

Signal Mountain Social Services
2019 Annual Report

Signal Mountain Social Services consistently provided exceptional services to those in our community who experienced complex needs during 2019. Following its mission to “address the needs of individuals living within the 37377 zip code during times of financial challenge and crisis with a longer-term focus of uniquely supporting each client on their path to self-reliance”, SMSS generated new partnerships to maximize resources available to clients. The executive director and two additional social workers strive to follow this mission with the guidance of the Board of Directors consisting of ten dedicated individuals overseeing the direction of the agency. Our Council of Representatives includes 25 members who act as our liaisons to their various community organizations. These representatives are an invaluable link to community resources and volunteers which allows us to maximize the use of our funds. SMSS volunteers total 100+ individuals providing invaluable manpower in The Clothes House, the Food Pantry, Christmas Baskets, support for clients, and other special projects for the agency.

During 2019, 169 Signal Mountain households received services in the form of assistance with food, rent, utilities, counseling, education, home repairs, daycare, medical, dental, vision, Christmas provisions, and senior services. Our goal for the clients we serve is for each to reach self-sufficiency and manage resources wisely. In many cases this goal is achieved through life skills counseling with the social workers. We act as a bridge to a stable future for clients who may have lost jobs, are experiencing medical and dental issues, are senior clients with no family to help with their many needs, are students struggling with difficult classes, or struggling with transportation issues. 154 households participated in life skills counseling receiving education in areas such as budgeting, job search, resource allocation, goal setting, accountability, and parenting from one of our social workers.

Now in its fourth year, the Assessed Home Repair program provided badly needed repairs for four seniors' homes. SMSS replaced a septic system and new field lines for one senior who is living in her childhood home. Another senior received a new roof replacing one that was 30 years old. A third project replaced rotted bathroom floors. And the final senior had a driveway that had become un navigable due to deep ruts and washout. Through this program, we were able to provide solutions to major repair obstacles for these seniors allowing them to remain in their homes free of displacement worry.

The SMSS Education Programs provided life-changing opportunities for preschoolers through adults. Six preschoolers were assisted with scholarships to prepare them for successful entry into kindergarten programs. The Tutoring Program provided 37 elementary through high school age students the opportunity to work one-on-one with the SMSS tutors greatly enhancing their advancement and self-esteem. The Educational Scholarship program provided 13 scholarships for students enrolled in technical through university level institutes through a needs-based application process. The scholarships are renewable pending required documentation. It is the hope that these students, many of whom are first generation higher education attendees, will successfully complete their programs and chart new territory for their families for years to come.

The SMSS Emergency Services Program continues to be a critical component of this agency. We are very fortunate to be able to customize the assistance granted to individuals based on their documented need. Home visits are customary not only to address the current household needs, but also to further develop relationships with the clients we serve. With heightened awareness of needs, social workers are better equipped to address the emergency at hand and strategize with clients on a positive path going forward. During 2019, 77 households received assistance through this program including rent assistance for a single mom facing medical issues, electrical work to a home with children that needed grounding and had faulty outlets, prescription cost assistance for a

