



Information Sessions Help Three Members to Reach Communities

Community outreach is always a challenge for a nonprofit agency.

Three Travelers Aid members – Crisis Center of Tampa Bay, Homeless and Travelers Aid Society of Albany and Travellers Aid Australia – have developed outreach tools – “in-house tours” – that have set them apart from others.

The Crisis Center and HATAS both use a light meal accompanied by a presentation and discussion to reach community leaders. Travellers Aid Australia is now providing “training courses” to educate targeted communities about the transit system of Melbourne region as well as the services of Travellers Aid.



A community outreach lunch at the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay

The Crisis Center offers a 1 hour light lunch twice a month that attracts 10 to 25 per session to acquaint the community with the services that the agency offers and its role within the community. Staff members are encouraged to invite interested

individuals to lunch. Employees hand out a business card-size invitations that lists the date of the next session as well as information on the agency, explained Ken Gibson, the agency’s director of marketing and public relations.

The sessions are frequently the first introduction of the agency to potential volunteers. Gibson said many of the guests are “young retirees” new to Florida and the area who use the session as way to learn more about their new community.

Albany

The information sessions in Albany, dubbed HATAS @ Home, have evolved over the last eight years. The light breakfast is now offered the third Thursday, every other month. The next breakfast will be March 16. Originally, the sessions were every month.

The goal of the information session is to educate the community about HATAS’ services and the community’s homeless problems, said Liz Hitt, the agency’s executive director.

HATAS @ Home is now part of the community service curriculum of the Leadership Tech Valley, an annual training program of the Capital Region Chamber of Commerce.

The sessions have produced board members, volunteers and donors, Hitt said. Three of the current 11 board members attended a breakfast session as part of the leadership program. This is a good way to tap and identify rising young or mid-career professionals.

Each session now attracts 7 to 12 and over the year about 30 attend. Most of the breakfast participants are now in the chamber program, Hitt notes, with a few drop-ins.

Both Tampa and Albany noted that donations are not actively sought during these information sessions.

Australia

Funded by a competitively-awarded grant from the Royal Auto Club of Victoria, Travellers Aid Australia provides a free community travel training course on how to use the transport systems in the state of Victoria. The course targets those with mobility challenges as well as those who are unfamiliar with the transit systems, primarily seniors and new community residents. The course also reassures travelers that the

WEB RESOURCES

Crisis Center of Tampa Bay
www.crisiscenter.com/get-involved/take-a-tour

Homeless and Travelers Aid Society
www.hatas.org/Events.php

Travellers Aid Australia
www.travellersaid.org.au/community-travel-training



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transit systems are safe and how to reach out to authorities, said Travellers Aid Australia CEO Elias Lebbos.

Not only does the classroom course show participants how to navigate the trains and buses, but also the Travellers Aid services, especially those to help those with mobility issues.

The course has been offered since 51 times since it began 8 months ago and there have been 1,168 participants. It is custom-tailored to the needs of a specific group with a variety of modules so that the course is from 1 to 4 hours long. Lebbos said the agency brings the course to the interested participants.

Travellers Aid Australia spent 2 years developing the program, said Lebbos. There are similar programs in the region, including those offered by the transit agencies, but the “independent” standing and 100-year reputation of his agency has drawn participants.

The Auto Club is funding the program because as its members give up their cars they need assistance to become familiar with the trains and buses. 🌟