

May 17, 1977

Welfare

James E. Packer
Deputy Director

Manpower

Roberto de la Selva
Deputy Director

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Mr. Paul Wolven, City Manager
City of Oxnard
305 West Third Street
Oxnard, California 93030

Dear Mr. Wolven:

I am writing to explore the possibilities of the City sponsoring the "Retired Senior Volunteer Program" which is currently active in Oxnard. I would like to begin by giving you a little background as to why the R.S.V.P. program was sponsored by the County in the first place.

In 1972 a group of Oxnard citizens formed a committee to organize a Senior volunteer program under ACTION, the federal agency which funds R.S.V.P. At that time there was one other R.S.V.P. program in the County. It was in Thousand Oaks and was sponsored by the Conejo Recreation and Park District. They still retain that sponsorship. ACTION agreed to fund a grant for Oxnard if a local sponsor could be found. One was not forthcoming and the County's Health Services Agency was approached to see if the program could be placed with the Senior Citizen activities of that agency. Health Services, recognizing that volunteerism is a meaningful way for older persons to remain active, alert and healthy, agreed to sponsor the program until a city sponsor could be found.

In November 1975, the County's Senior Citizen programs were transferred to the Public Social Services Agency. It has been the intent of PSSA to continue to seek an Oxnard sponsor for the R.S.V.P. grant. Last year about this time I contacted Bill Higgins, then with your office, and inquired about the possibilities of the program being placed under the Oxnard Recreation and Park Department as part of their Senior programming. Bill agreed with me in concept that such a program as R.S.V.P. probably would be more appropriate as a city recreation activity than a County activity. However, he said that the department could not accommodate the program at that time as part of their budget.

PSSA has agreed to continue to sponsor the program through the current contract year which ends November 30, 1977. It is the feeling of the County Executive's office that the Oxnard R.S.V.P. program, while worthwhile, does not have the countywide impact which would warrant continued County support. The current grant and subsequent grants carry a 30 percent non-federal obligation. With a total budget of \$42,000, the program receives \$30,000 from ACTION with the remaining \$12,000 being contributed by the sponsoring agency and the community. This contract year PSSA is providing \$4,000 in services and supplies and the community has been asked to contribute the remaining \$8,000. Program staff and the advisory committee have been successful in raising \$3,000 to date.

The R.S.V.P. program currently has 220 persons aged 60 and older enrolled, with ap-

proximately 160 active in any given month. For their hours of community service, the volunteers receive 14 cents a mile to and from their homes and the work stations. They are also reimbursed for bus fare and up to \$1.35 for lunch if their work schedule takes them over the noon hour. Work stations include a variety of community agencies who have agreed to place the volunteers in meaningful activities.

The success of the Thousand Oaks R.S.V.P. program under the sponsorship of the Conejo Recreation and Park District and the Ojai R.S.V.P. program under the sponsorship of HELP OF OJAI, INC., clearly demonstrates the advantages in a more local involvement with programs of this type. There is a sense of "belonging" which is not evident under county sponsorship.

It should be mentioned in closing that the focus of the R.S.V.P. program is to attract those elderly persons who are not normally motivated on their own to become active in their community. Some have cultural backgrounds which preclude this orientation towards community service. Many of the people recruited for the program have entered their retirement years ill prepared to cope constructively with leisure time. Mental Health professionals warn that boredom due to inactivity can lead to depression and physical and mental deterioration, especially in the later years of the aging process when family and friends are lost through distance and death. I feel that the R.S.V.P. concept is an important link in the network of services to the elderly. I sincerely hope that the City of Oxnard will see its worth and consider it an appropriate function for the City to sponsor.

The two member staff of the Oxnard R.S.V.P. program are regular County employees and have expressed a desire to continue their employment with the County. It is, therefore, only the program itself which we hope to secure in the community. Members of the R.S.V.P. Advisory Committee would be glad to talk to you further about the program in greater depth than I have done in this letter.

Sincerely yours,

JAMES E. ISOM
Director

Nancy A. Steinhilper
NANCY A. STEINHELPER
Supervisor, Adult & Family Services

cc: Tsujio Kato, Mayor