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ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS



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Seasonal and Themed Ideas Are a Better Way To Plan Calendars

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The most important aspect of the Activity Directors job is planning and implementing a calendar. It is important to know your residents through a population analysis. Once you know your population, the next task is to plan your calendar. Many directors have gotten into the habit of planning and printing their calendars by the 15th of the month. If the calendar is due September 1st, many directors have their calendars completed by August 15th. But what is the best way to plan a calendar?

The Director should be sitting down with the staff a good 45 days out to begin the planning process. Waiting till the last minute is very stressful. The director should provide to her staff the calendar, Creative Forecasting, activities to be included and a theme for the month. Ask your staff to come prepared with three ideas each for crafts, cooking, and discussions and one idea for a special event. Involve the resident council and activity planning committee in providing ideas and themes.

The best way to get everyone thinking about ideas is to provide a theme for the month that is related to the season. It makes planning the calendar a lot easier when you have a theme. Ideas for themes are endless and with many opportunities to expand your calendar and try new ideas. Once you have come up with a theme for the month, you can build your programs such as cooking, crafts, trivia, discussions, speakers, trips, movies and special events around the theme. The director should take the time to go on the Internet and look for ideas to present to the staff.

A good example is February. The theme for February might be Love & Romance. The theme name should be placed on the top of the calendar. You could kick off the month with a planned proposal. Cooking ideas might be decorating a wedding cake and preparing hors d'oeuvres served at a reception. Crafts might include making decorations for a wedding. A horticulture idea might be to make wedding bouquets. The special events could be a bridal shower complete with gifts, a bachelor party, a formal wedding and reception. The entertainer could play the traditional songs played at weddings. You can make the wedding really interesting by having a wedding that honors another culture. Often times a resident, staff member or volunteer will renew their vows. You might even find someone who can not afford a wedding and would be thrilled to have it at your facility.

Discussions might include "Where were you married, Where did you go on your honeymoon, What did your wedding cost, How did you meet your husband and Tips for the Bride". You could have a wedding bulleting board and ask staff and residents to bring in their wedding photos. A trivia game could be famous couples. You can rent movies about famous weddings such as Princess Dianna and funny wedding bloopers. You could invite speakers from a travel agency on honey moon destinations, a hair salon to show different hair styles and an owner of a local wedding store to host a fashion show. You could have a Tuxedo shop conduct a male fashion show. Movies could be famous honey moon destinations. You could reminisce using a veil, wedding dress, tuxedo, flowers, etc. As you can see, once you have a theme the ideas are endless. Try making the entire month about a theme vs one day.

Once you come up with a theme for the month, it makes planning the calendar so much fun. One year I planned it around old time houses. The month included history of the Sears House, History of Toilet Paper, History of Out houses. Discussion on how things were done in the past and modern conveniences from washing clothes and old irons you heat on the stove to the microwave. We had games to try to identify old gadgets. It was a lot of fun and residents had a blast remembering all kinds of things from the past. Did you know it was fashionable at one time to have pineapple wall paper!

Try this idea out at your next calendar planning and see if you don't agree, how much fun planning a calendar can be when you have a interesting theme.

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>.

[Alternative Solutions in Long Term Care](#) 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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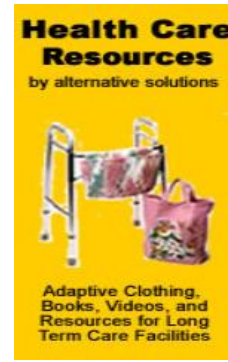
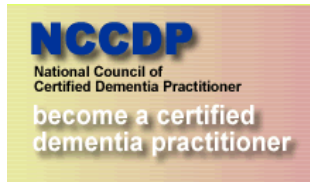
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in Long Term Care Settings*
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