

Activity Director Today

“The E-magazine for today’s Activity and Recreation Professionals in Long Term Care”

Activity Director Today Welcomes Author, Activity Professional Susan Berg
see Activity Ideas Galore on Page 8



IN THE GOOD OLD SUMMERTIME



Pathways to the Past

By Sandra Stimson ADC, CALA, CDP
Executive Director, *Alternative Solutions in Long Term Care*
<http://www.activitytherapy.com>
<http://www.nccdp.org/index.htm>

ABOUT NCCDP

The National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners® was formed in 2001 by a group of professionals with varying work and personal experiences in the field of dementia care. Their



backgrounds include Nursing, Psychiatry, Therapeutic Recreation, Social Services, Long Term Care Administration, Elder Law, and Home Care Administration. The Council was formed to promote standards of excellence in dementia education to professionals and other caregivers who provide services to dementia clients. As the number of dementia cases continues to increase nationally and worldwide, there is a great necessity to insure that caregivers are well trained to provide appropriate, competent, and sensitive direct care and support for the dementia patient. The goal of the Council is to develop and encourage comprehensive standards of excellence in the profession and delivery of dementia care.

Pick Your Staff Carefully for Dementia Units

It is important to pick and choose the staff to work on the dementia unit. The staff the Activity Director selects to work on the dementia units should possess the following attributes:

- Able to work as a team
- Able to think independently
- Self Directed
- Open Minded
- Creative
- Kind
- Patient

Additionally and most important is to select staff who have several years experience working with dementia clients. Often times, new employees with little or no training are hired for the dementia unit. The Activity Director should recruit seasoned, experienced and trained staff to work on the dementia unit. Seasoned and experienced staff will provide dynamic calendars, independent activities, appropriate programs, innovative activities, family involvement, and alternatives for lower functioning residents. They possess the knowledge necessary to adapt activity programs. Additionally, they are able to motivate the CNA's to participate in the activity program.

Inexperienced activity professionals lack the education, life experience, knowledge and confidence to work in this key role. Activity Directors should place new employees with little or lack formal activity training with their highest functioning residents. High functioning or independent residents will help guide a new employee and will also vocalize suggestions and con-

cerns.

The activity assistant should have the opportunity to work with the person leaving the unit. If this is not possible, the Activity Director should devote one full week and work side by side with the assistant. This is important as the existing employee can offer valuable information regarding:

- Introduction to residents
- Resident routines
- Resident preferences
- Level of functioning
- Level of Cognition
- Introduction to staff
- Unit schedule and routine
- Location of supplies
- Documentation
- Elopement protocol and emergency preparedness
- Safety concerns
- Snack times

The new employee should be given one day to read the Dementia Unit policy and procedure. Additionally the new employee should be provided with the Federal and state regulations as well as any specific regulations regarding the Alzheimer's dementia unit. There may be specific regulations that pertain to pets and volunteers and those should be provided as well. If you're a nursing home or adult day care, provide the assistant with Dementia Care Plan Book.

The new employee after attending the facility general orientation should receive a job specific orientation and a dementia unit orientation.

The new employee should be given the schedule for breaks and lunch. Often times, the activity assistant is required to assist at meal times. This needs to be clearly explained. The activity assistant should receive proper training regarding special diets, transferring from wheel chair to chair, transporting, van protocol, toxic plants and precautions for aroma therapy, pet therapy protocol, feeding procedures and pain in-service. Additionally, the staff should receive extensive dementia education before beginning the job or within 7 days of placement.

Not investing in an appropriate activity assistant may have negative consequences.

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About Sandra: Sandra Stimson has experience as a corporate consultant, Corporate Trainer and National Speaker. Her experience is in long term care, as Activity Director, Director of Alzheimer's Units and Assistant Administrator of a 550 bed long term care county home. She is Co-founder of Pet Express Pet Therapy Club, is a Life Replay Specialist. Sandra implements dementia units nationwide. Sandra has written several books, *Volunteer Management Essentials for Long Term Care* and *Pet Express Pet Therapy Program*. Sandra has been a facilitator for Alzheimer's support groups and is the Awards Chair for the NJ Association of Activity Professionals. Sandra is the Executive Director of National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners <http://www.nccdp.org>

<http://www.activitytherapy.com> offers resources for health care professionals in many areas of dementia care, care plans, Snoezelen products, dementia activity calendars, adult day care calendars, sensory calendars, reminisce videos for dementia, activity books, and dates to remember, party supplies, resources and links.

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Within the community facility reputation affected

Poor survey outcomes

Increased family complaints

Increased staff complaints

Destruction to day rooms that are not adequately supervised

Activity Assistants with little or no training provide:

Inappropriate activities

Activities that are too difficult

Demeaning activities

Too much down time between activities

Negative consequences for residents are:

Inappropriate activities

Demeaning activities

Lower self esteem

Increased Boredom

Increased agitation and restlessness

Increased verbal out bursts

Lower functioning residents completely left out of programs with no alternatives offered

Lost residents during outside trips

Accidents or incidents during activity programs

vided. There are many resources, web sites, magazines and organizations that offer free resources. Insure that part of the activity budget is spent on supplies for the dementia unit, such as reminisce products, relaxation videos, exercise props and music supplies such as CD's, bells, maracas and drums. Provide petty cash so the Assistant is able to pick up creative things to sort and fold at the thrift shops and dollar stores. Begin a notebook for the assistant and place articles and activity suggestions specific to dementia. This will be a valuable resource for the Activity Assistant.

Compliment often and provide positive feed back as the assistant needs to hear it.

The Director can avoid burnout and negative attitude if appropriate time is given for selection of employees and proper training is provided. This can only be a "win win" investment for the activity department, facility, family and most important the residents.

See www.activitytherapy.com for activity props, dementia care plans, and sensory programs for low functioning residents and tons of books and resources.

See www.nccdp.org for information on Certified Dementia Practitioner, Certified Dementia Unit Manager (Dementia Unit Supervisors only) and Train the Trainer.

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(Food Related Event - Continued from page 9)

(sugar free is available), 1/3 of a banana, a few vanilla wafers, and a plastic knife. I let each one who is able, peel and cut up their banana, they then mix it with the pudding and then crumble and add the wafers. You can adapt as needed. If the cookies are too hard for their diet, just leave those out.

This is a great way for them to actually participate in a small cooking type activity and turns it into so much more than a social event.

You can take this same idea, and apply it to numerous foods. Turn it into trivia, education, or whatever you can think of to make it more than just a snack or social activity. Have taste testing parties! Pick foods of a certain color and expound on those (the benefits, recipes, stories and poems, trivia about them you can find online) and then allow them to taste food of that color, or make an item using a food of that color. Put your thinking caps on and surprise yourselves with the results!

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teach new skills and, overall, improve the quality of life for all residents.

At *name of facility*, residents are engaged in person-centered, meaningful activities, specially adapted to meet the needs and interests of each resident. For example, the wide range of therapeutic recreational activities at *name of facility* include pet therapy, music therapy, intergenerational programs, community outings, exercise and creative-expressive programs, cognitively challenging games, cultural programs, clubs and special events, programs for the cognitively impaired, etc. are just some of the activities offered. Programs are offered daily and provided in small, medium and large-sized groups, as well as on a one to one basis.

The team of professionals at *name of facility* believes in creating an environment that is fulfilling, holistic and nurturing for the residents. For that reason, *name of facility* has an inter-disciplinary approach to quality of life. As an example, the Food and Nutrition Department hosts a monthly cooking class, in which residents share in the preparation of their favorite recipes. Similarly, the Rehabilitation Department works in conjunction with the Recreation Department to increase residents' physical functioning. Even the Nursing Department can be found reading the newspaper or singing in the dayroom. In addition, there are numerous community groups and volunteers that enhance the quality of life of the residents.

The long-term care industry has changed dramatically over the years. Now, quality of life is as equally important as quality of care. Recreational activities have become a heightened focus of regulatory agencies such as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and are a fundamental component of today's long-term care facilities. *Name of facility* is one of 10 skilled nursing facilities in the xyz Corporation that provides both short and long-term care and rehabilitation services. For more information on *name of facility*, please call (555) 123-456-7890 or visit us on the web at www.nameoffacility.com.

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For more information about the recreation program at *name of facility*, call *name of Recreation Director*, at 555-123-4567 or email recreation@nameoffacility.com.

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For the first 30 days, the Activity Director should be observing, monitoring and evaluating the morning and afternoon programs. Some of the areas to look at are:

Appropriateness of program

Supplies and preparation for the program

Can everyone participate in the program

Those who can not participate what else is offered

Nursing assistants participating in the program

Employee Adjustment

Attitude of employee

Safety issues

At the end of each day, the director should meet with the employee to go over observations, concerns and recommendations as well as seeking feed back from the employee.

The Director should also send the assistant to seminars and conferences specific to dementia topics. Any available resource specific to dementia should also be pro-