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# Navigating the System

SCOTTSDALE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA

Beginning in 2010, Scottsdale Presbyterian Church (SPC) has led a collaborative effort of public, private, non-profit and faith groups called New Faces Partnership. Its mission is to assist the growing number of city residents and homeless in immediate need. The Community Navigator Program is the signature project of New Faces Partnership. A Community Navigator is a volunteer who helps people in financial distress navigate their way through the social service and healthcare resources that may be available to them. Navigators are neither trained social workers nor professional healthcare providers. Instead, they are friends, tied to local faith communities or service clubs, who have received broad-based training and are willing to offer practical help to others.

The first class of Community Navigators was composed of 20 people representing both community and faith groups in the wider Scottsdale area. They received 40 hours of initial instruction provided by 32 individual presenters who represented a wide variety of public, private and nonprofit organizations, including DUET Services for older adults, the Alzheimer's Association, the Keogh Foundation, Area Agency on Aging, Arizona Coalition for Military Families, Hospice of the Valley, State of Arizona Department of Economic Security, Scottsdale Unified School District, and the Scottsdale Job Network.

During each day of training, the Community Navigators experienced hands-on instruction and exposure to healthcare and social service resources in our area. One day, clients from the UMOM New Day Center prepared the lunch. On another, under the direction of a Registered Dietician, the participants themselves prepared a meal using ingredients from a typical emergency food box. Using public transportation,

they also toured various agencies in the southern part of the city. The feedback received from the first two classes of Navigators was overwhelmingly enthusiastic. An unexpected outcome of this training scheme was how much the presenters learned in the process. The social workers and healthcare professionals knew their own fields in depth, but often did not have a broad understanding of the resources offered by other organizations. That began to change as the training progressed. As one social worker put it, a single contact number he received was worth the entire week of effort.

Some changes were made in 2012 for the second class of 18 Community Navigators. This time each day of training was held at either a healthcare or social services center. This helped familiarize Navigators with the locations of these institutions. As a response to input from the first class of Navigators, more time was given to instruction regarding resources for military families, including touring our city's medical training facility for military personnel and hearing from local veterans recovering from battlefield injuries and PTSD.

As we prepare for our third round of Community Navigator Training, we now have more healthcare and social service agencies offering to help than we can accommodate within our timeframe of 30 to 40 hours. In addition, two Interfaith Breakfasts are held each year to offer 90 minutes of training to larger groups of people from faith communities and other organizations (80 to 120 people at each breakfast). In February, the speakers focus on healthcare resources. In October, the focus is on social service resources.

Since this was the first use of the Community Navigator model in Arizona, New Faces has also begun to act in a consulting role as other cities in our state seek to adapt this collaborative methodology for their own communities.

Much goodwill is being fostered between the congregation, neighborhood residents, public entities, non-profit agencies and local businesses as we join force to work collaboratively. The New Faces Partnership, and the Community Navigator Program, have changed the way the community thinks of Scottsdale Presbyterian Church. It has also changed the way the church thinks of itself and the way it relates, more and more, to its community. The congregation now understands that it is a people tied to a particular neighborhood, and it is actively looking for ways to share the love of God in word and deed with its neighbors.

