



PENNSYLVANIA HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY

PHFA's Housing
Services Department
Best Practices

Altoona Evergreen Manor Family Resource Center

Category: Access to Services

Outcomes:

The Supportive Services Program is a holistic comprehensive service delivery program that is broad based and diverse to meet the needs of the individuals residing at Evergreen Manors as well as the needs of the community at large. The Supportive Services Program focuses on strengthening protective factors that can buffer people from problem behaviors and promote positive development.

Units: Altoona Evergreen Manor Phase I & II consists of 158 units for general occupancy.

Management Agent: Improved Dwellings for Altoona, Inc.

Service Coordinator: Kathy Baskin, Supportive Services Coordinator, Improved Dwellings for Altoona, 814.283.1181.

Program Components:

On-site Food Pantry and More – the on-site food pantry is stocked by the St. Rose of Lima, St. Vincent DePaul Society Conference. This church also collects, bath tissue, paper towels, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, conditioner, a variety of cleaning supplies, school supplies, back packs for the students filled with school supplies, and brings them to the Supportive Services Office for distribution.

Computer Lab – thanks to a grant from the Central PA Community Foundation a laptop and printer were purchased for resident use in 2009; in 2010 the Nittany Pointe Student Housing complex donated 3 computer towers and keyboards to the Supportive Services Office. All computers have internet and a printer. After purchasing 3 monitors the computer lab was set up. There is also a copier in the lab for resident use. These are utilized by the residents to search for jobs, complete online applications, and by students to complete homework assignments or just catch up on Facebook and emails.

Project Room – furnishings and project supplies were donated by Improved Dwellings of Altoona for students who are too old to attend the after school program to complete projects for school. Students have access to the room, poster board, markers, & more. They seem to really like it.

Playroom- toys, books, television, movies, table and chairs, all donated, make a great place for the little ones to keep busy while mom or dad are either on the computer or meeting with the service coordinator.

Play Group - the Parent-Child Home Program conducts a play group for children between the ages of 18 months and 3 years of age. Parents and children are invited to the Supportive Services Office monthly for a time of free play, art activity and circle time. Children and parents work together to make an art project while circle time consists of a book, finger plays, and songs. Siblings are permitted to attend and parents must attend with their children.

Younglife – The director of Young Life, Tim O’Brian meets with students weekly at the Supportive Services Office. In the past year they have gone out to eat and to several Penn State Basketball Games. There is no charge to students.

Youth Program conducted by: Pastor Derald & Mrs. Leslie Young.

The **Altoona Community Club 4-H** program was formed and meets on-site. It is the only community based 4-H program in Blair County. This program presently has 22 student members and 3 adult leaders. The group meets every 2nd & 4th Thursday at the Evergreen Manors’ community room. The students work on projects such as photograph, animal care, stranger danger, and community awareness. In the Fall of 2010 the group enjoyed a catered lunch at the Iron Masters’ Club and a trip to a local farm. Dues for the students were paid for by a grant received from Operation Our Town and bus transportation was funded by the St. Rose of Lima, St. Vincent DePaul Society Conference.

The Evergreen Manors’ Girl Scout Troop # 623 meets every Friday in the Evergreen Manors’ Community Room; there is 1 leader, and 4 volunteers. The troop is very active in the Blair County Community. They participate in parades, collect donations for the food pantry and also collected for the Central PA Humane Society. Last year the troop went to the Pittsburgh Zoo and Aquarium and to Weakland Farms. Tickets were provided by the Tickets for Kids Organization and reduced costs transportation was provided by Freedom Excursions and paid for by a grant from Operation Our Town.

Craft & Chat – mostly women attend this event held the last Tuesday of every month. It is great fun and they make some really beautiful crafts.

Block Parties - two Saturday block parties were held in 2010 with approximately 150 people in attendance. New Hope Baptist Church provided everything including: games, prizes, food, drinks, entertainment and fun for all. The Church also provided a movie night for families at the church with transportation for the viewing of “Toy Story 3” and also hosted a large dinner for the families of the property.

Evergreen Manors’ Day at Lakemont Park – 163 family members participated in this event. Thanks to the grant from Operation Our Town a pavilion is rented and 100 wrist bands are given to the children. The event is planned again for June 2011.

Field Trips 2010 – thanks to a grant from Operation Our Town and free tickets from the Tickets for Kids organization the following field trips were taken by the families at Evergreen Manors: the Pittsburgh Zoo & Aquarium, Pittsburgh Pirate Game (the kids all got free Pirate Shirts), the Carnegie Science Center & UPMC Sports Works, and the Pittsburgh Steelers Training Camp. Transportation was provided by Freedom Excursions with 2 free buses to take families to see the live Nativity here in Altoona.

Free Throw Competition – held just before the All American Festival – In 2010 there were 23 entries; Sonny Consiglio and Tom Irwin, (former coaches) officiated. For weeks we had students at the basketball court practicing. The competition was great and it was amazing how they all supported one another. Operation Our Town funds were used to provide the Grand Prize of \$100. After winning Sean S. ran to his Grandmothers and gave her the money. The next day he opened a savings account with the money; Sean is very proud of winning & opening a savings account. Plans are underway for the 2011 event

Three large annual events: “All American Festival”, Fall Fest and a Christmas Celebration - In 2010 the 5th annual “All American Festival” was

Held on June 25th and the Fall Fest was held on October 7th. Fiore True Value donated the use of their large tent for the Magician (Dennie Huber) to perform along with 15 tables & 90 chairs. St. Rose of Lima Church members Larry & Nancy Harker volunteered along with volunteers from the United Way and many Evergreen Manors' resident volunteers. At both festivals 13 other organizations set up tables with activities and information including the schools that the Evergreen Manors' students attend. Organizations such as Head Start, Blair Conservation District, the Respiratory Disease Society, PAWS (Perseverance+Ambition+Will=Success) from Penn State, Parents as Teachers, the Family Resource Center, Pyramid Health Care, Operation Our Town, Contact Altoona, and more. Approximately 250 people attended each festival. The United Way donated \$100.00 towards the food costs and \$600.00 from Operation Our Town covered the cost of entertainment and supplies. The Blair County Ballpark donated tickets for door prizes. An Apple Pie Contest is held at the All American Festival and a Chili contest is held at the Fall Festival. The Christmas Celebration was held on December 23rd at St. George's Orthodox Church (nearby donated space); 115 people attended.

Resident Participation: Leadership workshops and a leadership group were established in January 2007. Monthly meetings are held and all leaders are involved in at least one or more of the following: Neighborhood Crime Watch, Girl Scouts, community events, welcoming new residents, problem solving, fundraising and the Summer Feeding Program.

Parenting issues are resolved by a referral to the Family Resource Center. The Center provides one-to-one parenting assistance in the resident's home weekly or more often if needed. The FRC also provides individual potty training assistance.

Housekeeping skills are addressed by the Service Coordinator upon referral from the Manager. The Coordinator provides one-on-one, in-home instruction and assistance to assist those who are having trouble meeting basic maintenance standards in their apartments. The Coordinator identifies residents that are eligible for free in-home assistance from an area agency and refers the resident for services, such as the Center for Independent Living, Home Nursing Agency, Blair Senior Services, and/or North Star Support Services.

Adult education and job development – the Service Coordinator collaborates with the Community Education Center and has raised funds to pay for the GED exams for residents. Three residents achieved their GED in 2010. One man and one woman following getting their GED got a good job with benefits and the other is still looking for work; she has a young child. The male GED graduate was just promoted at the job he secured and is now planning on renting a house and moving.

Budgeting skills and financial literacy are addressed by the Blair County Community Action Agency upon referral from the Supportive Services Coordinator. Budget counselors meet with residents individually in the Supportive Services Office during scheduled appointments.

Health Promotion - Penn State Extension Office monthly on-site cooking classes, a Smoking Cessation Support Group, presentations by a local physician and Nulton Diagnostics with on-site individual or family counseling at scheduled appointments and through a variety of presentations on such topics as domestic violence, depression and stress management.

Crime prevention through a neighborhood watch group is making a difference. The neighborhood Crime Watch Group at ends trainings and meetings held within

the county. They report suspicious activity and meet with local law enforcement to discuss areas of concern.

Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation after school program works with teachers and parents to support and model good behavior and improve grades. It is achieving success in both areas.

The Summer Rec Program – funded by Evergreen Manors, the Blair Recreation Commission provided staff and activities for the students in June, July, & August on-site.

Free Summer Breakfast & Lunch Program – is held in the Evergreen Manors' Community Room June through August. Resident volunteers help with setting up, serving, and clean up.

The summer program conducted by the Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation. Instructional sports clinics teach skills, self control, a good attitude, and team spirit. Kids College allowed grade school children to spend time on the Penn State Altoona campus and showed them that college really can be in their future.

Great Service Coordination and management buy-in are key components to any successful services program. At Altoona Evergreen Manor all services staff meet regularly to assure smooth operations and use of resources. Monthly meetings with site management are used to review referrals, proposed activities and progress of on-going programs.

Background:

Altoona Evergreen Manor consists of 24 two-story buildings. There are a total of 158 units with one, two, three and four bedrooms. A HUD 236 development, it went under moderate rehabilitation in 2001 and 2002 to upgrade and preserve the development with PHFA financing.

Investment in Services:

Improved Dwellings of Altoona, Inc. expanded their services program with Family Resource Center funding in 2004. Additional resources used to support services include a Neighborhood Assistance Program Tax Credits, and the developments annual operating budget. The collaborative programming with local social service agencies is key to the success of Supportive Services at Evergreen Manor.

Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation, in combination with funding from the United Way and Altoona Hospital, provides after-school programming children in grades K-6. The Foundation has supported services at this development for more than 10 years.

For more information contact
PHFA's Housing Services Department:
Steven Chopek
412.429.2843
schopek@phfa.org