

A New PEPartnership Ally!

Some of you who are vigilant readers of Facebook, and follow us on that venue, may already have seen the brief notice of our new ally.

The Matt Urban Hope Center in Buffalo, NY, contacted us a couple of weeks ago, to ask whether we'd be willing to partner with them.

An excerpt from the initial email we received from Amanda Frank is below:

...[The] Lt. Col. Matt Urban Human Services Center of WNY (Matt Urban Center) [is] a nonprofit organization located on the East side of Buffalo in New York. The mission of the Matt Urban Center is to provide programs that enhance the quality of life, preserve neighborhoods, and encourage economic development. This living mission statement has been developed and embraced by our board of directors, employees, and volunteers for over 35 years. The Matt Urban Center is comprised of seven sites (soon to be eight) that offer an array of services to the community including housing, weatherization, senior services, and crime victim assistance. The Matt Urban Hope Center serves the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless, individuals and families suffering from domestic violence, loss of income, no utilities, and/or eviction. We respond to the needs of the community by hosting family-focused events, informative workshops, free tax preparation, benefits screening, housing and job assistance. Partnering agencies come into the center on a regular basis to bring their information and services to our clients who come into the center. There are also meals served in our Urban Diner five days per week, which is open and free to the public. The population we serve are in general low income individuals and families who are receiving public benefits or hold low paying jobs. The limited monetary resources in this community create a need for additional assistance obtaining necessary personal and household items.

We had come up with the goal to expand our existing food pantry services and start a pantry for personal and household items. In our search for established programs and/or research supporting such an initiative we came across the PEPartnership, Inc. website. We are impressed by the apparent time, effort, and thought that has gone into creating a Personal Essentials Pantry complete with policy, organization, literature, and software for providers. We at the Matt Urban Hope Center are interested in partnering with PEPartnership, Inc. and hope to utilize the system you have developed, PEPbase, and informational material in your flyers. We respectfully request your permission to utilize these resources. It makes the most sense rather than trying to reinvent the wheel to make use of the excellent work you have already done....

I spoke with Amanda Frank and with her supervisor, Tara Stahl, for about 90 minutes last Wednesday, about what would be involved in becoming a member of the PEPartnership Alliance. They are eager to proceed!

As you may have noted, they are already in partnership with many agencies in their area for coordinating services, and have eight sites in their own program. They are eager to not only start a

Personal Essentials Pantry, but also to grow into an Alliance of their own, serving as the lead agency for that Alliance. (Think of it – we'll now have to figure out how to differentiate between various Alliances, not just various pantries!)

Mike and I will be working to create a clone PEPbase system just for the Buffalo area, so that we don't confuse guests in Wisconsin or in New York about what pantries they might utilize. (I know we've had folks from quite some distance, but I think New York is probably a little on the extreme side.) The Buffalo system will be kept on our server, so that we have access to their summative data (and also so that we can more easily provide updates and do any troubleshooting that may be necessary). We're also planning on making the various summative reports that we currently provide for the Wisconsin Alliance accessible for the New York Alliance, from our website (which will also give the two Alliances access to each other's summative data, so that they can see how things vary across the two regions).

I've emailed off the Memorandum of Agreement for their perusal, and am expecting to have that back by the end of the week. We haven't talked about start dates yet, but I would assume that at least their initial PEP will be up and running by September or so.

A wonderful development!