

Agency: Volunteer Center of Story County

ASSET Evaluation

Liaison: Michale Hansen

October 2016

Need for Program: The VCSC serves individuals, nonprofit organizations and unmet needs in the community. The center provides a needed service as a clearinghouse for volunteers. The mission of the VCSC is to build a strong community by inspiring, educating, and mobilizing volunteers in Story County. The VCSC works with partner agencies to identify volunteer needs in areas of leadership, events, fundraising, programs and administration.

Program Strengths: VCSC Executive Director Anne Owens has settled into her role well and is moving the organization forward with innovative ideas integrating Iowa State University, the Story County community, businesses, and other partners.

The core agency programs are:

1. **Get Connected-** Through this database, volunteer centers throughout the state are networked with the Iowa Commission. Currently VCSC has 6,800 volunteers registered and there have been on average 10,000-15,000 views regarding opportunities. There are 185 active agencies and 228 total agencies in the system.
VCSC continues to see an increase in ISU student willingness to serve, assisting ISU students with numerous group projects. VCSC maintains a partnership with the ISU Student Organizations office on campus and assists with any organizational needs as much as possible.
2. **Story County Youth Volunteer Awards** – The VCSC holds a program to recognize outstanding youth volunteers. In 2015-2016, VCSC recognized 9 individuals and 2 groups.
3. **Ames Repair and Care Volunteers** – This program was originally developed by former City of Ames community planner Jeff Benson and serves low income residents of Ames who need assistance with home repair and upkeep. The State and the City of Ames have stopped funding this program; however VCSC continues to offer this service to those who are in need.
4. **Story County Alliance for Energy Efficiency-** Collaborative program with Central Iowa RSVP and Mid-Iowa Community Action. In 2015-2016 this program organized winter weatherization for 42 homes utilizing the efforts of 85 volunteers.
5. **Youth Engagement/Service Learning-** Service Learning has changed to Youth Engagement. Service learning models are a type of value added volunteering. It combines a learning component that help volunteers to better understand what needs to be done in the community and why. This experience is more advanced than volunteer service. VCSC is encouraging Service learning outside of Ames as well. New this year has been the Nevada High School Day of Service which took place in April. Youth volunteering also refers volunteer opportunities for youth under the age of 25 to serve in our community. The VCSC has updated their Youth Volunteering Resource Guide and is currently working on developing a marketing plan to raise awareness of

these resources and opportunities for young people. VCSC also invested \$1,000 for a new pilot tracking system (Silver Cord) which will maintain volunteer hours.

6. **Summer Enrichment Program-** VCSC's involvement in this program has been successful but has also resulted in significant impact to their program both in time and resources. For summer 2016, the VCSC assumed responsibility for recruiting, screening, placing, and on-site supervision of over 500 volunteers involved with the program. Plans are in place to assume these responsibilities in 2017 as well, resulting in an increase to VCSC's request to ASSET this next budget year.
7. **Stash The Trash-** 2016's Stash the Trash campaign was very successful. This year 280 volunteers came out to clean up our community. VSCS also participated in the **Martin Luther King Jr. Day** activities with 180 volunteers participating, **Family Volunteer Day** with 50 families taking part, **Giving Tuesday**, and **Random Acts of Kindness Week**.
8. **Other Collaborative Efforts-** The VCSC facilitates monthly meetings for the Story County Volunteer Coordinator's Coalition. This group of area volunteer managers come together for professional development and networking. The VCSC participates in the Story County Alliance for Philanthropy annually as well and connects with the Story County Hunger, Education (Ames Reads) and Transportation Collaborations in order to support these efforts and maintain awareness of relevant community needs and issues. This year they served as the organizational body for the United Way Day of Caring.
9. **Blast Back to School Fair-** This is a new initiative in collaboration with the Boys and Girls Club of Story County and the Ames Community School District. \$50,000 worth of supplies were donated for students in need.
10. **Rummage Rampage-**This is a new event in partnership with 18 other agencies and the City of Ames. Held at the Intermodal facility in Ames, there were 87 volunteers (489 hours over the course of the three days) who assisted with this inaugural huge community wide garage sale. \$5,400 was raised and 2,200 pounds of household items were diverted from the landfill. Monies raised were divided among participating agencies.
11. **Service Enterprise Initiative-** This new initiative through the Points of Light Foundation focuses nonprofit organizations' efforts on effective and efficient volunteer engagement at all levels in the agency. The VCSC completed training and has received national certification ranking in the top 17% of applications received. Additional volunteer positions have been identified and created; internal training and management processes have been implemented for the agency. As a result of this process, the VCSC has determined that for every \$1 and every volunteer hour contributed to the VCSC and VCSC programs a \$6.61 return on volunteer investment is made to our community. As a selected Service Enterprise Hub, the VCSC is working with several other agencies as they progress through this process.

Agency Strengths

One of the greatest strengths of the VCSC is its partnerships with other nonprofit agencies resulting in excellent outcomes for all agencies involved. The VCSC is seen as a credible and collaborative resource

for other agencies, businesses, the ISU community, and communities within Story County. Partnerships outside of Ames have increased this past year and look to expand further in 2017-2018. Story County Conservation has become one of the VCSC top organizations to utilize the VCSC services.

Social Media involvement has continued to increase. Currently there are 500 Facebook followers (up from 300 last year) and 1,800 Twitter followers. The VCSC sends 2,500 e-newsletters regularly to community members and business partners. Goal for 2017-2018 is to have 6,800 e-newsletter recipients.

The Ames Tribune donated \$25,000 worth of advertising space this past year in the Tri-County Times, The Tribune, The Sun, and their website, allowing the VCSC to publicize volunteer needs to the county.

The VCSC's Winter Weatherization Program received the Make a Difference Day Community Impact award earlier this year. This \$10,000 award is given to only 10-14 individuals/organizations each year and recognizes the outstanding efforts in meeting an identified community need.

The VCSC staff and volunteers participate in the Iowa Nonprofit Summit held every two years.

Agency/Program Needs/Weaknesses: A continuing need is to secure annual funding to support the staff and programs that are delivered by the VCSC. Two full time staff, three adult volunteers, and three college student volunteers comprise the "staff" at the VCSC. The three adult volunteers assist with fiscal services, administration, and youth programming. The three college student volunteers assist with social media, the Days of Service events, and other large events. Based on the demand for VCSC programs and services this staff is oftentimes stretched in meeting these needs.

Financial Outlook: The VCSC operates primarily on ASSET funds. Anne is looking at other fundraising activities to support current and future goals of the VCSC including corporate sponsorship opportunities. An annual campaign has been established. The goal for 2016-17 is \$8,000. Additional grant funding is continually being sought. The VCSC is not eligible for any funding from the Federal Volunteer Generation Fund this year. Discussions are continuing with corporate sponsors for the various Days of Service and Story County Youth Volunteer Awards.

VCSC charges a fee for volunteer management services including consulting services for projects, and poverty simulations for Leadership Ames and the Ames Middle School.

VCSC conducts an annual appeal via mail. In 2014, the appeal brought in \$800. Last year \$1,600 was received. The goal for 2016 is \$18,000 with the mailing being sent out around December 10th. The VCSC recognizes that this is a very optimistic goal but feel that it is a goal that they must strive for in order to meet programming need/expenses.

The VCSC's ASSET request indicates at \$13,000 increase. This increase would support increased training and programming with other agencies, businesses, etc.

Internal Management: The VCSC consists of just two staff members, Anne Owens as Executive Director and Ashley Maurer as Volunteer Generation Coordinator. Last year, Ashley's position was increased to

full time status, however she still does not receive any benefits. A pay increase for her position is also overdue however this will be difficult to do without additional funds.

There are currently nine members on the board for the VCSC. Goals for this year would include recruiting several additional members that represent more diversity (ISU student, person of color).

General Assessment: The VCSC continues to provide a necessary capacity building service for the Story County community. Continued combined efforts with other agencies and community organizations and financial support are two keys to the future success of the program.