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Senior Resource Outreach Project

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Senior Outreach Event

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This capstone project was created with the support of the City of Pacific Grove to inform low-income senior residents about local services through an outreach event. Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to Mariah Barry California State University, Monterey Bay, 100 Campus Center, Seaside, CA.
Title: Senior Outreach Project

Abstract

This capstone project was implemented by the Community and Economic Development department of the City of Pacific Grove. The social problem is the high rate of home deterioration among low-income seniors. In order to address this issue, an outreach event was implemented to advertise the Housing Rehabilitation Loan program and organizations with similar target populations. The purpose of this event was to advertise local resources to the public. The implementation method included contacting agencies offering similar programs, finding a venue, and sending out surveys to invited agencies. Findings from the survey remain inconclusive due to a lack of responses from agencies. Going forward, the City should send out these surveys again to reach a conclusion.

Keywords: Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program, outreach, resources, event, seniors
Agency Description

The Housing Division is a branch of the Community and Economic Development Department in Pacific Grove. It manages programs designed to increase the availability of low-income housing. These programs include the Housing Rehabilitation Loan program, Sewer Loan Program, Emergency Home Loan Repair Program, and Affordable Housing and Monitoring Program. These programs offer loans ranging in price from $10,000 to $60,000 depending on the program and amount of rehabilitation required. It also applies for grants to finance these programs and organizes the city’s efforts to foster and maintain senior housing establishments. Funding for these programs comes from city finances, grants administered by the Housing and Urban Development department (HUD), such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). It also provides information on laws administered by HUD regarding housing discrimination and fair housing.

Problem Definition

The rate of home deterioration among low-income seniors is too high (U.S. Census, 2016; Housing and Urban Development, 2017; T. Schaeffer, personal communication, 2017). About half of the population of Pacific Grove report being homeowners. Out of this population, at least 31% report living with someone in the home at least 65 years of age (US Census, 2016). However, there is a substantial number of male and female seniors ages 65 and older who report living alone: approximately 325 and 771, respectively. Out of the all 2,380 homeowners ages 65 and older, just under 350 report making under $25,000 (U.S. Census, 2016). From this data, we can see that there is a significant number of elders--specifically low-income--living in the area. Low-income senior homeowners who report living alone are more likely to live in neglected homes prone to serious damage and decay. The majority of the isolated seniors in Pacific Grove
only find the help they need when it is too late for their homes. Terri Schaeffer, the housing
program manager, usually hears about a home in distress only when the fire or police department
calls her pleading for her to offer her services to a senior who lost his or her home due to easily
preventable housing issues (T. Schaeffer, personal communication, 2018).

Contributing Factors

The first contributing factor is the climate of Pacific Grove. All homes in Pacific Grove
regardless of a homeowner’s socioeconomic status or ethnicity are affected by the harsh coastal
wind. About 88% of homes in Pacific Grove were built before the 1980’s, and 41% were built
before the 1950’s (City of Pacific Grove, 2016, p.27). Old age and continuous exposure to these
winds have increased home deterioration rates, which makes consistent home assessment and
repair vital to maintaining the sustainability of Pacific Grove. As global warming continues to
affect the weather and ocean levels, the homes and landscapes continue to morph and change.
We need to ensure that affordable homes are built up to code and maintained consistently
throughout the year.

The second contributing factor is the increasing cost of living. As inflation increases, so
does the median price of homes, especially in California. Most seniors already own their homes,
but some struggle to pay taxes and repair costs because they rely on social security, which
rewards 1 in 4 seniors with as little as $15,000 a year (Housing and Urban Development, 2017).
A study conducted by AARP found that the majority of elderly participants reported wanting to
stay in their homes and communities as long as possible—approximately 73% and 67%,
respectively (Harvard, 2014, p.2). Therefore, moving to a place with a lower cost of living is not
an option.
The final contributing factor is a lack of outreach about available programs within the area. Some agencies are doing well to spread the word about their programs. Legal Services for Seniors, for example, does tabling events at the local senior center located in downtown Pacific Grove. However, this agency is not located in Pacific Grove, which makes it difficult for aging Pacific Grove residents with limited mobility to reach this facility; there are no branches located nearby. The housing division at the city of Pacific Grove does not do enough outreach in the community. Many clients who find out about the housing rehabilitation loan program stumble upon it by chance; they wish they had heard of it sooner (T. Schaeffer, personal communication, 2017).

**Consequences**

One of the consequences of this problem includes increased health care costs for these seniors. The reason for this is that most outdated, deteriorating homes contain varying degrees of mold, mildew, termite damage, or lead paint covering the walls. The consequences of breathing in a home contaminated with mildew and mold range from mild to severe, depending on the type. For those with compromised immune systems, some molds cause nasal stuffiness, sore throat, skin irritation. The most extreme reactions to mold include the development of lung disease or asthmatic symptoms, such as wheezing or a feeling of tightness in the throat (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). Lead paint poses a more sinister problem to those who live in close quarters to it. Lead exposure can cause harmful reactions even when only trace amounts are found in the bloodstream. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention Center (CDC), long term lead exposure has been known to cause forgetfulness, nausea, depression, abdominal pain, and irritability, to name a few symptoms. For those who cannot afford to pay their bills, it falls into the hands of others to pay for their medical expenses.
Another consequence is that the presence of deteriorating homes affects the community overall. The value of a blighted home decreases substantially if it remains unixed, which by association lowers the value of neighboring homes. With the value of the neighborhood decreased overall, less funding will be available for public schools and maintenance of public parks and roads. When these homes are unable to be taken care of by the homeowner themselves, blighted homes must have the rehabilitation costs paid for by local residents through their taxes.

Title of Capstone
Senior Resource Outreach Project

Project Purpose and Justification

Studies have shown that community outreach can increase rates of enrollment in service programs. An article published in the Journal of Environmental Health describes how different outreach methods aided in increasing enrollment in a home safety hazard program called Henderson Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes Program (HLHCHHP). According to Barber et al. (2018), after being asked about how new recruits heard about the program, most stated that they learned about it through word of mouth. The second most popular answer was through direct mailings (p.24). Although these efforts seem to be the most successful, the City still needs to develop these connections to spread the word about the program. Therefore, the City decided to create an opportunity to make connections with social service agencies through a data-driven tabling event so they can help spread the word about resources the City offers.

Implementation Plan
The chosen project included two parts: a data-driven tabling event and a survey. The tabling event was designed to bring awareness to available resources in Monterey County for low-income seniors. Participants ranged from non-profit to government organizations. They included Monterey-Salinas Transit, Pacific Grove Police Department, Sally Griffin Senior Center, Alliance on Aging, Gateway Center, Monterey County Adult Services, and Community Builders. The event was hosted at Wellspring Church, located near the downtown area of Pacific Grove on May 3rd, 2018. Advertisement strategies included posting flyers in the downtown area, coordinating with establishments located in areas of Pacific Grove with high foot traffic to spread the word about the event, tabling at popular festivals in Pacific Grove such as Good Old Days, and contacting the Cedar Street Times to place a public service announcement in the newspaper.

To complete the project, a venue was found, research was conducted on different agencies in Pacific Grove, agencies were invited to the event, and advertisements for the project were created and distributed. Before the event, refreshments were purchased for attendants and a small team of volunteers assisted with the setup of the event. Initial steps included researching agencies located near Pacific Grove that specifically assist low-income seniors. After conducting thorough research of these agencies beforehand, an attempt to get in touch with these agencies was made. After being contacted, these agencies were emailed a survey (Appendix B) which was used to assist in the implementation of the second part of the project.

Resources needed to create posters to advertise for the event included paper for flyers, tape, and tacks. For the event itself, tables, chairs, donuts, coffee, refreshments, plates, napkins, forks, knives, and spoons had to be provided. Furthermore, brochures, a table cloth, and
promotional gifts for the City’s table were used. For the last part of the project to be completed, answers to the survey questions were filled out.

**Project Results**

The success of this project had two measures: 1) 30 or more residents needed to attend the outreach event; 2) the questionnaire needed to supply enough data to help the City determine if a second senior resource center needs to be created. Unfortunately, the project did not fulfill expectations regarding both aspects of the project. The results of the survey remain inconclusive due to lack of responses. Of all attending agencies, just under half reported back information about their organizations and the percentage of clients who report addresses from Pacific Grove. From the data gathered, it was determined that for all agencies approximately 25% of clients report addresses from Pacific Grove. The results suggest that there is a large population of seniors there that rely on these social service resources, so the City should take steps to keep outreach efforts maintained.

This project had many successful components. The most important achievement was simply that the event was implemented. Organizations that were contacted showed up, brought promotional gifts and were able to talk to individuals one-on-one about the programs they offer. These organizations were also able to come together and talk amongst one another about their goals and network with one another. This type of dialogue may not have been possible had the event not occurred.

There were numerous challenges that occurred as the project was being created and implemented. The first challenge was determining how to allocate time effectively. The most time-consuming part of the project involved doing research on organizations in the area. In order to address this task in a timely fashion, effective planning was necessary. Each day at the City
was planned out efficiently, starting with allocating time for websites research, followed by setting aside time for phone calls that needed to be made. These productive measures allowed for in depth research to be conducted on local agencies with similar target populations to the Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program. The second challenge involved getting agencies to participate in the project. Repeated reminders were sent to agencies via phone and email asking to confirm if they would be able to attend. Some agencies responded saying that they would be able to attend and ended up not following through. Furthermore, less than half of the agencies that attended the event responded to surveys, despite reminders sent to them via email. However, some surveys were sent in and were able to be used to collect data. If more surveys were sent in, statistically significant evidence could have been collected from the responses.

Conclusion

This project should be continued, but advertisement strategies should be rethought. This project has great potential to connect seniors in need to local resources they may not have known about before. It could also serve as an excellent way for non-profit and government agencies alike to meet and network with each other. If the City were to create another outreach event, participating organizations should be asked to spread the word about the event to other agencies with similar target populations. The results from the outreach event show that posting flyers, attending festivals with high foot traffic, and putting a public service announcement in the Cedar Street Times were good strategies, but not quite enough to effectively let the public know about the event. Organizations most likely have connections with others that could benefit from doing outreach. Social media platforms should be utilized when advertising for the event as well. Surveys should still be distributed to agencies to help the City determine if another resource center needs to be created.
Personal Reflection

This project was able to help me build my skills as an organizer, recruiter, an outreach worker and a researcher. It also gave the City an opportunity to advertise the Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program to the public and to organizations that participated at the event. It prompted a dialogue between government and non-profit agencies, allowing them to band together and create positive change within the community of Pacific Grove.

This project was able to help the senior community directly and indirectly. In terms of direct help, this project was able to connect seniors with resources they may not have known about had the event not occurred. In terms of indirect aid, this project allowed organizations to network and talk about their missions. This type of discussion can lead to growth within an organization, such as redefining a mission statement or learning about new outreach strategies from other organizations. This type of networking helps the organization learn how to reach the public in a more effective manner, which in consequence can lead to more seniors being served.

To expand on this project, a larger venue should be utilized to accommodate more organizations and perhaps include activities such as Zumba dance sessions or knitting classes. This would allow for a more engaging experience that participants of all ages could enjoy. The tabling session could even incorporate presentations from agencies to address topics such as how they are tackling issues related to aging adults.

Incoming interns should know that this internship can be one of the most rewarding experiences during your time as an undergraduate. Make sure to show your mentors that you are eager to help them as much as you can. Don’t be afraid to ask questions because this is the time to learn and grow. The experience you gain at this internship can help open so many doors for you, and it’s important to show that you are ready to improve yourself as a professional. You
may be afraid that you will come across as incompetent, but at this stage in your life you are just starting to put the theories learned in class into practice. It’s perfectly fine not to know how to tackle a situation or remember a specific policy. You wouldn’t be doing this internship if you knew how to do everything. Your mentors are there to help you become the professionals needed out in the health and human services field.
References


months (in 2016 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars). Retrieved from:

https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_16_5YR_B11010&prodType=table
## Appendix A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Deliverables</th>
<th>Timeline/Deadlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create a survey to be delivered to organizations about Pacific Grove clientele</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>January-February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct research on agencies, get in contact with them and ask if they want to join. Visit agencies in person if possible to see their programs in action. Also, find the venue</td>
<td>List of organizations to contact, venue for event</td>
<td>January-April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create flyers for the outreach event. Attach them to various bulletins and street corners in Pacific Grove. Also, get in touch with agencies and see if they would be willing to post a few flyers around their agencies.</td>
<td>Outreach plan</td>
<td>April 1-15th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call newspapers and see if they will place public service announcements in their paper about the event. Do this at least twice, if possible.</td>
<td>Advertisement for the event, PSA</td>
<td>April 15th-April 30th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host the outreach event (do set up and take down of the event)</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>May 3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate surveys completed by organizations</td>
<td>Plan of action for my mentor</td>
<td>August-October 30th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Survey of Pacific Grove Clients

How many clients do you serve that report addresses from Pacific Grove?

- 0-10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 41-50%
- 51-60%
- 61-70%
- 71-80%
- 81-90%
- 91-100%
- (If you have the exact number, please write/type it here __________________________)

What are your sources of funding?

Please check off the type of agency you identify as. If neither answer applies, please describe your agency on the line adjacent to the word “other”:

- Non-profit
- Government
- Other: ________________________________

What is the cost of service per person? (Please include answers from your most popular senior programs)

What are your main services?