

2010 Great Ideas in Aging Contest

Sponsoring Agency: Catholic Family Center, Aging & Adult Services Department, HomeWorks

Initial Problem to be Addressed: Need of older community members to obtain safe, reliable and inexpensive workers to perform home maintenance and home repairs in order for them to remain independent in their own homes.

Brief Program Description: Our HomeWorks service has evolved over the years. Currently it is an annual membership based program which enables its members to use the benefits of our coordinator and our list of approved workers. A member enrolls and pays a sliding fee based on income and the size of the home. People with incomes less than 150% of the poverty guidelines are donation based. Once enrolled, they can call HomeWorks with a concern anytime and the coordinator will match them to a worker. The workers have all had back ground checks and are interviewed and monitored by the coordinator. If there are any concerns the coordinator can't resolve the worker would not be used again. The coordinator will often visit the home to preview the job to determine its appropriateness and scope. The coordinator is the liaison between the member and the worker to resolve issues. The member pays the worker directly for any work completed and a record of the work done is sent to the office. The rates charges are well under the normal market rates; \$10 an hour for most jobs, \$17.50 for skilled labor (plumbing, electrical, lawn care for which equipment must be transported) and \$25 for after hour emergencies. Membership fees vary from \$100 - \$200 a year. Referrals are made to the service by social workers of senior service agencies, Adult Protective workers, and by word of mouth. There are ~125 members at this time and ~15 workers. The coordinator is a volunteer but does get a stipend of \$50 a week for carrying the oncall phone for emergencies. He enrolls new members, 'hires' the workers, assigns the jobs, and keeps track of the paperwork and data.

How does the Program Help? HomeWorks provides peace of mind for its members because there is one number to call 24/7 and they have a trusted person coordinating their home repair needs. The workers feel good about helping seniors and also having the support of the coordinator to handle issues. The members feel secure that the workers are being monitored by our agency. The professionals making the referrals are happy to have a low cost option to offer their clients to get the needed repairs/maintenance done on the homes. If the coordinator or a worker is concerned about something they see while in the person's home they are able to access additional support because the program is part of a larger network of senior services.

Total Program Cost/Income Sources: HomeWorks is part of a larger program called Support To Aging Residents (STAR). Since the workers are paid directly by the members for the work and the coordinator is currently a volunteer, the expenses are minimal and are covered by the membership fees, occasional grants, and most recently United Way funding that STAR receives. Expenses include; coordinator stipend (\$2600 a year), mileage, internet expense (works from home office), postage, cell phone, back

ground checks of workers (\$17 a piece), and printing of envelopes/receipts/handbooks. The most rewarding and helpful grants have been ones that pay for the actual work to be completed. Then when the coordinator discovers an important safety concern he can have the work done immediately and it greatly benefits the senior who is usually on a fixed income.

Special Issues/Characteristics: Proper home maintenance and repairs can prevent greater problems in the future. It is also beneficial for the community or neighborhood to keep up appearances and property values. It is often a support for family members who live out of town to know that their loved one is connected to such a service.

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