



# The ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS PAGE



By Sandra Stimson ADC, CALA, CDP  
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Music: "Peg of My Heart" furnished by [Heart and Soul Music](#) "Providing Quality Music for Nursing Homes"

## 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>

[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.

## "Theme or Not To Theme...That is the Question"

Many Activity Directors have written to us over the years asking, "Why is it important to have a Themed Calendar?" My answer is why are you not theming your calendars? We have been teaching the 90 hour activity courses for many years and one of the expectations of our student's, is to develop calendars. The expectation of the students is to provide a themed calendar that is seasonal.

For many, it's the first time they have ever approached calendar planning in this fashion. After completing the calendar, the students tell us, they will never go back to completing a calendar the "old way". With that said, we want to make sure that everyone understands that with the new regulatory imperative guideline changes, a Population and Calendar Analysis should be completed and incorporate the findings into your calendar planning. The Analysis tools are available on [www.activitytherapy.com](http://www.activitytherapy.com). In the new guidelines, the analysis tools are referred to as an audit tool. You can visit the CMS web site and watch the CMS Activity Guidelines presentation at <http://cms.internetstreaming.com> as the presentation discusses the analysis tools.

One recommendation is to go on the Internet and search for a theme that is seasonal. You could enter as a search term, "Ideas for Autumn." Look at some of the names and programs others have developed. You could enter search terms such as; cooking ideas for autumn, craft ideas for autumn, trivia ideas for autumn, etc. As the Internet is an ocean of ideas and everything is available at a touch of a key.

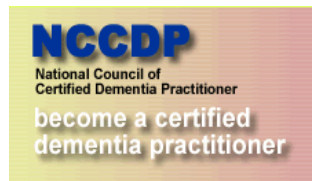
Once you come up with the theme, you need to than come up with a creative name for your calendar that clearly denotes what your theme will be about. For example, the September theme might be about memories associated with school and a creative name might be "Memories of Fall."

Once you come up with a creative name and a theme, it's easy to now plan your calendar around that theme. Every event, trivia, special event, cooking, crafts, etc, should be around the theme. Any one, who has ever had a theme day, knows the excitement and anticipation your residents and staff have. So it only makes sense to have a theme month. You should include your resident activity planning committee in developing the ideas for your theme.

Developing a theme also helps decide what type of decorations you may want to plan for these events. A great web site for decorations is [www.activitytherpy.makesparties.com](http://www.activitytherpy.makesparties.com)

There are many resources available to help you plan your theme, such as the internet, activity and recreation web sites, books, magazines, Creative Forecasting and staff / volunteer input.

The calendar should include a large special event related to the theme as well.



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