R.E.A.L. VOLUNTEERS
( Resident Elder Activity & Life )
INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP PROJECT
DEVELOPED & PRESENTED BY: BRAD PRICE
FOUNDED BY: RICHARD DAHL

REAL OPPORTUNITY
Residents in long-term health facilities often find themselves with few options to develop friendships, companionships, and meaningful relationships. Employees do their best to establish relationships with the residents; however, employees often find their hands full balancing the basic healthcare needs for residents while complying with the long-term health rules and regulations. This leaves limited time for staff to establish one to one time, share stories, listen to music, and reminisce with the residents. As a result, this loss of connection to the outside world can severely impact a resident’s overall physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing. Research has shown that the simple act of volunteering can make a significant impact.

REAL KNOWLEDGE
The Hospital Elder Life Program (HELP) developed by Dr. Sharron Inouye is an intervention in acute care settings that validated residents suffering from delirium and dementia can benefit from:
- Increase assistance with meals;
- Encouragement to exercise;
- Individualized activities for cognitive stimulation and enjoyment.
HELP utilizes an innovative volunteering method to provide assistance, so providers can minimize costs, deliver higher quality care and connect residents to the community.

Recognizing the success of the HELP program, Capitol Lakes implemented their own volunteer program called the Resident Elder Activity & Life (REAL) Volunteers Program.

REAL VISION
Modeling after the volunteer interventions of the HELP program, the REAL program aims to:
- increase residents’ social contact with the community
- engage residents in more physical and mental stimulating activities
- improve quality of living
- develop new relationships

Additionally, the REAL Volunteers program aims to benefit volunteers by:
- allowing them to apply their skills in a “real-time” setting
- connecting them to the community
- developing relationships that will carry them towards their goals

REAL GOALS
- Increase residents’ social contact with the community by recruiting 30 volunteers.
- Establish a volunteer program with minimal operating costs and high value
- Create a volunteer program that complements Capitol Lakes’ core values (Excellence, Innovation, Integrity, Stewardship, Compassion, Collaboration)

REAL METHODOLOGY
Identify Departments & Activities Where Volunteers are Needed
- Identify departments & activities where volunteers are needed
- Create a business plan to present the value of volunteers
- Gain appropriate approval to implement project

Identify Personnel Roles & Responsibilities
- Develop implementation team (REAL Team)
- Identify individual roles and responsibilities
- Create program logistics to complement roles and responsibilities

Do

Development Orientation Program
- Identify volunteer-specific policies and procedures
- Create orientation booklet (REAL Guide)
- Develop general orientation and shadow orientation presentations

Recruit Volunteers
- Email volunteer waiting list
- Contact University of Wisconsin’s student organizations
- Develop REAL Volunteers link on Capitol Lakes website and volunteer websites

Measure & Analyze
- Implement volunteer feedback surveys
- Conduct brief interviews with staff
- Update volunteer operations

Act
- Update operational logistics to match feedback
- Use volunteer and employee feedback to improve the program
- Continue PDCA method to improve efficiency and effectiveness

REAL LOGISTICS
Volunteer Coordinator
- Sends out email with flyer, application, BID and shift availability
- Receives applications & updates volunteer spreadsheet

Human Resources
- Retain Application & Submit BID to Human Resources
- Verifies BIDs

Coordinator / Human Resources
- Approves application & background checks

Activities Department
- Updates volunteer spreadsheet
- Schedules volunteer for an orientation session
- Notifies activities department of volunteers scheduled for general orientation

Shift Volunteers
- Volunteer shadows the selected facilities activities department on their scheduled shift

Non-Shift Volunteers
- Volunteer not required to shadow, as they should already know their responsibilities

Volunteer Becomes a REAL Volunteer

REAL SUCCESS
Capitol Lakes currently has 42 REAL volunteers: 17 shifted, 13 non-shifted, 9 in-house residents & 4 pet therapists. Overall, feedback from the volunteers, staff and residents shows the program made a positive impact.

REAL FINANCING
The REAL Volunteers program netted an estimated total value of $2,525.44 in 8 weeks. We calculated revenues by multiplying total volunteer hours by $21.78, which is the estimated average hourly with benefits value of a volunteer in Madison, Wisconsin (independ sector.org). Costs were kept minimal by creating simple logistics with clear rules and responsibilities. At the end of the 8 week period, the REAL Volunteers program experienced a return on investment of approximately 362%.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- KEEP IT SIMPLE
  - Small implementation team
  - Simple shifts for volunteers
  - Clear and simple logistics
  - Responsibility evenly distributed amongst volunteer team members
- BE AGILE
  - Start simple, learn quick and improve accordingly
  - Flexible shifts for volunteers
  - Recruit from numerous resources
- HAVE FUN
  - Let volunteers implement new activities
  - Involve volunteers in engaging, educational, and fun activities
  - Recognize and celebrate accomplishments with the volunteers

REAL TEAM & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
The success of the REAL Volunteers program can be contributed to a team of individuals. Richard Dahl – Coordinator of HELP program at Meriter Hospital and 18-year employee at Capitol Lakes
Jessica Grabu – Programming, Events and Volunteer Coordinator for Capitol Lakes’ independent living facility.
Paul Bernstein – Activities Director for Capitol Lakes Health Center.
Alessio di Bernardo – Activities Coordinator for Capitol Lakes Terraces (assisted living facility).
Brad Price – Administrator in Training at Capitol Lakes

Thank you to all the organizations who helped make the REAL Volunteers Program a success.
UW-Pro Med Society - American Medical Association - Health Occupational Services Association - Mergridge Center for Public Assistance

Special thank you to Capitol Lakes and all the staff that helped contribute to the success of the program.