

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Older Adult Volunteers 55 and over Increasing the Chances for Individuals with Conviction Histories Take Control of Their Lives

New York, NY, September, 2010 – Each week Harold Foy and Alice Williams both retirees, leave their homes to increase someone’s chances of becoming employed. For the past year Mr. Foy and Ms. Williams, have been serving as part of a volunteer Corps of record repair counselors. They work with formerly incarcerated people most of whom are guilty of low level offenses for which they have been denied employment. With their help many of their clients with sealable offenses have had their records sealed.

Long after being involved with the criminal justice system, many individuals cannot become self-sufficient, contributing members of society. They receive a second sentence, not a second chance, as they encounter a combination of barriers to employment, housing, and educational opportunities.

The Community Service Society’s Retired and Senior Volunteer Program CSS/RSVP has volunteer opportunities for adults aged 55 and over who are concerned about mass incarceration and recidivism and would like to serve as record counselors and help people take control of their conviction histories

RSVP Record Repair Counselor Harold Foy believes that there is no question that serving as a record repair counselor comes with the reward that you could be helping someone reset the course of their life on the road to being successful. So too does his colleague Alice Williams who want potential volunteers to understand the return that investing time with someone who really needs it brings to your own life. If you want to learn more about this opportunity please call **Hazel Beckles Young Lao at 212 614 5556** or attend an **Orientation on September 29th, or October 4th, 2010, 9:30 a.m. at the Community Service Society 105 E 22nd Street, Conference Room 4B.**

An estimated one in three New Yorkers have a criminal record, and 58% of those records have at least one error. Nearly 70% of convictions are for low-level crimes—misdemeanors and violations—not felonies. Counselors are trained to help individuals request, read, and repair their NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services rap sheets and their criminal records maintained by risk information consumer credit reporting agencies. Armed with the same information an employer has, as well as the knowledge about how to handle questions about their record in a job interview, clients can accurately disclose their conviction records and avoid being fired for accidentally failing to disclose a conviction. With instructions and ongoing support from CSS RSVP Record Repair Counseling staff and a CSS staff attorney, volunteers will gain a basic understanding of New York criminal law; discover how to spot and fix mistakes on rap sheets; learn the truth about the

real-life consequences of criminal convictions; and educate individuals so that the words in their records are not the story of their lives.

Established forty two years ago, the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program's 7,000 volunteers contribute more than 1.5 million hours of service annually to 500 organizations in New York City. RSVP is a program of the Community Service Society of New York, a nonprofit organization which advocates on behalf of the poor in the areas of education, affordable housing, health care, and income maintenance. RSVP is part of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and receives funding from CSS, and other government agencies, foundations, and individuals.