

Reaching Out! Community Program Ideas for Healthcare Facilities

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Community programming is instrumental to enhancing the services of any activity department. With the implementation of the revised CMS Activities Guidance to Surveyors, there is a heightened focus on the individual needs and interests of the residents. Involving local communities and volunteers is an essential part of establishing a well-balanced, diverse program of activities. There are many organizations, clubs, and associations that can be contacted. Ask them to post an announcement in their newsletter, bulletins, flyers, or bulletin board, or announce at their next meeting, that community groups and volunteers are needed at your facility. Inform them of your specific needs i.e. you need a volunteer that speaks German that

can read to a resident or you would like a volunteer who can do arts and crafts. Other methods of recruitment include word of mouth, media coverage, on-line, family members and visitors, community fairs/events and mailings.

Often times, Activity Directors are given the responsibility of developing and managing the volunteer and community outreach program. It can become overwhelming. Activity Directors often do not pursue volunteers and community groups because of the extensive work that goes into it. There is ongoing research, organization, planning, implementation, and follow-up. For that reason, it is suggested that each facility have a Volunteer Coordinator or someone who is primarily assigned to manage these responsibilities. But since it is not common practice to have a separate Volunteer Coordinator, here are some ideas and suggestions that will help you reach out to the community and expand your volunteer program.

School System

- Pen Pal Programs
- Adopt-A-Resident Program
- Educational Opportunities for the students (students may learn about Ellis Island, WWII, the Depression, etc.)
- Volunteer opportunities (Key Club, course requirements, independent volunteer services)
- Entertainment (school choir, bands, dance groups, drama club, art, poetry, specialty groups)
- Sporting events
- Special education opportunities (volleyball game with DD adolescents)
- Intergenerational Programs (holiday activities, craft projects, physical games, discussion groups)
- Cultural Clubs (Spanish, Italian, African American etc.)
- Day Care children
- College internships/field experience

Churches/Synagogues

- Rosary Groups
- 1:1 Communion (Sundays)
- Adopt-A-Resident Program
- Outreach programs (donations, community services)
- Choirs
- Bible Study
- Church intergenerational programs
- Independent volunteer opportunities
- Confirmation requirements
- Rabbi Visits
- Church Services

Community Groups

- Community public relations opportunities
- Cub/Boy/Eagle Scouts community service (special/holiday events)
- Brownies/Girl Scouts Community Service (special/holiday events)
- Clubs (VFW, Elks, Masons, Kiwanis Club, Eastern Star, 4-H, American Legion, Knights of Columbus, Lions, Chambers of Commerce)
- Cultural Clubs (Italian American Independent Club, Hispanic, Polish etc.)
- YMCA/YWCA
- YM-YWHA (Hebrew Association)
- Salvation Army
- Historical Society presentations
- United Way
- Joint community fundraising or community service programs (toy Drives, food drives, raffles, car washes, etc.)
- RSVP/AARP volunteer opportunities/donations/service projects
- Local dance groups/troupes
- Senior dancers
- Independent volunteer opportunities
- LTC resident service projects for the above mentioned groups

It is also important to bring the residents into the community as well. Before doing so, establish a well-developed policy and procedure that outlines all aspects of the outing, especially what to do in the case of an emergency or missing resident. Check with the desired site before bringing the residents to ensure appropriate parking, wheelchair accessibility, bathrooms, process, etc. There are so many places that you can bring the residents. Check the local newspapers for community events, special deals, and coupons. Assign a resident or group of residents browse the weekly newspapers. Some ideas include: community/school sporting events, parks and recreation, community flea markets, festivals, music events, movie theater/plays, local restaurants, historical sites/museums, zoos, visits to other facilities or organizations, churches, synagogues and other places of worship, school events and so on.

Organizing a community outreach program is an ongoing process and requires an abundance of creativity, time and commitment. Utilize as many resources as possible and don't hesitate to ask community groups and individuals to volunteer. By "reaching out" you will greatly enhance the lives of the residents in your healthcare facility. For more community ideas and links, visit <http://www.recreativeresources.com/linkscommunity.htm>.