

LIAISON REPORT

AGENCY: Good Neighbor Emergency Assistance LIAISON: Jane Acker

1. Need for Program. Describe who the target population is and whether their numbers are increasing or decreasing. Indicate the source of this information. Also, indicate how the program/service is different and how it is similar to others and what would happen if the program/service ceased to exist. List the priorities established by ASSET Funders, which the programming addresses.

GNEA programs benefit low income households, usually those in crisis situations. GNEA offers Healthy Food Vouchers (max. \$30 per household per quarter), gas or CyRide vouchers (max \$10-50 per year for gas, \$1-20 for CyRide tickets) and rent/utility assistance (\$25-350 or more per year depending on circumstances). HFV are available to all who request them, depending on availability, gas/CyRide dependent on circumstances, and rent/utility assistance requires documentation of residence, income, need, etc. Many other organizations in Story County provide more comprehensive assistance with food needs, and others also can provide emergency rent and utility funding (ERP, Salvation Army, St. Thomas' Love Your Neighbor program etc.) GNEA is the only source in the county for transportation funding as per director Lori Allen.

2. Program Strengths. Pick two to four factors that contribute most importantly to the program/service outcomes. Do not list everything that is satisfactory. We will assume that things not mentioned are okay. For each strength describe some supporting evidence.

GNEA can be flexible in its response to household needs and relies not only on income data but also on individual interviews to determine the level of support provided. Volunteers and the director assess rent/utility needs on a case by case basis, and can also provide helpful referral service and direct clients to relevant community resources. Local church communities, as well as members of their congregations, have been faithful in supporting GNEA since its founding in 1997.

3. Program Weaknesses. Select factors that detract most from the program/service achieving its outcomes. Present details as described above. Recommendations for reducing these weaknesses should follow the discussion of each weakness.

Reliable volunteers are hard to find! In addition, the typical demographics of the volunteer group (white, female, over 55) do not reflect the diversity of the population served. Personnel fluent in languages other than English are not available for interviews. Traditional operations are paperwork heavy, do not support easy collection of data, and are not secure. Director Allen has made good use of contacts at ISU to diversify the volunteer base, and teams from Leadership Ames and ISU have been of huge help in providing up to date technology and moving data into useful databases. The Healthy Food Voucher program may have outlived its usefulness in its current form—too little money, distributed without regard to organizational priorities, hard to manage logistically—but the board is working on changing its approach in this area.

4. Financial Outlook. Current funding concerns should be described. In addition, the assessment of the program's plan to cope with shrinking resources should be given.

Funding is provided in nearly equal shares by faith community contributions, individual contributions, and ASSET. Of these, ASSET is the only source that is consistently reliable. Contributions from faith communities are uncertain in timing and amount, and very difficult to predict, especially since church attendance and financial support are declining in line with national trends. Individual contributions vary enormously from year to year, and since they are

often made by members of the supporting church communities, it is difficult for GNEA to actively solicit contributions without alienating the churches to which they belong.

5. Internal Management Practices. Summarize your assessment of the management of the agency, and the role of the Board. If there are deficiencies, details should be provided. Conclude with recommendations when appropriate.

Lori Allen has been in place for less than two years. She has a coherent and realistic vision for the organization, which involves modernizing its operations, expanding its donor base, and diversifying the volunteer pool. The board is thoughtful, dedicated, and hard-working, and has clearly made great strides in working with Lori towards shared objectives.

6. Agency Suggestions/Comments. Make note of any suggestions, comments or questions agencies may have with regard to the ASSET process, budget forms and or anything else that relates to the process.

None noted.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT:

GNEA is small with very low overhead. It fills a valuable role for community members with urgent needs for rent, utility, or transportation assistance.