



The Economic Value of Volunteers

Key Results from
ACL Programs

The Important Role of Volunteers in Federal Programs That Support Older Adults and People With Disabilities

Since 2012, the mission of the **Administration for Community Living (ACL)**—one of 11 operating divisions in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—is to “maximize the independence, well-being, and health of older adults, people with disabilities across the life-span, and their families and caregivers.” To achieve

this mission, ACL funds a variety of programs that help older adults and those with disabilities to access services and other assistance needed to maintain independence and participate in community activities. Generally, ACL provides funding to state agencies that, in turn, distribute funds to service providers.

WHAT ROLE DO VOLUNTEERS PLAY?

ACL programs depend on volunteers! Volunteers play an essential role in delivering ACL program services to those in need. Without volunteers, many local services providers would not be able to provide services or effectively reach individuals in the community.

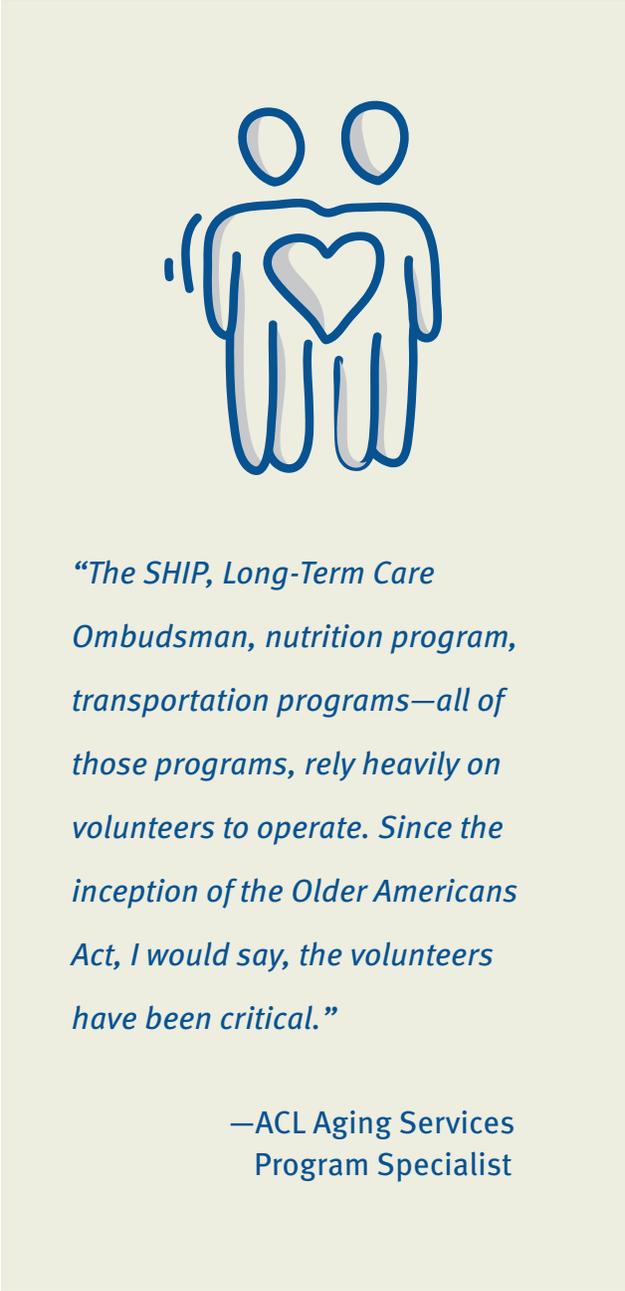
Here is a brief description of two ACL programs that rely on volunteers:

Older Americans Act (OAA) Programs

The OAA is one of the country’s leading vehicles for providing services and supports to older adults (generally age 60 and older) nationwide. OAA Title III provides funding for nutrition and other supportive services (congregate meals served at group sites; home-delivered meals; nutrition counseling; family caregiver supports; supportive services such as home care, adult day services, and assisted transportation). OAA Title VII provides funding for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP), which helps the rights of older adults by investigating and resolving complaints made by or on behalf of older adults in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities.

State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs)

SHIPs empower, educate, and assist Medicare-eligible individuals, their families, and their caregivers to make informed health insurance decisions that optimize access to care and benefits. They accomplish this through outreach, one-on-one assistance, counseling, and training. Specifically, SHIPs assist individuals in obtaining coverage through Original Medicare (Parts A & B), Medicare Advantage (Part C), Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage (Part D), and Medicare Supple-



ment (Medigap), and assist beneficiaries with limited income to apply for programs such as Medicaid, Medicare Savings Program and Extra Help/Low Income Subsidy, which help reduce healthcare costs.

OAA Title III Program Volunteers

WHAT DO OAA TITLE III VOLUNTEERS DO?

- Deliver meals to individuals' homes
- Serve food at congregate meal sites
- Teach health promotion and disease prevention classes
- Help with housework



- Provide legal assistance
- Organize activities in senior centers
- Support family caregivers
- Provide transportation assistance, and much more ...

62,467,200
volunteer hours contributed

AREA AGENCY ON AGING FTE COUNT, 2019

VOLUNTEER STAFF FTES

56%

(31,234)



PAID STAFF FTES

44%

(24,642)

equal to approximately
\$1.7 billion

HOW MUCH TIME AND VALUE DO VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTE?

In FY 2019, OAA Title III program services were provided primarily by Area Agency on Aging (AAA) volunteers.

Volunteers contributed approximately **62,467,200 hours** to OAA Title III AAAs in FY 2019. Based on the estimated hours contributed by OAA Title III volunteers in FY 2019, the **economic value of AAA volunteers** was equal to approximately \$1.7 billion for that fiscal year. This represents a very large economic value, considering that federal funding for OAA Title III was just \$1.49 billion in FY 2019. In fact, the value provided by OAA Title III AAA volunteers exceeded federal funding for the program.



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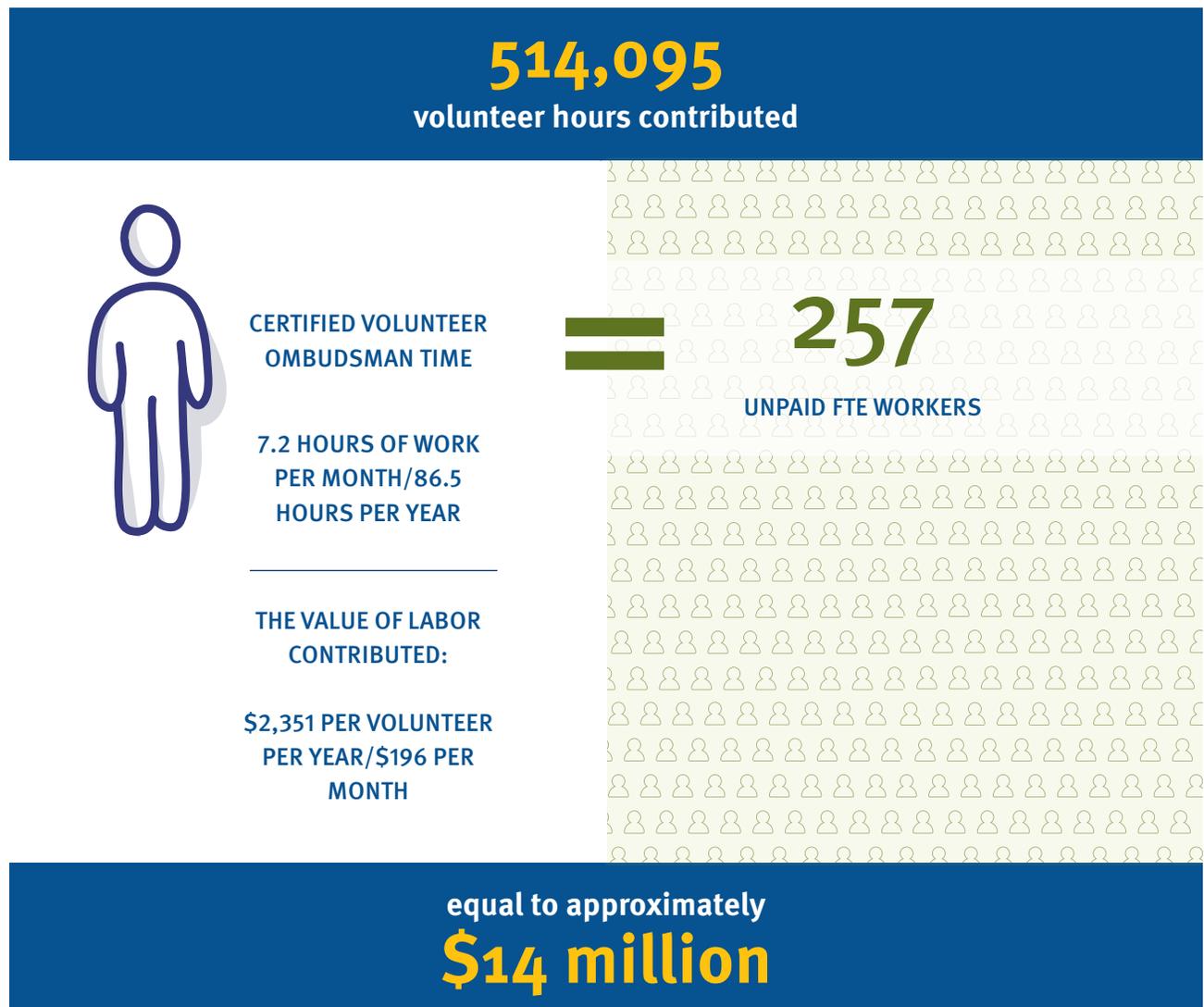
“Oftentimes home-delivered meals programs rely on volunteer drivers to deliver the meals. The same would go at senior center or congregate meal sites. There may be one or two paid staff, but the rest are volunteers. The same would go for senior centers or adult day programs. The entertainment that comes in, the singing groups, and arts and crafts—that is largely volunteer and allows a program to offer a range of opportunities and activities that wouldn’t be possible if you had to pay somebody to have on staff. So when we say that the aging services network is heavily volunteer based, that’s absolutely true, but in turn those volunteers and the volunteer hours are used by programs as in-kind match, so there is a dollar value to them.”

—Director, ACL Office of Supportive and Caregiver Services

OAA Title VII LTCOP Volunteers

WHAT DO OAA TITLE VII LTCOP VOLUNTEERS DO?

- Conduct long-term care facility visits
- Educate residents about their rights
- Interact with residents, resident representatives, and staff to help meet residents' needs
- Help solve problems and address resident complaints



HOW MUCH TIME AND VALUE DO VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTE?

Certified volunteer ombudsmen¹ donated **514,095 hours** of their time in FY 2019, which is equivalent to approximately 257 unpaid FTE workers. On average, each volunteer contributed **7.2 hours of work per month** to the program, or 86.5 hours per year.

Based on the hours contributed by certified LTCOP volunteers, the economic value of volunteers to the OAA Title VII LTCOP was equal to **approximately \$14 million for FY 2019**. OAA Title VII LTCOP federal funding was just \$16.9 million for FY 2019. The value of labor contributed by Title VII volunteers translates into **\$2,351 per volunteer per year or \$196 per month**.

For additional details on the use of volunteers in the LTCOP, see the 2019 LTCOP Research Brief. [“Strengthening the Aging and Disability Networks: Use of Volunteers in Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs”](#).

¹ “Ombudsman” refers to the State Ombudsman. All other staff that perform duties of the Office are “designated representatives of the Office” although many use the term “ombudsman” in practice. The National Ombudsman Reporting System uses the term “certified” rather than “designated.”



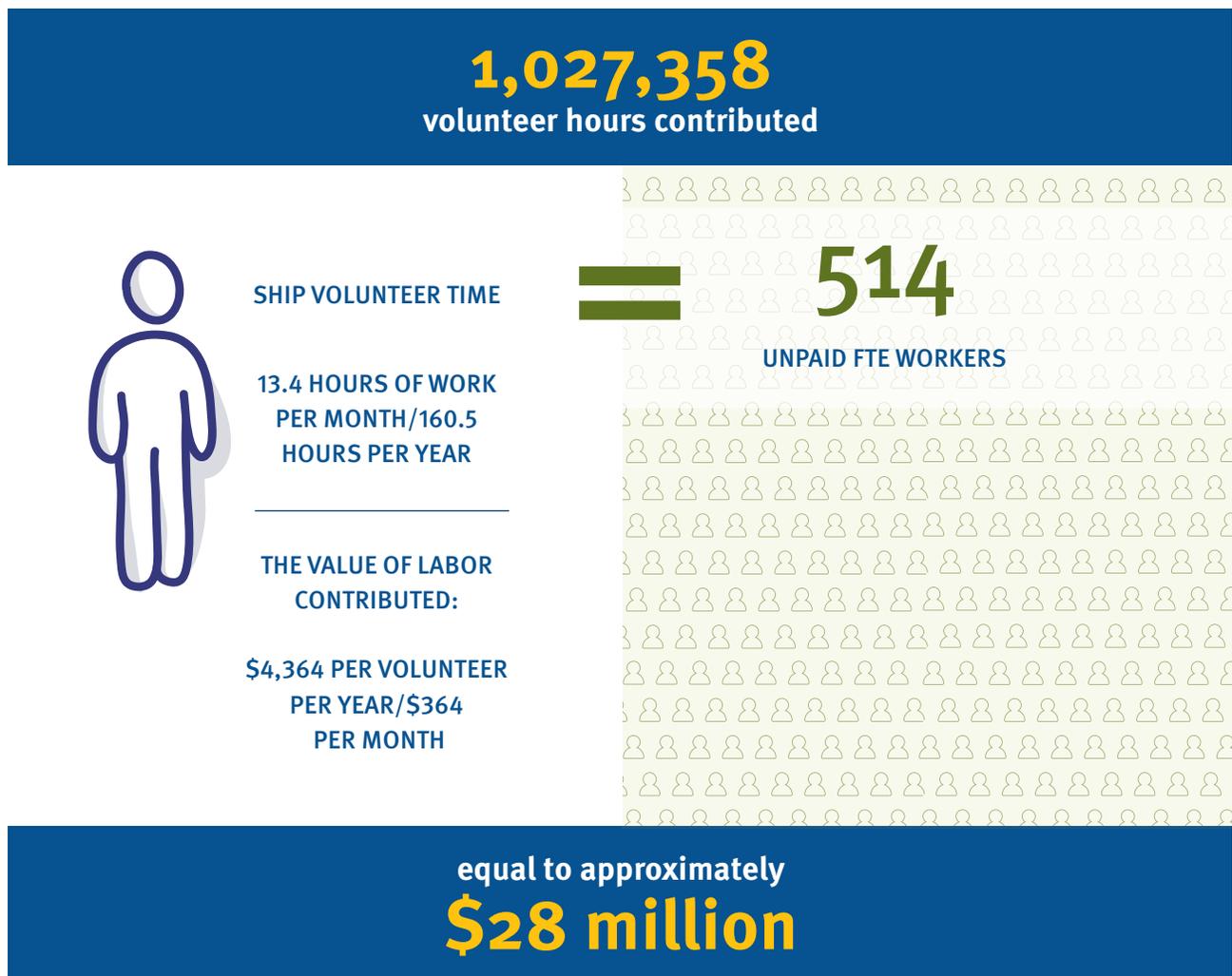
“When we go through the facilities, we’re looking for a couple of specific things. One, in general, how do the residents look: Are they clean? Are they appropriately dressed? Are they comfortable, are they able to interact, how do they think things are going? Open-ended questions that are intended to identify issues from their perspective. And, of course, what we do initially is introduce ourselves as advocates for the residents.”

—LTCOP Volunteer

SHIP Volunteers

WHAT DO SHIP VOLUNTEERS DO?

- Conduct outreach to Medicare beneficiaries to provide education, answer questions, troubleshoot, and assist with enrollment
- Give public presentations at education or training events
- Provide one-on-one assistance to assess client health services needs and match them with health plans
- Recruit and train new team members



HOW MUCH TIME AND VALUE DO VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTE?

In grant year 2019,² supporting the SHIP program in these responsibilities were 2,651 FTE workers paid through SHIP, 4,495 FTE workers paid in kind,³ and 6,403 volunteer workers. Volunteers donated **1,027,358 hours** of time to SHIPs, equating to approximately 514 FTE volunteer workers. On average, each volunteer contributed **13.4 hours of work per month to the program, or 160.5 hours per year.**

Based on the hours contributed by SHIP volunteers, the economic value of volunteers was equal to almost **\$28 million** in grant year 2019. This translates into **\$4,364 per volunteer per year.** With an average contribution of 13.4 hours of work per volunteer per month, each volunteer provided an average economic value of **\$364 per month.**



“I think it’s made me a complete person. It gives me great satisfaction to assist others, and I think that, besides giving me something to do, it keeps me sane. It keeps me alert, and I think it keeps me engaged. I think that’s probably the better word for everything. It does give me great satisfaction, you know, to help others.”

—SHIP Volunteer

² SHIPs reported data for the grant year April 1, 2019 – March 30, 2020.

³ In Kind (“donated”): Anyone working with the program that is paid by a source other than SHIP, e.g., care managers at Housing and Urban Development housing who are doing SHIP work as part of their job with the housing complex.

For additional details about the economic value of volunteers to these programs see the ***Final Study Report***. For a summary of effective volunteer practices identified by these programs, see the practice guide.

