

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

The Caring Place's (CP) strengths lie in several areas. CP is a well known nonprofit within the community, among both clients served as well as volunteers and general community members. CP also has a strong and reliable donor base. CP's staff communicate regularly and the environment among workers and volunteers is positive and uplifting. Dynamics between positions are respectful and open, although different positions may have more authority than others, the staff works as a team to complete activities and has strong cohesion. CP also possesses a strong unified spiritual mission. Ongoing and inclusive devotions before CP opens each mornings reminds volunteers, staff, and clients of the primary missions and values that CP holds in being a strong spiritual support for the community and being the hands and feet of Christ. At the same time the staff and volunteers are from diverse spiritual and denominational backgrounds. The current volunteer base is also very reliable and consistent.

CP is also physically located in a key location in the community. It is close to downtown and to bus routes and is very accessible to those who may not have reliable transportation. This also contributes to the community's awareness of the CP. The CP also is very effective in their delivery system of goods and services to individuals and is able to serve many clients in a short period of time. The CP's long term goals are for self-sufficiency and the CP makes steps towards these goals with their clients by providing educational services, like Getting Ahead, that investigate poverty with clients while helping them develop a plan and goals for their life.

Weaknesses

The CP's weakness are combated by its strengths. Although the CP has an established donor base, their funding is not diversified. Much of the CP's funding comes from individual or

institutional donors and they lack in the areas of endowments and grants. The CP has also grown out of their location and there are issues of safety when it comes to overcrowding with clients, such as fire hazards and the outdated wiring and composition of the building. This adds more liability when it comes to recruiting volunteers. Along with this, the location is not accessible to individuals who are handicapped.

Within the staff, there are also limitations in diversity. The staff and volunteers are primarily made up of caucasian women, which does not reflect the clientele the CP serves. At the moment there are also several staff positions that have been combined into a single position adding stress and disorganization in roles and programing details. In regards to the volunteer program, this will affect its ability to be maintained because the individual currently over the volunteers is doing work for two positions instead of one. There are also limitations in communication with clients who do not speak English because the CP is lacking in bilingual staff and volunteers and there are no official staff members who are translators. The current volunteer base is also primarily made up of an aging population and there are challenges in recruiting and the general mindset as to volunteering to younger generations. All of these weaknesses will contribute to our programs functional abilities.

Opportunities

One of the many opportunities that this program could tap into is the large Christian demographic in the area. The area in which Cleveland, Tennessee is located is known for its religious fervor. It could even be said that southeastern Tennessee is the buckle on the Bible Belt. Cleveland itself is home to the headquarters of the Church of God. The CP is an organization that can pull help from multiple denominations. With these two factors in mind, it is highly possible that local Christian congregations could be used when attempting to recruit volunteers.

A second opportunity is the CP's location. Because the CP is placed in a fairly centralized location, it is convenient for many residents, including potential volunteers. This obviously opens up even more opportunities when it is considered that its centralized location makes it easier for the CP to partner with other organizations.

A third opportunity is the number of local colleges and universities that may be good sources of stable volunteers. Lee University, Cleveland State Community College, Southern Adventist University, University of Tennessee Chattanooga, and Chattanooga State College are all not terribly far from the CP. Some of these universities, such as Lee University and SAU already have working relationships with the CP. It would be possible to partner with these universities in this project and perhaps even include them in the planning phase.

Another opportunity that exists for the CP is that the agency exists within a city that is growing very rapidly. Because of this the volunteer base also grows with that. Cleveland's population continues to grow and much of this has to do with the growing population of young families that come out of Lee University that stay in the area. This growth in population creates growth in businesses and communities as well as technology. CP can benefit from the advancements in the social environment and new communities and businesses forming by recruiting volunteers and donors from these groups and individuals.

Economically, this growth will contribute to CP's opportunities to recruit from companies and businesses and have entire groups come and volunteer their time and service. CP can partner with new and local businesses and organizations and create opportunities for their employees to contribute to and participate in events at the agency.

Threats

There are multiple stakeholders that are threats to the CP some of which are for profit social service agencies. For profit agencies such as Omni community Health and Mental health cooperative should be collaborated with to avoid conflict. These agencies would be made aware of the CP's programs and offered support for their potential clientele that does not have insurance. Since these agencies both offer therapy services, the CP could establish a system that incorporates them as next steps for the CP's clients that are exiting the Bridges out of Poverty Program. In this way the CP could establish a mutually beneficial relationship between agencies.

An additional risk is the lack of diversity within the CP. Currently the CP has many connections within the religious community but has failed to reach out into the Black-church community or the Latino population. Fostering growth in this area would fix this weakness by providing a network for volunteers and potential clients that are ethnically diverse and can address this weakness.

As stated, the CP should develop a process of locating and applying for potential grants. Currently the CP relies on donations, however they are missing a great opportunity to expand a relationship with the local university and colleges in the area. There is Lee University, Cleveland College and Southern Adventist University. The CP does take interns from those institution, however they are not consistent workers or are being used to the best of their potential. Instead CP should work to create healthy relationship with these institutions by giving their students opportunities to find and write grants that would be beneficial to CP. In this way CP can diversify their income to foster economic growth in a low risk way.

Response to SWOT Analysis

The volunteer program can use the strengths of CP to their benefit by including those benefits in the program planning and advertising. For example, one of the strengths identified by

the SWOT analysis was a strong, unified community among its employees and its mission. This can be carried over to the volunteer program. Another strength of CP is its central location. This can be used in advertising to volunteers to promote it as a convenient place to volunteer. While there are a few substantial weaknesses found in the CP that would be difficult to immediately fix, the volunteer program can work towards stopping some of those weaknesses within the program through diversity in funding and diversity in its volunteer base. The other weaknesses, that will take longer to solve, can be worked on through an analysis and plan for each. The potential opportunities for the volunteer program at CP include the recruitment of volunteers from the many local churches and schools and using its central location to promote itself as a good place to volunteer. These opportunities can be exploited by reaching out to these organizations early on in the program's creation, in order to secure partnerships sooner. The volunteer program at CP can defend against its weaknesses by addressing them early on in the development of the program. For example, one of the weaknesses was the potential negative reactions of some of the stakeholders. This can be addressed through the collaboration and inclusion of those stakeholders in the development of the program.