



Communicator

Autumn 2008

Making connections across Minnesota

50,000 and counting

This summer, Twin Cities Community Voice Mail achieved a milestone that its early planners would have thought a long way off. Since TCCVM began in 1994, 50,000 persons have received access to voice mail boxes for their job or housing searches, for contact to health care professionals, and for safe communication for those who are victims of abuse.

When a planning group began discussions of the possibility of a network of voice mail numbers for people who are poor and homeless, their initial expectations were very modest: "Should we start with just Minneapolis, or could we do Minneapolis *and* St. Paul? Could we get as many as 30 agencies to participate?"

In the 15 years since those first planning meetings, TCCVM has grown to become a national leader in connecting people who do not have phones with the communities to which they belong through the seemingly simple technology of voice mail boxes.

Today over 375 agencies across the entire state of Minnesota partner with TCCVM to allow nearly 3,000 individuals to have a safe and secure place to receive messages from employers, landlords, children's schools, doctors,



social service providers and family members.

By offering this tangible connection, TCCVM has formed strong bonds for the people who use the service. The people using the system, in turn, have a number that is theirs and that serves as a real tool in helping people get on their feet.

Beyond the exchange of voice mail numbers with agencies, TCCVM has created even greater connections with the people who use the service. Its advisory group and a group of voice mail users ages 50 and up serve to bring folks together to share their experiences and to offer insight into the situations they face and how voice mail can serve to meet needs that people may encounter right now, as well as into the future.

While on one hand it is disappointing that this service has been so desperately needed for so long, we are immensely proud to have offered it for the past 50,000 clients and to continue to offer it—and other communications services in the future—for the next 50,000.

Voice Mail Works! A Success Story

Sally had two daughters and lived with her abusive, alcoholic husband in Tennessee. He did not work. The family survived on Sally working two shifts a day at the local Subway. She dealt not only with working long hours and raising two kids, but the abuse was getting worse. Sally feared for their safety. Working with a women's agency, Sally made plans for the girls to stay with a friend. After the first shift, she would leave work, pick up her girls and take off for a women's shelter in St. Paul. They would be safe. Hopefully, the abuser would never know where they went.

The plan worked! Unfortunately, she found herself in a strange place living in a shelter with no job, no phone and no money. She met with a job counselor to get ideas on how to get a job that would support her family. She had limited experience, but often thought that she would like to work with a computer.

The job counselor helped her with clothes for an interview, put together a resume, arranged time on computers to practice typing and basic skills, but most importantly, gave Sally a voice mail phone number from TCCVM. Within 6 weeks, Sally had a job as an office assistant. It paid enough that Sally also used her voice mail number to get messages from potential landlords and get her family their own home.

Sally came back to her job counselor with a tear in her eye. She now had a cubicle with her own computer on her desk! She and her girls have their first home in Minnesota. None of it was possible without her voice mail number from TCCVM.

Twin Cities Community Voice Mail

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The Call-Sheet...Messages about TCCVM happenings

1. Project Homeless Connect

TCCVM staff and board members participated in the fourth Hennepin County Project Homeless Connect on April 28 at the Minneapolis Convention Center. Nearly 3,000 people attended the "one-stop shopping" social service event. Over 100 people received voice mail boxes with the help of our staff and volunteers. On June 10th, TCCVM participated in the Ramsey County Homeless Connect and provided voice mail boxes to 76 people.

2. TCCVM Travels the State of Minnesota

In the past few months, TCCVM has continued to make its presence known throughout the state, not just in the Twin Cities metro area. We have provided agency trainings for new partner agencies in central Minnesota, southeastern Minnesota, and for many northern agencies in trainings in Pine City and Duluth. Staff also have directly provided voice mail to veterans at Stand Down events in Duluth, St. Cloud, and the Twin Cities. They have attended Transitions Fairs held at Minnesota Correctional Facilities in Shakopee, Faribault, Rush City, Stillwater, Red Wing, Willow River/Moose Lake and Lino Lakes.

3. Donations still needed

Your help is needed to make voice mail and cell phone technology available for people in need. We rely on a combination of funding from foundations, corporations, government, and individuals. Please use the form below to make a tax-deductible contribution to Twin Cities Community Voice Mail. Thank you!

I support Twin Cities Community Voice Mail!

Name _____

Address _____

City State, ZIP _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Enclosed is my donation of:

___\$50 ___\$100

___\$250 ___\$_____

Mail your tax-deductible gift to:

TCCVM
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St. Paul MN 55104



Twin Cities Community Voice Mail comprises a network of 375 partner agencies across the state. TCCVM staff provides training to new agencies. We then offer ongoing support so clients can be successful with voice mail.



Partner Agency Spotlight: **RESOURCE**

Year founded: 1960 **Years providing Voice Mail:** 14 years

Program description: RESOURCE is the hub of many programs serving low-income people, including Employment Action Center, Resource Recovery Center, Spectrum Community Mental Health, and Minnesota Resource Center. They provide more TCCVM boxes than any other organization.

For more information: 612-752-8000 www.resource-mn.org

In their own words: "It was clear from the inception of TCCVM, people using RESOURCE's services would have a great advantage in achieving the goals they have for themselves and their families. Voice mail makes that connection for them with business, service, and education communities. RESOURCE helps people to discover their potential and achieve their dreams. Twin Cities Community Voice Mail is an important tool to make this happen."

— Debbie Atterberry, President, RESOURCE.



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