

Carson City's RSVP wins Governor's Points of Light Award

October 12, 2017

One of Carson City's volunteer programs won a prestigious award last week among other statewide recipients.

The 2017 Governor's Points of Light Awards honors individuals, community-based organizations and businesses for their contributions through volunteer service. The Nevada Rural Retired and Senior Volunteer Program's Veterans VIP Program received the award Oct. 5 for its volunteers serving veterans.

Other award recipients were located in Henderson, Mesquite, Las Vegas and Reno.

"It's an exciting thing to be a part of," said Susan Haas, RSVP executive director and CEO. "For our veterans and volunteers, receiving this hits home."

In Carson City, there are 200 active volunteers in the program with 1,000 registered statewide.

The program is a collaboration with numerous groups dedicated to assisting veterans, including volunteer opportunities for veterans, using resources through community partnership building, sponsorships, and expanding options in rural areas around the state.

This includes involvement with local businesses such as Friends In Service Helping and the local Rotary Club to gather items for homeless veterans. AmeriCorp VISTA and the Carson City Sheriff's Office also partnered with RSVP's program to provide wellness checks, emergency medical transportation and a referral system for veterans.

"I think what makes us stand out is the diversity we have," Haas said. "We work to match the talent in need with the community."

The program also further promotes awareness of veteran issues in Carson City, as the veteran suicide rate is known to be high in the state (<http://www.nevadaappeal.com/news/local/mental-health-in-carson-city-carson-city-v-i-p-s-focuses-on-helping-veterans/>), with one committing suicide every 2.8 days according to the Department of Health and Human Services Division of Public and Behavioral Health.

Haas said another benefit of the program is veterans are given the chance to discuss and provide opportunities for suicide prevention, awareness and training education.

In partnership with the Nevada Office of Suicide Prevention, the program hosted an Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training Suicide prevention training event in March.

"We let them know they are not forgotten and will never be alone," she said. "But I think what also helps is the support in Carson City. There's not a lot of suicide in this town and there's more of a high rate for a need of caregivers, benefits, and services in the area."

Although the program's resources are making an impact for local veterans and even active military members, Haas said volunteers are in need for the program.

"Some of our volunteers are getting older and need help now, too," she said. "We also have some inactive volunteers and we would like to get them back."

To maximize resources, the program will be holding a suicide awareness fundraiser Jan. 20.

The VIP program will soon provide a disabled veteran with a service dog and is a project of a Carson City High School senior.

Award recipients were selected by a panel of leaders in business, government, and non profits from across the state based on criteria showing how their volunteerism exemplifies achievement, need, innovation, mobilization and endurance. Carson City's Muscle Powered and Sable Shaw of Capital City C.I.R.C.L.E.S. Initiative were also finalists for the award.

Since its launch 43 years ago, RSVP has also been honored by the Chamber of Commerce awards for outstanding community agency; United Way, March of Dimes and Red Cross awards for outstanding community service; Governor's Honor Role of Excellence in volunteerism; and Linda Carr Caregiver Awards to several RSVP Respite Volunteers for exceptional service in the field of care giving.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

The Nevada Rural RSVP Program, Inc., is looking for volunteers for its VIP Veterans program and many more.

Visit nevadaruralrsvp.org/volunteer-opportunities (<http://nevadaruralrsvp.org/volunteer-opportunities>) to apply.