

County Gaston County Department of Social Services
Department of Social Services

Submitted By Joseph Shepherd

Title Special Projects Manager

Address 
330 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. way
Gastonia, NC 28052
United States

Phone Number (704) 862-6655

Email Joseph.Shepherd@gastongov.com

Project Title Home Delivered Meals Community Collaboration

Category Profiles in Community Collaboration
(Please select one)

Project Description and Summary

What did you do?

Describe your program or project. What did you do? What is the history behind the program/project? What did you hope to accomplish? What was your timeline? Your budget? How did you identify your objectives? How well did you use available resources?

Our agency partnered with a local church in order to expand the home delivered meals program to individuals previously outside of the service area. The home delivered meals program requires volunteers to pick up hot meals from a meal site and deliver them on a pre-determined route. These routes are structured to ensure all meals can be delivered within one hour of leaving the meal site. Unfortunately, older adults in need of home delivered meals were unable to be served due to limited labor

resources for delivery and the relation to their geographic location to the meal preparation site. Partnering with Bethlehem church has resulted in the addition of 95 trained volunteers who have been able to serve an additional 16 older adults once unable to receive home delivered meals. Furthermore, partnering with the church has improved the ability of the agency to educate the community on the increasing aging population and collaborate in order to serve those in need.

Over the last year our agency has relied on the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to better operate the home delivered meals program. The utilization of this software not only helped in creating more efficient routes but also helped identify areas of the community where large numbers of individuals were unable to be served due to location. The latter became the premise for creating the community collaboration project and resulted in the partnership with Bethlehem Church. Bethlehem Church was chosen due to the large congregation, available resources and geographic location. The GIS software identified the area directly around the church as a region with a large number of unserved individuals.

Our agency hoped to accomplish a variety of goals through the partnership with Bethlehem Church. The first and most important objective was to serve individuals in need of receiving home delivered meals. Improving Senior Livability is a strategic priority for our agency and assisting older adults with the resources needed to remain independent is vital to achieving success. A secondary objective of the program is to increase community awareness regarding the needs of the adult and aging population. The partnership has allowed for a fluid line of information dissemination, which has aided in recruitment and education.

The conceptualization of this program began in April 2017 and was fully operational by July 2017. The collaboration was essential in achieving operational viability within three months. The budget for the home delivered meals program was not expanded to encompass the development of this program, meaning the success of the program relies solely on volunteer participation. Existing staff were used to train volunteers and existing funding was used to provide the additional meals. The success of this project in such a short timeframe is a testament to the

utilization of available resources. This innovative approach not only produced positive outcomes with zero additional cost but also served as a model to use in other areas of the county.

Project Success and Impact

What was the outcome?

Was your program/project a success? What was the impact? How did you measure the impact? How widespread is the impact of your program/project? How were you able to overcome obstacles and challenges? Did your program/project meet your established objectives?

The Community Collaboration project has been very successful in the short operational timeframe. The success expands far beyond the tangible outcomes of the project and contributes to changing the culture of a community. That being said, the tangible results are exceptional. The program has been able to develop 95 volunteers and serve an additional 16 individuals within the three months of operation. The program has the capacity to serve 4 routes and additional 15–25 individuals due to the large number of volunteers from Bethlehem Church. This increases the entire Home Delivered Meals recipients served by approximately 18%, an overall incredible achievement. The impact of the program is easily quantified by the number of individuals it is able to serve, although the collaborative relationship with the community may be the most valuable aspect of the program. Currently the program is able to serve 16 individuals who previously were unable to receive home delivered meals. The impact on the recipients of the meals goes far beyond the meal itself, the social engagement creates cognitive engagement and allows for staff to monitor individual's well-being. The main challenge of the program was recruiting volunteers. This was easily overcome with the partnership with Bethlehem church and the motivation of their congregation to assist vulnerable individuals within the community. The objectives of the project have been met within the three months of operation. The objectives were to identify a church within an area of need, recruit volunteers and serve individuals with unmet home delivered meal needs in the area. The simplicity of the objectives lends itself well to program replication and is something we hope can be implemented in strategic areas of the community.
