



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**DELEGATION FROM THE COUNTRY OF GEORGIA VISITS ERIE COUNTY
SENIOR SERVICES TO LEARN ABOUT VOLUNTEERISM AND THE
IMPORTANCE OF RSVP PROGRAM**

December 6th, 2024

Contact: Aislyn McQueen

Erie County Department of Senior Services

Aislyn.mcqueen@erie.gov

Erie County, NY— A delegation from the Republic of Georgia, in partnership with the International Visitor Leadership Program through the U.S. Department of State and the International Institute of Buffalo (IIB), visited Erie County Senior Services on Friday, December 6th to learn about volunteerism and the vital role the AmeriCorps Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) plays in supporting older adults in Erie County.

The delegation, made up of seven distinguished female leaders in education, advocacy, healthcare, and government, were invited to the U.S. to explore the impact of volunteerism in American communities and how volunteers are inspired to foster a culture of service, civic responsibility, and community engagement. The program is designed to equip delegates with the tools and insights to develop similar volunteer programs in their home countries.

During their visit, the delegation toured Erie County Senior Services, learned about the department's programming, and participated in discussions about the significance of volunteerism and how it benefits both the community and the volunteers themselves. They were particularly interested in the RSVP program, which exemplifies AmeriCorps' mission of using volunteerism to drive positive change. The RSVP program recruits and places older adults in volunteer roles across Erie County, providing both a sense of purpose for volunteers and essential support to the county's diverse senior population. Afterward, the delegation shared insights about their culture with Erie County Senior Services staff.

QUOTE FROM CE

“We are proud to share Erie County’s approach to volunteerism with our international guests,” said **Angela Marinucci, Commissioner of Erie County Senior Services**. “RSVP plays a pivotal role in improving the lives of older adults, not only by providing them with opportunities to serve others but also by ensuring that essential services are delivered throughout our community. We’re excited that our Georgian friends can take lessons from our model and apply them in their own country.”

The RSVP program has been a cornerstone of Erie County Senior Services for many years, offering local residents age 55 and older opportunities to make a meaningful impact through volunteerism. Volunteers engage in roles such as meal delivery, senior companionship, tutoring, and supporting local nonprofits. The program currently involves nearly 400 volunteers across all areas of Erie County. In 2023, RSVP volunteers saved the county over \$700,000 in volunteer hours, based on the minimum wage rate of \$15 per hour. With the continued growth of the program, this figure is expected to increase in 2024.

The delegation from Georgia was particularly impressed by the integration of AmeriCorps’ core values within the RSVP program, especially the way it fosters civic engagement among older adults, allowing them to contribute meaningfully to their communities. This model not only strengthens local service programs but also builds a culture of volunteerism that can be replicated globally.

Representatives from the International Institute of Buffalo, which helps facilitate cross-cultural exchanges, played an essential role in organizing the visit. “Through programs like this, we can build bridges between cultures while strengthening communities,” said **Jennifer Rizzo-Choi, Executive Director of IIB**. “This exchange is a fantastic opportunity to share the values of volunteerism and community service with our international partners.”

Throughout their visit, the Georgian delegation engaged in conversations with Erie County volunteers and staff, discussing how volunteerism can support social programs, empower older adults, and create stronger, more connected communities. They were particularly impressed by the dedication of Erie County’s senior volunteers, who contribute thousands of hours annually to help those in need.

This exchange between Erie County and Georgia highlights how global connections can foster mutual learning and collaboration, particularly in the areas of senior care and volunteerism. It also underscores the role of Erie County Senior Services and the RSVP program in setting a global standard for volunteerism, demonstrating the power of community engagement to create meaningful change at both local and international levels.

Get Involved in RSVP

Residents of Erie County are encouraged to get involved in the RSVP program and make a difference in their community. Volunteers aged 55 and older can apply to join the program and contribute to the various services offered to seniors. For more information, <https://www3.erie.gov/seniorservices/rsvp> or call 716-858-7548. To learn more about AmeriCorps Seniors visit <https://americorps.gov/serve/americorps-seniors/americorps-seniors-rsvp> or call 1-800-942-2677.

About Erie County Senior Services

Erie County Senior Services is dedicated to improving the quality of life for older adults in Erie County by providing a wide range of programs and services that promote independence, health, and dignity. The RSVP program is one of the key initiatives that engages seniors in meaningful volunteer roles to support their community. For more information about other programs visit <https://www3.erie.gov/seniorservices/> or call the 716-858-8526.

About the International Institute of Buffalo

The International Institute of Buffalo fosters cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect through programs designed to help immigrants, refugees, and global communities engage with American society. The IIB plays an important role in promoting international exchanges and strengthening global connections. Visit their website at <https://iibuffalo.org/>