



**WE can Do It!**

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**Sponsored By:**





***In 100 words or less, briefly describe your Best Practice.***

“The role of leaders is not to get other people to follow them, but to empower others to lead.” In having great leaders within our staff, we have learned that it is equally important to allow our residents the opportunity to lead. Our Best Practice, “WE Can Do It” offers activities that are led completely by our residents. Not only do great leaders create and maintain bonds of trust; they act as the centerpiece that keeps great relationships on track. Having our residents become the leaders of these programs has proven to be far more successful than we thought possible!

***What problem does your Best Practice address, and what is its primary purpose?***

We love and provide wonderful activities, just as any other facility. But one thing we have questioned is this... have we been allowing all of our residents to reach their full potential with what we offer in our day-to-day activities? Then we began brainstorming on how we could find ways to let our residents take control. Our Best Practice addresses the issue of giving our residents with higher skill capabilities a purpose, with objectives and meaning, to what they are doing day in and day out. We have numerous long-term residents in our facility that are completely cognizant and able to function on a higher level. As part of our Resident Council, it was brought to the attention of our staff that many of these residents felt the need to have more meaningful and challenging activities offered. We immediately thought of all the amazingly talented, skilled, gifted, and creative residents that we have in our facility! What better way to offer these new activities than to allow our own residents to be the leaders of them?

The primary purpose of our Best Practice is to give our residents the opportunity to reach their full potential. And one of the most important aspects of this is to encourage our residents to overcome the feeling of dependence. These activities are ones that the residents have come up with themselves, and they are genuinely proud of what they do in their activity groups.

***What group(s) of residents and others are involved in your Best Practice and how does it work? (Who and how many are helped, what are the benefits to these people, and what methods or procedures/protocols are used to get results?)***

This Best Practice has the potential to reach a majority of our residents. The leaders of the activities are our higher-functioning residents, and the residents attending can be classified in any skill level, they simply have a love or interest in the class being taught. We also have resident-led activities such as Prayer Circle, which reaches a large variety of residents, all with a passion for prayer. The leader of this activity also plays the piano for our Sunday church services. She says that “the Lord started the group, and it makes me feel more purposeful to lead the group. It makes me feel wonderful to be able to connect to our residents with dementia. I am delighted that God put within me a helping hand, and it makes me feel needed when I can serve by playing the piano and leading our Prayer Circle group.” Another wonderful aspect of this Best Practice is the fact that it can reach such a large audience of residents. There are so many different resident-led classes that are offered, such as: photography, painting, jewelry making, cooking, domino tournaments and prayer circle, there is just about something for everyone!

The way we make this program work is very similar to our typical daily activities. We reach out to any resident who has a special talent, skill or interest and invite them to be an activity leader. From this point, the resident is able to take the class in any direction they may choose. If the class needs supplies/materials (such as cameras for the photography class) then our staff and facility helps to arrange this as needed. Once we establish a class leader, then our Activities Director puts the class on the calendar and the activities staff will try to reach out to anyone that may be interested in learning about and attending the upcoming resident-led activity. When the actual activity is held, we make sure to have an activity leader present during the entire activity, even though they are not the ones responsible for leading the class; they are there to support and assist the residents if necessary.

This program has been made possible and has enjoyed much success through a multi-disciplinary approach. Our Activities Department is responsible for ensuring the activities take place and for providing any necessary materials for the classes. We rely heavily on our nursing staff to get the residents to and from activities, and they are also very helpful in finding out about new resident talent and potential leaders throughout our community. Dietary plays an essential role with food, ingredients and supplies needed for all of our cooking classes. They were also a valuable piece of a resident-led fundraiser that was held last fall. These residents got together and decided to bake fried apple pies to sell, raising over \$300. They then donated the money to our local Victim Services Department which is a non-profit organization that offers a host of services for victims of domestic violence or sexual assault. This impressive act of generosity by our residents was recognized throughout our community and truly gave them a strong sense of accomplishment.

Staff from each and every department has played a role in the success of this program. They have purchased pieces of art done by our residents, ordered custom jewelry made for gifts at Christmas time, and numerous employees contributed to the successful fried apple pie sale. Our employees sincerely see our residents as their own family. It warms our hearts to see this program in action. When you have residents putting their hearts and souls into these classes and projects, then have employees who support and encourage them by purchasing and even simply complimenting on what great work the residents have accomplished, it makes us feel so proud to be a part of something this meaningful.

***What has your Best Practice accomplished and how have you been able to tell this? (You are permitted to give numbers and/or use specific “before and after” examples.)***

Our Best Practice has seen a host of wonderful accomplishments unfold, and even more than what we initially set out to achieve! First, starting with the residents who are the actual leaders of the activities, we have seen positive results. For some of these residents, it has fulfilled a sense of purpose while living in our facility. One resident, who happens to be our Resident Council President, is the leader of our Photography Class. In his younger days, he was a photographer for the Navy. Now, he is able to teach our residents how to capture special memories and fun events in a way that is far more meaningful to them. He is always snapping photos, and now he has the opportunity to reach out and share his love of photography with others. He prepares power point presentations for his classes, and is a wonderful instructor! He says “it makes me feel good to share my experiences with others and makes my hard work feel like its paying off. I love being around people and enjoy helping others. It makes me feel like I have a purpose at the nursing home.” Secondly, it has been a joy to see our staff learning new things about our residents. We have one resident who is an extremely talented painter, and she is the leader of our Painting Class. There were very few employees who knew of her capabilities, until she began showing us her skill by painting beautiful canvases of birds and flowers. We were awestruck! She told us

that “I enjoy teaching the class. It makes me feel needed and makes my life have meaning.” Lastly, it has truly been a great advantage for the residents that participate in the classes. It gives them a chance to mingle and come together with one another, all while learning and sharing common interests. It is great to simply mix things up a bit.

***What problems, obstacles, or challenges might other facilities face in replicating part or all of your innovation? Were there any adverse effects or any ways that things turned out differently than you had planned? Do you know of any other facilities which have tried this or a similar best practice idea?***

This Best Practice has run extremely smooth, for the most part. So far, we have only experienced a problem with having to cancel classes due to health issues. One challenge that other facilities may face in attempting to replicate our Best Practice is finding willing and capable leaders for these classes and activities. We are a large facility; therefore we have a large pool of residents to solicit leaders. We have not seen any adverse effects. Things have turned out better than we had planned, and in a wonderful way! We have seen a great response from offering this to our residents and we are hoping to grow the program in the future. Some of our future plans include offering a wider variety of classes and finding more resident leaders, and we also hope to host an Arts and Crafts Show where residents can display their work and sell it to our employees, other residents and even the community.

***What was the cost to implement your Best Practice (include dollars, staff, supplies, equipment, etc.)? How did you pay for it?***

For our Best Practice, the cost involved was exactly the same as any cost for a regular activity. Some of our expenses were for things such as paints and crochet tools, which all came out of our regular activity budget. The only difference is that we held these classes in addition to our regularly scheduled activities, but we still did not have to increase our activity budget to accommodate for these new activities. We paid for all supplies out of our regular monthly activity budget.

***What are the reasons you consider this Best Practice to be excellent and innovative?***

So often when a resident enters a nursing home, there is a negative stereotype that residents are given little to no choices, and that they are going to spend the rest of their life where they have absolutely no input on the events of their day by day existence. One of the most wonderful accomplishments of our Best Practice is that it empowers our residents. In this program, they have all the input and make all the choices. They have goals for their groups and are working to achieve something great. This simple, yet significant, idea has meant the world to many of our residents. And to those who are the ones attending the new activities and classes, it has given them a fresh outlook and energizing change of pace. We reach out to our residents as if they were family; this gives us a means to love and assist them in any way we can. And if that means handing over the reins, then that is exactly what we will do! Our goal is to satisfy our residents to the best of our ability, so that in every aspect they can find joy in sharing their lives with us and others. We truly believe that there is no act too small to make a difference, they are all worthy in our book. “Never stop doing little things for others. Sometimes, those little things occupy the biggest part of their heart.”

“WE Can Do It” has helped us take one more positive step on our huge journey of culture change. We genuinely feel that changing the way we think and acting upon those instincts will only help facilitate a more positive connotation for nursing homes all around the state. In sharing our empowering practices, we can only keep getting better and better! “If you want to change the culture, you will have to start by changing the organization” ~ Mary Douglas.

# Painting Class





# Photography Class



# Prayer Circle

