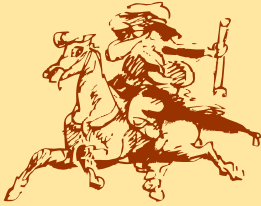




HOMELESS
CHILDREN'S
EDUCATION
FUND



Informing Design, Inc.

BigBurgh.com App

Helps Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

BY THE NUMBERS

- BigBurgh attracted **53,000 site visits** during its first year of operation.
- More than **2,000 individuals** have been trained on the use of BigBurgh.com.
- **50+ training sessions** have provided feedback.
- BigBurgh features **170 free services** from 80 providers in the City of Pittsburgh.
- **60+ centers** (clinics, libraries, churches, food banks, etc.) share promotional materials.
- Independent audit reported 91% of queries returned at least one service listing and **100% of listings were relevant** to information requested.
- **60% of homeless youth** have smartphones.

“IS THERE AN APP FOR THAT?”

Since Allegheny County set the ambitious goal to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring by 2022, numerous stakeholders are collaborating to address this pressing issue.

Beginning in 2013, many working in the field requested technological assistance in response to the ongoing challenge of accessing up-to-date information by both homeless individuals and service providers. During numerous conversations among service providers and leaders, one simple question repeatedly surfaced. “Is there an app for that?” referred to an obvious need to alter the system of connecting people (especially youth experiencing homelessness) with available services and agencies in a position to help them.

Those six words – “Is there an app for that?” – set in motion a collaboration that has created a highly successful model worthy of replication throughout the nation. ■



THERE IS NOW!

BigBurgh.com is a mobile-optimized website that is completely free and accessible without the need for any login or app store account. View it on any smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer with a data plan or Internet connectivity. Currently, BigBurgh includes more than 170 free services available from 80 different providers within the City of Pittsburgh. ■

“We have the resources to get people exactly what they need quickly. That makes our relationship with the homeless much stronger and eases the tensions that can arise when a uniformed officer interacts with a member of a vulnerable population.”

Assistant Chief Anna Kudrav, Pittsburgh Bureau of Police

About BigBurgh.com

Dr. Joseph Lagana, a respected community connector and networker, discussed the question with Bob Firth, President of Informing Design. The foundation of BigBurgh's design would provide answers to immediate issues that arise on the street with the touch of a fingertip, immediately eliminating the experience of wading through long lists of primarily irrelevant search results.

At the conclusion of the research phase, the Informing Design team reported a resounding, “Yes, there can be an app for that,” and, with the help of 10 local funding sources, the BigBurgh.com pilot project was born.

BigBurgh.com is a mobile-optimized website – completely free and accessible without the need for any login or app store account – that can be viewed on any smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer with a data plan or Internet connectivity. It is an invaluable resource for police, teachers, clergy, medical and social services professionals, parents and ordinary citizens alike. Most importantly, it's for the homeless themselves – more than 60% of homeless youth have smartphones, and homeless adults frequently access computers at libraries and other centers.

BigBurgh opens with a “For You” dial that enables the user to pre-filter results based on his or her gender (including transgender), age, and veteran or family with young children status. The categories themselves parse out the most important everyday human needs for the homeless: shelter (both during the day and overnight), meals, clinics (further broken down into type of health need), showers and laundry, clothing and diapers, food pantries, transportation, and expert help with financial, legal and employment matters. Results then appear in order of distance from the user.

Currently, BigBurgh includes more than 170 free services available from 80 different providers within the City of Pittsburgh. ■

How it all began...



2013

Question first voiced:

“IS THERE AN APP FOR THAT?”

2015

- Informing Design begins research
- Bob Firth develops specs, functionality and data model
- First police focus group assembled



2016

- Informing Design work is funded and project begins



DOWNLOAD AND NAVIGATE THE FREE APP

To download the app to an iPhone, Android or desktop, simply type in **“bigburgh.com”** in the browser.

BigBurgh.com PITTSBURGH'S HOMELESS SERVICES WEB SITE



For You: Customize the results ... or go straight to All Services



Offerings divided between everyday needs and urgent needs



Click for Listings: See services mapped out and listed in distance order

Save Listings to Favorites (& recover them when off-line!)



Click for Full Info: Then get the lowdown on how a service works.



find Safe Places fast



Email Street Help connects Police and the homeless themselves with outreach workers. Users can send pictures and their GPS location too.

NOTE: It is not an app that is sold in the app store.

“Every day, I find out there's another kid who has used the app and was able to get the resources that they needed.”

Debra Smallwood, parent volunteer and organizer, Brashear High School

“Times are tough, but this app truly treats us with dignity and respect.”

Beta tester visiting 412 Youth Zone

- First Steering Committee meeting takes place
- First youth focus group assembled
- Second police focus group takes place
- Beta released (May 1)
- Social Service Liaison begins working on project
- Public launch on August 29 features press conference with Mayor Peduto, County Executive Fitzgerald and Congressman Doyle



You're meeting youth where they're at in terms of technology use. You engaged street outreach workers and police as end-users. I've never heard of anyone doing this before. This is such a big deal."

Prof. Eric Rice, USC, Huffington Post homeless issues reporter and expert on homelessness

Financials

Due of the length of time required to develop, test and launch the app, organizers sought financial support from foundations for a two-year period. The Homeless Children's Education Fund provides project management and serves as fiscal agent. Expenses to date are approximately \$130,000. Generous in-kind donations from numerous individuals and organizations supported the effort from its inception, including an in-kind donation from designer Bob Firth who did not charge for time invested, which is estimated to be 1,000 hours. ■

FOUNDATION SUPPORT

Ayres Family Foundation
 Birmingham Foundation
 Buncher Foundation
 Heinz Endowments
 Highmark Health Foundation
 Margaret Ritchie R. Battle Fund
 McCarten Foundation
 Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation
 Pittsburgh Foundation
 Serafini Foundation (and Terry Serafini)

Instead of leaving the young people to their own volition to solve their problems, now they can actually use that mobile app to get the services they need rather than simply relying on each other."

Joseph Lagana, Founder, Homeless Children's Education Fund

Leadership Team

STEERING COMMITTEE

Executive Committee

Pamela Golden (chair)

Joseph Lagana

Bob Firth

Membership

Phil Hallen

Charles Keenan

Anna Kudrav

Angela Reynolds

Chris Roach

Jeff Shook

STAKEHOLDERS

Maurita Bryant

Carlos Carter

Stephanie Ciappini

Julie DeSyn

Joseph Elliott

Anne Fogoros

David Gloss

Abigail Horn

Breanna Jay

Jeff Korczyk

Jacob Miller

Nick Pashel

Aimee Plowman

CREATIVE TEAM

Bob Firth

Will Hackney

Chris Harrington

Deborah Knox

Yelena Lamm

Moving Forward

2017



- Spanish translation introduced
- Many new app functions added including empty bed alert
- Expansion to Mon Valley
- Outreach forum with police takes place

Upcoming

Training for Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education police, Crisis Intervention Team police, City EMS/Fire and Downtown Ministerium

Spin-off initiatives to create similar apps for opioid addition, incarceration and mental health crisis



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digest published June 2017