

East Neighborhoods

Collection of old cell phones means cash for program

Thursday, February 22, 2007

By M. Ferguson Tinsley, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The Turtle Creek Valley Mental Health/Mental Retardation program is turning old cells into new cash.

Early this year the Braddock-based agency began collecting used cell phones to be turned in to a recycling company for money.

Agency officials hope that when the drive closes at the end of next month those phones will have brought in several hundred dollars.

This is the first time the agency has used this method to raise funds, said agency spokeswoman Kimberly Mroziak.

“It was Patti Ferron’s idea,” she said of an administrative assistant who works in the East McKeesport office. “She was searching the Internet for new fundraising ideas and found this.”

Actually, Ms. Ferron found www.phoneraiser.com in a magazine. That’s the Web site for a cell phone recycling company based in Fort Worth, Texas, called Phoneraiser.

The company pays agencies, schools, businesses and individuals for used mobile phones and printer ink cartridges.

According to the Web site, Phoneraiser will pay as little as \$.50 to as much as \$300 for a phone and about \$1.25 on average for an ink cartridge.

Ms. Ferron said that so far the agency has collected 200 phones.

Ms. Mroziak said all the money raised will help defray Community Link costs.

Community Link, according to an agency brochure, is an agency division that supports clients as they move toward independence.

Community Link pays for YMCA memberships, bowling leagues and sporting and cultural events; as well as one-to-one support, social/habilitative services, volunteer placement training, vacation/respice trips and in-home respice services.

Community Link also pays for camping events. Ms. Ferron, who is chairwoman of the agency’s fund-raising committee, is especially determined to gather money for clients to go to camp this summer.

Collection points for the used phones are the Turtle Creek Valley MH/MR East McKeesport office, 1301 Fifth Avenue, First Floor, East McKeesport, and the Steel Valley Council of Governments office, 1705 Maple St., Homestead.

For more information call 412-823-0600.