

Lancaster Downtowners Steering Committee

November 2, 2006

Minutes

Facilitator: Rod Houser, Lois Good

Present: Charles Lane, Marga Lane, Mimi Shapiro, Shirley Jackson, Sandy Usher, June Lang, Victor Lang, Louise imm-Cooper, Gene Aleci, Ken Nissley, Melanie, Murray foreman, Mary Lou Houser

Judith Neale from Swathmore, PA, joined us for this luncheon meeting to share highlights from her experience organizing and serving as Executive Director for SeniorCare Cooperative, a support service for seniors living in the Swathmore area. Judith reviewed some history of SeniorCare and how the service is currently working, then entertained questions from the group. Highlights from her report and following discussion follow. Ideas are listed somewhat randomly.

1. An initial survey of community is important to determine what sorts of services people may be looking for.
2. An "angel" to provide initial funding is helpful.
3. Grants can be useful but often come with limiting restrictions.
4. SCC (Senior Care Cooperative) depends on an important volunteer base:
 - Volunteer drivers provide medical and other sorts of transport.
 - Some years ago, two twelve year olds started a youth support group. The group continues to provide services such as yard clean up and changing light bulbs.
 - Some young people in this group use the experience to fulfill volunteer requirements from their high school programs.
5. SCC works cooperatively with Gathering Place, a local senior citizens group. The senior citizen group provides some social activities such as a weekly bag lunch event. They offer a daily call in service for persons who live alone to make a daily connection with someone.
6. SCC's mission is focused on providing in home services or access to in home service providers and access to health care options by referral. They provide base case management services They do not have a schedule of social activities or educational opportunities.
7. SCC fee structure includes a \$50 initial household fee and \$25 per month thereafter.
8. Judith serves as main contact person for members of the group and makes herself available 24/7 by personal cell phone.
9. SCC uses marketing and advertising strategies to make people aware of their program.
10. SCC depends on a good board of directors. The board met regularly during startup of the program but currently meet on an as needed basis. They do have at least an annual meeting as required to maintain non-profit status of SCC.
11. SCC started with a group of 20 families, less than the board had hoped, but a manageable number that actually served the startup effort better in Judith's opinion.
12. Although there were only 20 families who initially committed, there was considerably more interest on the sidelines.
13. Initial efforts included sending out a letter to prospective persons indicating what the group was ready to offer and what they planned to offer, local newspaper articles, announcements on local cable, meetings with groups, flyers to churches and community groups and a refrigerator magnet advertisement to distribute to interested persons.
14. Initial intake of new members includes a personal interview in the applicant's home which includes health history and an assessment of the home environment.
15. In most cases, Judith, as executive director and contact person for members serves as a connection between the member and an existing agencies that serve the various needs of the member. Judith brings to her job much personal experience working with elderly and aging persons.
16. SCC has made arrangements with some local restaurants to provide home delivery of meals. Couriers deliver meals and spend a few minutes chatting with clients.
17. SCC has found local businesses that are eager to partner with them. Some offer discounts, while others do not.
18. SCC has no contracts with local business or health care providers. SCC members deal directly with business or agencies. SCC functions to make the connections between its members and the services they need.
19. SCC is a non-profit cooperative under the rules governing PA cooperatives. Specifically, they function as a health care cooperative. They do not receive donations. All funding is through membership fees. As required by the state, they have developed bylaws. Judith offered to send a copy of the bylaws to us.

20. They initially did not accept any grants. Being intergenerational was important to the group, and many grants stipulated senior membership only.
21. In two years, SCC has grown from 20 households to 75–80 households consisting of 1–5 persons each.
22. Judith served as a volunteer during the first year and now receives a stipend for her work.
23. SCC initially used the boundaries of a school district to define the area they would serve. It is important to identify boundaries early.
24. Volunteer drivers are reimbursed per mile following the IRS charity reimbursement for mileage.
25. SCC has a tenuous connection with the local government. The local council is not particularly supportive of their intergenerational effort.
26. SCC has found an advantage to seek in-kind services or donations rather than money donations.
27. SCC does have connection with a CPA for pro bono services for members of the group.
28. Judith offered to send a copy of the initial community survey that their group used.
29. The very poor can access assistance such as Medicaid and the very wealthy are self supporting, but those in between generally are not educated on asset management. It takes collective energy of groups such as SCC and our Downtowners group to assist in maintaining financial stability of this large group.

Recorded by Rod Houser