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PROMISING PRACTICES



HAVING A FINANCIAL CRISIS?

The Answer May Be As Simple As SNACKS TO YOU

Seven years ago, the developmental disability (DD) community in California was facing yet another fiscal crisis. As is happening today, workers' compensation costs had sky rocketed, jobs were being lost, benefits were being cut, and some local programs closed due to lack of money. At Vocation Plus, located in Fresno, the team met to decide how to handle the crisis. It could lay people off, cut benefits, or greatly cut back or curtail the highly individualized services provided to approximately 150 consumers—or it could figure out how to make more money. The Vocation Plus team brainstormed, and out of its love of cooking and its heart for service, the Snacks to You program was born.

Snacks is a food service program that provides fresh sandwiches, salads, snacks, and daily specials to approximately 80 businesses in the Fresno area. To start up, the local Masonic Lodge was approached and found willing to do what was necessary to have its kitchen pass the strict Department of Health inspections. Formal application was made so Snacks could be licensed by the Department of Health as a catering business, staff members went to classes and became certified food handlers, and sales routes were established.

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Putting Out the Good Word: Some Information about the Promising Practices Series

We are offering a series of short articles on a variety of promising practices that CARF surveyors have observed during surveys from 2004 to the present. There is no particular order that we will follow in presenting this series of short reports. The purpose is not to rate one organization over another, but to encourage U.S. and Canadian community providers to dialogue with one another and to encourage creative solutions to individual service designs and organizational business practices and thereby achieve effective and positive



Work opportunities seemed endless; prep work, cooking, clean up, menu planning, shopping, stocking shelves, inventory control, making change, reading temperatures, telling time, and sales, sales, sales all became integral parts of the Snacks to You program. Presentation is everything—so the food needed to look good, and consumers who had winning smiles, charming personalities, and a love for people were sent out to contact potential customers for the service, and the Snacks to You customer base was started.

Of course, there were some kinks that needed to be worked out, and it takes good quality control systems to maintain the highest standards of health and service, but it has been worth the effort involved. If a consumer loses his community-based job or other supported employment opportunity, there is no need to panic over lost income. Snacks can provide interim employment so that the consumer's dignity and desire to work are not upset, and finances can also remain stable until another job is found.

Snacks also now serves as an entry-level job training opportunity for consumers with little or no work experience. They learn how to follow directions and to develop a good work ethic as well as how to get along with others or to work independently. Even persons with challenging situations like uncontrolled seizures, behavioral issues, or lack of motivation and/or skill can work out the problems or stabilize the situation in house before moving to community employment.

The Snacks program currently operates on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Monday is shopping and preparation day, and Friday is a

results in each organization's community.

Although there are indeed a number of ways to approach conformance to a standard, what makes organizations given an exemplary rating stand out is their professional and strategic response to an observed service or business need, always designed with input from their stakeholders and based on those individuals' quality expectations.

We hope you enjoy the series. We encourage you to contact the identified representative in the article to get more information about their services.

Promising Practices issues now archived online!

Do you remember a past article coming out that you'd like to forward on to a colleague? Did you just join Promising Practices and want to see issues we covered in the past? Well, now you can! Old issues of Promising Practices are now available online. Visit archived issues at www.carf.org/newsletter and follow links to past issues. Past issues are categorized by topic so you can easily find articles of interest.

free day for fun and other types of community integration or practicing for Special Olympics. Snacks employs 25 to 30 consumers on any given day and brings in enough money (about \$10,000 per month) to pay for the inventory and supplies needed to operate the program and to pay the consumers' salaries with a little left over. Vocation Plus is proud of its Snacks program and the employees who make it possible.

For more information please contact Judy Rogers at (559) 221-8019.

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