



Rural Colorado Adult Day Care Center Overcomes Odds

Partners in Caregiving: The Dementia Services Program

SUMMARY

From 1994 to 1996, staff at [Seniors' Resource Center \(SRC\)](#), a human services agency in Colorado, opened two satellite adult day programs to attract new clients: one in South Jefferson County (Lakewood, Colo.), and another serving the rural/mountain communities around Evergreen, Colo.

The project was part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) *Partners in Caregiving: The Dementia Services Program* national program.

Key Results

- The South Jefferson County site opened in February 1994 and exceeded its projected enrollment in part by accepting 12 existing clients from another SCR adult day program, for whom the Lakewood site was closer to home.
- The Evergreen site failed to meet its enrollment objectives. However, rather than fold the operation, SRC redirected staff resources toward cultivation of a network of support services for rural clients that included:
 - Short-term overnight care.
 - In-home personal care and homemaker assistance.
 - Information and referral concerning part-time jobs for caregivers.

Funding

RWJF supported this project through a grant of \$53,150.

THE PROBLEM

Founded in 1978, SRC is one of Colorado's largest human service agencies: the nonprofit center served 60,000 people during 1992 through its various programs. It receives partial support from county government (Jefferson County), but serves a wider area.

Since 1991, SRC's DayBreak, an adult day program in Wheat Ridge, Colo., has provided impaired adults with care seven days a week and has offered evening and short-term overnight care. Approximately 85 percent of the center's clients have mild to advanced cognitive impairments (Alzheimer's disease and related disorders, chronic mental illness, developmental disability, etc.).

SRC entered the grant period with strong linkages to the community and to community medical centers such as Lutheran Medical Center (Golden, Colo.), to social service agencies, nursing homes, associations for the aged and Alzheimer's patients, and to local and state government agencies.

THE PROJECT

This grant enabled SRC to begin offering adult day services in two satellite locations that lacked community-based services for cognitively impaired adults. The South Jefferson County site in Lakewood, Colo., opened in February 1994 and exceeded its projected enrollment in part by accepting 12 existing clients from its Wheat Ridge Center for whom the Lakewood site was closer to home. Housed in donated space of the Bear Valley Church, by the end of its first year the program had nearly reached its third-year goal of 20 participants per day, and was financially self-sustaining.

The more rural, mountainous Evergreen, Colo., site opened May 1995 in space donated by SRC's parent organization, Mountain Services Program. Its enrollment was disappointing—only 3 to 6 clients per day of a projected 10 by June 1996—and other SRC revenues supported it. Failure to secure referrals from a local established home health and hospice organization appears to have hurt its enrollments.

Rather than fold the operation, however, SRC redirected staff resources toward cultivation of a network of support services for rural clients that included short-term overnight care, in-home personal care and homemaker assistance, and the location of part-time jobs for caregivers. It also provided information and referral, outreach and case management, nutrition, social, recreational, and educational programs.

Rates at all three sites remained unchanged since 1993: \$36/day for care (which was an estimated actual cost per patient day). SRC added a \$7 surcharge for intensive care, and transportation services were \$6.50 per round-trip. Reimbursement for Veterans Administration clients was \$42.

Marketing *Plus* Networking

SRC's marketing supplemented networking and referral relationships developed over many years. A good example of this was outreach to Denver area corporations via the Elder Care in the Workplace Program, which solicited client referrals. SRC had other

exceptionally strong community linkages to health professionals; a local program for the developmentally disabled; the Veterans Administration; the Area Agency on Aging; Home and Community-Based Services (a case management organization); and other local, state, and national agencies.

SRC printed a brochure, "DayBreak ... More Choice in Adult Day Services," to market its Wheat Ridge center and two expansion sites through mailings and as handouts at the time of service inquiries. It introduced its satellite centers with a luncheon for area healthcare providers, and held monthly meetings with this same referral group. Other community marketing included an open house and fellowship dinners for its clients' caregivers, an Alzheimer's symposium, mailings to the community, and monthly articles in the senior news section of a local newspaper.

The South Jefferson County and Evergreen centers held open houses, and articles on them appeared subsequently in local papers. SRC staff also participated in a one-time help-line phone event run by a Denver television station to answer questions about adult day services. Monthly articles and advertisements were placed in area newspapers, and a twice-yearly newsletter, *SRC's Communicator*, brought news of the centers to 65,000 registered voters, as well as caregivers and referral sources. SRC's profile gained prominence locally when the program director, Susan Walker published her book, *Keeping Active: A Caregiver's Guide to Activities with the Elderly*, in 1994. (See the [Bibliography](#).)

Transportation: A Bottleneck To Growth

Providing transportation services for both new sites presented challenges. A year into the grant project, in 1995, a donated van solved the transportation needs of the South Jefferson County center. At the Evergreen site, pick-up and drop-off times and routes remained limited by the availability of a van already in use at Wheat Ridge. At the conclusion of the grant, the site hoped to establish a volunteer driver pool to provide clients' transportation.

An Invitation To Pay Full-Cost Fees

By the end of the grant, in 1996, most clients paid full fees—a grant goal. Although the organization offered a sliding fee scale, most caregivers could afford the full fee (which reflected true costs), and SRC emphasized the concept during inquiries and enrollment.

The project gained additional support from a number of local fund-raising activities and workplace-giving campaigns. It also received gifts of renovation materials, labor, and space. Local grants included a scholarship fund for low-income clients. The Veterans Administration reimbursement and revenue streams from an unusually wide variety of agencies and grants complete a picture of budgetary self-sufficiency—though Wheat

Ridge and the South Jefferson site continued to subsidize the Evergreen center. SRC also reduced its staffing expenses with on-the-job training of students enrolled in a community certified nursing assistant program.

Communications

The communications effort is described in the preceding section, *Marketing Plus Networking*. (See the *Bibliography*.)

AFTERWARD

To boost enrollment, in 1996, SRC planned to create an advisory council for the Evergreen site comprised of area providers and referral sources, among others. It contemplated permanently redirecting its Evergreen Center's Resources to provide care through a traveling respite concept (some elements of which it had previously introduced), which would bring a staff person into clients' homes rather than bringing clients together in a central location. SRC was also increasing its use of volunteers, and anticipated the use of AmeriCorps volunteers to expand music, drama, pet therapy, and intergenerational programming.

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Grant ID # 23462

Program area: Vulnerable Populations

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(Current as of date of the report; as provided by the grantee organization; not verified by RWJF; items not available from RWJF.)

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