



PENNSYLVANIA HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY

PHFA's Housing
Services Department
Best Practices

PETRA COMMUNITY HOUSING/ "Petra On The GO"

Categories: Access to Services

Outcomes: The "Petra On The Go" bus program has allowed homebound residents to get out in the community, shop, go out to eat and enjoy local events. Our Tenant Associations are able to "rent" the bus to take residents to the attractions such as Valley Forge Casino or Lancaster's Shady Maple Smorgasbord. We average at least 10+ passengers on our regular runs and almost always have a full bus for sponsored special events. Our residents with physical disabilities are also able to enjoy the accessibility features of the bus and we welcome them to bring their aides.



Partnerships- Community partnerships have increased due to a variety of sponsorship opportunities for the program and trips. Our residents are empowered to enjoy their independence in the community often patronizing those partnerships that help sponsor the program.

Program Development- In order to continue providing the annual operational costs for the program, we developed a system that utilizes the Giant Food store "Cash for Cause" gift card donation program that awards 5% of every gift card purchased to our "Petra On The Go" bus. Along with sales of Travel Cards to residents that affords 10 trips per \$10 card. We offer "sponsorship" opportunities with partner agencies by providing advertising on the bus itself for a fee. We allow our Tenant Associations use of the bus for a small fee based on mileage. We host our Friends & Family Day Fundraiser annually to raise the majority of the funds needed to sustain the mini bus and the Petra On The Go program. Last year the event raised approximately \$5000 to cover gas, insurance and operational costs needed to sustain the mini bus.

We created a program that provides weekly shopping trips to centers that include grocery, department stores and eateries for all of our residents in all our locations. We incorporate a monthly "Fun Run" into our schedule that highlights an area of interest such as local malls, museums and restaurants. Area supporters along with our Board of Directors sponsor annual events such as concerts and our "Christmas Light Ride". Our housebound residents especially enjoy the light ride as we drink hot cocoa and reminisce while visiting some fabulous light displays. We named our program "Petra On The Go" as that is exactly what it is! As luck would have it, an opening in our on-site porter position afforded us the ability to hire Ed who thoroughly enjoys being our regular driver. Ed makes every trip enjoyable for each passenger.

Program Promotion:

Each month Petra creates and posts our "On The Go" calendar that lists the dates and times of our shopping runs along with the announcement of our "Fun Run" for that month. Our residents coordinate with us and include the bus trips on their resident calendar too. Each building has a sign-up sheet by the mailboxes that we ask residents to use to reserve their spot for each trip. Our Fun Run's and special trips always have a flyer posted with a call-in RSVP. This is to assure we don't overbook the special trips. Residents are responsible to purchase their own Travel Cards from the office. These cards allow for 5 round trip regular bus runs.

Background:

Petra is a HUD subsidized 501C3 that serves low income elderly and persons with disabilities in several renovated sites located in Chester and Montgomery counties. All of our locations are independent living communities. When we first started the Resident Service Coordinator program in 2011, one question I got asked frequently by my senior residents was if there were any programs to help them get their groceries. At the time we were lucky enough to have medical transportation available and be located fairly close to public transportation but this did not help a good portion of our residents who had mobility issues that prevented them from accomplishing their errands without assistance. We began to brainstorm ways to acquire an accessible van. That summer we had our first Friends & Family Day to help raise funds for the vehicle. In 2012 one of the local employee giving programs awarded us an additional \$20,000 toward the purchase of a brand new 12+ passenger accessible mini bus!

Service Coordinator:

Beverly Sarduy

Management Agent:

Petra Community Housing

For more information,
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