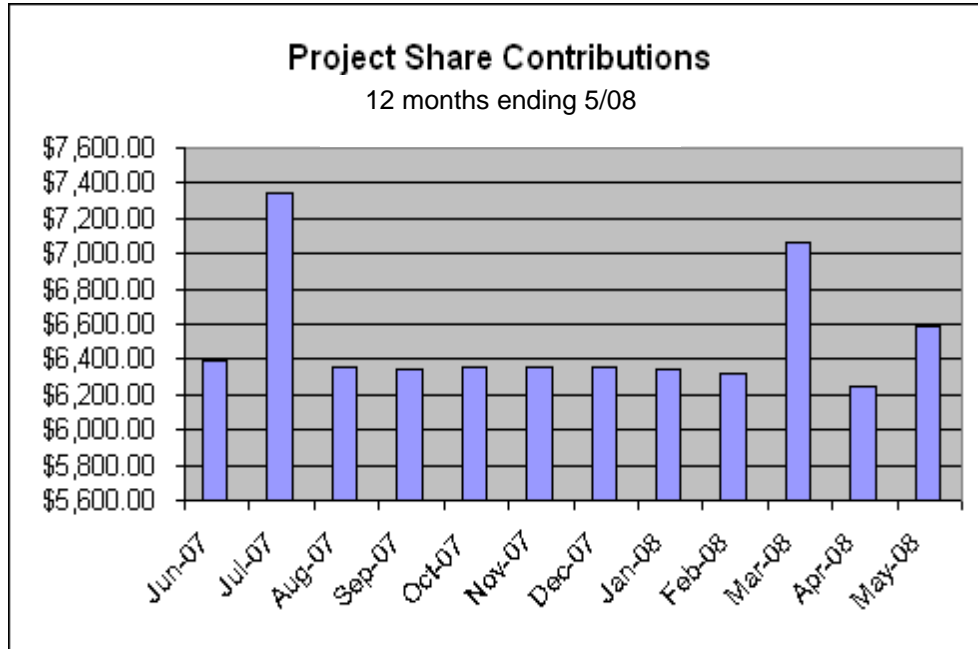


GRU Project Share Program Status Report & Recommendations for Increased Giving

Current Program Overview:



- GRU's Project Share provides assistance to those who cannot pay all or part of their utility bill. Through voluntary donations from citizens and GRU customers, we assist the elderly, handicapped and those in financial hardship due to illness. Donations pay for emergency utility bill costs including but not limited to electric, water & gas service.
- Funds are disbursed through three social service agencies; Catholic Charities, Gainesville Community Ministry & Salvation Army
- GRU customers receive direct and indirect payment assistance from a variety of other sources such as churches, individuals and other social service organizations that are not part of Project Share.
- The three partner non-profits offer utility assistance between \$125 and \$175 per customer.
- The average individual contribution in May 2008 was \$3.23 from about 2,037 participating customers and donations ranged from \$1 to \$30 with the vast majority in the \$1 to \$5 range.
- Fluctuations in monthly giving are due to one time gifts, new customers contributing and contributing customers discontinuing donations or service.

Recommendations:

1. Increase Customer awareness and opportunities to contribute the program;

- Focus on February for both the internal and external campaign while conducting a “soft” campaign year round via Customer Bulletin, placed news release appeal/update, and bill inserts.
- Investigate option of “round up” function through SAP billing software and plan a campaign to allow customers the additional choice of being billed with their dollar amount rounded to the next highest dollar amount and the difference from their actual bill would be donated to the program. (*example*, \$129.16 to \$130.00 with \$.84 going to Project Share)
- Investigate option of adding Project Share donation option to online payments.
- Revamp the rebate form so that customers have the option of contributing a portion of their refund to Project Share
- Investigate ability to send a year-end thank you for giving letter updating donors on the impact of the program to the community, giving them a record of their contribution for tax purposes, and offering an opportunity to increase their contribution.
- Look at development of PSAs (Public Service Announcements) – this would be free advertising provided by local television and radio stations; include TV 12.

2. Work with partnering agencies to incorporate information on conservation and resources for assistance with home efficiency improvements;

- Conduct conservation training with partner agencies and provide material directed at no cost/low cost practices to conserve and control bills for distribution with payments or as a condition of payments.
- Refer clients (owners) to the CWC (Community Weatherization Coalition) and LEEP (Low-income Energy Efficiency Program), as well as any other available assistance for long term improvements to efficiency for homeowners.
- Investigate a tiered aid system with agencies for immediate assistance at a certain level of payment and additional funding provided after requirements are met, such as conservation education classes or home energy audits.

3. Engage the faith based community, government and non–profit organizations in discussions to coordinate assistance opportunities;

- Host a luncheon for community stakeholders, including non-profit agencies that have a utility assistance program, churches, and opinion leaders. The goal of the lunch will be to provide a forum to share information, resources, and develop a strategic go-forward plan that maximizes the success of Project Share and other efforts in the community.
- Develop a program for churches to become sustaining partners of Project Share and refer those needing assistance to the participating agencies for qualified assistance. Perhaps these agencies would be willing to coordinate a major fundraiser such as a golf tournament or dinner.
- Implement a City Commission, Leadership Team and General Employee Campaign