



Community Awareness Committee Agenda – 5/16/22

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

2.0 Minutes and Approval

2.1 Review and Approval of March 22, 2022 – Community Awareness Committee minutes

2.2 Review and Approval of April 18, 2022 – Community Awareness Committee minutes

3.0 Public Comments

4.0 Old Business

4.1 CoC Website

4.2 Neighbors in Need Event

5.0 New Business

5.1 Landlord Engagement Programs

5.2 Success Stories

5.3 CoC Website Donation Wordage

6.0 Member Announcements

7.0 Adjournment



Community Awareness Committee Agenda – 3.22.22

Meeting called to order by Brandon Kyker at 2:02pm

Present: Brandon Kyker, Gina Zinck, Megan Bennett, Suzanne Martinez, Barbara Szul

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

2.0 Minutes and Approval

2.1 Review and Approval of February 22, 2022 Community Awareness Meeting Minutes

- Suzanne motions to approve the minutes as presented. Gina seconded the motion. The February 22, 2022 meeting minutes were approved.

3.0 Public Comments

- No public comments

4.0 Old Business

4.1 Homelessness Awareness Month – Community Call to Action

- Brandon asked what the committee viewed to be a greatest need or what advocacy cause/idea we could advocate for. Gina recommended housing for landlord engagement to expand and maintain our community's housing stock; even tying in a landlord incentive program. Megan said she would report to Sue Rose and see what she could learn about landlord incentive programs. Suzanne wants to make sure the CoC website is still easy to navigate with newer sections being added for people that are visiting for the first time.
- The committee discussed bringing in more providers to the conversation and the table for creating landlord incentive and engagement programs. The committee stresses the need to keep the relationships with current landlords and hopefully engage more in the future.

4.2 Fundraising

- Brandon stated that the CoC website will have a donation button that people can donate during the month of October. Those funds will go towards Uber/Walmart gift cards, or even hotel stays.

4.3 Success Stories Examples

- Gina stated that she will review the rest of the success stories. Gina had sent an example to Brandon that had a great length and would be a perfect example for other agencies to use as a template.

4.4 CoC Website Transition Timeline

- Brandon stated that the CoC website will become the main hub for agendas and minutes for the various CoC meetings. The County website will no longer be used after June 1st. During the transition, both CoC and County websites will be used from March 1st until June 1st.

5.0 New Business

5.1 Renaming of Empower Shower / Homelessness Awareness Month

- Brandon had asked the committee which names they had liked. Three choices that were contended with were: Neighbors in Need, Unsheltered Neighbors Month, Neighbors Without A Home. The committee really liked Neighbors in Need.

6.0 Member Announcements

- Brandon stated that he will send out an email a week prior to the meeting to get agenda items for next committee meeting from committee members.

7.0 Adjournment

- Gina made a motion for adjournment. Megan seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:23pm.



Community Awareness Committee Agenda – 4.18.22

Meeting called to order by Brandon Kyker at 2:04pm

Present: Brandon Kyker, Gina Zinck, Megan Bennett, Julie Davis, Suzanne Martinez, Nancy Portincaso

1.0 Welcome and Introductions

2.0 Minutes and Approval

- Brandon will be attaching the past two meeting minutes to the next committee agenda to be approved.

3.0 Public Comments

- No public comments.

4.0 Old Business

4.1 Homelessness Awareness Month – Community Engagement / People in Need Forum

- Brandon discussed mimicking the People in Need Forum and allowing agencies to give brief presentations to showcase what they do and how to apply for their services. Landlord engagement being tethered in is discussed. Brandon Kyker asks the committee if they like the idea of a similar setup to the People in Need Forum and how big the room size is.
- Julie says the room is big and will allow the agencies to setup booths and to have 25 seats in the middle of the room. They can have a couple of presentations including one about landlords and Helping Without Hurting. Julie brought up the need for bikes.
- Brandon discussed taking donations earlier and having a physical drop-off location for summer gear such as bikes, as well as making a flyer to promote it and a wishlist for donations.
- Megan mentioned that MCHA has a lot of remaining donations and asks if they can donate it to the Empower Shower. Julie agreed to it.
- Sam offered hand sanitizer for the event.
- Brandon discussed food trucks for the event and signage.

4.2 Renaming – Empower Shower and Homelessness Awareness Month

- The committee discussed Neighbors In Need and whether or not the name is too broad. The idea of adding a subtitle like “Understanding Homelessness in McHenry County” is praised.
- Nancy brought up font size and design possibilities for the Neighbors In Need signage.

5.0 New Business

5.1 Food Trucks and Bands

- Brandon mentioned that 2-3 bands have expressed interest in performing at the event but no time slots have been discussed yet.
- Brandon has not talked to any food trucks yet but has started thinking about what kind of food options they might need.
- Nancy mentioned food trucks are very specific with the amount of food they bring and sometimes can run out of food.

- Megan reminded the committee of the importance of having soft foods available for homeless who may have poor dental hygiene or are missing teeth.
- The committee discussed the idea of providing chips and drinks to offset the costs of the food trucks.

5.2 Community Outreach

- Sam and Nancy both mentioned promoting the website and keeping it updated.
- Nancy discussed how people can suggest a post for the website and allow other people to write blog posts.
- Julie brought up the idea of bringing in an intern to work on the website.

6.0 Member Announcements

- No member announcements.

7.0 Adjournment

- Julie motioned for adjournment. Nancy seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 3:08pm.

Former client arrived at PADS in December of 2019, after being kicked out of their home with nowhere to turn. Client was 19 years old and had no idea what they were doing. Client had been diagnosed with depression, anxiety, and struggled with alcohol and substance abuse. Client was at PADS for almost ten months due to COVID shutting everything down, and during their time at PADS they accomplished so much! They grew as a person, were able to work on and maintain sobriety, rebuilt relationships with family members while creating new relationships with peers, transitioned into an independent living facility, and agreed to begin therapeutic services. Client opened up to staff about themselves, their past, and their relationships and became comfortable around PADS, so much as to even show new clients the ways of the shelter. Client and I worked together on setting realistic goals and figuring out the steps needed to achieve them. Client struggled here and there but was able to work hard and achieve each of their goals by the time they left PADS.

Personally, I cannot imagine where this client would be without PADS or without having someone taking the time to listen to this client. This client was a bright, thoughtful, creative, and nice individual, who would go out of their way to help others before worrying about themselves.

About seven months after them leaving PADS, I was shopping at Walmart and ran into this former client and they were excited to tell me that they were still working on certain goals and was doing well! I was overjoyed to hear this and wished them the best!

When I first learned about Birdie, a case manager from another agency found her sleeping in the bushes of his home. Birdie once lived in her own home for many years. She decided to sell her home because she could no longer afford to maintain the home or afford the expenses and taxes. She sold without a solid plan on where she would go. She spent over a year in one hotel or another and never really put down roots anywhere. Her health was declining, and she was not able to manage her financial affairs any longer. To make matter worse, her car broke down and she would have to figure out how to get from A to B without a vehicle. She did not know where to go or what to do. She was 68 years old, alone, in poor health and in need of immediate shelter. The case manager who discovered her in the bushes encouraged her to come to PADS and eventually she made her way to us. She was unkempt, tired, hungry, confused and in need of an entire life make over. PADS staff loved Birdie right away. She was always so grateful for every kind word, hot meal, and a safe place to stay. As I got to know her, I learned that she was a hairdresser, and a professional baker in her younger days. Her case manager found family out of town, who loves her and was very concerned about her. Her case manager was able to reconnect her to family. Her family was able to assist her in managing some of her affairs. She was a delight to work with and I still miss Birdie's smile, joyful heart, and gratitude. I once asked, how do you stay so cheerful all the time. She told me "Nobody likes a Debbie Downer" and she became fast friends with many of the guests at PADS.

It became clear that Birdie was going to need a higher level of care. Birdie was not initially happy about our suggestion of assisted living. A beautiful apartment was located but, she still was not excited to go. Why? We wondered... Birdie is a cat lover and always hoped that she could one day have a cat again and do some baking. She tells me chocolate chip cookies are her specialty and she sold many in her baking days. We learned that cats were acceptable at this facility and she would be allowed to bake too! She was thrilled! We got her a new bed of her choosing and set her up in her new apartment, she loves it and is doing well! She is well cared for and enjoying her new home in an adult community with assistance. Way to go Birdie!!

I am so proud of my team! They do so much for so many, most, not nearly as sweet as Birdie! We always must consider our guests and their goals and sometimes they have never even considered goals before and do not have a direction. It brings to mind a quote from Mother Theresa. "We the willing, led by the unknowing are doing the impossible, for the ungrateful. We have done so much with so little, for so long, we are now qualified to do anything, with nothing. Miracles happen here!

Dave became a PADS guest in September of 2018. He was camping behind a grocery store in Cary, IL when he became ill and was taken to a local hospital. After he was treated at the hospital, he was released. He was brought to PADS in the middle of the night with nothing but the clothes on his back. His identification read Iowa, so he was denied entry at that time because he was not a McHenry County Resident and PADS was at capacity. With nowhere to go, Dave was taken by police back towards the camp site and according to the client, was left in a small ditch on the side of the road and was told "Good Luck".

When morning dawned and the night was discussed, it was decided that PADS would take a chance and go get Dave. He was still willing to come to PADS and was waiting by the road when staff arrived. He has often said that this moment saved his life.

Once at PADS, an intake was done on Dave and although years of camping and homeless in Illinois, could not produce the residency piece he needed to secure services. His background check was clean. He was in very poor health, so the choice was made to allow him to stay and heal. Dave attempted to reach out to an estranged brother in Iowa but had no success in making this connection. Malnourished, dehydrated, pale, and desperately in need of a shower, it was clear to everyone he was severely depressed. He could not eat the food that staff provided for him. He was seen by the nurses that visited from Family Health Partnership Clinic and they supplied Ensure liquid meal replacement for him. This was supplied by the Clinic and PADS for the first month that Dave was with us. He was quiet, sat in the same place at the table every day and refused most requests to help. It took him a while to understand the importance of following through with case management. He was content to sit quiet in the same sports sweatshirt that he rarely was seen out of. Some days it was a struggle for the staff to get him to even drink the Ensure and you could see the hollowness in his face. Dave also seemed to be struggling with some memory issues. Dave was 57 at this time.

Dave's biggest goal was to secure a job. He kept stating that he wanted to get work. Countless applications were filled out and at one point, Dave had an interview at a local restaurant that was run by an old acquaintance. His physical health was still not good and he was not able to interview for the job. At this time, it was determined that Dave had COPD and also a hernia that most likely needed to be operated on. He had the surgery and rehabbed at PADS.

His case manager continued to work on ways to secure benefits for Dave so that he would have some sort of income. He was from out of state, with an expired Iowa ID and a dormant social security number. It goes without saying that getting him benefits such as SNAP and Medicaid was next to impossible. Countless hours were spent by PADS case managers working through that. It took a while, but eventually he was able to receive those benefits. He was denied disability due to not having enough work credits, needing 40 credits – 20 of which he would have needed to earn in the last 10 years since he became disabled. The case manager persisted with trying to qualify him for supplemental Social Security. All of this took countless trips to the doctor, faxes, emails and numerous phone calls to the Social Security office. She helped Dave file his taxes, showing that he had no income and verifying that he existed. At the time that this was happening, the Statewide Referral Network notified her that Dave was chosen for a 1 Bedroom apartment in Richmond. Once Dave's taxes were filed and accepted, he received an economic impact check. For the first time in years, Dave had some income to show. This income was enough to qualify him for the apartment, but not enough to pay his rent for a year until he

could find work to sustain his cost of living. Through the collaboration with Willow Creek Church and St. Vincent DePaul homeless ministry, Dave's security deposit and rent for the entire year was paid.

This sparked the hearts of the generous staff at PADS, who together, gathered enough items to furnish Dave's apartment with everything he needed and a TV was also donated that staff was able to give to him. His case manager helped him proudly and humbly move quietly into his own apartment on December 22nd – a very Merry Christmas for Dave indeed! We were able to provide aftercare services for him for 30 days, making sure he settled into his new place and surroundings, attended some needed doctor appointments and transitioning his care to AID for additional support.

This is just one of the stories of success that comes from the hard work, the persistent case management and from loving on those that have fallen and need a little help back up that happen at Pioneer PADS Homeless Shelter. Thank you for letting us share a glimpse into what we do!