



Institute for Senior Professionals

December 29, 1999

Vicki Baldwin
Project Director RSVP
207 Hospital DR., NE
Ft Walton Beach, FL 32548

Dear Ms Baldwin,

Per your December 17, 1999 request to Dr Richburg, a copy of the America Reads assessment done by the Institute for Senior Professionals is attached. As you suggested, this assessment was kept brief and to the point. If you need additional amplification please let me know.

Thank you for letting us be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Donald P. Litke
Chairman

Atch: assessment

cc: OWCC, Dr Richburg
AmeriCorps, Susie Flood
OWCC Foundation, file

Okaloosa-Walton Community College
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To whom it may concern:

The Institute for Senior Professionals (ISP) at Okaloosa-Walton Community College is an organization committed to providing a means for talented retired individuals to continue to make contributions to the community through participation in community problem solving, participation in economic development of the college district and through volunteer participation in college activities.

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) was recently requested by the Corporation for National Service to provide an independent assessment of one of their programs for inclusion in their request for a FY 2000 grant. RSVP, in turn, requested the ISP to perform this assessment and suggested the "America Reads" program for evaluation. Since we have had recent personal contact with the America Reads program we agreed to do so. Our assessment of this program follows.

In June 1999 the ISP was asked to provide a member on a Florida Commission on Community Service Quality Assurance Audit Team. Our task was to conduct a quality review of the OWCC-AmeriCorps program. This program is focused on providing remedial reading assistance in local elementary schools. This past year they placed 28 members in 21 local schools to provide this service. Our team visited 7 schools in Okaloosa and Walton counties and met with principals, teachers, members, parents and children over a three day period.

One notable finding, which came from our review, was that the AmeriCorps program, although extremely strong and successful, is only a part of a larger, more comprehensive reading program in these schools. We found, germane to this discussion, that a very valuable element of the reading program was the large number of volunteers who give of their time to assist the teachers, AmeriCorps members, and others in providing this service to the children. These volunteers primarily come from the ranks of RSVP and their efforts are coordinated under the umbrella of America Reads by a RSVP/VISTA recruiter/coordinator. This coordinated approach to reading enhancement by full time professional teachers, Americorps members and America Reads volunteers produces synergies not otherwise possible and has resulted in a model remedial reading program with outstanding results. All those we met with agreed that volunteers are essential to ensuring the community members themselves, not just educational professionals, are involved with our children.

This particular community has an extremely strong volunteer ethos, and seniors, in particular, are eager to provide service to those who have needs. But volunteer programs need structure and that is what America Reads provides---a coordination mechanism to get the volunteer the right training and ensure that he or she is teamed with the right teachers and/or AmeriCorps members at the right school with the right children.

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The ISP has also recently been involved as part of a task force helping the OWCC-AmeriCorps program prepare a Sustainability Plan. It is noteworthy that RSVP and America Reads personnel were major contributors to this effort which further indicates their role as a vital part of the larger, integrated effort to provide remedial reading to needy children.

We of the Institute for Senior Professionals strongly endorse the RSVP America Reads program and urge its continued funding.

Sincerely,



Donald P. Litke
Chairman

cc: OWCC, Dr Richburg
AmeriCorps, Susie Flood
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