



Communicator

Autumn 2009

Making connections across Minnesota

TCCVM groups forge new connections

Twin Cities Community Voice Mail has grown into an organization that does so much more than merely provide voice mail boxes to people in need. While that is still a primary focus of the organization, the fact is that TCCVM's efforts at organizing its constituents and connecting them both with one another and existing services are among its strongest assets.

Two important ways that TCCVM reaches out to the people using its service are the Advisory Group and the 50+ Group. Each group sets its own agenda for issues to discuss and act upon, with support from TCCVM staff.

Ed Petsche, community outreach specialist and organizer, gives a snapshot of what each group is doing.

50+ Group

When TCCVM decided to host a listening session for people over 50 who used community voice mail, we were eager to learn about their concerns and their lives. We did this as part of the Minneapolis Foundation's Community Experience Partnership initiative.

The people who came to our listening session were mostly homeless, all very low income, and employed marginally if at all.

A meal and initial stipends to participate were a strong incentive for people to attend, but once they started with the meetings, people were also motivated by the group experience and spending time with their peers.

Since Fall 2008 the group has been focusing on a few core issues:

- Increasing focus on the special needs of homeless older adults
- Advocating for more assistance for older adults to apply for Social Security Disability and SSI
- Tenant rights/public housing issues

People from several agencies whose work is related to these issues have attended meetings to present, and, as important, get input from the group, including a state human services program director and a legal aid lawyer.

Advisory Group

Counting as its members voice mail users of all ages, the Advisory Committee has met since 2007. All voice mail users receive broadcast messages inviting them to meetings, whose purpose—like the 50+ group—is as much to bring people together with one another as it is to connect them to other services and get their input on things happening with TCCVM.

Advisory Group meetings offer voice mail users a chance to give us feedback about our service, and provide an opportunity to share information with other people who are using voice mail. Group discussions address resources that may be available, issues that affect us all—like the governor's recent budget cuts—and tips about using voice mail.

Twin Cities Community Voice Mail

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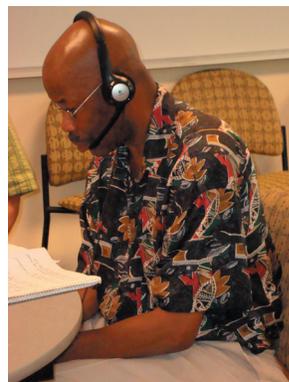
TCCVM Board of Directors:

Debra Bean; Kim Carpenter; Simon Carvalho; Charles Crowley, *Treasurer*; Ted Dennis; Anthony Elliot; Jim Ferguson; Doug Fountain; Al Hawkins; Scott Helland; Tim Gothmann; Gloria Johnson; Ruth Johnson; Dale Johnston, *Secretary*; Dave Kapalka; Maria Lieske; Mike Menner, *Chair*; Cheri Speeter Margoles, *Vice-Chair*; Wayne Oliver; Audrey Sanchez; Ann White; Dale Woodbeck

Voice Mail Works! A Success Story

At a meeting of our 50+ group, a Media Justice advocate did a training to demonstrate how the group could tell its own stories both collectively and individually to counteract the portrayal of low income people and people of color by the mainstream media.

One of the group members recorded his story about his experiences. Ron tells how he has been using TCCVM services since 2005. At the time, he was staying in a shelter where he didn't always get his messages and had to go through various hassles to use the one phone with a 5-minute limit.



"Voice mail was a blessing for me. After I received my own voice mail number, a lot of pressure was taken off me. I could use any phone, anywhere, at any time to get my messages or updates on events or resources."

As a result of a message that had been broadcast to all voice mail users, Ron attended the first meeting of the 50+ Group and "was hooked from the beginning," he says. "We discuss issues of importance to older adults. We talk about all the injustice, prejudice, and intolerance that we face as older adults daily, such as homelessness health care and unemployment. The 50+ group has been a good source of networking and information."

To see Ron's video and hear his whole story, go to www.tccvm.org.

The Call-Sheet...Messages about TCCVM happenings

1. TCCVM undergoing brand re-development

Twin Cities Community Voice Mail is in the process of refining its brand vision and identity. We have been working with Kazoo Branding to best identify who we are and how to express that. The result will be a new name for the organization in early 2010. At the same time, we will give our website a fresh new look. Kate Huebsch of High Point Creative and her team are working to revitalize our website. In the meantime, we've made other improvements to the site content, including a "Twitter badge" with regular updates on happenings with voice mail and in the community. Check in regularly!

2. Voice mail users to begin helping make service available

With the support of the St. Paul Foundation, TCCVM is going to begin an outreach effort to help make voice mail services more widely available. Because of the economic downturn, many partner agencies have been less able to make voice mail boxes available to their clients because of increased demands on limited staff. TCCVM's new outreach effort will enlist some past and current voice mail users active in our various groups to go to drop-in centers, food shelves, free meal programs and other organizations to directly connect people to voice mail boxes. It's a great way for people who are already benefiting from the program to help others access a vital communication link.

First "Minnehaha Walk" was a big success

Twin Cities Community Voice Mail hosted its first Minnehaha Walk on September 27 at Minnehaha Park in Minneapolis. Fifty three people participated in the event, including voice mail users, board members, staff, friends, and family.

We raised nearly \$3,000 to cover bus fare or gas for people who participate in the TCCVM Advisory Group and the 50+ Group.

It turned out to be a nice day after a bit of rain and strong winds. Participants got a chance to walk, share a picnic lunch and socialize. Hennepin County Commissioner Peter McLaughlin stopped by to share his memories of the start-up of TCCVM and to emphasize his continued support for our work.

Thanks to our dedicated walkers, and to all who supported TCCVM.



3. Earn a 50% donation match for TCCVM on November 17!

There is a special opportunity to make your TCCVM donation go even farther.

As part of the new non-profit online donation site GiveMN.org, all donations made on **November 17** will be matched 50% by the foundations and sponsors of GiveMN.org. So your \$100 donation would mean \$150 for our programs.

Just go to GiveMN.org on November 17, search for TCCVM on the site and make your secure, tax-deductible donation. Thanks!



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



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