LIBRARY SERVICE TO PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

International Federation of Library Associations Conference
Columbus, OH
August 16, 2016

Forsyth County Public Library
THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

THAT ALL MIGHT FIND WELCOME IN THIS CITY
“That all might find welcome”
Public Libraries...free and open to everyone
The elephant in the room—and at the door...
Grant Objectives

- Hire a Peer Support Specialist to work directly with Central Library customers who are experiencing homelessness
- Conduct sensitivity training for Library staff and the general public
- Provide library services and programs to meet the needs of the target population
- Determine best practices that can be shared with library professionals in North Carolina and nationwide
“Grant helps library better lives of the homeless”

From The Chronicle, Winston-Salem, December 13, 2012

“It is no secret that the Central Library has become sort of a safe haven for members of the local homeless population. Now, library officials are looking to better serve these patrons. The library wants to become a more valued resource for local homeless men and women by connecting them with the resources and services that could help change or improve their lives.”
“I think it’s a really great idea that sometimes we have to meet people where they are, and if they’re homeless and they’re at the library, let’s bring some services to them.”

Sonya Kurosky, Samaritan Ministries
The Library hires a Peer Support Specialist

Assistant Library Director Elizabeth Skinner with Peer Support Specialist Jose Perez Jr.
“Love and concern about the community”

Forsyth County Public Library Director Sylvia Sprinkle-Hamlin said the Library is ready to stand at the forefront of an issue that can help shape the future of the broader community. “I’m just really happy to let everyone know that we are about more than books; we have a love and concern about the community.”

From The Chronicle, Winston-Salem, December 13, 2012
Outcomes

Best practice you can take away today—

- Identifying and collaborating with the homelessness service providers in your community does not cost a dime.

Who are they?

- Homeless shelters, United Way, Salvation Army, Rescue Mission, churches, Veteran’s Administration, service organizations, non-profits
Partnerships & Collaboration

LSTA Homelessness Grant Steering Committee

- Anthony’s Plot
- Bethesda Center
- Department of Library and Information Studies, UNCG
- Downtown Churches
- Partnership for a Drug-Free NC
- Rescue Mission
- Salvation Army
- Samaritan Ministries
- United Way, Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness
- Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center
Surprises

Do not assume you can identify who is homeless in your library.

- People experiencing homelessness can be all ages including children.
- Appearance is misleading.
- People whom we thought were homeless are actually working but do not make a living wage.
- Many people are desperate for our services—computer access and training, job searching, GED, etc.
Families with Children—the Children’s Department as Safe Haven
People experiencing homelessness, and those at the poverty level value the public library as—

- A safe, neutral place where they can feel normal (& they are motivated to be good customers so they can stay in the Library)
- A place where they can enjoy recreational programs such as movie series, book clubs, gaming (electronic & traditional), etc.
Challenges & Delayed Timeline

- Justification of LSTA grant to Forsyth County Board of Commissioners, June-August 2012
- Partial reallocation of grant funds, August 2012
- Recruitment of third party non-profit to administer/hire Peer Support Specialist, September-October 2012
- Advertising and interviewing Peer Support Specialist candidates, November 2012
- Peer Specialist hired, December 2012
- Back on schedule with Staff Training Day, December 2012
Housing First
Why libraries break down barriers

“Each of us ‘resides’ in three homes: body, house, and community.”

“Homelessness is a state, not a trait.”

Triggers, Trauma, Why people experience homelessness?

Housing First & Rapid Re-Housing

“There is no such thing as THE homeless.”

Words matter. Helping staff be self-aware. Learning how to manage conflict.


Suggestions for relating to a person experiencing Intoxication/Mental Illness
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Average estimated daily population of people experiencing homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Average daily contacts by Peer Specialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>4420</td>
<td>Total Peer Specialist contacts for FY 2012-2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>967</td>
<td>Referrals to community services (18.6 per week)</td>
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<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Average attendance at 2nd Run Cinema</td>
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Referrals by Peer Support Specialist

- Library Services: 58.6%
- None: 19.8%
- Medical: 0.4%
- Library Services -- Computer Card: 0%
- Library Services -- Computer Training: 0.2%
- Shelter: 3.1%
- Behavioral Health: 5.4%
- Education: 0.5%
- Employment: 3.9%
- Financial: 1.4%
- Food: 2.1%
- Housing: 4.6%
Resources & Refuge on the Journey

A directory of agencies, ministries and friends who offer services and support
Compassionate Winston-Salem

Interfaith Book Clubs
Register by Sunday, July 28

For more information contact:
jmcleese1@yahoo.com or faiznr0@wfu.edu

understanding then respect... justice then peace

Sponsored by Interfaith Winston-Salem [http://www.ifws.org/] in partnership with the Forsyth County Public Library [www.scc.lib.nc.us/library/]. Funded by the Winston-Salem Foundation.
The community read project as a vehicle for sensitivity training for the community.

- Poverty Simulation
- Documentary film series (American Winter, Innocente, Without a Home)
- Chris Gardner
- Book discussions
Public Programming

Entertainment

- 2nd Run Cinema Café
- FCPL Chess Club
- Books for Dudes Book Club (Winston-Salem Foundation ECHO Award 2014)
- Family Game Night
Public Programming

Computer Skills
- Drop-In Job Seeker’s Lab
- Computer ABC’s
- Computer Basics for Seniors

Life Skills
- GED Preparation
- Personal Budgeting and Credit
- Ways to Save
Medical and Health

- Stress? Who Needs It?
- Dental Health
- Eating Right to Feel Great
- Ask the Pediatricians: A Panel Discussion
- Long-Term Care Insurance: The Missing Link in Retirement Planning
- Walking Grief and Community Mental Health Resources
- What’s On Your Mind? Men’s Rap Session
Documentation

Statistics
- Peer Support Specialist log and data intake
- FCPL statistics

Photo/Video
- Public Information Officer and Peer Support Specialist trained in use
- Incorporate equipment into programming
- Document outcomes through individual interviews with customers, service providers, library staff, etc.
- Produced a training video on the project
Sustainability

The Peer Support Specialist position is funded by Forsyth County.
Opening in 2017
Designing a new Central Library for all citizens of Forsyth County
Design Considerations

• Site lines, visibility and proactive staff
• Restroom location
• Security centrally located
• Public computer placement
• Location of the Children’s Room
• Flow throughout the building
• Outdoor spaces
• Smoke-free campus
WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?
For more information

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