

# **Northern Illinois Area 20**

## **District 41 Answering Service**

### **2009 Year-End Report**

The District 41 Intergroup Office is up and running. At year-end we have handled 127 logged calls. Plus some telemarketers and possibly a few that were not logged. And the Computer has processed a couple of dozen more. We have staffed the office with one or two volunteers from 9 a.m. through 9 p.m. Monday through Friday since Monday, October 19. The computer has handled calls for a few shifts when volunteers came down ill, had car trouble, or work or family intervened. Even then all calls were answered.

We held a Workshop in July. (Scheduled for June, Mother Nature had other ideas as a powerful Friday Night Thunderstorm cut off power to Anona East (and a lot of Villa Park) until late Saturday afternoon.) Fifty! people showed up. We presented a short history of our Answering Service and a vision that we had for the future. We presented several call situations and a method of handling them. And we let the participants try several situations so they could find their own solutions and report back to the group.

The workshop was a resounding success. We had volunteers to staff all 15 4-hour time slots - 8 of them with TWO volunteers! We also garnered several new volunteers to take calls at home. They didn't just come for the pizza!

A motion to proceed easily passed at the next day's District meeting, along with a motion to spend up to \$2,000 to set up the office. Several people volunteered office furniture and supplies. Mostly on the condition that we take them NOW! One person was retiring and wanted his home office reconverted into a second bedroom. So we told the Church we would take possession of our room (and start paying rent) in August.

It took a couple of months to gather all the "stuff" to make the office work. Someone donated a Pentium-3 computer, but it took time before it was available. Then Louis, the District 42 computer whiz, had to clean and load it for us, including entering ALL the meeting and volunteer information - with voice files. (He said it was a beautiful machine.)

We held an open house to train volunteers. Unfortunately, we didn't have phones and the Computers didn't work. So we sat around and discussed how we thought things might work and passed out write-ups. Cupcakes and cookies from Costco helped.

Ready to get started, at the end of September we called AT&T to hook up our phones. We thought they would come out one morning and we'd have dial tone; then they would switch us over from Tel\*Assist and we would be in

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business. NO WAY! It took TWO weeks! Then we had to cancel Caller-ID. The computer interpreted the ID as a hang-up signal and dropped the call.

Thanks to all the donations, we only spent \$1,126.36 of the allocated \$2000 for office startup (See attached spreadsheet). But our finances were "strained" from an area we didn't expect. We started paying rent in August, but the Tel\*Assist bill didn't go away until October 19 (the November billing cycle). From August through November we paid rent for the office while paying Tel\*Assist! And AT&T billed us \$850 for telephone installation. Negotiations got that "down" to \$612.26 on the November bill. The December AT&T bill contained the first month's costs plus the going-forward monthly charges. When we explained that we cancelled Caller-ID, Call Waiting, and Call Forwarding, plus a few other minor adjustments, we got the December bill "down" to \$295.63. (The January bill is just over \$200 - and future negotiations should get that down.) Meanwhile, contributions held steady. Our bank balance went from \$3005.11 in August to \$55.30 at year-end.

We need a few more volunteers - especially people who could fill in at a moment's notice. And we need the contributions to keep coming in until we build up a prudent reserve and a Capital Expenses account - to replace a computer or other major piece of equipment.

One call from someone really hurting makes it all worthwhile!

Our current volunteer schedule:

9 a.m. - 1 P.M.	Art C	Jan S Ross S	Adam	Jan S Glad C	Ken B
1 - 5 PM	Pat B Ken B	Linda B Leo S	Lori V	Terri S Linda B	Dave A
5 - 6 PM	Diane R	Kelly H Becki F	Mick L Antonio	Jaimie C	Art
6 - 7 PM	Diane R	Kelly H Becki F	Mick L Antonio	Open	Art
7 - 9 PM	Steve T	Kelly H Becki F	Mick L Antonio	Open	Art

Some volunteers have had their class schedules change. Others have found jobs. As a result, we are looking for a volunteer for the Thursday 5-9 shift. We are also looking for a second volunteer for all shifts that only have one current volunteer. Then when someone can't make it, the position is still covered.

Art C, District 41 Answering Service Chair