

Local

AmeriCorp programs receive increased funding

✍ By Jacob Dick Messenger-Inquirer

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An increase in federal grants is allowing a local outreach program for seniors to expand its enrollment and benefits during its recruitment period.

Thanks to \$6.5 million in federal grants awarded to Kentucky, programs such as the Senior Connections AmeriCorp initiative sponsored by the Green River Area Development District have seen an increase in funding.

Dave Clark, AmeriCorp program director for GRADD, said the program's yearly grant for operations will allow for the program to increase its impact.

"Our volunteers will see a slight increase in their living allowances by about \$100 and the amount of slots we have can increase," Clark said.

Senior Connections is currently recruiting volunteers and partnering agencies for the program. Partnering agencies can include any nonprofit or faith-based service willing to supply a matching grant for a volunteer to work toward their organization's mission.

AmeriCorps parent organization, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), distributes funds appropriated by Congress to the state's Cabinet of Health and Family Services for Kentucky's 23 AmeriCorp programs each year to continue their operations. Clark said funds are based on the performance and impact of each program.

The funds received by stated increased by about \$400,000 from 2016. Senior Connections saw an increase from \$490,200 in 2016 to \$590,920 for this fiscal year. The funds for educational grants also increased by about \$25,000.

AmeriCorp Volunteers receive living allowances for their work and a education funds good for seven years on completion of 17,000 hours of service. These benefits will increase for volunteers along with enrollment growing from 38 to 44 positions.

Senior Connections is the only AmeriCorp program in the state geared toward seniors or sponsored by a development district.

Clark said Senior Connections was formed in 1997 in hopes of combating Kentucky's issues with preventable hospitalization of seniors.

"Through research, we've found AmeriCorp members could help seniors by working on projects to answer problems with nutrition like meal delivery, community gardens and food banks," Clark said. "We also knew there was a socialization component that could help seniors."

There are other AmeriCorp members sponsored in Owensboro and Daviess County through statewide organizations such as the Kentucky Commission Against Domestic Violence in partnership with the Green River Asset Building Coalition. An AmeriCorp volunteer works with the coalition in their mission to help provide tax return filing and financial guidance services to community members in need.

Potential volunteers and partnering organizations can contact Dave Clark at davidclark@gradd.com or 270.926.4433. More information about AmeriCorp and its various programs can be found at AmeriCorps.gov.

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