



My View

THE BEST KEPT SECRET

Over the years, TIP Leaders and Volunteers have observed that TIP is not known by many residents in their communities. This observation is usually expressed in a sentence like: *"I was talking to the supermarket cashier and she never heard about us!"* The fact that TIP is a "best kept secret" is also expressed in thank you letters from our clients who write...*"I never heard of this wonderful organization before."*

There is no doubt that TIP is not a household word, nor are we known like organizations such as the Red Cross or the Salvation Army. The question is... "Why?" Is the reason that we are relatively unknown because we aren't effective at garnering media attention, or because we don't have a worthwhile mission?

No, the reason we are "a best kept secret" is that what we do is usually done "in secret." What I mean is that typically our volunteers respond to quiet singular tragedies which do not get the attention of the media. Our volunteers work behind closed doors in a home or in a hospital. Also, they don't have an identifiable role (like social worker), and they don't wear uniforms.

Furthermore, our volunteers do not talk about their calls after the fact. They return from their TIP Calls and just go about their business. In short, TIP volunteers can be described as "stealth helpers" who respond quietly without fanfare. That's probably why our clients refer to our volunteers as "angels" in their thank you letters. TIP volunteers appear seemingly out of nowhere and then disappear.

Should we be complacent about being "the best kept secret?" No. I believe we should look for any opportunity we can to promote ourselves in the community. But I do believe that because of the nature of the work we do, we will never be known in our communities like the Red Cross and other high profile organizations. We will always encounter people in the community who have never heard of TIP. I suggest that we accept that fact, and that we don't criticize ourselves for it.

Instead of being frustrated by our low profile in the community, I suggest that we focus on being "the best known organization" to those who really matter to our ability to fulfill our mission. I'm referring to emergency and healthcare professions, elected officials, community leaders, our donors and everyone associated with our own volunteers. These are the people who need to know about TIP, and they need know us well. These are our "constituents" who need to be the focus of our PR efforts.

On an uplifting note, hardly a week goes by that a TIP leader or a TIP volunteer doesn't tell me that he has encountered someone who has received TIP services or knows someone who has received TIP services. Usually, those recipients of our services don't know much about TIP, but they remember that *"a kind person was there with me/my friend/my family member."*

Although a poll of community members would undoubtedly conclude that TIP does not have widespread name recognition, I'm certain that we are embedded in the hearts and minds of those we've helped as a caring memory or as a warm touch. And that's good enough for me.

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