



# Accomplishments of the Senior Companion Program

*June 2005*

Corporation for  
NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE 

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Senior Corps is a network of programs that tap the experience, skills, and talents of older citizens to meet community challenges. Through its three programs – Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and RSVP (the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) – more than half a million Americans age 55 and over assist local nonprofits, public agencies, and faith-based organizations in carrying out their missions. Senior Corps is administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency that also oversees AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve America. Together with the USA Freedom Corps, the Corporation is working to build a culture of service, citizenship, and responsibility in America.

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## Contents

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Executive Summary . . . . .	2
Section 1: Senior Companion Volunteers – How and Where They Serve . . .	4
Section 2: Senior Companion Volunteers – The Benefits they Deliver . . . . .	6
Section 3: How Volunteer Stations Use Effective Practices to Manage Senior Companion Volunteers . . . . .	8
Section 4: How Volunteer Stations Recruit Senior Companions . . . . .	10
Section 5: Challenges Faced by Community Organizations Working with Senior Companion Program Grantees and Volunteers . . . . .	11
Section 6: Senior Companion Program Stations’ Capacities to Involve More Volunteers . . . . .	13
Section 7: Differences between Types of Community Agencies Serving as Stations . . . . .	14
Section 8: Senior Companion Program Volunteer Accomplishments . . . . .	14



# Senior Companion Program National Accomplishment Report

## *Executive Summary*

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### **About this Report**

This report summarizes the community service accomplishments from the Senior Companion Program grantees and volunteers for the period of fiscal year 2004. Findings used to develop this report were gathered through a national survey process. The survey asked about ways in which Senior Companions serve in the community, the benefits they bring to the organizations where they serve, and other information related to community volunteering and service.

### **About the Senior Companion Program**

The Senior Companion Program is authorized under Title II, Part C, of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973, as amended (Public Law 93-113). The Senior Companion Program provides a way for limited-income people age 60 and older to provide assistance and friendship to adults who have difficulty with daily living tasks, such as grocery shopping and bill paying. Senior Companions spend from 15 to 40 hours a week helping two to four adult clients live independently in their own homes. Senior Companions provide relief to caregivers and alert doctors and family members to potential problems. In return for their service, Senior Companions receive a stipend of \$2.65 an hour, accident and liability insurance and meals while on duty, reimbursement for transportation, and monthly training.

### **Study Overview and Methodology**

The Senior Companion Program Activities and Accomplishments Survey collected information on SCP community service activities for a one-year period from October 1, 2002 to September 30, 2003. The last Accomplishments

## Accomplishments of the Senior Companion Program

Survey, conducted in 2000, recorded information on Senior Corps programs during the October 1999-September 2000 period. The Senior Corps Accomplishments Survey conducted in 2004 built upon the 2000 version. This survey addresses two primary topics:

- Volunteer management issues, such as the recruitment, management, use, and evaluation of volunteers; and
- Estimates of how many volunteers spent how much time engaged in what types of service, and how many people benefit.

Volunteer management was not addressed in the 1999-2000 study.

The Accomplishments Survey was distributed in questionnaire form to a sample of 500 volunteer stations, the organizations that manage Senior Corps volunteers. The sample of stations was selected randomly, based on the service activities they offer, and the responses were weighted for nonresponse and nonparticipation to produce national totals. While this procedure gives unbiased estimates of program activities at the national level, the reliability of the data reported here may be greatly affected by the number of respondents to each question. When the sample size is largest (as with the volunteer management questions, which every station answered) the data are most reliable; for the counts of individual activities found in Section 8, they are least reliable, because only a few stations in the sample engage in some types of service. Thus, the results listed here should be interpreted with caution.

### SCP Highlights

<b>224</b> Senior Companion Program grantees	<b>\$45.2 million</b> federal funds in FY 2004
<b>16,355</b> Senior Companion Program volunteers	<b>\$24.7 million</b> non-federal funds in FY 2004
<b>14</b> million hours served	
<b>5,000</b> Volunteer Stations	
<b>Hundreds of thousands</b> of clients served, primarily frail seniors	

## Section 1: Senior Companion Volunteers – How and Where They Serve

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***This section presents an overview of Senior Companions in service, including the number of volunteers, the hours served, the number of clients, primarily frail seniors, they served, and information about the faith-based and community-based organizations that serve as placement sites for the volunteers, often known as “volunteer stations.”***

Senior Companions are placed in a volunteer station network of more than 4,000 individual organizations, including social service agencies and departments of aging services. In turn, the Senior Companions are most often deployed to deliver their services in the homes of their clients, thus providing much needed independent living assistance. The Senior Companion Program grantee develops the relationship with the volunteer stations, and facilitates placement of Senior Companions in ways that are helpful to the organization and satisfying to the volunteer.

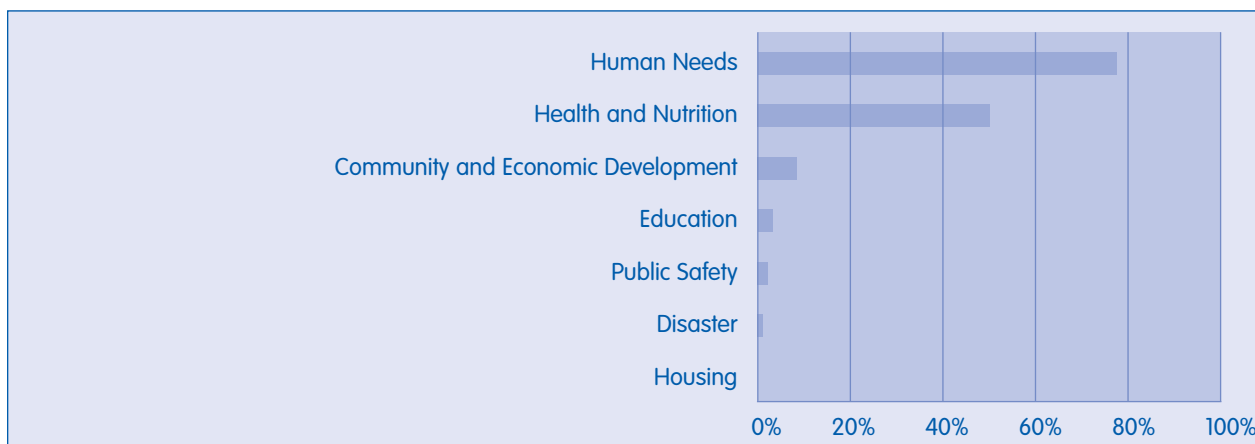
- Social service organizations and human needs agencies comprise 25% of all volunteer stations, the largest single percentage by type.<sup>1</sup>

- Multi-purpose centers are the next largest percentage of volunteer stations, accounting for 23% of all stations.
- Community development nonprofits represent 21% of volunteer stations.
- By type of geographic community:
  - 60% of volunteer stations are in urban areas
  - 25% of volunteer stations are in suburban areas
  - 14% of volunteer stations are in rural areas
- 16% of Senior Companion Program volunteer stations are faith-based organizations.
- Senior Companions help their volunteer stations to meet a wide variety of needs in primarily human needs and health/nutrition. In this report, the needs are distributed among seven separate “Issue Areas” as illustrated in Figure 1 and Figure 2 below.
- When measured by the percentage of Senior Companions serving, and by the distribution of hours served, the “Human Needs” issue area accounts for the single largest block, with 68% of the Senior Companions assigned and 58% of the hours served. The second largest block is Health and Nutrition, accounting for 44% of volunteers and 38% of the hours served.

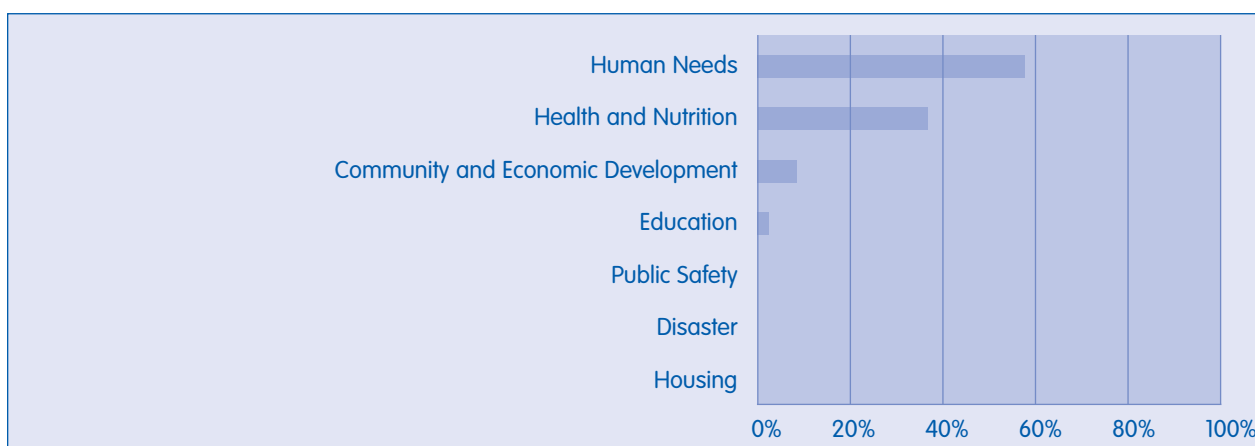
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<sup>1</sup> All stations were asked to describe themselves using a long list of organizational types. Respondents could choose as many descriptions as they wanted from this list.

**Figure 1: Percentage of Volunteers Serving in each Issue Area**



**Figure 2: Distribution of Senior Companion Hours to each Issue Area**



### Number of Clients Served by Senior Companions<sup>2</sup>

According to volunteer station supervisors, Senior Companions serve hundreds of thousands of clients.

- In **Health/Nutrition**, Senior Companions served 257,000 clients
- In **Human Needs**, Senior Companions served 111,000 clients
- In **Community/Economic** Development, Senior Companions served 77,000 clients
- In **Education**, Senior Companions served 22,000 clients
- In **Housing**, Senior Companions served 5,400 clients
- In **Disaster Preparedness**, Senior Companions served 1,800 clients
- In **Public Safety**, Senior Companions served 1,100 clients

<sup>2</sup> Since the same person may receive multiple types of services, it is not accurate to add these numbers to derive an estimate of the total number of individuals served by SCP volunteers.



## Section 2: Senior Companion Volunteers – The Benefits they Deliver

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***Finding: Senior Companions deliver tangible benefits to help the volunteer stations meet their service missions in the community.***

According to a majority of volunteer station supervisors, Senior Companions help the volunteer stations better serve the community “to a great extent” by:

- Expanding the types of services to clients
- Improving the quality of services

In addition, a majority of station supervisors credited the Senior Companions with helping to:

- Increasing the number of clients served
- Helping free up the time of paid staff
- Increasing public support for the program
- Recruiting non-Senior Companion Program volunteers
- Reducing the time and effort needed to recruit volunteers.

Figure 4 (below) shows results from a nationwide sample of charities<sup>3</sup> that rely on volunteer service. Compared to charities on the whole, most Senior Companion Program station supervisors realize at least some value from their volunteers, although

not as many station supervisors perceive these benefits “to a great extent.”

### **Other benefits described by volunteer station supervisors**

Senior Companions:

- Improve the quality of their clients’ lives by providing social and emotional support to their clients, including companionship and cognitive stimulation and practical support, such as transportation services to enhance independence.
- Serve as additional pairs of “eyes and ears” to watch over their clients. As phrased by one station supervisor, Senior Companions serve as “a safety net through their observational and reporting skills to catch residents early in a decline so treatment intervention comes prior to a significant decline.”
- Help to extend volunteer station’s reach to serve homebound or less mobile seniors which “helps keep clients independent and living in their own home.” A station supervisor commented that Senior Companions “allow a small staff to provide home-based services to many people not otherwise served in that manner.”

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<sup>3</sup> Based on the results of the 2003 Volunteer Management Capacity Study, which surveyed 1,753 charities in the United States on the benefits and challenges of effectively recruiting and managing volunteers. For details, see the final report: Urban Institute, 2004, *Volunteer Management Capacity in America’s Charities and Congregations: A Briefing Report*, Washington, D.C.



Figure 3: Benefits of Senior Companion Program Volunteers reported by station supervisors

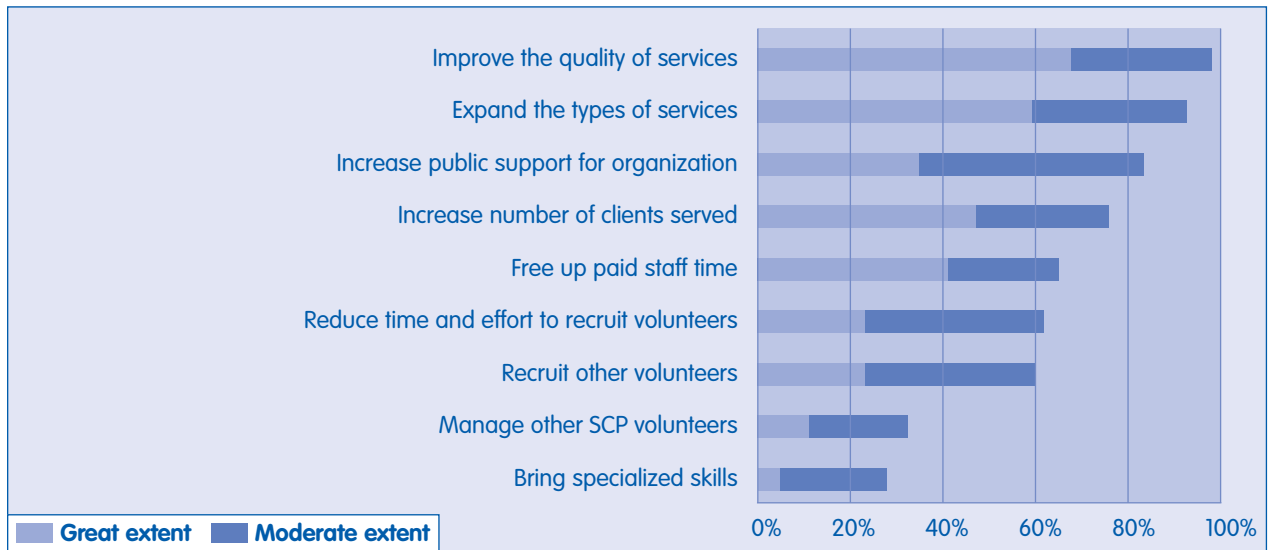


Figure 4: Volunteer Benefits as reported by Charities



## Section 3: How Volunteer Stations Use Effective Practices to Manage Senior Companion Volunteers

**Finding: The majority of volunteer station supervisors follow the “Effective Practices” identified by sector leaders.**

Some of the most effective practices of volunteer management are listed in the graph in Figure 5 below along with the percentage of Senior Companion Program volunteer station supervisors who reported using these practices.<sup>4</sup>

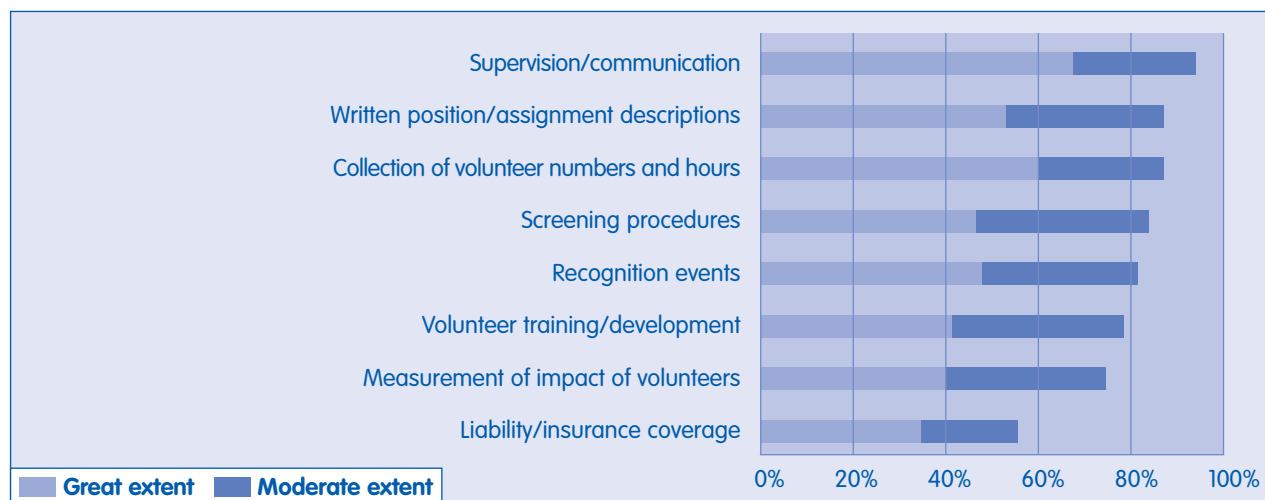
The majority of Senior Companion station supervisors report that almost all of these practices are used by their organizations. A majority of respondents said that they were employing the following practices “to a great extent”:

- Supervision/communication with volunteers
- Written position/assignment descriptions
- Collection of information about the volunteer numbers and hours

Figure 6 shows that Senior Companion station supervisors are about as likely as charities in general are to make use of these management practices. The division of responsibilities between projects and stations probably account for many of the differences, such as for collection of information about volunteer numbers and hours, and the screening and matching of volunteers.<sup>5</sup>

Three practices in particular have been found to be positively associated with volunteer retention: volunteer screening, volunteer training, and volunteer recognition. Compared to charities overall, Senior Companion Program stations are about as likely to use volunteer screening to a great extent, but are considerably more likely to use the second two practices to a great extent.

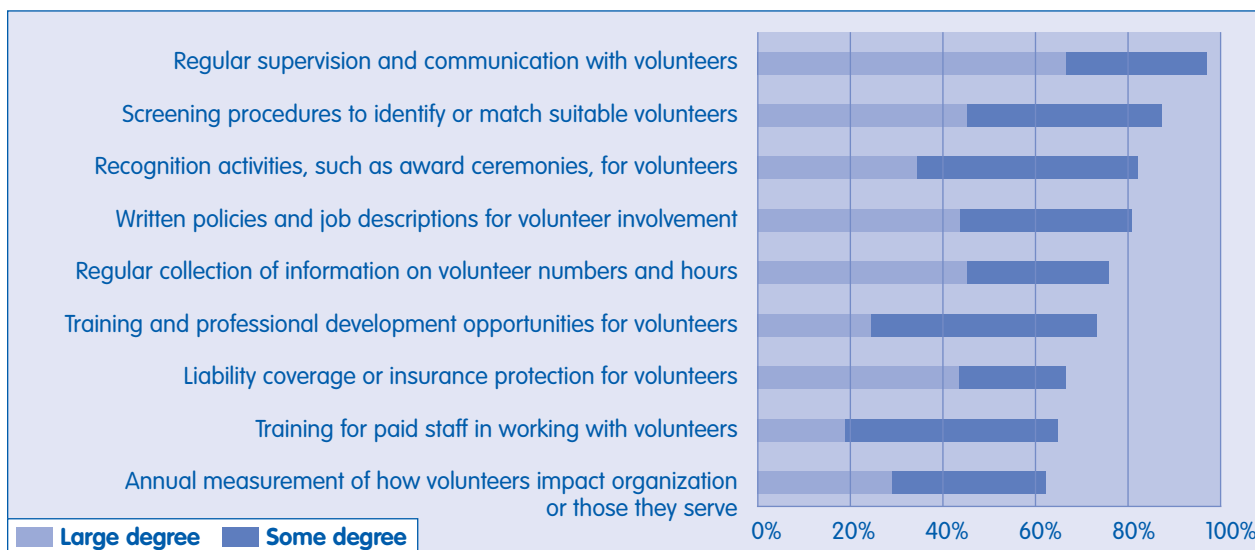
**Figure 5: Management Practices Used with Senior Companion Program Volunteers**



<sup>4</sup> Urban Institute (2004). The practices include: written policies and assignment descriptions, liability coverage/insurance protection, recognition activities for volunteers, collection of information on the number of volunteers and the hours they work, annual measurement of the impacts of volunteers, training and development of volunteers, screening to identify volunteers and to match them to assignments, and regular supervision and communication with volunteers.

<sup>5</sup> In Senior Corps, projects are chiefly responsible for volunteer matching.

Figure 6: Management Practices among America's Charities<sup>6</sup>



The best prepared and most effective volunteer programs are those with paid staff who dedicate a substantial portion of their time to volunteer management.<sup>7</sup> The greater the amount of time paid staff spent on volunteer management, the more likely these agencies were to use effective management practices, and the more capable they were of managing more volunteers.

A majority of Senior Companion Program station supervisors report that volunteer management in their organizations is the responsibility of paid staff.

- 80 percent have paid staff who manage their volunteers
- 15 percent have volunteers who manage other volunteers

Among charities with volunteer organizations in general, 64 percent of charities have a paid volunteer coordinator, while 21 percent had a volunteer who coordinates other volunteers.

Senior Companion Volunteer Leaders recruited, trained, or coordinated 1,600 other volunteers.

<sup>6</sup> Based on the results of the 2003 Volunteer Management Capacity Study, which surveyed 1,753 charities in the United States on the benefits and challenges of effectively recruiting and managing volunteers.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

## Section 4: How Volunteer Stations Recruit Senior Companions

**Finding: Volunteer station supervisors generally use personal interactions and other “low-tech” methods to recruit volunteers.**

The most popular method of volunteer recruitment (used by 91% of the stations) is word of mouth.

A majority of station supervisors also report using:

- Public speaking before groups
- Registering with other organizations to receive referrals
- Special events, such as volunteer fairs and open houses
- Newspapers, trade papers, billboards or fliers

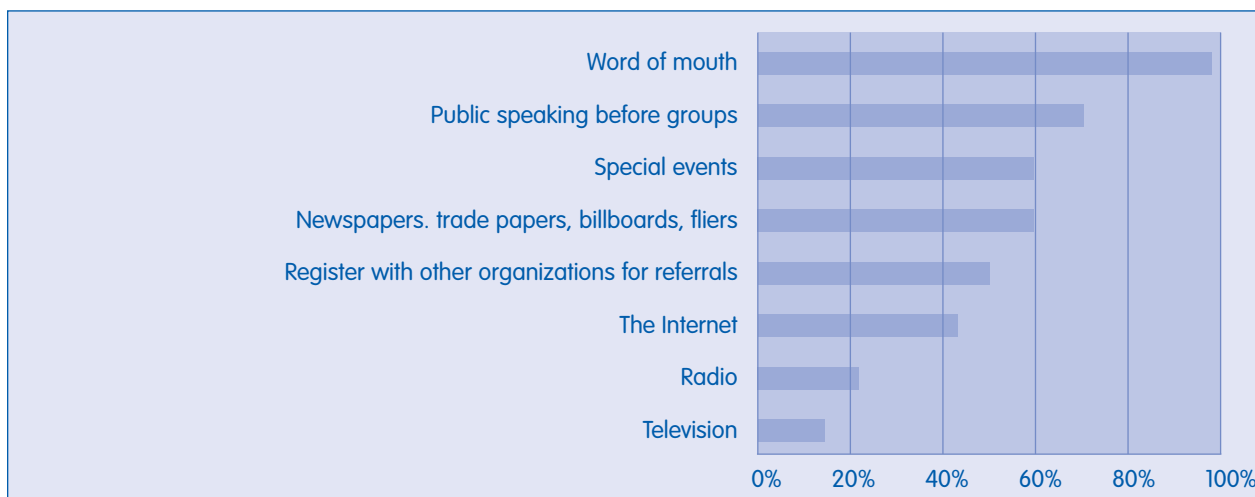
Few station supervisors report using the Senior Corps JASON recruitment system, other internet recruiting systems, radio, or television. Figure 7 presents the results of this question.

Figure 8 shows that word of mouth is also the most widely used tactic among all charities. Like FGP stations, few charities use paid media advertising (radio, television), but use of the Internet is more widespread in general than it is among FGP stations.

**Figure 7: Methods Used to Recruit Senior Companion Program Volunteers**



Figure 8: Methods Used by America’s Charities to Recruit Volunteers<sup>8</sup>



## Section 5: Challenges Faced by Community Organizations Working with Senior Companion Program Grantees and Volunteers

**Volunteer station supervisors were asked about challenges of working with Senior Companion Program grantees and Senior Companion volunteers. They were also asked to classify the challenges as “major challenges” or “minor challenges”.**

**Key findings:**

- Eighty percent of volunteer station supervisors indicated no major challenges.
- Twenty percent listed increasing the number of Senior Companions in the program as a major challenge.
- Fifteen percent cited lack of funds to support volunteers as a major challenge.
- Eleven percent listed finding volunteers with the right skills and experience as a major challenge.
- Volunteer station supervisors were more likely to report challenges as minor in nature.
- The most frequently minor challenges mentioned by station supervisors include:
  - Increasing the number of volunteers in the program – 31%
  - Finding volunteers with the right skills and experience – 34%
  - Finding volunteers for special schedules – 28%
  - Lack of funds to support volunteers – 27%
  - Regulatory, legal or liability constraints – 20%

<sup>8</sup> Based on the results of the 2003 Volunteer Management Capacity Study, which surveyed 1,753 charities in the United States on the benefits and challenges of effectively recruiting and managing volunteers.

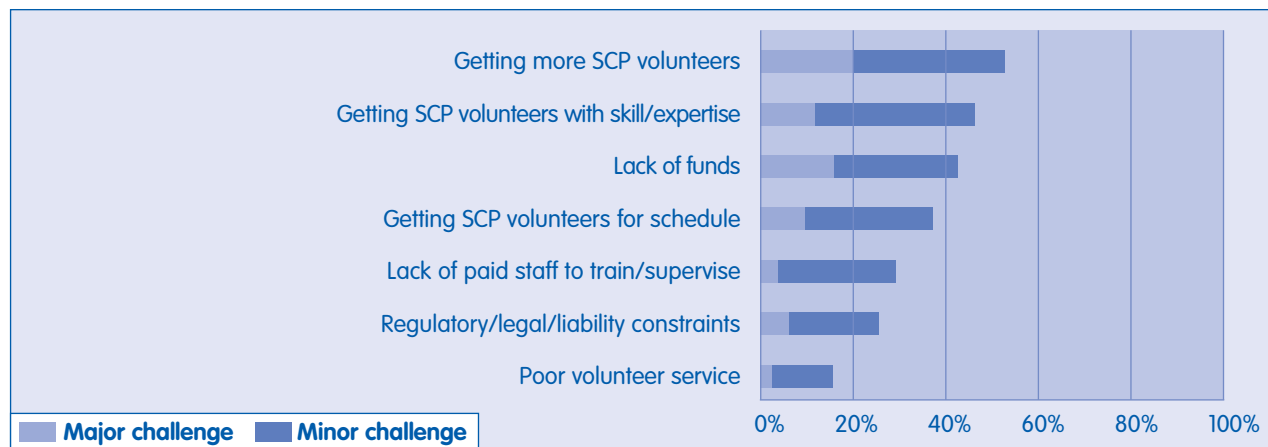
## Accomplishments of the Senior Companion Program

Senior Companion Program station supervisors are less likely to mention either major or minor challenges, compared to charities in general. This, too, may be because Senior Companion Program projects and stations share the responsibility for recruiting volunteers. However, charities nationwide are much more likely to mention the problems caused by volunteers, compared to Senior Companion Program station supervisors.<sup>9</sup>

### Other challenges reported by Senior Companion Program volunteer station supervisors:

- Lack of volunteer transportation: some Senior Companions do not drive; some stations are located in rural areas and volunteers are not willing or able to travel long distances; and gas price increases are a hardship.
- Volunteer age and income restrictions: some station supervisors cited as too restrictive

**Figure 9: Challenges working with Senior Companion Program grantees**



**Figure 10: Challenges Working with Volunteers as reported by America's Charities<sup>10</sup>**



<sup>9</sup> Differences in question wording between the two surveys makes a direct comparison difficult.

<sup>10</sup> Based on the results of the 2003 Volunteer Management Capacity Study, which surveyed 1,753 charities in the United States on the benefits and challenges of effectively recruiting and managing volunteers.

## Section 6: Senior Companion Program Stations' Capacities to Involve More Volunteers

*Several questions in the survey concerned ways in which community agencies could increase their capacities to involve volunteers. The majority of station supervisors did not indicate that using any of these methods would increase volunteer involvement "to a great extent".*

*For two of the methods, at least forty percent of station supervisors gave this answer:*

- Forty-two percent of station supervisors indicated that more information about people in their community who want to volunteer would increase volunteer involvement "to a great extent".
- Forty-one percent reported that a paid volunteer (e.g., an AmeriCorps\*VISTA) with responsibility

for volunteer recruitment and management could increase volunteer involvement "to a great extent".

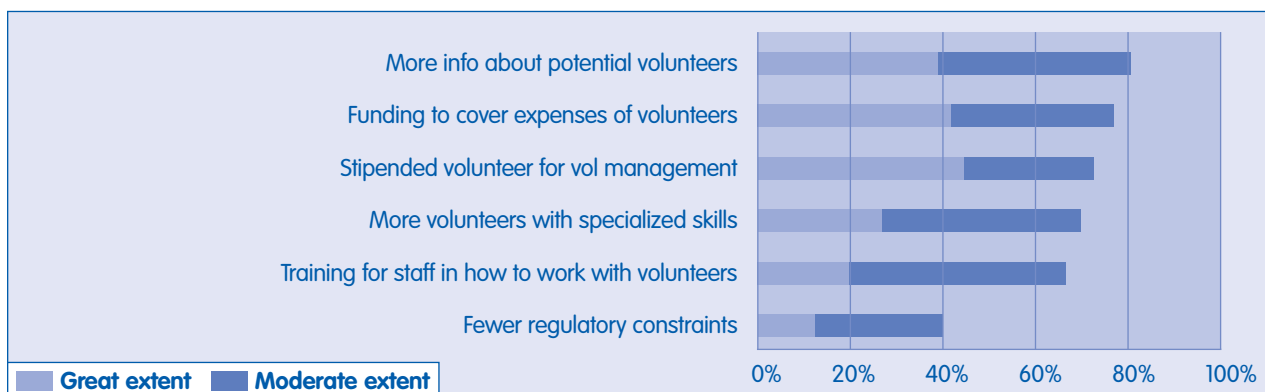
The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 11.

Senior Companion Program station supervisors were not asked to address their station's need for recruitment and management, unlike the national sample of charities. However, Figure 12 suggests that Senior Companion Program stations are typical of American charities in their capacity to involve more volunteers, except that they are less likely to say that any particular method would lead to increased volunteer involvement.

**Figure 11: Factors Reported to Help Increase Volunteer Stations' Capacity to Involve Volunteers**



**Figure 12: Factors Reported by America's Charities to Increase their Capacity to Involve Volunteers<sup>11</sup>**



<sup>11</sup> Based on the results of the 2003 Volunteer Management Capacity Study, which surveyed 1,753 charities in the United States on the benefits and challenges of effectively recruiting and managing volunteers.



## Section 7: Differences between Types of Community Agencies Serving as Stations

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The survey results were analyzed to see whether the type of organization was related to the volunteer management capacity of Senior Companion Program stations. Senior Companion Program stations were categorized in three ways: faith-based or non-faith-based affiliations; location in urban or rural areas; and many or few Senior Companions.<sup>12</sup>

- In general, station supervisors of faith-based and non-faith-based volunteer stations report the same benefits, challenges and volunteer management practices.
- Station supervisors in urban and rural areas report differences in the use of specific recruitment and management practices, with stations in urban areas generally more likely to report using these practices than stations in rural areas.
- Station supervisors of volunteer stations with more Senior Companion volunteers report more benefits from volunteers, greater use of specific volunteer management practices, and greater use of a variety of recruitment methods than supervisors of volunteer stations with fewer Senior Companion volunteers.

## Section 8: Senior Companion Program Volunteer Accomplishments

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***This chapter presents the accomplishments or outputs attributable to Senior Companions in the Issue Areas covered in the Accomplishments Survey: Education, Health/Nutrition, Human Needs and Housing, Public Safety, and Disaster.***

### **Health/Nutrition**

*Fifty percent of the Senior Companion volunteers provide at least one service in the area of Health/Nutrition. They devote about 37 percent of the total Senior Companion hours served to activities in this area.*

### **In-Home Care**

- 5,400 volunteers spent a total of 3,288,000 hours assisting 89,200 frail adults with grooming, dressing, and other daily.
- 5,700 volunteers spent a total 3,343,000 hours providing services such as light housekeeping, meal preparation and nutritional education to 79,900 frail adults in their homes.
- 5,800 volunteers spent a total of 3,116,000 hours peer counseling, writing letters, visiting, listening, reading and speaking with 64,500 frail adults to ease their feelings of loneliness.

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<sup>12</sup> "Large" stations have a number of Senior Companions greater than the sample median (4 volunteers); "small" stations have one, two or three Senior Companions.

### Delivery of Health Services

- 1,000 volunteers spent a total of 545,000 hours providing services at clinics, hospitals, mobile-units, skilled nursing facilities, and adult day care centers to 86,200 frail adults.
- 2,100 volunteers worked 818,000 hours helping 13,800 frail adults prepare for/recover from operations.
- 2,000 volunteers spent a total of 783,000 hours providing escort and support services to 6700 frail adults.

### Mental Health

- 1,000 volunteers spent a total of 557,000 hours providing support services to 10,700 frail adults with mental health impairments.

### Physical Disabilities

- 1,700 volunteers spent a total of 710,000 hours providing rehabilitation, exercise and other services to 9,000 frail adults with physical disabilities.

### Hospice/Terminally Ill

- 800 volunteers spent 370,000 hours nurturing and supporting 6,200 terminally ill adults and their families.

### Developmental Disabilities

- 880 volunteers spent 567,000 hours providing support services to 2,600 frail adults with developmental disabilities.

### Substance Abuse

- 150 volunteers sent 11,900 hours providing services to 760 frail adults and their families who participated in substance treatment, rehabilitation or support groups.

### HIV/AIDS

- 50 volunteers spent 33,600 hours nurturing and supporting 240 frail adults with HIV/AIDS and their families.

### Human Needs

*Seventy-seven percent of the Senior Companion volunteers provide services in the area of Human Needs. They spend 58 percent of the hours served by Senior Companions volunteering in this area.*

### Companionship/Outreach

- 10,000 volunteers spent 5,704,000 hours supporting, writing letters, listening, reading and speaking to 50,000 people to ease their feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- 6000 volunteers spent 3,517,000 hours visiting, calling and providing bereavement support to 15,500 people.

### Adult Day Care

- 1100 volunteers spent 680,000 hours providing supportive services and social activities at adult day care centers for 15,700 adults.

### Senior Center Programs

- 900 volunteers spent 556,000 hours providing supportive services and social activities at senior centers to 12,600 frail adults.

### Respite

- 4,100 volunteers spent 2,011,000 providing respite for 9,000 caregivers of frail adults.

### Elder Abuse/Neglect

- 290 volunteers spent 87,000 hours assisted 700 frail, abused elders and their families.

### Community and Economic Development

*Nine percent of the Senior Companion volunteers provide services in the area of Community and Economic Development. They spend 4 percent of the hours served by Senior Companions volunteering in this area.*

### Transportation Services

- 1,420 volunteers spent 445,000 hours driving 5,800 people to grocery shopping, errands, and doctor visits.

## Accomplishments of the Senior Companion Program

### Senior Companion Leaders

- 30 volunteers spent 2,500 hours coordinating and helping manage volunteer teams involving 240 volunteers.

### Public Safety

*Two percent of the Senior Companion volunteers provided services in the area of Public Safety. They spent 0.3 percent of the hours spent by Senior Companion participants volunteering in this area.*

### Safety/Fire Prevention/Accident Prevention

- 350 volunteers spent 45,000 hours identifying and reporting safety problems affecting 730 frail adults.

### Crime Awareness/Crime Avoidance

- 90 volunteers spent 14,300 hours identifying and reporting 70 potential crime problems affecting 140 frail adults.
- 220 volunteers spent 15,800 hours providing information on how to avoid victimization to 620 frail adult.

### Education

*Three percent of the Senior Companion volunteers provided services in the area of Education. They spent 1 percent of the total hours spent by Senior Companion volunteers serving in the area.*

### ESL

- 270 volunteers spent 116,000 hours helping 3,600 adult ESL students learn English.

### Adult Education and Literacy

- 130 volunteers spent 49,000 hours providing literacy assistance to 620 adults.

### Service Learning

- 190 volunteers spent 20,900 hours describing their experience on service, client advocacy, social issues and their own lives to 260 volunteers.

### Housing

*Two-tenths of one percent of the Senior Companion volunteers provided services in Housing-related activities. They spent 0.2 percent of the total hours spent by Senior Companion volunteers in this area.*

### Homelessness

- 30 volunteers spent 27,000 hours participating in programs (not including housing referrals) to help 70 homeless people.

### Disaster

*One-tenth of one percent of the Senior Companion volunteers provided service in the area of Disaster. They spent 0.3 percent of the total hours served by Senior Companions in this area.*

### Disaster Preparedness

- 200 volunteers spent 38,000 hours helping 1,700 seniors prepare for, cope with and understand what to do in the event of emergencies and disasters.
- 160 volunteers spent 37,700 hours providing information, class enrollment, or referrals on natural disaster preparedness to 1,400 people.