

GRANT HIGHLIGHTS

NOVEMBER 2013

United Community Center Opens Clinic for Low-Income Hispanic Seniors

In 2010, RRF awarded a two-year, \$50,000 grant to the United Community Center (UCC) to help coordinate the services of a new medical clinic, located in UCC's low-income senior housing complex in Milwaukee. The housing complex, named Olga Village, consists of a 20-unit, HUD Section 202 apartment building and a newer 37-unit apartment complex jointly sponsored with the Milwaukee Housing Authority and built with Low-Income Housing Tax Credits.

The clinic is a partnership between UCC and the 16th Street Community Health Center of Milwaukee, a Federally Qualified Health Clinic. Since opening in late 2011, it has been serving seniors who participate in UCC's Elderly Programs and the larger community. The clinic operates two days a week. In 2012, the clinic logged 738 patient visits. During the first four months of 2013, the clinic logged almost 300 patient visits and was on course to double the volume of the previous year. Nearly all of the clinic's patients are Hispanic. Eighty percent have an annual income below \$15,000.

RRF funds enabled UCC to hire a part-time social worker to coordinate the clinic's services for seniors, help reduce barriers to services, and improve overall health outcomes. Patient surveys indicated that the coordination is working. Eighty-nine percent of patients indicated they were connected to, and engaged in social events at Olga Village's Senior Center. Ninety-six percent reported they made new friends as a result of this connection. Almost all reported they were treated with respect and dignity at the clinic and felt their culture was valued. Seventy-five percent indicated they have been assisted with daily living skills; 85 percent were able to cope better with stress; 83 percent were more physically active; and 76 percent improved their eating habits.

With the addition of the clinic, attendance in UCC's adult day care program grew by 40 percent. Its programs for persons with Alzheimer's disease grew by 60 percent. UCC has demonstrated its keen ability to form strategic partnerships for the delivery of linguistically - and culturally-competent services for Hispanic elderly.

Social Development Commission Helps Wisconsin's Low-Income Seniors Access Benefits

In 2011, RRF awarded a \$25,000 grant to the Social Development Commission of Milwaukee (SDC) to expand its pilot Senior Companion Benefits Enrollment Program. The Senior Companion Program gives stipends to low-income seniors who provide caregiving and friendship to other low-income elders. SDC trained the Senior

Companions to educate and help seniors enroll in public benefits by using two online screening tools--Benefits CheckUp and Wisconsin Access.

RRF provided partial support for a Benefits Enrollment Coordinator to enable SDC to expand the program. SDC screened 5,204 seniors--10 times more than anticipated. The seniors were screened in person at SDC locations and partner agencies in the community such as congregate meal sites, senior centers, and senior living facilities. The Senior Companions also provided phone consultation to homebound seniors.

The volunteers enrolled 518 qualified seniors--outpacing the projected 300. SDC estimated that the value of benefits secured for the low-income seniors was \$622,660. Examples of benefits secured include the Medicare Savings Program, Medicare Part D (Prescription Drug Coverage), and Food Share.

SDC involved a team from BEST (Boosting Employability and Soft Skills Training), one of its employment and training programs for low-income adults. BEST workers augmented and supported the outreach and screening efforts. The project provided additional work experience for these participants, while also benefiting the elderly.

Two Houses of Worship Make Accessibility Improvements

Over the last few months, two Chicago-area houses of worship improved their facilities accessibility with support from RRF's Accessible Faith Grant Program.

Oakdale Covenant Church is a 2,700-member, low-income, African-American congregation located in south Chicago. More than one-third of its members are seniors. The church offers several programs for elders, including grief support, social activities, luncheons, health fairs, and leadership training. Its large food pantry serves 80 seniors each week.

Oakdale Covenant holds many of its programs in the lower level of the church building. It had previously installed a platform lift for access to the lower level, but the lift had become unreliable and unsafe. The congregation noted a decrease in participation of older adults, and many had expressed difficulty in navigating the stairs.

A \$19,100 Accessible Faith grant enabled the congregation to replace the obsolete platform lift with a new one. Despite weather and other delays, the project was successfully completed. The final report indicated that the congregation expects to see a 30 percent increase in participation in activities. It plans to offer additional fitness and fellowship activities. It is already off to a good start with a recently hosted, city-wide senior health screening event.

Sixth Grace Presbyterian Church is a 250-member, primarily African-American congregation located in Bronzeville. Fifty-percent of its members are seniors. Sixth Grace is a very active congregation that welcomes the broader community. Its food

pantry serves 100 seniors. It provides computer classes and hosts the Bronzeville Anti-Hunger Coalition and the 4th Ward Organization.

An \$11,698 Accessible Faith grant enabled Sixth Grace to construct its first accessible restrooms. The project involved converting two janitorial closets into two new accessible family restrooms with automatic door openers. Although the project took a few months longer than anticipated, it was successfully completed. The church also decided to update other restrooms in the process of constructing the two new ones. The church received a settlement from the City as a result of damages caused when city workers were repairing a neighboring water line. The settlement provided sufficient funds for Sixth Grace to replace 40-year old fixtures in the old restrooms at the same time as it was constructing the new ones.

Latino Alzheimer's and Memory Disorders Alliance Provides Support for Hispanic Caregivers

In 2012, RRF awarded a \$10,000 grant to the Latino Alzheimer's and Memory Disorders Alliance (LAMDA) for the second year of the En Familia Program. Initially launched in 2011 with first-year RRF funding, En Familia conducts support groups for Latino caregivers whose loved ones have Alzheimer's disease. The support groups meet every other Saturday at Casa Maravilla, a senior center and housing complex for Hispanic elderly located adjacent to Alivio Medical Center.

The support groups include education on dementia, offered by outside experts, and facilitated small-group discussions, which focus on how to care for elders with this condition. Volunteers provide respite care for families who bring their loved ones to the program.

En Familia grew substantially this past year--from 98 families and 287 caregivers in the first year to 147 families and 341 caregivers in the second year. Forty-nine new families joined the program. On average, 71 families attend each session.

Volunteer health promoters, provided by Alivio Medical Center, help with outreach to encourage families to participate. The health promoters make presentations at community health fairs and at Mt. Sinai events. They regularly make presentations at the Mexican Consulate. The Alzheimer's Association also makes referrals to the program. In addition, many families self-refer as a result of seeing flyers in the community.

Alivio continues to be a valued partner with LAMDA. During the second year, LAMDA referred 191 caregivers and their loved ones to Alivio for conditions such as diabetes, high cholesterol, and mental health issues. LAMDA also referred families to bilingual neurologists and other specialists at Rush University Medical Center and Mt. Sinai Hospital.

LAMDA is a relatively new organization, but its reach has been extensive because of strategic alliances it has forged with established health and social service

providers, the media, and advocacy groups. LAMDA connected with La Raza, the nation's largest nonprofit organization serving Hispanic Americans. La Raza produced a video in Spanish, featuring LAMDA and its En Familia Program. The video included interviews with families, discussed the impact of dementia on families, and provided information on available resources. La Raza unveiled the video at its annual conference this past summer.

LAMDA has also gotten excellent coverage from Univision Chicago, the major TV station for the metropolitan area's Hispanic population. LAMDA recently received a third-year RRF grant to continue the program.

Substance Abuse Treatment Program Reaches Seniors and Service Providers

In 2011, RRF awarded PEER Services of Evanston a third-year, \$38,500 grant to continue to meet three objectives: 1) increase older adult access to substance abuse treatment by expanding staff outreach and treatment services; 2) train traditional substance abuse treatment providers on a successful model of engaging and treating older adults; and 3) educate providers and the general public on how to identify and refer older adults with substance abuse disorders.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration estimates that one in six older adults meets the diagnostic criteria for a substance use disorder. Substance abuse is associated with poor health outcomes, higher health care utilization, increased complexity of the course and prognosis of mental and physical illnesses, increased impairment, disability and inability to age in place, increased financial instability, and higher risk of suicide.

PEER Services addresses the shortage of public information about the risks and consequences of substance abuse among older adults, under-identification of the problem when it does exist, and inadequacy of treatment resources. Its service model includes non-confrontational, highly supportive and individualized counseling, as well as support and flexibility in all aspects of the intervention.

PEER Services provides long-term treatment services and crisis intervention/short-term treatment. Long-term treatment is particularly important for elders who lack the physical and mental health to survive multiple relapses. The agency offers a specialized substance abuse treatment program, specifically tailored to older adults, with many steps involving engagement and perseverance. Its program has resulted in above-average engagement and retention rates for its clients. Rates are higher than 90 percent for both--much better than the average statewide rates, which range from 26 to 41 percent for retention and 38 percent for engagement.

During each of the three years of RRF funding, PEER Services exceeded its goal in numbers served and expected clinical goals. The program served 23 seniors in the first year (three more than anticipated). It nearly doubled the number--from 23 to 44 in the second year. In the third year, the number of clients increased from 44 to 51.

Clinical goals were exceeded in each year. The abstinence rate was higher than the 65 percent goal during each of the three years of the grant. This is significantly higher than the national rate of 40 to 46 percent. All clients demonstrated an increase in constructive, self-caretaking behaviors.

In addition to providing direct services, PEER Services expanded its training to 100 additional substance abuse professionals in Illinois and across the nation. It presented its successful treatment model at statewide conferences, including National Association of Social Workers, Illinois Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Association, Community Behavioral Health Association, and Illinois Alcohol and other Drug Abuse Professional Certification Association. PEER Services also provided training and consultation to several local mental health providers, including Turning Point in Skokie, the Josselyn Center for Mental Health in Northfield, North Shore Senior Center, Evanston Skokie Valley Senior Services, SASI (Services for Adults Staying in Their Homes), and the City of Evanston. Assistance was provided to these agencies in identifying substance abuse problems among their older clients or in using skills and techniques specifically targeted to seniors.

PEER Services also provided training and consultation to staff of local retirement communities, hospices, and other long-term facilities where older adults reside. Mather Lifeways, Presbyterian Homes, and Rainbow Hospice received training. Educational materials were disseminated to many other providers such as home healthcare agencies, hospital discharge staff, physicians, pharmacists, faith-based organizations, and local libraries.

PEER Services outreach and education resulted in several new relationships. For example, Rush University Medical Center became a regular referral source. The Jewish Healing Network of Chicago invited PEER Services to serve on its Advisory Committee, and several organizations that were previously unfamiliar with PEER Services requested first-time training.

Hospice Care Plus Improves Durable Medical Equipment Program

In 2012, RRF awarded a six-month, \$36,600 grant to Hospice Care Plus (HCP) to improve its durable medical equipment (DME) program. DME includes items such as hospital beds, bedside toilets, oxygen concentrators, and wheelchairs that are often needed by hospice patients. HCP is the only hospice care provider for six counties in the Appalachian region of central and eastern Kentucky.

Prior to receiving RRF funding, HCP had been contracting with various vendors for DME rental, delivery, and pick-up. However, HCP was concerned about the lack of timeliness of the delivery of the equipment and the level of sensitivity and responsiveness of the vendors.

RRF's grant enabled HCP to bring operation of the DME program in-house. By operating it internally, HCP hoped to improve the distribution process and achieve cost-

savings. HCP hired two new staff members for a six-month period: a program coordinator and a full-time driver.

Initial results suggested that the DME program was on solid footing, both in terms of client satisfaction and cost-savings. Patients and their families reported improvements in the condition of the equipment, promptness of delivery, and timely pick-up. HCP was also making excellent progress toward its goal of saving \$5,000 per month by offsetting fees previously paid for external DME management. In fact, as the program began operating, HCP's monthly savings averaged \$6,500. Thus, HCP expected it would exceed its goal by more than 25 percent and save closer to \$78,000 in the first year of the program. With this savings, HCP should be able to cover the cost of maintaining the program in the future as it had originally planned.

Note: RRF staff takes much of the information for GrantBriefs directly from grantees' final reports. Staff often asks questions and holds discussions with grantees to get a more complete understanding of the results of grants and to understand challenges grantees faced. While we encourage candor, we recognize that grantees tend to report results in the most positive way.