

Barre Housing Authority

- Major activities/accomplishments
 - Conducted orientation to Senior Wellness and Nutrition (SWAN) Program for 30 people.
 - PR event (Club Blue) sponsored by Blue Cross/Blue Shield of VT, included dinner. Attended by 50 people. Additional 10 SWAN participants were recruited at this event.
 - Nutrition education session held at the fitness center following an exercise class (presented by RD from the local hospital).
 - Ongoing nutrition education presented by student intern.
 - Created affordable fitness club membership for Barre Housing Authority senior residents.
- Problems/barriers/challenges
 - Provision of transportation to and from fitness center from the senior housing site cost more than anticipated. Transportation authority agreed to waive additional fee.
 - Making the DAIL evaluation tool fit the SWAN program.
 - Steady decline in participation.
- Findings
 - \$21.00/month fitness club membership still deemed too expensive for older adults.
 - Ongoing advocacy for/promotion of fitness program was very time consuming for Director.

Barton Senior Center

- Major activities/accomplishments
 - Meals are now being prepared on-site. Site was serving 6-8 people two days/week; now serving approximately 50 people two days/week.
 - Provision of transportation for older adults to indoor recreation center in a neighboring town increased access to fitness programming (Tufts Strong Living and Steps to Healthy Aging programs).
 - Meal site manager attended SERVSAFE training and is certified Safe Food Handler. Implemented new safe food handling procedures in kitchen.
 - Partnering with Vermont Foodbank for year-round delivery of locally grown farm fresh produce.
 - Increased satisfaction with on-site meals.
 - Increased number of men attending senior center/meal site for home-cooked meals.
 - Became a non-profit agency with a Board of Directors.
 - On-site RD visits two times per month.
- Problems/barriers/challenges

- Accommodating growth in participation. Stricter standards of safe food handling tightened access to kitchen. Participants felt put-out by restrictions on kitchen access.
- Findings
 - Cooking staff was very resistant to menu changes (additional fresh fruit and vegetables, plus whole grains). Providing training helped overcome this resistance.
 - Onslaught of excessive amount of fresh produce required involving senior participants to help with freezing (lots of vegetable chopping and apple peeling).

Brattleboro Senior Meals, Inc.

- Major activities/accomplishments
 - Purchased salad bar and convection oven.
 - Held two ‘Luncheon with the Arts’ programs.
 - Participation increased on salad bar days and special arts luncheon days.
 - Recruited eight new volunteers; three of whom agreed to serve two-year terms on the Board of Directors.
 - Breakfast option was successful, but only offered twice.
 - 52 new members; 28 of whom had never before attended a meal at the site.
- Problems/barriers/challenges
 - Delivery of salad bar delayed.
 - Extra staff time required to keep salad bar stocked and clean.
 - Forecasting produce needs for salad bar to avoid leftovers.
- Findings
 - Word of mouth is the most effective method of public relations. PR and marketing efforts that cost money did not yield predicted results.
 - Although popular, salad bar created many issues including traffic flow around the island, need for ongoing clean-up during salad bar operation, and how to handle leftovers.
 - Underestimated the need for staff training (and time required) regarding new menu items, salad bar, baking, etc.

Castleton Community Center

- Major activities/accomplishments
 - Mailed community survey to 2,100 Castleton area residents with a follow-up postcard mailing.
 - Held one focus group as follow-up to survey.
 - Held one evidence-based chronic disease self management class (*Healthier Living Workshop*); 10 seniors attended.
 - Opened a computer resource center.
 - Now have four trained leaders for *Healthier Living Workshop*.
- Problems/barriers/challenges
 - Survey distribution was postponed due to printer delays.

- Undelivered mail was not returned by the Post Office, making accurate computation of response rate difficult.
- Response rate was low (10-12%).
- Findings
 - Need to use 1st class postage for mailing surveys rather than bulk mail (so that undeliverable mail is returned to the senior center).
 - Participant recruitment for *Healthier Living Workshops* is difficult.
 - Laptop computers more effective than desktops for developing a computer resource center.
 - “Live” computer instruction requires use of LCD projector to facilitate visual learning.
 - Experienced 33% increase in attendance at center.
 - Annual fund contributions have increased.

Champlain Senior Center, Inc.

- Major activities/accomplishments
 - Purchase of salad bar equipment and hiring of chef to staff new food production area.
 - Soup and salad bar offered five days per week.
- Problems/barriers/challenges
 - Underestimated the amount of time required to recruit/train volunteers.
 - While the new soup and salad bar is popular, the volume of participants choosing to eat at the salad bar is not sufficient for long-term sustainability (at this point in time).
 - Insufficient number of dedicated volunteers to support salad bar.
- Findings
 - Soup and Salad Bar as meal alternative changed the face of the meal site.
 - Soup and Salad Bar attracted younger, more active seniors.
 - Sustainability of Soup and Salad Bar will depend, in part, on adequate number of volunteers and more patrons.
 - On-site chef and food prep infused the center with positive energy.
 - During the six- month project, 120 new participants came to the center (15% increase in senior center participation; 24% increase in meal site participation).

CIDER (Champlain Islanders Developing Essential Resources, Inc.)

- Major activities/accomplishments
 - Silver Sneakers exercise program (based on the Arthritis Foundation exercise program) is in place two days/week, and is attended by 8-10 seniors/class.
 - Held a focus group in the community.
 - Sponsored a creative writing class (*Writing Stories of Your Life*). All 10 participants (and they were in the younger, more active cohort) had never attended the meal site before.
- Problems/barriers/challenges

- Collecting data, completing surveys and conducting focus groups required more time than planned.
- Difficulty finding instructors to lead classes. As a result, health and nutrition classes postponed/not offered.
- Seasonal nature of population base. Many seniors leave the Islands for Florida, especially the younger more active seniors who tend to comprise the volunteer base.
- Co-location of center in a church discourages participation for some community seniors because they feel the programs are church-affiliated.
- Findings
 - Captured above.

Central Vermont Council on Aging

- Major activities/accomplishments
 - Completed development of eight-week curriculum for *Holding Hands* .
 - Two 8-week *Holding Hands* sessions were held.
 - Program ranked “very valuable” for those caregivers that participated.
 - Validation of care giving experience by participating caregivers.
 - Partnerships formed with new community organizations/groups, including the hospital, Eldercare Clinician Program, and exercise leaders.
- Problems/barriers/challenges
 - Enrollment in *Holding Hands* classes lower than planned; also, the number of men did not meet targeted participation rate. Caregivers find it difficult to attend the regularly planned classes.
 - Caregiver attitude that they can’t afford to take the time to attend the support sessions/classes.
 - Meal/socialization component following the classes did not happen because of scheduling issues.
- Findings
 - Need to work with professionals, case managers, and social workers for recruitment of caregivers.
 - Might be useful to create a buddy system for follow-up with caregivers connected to a group.

Franklin County Senior Center

- Major activities/accomplishments
 - Increased meal participation (8%).
 - Increased senior center membership (10%).
 - Increased volunteer activity.
 - Increased number of Board of Director members.
 - Strengthened partnership with local hospital.
 - Increased awareness of services available to seniors.
 - Additional trained leader for the Tufts Strong living Program.
- Problems/barriers/challenges
 - Program began during the summer months when younger seniors are busy.

- Local sports complex started a multigenerational physical activity program just as the *Weigh to Good Health* Program began.
- Senior Center computer crashed during the project and data was lost.
- Limited transportation impacted programs.
- Findings
 - Outreach is time consuming.
 - Social stigma of *senior* center is very real in the community.

Heineberg Senior Center

- Major activities/accomplishments
 - Created website and separate phone/voice mail for ‘Wit, Wisdom and Wanderlust’ (WWW) project.
 - Completed two outreach sessions to determine needs, priorities and gaps in services/programs for new population of seniors attending the site.
 - Formed Ambassador Group to spread the buzz regarding new programs and activities at the center.
 - Soup and Salad Bar attracted new participants – especially the “young” old.
 - Partnered with the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts to increase access to the performances.
- Problems/barriers/challenges
 - Early recognition of need for dedicated staff person to manage/oversee the WWW project.
 - Early recognition of need to create new senior center image to attract younger older adults.
 - Staffing limitations prevented sufficient community outreach.
- Findings
 - Had unrealistic expectations regarding what could be accomplished during the six-month project.
 - Newly retired seniors want a place that provides a sense of community.
 - Center is in the midst of transitioning from public perception that they are simply a social service agency; rather the center is a place for celebrating aging, older adults and the community asset that older adults are.
 - Although Target Area was not included as a priority in their proposal, the Salad Bar drew in a large number of new patrons.

Island Pond Community Services, Inc. (Sunrise Manor)

- Major activities/accomplishments
 - Distributed newsletter announcing new activities offered at senior center.
 - Established exercise classes: walking program that meets two days/week using pedometers and a strength-training class.
 - Participation in the exercise classes doubled during the 2nd half of the project.
 - Partnership with local farm has resulted in fresh vegetables for seniors and increased use of fresh produce in menus.
 - Attendance at meal site has increased.

- Number of home delivered meals has increased on two of the three days of delivery service.
- Delivering meals to clients living in more of the outlying areas of the community/surrounding towns.
- Problems/barriers/challenges
 - Resistance of seniors to adopt healthy eating and physical activity.
 - Cooking class was poorly attended.
- Findings
 - It takes time and money to run these programs.
 - Word of mouth is the best recruitment tool.
 - High degree of interest in and participation in interactive sessions with a nutritionist at the site.

Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association

- Major activities/accomplishments
 - Start-up of computer resource center.
 - Community residing seniors have increased access to computers and the Internet.
 - Nurse available two days per week for Ask the Nurse.
 - Marketing campaign promoting Menu for Healthy Living is underway.
 - Participation in meals and other activities increased.
 - Strengthened community partnerships with local libraries, the hospital library and the mental health center.
- Problems/barriers/challenges
 - None reported.
- Findings
 - Seniors are hungry for health and wellness information.
 - Increased marketing and PR efforts resulted in increased meals attendance and participation in health promotions and disease prevention activities.
 - Parker House Management Company will continue to provide financial support to keep the computer resource center with Internet access in operation.

Senior Center Covenant Community Church

- Major activities/accomplishments
 - Increased local awareness of and support for the Connections program and senior center.
 - Addition of Thursday meal; serving approximately 20 seniors.
 - Identified local provider for Thursday meals.
 - Internet access now available following IBM donation of computers; Internet Café is functioning.
 - Created a Steering Committee that meets twice/month.
 - Hired a part-time coordinator.
- Problems/barriers/challenges
 - Targeted start-up date in July conflicted with participant summer vacations and travel, resulting in lower than targeted enrollments.

- Transportation (lack of it).
- Decline in participation when seniors from Richmond (neighboring town) do not attend.
- Findings
 - Meals are not a revenue-generating activity, rather a break-even proposition.
 - Ongoing challenge to recruit and retain volunteers.
 - “Community Church” in their name was disincentive for people to attend because they felt it was a church-affiliated program.
 - Surprised at the disinterest in special programs.

St. Johnsbury Senior Center

- Major activities/accomplishments
 - Marketing campaign is underway.
 - Advisory group has been convened; re-named the center, selected identifying logo for the center, etc.
 - New website established.
 - Increased public awareness of the center.
 - Increased participation in activities, volunteerism, and donations.
 - New membership on the Board of Directors.
- Problems/barriers/challenges
 - Learning the new computer technology has been a challenge for the director.
 - Recruiting and coordinating competent volunteers.
- Findings
 - Project Director needed to learn the computer programs and technology.
 - Producing a quarterly newsletter requires more time and money than anticipated.
 - Creating two advisory groups increased the sense of senior center ownership
 - Ad hoc committee to oversee SCE Project
 - Ad hoc committee to re-design the center name, logo, etc.

Waterbury Area Senior Center

- Major activities/accomplishments
 - Developed and posted market analysis survey on website of major employers in Waterbury and included an insert in local newspaper.
 - Focus group participants are now engaged and want to be kept in the loop.
 - Surveys and focus groups got community talking about what is happening and the importance of their services for older adults.
- Problems/barriers/challenges
 - One local employer who had agreed (during the drafting of their proposal) to distribute survey to its staff, never responded to the invitation, resulting in reaching 200 fewer individuals.
 - Low response rate on survey.
- Findings

- Realization that in order to survive and thrive, need to drop *senior* from their name.
- Center needs to consider regrouping an emerging as a multigenerational, multi-service center.
- Providing transportation services and access to cultural events are important to community respondents.
- Waterbury Senior Center is perceived as center of low vitality.
- Current programs and services hold little appeal for Baby Boomers.

White River Junction Council on Aging

- Major activities/accomplishments
 - Completed script and story board for PR/volunteer recruitment video/DVD.
 - Produced a DVD for volunteer recruitment.
 - Recruited three new home delivered meals drivers, including one driver for a longer route.
 - Doubled the number of participants in the 66 – 70 year-old age cohort between the pre- and post-survey.
- Problems/barriers/challenges
 - Delay in funding from DAIL caused production of video/DVD to fall behind schedule.
- Findings
 - Existing pool of volunteers has new awareness of how valued their services are by HDM recipients.
 - Producing a high quality video/DVD requires a lot of time, patience and skill.
 - Keeping up with the computer technology requires time and someone who understands the jargon and technology.
 - Underestimated the amount of time required for the volunteer coordinator to master the editing software.

Woodstock Area Council on Aging

- Major activities/accomplishments
 - New website launched.
 - Evening transportation provided for seniors to attend programs at the senior center.
 - Significant increase in both the congregate and home delivered meals served.
 - Developed new community partnerships.
 - Participation increased in targeted towns (previously underserved communities).
- Problems/barriers/challenges
 - High cost of gasoline caused seniors to think twice about attending programs at the senior center.

- Stigma of “senior” attached to the center and its activities; local residents express interest in attending programs/events, but are reluctant because they do not consider themselves “seniors” yet.
- Findings
 - Center faced ongoing stigma of *senior* in their name, but after an ad hoc group investigated whether or not to remove it, decided to leave it intact.
 - Although the center felt that the cost of new programs was sufficiently low, many seniors struggled to pay a nominal fee.
 - High cost of gasoline impacted ability to use van service and impacted frequency of seniors driving to the site for events.
 - Insufficient time to network with community partners.