

You Want to Make a Difference in Your Community...Here's Your Chance

Cecil County faces a number of challenges that affect us all. We have high rates of homelessness, opioid overdoses and a large number of young people who are not in school or employed. **55VLP**, a free 6-week volunteer leadership program for adults 55 or older, will address these challenges by cultivating leaders across the county. Using volunteer service as a strategy to meet these needs, **55VLP** participants will study the issues with local organizations, learn project management and leadership skills, and set to work to develop volunteer responses.

Why 55VLP?

- Addiction, homelessness and disconnection thrive in isolation. Our existing partnerships are strong, but there are gaps in service delivery.
- Volunteering creates community connections. Older volunteers (ages 55 and above) are already an engine for direct volunteer service across the county, but we can do more to engage them as leaders.
- 55+ volunteers are ideally suited to find creative and self-directed solutions to problems.
- We need more people power to get things done. Research shows that a modest investment in service pays lasting, transformational dividends.

How will it work?

Over six weeks in May and June of 2018, 55VLP participants will attend weekly sessions, with three elements:

- Policy briefings from community leaders. Participants will receive information and recommendations about these issues and what is being done about them across Cecil County. ***Participants will be equipped to be ambassadors, and to raise awareness about local needs.***
- Trainings on community-based change with local and national experts. Topics will include mapping assets, systems change, group decision-making, project planning and implementation. ***Participants will practice techniques to convert a sense of mutual responsibility into community will.***
- Discussion and project planning. In smaller groups, participants will explore ways to make a difference and work together on specific interventions. ***Participants will formulate local solutions and community-based responses to three interconnected crises.***

What is expected of me?

Participants will commit to attend at least five of six sessions, learning from each other, and joining teams to take action. The sessions will take place in different locations across the county between 9:00 AM and 1:00 PM. Lunch will be provided. Participants are encouraged to design group projects that they will lead after the sessions are completed.

Is there a cost to apply or attend?

No. **55VLP** is coordinated by the Cecil County Department of Community Services and funded by the Corporation for National and Community Services through the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) grant.

Where are you looking for community leaders?

Everywhere. We encourage you to nominate people you admire. Please refer to the next page for an overview of the skills and qualities we seek. **A 55VLP application is included; interested individuals are encouraged to submit as soon as possible.**

Schedule and Curriculum

Weekly Session Time: 9:00 AM-12:30 PM (Light lunch served from 12:30-1:00)

Session Locations: To be determined

May 3	Introduction, Leadership and Team Building
May 10	Opportunity Youth in Cecil County
May 17	Homelessness in Cecil County
May 24	The Opioid Crisis in Cecil County
May 31	Tools for Collective Action
June 7	Graduation

55VLP Participant Roles and Expectations

Problem Solver

- Serves with leaders and community members to advance solutions to improve the quality of life throughout Cecil County.

Collaborative Partner

- Develops new opportunities to address unmet needs in community.
- Builds existing partnerships and processes to serve more people.
- Expands the capacity of partner organizations to offer more services to clients.

Community Builder

- Organizes community outreach to provide a more holistic approach to the opioid crisis, the needs of people who are homeless and disconnected youth.
- Builds and bolsters collaborations with organizations to strengthen host site's reputation and services in the community.

Ambassador

- As a volunteer for Cecil/Harford County RSVP, acts as part of an elite group working to solve local problems.
- Represents Cecil County and community partners to raise awareness and visibility of local solutions to local needs.

Leadership and Team Building

- In settings large and small, looks for opportunities to bring out the best in others.
- Offers compliments and constructive feedback to help others achieve their highest level of engagement.
- Acts with awareness of own strengths and gaps, seeks feedback to improve and opportunities to grow.
- Takes responsibility for own projects and own experience.
- Commits to build something of value beyond the six weeks of the program.