

The Colony • Eden Prairie, MN

The Colony knows it's 'the journey' that matters

By Anita Cornelius, Executive Director of The Colony of Eden Prairie, MN

How it started

It began at Covenire Care and Tealwood Care Centers' corporate level, with a committee of executive directors from different communities within our organization. [Editor's note: Anita served as an advisory member.] Over a period of ten months, the committee developed the new customer service program. The program was presented to each of our senior care communities at an annual corporate meeting. Each executive director was charged with rolling out the program within their community.

Armed with established commitments for each community to follow, The Colony looked to its department heads to make it happen.

At the community

To initiate the process, department heads were asked to nominate team members from each of their departments to serve on The Colony's committee. There were three requirements:

1. Each department had to be represented on the committee.
2. All nominees had to be engaged and positive.
3. None of the nominees could be a supervisor or department head.

With a committee made up of caregivers, housekeepers, activities, concierge and dining servers with both the assisted living and post-acute care center represented, we discussed the goals of the new customer service program:

- Present the new program to peers at the next team member meeting
- Break up into subcommittees to develop different focus areas
- Implement and promote the program to all team members
- Continually find creative ways to help team members embrace the new program

With the theme "... because the journey matters" in place, the first three subcommittees focused on:

Sharing news and recognizing team members

- Newsletter now promotes team-member news, including success stories, "... because the journey matters" moments, anniversaries, birthdays and training opportunities.
- Recognition program rolled out a variety of ways to recognize and celebrate "super star" team members.

Welcoming and mentoring new team members

- A "rolling out the red carpet" program welcomes all members.
- A mentor program sets up the new member for success and recognizes our "best of the best" team members.
- A welcome bag includes a "... because the journey matters" T-shirt.

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Inviting and comfortable break and locker rooms

- Locker room walls were freshly painted with fun Colony colors, new lockers installed, ceramic tiles added and new benches added.
- Break room updates included fresh paint, "... because the journey matters" script on the wall, hardwood floors installed, daily complimentary refreshments initiated, and a newly designed body, mind and spirit wellness board.

New approaches are limitless

Once these enhancements were put in place, The Colony's committee did not call it quits. Currently, we are:

Building relationships and sharing our lives

- The Colony Recipe Book will be filled with resident, family and team member recipes. Proceeds from the sale of the book will go to the Alzheimer's Association.
- A resident, family and team member recipe social is being planned. Everyone is invited to bring their favorite dish, dessert or beverage for all to share and include the recipe for the dish.
- For each dish, dessert or beverage presented at the social, the recipe and a picture of the creator will be included in the recipe book. Additionally, we've asked all participants to share a piece of history about their favorite dish in order to build relationships and provide an opportunity for people to share stories that are important to them.

Communicating our commitments and welcoming new residents

- Family members and other visitors can read about our new customer service program at all entrances to the community and by each office. The commitments to our customer service program are articulated in the collaterals.
- New residents of both the assisted living and post-acute care center now receive a welcome packet and resident directory. New resident welcome programs were also implemented, including The New Comer's Club and Dining with the Director, as well as many other new programs designed to build relationships and meet the needs of residents.

Strengthening our customer service program

- To ensure quality of care and enhancements to customer service, we implemented our "Three R's" program," Recognize, Respond and Respect. To do this we:
 - Utilize My InnerView's resident, 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
 - Focus on using benchmarks and clinical data to continually assess how we are doing

We will continue to create subcommittees to further refine our customer service program with the goal of continually meeting and exceeding the expectations of our residents. 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."

The Colony at Eden Prairie, located in Eden Prairie, MN, is an assisted living community with services designed to meet the specific needs of all clients, which can include seniors with Alzheimer's disease, enhanced care needs and post-acute care customers. 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. Additionally, The Colony's post-acute care center was given a 5-STAR rating in 2008, and was deficiency-free on their 2008 state survey results.