

MASTERS DEGREE IN NATIONAL COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

NEW HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

FRIENDLY VISIT PROJECT

DONE BY

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FRIENDLY VISIT PROJECT

The Friendly Visit Project began in the Spring of 1994). Friendly Visit Project was born from the necessity that I have to create a project that connected elderly with other elderly. My original concept of this project was a transportation system for the clients of Puerto Rican Home Attendants Services Inc. located in 564 Southern Boulevard Bronx, NY 10455, where I work. I wanted to create an Ambulatory System that transported the elderly to the hospitals without any charge to the clients.

I try to involved the Medicare program as a sponsor for this project, but my intentions failed because Medicare is no longer paying for this kind of service that was done through the Home Care Agencies. Now the new system is that the elderly can only receive this service through the hospitals. Medicare would only pay the hospitals for the patients that qualify for this kind of ambulatory system. With the Home Care cutbacks there is a few things that we can do for the elderly through the Home Attendants Agencies. Since it was at the middle of the year that I wanted to stablish this service, and with the old budget my agency could not affort to pay for this service.

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That's is why I started to think about a new project. A project that I did'nt have to depend on my agency to get the approval or wait from any grant to come. I Also wanted to create a project that was not duplicated by any other agency. However, I did want to do something for the clients of PRHAS.

It took me weeks to figure out what kind of project I could do without using a substancial amount of money, and at the same time a lot of people will benefit from it. I thought to organized the clients of PRHAS being that they are so many (402). Considering, that they all live far, then I thought that would be better if they visited each other. Especially those on the move to visit those who are homebound. I name these visits "Friendly Visit". That is how the Friendly Visit concept came from. Then, I made a little change, and it was that those elderly who are able to walk would not only visit the clients of PRHAS but any elderly of the South Bronx who needed to be visited.

In my project three out of five of these people live with little help or no help. Surely, they are active and able to manage their affairs. I call them the "Frisky Elderly".

These older people can serve as volunteers in any organization besides mine, and some do. At the same time they help other elderly people. Therefore, there are other older people who merit more attention than they have been getting.

I am convinced that most older people can live their lives, surround of help that brings them joy and alleviate their loneliness. I believe that things can be done to help our elderly population. What we need is action. We need to involve the private sector, who is you and I- and our neighbors, friends, our church and community organizations.

Aging is the one minority to which all of us will one day belong. We simply have to start with the basic needs such as caring, love and steem.

CARING

- helping
- teaching
- giving

LOVE

- affection
- belonging
- giving and receiving love.

ESTEEM

- esteem of others and self-esteem
- strength
- achievement
- adequacy
- confidence
- independence
- recognition.

Part one deal with the help and companionship that many elderly in this community need.

Part two deals with the needs for love that many elderly need.

Part three we look at how to meet the needs for esteem.

This include self-esteem and the esteem for others which are derived from a sense of achievement and adequacy, recognition and independence.

Yet as I already pointed out, three out of five older persons manage to live independently. This means that there more older people living in our community than we realize. Friendly Visit Project shows how one person cares for another, and how that action can make a significant difference in an elderly persons quality of life. We do it helping one person at a time. Each of us offers our helping hands.

WHAT IS A FRIENDLY VISIT?

Friendly Visit Project is elderly visiting other elderly people.

- They visit those who are homebound
- Those who are sick
- Those who are hospitalized
- Those who were released from the hospital
- Those who don't have family.

WHAT THEY DO WHEN THEY VISIT THOSE IN NEED?

- They make them feel happy
- They talk to them
- Celebrate birthdays
- Give out presents
- Entertainment
- Counseling
- Sharing Experience

The focus in this project is the frail elderly, people facing physical and emotional realities that impide their mobility.

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I have established the Friendly Visit Project in two elderly buildings of the South Bronx. One is located in 285 East St. Bronx, NY 10454 which I call it Group # 1 and the other one is in 1441 Boston RD. Bronx, NY 10456 which is Group #2.

GROUP #1

Has 31 members which 20 are presently attending the meetings, and we meet every Monday at 5:00 P.M at the building. In this group the responsibility of the duties is designated to seven officials.

Project Coordinator: Nurys Gonzalez. (myself)

Assistant Coordinator: Juanita Mcpherson

Age: 74 Yrs Old

Treasurer: Jannie L. Smith

Age: 69 Yrs Old

Visit Coordinators: Digna Jackson

Age: 59 Yrs Old

Felicita Olivo

78 Yrs Old

Activity Coordinators: Maria Rivera

Age: 68 Yrs Old

Mae R. Grant

75 Yrs Old

OFFICIAL TASKS:

Project Coordinator:

I created this project, and I designed it to my way. I am the president of the program, and I am in charge of the tasks perform by the officials, I am in charge of the meetings every week, I bring them new ideas, I approve their ideas, I motivate them to participate in the program, and I guide and help them in what they have to do.

Assistant Coordinator:

The Assistant Coordinator takes over when I am not available, she gives instructions to the other officials as well as the members, and so far she has perform it great.

Treasurer:

The treasurer is in charge to collect the money and to keep record of the expenses, in other words, she does a bookkeeping job. Mrs. Smith as a bookkeeper is very good.

Visit Coordinators:

They are designated to search people in need that reunited with the requirements. These people recruited visit, and then they make calls to make sure that they want us to visit them.

Therefore, the visit coordinators set up the time and the day of the visit, and then they choose three members of the group that can go with them. The hospital visits we go in a group.

Activity Coordinators:

The Activity coordinators are in charge of the raffles, trips, go shopping, and create activities to entertain the group.

On August 15th, 1994 Group #1 had a raffle in order to collect money to buy gifts for the people that we visit, pay for the transportation whenever we need to go to the hospitals, and celebrate birthdays. In this raffle we had as a 1st Prize a Radio & T.V Sound, 2nd Prize an Electric Coffeemaker, and 3rd Prize an Electric Iron. In this raffle we sold 600 tickets, \$1.00 per tickets, and we collected \$523.00.

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In this group, members are very collaborated. We had a birthday party, and they were very enthusiastic about it. They decorated the room, they got the cake donated by the Valencia Bakery, some members brought different kinds of deserts and dishes for the party, others brought soda, cookies, ice cream, all kind of chips, and candies. With the money that we collected from the raffle, we bought the decorations for the room, birthday cards, and gifts.

GROUP #2

Has 21 members which 15 are presently attending the meetings, and we meet every Wednesday at 5:P.M at their building. Like in group #1 I am the Project Coordinator.

Assistant Coordinator: Marvis Shaw

Age: 50 Yrs Old

Treasurer: Iris Rivera

Age: 74 Yrs Old

Secretary: Loisa Jarvis

Age: 57 Yrs Old

Visit Coordinator: Aida Osorio

Age: 68 Yrs Old

Activity Coordinators: Jame Joymer

Age: 70 Yrs Old

Ana Vervejo

68 Yrs Old

The average of ages among the members of the Friendly Visit Project is 50 to 85.

In this building we have done a lot of funds raising. We have done cake selling, the members have made little baskets to sell, monthly quota of \$3.00 from each members, and a raffle. The raffle was done on November 30, 1994, on this raffle we sold 500 tickets and we collected \$473.00.

Approximately 50 elderly people are being visited and helped through the Friendly Visit Project. We have made nine hospitals' visits, one to a home for elderly who have mental problems, and fourthy was home visits. When the people that we visit trust the members they talk about their feelings, thoughts, wishes, frustrations, sadness, and joys. The group becomes like a family for the people that we visit. Differences that exist among Group # 1 and 2.

GROUP #1:

- Started first
- Has more members
- Has made more visits
- Does not pay a monthly payment
- Has collected more money
- Has more women than men
- Has made more parties.

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Group #1 the Tenants association Board of Borinquen court finally recognized that the Friendly Visit Project is a good project and they are going to take over, and they will finance it. They would provide us free transportation, material to do manual things, and they will pay for any other expenses. Free transportation for the elderly, not only meets a practical need, but also brings new excitement and zest to their lives. Thus, transportation merits serious and separate consideration because it avoid difficulties they might encounter for those who are frail or handicapped person.

GROUP #2:

- Started second
- Has less members
- Has more hispanic people
- Pays monthly quota of \$3.00
- Does not have a tenants Assoc.
- Has more men than group #2.

I expected that women would be more interested and adept, but I was happily surprised to discover how men wanted to help too. Friendly Visit Project has presently actively involved eight men, two from group #1 and 6 from group #2.

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The group is divided of eight hispanic men and one American.

The similarities that exist among Group # 1 and 2 is that both groups are working hard for one cause, they are unified, they are very creative, they are very friendly, collaborated, happy, good, helpful, independent, brilliant, responsible, dedicated, talented, skillful, patient, caring, loving, and they are party people. In Christmas we had a party and we distributed gifts to the members. They were very happy and glad of being members of the Friendly Visit Project.

HOW THE PEOPLE THAT WE VISIT FEEL ABOUT THE PROJECT?

- They feel very happy.
- They feel valuable.
- They feel important.
- They cry of happiness to see people who care for them.
- They really appreciate our hard work.

WHAT KINDS OF CONCERNS MIGHT A SELF-SUFFICIENT GROUP HAVE?

- The majority (three out of five) of these people don't have difficulties performing their own repairs around the house.

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- The rest feel that their talents, skills, and interests were being used.
- Most of these people are religious and they go to church, centers, shopping, and they visit their families and friends.
- Some babysit their grandchildren.
- Some of them are attending arts and crafts classes that require a commitment of one hour three times a week.

HOW THE MEMBERS FEEL ABOUT THE PROJECT?

- They feel happy
- They feel they are community leaders
- They feel helpful
- They feel proud
- They feel that their talents and skills are recognized.

HOW DO I FEEL ABOUT THE PROJECT?

- I feel that this is an excellent project.
- That I have accomplished a lot.
- That I made true friends.
- It was an excellent experience being working with the elderly (a group that one day I will belong too).

- The Friendly Visit Project is a great way to keep the elderly minds alert.
- I brought to the elderly nearly a decade of experience as student of New Hampshire College, as a worker of Puerto Rican Home Attendants Services, and as a member of a church. I was an excellent choice, even though I am relatively young person, and I have to build rapport and trust with the elderly even though I already knew many of them.

VISION:

I want to offer the clients of Puerto Rican Home Attendants Services, Inc. as well as the tenants of these buildings a Friendly visit Project where they will help each other, they will know each other better, and where they will learn a lot from each other too.

PROBLEM:

- The problem is that even though the elderly are very interested in helping others, they confront a lot problems and necessity such as:
 - Alcoholism and smoking cause to depression of their loneliness.
 - The project is not funded by any organization or institution.

MISSION:

I want the elderly to entertain themselves, to be useful, to help others in need, to learn and to teach others.

PROJECT PURPOSE:

- Provide them with the professional support.
- Train them in what they are supposed to do.
- Support and reward what they do.

OBJECTIVE:

- The objective of the project is elderly visiting and helping other elderly.
- To organize the elderly who live in elderly buildings to get together, to know each other needs, to be friends and help each other.

GOALS:

- More elderly to participate in the project.
- That the project be funded
- That the Friendly Visit Project multiply to the rest of the elderly buildings of the South Bronx.
- To involve the Home Attendants Agencies and the Elderly Buildings in order to work together to keep this project working effectively.

- More Hispanic Elderly.

METHOS:

Since this project was not funded I had to stabish some procedures to raise money in order to accomplish my objectives. Our immediate concentration to raise money were:

- Raffles
- Cake sells
- Donations
- Monthly Quotas from the members.

RESULTS:

The result of the Friendly Visit Project is that the elderly people of the two buildings were organized, that they understand the objective of the project, that they feel helpful, valuable and the most important thing is that all this time working with them they have been considered important and forever they will.

Now after this great experience of being in the Friendly Visit Project most older people are ready, willing and able to help others without any guide.

WEAKNESSES:

- I needed to know more about them in order to understand them better.
- I needed to establish more communication with them.
- They also need to know more about myself.

STRENGTH:

- That money was not an obstacle for us not to continue with this project.
- The unity that exist among the members.
- The faith that we have in what we do, and that what we are doing is right.

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- Faith that this project will be financially supported and that we will be able to keep with the Friendly Visit Project for so many years.

ANALYSIS:

They are some elderly that I call them elderly teachers because they teach us manual arts, and so many times they taught us living history. There were even a few times when the elderly members of this project talked about the reality of wheelchair life, incontenency, or death as they now saw and experienced it. The older people, are people with personal history and private dignity. This is the road to self-actualization because it meet the need for human growth such as:

- Self-fulfillment
- achievement and meaningfulness.

There are basic needs to meet first but because people do not live by bread alone, we can be inspired by the example of older people who feed the mind. We are never too old to learn, or to teach. The learning in this project occured in planning, team work, films that share a common experience and manual arts.

The scope of this project is astounding because I was surprised that many elderly people tackle a project that was so physically demanding in most part. They did, they succeeded, and their reward was the great outpouring of joy from the older people that they visited and helped. More than socialization or busy-work the Friendly Visit Project provides to the members funds and joys.

CONCLUSION:

The private sector must enlarge and strengthen the safety for our vulnerable older citizens, since government resources for all kinds of social services programs are diminishing.

Less money is coming from Washington, and state and local governments have not yet found ways to make up the difference.

The Friendly Visit Project was self-sufficient and even though we didn't have any government grant we use our creativity to keep with this project and to raise money. In this project we learned that when we don't have money we always have ourselves, our minds, our spirits, and our knowledges. Having all of these in minds what is make this project to succeed and forever will be succeeding.

In these days of increasingly resources for non-profit institutions, the elderly programs seem to be among the most affected ones. That is why the Friendly Visit Project was created to prepare the elderly population that when they can not receive enough hours of Home Attendant Service, they have themselves since the elderly is a growing population. Our elderly population is growing at a phenomenal rate.

WHAT I LEARNED FROM FRIENDLY VISIT PROJECT:

- I learned that no matter the age, the spirit never gets old.
- I learned that no matter the age, knowledge never disappear.
- I learned that good education, values, culture, responsibility, sincerity, discipline, believes, and internal beauty remains the same through the years.
- I learned that never is too old to learn.
- I learned that never is too old to teach.
- I learned that age can never hope to win you while your heart is young.

- I learned that not all elderly people lose control over their mental and physical functions or personal affairs.
- I learned that not all elderly people feel sad for the loss of health at the inconveniences of being ill or dependent, the physical mobility, the loss of control over portions of life, and at the unfairness of life or fate.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop one-to-one relationship.
- Professional counseling whenever a need is evident.
- Free transportation must be provided either by the Elderly Buildings or the Home Attendant Agencies.
- More communication from the buildings and Home Attendants Agencies that these elderly belong to, in order for these institutions and organizations to find out more about the elderly talents and skills.
- Special classes and events must be designated for the elderly from the buildings or agencies that they belong to.