

Activities for Living Well



Give Seniors a Chance to Be Extraordinary

Oftentimes the activities that are offered to seniors in assisted living (AL) facilities and other centers are limited to bingo or wheelchair aerobics. More recently, the technology revolution has impacted activities—video game systems like the Nintendo Wii or computer labs are now offered in many AL residences. Although these games are entertaining and even mentally stimulating—sometimes even physically stimulating—they fail to do much for a person's spirit. This is certainly a lost opportunity because seniors have a tremendous history and expertise to share. It is for this reason that we are launching a new department titled "Activities for Living Well."

The new department will highlight programs that provide seniors an opportunity for being extraordinary. The department is meant to serve as a dialogue so that we can work together to develop more meaningful activities that truly provide opportunities for extraordinary living.

For instance, seniors may wish to become involved in charity work that involves others their age or those from a younger generation. A program that is very personal to me is the Go4theGoal Foundation (www.Go4theGoal.org)—a Foundation dedicated to allowing children affected by cancer to be "normal" kids. The Foundation is just one example of how seniors can get involved. Many hospitals look for volunteers among the elderly community to serve as patient guides or work in the nurseries to comfort ill newborns.

Other programs may include working with local schools to offer book reading to grade school children. Libraries often hold reading hours as well and look for volunteers from the community. Many seniors have special talents that can be provided to community groups such as scouts or work programs—talents such as carpentry, embroidery, or sewing. Some AL communities offer train rooms where enthusiastic residents build model railroads and display them to young and old visitors alike.

So what can be done in senior communities? Just think about it for a moment. The activities director working with the resident council might develop a calendar of activities for the entire year. Starting in the spring with a dinner dance fundraiser, residents could help obtain donations to support the dinner or fill gift baskets for raffles. The event could be repeated in the fall. In the early summer a family fun fair could be developed that would also involve children and grandchildren not only in the event itself but the preparation and running of it. Think about the generations coming together to work in tandem on such an event. During the holidays, the community can work together to make

holiday gift boxes, which could be delivered to a regional pediatric cancer unit or a homeless shelter to bring the holiday to those in need of extra cheer.

Such activities as these help stimulate seniors in body and mind and raise spirits in a way that bingo cannot. We know that there are extraordinary activities taking place in your communities, and we ask you to share them and we will highlight a new activity and a new facility in each issue.

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Forever Young When You Dance and Sing



Mrs. Loretta Pescatore, organizer of the event

Residents and staff joined together to hold a holiday pageant on December 18, 2007, at Springfield Senior Commons at Harlee Manor, Springfield, Pennsylvania. The pageant consisted of 3 small holiday-themed vignettes, including singing and dancing by residents and staff. Together they also wrapped gifts and loaded Santa's sleigh, hung stockings on the mantle-piece, and read excerpts from *Twas the Night before Christmas*. Santa and his reindeer delivered presents.

Eighty-eight-year-young resident Loretta Pescatore created and organized the event. Mrs. Pescatore began pulling together ideas for the pageant and recruiting its cast members months before the event. "I've been performing in dance shows and theater productions since my childhood and wanted to bring some holiday cheer to my newly found family and friends. I get great enjoyment from organizing these productions and am already giving consideration to organizing a Spring performance," said Mrs. Pescatore. Looks like we should stay tuned for more to come from Harlee Manor residents!

Since 1968, the Beloff family has owned and operated Harlee Manor. The guiding philosophy has remained unchanged...to provide a safe, comfortable, homelike environment for residents while attending to their physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual well-being. The facility provides a continuum of care including nursing care, rehabilitation, and assisted living. For additional information on Harlee Manor, please visit www.harleemanor.com.

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