

Hardwiring Excellence-MHG's Commitment to Quality

by William Mantzoukas,
President

Mike Walsh and I formed Merrimack Health Group in 1998 with a singular purpose—to own and manage skilled nursing and assisted living facilities. Along with this purpose was the mission to provide facilities with the support, staff and services they would need to be successful—always putting the facilities first. Our model has been a decentralized one, which emphasizes inclusion rather than exclusion.

Decentralization is not as clean an approach, and at times it takes longer to reach the solutions, but Mike and I have felt that it also leads to employees' ownership of their actions and better results overall.

In 2002, we were able to focus on our mission in full force. Throughout the next 6 years, we formed the teams that we have now, based on the beliefs in *Good to Great*, that adding quality people leads to quality.

Our industry is constantly changing. Over the years I have managed by way of knowing—by rounding, and by asking questions. This is not an exact nor a proven method, but one that worked well up until this surge of growth in Merrimack Health Group. I firmly believe that the Studer Method of Hardwiring Excellence fits in with our goal to have a clear and concise structure to maintain standards of excellence throughout our facilities. No one can be everywhere at once.

The tools and techniques we are rolling out in the facilities are the first part of a plan that we will be implementing throughout our facilities. It is a perfect complement to our decentralized model, as it builds structure and systems that are “hardwired” into our facilities, allows for inclusion rather than exclusion, and is a proven recipe for success.



MHG Administrators, Directors of Nursing, and the Regional Team worked extensively at a two-day workshop in March on integrating the methods of Hardwiring Excellence into the MHG infrastructure. The rollouts in April and May of Rounding for Outcomes is the beginning of the process.

Culture Change Corner- Helping Hands Dining Experience

A 2005 article in the North Carolina Medical Journal stated that one of the most salient aspects of long-term care quality is food and the dining experience, as well as hydration and fluid intake. Nutrition is one of the major determinants of successful aging and, for most, eating is one of life's most pleasant daily experiences. Now we see that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services are using the dining experience as measurable indicators of quality care in long term care facilities.

In 2008, MHG embarked on a mission to incorporate elements of culture change throughout our facilities. To date, we have been able to eliminate or significantly reduce overhead paging, institute consistent assignments, create a universal admissions/discharge/concierge program, and renamed resident units to have less institutional-



"Helping Hands Dining" ensures that residents receive the most efficient, enjoyable dining experience possible, enhancing overall nutritional status, hydration, and quality of life.

sounding names. With these accomplishments well underway, now is the perfect time to share best practices and develop a dining program that will provide the most enjoyable and effective dining experience for residents. The program, entitled Helping Hands Dining, also allows the licensed nursing staff adequate time to assist those residents who need help by having the facility leadership staff perform non-clinical duties at mealtime.

How the program operates:

1. All department heads and other participating non-clinical staff receive a dining area assignment. The assignment is managed

by the administrator. The assignment should be consistent.

2. Nursing management on each neighborhood will give and supervise non-clinical assignments.
3. Helping Hands staff report to nursing management for specific assignments prior to meal service and upon completing their assignments. All participating staff review the non-clinical support for dining prior to their first assignments.

What is involved?

Prior to meal service, the non-clinical staff (helpers) will check the posted

menus, know the alternates and report to the nurse managers for their assignments. During the meal service, the helpers deliver meals to the residents as directed, assist with meal set up as needed, describe the meal to the resident, and use the time to promote socialization and resident interaction.

The Administrator assigns the non-clinical staff to the assignments and sets the schedule for participation. The schedule is then provided to nursing management on a regular basis. Nursing management makes its own assignments for supervision for each dining area, with all nurses participating in Helping Hands. Medications are not to be passed during meals unless there is a specific physician's order.

Earlier this year, all facility Food Service Directors met with Bill Mantzoukas, Susan Fitzgerald, Senior Director of Clinical Services, and John Kain, COO, to review how best to implement this program in our facilities. They plan to meet again this summer, with the program kickoff to occur soon after. Stay tuned for more information on this enriching program for our residents.

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MHG Above and Beyond Winners for 2008!



Congratulations to all the facility Above and Beyond Winners for 2008. As is our custom, we are highlighting the winners here in the pages of *Newsnotes*. The Above and Beyond Luncheon, where we celebrate the winners and select the 2008 Regional winner, will be held on Tuesday, July 14, 2009, at the Cafe Escadrille in Burlington, MA.

Marlborough Hills-Taciso Santos, John Murphy, and Ed Burke



In April, 2008, Ed Burke, Maintenance Supervisor, John Murphy, Maintenance Assistant and Taciso Santos, Housekeeping Supervisor, assisted the staff in searching for vital information that turned up missing. After the facility was searched, the only stone unturned was the dumpster. All three gentlemen suited up to protect themselves and entered the dumpster in search of this information.

The spring day

offered clear blue skies and warm temperatures, which added to the potpourri of smells they encountered as they searched. Still, with determination, these "dumpster rats" searched on for the greater good. Though unsuccessful in finding the information lost, they are dedicated to Marlborough Hills and we proudly chose them as our 2008 Above and Beyond Winners. Dedication and commitment should be rewarded and this act certainly demonstrates theirs!

Parsons Hill-Carey Andrus



Carey Andrus is the Parsons Hill 2008 Above and Beyond annual award winner. Carey came to Parsons in May of 2008 as the Business Office Manager and found herself facing some serious challenges from the start. She energetically jumped into her work and started planning exactly how she was going to improve business office processes. Her efforts have paid off in a very big way.

Carey has cut in half the time it takes to collect monies owed to the facility, she has endeared herself to residents and families, is an active participant in events throughout the building, and has an infectious positive attitude!!

Building strong partnerships with the corporate office team is important in Carey's role and she has done a terrific job with that as well. Reporting a strong profit is a critical part of running a successful business, but if you are not able to collect the money people owe you then it doesn't really matter how much success you report!

Carey has been instrumental in the success that Parsons Hill has shown since she joined the team just over one year ago! She regularly goes Above and Beyond in her service to residents and families and for this we are very happy to have her as the annual award winner!!



The Oxford- Maryanne Burke, RN



Maryanne Burke, RN SDC, has many great qualities, which define her as a winner. She is always looking out for the best interest of the residents, staff, and the reputation of the Oxford. She is committed to a high quality of care. She goes above and beyond the definition of her job description, helping out in any way she can. No task is too great or too small. She promotes employee morale daily, by planning and participating in functions. She is honest, knowledgeable, kind, compassionate, a problem solver, a true team player as well as a great co-worker.

Her caring, compassionate way was demonstrated in particular with a gentleman who was admitted to The Oxford for end of life care. He had multiple diagnoses and was in the hospital for some time prior to coming to the facility. His admitting diagnosis included failure to thrive.

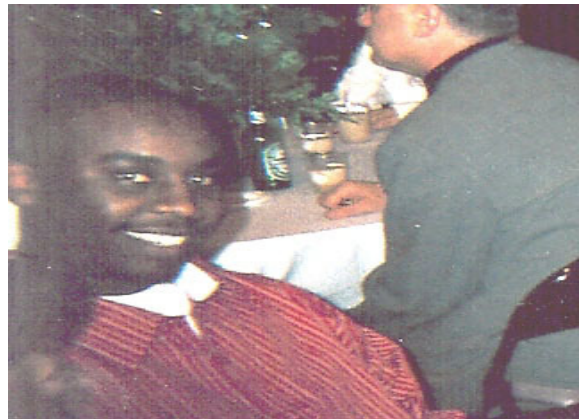
On this particular day Maryanne saw through all the medical necessity. She immediately saw that this resident was alone in the world, had no family or friends to be with him in

his final moments of life. She gathered items throughout the facility to make his room like a bedroom that you would have at home.

The items included, a donated red quilt, a plant from the lobby, a donated television and various other items including fresh linens and bed garments. She introduced herself and other staff members present in the room to the frail elderly man.

After performing a skin assessment, she changed his bed linens and placed the red quilt on top of him. His eyes were wide open as he watched her moving around his bed working to make him more comfortable. His eyes followed her for a little while watching her make this small space his special place. This man who was actively dying was given the opportunity to be with people who were able to see what was truly needed at that time and was able to assist him to die with dignity. She was a guardian angel that truly made an impact on this man for one of the final days of his life.

The Lafayette- Kawsu Kinteh



Kawsu Kinteh is an excellent C.N.A. Kawsu has been employed at the Lafayette since 2003. He is organized, efficient, and dependable. Kawsu is extremely well liked by staff, residents and families, he is kind and caring.

Kawsu assists the dentist monthly with oral care. He is gentle and thoughtful and his approach is always professional. He provides complete and safe care. Kawsu has a robust laugh that gives a sense of comfort. He is an asset to the Lafayette staff.

Kawsu took it upon himself to help with a heating problem during the 3-11 shift. He is always willing to help

even when it goes beyond the realm of his position as a C. N. A. He is a great team player and does what it takes to keep his shift running smoothly.

Another example of how Kawsu makes a difference is the story of a resident who lives on the first floor. This incident took place in 2007 but certainly speaks to his commitment. Mrs. G was excited and wanted me to see her new Red Sox blanket, draped over her bed and given to her by Kawsu. Mrs. G stated, "At 94 years old this is the biggest thrill of my life." Kawsu had humbly left the blanket for Mrs. G whom he knows is a huge Red Sox fan.



Lanessa Extended Care- Kaleena Boulos



Lanessa Extended Care is very pleased and excited to announce Kaleena Boulos as the Above and Beyond Winner for 2008. Kaleena began her career at Lanessa on February 11, 2002, as a Certified Nursing Assistant. She quickly earned respect from her co-workers and love from her residents. Kaleena was always willing to help others and was anxious to learn.

After almost four years here as a fabulous C.N.A., Kaleena decided to become a nurse. She applied for the Merrimack Grant Program and was chosen. Kaleena passed her nursing exam and became a Licensed Practical Nurse on 9/26/07.

A position became available on the Windsor Unit, where Kaleena had worked as a C.N.A. She quickly made the transition to "nurse". The C.N.A.s who worked with her previously loved seeing "one of their own" achieve such great success.

Kaleena has now grown to become one of the strongest nurses at Lanessa. We often look to

Kaleena to assist other new nurses with training and mentoring. She is always ready to accept new challenges and responsibilities.

Kaleena can often be seen sitting with a resident after her shift or assisting another staff member with care of the residents. She has never forgotten her roots as a C.N.A. and she helps with feeding, transporting, toileting, etc., etc...without being asked.

When speaking with our Director of Nurses she made a point to say "the nurse, Kaleena, is one in a million". She went on to say that it is the "little things she does that makes the difference". One resident loves having chewing gum and Kaleena makes a point to bring her some regularly. One 92 year- old male resident describes her as a "sweetheart with a heart of gold". She helps her fellow co-workers with their workloads. Her goal is to continue her studies and become a Registered Nurse.

Craneville Place- Gail Mullady



Gail started at Craneville Place about one and one half years ago in the Activities Department. Each day she looks forward to helping the residents enjoy themselves. Whether it is creative movement, manicures, or sing along (her favorite), Gail is always seeking news ways to make residents smile.

In addition, Gail is also a foster mom to hard to place children. Even with this hectic schedule, Gail always gives 150

percent, a sincere smile and hello, and a warm listening ear. Her number one priority is the residents.

Here is one recent example of her kindness. A resident's doll was accidentally sent to the laundry, and was ruined. The doll happened to be the resident's favorite and was very important to her. Gail took the doll home and restored it, making new clothes and fixing it to be just like new!.



Fairhaven Healthcare Center-Ida Lewis



Ida has been employed at Fairhaven Healthcare Center since January 1984. She started in the housekeeping department part time and transferred into the Dietary Department after two years eventually being promoted to day supervisor. She did a fabulous job making sure the staff completed their jobs, the trays and food temperatures were correct and the kitchen was clean. She decided to become an Activity Assistant in 2000.

Ida's personality has made her a pleasure to work with and residents enjoy her humor and creative ideas. Ida was nominated and won Above and Beyond because she does an amazing amount of extra

work for the holiday fair. She is creative, organized, and is known as a "go to" person. Residents report she is always making sure they are involved in craft groups and helping them feel proud of their achievements. She also assembled many of the raffle baskets and shops for items for the residents' raffle basket.

Ida also volunteers to serve as a personal shopper for residents in need of clothing. She will even go so far as to make returns and see needed alterations are done.

Fairhaven is proud to have Ida as our Employee of the Year and believe she would make an outstanding example of the best in Merrimack Health Group's staff.

Webster Manor- Sue Beaudette



Sue Beaudette has been a loyal, dedicated employee of Webster Manor for 8 years. She started out as the weekend part time administrative assistant, which led her into the full time position she is in currently. At one point, she even worked 7 days a week!

Sue not only answers phones, she assists all department heads with various jobs they need. Whether it be a

photocopy, an activity calendar, event poster or selling the raffle tickets, Sue always does it with a smile.

Sue also plays two other very important roles at Webster Manor as the photocopy machine "fix-it-guru" and our own fire marshall during fire drills!

The residents and staff at Webster Manor would not be able to survive without our own Susan Beaudette!



The Arbors of Bedford- Deb Greene



Deb has been with the Arbors of Bedford since August of 2008. Even though Deb was with us for such a short time, her overabundance of caring, dignity and compassion for each resident warranted her this distinguished award.

Deb works on the 3-11 shift, which often can be the most difficult shift for our residents as many of them experience "sun downing". She will often come in off her shift and assist as needed. Deb often brings in special snacks for the residents as well as favorite movies. During a difficult time she will most often be found consoling someone in need. Deb is a special person and we are glad she made the Arbors of Bedford her place of employment. Congratulations, Deb Greene, LPN.



First Annual AdventCare Charity Golf Tournament

The First Annual AdventCare Charity Golf Tournament is scheduled for Monday, June 8, at Andover Country Club in Andover, MA. Although MHG has been actively involved in golf tournaments each year to help raise funds for several charities, with this tournament we are able to help benefit the residents, staff and services provided by our managed non-profit facilities, Fairhaven Healthcare Center in Lowell and The Lafayette Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing Facility in Marblehead. Nearly 120 golfers are registered to attend the tournament,



Committee Chair, Joel Kirchick, Board President, and Raymond Dennehy, Board Treasurer.
From MHG: Bill



Mantzoukas, Michael Walsh, Richard Kravetz, John Kain, Gina Queiros, Richard Atkinson, Laura McDonnell, and Karen Driscoll.

From the AdventCare facilities: George Barbuzzi,



which includes two hole-in-one prizes of a new car and a one week vacation to The Cabins at China Lake, Maine. Patriot Financial Group gave us a generous donation of \$10,000 to become a Platinum Sponsor of the tournament. The AdventCare Golf Committee members have been hard at work for several weeks to help make this tournament a success. The Golf Committee members are:
From the AdventCare Board of Directors:
Dave O'Donnell,



and Brian Hurley, Administrators. Business colleague Jim Rancatore, also was a member of the committee. Stay tuned for golf tourney photos and updates in the next issue of *Newsnotes!*

"Age is opportunity no less than youth itself, though in another dress, and as the evening twilight fades away, the sky is filled with stars, invisible by day..."
Longfellow



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Nine Steps to Rounding for Outcomes-- A Refresher!

Here's a report from Quint Studer, author of "Hardwiring Excellence" and the designer of the Rounding for Outcomes techniques that are being implemented in our facilities. To benefit more from rounding, you must standardize rounding skills, teach them to all managers, and hardwire it into your culture. Don't assume that rounding is easy. It isn't. It requires some serious training and self-discipline-but, over time, you'll see that the results are worth the effort.

- 1. Give your employees a heads-up.** Before you start rounding, tell your employees what you plan to do. Any time a leader changes his or her behavior, employees tend to get jumpy. Be honest. Tell them up front: "I want to be a better leader and I need your help. I am here to recognize and reward people and to find out what's working well in this company-and what's not working so well."
- 2. Prepare a scouting report.** Start with a basic knowledge of what the current problems are. For instance, if you know a department is short-staffed, put it on the report. Or if you know there's a chronic problem with equipment break-downs, note it. When you start rounding, you can talk intelligently about the issues. As you talk with each employee . . .
- 3. Make a personal connection.** Ask how her sick mother is doing or ask him how his child did on college entrance exams. This is relationship building. Be genuine.
- 4. Mention an issue he or she raised during your last rounding visit.** Show the employee that you have solved the problem or that you are working on it.
- 5. Ask five questions, keeping your tone and words as positive as possible:** What is working well today? Are there any individuals I should be recognizing? Do you have the tools and equipment you need to do your job? Is there anything we, the leaders, could do better? What else would you like me to know?
- 6. When someone brings up a problem, assure him or her that you will do the best you can to get it resolved.** Obviously, there will be circumstances you can't control. But people appreciate knowing that you will try. Sincere effort goes a long way.
- 7. Record issues that arise in a rounding log.** This will help you keep what needs to be done top of mind. It will also help you hardwire the process into your company. Writing things down makes it more likely that they'll get done, and it makes things seem official.
- 8. Recognize and reward those who are identified by peers as high performers.** This might mean conveying a sincere word of thanks-citing who complimented him or her.
- 9. Repeat.** Round daily, if possible. At least do it several times a week. Don't risk losing momentum or you'll give it up before you start seeing results.

"Rounding is a lot like exercise," Studer explains. "If you don't round every day, religiously, it will take much longer to accomplish your goals and it will be far more painful. You must make it part of your routine. But proactive leadership is far more effective than reactive leadership. It allows you to consciously and deliberately build the kind of culture in which people feel a sense of purpose, a sense that their work is worthwhile, a sense that they're truly making a difference."

Selected Rounding Results from our facilities will be featured in future issues of *NewsNotes*. Good Luck to all!