

Center in the Park Midyear Conversation 4.22

Renee Cunningham, Megan, Keyerra Charles, Susan

Program: Pride in the Park

Renee was happy to report that they have resumed many in-person programs, as well as continuing virtual. They have served 1195 unduplicated clients since July 2021 (1360 in 2019). The pandemic illustrated how much isolation and loneliness affect well-being.

Megan and Keyerra just returned from the ASA conference where they did 3 presentations and 1 poster, including the Pride in the Park program.

In year 1, the Advisory Group was established and staff did SAGE Cares training, achieving Platinum status. The Advisory group was so enthusiastic, they went ahead and planned a successful Pride month event.

This year, 2 new people joined 4 returning people on the Advisory Group. New staff went through full training and returning staff fulfilled the annual recertification, with a focus on Antbullying in senior centers. The AG is planning a larger Pride festival in Vernon Park, where the Center is located, scheduled when the center is open to encourage participation. It will include a jazz concert, healing through the arts exhibits and resource tables. They expect to build sustaining collaborations and sponsorships. With volunteer planners and sponsors, as well as integrating it into the life of Center in the Park, the program should be sustainable.

They are also considering offering evidence-based programs such as Chronic Disease Self-Management and Diabetes Self-Management for the LGBTQ community. As certified trainers, they can train other senior centers as well.

Renee then told me that the State cut funding for senior services dramatically (\$3.5 Million for PCA) redistributing some funding from Philadelphia to other parts of the state. The blow was somewhat softened this year by using American Rescue Plan funds, but that will not be available next year. Center in the Park lost \$375,000, which translates to 250-400 clients and 4 staff in NW Philadelphia. The funding supported case management and discretionary funding used for home repairs. Most clients were assisted for short periods of time to stabilize their lives at home. There are no other programs like this in Philadelphia, and clients continue to be referred to them. We talked about the consequences of this loss on top of the closing of My Way. They have collaborated with Jaisohn and Casa del Carmen in the past. They would be very interested in exploring a grant in the Fall to provide some of these services again.

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