The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

YEAR:
2012

STATUS:
Laureate

Organization:
GMHC

Organization URL:
gmhc.org

Project Name:
Food and Nutrition Bar Code Scan

What social/humanitarian issue was the project designed to address? What specific metrics did you use to measure the project's success?

At GMHC, we provide over 350 meals to HIV/immune-compromised system individuals every day. Initially, this program was not pay-for-performance, but that is the trend that all funded human services programs are now going to. To help measure the success of our program, both internally and for funding sources, as well as making sure that only people who qualify for the meals program at GMHC get a meal, we implemented an ID system that contained the client's encrypted ID, which allowed the staff doing the check-in to first see if the client was enrolled in the program and then record a service for the meal. If the person requested a second meal, and it was available, this second meal was recorded separately in the database again. The reporting from this database actually showed our funders that we were so over-performing the parameters of the funding, that we ended up getting an enhancement (more funding). This allowed us to serve additional meals to additional clients, thereby providing our community with enhanced services. We went from an average of 300 meals served per day to 350 meals served per day. Additionally, from the staff perspective, we literally reduced the man-hours of this task from 20 per day (recording of the services, as well as checking in the clients) to 3, allowing those staff to work on nutrition counseling and food preparation skills instead of data entry.

Please describe the technologies used and how those technologies were deployed in an innovative way. Also, please include any technical or other challenges that were overcome for the successful implementation of the project.

We built this system utilizing standard open-source barcode scanning fonts and systems, and integrated into our enterprise-wide SQL client/service database. We developed the architecture for this database internally, and this actually allows for real-time analysis of all services at GMHC in addition to the meals services.

Please list the specific humanitarian benefits the project has yielded so far.

We took a program that was about to be cut from funding, which was then feeding about 300 people, to a program that received funding to feed 350 people. In essence, if we lost the funding, we would not have been able to feed anyone, and now we've actually increased our capacity and ability. It also allows us to increase capacity even more because we now have hard evidence that we can feed more people and are limited only by the funds donated to us, not by staff or technology.

Please provide the best example of how the project has benefited a specific individual, enterprise or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work.

"The use of the bar code technology in Gay Men's Health Crisis Food and Nutrition program has created a sea-change in our ability to record data and report our successes to individuals, foundations, corporations, and governmental entities. Being able to see real-time, accurate data shows our supporters that their strategic philanthropic investment is making a difference every day in the fight against HIV/AIDS, hunger, and poverty. Additionally, this technology allows the agency to see immediately if numbers dip or surge, so that we can reallocate resources to operate more efficiently. This has an enormous impact on the purchase of food and in other programmatic costs." - Seth Rosen, Managing Director of Development, GMHC.