



# County Corner

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## The Retired & Senior Volunteer Program of Flathead County

RSVP is a program that links the skills and experience of older adults with the needs of the community. The goal of this program is to promote volunteerism by providing structure and support for the seniors who volunteer, while providing opportunities that promote an active lifestyle and increase independence. The volunteers enrolled in this program receive quarterly mileage reimbursement and supplemental liability insurance. They receive recognition through a once-a-year luncheon as well as various other social functions where small appreciation gifts are handed out and credit is given for hours served throughout the year. If you ask an RSVP



### Flathead County Retired & Senior Volunteer Program Director **BOBBIE KELLY**



Bobbie was hired as RSVP director in 2004. Prior to accepting her position for RSVP, she worked for the Lantis Corporation in long-term care and assisted living. She brings a love and appreciation for the seniors who built this country. With her open door policy, she enjoys the anecdotes and history lessons related by the volunteers, some of whom have ties to the Flathead Valley dating back to the late 1800's. Her respect of the history of the area combined with her admiration for those who built and strengthened our country make her a perfect match for the special needs of the Senior Volunteer Program and the communities it serves. Away from her many activities as director, Bobbie enjoys cooking for her husband, two sons, and all of their friends and extended family.

### The friendly, helpful staff at the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program of Flathead County.

volunteer why they commit so much of their time to helping others, you will get various responses. All, however, have one thing in common. They love what they do, whether it's delivering meals to shut-in seniors or mentoring a youth who is struggling. They all feel compassionate about the cause they are serving.

The Retired & Senior Volunteer Program began operating in Flathead County in 1973, with approximately 30 volunteers. Since then, the program has grown to 526 volunteers serving over 50,000 hours to local non-profit agencies. Flathead County is the local sponsor providing funds for employee salaries and benefits, office space and storage, and some funds for operating expenses. The remainder of the funding comes from a federal grant and a local grant from the United Way. Any shortfalls in funding must be raised through local donations and fundraising events such as the RSVP annual golf tournament held in June. The office staff consists of one full-time director, one full-time volunteer coordinator and one part-time office assistant.

Volunteers who express interest in joining RSVP are given a list of available work locations and information on the requirements of being a member. It is then their choice to pick a work site and decide how many hours they would like to serve. Training, if needed, is provided by the worksite. Currently, RSVP has volunteers serving over 60 workstations throughout Flathead County. Those sites include: services to

children, seniors and families in need, local schools, libraries, museums, hospitals, many county offices, Habitat for Humanity, Meals on Wheels, the food banks, Agency on Aging, tax assistance, driving instruction for seniors through AARP, the American Red Cross, the Humane Society, senior care facilities and many more. We are constantly trying to improve service to the community by increasing placement opportunities for volunteers and providing more services to agencies that serve the public.

If you've ever been to the Northwest Montana Fair, you have probably seen RSVP volunteers at the entrance gates handing out ribbons to seniors for free admittance on Seniors' Day. They can also be found at the senior rest area, where shade and refreshments are provided. Buses from all the assisted living and convalescent homes bring in their residents and box lunches to the covered area provided by the fairgrounds staff. They socialize, enjoy cookies and beverages served by the RSVP staff and volunteers before making their way to the exhibit areas. Local grocery stores and bakeries provide baked goods and refreshments for this event. We are very proud of this long-standing tradition, and of all the RSVP volunteers who make personal sacrifices to serve their community proudly.

Anyone interested in volunteering, or any non-profit organization needing help, is encouraged to contact the RSVP office staff at 758-5712 for more information.

*"The needs of the future take precedence over the demands of the present."*

— County Commissioners: Joe Brennehan, Gary Hall and Dale Lauman