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## The Birches Assisted Living

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### Birches Offers Certification Training to Dementia Caregivers

*The Birches Assisted Living in Clarendon Hills, Ill. hosted a Certified Dementia Practitioner (CDP) training seminar.*

Clarendon Hills, IL, December 01, 2016 --([PR.com](#))-- Caring for older adults with dementia is not easy. But having the most up-to-date training in the field of dementia care can make it a little easier. To provide this training to dementia caregivers in the Chicagoland area, The Birches Assisted Living in Clarendon Hills hosted a Certified Dementia Practitioner (CDP) training seminar on November 16 led by Rachelle Blough, a Certified Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Care Trainer for the National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners (NCCDP).

In a day-long seminar, Blough prepared 15 participants from across the Chicagoland area to become Certified Dementia Practitioners (CDPs). A Certified Dementia Practitioner is a health care professional who has received in-depth training in dementia care so he or she can provide thoughtful, competent care that improves the lives of people with dementia.

Of the 15 participants who attended, five were Birches associates who were eager to expand their knowledge in dementia care. Several of these associates work in The Birches' memory care neighborhood Encore, and they came away with practical tips that will help them care for Birches residents in the most effective and enriching way possible.

"We learned so much," said Encore Resident Assistant and Encore Activities Assistant Kathleen Harding. "We learned about the dynamics of the disease. We learned how important validation is. That's the idea that instead of trying to bring someone back into our reality, we should try to meet them in their reality. And we also learned how important it is to understand the background of each resident —their family, their likes and dislikes and what their life was like before they got dementia. That helps us understand where they are coming from."

Participants from The Birches were especially impressed with the teaching style of instructor Rachelle Blough, who used examples from her personal experience caring for a mother with dementia to illustrate the best practices in dementia care.

"Our instructor allowed participants to share their stories and input, and she shared personal stories, which is really helpful," said Birches' Staff Nurse Barbara Brown. "It's better than reading something in a textbook."

Along with her personal anecdotes and experiences, the instructor also shared unusual but practical tips that even those working in dementia care for years may not have thought of. There was one unusual tip in particular that stuck with Encore Resident Assistant Akosua Boakye:



"Our instructor suggested that we make a greeting card with a recorded message inside from a resident's family member. When they are upset, we can use the card, which maybe has their daughter's voice recorded inside of it saying, 'Mom, you are okay. Everything's fine.'"

But participants didn't just learn from the instructor, they learned from one another. People in the seminar came from diverse backgrounds. Some drove in from Chicago, others came from assisted living communities that were just down the street from The Birches. But they all shared a common goal: To understand dementia better, so they can apply their knowledge to their professional lives in a way that makes every day a bit easier for those living with the disease.

"There weren't just Certified Nursing Assistants and Registered Nurses attending. There were people from other backgrounds and careers," said Harding. "That was good for us, because we know what we do here, but there's so much out there that we never really considered. It was good to hear from people with different perspectives and see how all of it fits together, because we're only seeing one aspect in our work."

The training helped Birches associates see the bigger picture of dementia care. And that's exactly what The Birches leadership team wanted. Obviously, Birches' Executive Director Jackie Sander is eager to have more Certified Dementia Practitioners on her staff (her ultimate goal is to have at least one CDP working every shift), but The Birches' hosted this training with an even grander goal in mind: To get more CDPs working in assisted living communities, nursing homes and healthcare agencies across the country so people with dementia are receiving the kind of care they deserve.

"Having the best-trained dementia caregivers at the Birches and beyond improves the quality of life for people with dementia, and that's really our goal," said Sander. "We want to do our part to create a world where people with dementia are living the most fulfilling lives possible."

The Birches Assisted Living in Clarendon Hills, Ill. offers professional services to support the physical, social, intellectual and spiritual growth of the older adults who make it their home. The Birches offers purposeful programming and activities designed to promote a healthy aging lifestyle and a strong sense of community. For more information about The Birches, call 630-789-1135 or visit: [birches.net](http://birches.net).

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