

Community Support Roundtable Notes

How do you get community support and involvement?

- Have postcards with the clients' artwork to distribute or use for thank-you notes
- Have the clients out in the community and able to walk up to people
- In Rogers Park, the experience is that the more personal contact you can achieve, the greater the impact. The clients become known and welcome in the community. One client now works at a thrift shop 2 days per week, another stocks shelves at a local food pantry. Other suggestions included; contacting local service agencies; helping a local preschool to stock supplies, performing lawn work. As agencies become bigger, the agency needs to be a PART of the community. Tiny things often get overlooked...such as needing to teach a client how to buy a bus pass, and this may take ½ hour of time for each client. The client needs to have this community experience to gain more independence.

Importance of field trips into the community

- Small interactions can be very impactful
- A top down attitude where every community interaction may turn into an opportunity for a client.
- Opportunities for parent and child to share experiences are often limited due to our hurried and stressed lives.
- Lots of ground work advocacy is needed. .outing, where you would call in advance to "make it elegant".
- Smaller groups
- Assess the need for the amount of support and the clients' skill levels in advance
- Have expectation of the STAFF
- Staff has had some negative experiences, and have to work through this with them.. you have to be understanding
- Clients with a history of behavioral issues can surprise you, and the behaviors may vanish with community experience.. they rise to the occasion.
- Use social stories for transitions. Envision uses individualized stories for each client. These are used to adapt behaviors, and then fade.
- Use real banter and humor, "So, Jeff, when you go out into public, do you scratch your behind???"
- Use a natural humorous technique, not clinical banter.

Staffing:

You know the difference of who is a better worker than another for our clients. The better worker can redirect how the staff learns to view and frame what they are saying..

Staff..all the supports? What supports do we use? Lists, coffee..Its a challenge to find staff that "gets it".

Training: How do you find staff or do training?

- Find the PERSON, then train that person.
- You can tell about a person in the interview, and how much that person knows about autism or his willingness to -learn about autism.

- Has to be a team,..not a top down approach
- Want them to learn within a collaborative environment
- Would take a risk on a PERSON

Scale resources:

- Community support is the most expansive form of help available.
- Esperanza..wants to reopen the art and gift shop in the building..its a challenge to operate as a store as opposed to teaching the workers vocational skills
- Store hours are not program hours, decreased foot traffic at lunch time, workers getting bored, “phony” jobs create disinterest; are all obstacles.

- How can we integrate a store into the community?
- Need to build and grow a volunteer base
- flex hours of staff to extend the store hours
- Envision suggested an arts based program..ready to rent out a room at Navy Pier..like a prom, would invite other agencies
- Project Onward..Cultural Center
- “You did it great, now share.”
- Some agencies get proprietary...”We invented it”
- Shared events and clients
- The challenge is in the actual coordination, money, time, and getting agencies over the “hump” of their own pride.
- Agencies DON’T KNOW EACH OTHER.
- Location of the event or facility..often too far from the clients, customers, or workers.
- United Way has a book with agencies listed??
- Wilmette Youth Commission..gave grants for meetings of agencies
- There may be something next door, but you don’t know about it.
- There should be a forum or website around these topics

La Rabida: Kids on vents, and cannot go anywhere unless there is an electric hook-up. Would want these kids to be part of the community. Field Museum could perhaps be pulled in to help plan.

-Have to advocate; ADA

Advocacy: These individuals HAVE RIGHTS

- Monica of Envision could teach a session to others on how to plan a successful field trip or how to advocate for these clients.
- Programs and services should not be competitive. it won’t affect funding
- People don’t always have time to plan field trips or extra events. A web discussion on the Special Kids website might be helpful.
- Does every community have a listing of agencies, possible work sites, and businesses?
- Suggested a “speed-date” way to get agencies to get together and know each other.

What would I like?

- Employment marketing coach, help with matching career to jobs
- Suggested more use of the local Chamber of Commerce, non-for profit agencies, one-to-one business contacts

- on-site training
- more community involvement in these ventures
- One group has a partnership with Doubletree for housekeeping and hospitality. They service 1 time per week, from 9-12, and have 2 suite training rooms.
- Help in screening clients' skills
- Asking companies if they can fund, ex) funding copiers?
- The community should be HELD RESPONSIBLE..ITS THE RIGHT THING TO DO
- Go to someone else's fundraiser
- NETWORK
- Get help on how your finances can be handled more efficiently
- Creat a job; making boxes..How many orders are incorrect?? Profits will increase if accuracy increases. One client started this type of job for 3 hours per week, and has now increased to 3 days per week. This job was created by just knocking on a door.
- Another opportunity arose from the director researching a local business that made tomato sauce and started a relationship which built into a job for a client. It took a few visits, but was successful. GET THEM TO REMEMBER YOU.

- More donations are wanted, for example food for an event
- Best Buddies stressed the HUMAN CONNECTION. They offer a tee shirt or a thank-you note no matter how small the donation.
- ALWAYS give a personal hand-made card..your group "Needed the gift, and it was appreciated". HAND ADDRESS.

Picture of what happened.....:

Envision Foster Care in Hyde Park; raising money for kids to buy x-mas gifts..they started a White Elephant sale, placing ads in the Hyde Park newspaper. The community donated items, and supported the sale. Now, there are 2 sales per year at the agency.

LaRabida: Wanted to develop a partnership with schools...the hierarchy was frustrating to deal with. .so Where do you start?. They started with with leaders in the community, asking, "Who are the most influential pastors?" They would then sit down with these people, and would plead for them to get their people involved. Networking can yield results.

Seguin suggested: To get into the schools, as the next step, they worked on going from the inside by volunteering as a room mom, letting the students work on a project related to the clients, or doing a walk for autism. They used Maria Shriver's book, "What's Wrong With Timmy" as a teaching tool. This was tied to a program at a school, with seniors able to satisfy service hours for their help.

- Has your group had success in getting volunteers?
- How do you get corporate volunteers?
- How do you engage them at a deeper level?
- How do you engage donors, or get pro bono volunteers?

-Offer specific tasks such as come for a day of cleaning, help with a survey, make phone calls

-Ask your volunteers if there is something that can be improved upon

-Ask for feedback

-La Rabida has a Volunteer Day

-Have one person be THE contact for follow-up

-How to tap into volunteers? How do you scope out the good volunteers?

JUST ASK!

-Envision uses U of C students as tutors

-Tap into seniors that have been forced to retire too early.

-How do you make volunteers have fun and feel rewarded?

-Partner with a high school for shadowing