



For Summercrest Resource and Community Center, Success Is All About Who You Know

National City, CA—In September 2007, more than 2,600 visitors walked through the doors of the Summercrest Resource and Community Center. They came to access technology; receive much-needed services; participate in one of the many programs aimed at helping participants achieve greater professional, academic, and personal success; or just be part of the community. Since opening four years ago, the center has become the cornerstone of the 372-unit, 800-resident **Summercrest Apartments community**. What is the staff at the Summercrest Resource and Community Center doing to build such a loyal group of users?

"I think the center has become so popular because it offers growth opportunities for residents of all ages. At any given time, we're running about 20 different programs. We have programs that increase the skills of our adult residents so they can get jobs or get better jobs, programs that help our young residents achieve greater academic success and make wise life choices, and programs that help senior residents maintain their mental and physical well-being, as well as their independence. If residents have a need, the first place they usually visit is the center," said Madelyne Pfeiffer, vice president of Communities Advocating for Resident Empowerment (C.A.R.E.), a nonprofit social services agency that was created by the nonprofit affordable housing organization **Las Palmas Housing**.

So Many Resources, So Little Effort

The Summercrest Resource and Community Center does not have unlimited funds, so how is it able to offer so many programs to such a diverse resident population? "We're a member of a collaborative." Pfeiffer went on to explain, "Basically, a group of local organizations got together and pooled their resources. For example, a member might have received a grant to conduct an exercise program for seniors. We provide the space and the participants; they provide the instructor. Our university members might be looking for internship opportunities for students. We provide a structured environment that allows the students to learn and gain hands-on experience; they provide us with enthusiastic volunteers. Everyone benefits from being part of the collaborative. I'm also the vice president of the California Neighborhood Networks Consortium so I believe strongly in the whole concept of 'strength in numbers.' By collaborating with other community organizations, we're usually able to get the resources we need so we can offer the programs that residents need."

Professional Sports Teams Help Score Big Money

While pooling resources has proven beneficial for the Summercrest Resource and Community Center, sometimes there is no getting around the need for cold hard cash. "Las Palmas Housing operates 12 Neighborhood Networks centers in California. These centers serve nearly 4,000 people. Even though there's a budget for each center, there never seems to be enough money to do everything we want and need to do. So, we have to go out and raise the money," Pfeiffer said.

Currently, Pfeiffer is planning a spring fundraiser with the Los Angeles Galaxy, the local professional soccer team that includes superstar David Beckham on the squad. For the fundraiser, members of the Los Angeles Galaxy will host a three- to four-hour youth soccer clinic and then participate in a dinner.

"We'll charge a fee to participate in the clinic, and we're asking local businesses to purchase a table. We haven't figured out how much we're going to charge for the clinic or the dinner yet, but the

money we make will go toward operating costs and the afterschool program at the Northpointe Resource Center in Long Beach. We recently lost some of our funding for that afterschool program. There are 800 school-age children at that property so it's pretty important to keep the program going," Pfeiffer emphasized.

The idea for a fundraiser that enlists the help of local professional athletes came to Pfeiffer when she was planning an event that would deliver positive messages to youth and increase awareness of her organization. For that event, Pfeiffer invited former members of the San Diego Chargers professional football team to the center to conduct a 90-minute clinic and to share their success stories with the youth.

"We had about 250 children show up. Everyone was very excited about meeting the players and hearing how they became professional athletes. The mayor of National City came out, and a local radio station and the ABC News channel ran a segment on the event. At the end of the clinic, the players treated everyone to a barbecue at the center. After that event, I realized that local athletic teams draw crowds. It doesn't even have to be a professional team. It could be members from a local college team who come to the center to conduct a clinic. In addition to raising money for the center, the event also shows the younger residents that hard work and dedication leads to success no matter what you choose to do in life," said Pfeiffer.

Programs for Every Generation

It is through its collaborative and local fundraising efforts that the Summercrest Resource and Community Center is able to provide residents of all ages the programs and services they need and want.

"For our adult residents, we work with a collaborative member, the Family Resource Center, to provide employment and housing services, family support, and mental health services. These services enhance the programs offered at the center," Pfeiffer explained.

Onsite adult programs include computer education classes held in the center's 20-computer technology lab. "The San Diego Futures Foundation recently donated 10 brand-new computers." Pfeiffer continued, "Every day from 9 a.m. to noon, residents can come by and work on improving their computer skills with the help of an instructor. To determine where residents are in their learning, we conduct a needs assessment. Based on that, we create a customized training curriculum. Many of our adult residents are using these computer training classes to improve their skills so they can get ahead in their current job or get a better job."

Young residents also have plenty of programs from which to choose. "We have a childcare program that is offered every weekday from 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. A certified childcare worker and five volunteers plan activities for about 10 five- to seven-year-olds." Pfeiffer added, "We also have an afterschool program for eight- to 14-year-olds that is held every weekday from 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. About 40 children take part in this program that focuses on academic achievement, sports, dance, computer education, and science. This program is run by a primary director, supervisor, and staff members that are provided by our partner, Life Connects."

The center also offers two- to three-month workshops that address current risk issues that the teen residents may be facing. Past workshops have included pregnancy prevention and saying no to drugs and gangs.

To meet the needs of senior residents, the Summercrest Resource and Community Center employs two full-time senior service coordinators who plan and organize a variety of programs and services. The center offers weekly computer education courses, and twice a week, a service coordinator teaches an English as a Second Language (ESL) class. A diabetes education class and a feeling fit exercise program are also offered.

The center also provides programs that have helped seniors build a strong resident-to-resident network. "As we age, we have to face some pretty tough issues, such as the loss of a spouse or illness. Who better to help us through it than someone who has been there?" said Pfeiffer. To provide seniors with the skills to help others, the center offers a three-month, peer counselor training program. During the class, participants learn how to help their fellow senior residents cope with hardship.

Pfeiffer went on to say, "All of the residents are invited to attend our monthly cultural events and seminars. The cultural events are a way for us to strengthen the community, and the seminars educate residents on a variety of topics. For example, in October we offered a seminar on financial literacy, which was made possible by a \$1 million grant that was awarded to the California Neighborhood Networks Consortium by Washington Mutual. Kimberly Paul of the San Diego Housing Corporation was the lead grantwriter, but every center who is a member of the consortium benefits. You see? It pays to be part of the group."

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