

# Good News Garage



A Program of Lutheran Social Services

## 2006 Impact Study of Good News Garage Produced by The University of Vermont (UVM) and The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

### **Introduction**

The Good News Garage is a non for profit organization that enhances the ability for low-income individuals to benefit from economic opportunity. Although the Garage offers a variety of programs to meet transportation needs, the program that was evaluated was the one that works with the Department for Children and Families Economic Services Division, formerly known as PATH. The Good News Garage provides donated cars to individuals who are qualified to receive a car made possible through a Reach Up grant. The recipient must be in a ready- for-work or employment phase, including starting an already secured job as soon as the vehicle is attained, increasing education, or looking for work. The individual can also participate in the program if he or she is already working and in danger of losing a job due to lack of transportation. The objective is to give donated cars to those most in need that would benefit the most from reliable transportation.

### **Methods**

The instrument of measurement used was a telephone survey. The population included all clients who had purchased a car from the Good News Garage with a grant from Reach Up from July 12, 2004 to September 1, 2005. Out of the 97 reachable potential respondents, 76 actually completed the survey.

### **Characteristics of the Population**

- At 96% (73), the overwhelming number of clients who received Vehicles through a Reach Up grant were women.
- 93% were single parents with 1-6 children living at home.

### **Service Evaluation**

Although the majority of the population still has their cars, 21% of recipients no longer had the car. 50% of those people reported that the car broke down and could not be repaired, while the other half reported that the car broke down and they could not afford to repair it. However, 69% of the respondents who no longer have the car from the Good News Garage were able to acquire another form of efficient transportation. **Furthermore, of the 21% who no longer have the car, 44% still reported a decrease in their reliance on TANF benefits due to the car.** This speaks to the fact that the Good News Garage not only provides temporary self-reliance to the people they serve, (that is, until the car dies), but also helps to pave the path for long-term self-reliance.

- 79% still have the car.

- 82% of the population reported that the vehicle was reliable to very reliable
- 43% of the population reported spending a large sum of money on fixing the vehicle's problems. The average amount spent was \$373.97.

### ***Impact on Clients Who Purchased Cars with Reach Up Grant***

Among the most important indications of economic success are the percentages that have decreased their reliance on TANF as well as job obtainment or retainment due to the vehicle. The majority of the respondents decreased their TANF reliance due to the car, and most of them had so completely.

- A total of 61% reported a decrease in their reliance on TANF due to the vehicle.
- The majority of the people who decreased their reliance had done so completely, that is, 49% of the population reported a complete decrease in their reliance on TANF due to the vehicle.
- 37% of the population have reported a decrease in food stamps due to the car
- 60% of the population contributed the obtainment of employment to the car
- 83% of the population contributed the ability to keep a job to the car
- 72% of the population contributed an ability to save money when shopping for food to the car

Among the most imperative human and social capital success gauges are education attainment and increased participation within the community due to the vehicle. It is evident that the Good News Garage is also meeting these needs with their services as is evident by the following outcomes.

- 58% of the population reported an increase in some sort of community participation due to the vehicle
- 48% of the population contributed an increase in education to the car
- 60% of the population contributed an increase in training to the car

The measurements of mental development are how much quality of life has improved. There are evident increases in self-confidence or self-esteem, and leisure time due to the car as reported by the respondents.

- 90% of the population reported an improvement in hope for the future of themselves and their family members within Vermont due to the car
- 87% contributed an increase in self confidence due to the car
- 70% of the population contributed an increase in time for leisure and relaxing to the car

### ***Disadvantages and Advantages of Having a Car***

Although respondents were asked to state both advantages and disadvantages of having a car at the time of evaluation, the majority of the people reported more of the former than the latter. The following are the top responses given for both.

#### **Advantages**

- Can work/better overall work life (promotion, reliability increased)
- Can take children to where they need to go including (appointments, extracurricular activities, school, out for activities)/ have become a better parent:
- Self-reliance and independence

### **Disadvantages**

(The numbers represent the number of times mentioned)

- Costing money to maintain car (gas, maintenance, insurance)
- Fear of car breaking down/car breaking down

### ***Issues and Suggestion for Future Studies***

Initially there were 176 who had participated in the program, however because of the socio-economic status of this group, many people could not be contacted after a period that ranged anywhere from 5-17 months. If the Good News Garage could make more of an effort to keep track of these customers over time this problem might be alleviated to an extent.

With more time and funding, it should be possible to do a longitudinal study. The ability to be able to track and question those who purchase vehicles with a Reach Up grant over intervals of time until the completion of a year would provide valid and reliable information that was not able to be attained in this study, namely actual figures to calculate cost savings for the government. Furthermore, it would be more likely that the majority of the initial population could be contacted even after a year.

For more information, please contact Carmen George at 877.448.3288.