

MI1B Success in Outreach

With regard to local community newsletters, whether it's a service like Homewatch Caregivers; a senior residence or community; student housing services; a department of one of the health systems; or others, our Outreach & Neighborhood Services department staff actively seek out a contact and offer to provide the content for an article or mention of our services. It really depends on the receptiveness of the contact and whether or not they allow content to be included that promotes services other than their own, whether we're successful or not. Proactively seeking out and initiating the contact and offering to provide the content is really key though, since it requires very little effort on the part of the contact then, to include it.

Generally speaking, we employ the philosophy that it's important to develop and promote our brand by telling the community about what we offer through personal contact, local media (news, local cable access), visiting senior residences, meeting with service-providers of all types, and talking with (or emailing, or meeting with, or writing to, depending on what works best for them) anyone else in our community who might help us promote our services. Meeting people, networking, learning more about them, and building relationships is what we do; and sometimes it happens very quickly, while other times it may take months or even years before things really click.

For example, long before Homewatch Caregivers included WLBDP@AADL in their newsletter, we had a previous relationship with that organization. They and other local small business owners participated in a Small Business panel discussion program for AADL in 2010.

Another thing we try to remain keenly aware of, is that staff turn-over at some of these facilities/organizations/businesses plays a factor. Just one more reason persistent follow-up is crucial in maintaining consistency in getting our message out.

So...research + strategy + communication + persistent follow-up = success!

We have a long list of contacts including (but not limited to):

- Senior residences
- Optometrists & ophthalmologists
- Retail eyeglass stores
- Schools
- Libraries
- Religious institutions
- Social service providers
- Service-provider listservs (a good way to get your message out to many people at once)
- Community centers
- Meals on Wheels
- University of Michigan Health Services, Guest Services
- University of Michigan, Council for Disability Concerns (attend monthly meetings)
- Local Lions Clubs
- Ann Arbor Commission on Disability Issues (attend monthly meetings that are broadcast on local cable channel)
- Senior Leaders (attend monthly meetings of area service providers)
- Washtenaw Intermediate School District
- Senior Moments (appear regularly on local cable show)
- VA Hospital
- Vendor fairs

With regard to tracking referrals as a result of these contacts, that remains a challenge that we're constantly looking for better ways to measure. The best means we have for measuring this right now, is we have a space on our application that asks the patron how they received it.