

# MAKING THAT CONNECTION POSSIBLE

**Agency:** Common Good  
RSVP

**Program:** Volunteer  
Connections

**Service:** Connects seniors to volunteer experiences at local non-profits, as well as the *Reasons to Write* program doing tutoring, and reading and writing assistance

**Need:** Retired community members have so much to offer our community. Their life experiences, knowledge and talents continue to make our community great. But sometimes, the challenge is just getting connected. RSVP makes the connection between retired community members and places and people that need their help, creating meaning, and a wonderful sense of serving and purpose. The volunteers, the non-profits, and the community reap the benefits

**Impact:** This year alone, **950** RSVP volunteers will provide **62,000 hours** of service to the community with programs like these and lending a hand at non-profits. That **volunteer time is valued at \$1,292,700**

Every two weeks, 4<sup>th</sup> grade students at Bridges Elementary School would see the shiny, decorated box of purple pen pal folders sitting on their teacher's desk and get squirmy, knowing there was a letter written especially for them in that box. At the end of the school year, the students got to meet their pen pals. That day, Kyle\* stood in front of the group and shared what his pen pal, Kay, meant to him. Through their letters, Kay, who was a book publisher, learned that Kyle loved hockey and sent him a book she had written about hockey. When Kyle wrote her that he dreams of one day training whales, she sent him a whale book, and encouraged him to dream of possibilities like an internship at Sea World. "She makes me feel like I can do anything I dream of," Kyle said.

Each story, as with each letter, brought the students confidence and development in their writing skills, along with new friendships and bonds. The students learned from the volunteers about different types of hobbies, places to visit in the world, and things never before imagined, like the Korean War veteran who wrote his pen pal about how he built an airplane.



But these relationships have benefits for both sides. Not only do kids get a chance to improve their writing skills and reading comprehension, while being exposed to a whole new generation of thoughts and experiences (not to mention good, old-fashioned letter writing), the volunteers experience an improved quality of life when a new vibrant young person is introduced in their life. They experience a feeling of being needed, doing something purposeful, and new adventures. "I feel through our correspondence I've found new hope and purpose" said Howard, an RSVP pen pal.

Through RSVP, retired volunteers can get involved in the community and are encouraged to participate in ongoing weekly volunteer opportunities. Non-profits who rely on volunteers to keep costs down find a wealth of resources in RSVP's volunteer connections.

Your donation to Greater Mankato Area United Way helps ensure that people like Kay and Howard can be matched up with opportunities that are meaningful and improve their quality of life, while enriching the community and the lives of those around them.

\* Child's name has been changed for confidentiality