When I receive the list, I will randomly select a small number (est. 10-15) of your volunteers to receive my questionnaire, and I will send you their names, copies of the questionnaire, self-addressed, stamped return envelopes, and a brief explanation of the study to be given to the selected volunteers. I will ask that you make sure the selected volunteers receive the questionnaire, the explanation, and the return envelopes.

That is basically all that I will need from you for the duration of this study.

Please Note:

If you decide you are unable or unwilling to complete the requested tasks, please let me know so that I can select, and contact a different program.

I hope you agree to participate, and I will be grateful for your assistance in completing this study. If you agree to help, please forward me a list of your volunteers as soon as is possible.

Thanks in advance for your help. If you have questions on the study please do not hesitate to call me at 207-627-3145, or email me at peterg@maine.rr.com.

Puerto Rico Programs please note:

All materials will be sent in both English and Spanish.

Peter Gartland
51 Pine Hill Road
Casco, Maine 04015
207-627-3145
peterg@maine.rr.com

August 24, 2001

Ms. Lois J. M.
Admin Assist
Merrimack County RSVP
97 Pleasant St
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Ms. M.;

Thanks for agreeing to help me with this study. Please find enclosed, the following materials:

1. Your volunteers who were selected at random for participation in this study. You will find a total of 15 volunteers.
2. A brief explanation of the study to be provided to the volunteer
3. One questionnaire for each selected volunteer.
4. Stamped, self-addressed, return envelopes to be provided to the volunteers for return mailing of the completed study form.

Please note:

In the lower, right-hand corner of the questionnaire you will find a space in which I need you to write the 3 digit NSSC code (also called the BHN code) assigned to the activity of each of the selected volunteers. Just prior to distributing the questionnaire, please code each one with the **BHN Code** number you have already assigned to the activity in which each of the selected volunteers is engaged. For example, if a selected volunteer is a literacy tutor in elementary grades, then you would code his/her questionnaire with the number '>336' in the space on the survey reserved for this information (lower right portion of the form).

If a volunteer works in more than one BHN code area, you can list the one (1) code number for the area in which they spend the majority of their time.

If a volunteer refuses, or is unable to complete the questionnaire, I need you to select another name from the list, and ask that person to complete a questionnaire, coded with their 3 digit BHN assignment code number.

Proceed in this fashion until a minimum of ten (10) volunteers agree to complete the questionnaire.

The completion of a statistically valid study is solely dependent upon completion of these questionnaires by the randomly selected volunteers. Therefore, I am asking that you encourage the selected volunteers to complete the survey form. As you can see, the survey does ask for some very private information, like household income, but the results will be anonymous, confidential, and tabulated in the aggregate. In other words, I will never report out the survey results on any single, individual survey. Results will always be a compilation of all survey participants.

If you have questions on the study, the study methods, or my instructions to you, please do not hesitate to call me at 800-484-7238, code # 6570, or email me at peterg@maine.rr.com.

Very truly yours,

Peter Gartland
CNS Fellow

Your selected volunteers are:

(15 names, or 15 randomly selected numbers from the program roster were listed here)

Survey Participant Information

What is this Survey For?

The Corporation for National Service, which provides funding to your local RSVP, FGP and SCP programs, sponsors this survey. The study is designed to measure the impact on you, the volunteer, as a result of your participation in this program.

Why are you being asked to complete this survey?

You, and 14 other volunteers from your program, were selected at random to participate in this study. Random selection is used because it provides the most valid statistical results.

Does your Program staff know about this study?

Yes, your program staff is aware of this study, and support it. They know that the study may result in important information they can use to demonstrate program impact, and to recruit new volunteers.

How will the information from the survey be used?

The information gathered from the enclosed survey form will be compiled along with the results from approximately 1,000 other volunteers. Your individual survey information will not be shared with anyone. Your answers will remain confidential, and will only be reported as part of the total results.

Who is conducting this study?

An individual, by the name of Peter Gartland is conducting this study. Peter is a National Service Fellow of the Corporation for National Service. He has been asked to conduct this study for the Corporation.

Do you have to complete this survey form?

No. You are free to refuse to complete the form. Your participation in this survey is voluntary, not mandatory. However, your answers to these questions are important to the study, and we urge you to agree to participate.

Who can you talk to if you have questions about this survey?

You can talk to your program staff, or you can talk to Peter Gartland. He can be reached, toll free, at 1-800-484-xxxx, code # xxxx.