

Nebraska Community's Workforce Strategies Win National Honor

Staff Is No. 1 Priority

Gateway Senior Living, located in Lincoln, Neb., earned the Center for Excellence in Assisted Living (CEAL) award for "Mission Retention," a workforce initiative that has improved staff satisfaction and reduced employee turnover.

CEAL, an entity consisting of 11 national assisted living stakeholder groups, presented the award to Amy Fish, Gateway's administrator, during its fifth anniversary celebration held in Washington, D.C., in October.

Gateway is a Nye Senior Services community with 80 employees. Mission Retention began when Russ Peterson purchased the continuing care retirement community in 2006. The campus has 54 assisted living apartments, comprised of studios and one- and two-bedroom suites, along with an 18-bed skilled nursing component. Gateway participates in Nebraska's Medicaid waiver program for assisted living services.

Gateway's Mission Retention program is a multifaceted effort administered by managers and staff members that is based on management's commitment to supporting employees.



Gateway resident Sara Jane Walters with Natasha Pankoke, a medication aide.

"Management believes a commitment to staff retention is the first priority," says Fish.

The Mission Retention approach was the result of several management retreats that had defined the goals and a strategic plan for Gateway's employee satisfaction initiative. Among the tools used by Gateway is a balanced scorecard that aligns the goals of the strategic plan with the financial measures of the campus. The scorecard is used by management and staff to measure organizational performance. To guide its practices in excellence and advance assisted living practices, Fish uses NCAL's Guiding Principles of Quality. Gateway also hired a human resources consultant to examine its hiring practices and uses *My InnerView* for its employee satisfaction surveys. To convey information

and solicit honest feedback from employees, Gateway created a few committees consisting of management and staff. To enhance the work atmosphere, the community adopted The FISH! Philosophy® program, a set of four interrelated principles that improve relationships between team members. This philosophy led to the creation of community events such as the Gateway State Fair and the

Staff Summer Olympics. These are just some of the initiatives.

"After two years of revamping the workforce strategies, the overall retention of staff has exceeded everyone's expectations," says Fish.

For example, the turnover rate for dietary aides was lowered to 47 percent in 2008, compared to the prior year's 105 percent. In 2007, the turnover rate for nurse assistant/medication aides was 124 percent. When that category was measured in 2008, the turnover rate was 24 percent.

"Employee satisfaction surveys also indicate a cultural shift," Fish says. In 2007, 37 percent of staff completed satisfaction surveys, while in 2008, 68 percent completed surveys.

"The old suggestion box is no longer used, as staff now feel empow-

>> pg 7

NCAL Encourages Members To Participate In EPA ENERGY STAR®

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has targeted its ENERGY STAR program for senior care facilities, including assisted living and residential care communities.

ENERGY STAR is an energy benchmarking initiative. EPA is defining "senior care communities" as nursing facilities (including skilled nursing facilities), assisted living communities (including residential care), and continuing care retirement communities.

This is a voluntary initiative designed to create industry energy usage benchmarks so that building engineers can compare energy usage by these facilities to that of others and implement programs and actions to reduce energy consumption.

To create the industry benchmarks, NCAL members are asked to complete a survey posted under the "What's New" section of NCAL.org. The deadline for

completing this voluntary survey is Dec. 31, 2009. Completed surveys should be submitted to EPA by e-mailing them to ENERGYSTARHealthcare@icfi.com.

AHCA/NCAL members will have the opportunity to save on their overall energy costs. Similar EPA initiatives have been successfully conducted in the hospital and medical office sectors. AHCA/NCAL has been working with the other national long term care associations and EPA on this ENERGY STAR program for the past year. You may recall reading about the three EPA Webinars that AHCA/NCAL promoted earlier this year. Those Webinars are still available online should you want to view them. EPA is conducting another Webinar about completing the energy survey on Dec. 3 at 2:00 p.m. EST.

For more information, see "What's New" at NCAL.org; click on "Participate in EPA's Energy Survey of Senior Care Communities." ♦



Free Online Medication Management Training

The University of Maryland in Baltimore has created a Web-based training program about assisted living medication management and safety for health professionals, staff members, and families involved in managing medications for residents.

This program was recognized with a Center for Excellence in Assisted Living award in the category of health care. The training program includes videos, Power Point presentations, and case studies. The training was developed and is presented by a multidisciplinary panel of experts that include assisted living educators and advocates. The multidisciplinary perspectives provide a detailed look at the responsibility and inter-operability of health care professionals, staff, residents, and families in carefully planning, implementing, and monitoring medication management and administration programs.

The program can be accessed through the Geri-Ed Programs at the University of Maryland-Baltimore Web site: <http://geri-ed.umaryland.edu>. ♦

AHCA/NCAL National Quality Award Levels Renamed

The AHCA/NCAL National Quality Award Step levels have been renamed:

- Bronze – Commitment to Quality (formerly Step I)
- Silver – Achievement in Quality (formerly Step II)
- Gold – Excellence in Quality (formerly Step III)

Changes have been made to the Bronze (Step I) and Silver (Step II) criteria, so please make sure to download the new 2010 criteria before you begin writing your application.

If you have any questions, please contact Courtney Krier at ckrier@ahca.org.

The 2010 National Quality Award application materials and criteria are now available at NCAL.org, click on "Quality," then select "Awards."

Listening To The Voice Of Your Customers And Employees Brings Results

Your organization should base decisions on what you know—not what you think—by listening to the voices of your residents, families, and employees. That's why The Colony at Eden Prairie, located in Eden Prairie, Minn., used *My InnerView's* resident, family, and employee satisfaction surveys to identify what matters most—helping the assisted living community focus on opportunities as well as strengths—to quickly determine priorities for action.

My InnerView offers services designed to meet the specific needs of all clients, including seniors with Alzheimer's disease, those with enhanced care needs, and post-acute care customers. According to The Colony Executive Director Anita Cornelius, "It all began at Covenire Care and Tealwood Care Centers' corporate level, with a committee of executive directors from different communities within our organization and regional consultants who

function as the president's advisory committee. Over a period of 10 months, a new customer service program was developed."

Each community established a committee made up of caregivers, housekeepers, activities personnel, concierges, and dining servers with both the assisted living and post-acute care center represented. Subcommittees were developed for each of the following goals: strengthening our customer service program; inviting, comfortable break and locker rooms; building relationships and sharing our lives; communicating our commitment and welcoming new residents; and strengthening our customer service program. To ensure quality of care and enhancements to customer service, a "Three R's" program (Recognize, Respond, and Respect) was implemented. Elements include: utilizing *My InnerView's* resident,

>> pg 4



American Health Care Association
National Center for Assisted Living

2010 AHCA/NCAL Quality Symposium

February 9-10, 2010

Baltimore Marriott Waterfront
Baltimore, Maryland



2010 AHCA/NCAL
**QUALITY
SYMPOSIUM:**
INSPIRING EXCELLENCE
IN LONG TERM CARE

**For CEOs, Owners, Administrators, and Long Term Care Professionals
Dedicated to Performance Excellence**

Don't miss this opportunity to:

- Exchange innovative ideas and best practices in a dynamic forum
- Get inspired and better enabled to lead your organization
- Discover methods and new information to help you meet and exceed expectations
- Gain knowledge on quality improvement to achieve greater customer and employee satisfaction

13 CEUs are available for this event. For more information and updates, visit www.ahcancal.org, or call (202) 842-4444.

Sponsored by: *eHEALTH DATA SOLUTIONS, PointRight, and Silverchair Learning Systems*

ahca
American Health Care Association

ncal
National Center for Assisted Living

Voice Of Your Customers And Employees

Continued from page 3

family, and team member satisfaction surveys; optimize the value of those results by sharing them with our team, residents, and families; capture every opportunity to improve upon those results, as well as further enhance what we do well; and focus on using benchmarks and clinical data to continually assess how we are doing.

Each goal was supported by a list of activities, enhancements, or process changes chosen to more appropriately meet the needs of The Colony's residents, families, and team members, as well as communicate the good care provided to residents. (Read more at www.myinnerview.com/summer2009profilesinnexcellence.php.)

"At The Colony, we each have unique, daily opportunities to do more, to give more, and to be more in making a difference in the lives of others ... because the journey matters," says Cornelius.

When The Colony's management team reviewed this year's customer and employee satisfaction survey results, they found their hard work had paid off.

"With the guidance of our survey results from our first survey," says Cornelius, "I can proudly say that we improved our scores in every area on the survey simply because we listened to what our customers and team members told us."

The leadership team shared the results with residents and families during resident council meetings and at family night. They also talked about the results with their team members and received even more feedback.

"We focused on the Priority Action Agenda items," says Cornelius. "One priority item was 'assistance with job stress.' Because quality care for our residents is directly related to our team members' well-being, we felt very strongly that this item needed our attention." The Colony was honored with the Step I AHCA/NCAL Quality Award in 2008 for their continued commitment to enhancing the quality of care for their residents and their ongoing focus on exceeding resident, family, and team member expectations. ♦

The impact of management

In communities ranked in top 25% based on quality of management, customer surveys show:

91%
of residents
and families are
satisfied with
quality of life

93%
of residents
and families are
satisfied with
staff performance

95%
of residents,
families and staff
would recommend
community for care

Scores represent percent of resident and family responses "Excellent" and "Good" to satisfaction survey items in communities ranked in the top quartile based on employee responses to management-related survey items.
Source: Assisted Living Resident, Family and Employee Satisfaction Surveys conducted in 2008 by My InnerView

MY INNERVIEW

BECAUSE KNOWING MORE MATTERS MOST™

ANOTHER
INCREASE?

Paying too much for cable?

**BULK
TV**

TM

& INTERNET

Upgrade and Start Saving Today!

Unlike the cable company, Bulk TV & Internet offers flexible à la carte programming from DIRECTV allowing you to customize your channel line-up and not waste money on channels residents never watch. For more information, call 1-888-243-5408 or visit www.bulktv.com and find out how you can save up to 50%!



* Digital TV reception system required. ©2008 DIRECTV, Inc. DIRECTV and the Cyclone Design logo are registered trademarks of DIRECTV, Inc. All other trademarks and service marks are the property of their respective owners.

Assisted Living Provider Sees Improved Census After Sales Management Training

Before sales management training, Americare's 80 assisted living communities had 1,548 assisted living residents. Six months later, after a rollout of effective sales management training, Americare's assisted living census rose to 1,603, a net gain of 55 residents, or approximately \$1.32 million in net operating income. And in the current year, census has climbed by 120 in the same mature property metric, despite industry seeing occupancy decreases nationwide, says Patricia Cokingtin, Americare's senior sales trainer, during her presentation at NCAL Day in October.

Americare is a long term care provider based in Sikeston, Mo., operating 80 assisted living communities, ranging in size from 21 to 25 units, and serving rural towns with populations between 5,000 and 21,000 people in Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee. In recent years, Americare also introduced the same model in

several metropolitan markets as well. Americare's administrators also acted as the sales representatives. In 2006, Cokingtin, who works out of Leawood, Kan., noticed

that occupancy was slipping and competition was increasing from new assisted living operators and states offering home- and community-based services. Americare's "visibility" marketing efforts, such as attending local



Americare's Patricia Cokingtin giving her presentation for NCAL Day.

Chamber of Commerce meetings or dropping by local hospitals, did not produce the admissions they once had.

Americare began to address the declining census during a two-year period with strategies including rebranding, sales training focused on learning personal information about prospects, hiring seven regional sales representatives managed by regional operations managers and administrators, and purchasing lead database

software. At the end of 2007, Cokingtin saw no sustained return on investment. Determined to find a solution, she went to the local bookstore to research what

other industries did to improve sales and discovered a book by Stephan Schiffman called, "No. 1 Sales Team: Superior Techniques for Maximum Performance."

Eureka! Cokingtin contacted

Schiffman to see if he would come to Leawood and consult with Americare. Though Schiffman wasn't available, he referred Cokingtin to Jeanine Aspen, owner of Just Fill It, a company based in Omaha that utilizes Schiffman's sales management strategies and applies them to senior living.

At the crux of Americare's problem was that the managers of the sales representatives didn't have a background in selling. Without an education in sales, they couldn't effectively manage the sales representatives to produce more admissions.

"Most of the operations managers are registered nurses, and they managed to achieve clinical outcomes and did so beautifully, but they weren't trained in sales," Cokingtin said.

Training began with teaching administrators and regional operation managers about sales. Americare also made them responsible for census in their buildings.

Another part of the problem was that the company's sales activity reports didn't reveal critical information. Americare revised its sales representatives' activity statements

'Only when we teach management how to manage the sales function of our business—and hold them accountable for doing so—can we really leverage the investments we've made in manpower, skills training, and marketing for better occupancy results.'

>> pg 7

National Honor Recognizes Nebraska Community

Continued from page 1

ered to make decisions and follow through with requests on their own," she says.

A few other components of the program are:

- Using the Nebraska Health Care Association/Nebraska Assisted Living Association online education resource for Gateway staff to meet professional education requirements, receive customer service and team-approach employee training, and pursue training programs of interest to them individually;

- Surveying new employees with a questionnaire titled "Are We Meeting Your Expectations?" after completing

30 days of employment, and again after 90 days of employment; and

'The old suggestion box is no longer used, as staff now feel empowered to make decisions and follow through with requests on their own.'

***—Amy Fish,
Gateway administrator***

- Holding monthly Employee Booster Committee meetings led by

the administrator and comprised of representatives from each department, mostly caregiving staff, as a way to exchange honest and candid feedback, discuss issues regarding operational changes, and plan fun activities.

"The beauty of Mission Retention is that it's a never-ending process," Fish says. "In order for its ongoing success, it must continue to be altered and adjusted in order to keep the program fresh and the targets challenging for the teams."

Gateway's Mission Retention program will be the subject of a CEAL Webinar held sometime in 2010. ♦

Improved Census

Continued from page 6

by creating a weekly visibility report. The report allows management to see clearly each week what has started and moved in that community's sales effort. The visibility report contains each community's goal for the number of admissions; appointments with referral sources or prospects, accompanied by next steps and dates; and the number of leads produced by these efforts.

Equipped with an improved report, administrators and operations managers learned how to analyze it and use it as the basis of weekly "coaching meetings" with sales representatives.

Previously, managers looked at reports that showed the number of calls made by representatives. "But activities alone don't produce admissions; effectiveness has to be part of the equation," said Cokingtin.

With the new reports, managers knew that if the number of sales

representatives' appointments or phone calls didn't generate a certain number of leads, the managers had to intervene.

The administrators or managers had been given an arsenal of questions to pose to the sales representatives to find out more information about the lead.

Managers could qualify prospects by asking questions such as, "Does the prospect have the financial means for assisted living, and are they willing to spend it?" or "Does Americare make sense to the prospect, and tell me what this prospect said that indicates they are ready for the next step? What do we know about the decision makers, and is there a date and time for the next step?"

With these efforts, Americare improved its sales management effectiveness, which produced more admissions to the assisted living communities. In addition, Cokingtin

said the increase in census has been sustained and can be replicated at each community.

"Only when we teach management how to manage the sales function of our business—and hold them accountable for doing so—can we really leverage the investments we've made in manpower, skills training, and marketing for better occupancy results." ♦

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

To obtain Cokingtin's NCAL Day presentation and a Sales Process Audit, send an e-mail to Lisa Gelhaus at lgelhaus@ncal.org. Or contact Patricia Cokingtin at pcokingtin@americareusa.net or visit www.dei-central.com.

Discount Registration For Long Term Care And The Law Conference

AHCA/NCAL is pleased to announce sponsorship of the upcoming American Health Lawyers Association (AHLA) annual Long Term Care and the Law Conference, taking place in Miami, at the Doral Golf Resort and Spa, from Feb. 17-19, 2010.

In 2010, AHLA has expanded its traditional curriculum to include sessions on home health care in addition to comprehensive educational sessions for both assisted living and nursing facility attorneys and providers.

As a co-sponsor, AHCA/NCAL members will receive special discounted registration rates of \$550 for non-attorney providers and \$690 for in-house counsel. These special rates are much lower than those offered in past years. These rates compare to the 2009 early registration fees of \$790 per person for AHLA members; group rate fees of \$715 per person; and \$990 per person for non-members of AHLA. To qualify for this offer, AHCA/NCAL members must write "AHCA/NCAL Member – non-attorney provider or in-house counsel" on their registration forms.

Visit HealthLawyers.org to register. ♦

NCAL is the assisted living voice of the American Health Care Association. NCAL Focus (ISSN: 1095-5585) is published monthly by the American Health Care Association (AHCA), 1201 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005. Copyright © 2009 by AHCA.

ncal®. Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited without written authorization from the copyright holder. NCAL or AHCA members' subscription fees are included in membership dues. AHCA is the nation's largest federation of assisted living, nursing facility, and subacute providers. AHCA has 47 affiliated organizations, together representing more than 10,000 individual facility members.

EDITOR: Lisa Gelhaus
MANAGER, FOCUS PRODUCTION: Shevona Johnson

NCAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Nicolette Merino (Chair), Steve Ackerson, Jim Birchem, Ashley Blankenship, Jim Carlson, Deb Choma, Vickie Cox, Marcia Dooner, Edie Gerelli, Patricia Giorgio, Howie Groff, Jeffrey Hyatt, Brad Klitsch, David LaLumia, Cindy Luxem, Christian Mason, Joe Perkin, Neil Pruitt Jr., Marj Shell, Michael Shepard, Dean Solden, Jan Thayer, Robert Van Dyk, Brett Waters, Kristin West.

Your suggestions and feedback about NCAL Focus are welcome. Contact Lisa Gelhaus by e-mail (lgelhaus@ncal.org), by phone (202-898-2825), or by writing to the address above.