



*Helping
New Yorkers in
Need Since 1922*

The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies promotes the social and economic well-being of greater New York's most vulnerable by strengthening human service organizations and advocating for just public policies.

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Please feel free to contact the editor, Angela Spruill, at aspruill@fpwa.org

Info Network

December 2007

BUYING SMART

During this time of year, you really feel the excitement in the air at our offices! Deliveries of toys and gift items take over our conference rooms as staff members roll up their sleeves to unpack truckloads of items to be bagged and distributed to our member agencies. There's no question that FPWA's annual Holiday Toy & Gift Drive is one of the most popular of our programs, and we delight in working with you to make so many children and families happy at this special time of year. That's why we, like so many others across the nation, have been dismayed by news of hundreds of toy and product recalls over the last several months. We recognize the need for vigilance and precaution to ensure the safety of children and special populations — and we thought it important enough to dedicate a part of this issue to some information and advice to guide you in making toy purchases for your programs. The article "Toy and Art Material Safety" highlights the issues of lead and toxic chemicals in toys and art materials, which are just two of the various hazards you should be aware of. With permission from the United States Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG), we've also included a quick-tip toy safety guide as an insert that you can pass along to your program directors. It's a great resource for day care, community and after-school providers.

In addition to safety, purchasing — or more specifically, buying smart — is an ongoing responsibility in our daily work as leaders. Factors of cost, quality, efficiency, supply and demand, and our budgets and funding streams influence the choices we make as we procure the things we need to keep our business operating. **Bill Ferren** has been the Director of FPWA's Group Purchasing Service (GPS) for over 20 years. In the Expert's Corner he describes the GPS program and what it has to offer to non-profit agencies. Here at FPWA, we're learning to play our own part toward a cleaner, toxic free environment, so you'll also find a few ideas on how your organization can go "green".

On behalf of all of us at FPWA, best wishes to all of you for a safe, peaceful and joyous holiday season!

GOING GREEN MAKES SENSE: DOLLARS AND CENTS

New Yorkers pay some of the highest electrical costs in the nation. Everything that reduces consumption lowers expenses. Below are several easy ways to help your agency go green and reduce overhead expenses:

- * Sensitize staff to the importance of turning out the lights. Unnecessary lighting of unused space can eat deeply into a budget.
- * Evaluate the lighting level of all areas to identify overly illuminated areas.
- * As standard bulbs burn out, replace them with energy-efficient ones. The energy-efficient bulbs will substantially reduce your electric bill and, over time, the reduction in power usage significantly outweighs the somewhat higher cost of the energy-efficient bulbs. Because the energy-efficient bulbs last longer, you also save time on changing bulbs.
- * Investigate the cost effectiveness of timers and/or motion sensing switches that automatically turn off lights in areas when the space is not being used. Although these items can be costly to install, they may make sense in large areas or areas where lights are habitually left on unnecessarily.
- * Look for the Energy Star Rating when buying new appliances. A somewhat higher price is more than justified by the savings in electrical costs.
- * Reduction in electrical use pays an additional benefit in reducing the amount of atmospheric damage from burning coal – the largest energy source for electrical production. Reduced costs in treating asthma and other respiratory ailments may result from reducing the carbon emissions produced by the production of electricity.

TOY AND ART MATERIAL SAFETY

At FPWA, December is Toy & Gift Drive month. With the recent recalls of numerous toys by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), we recommend these pro-active steps you can take to ensure that the toys and art materials used by children, seniors and others are safe.

When purchasing toys, keep in mind the age recommendations for those toys. For younger children this means avoiding toys with small parts and ones that pose choking hazards. It also means avoiding materials that a child is too young to handle safely. We know that children under the age of 5 tend to put everything in their mouths, but no child under the age of 12 can be expected to safely use certain materials. Particularly for children under 3, follow guidelines and do not purchase toys with small parts or magnets. Look for art materials with the designation “ASTM D-4236”. This means that the product has been reviewed by a toxicologist. A recent news release from U.S. PIRG reminds us that when it comes to toys, “government itself does not test products to ensure that they comply with mandatory standards...that’s left up to the manufacturers.”

Use common sense when selecting toys and art supplies. For example, it’s not a good idea to buy something like “scented” markers. Teaching children that it’s okay to sniff markers, even if they are “non-toxic,” means that you are teaching them a habit that may put their lives in danger when they graduate to adult markers containing toxic chemicals.

It’s not just children who are at risk. The hazards posed by inappropriate use of toxic chemicals affects many special populations. In 1992, the National Poison Control hotline received a call from a nursing home where residents were given lead glazes, passed out in medicine cups, in an occupational therapy class. Several seniors proceeded to drink the lead glaze and had to be rushed to the hospital. Again, common sense tells us to exercise caution when using toxic materials with populations unable to use them safely—especially populations with compromised immune systems who may be more at risk from toxins.

While FPWA refrains from distributing toys that promote violence, if you are purchasing toy guns be sure the barrel or the entire gun is brightly colored so that it’s not mistaken for a real gun. Teach older children to keep their toys away from younger siblings. Check toys regularly for damage. Toys with peeling paint should be thrown away immediately. If a toy makes noise that is too loud for you, it’s definitely too loud for children. According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, “when held directly to the ear, as children do, a noisy toy can expose the ear to as much as 120 decibels of sound, a damaging dose — the equivalent of a jet plane taking off.”

Con’t

Be vigilant in selecting age-appropriate, safe toys and gifts and closely supervise their use with children and other at-risk populations. Finally, watch for recalls and quickly remove recalled toys. Photos and descriptions of recalled toys can be found at <http://cpsc.gov> or call 1-800-638-2772. Let's keep the holidays safe!

For additional information on our 2007 Holiday Toy & Gift Drive, contact Karen Giacalone, Coordinator, Volunteer Services at (212) 801-1332 or at kgiacalone@fpwa.org.

Experts Corner: Group Purchasing Service

Bill Ferren, GPS Director

Since 1943 FPWA's Group Purchasing Service has been serving as a shared resource to enable agencies to save time, money and effort. GPS functions as a buyers' co-op, taking the combined strength of a number of agencies into the marketplace to command pricing and service usually available only to the largest customers.

GPS negotiates reduced pricing with a number of suppliers for widely used commodities such as office supplies, fuel oil, maintenance supplies and equipment and furniture. While the emphasis is on institutional commodities, a range of services are also available, including directors' and officers' liability insurance, fire safety, pest control and utility refunds. A fuller listing can be viewed in the Group Purchasing Service section of the FPWA website www.fpwa.org

Access varies. Some commodities are purchased directly from the supplier after GPS makes the connection. Office supplies, for example, can be purchased online, by phone or fax. Fuel oil is by automatic delivery. Equipment purchases are frequently handled by the GPS staff, who shop for the best deal, cut the purchase order and make delivery arrangements. This saves a great deal of time and effort for the purchasing agency. The individuals who deal with the various commodities are listed on the FPWA website or inquiries can be directed to the GPS office.

Any 501(c)(3) non-profit agency can join GPS by submitting a simple application and providing documentation of tax-exempt status. There is no fee to join or to participate. As a member, your only commitment is to participate as fully as possible and to strive to maintain a good payment record with the group's vendors. For additional information, please contact Bill Ferren, GPS Director, at bferren@fpwa.org or (212)801-1349.

HOSTING A MEETING? NEED SPACE?

Need a great, affordable space to host your next meeting, luncheon or conference? The Laura Parsons Pratt Conference Center at FPWA may be just what you're looking for.

Located in our beautiful landmark building in New York City's Gramercy Park district, our site is ideal for small or large groups desiring a professional, attractive setting for their event. We're surrounded by fine restaurants, hotels, parking, and public transportation—we have nearby access to the #6 and the N and R subways.

Three conference rooms are available for use, and our historic Board Room is available by special arrangement. Our facilities offer first-class amenities and are fully accessible for people with disabilities. Fees range from \$125 for a half day/smallest space to \$475 for a full day/largest space. Visit our website at www.fpwa.org and click on the **Host a Meeting** link to view the rooms and the fee schedule.

Most nonprofits are working with scarce or limited resources, so compared with cost of space at NYC hotels and other meeting venues, FPWA's Conference Center rates are a bargain!

For reservations and information, contact Emma Morales, Conference Center Coordinator, at emorales@fpwa.org or (212) 801-1300.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

New York City Child Care Tax Credit

The Center for Economic Opportunity recently announced the creation of a new local child care tax credit. The tax credit is designed to help low-income families with children under the age of four pay for child care expenses. This tax credit will give thousands of New Yorkers with children the opportunity to keep working, helping them to achieve financial stability.

The local child care tax credit is a key initiative of Mayor Bloomberg's Center for Economic Opportunity.

As tax season draws near, the Center for Economic Opportunity enthusiastically encourages all eligible families to take advantage of the new local child care tax credit. A family can earn as much as \$1,733 per month and still qualify for the credit. When combined with the federal and state child care tax credits, the benefits can be very significant. With your help, all of the estimated 49,000 eligible parents in New York City will apply for and receive this benefit.

Enclosed is a two-page description of the program. You can also visit <http://www.nyc.gov/html/cwi/family/html/tax/tax.shtml> for more details.

FPWA to Launch New Agency Website

FPWA has been creating a new and improved website which will be launched early in January. Among the new features are easier navigation, and an improved and expanded "FPWA Members Only" section that includes enhanced funding information, members only news and events, and a members' discussion board.

The launch of the new website will coincide with our roll-out of new online advocacy tools that FPWA has invested in to bolster its advocacy efforts. This new advocacy solution will make it easier for members and supporters to get involved in advocacy campaigns, and to involve others in their communities.

Please watch your email in-boxes for more information on the new site. If you have any questions, or if you'd like to add email addresses to our list, please contact Tim Mercure, Manager of Development Communications, at tmercure@fpwa.org or (212)801-1304.