

Club: Soroptimist International of Greater Las Vegas

Project: Senior Stars

Need Being Addressed:

SI/Greater Las Vegas became aware that many senior women in our community are isolated and underserved. The average income of the target group is \$750.00 per month. Approximately 70% of the residents in subsidized housing are women. Many of them are living in isolation, resulting in low social stimulation. They have limited transportation options due to lack of accessibility and high cost. Many of the community options are youth or wealth focused, especially those provided by the casino industry. Members of the target group receive subsistence food and minimal food stamps valued at \$16.00 per month. They may have limited knowledge of nutritional options and physical limitations preventing them from acquiring and preparing adequate meals. Nevada's suicide rate for seniors is among the highest in the country.

Description of Project:

Senior Stars is a one day event held in May of each year which provides low income women residing in subsidized housing a day of food, games, prizes, and entertainment. The event is held at a senior center chosen on the basis of need of its residents. The Club partners with East Valley Family Services Senior Services Division and the Clark County Housing Authority to arrange use of the facility, selection and registration of participants, and coordination of the event. Businesses and agencies in the greater Las Vegas area which serve seniors are invited to participate in the event.

Planning begins each year in late spring with an assessment of the event just concluded and recommendations from the planning committee for the next year's event. Items for "goodie bags," such as treats, jewelry, knick knacks, stationary, pens, stamps, and practical kitchen items, are collected throughout the year, along with the bags. A minimum of twenty larger prizes is also collected to be given to the winner of each game. Monetary donations and food donations are solicited from the community.

About one month prior to the event, the prizes and gifts are organized, sorted, and bagged. During that month, contact is made with the chosen center and residents sign up for the event. If the center chosen is not at the same location as the residence, transportation is arranged. A few days before the event, several club members shop for food items needed to supplement donations. The day before the event, club members complete food preparation and arrange to transport the food to the site.

This event is designed to serve, touch, and talk with the women who are guests of the club. The day of the event, club members set up the facility and organize the serving of the meals. Participants are each given a "goodie bag" and served a continental breakfast shortly after they arrive. The games are then held and prizes awarded after each game. Lunch is served by club members, followed by entertainment and short informational presentations by participating

businesses and agencies. Throughout the day, club members interact with the participants one-on-one. East Valley Family Services employees are available to provide information and referrals to address the needs of the participants. Each participant is given a bag of supplemental food to take home in addition to doggie bags of leftovers.

#### Impact/Outcome:

Sixty women attended Senior Stars in May, 2010. The event provided socialization and activities at no cost to participants. All expressed enthusiastic gratitude for the day of fun and food. Many expressed their feelings that “somebody cares” about them and were willing to take time to talk to them and make them feel special. They were made aware of services and programs that will improve their quality of life.

#### Club Member Participation:

One hundred percent (100%) of active club members participated in this project, either in preparation or on the day of the event. Prior to the event, prizes and gifts are collected and organized. Donations of food and money are solicited. The week of the event, food is purchased and prepared. The day of the event, members serve food, greet and mingle with participants, assist with games and activities, and entertain participants. The total number of hours worked by club members was 221. Club funds in the amount of \$400.00 were spent on the project and the club received in kind donations with a total value of \$3,500.00 from a broad base of donors.