

Civic Reflections with RSVP
Mature Services, Inc.
Akron, OH
2007-2008

Introduction

In April 2007, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Summit County, Ohio, will present the first of four civic reflection series designed for volunteers in the local community. RSVP is a national organization whose mission is to connect adults over 55 with meaningful volunteer assignments that meet important community needs. The program, “Civic Reflections with RSVP,” will run from Spring through Fall 2007 and engage high school students as well as adult volunteers in conversation about a diverse set of readings, among them poetry and prose by Langston Hughes, William Carlos Williams, and Martin Luther King Jr. RSVP of Summit County is sponsored by Mature Services, Inc., a nonprofit founded in 1975 that provides employment and other support services to older adults.

Participants

Four different RSVP volunteer groups will each be involved in a four-part conversation series: members of a local continuing care retirement community; volunteers with the local Good Neighbors program, which distributes clothing and other items to the needy; volunteers at seven health care and hospital facilities in Summit County; and volunteers involved with literacy and tutoring programs. The last group will include high school service learning volunteers.

Facilitators

An RSVP volunteer, with support from others trained in facilitation.

Guiding Questions

- Why volunteer?
- Why do I care for others? How does interaction with others help us see ourselves? Why do we associate?
- What are our motives for giving to or serving others? How can we become better givers?
- What obligations do we have to a voluntary association? How do we respond to those who do not want our help?
- What’s in it for us? What are our motivations for serving? What role does inequality play in service? How does one learn compassion?

Readings

- “What We Don’t Talk About When We Don’t Talk About Service” by Adam Davis
- “Where Were We” by Dave Eggers
- “Theme for English B” by Langston Hughes
- “The Drum Major Instinct” by Martin Luther King
- “Four Traditions of Philanthropy” by Elizabeth Lynn and Susan Wisely
- “The Use of Force” by William Carlos Williams

Special Feature of this Program

Three of the conversation series will involve retired senior volunteers; the fourth will bring the seniors together with high school service learning volunteers for an intergenerational dialogue.