

THE ADVOCATE

1ST QUARTER 2011

The Importance of Supporting Direct Care Workers

CBS News recently conducted an investigation into the top ten most depressing careers. Personal-care providers top the list, with nearly 11% of people in this field reporting a bout of major depression. A typical day can include feeding, bathing, and caring for others who are "often incapable of expressing gratitude or appreciation... because they are too ill or too young or they just aren't in the habit of it," says Christopher Willard, clinical psychologist at Tufts University and author of *Child's Mind*. "It is stressful, seeing people sick and not getting a lot of positive reinforcement." (Source: http://www.cbsnews.com/2300-204_162-10005838-2.html#ixzz1AHNDbP00). According to the Direct Care Alliance, the general consensus amongst direct care workers is that most feel under-paid, unappreciated, under-valued, and easily replaceable by their superiors.



Most people choose direct care work because of a desire to help others and an interest in working in health care. Although the majority of direct care workers find their jobs intrinsically rewarding, they are often low paid with limited or no benefits, high workloads, unsafe working conditions, inadequate training, a lack of respect from supervisors, lack of control over their jobs, and few opportunities for advancement, all of which contribute to high turnover. (Source: AARP Public Policy Institute).

The truth is that direct care workers are the foundation of our health care system. They have a fundamental role in caring for the more than 13 million Americans who depend on long-term care services every day. Like teachers, firefighters and police officers, direct care workers provide a vital public service. By 2018, the direct care workforce will be the second largest occupational group in the country, behind only retail salespersons (Source: The Direct Care Alliance). Now, more than ever, we need to support direct care workers and foster a positive work environment for these essential workers. Here are some questions to consider when assessing your own home's work environment:

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- ***Does your home offer a living wage for direct care workers?***

Despite undertaking hard work requiring considerable skills, direct care workers are among the most poorly compensated of all workers. Direct care workers – about 90 percent of whom are women – struggle to support themselves on an average of \$17,000 per year, leading many to rely on public benefits.

- ***Are your direct care workers offered fair benefits?***

According to the most recent estimates, over one in four (26 percent) of direct care workers—some 800,000—were not covered by health insurance in 2008. The lack of basic benefits such as health care and paid sick leave hinders many direct care workers' ability to recover from the emotional and physical demands of this work.

- ***Does your home offer opportunities for the professional development of direct care workers?***

A lack of opportunities for specialized training that's linked to certification and higher wages makes it difficult for direct care workers to advance without leaving their profession. It also diminishes the quality of care for the residents.

- ***Does your home reward direct care workers for the critical services they provide?***

Everyone needs respect and positive feedback to reach their full potential. In a recent study of direct care workers, each of whom received a fleece jacket bearing the home's name/logo as a service reward, revealed that the workers were very proud to wear their service award merchandise with the agency name name/logo on the item. The workers commented on how they often got questions from those noticing the logo on their jacket and that they were pleased to provide information about their employer to those who asked. To have employees who want to be identified with their employer and want to share positive information about the home to others is truly remarkable—and obviously, excellent advertising/visibility for the home (Source: Pathways for the Future, Inc., Center for Independent Living).

About two-thirds of us will need some form of long-term care as older adults. Unless we improve work conditions, we will soon be facing a critical shortage of these crucial workers. By investing in direct care workers now, we are investing in our own future!

Save the Date!

Effective Nursing Home Discharge Planning

**April 20, 2011
Pennybyrn at Maryfield
Jamestown, NC**

Please mark your calendar and plan to join us for an informational workshop covering topics including MDS 3.0 Section Q, Money Follows the Person, and community resources to assist residents in successfully returning to the community.

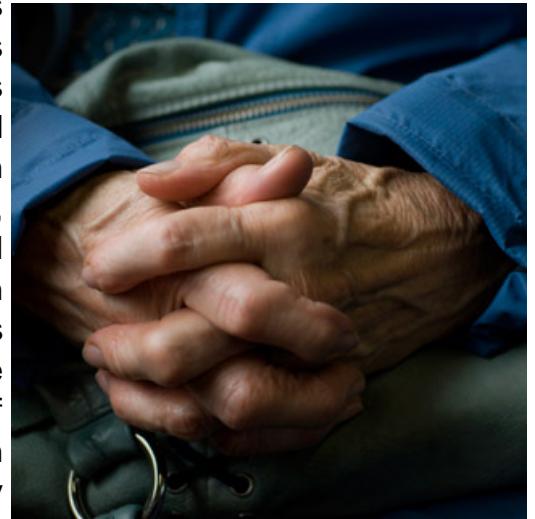
Featuring Cindy DePorter, NC Division of Health Service Regulation

Registration information will follow soon!

Michael J. Fox Isn't the Only One

Written by Lindsay Penny, UNC Department of Neurology

What is your knowledge about and experience of Parkinson's disease? Perhaps you have a friend or family member who is coping with the illness. Maybe you work with clients or patients who have the disease. Or possibly, your awareness and knowledge of Parkinson's is limited to interviews you've seen with Michael J. Fox. Whether or not you are aware of it, chances are that you have come into contact with an individual with Parkinson's disease. It is the second most common neurodegenerative disease in humans, and it currently affects around 1 million individuals in the United States. Because the risk of developing Parkinson's increases with age, the aging of the baby boomer generation will most certainly bring on an increase in the prevalence of the disease. Therefore, it is very important, particularly for professionals working with older adults, to have a comprehensive understanding of the causes, symptoms, and treatments of Parkinson's disease.



The UNC Department of Neurology has been caring for individuals with Parkinson's disease since 1952. In 2004, our Movement Disorders Center became the first in North Carolina to join the ranks of only 43 National Parkinson's Foundation (NPF) Centers of Excellence worldwide. As a Center of Excellence, it is our mission to educate both patients and professionals throughout North Carolina about Parkinson's disease and its treatment.

In keeping with this mission, we will be hosting several exciting educational opportunities for healthcare professionals in the coming months. From March 9-12, UNC and Duke will be partnering with the National Parkinson Foundation to offer the NPF Allied Team Training for Parkinson (ATTP) program in Chapel Hill. This training will be offered to physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, occupational therapists, music therapists, physician assistants, social workers, and speech language pathologists. Licensed participants will earn between 24.25 and 29.75 continuing education credits. The program will provide comprehensive information about Parkinson's disease as well as training on participation in interdisciplinary teams. For further information about this program (including application form, accreditation, and training schedule), please visit www.parkinson.org/attp or contact Denise Beran at dberan@parkinson.org or 305-243-2985.

Our center is also developing a half-day program on Parkinsonism and Parkinson's Plus disorders for healthcare professionals, which will likely take place summer 2011. If you would like to receive further information about this event when available, please contact Lindsay Penny at lpenny@neurology.unc.edu to be placed on our outreach mailing list.

Lastly, because patients with Parkinson's need to be educated about the disease as well, our center will be offering half-day educational workshops for patients and families from February to April 2011. The goal of these workshops is to educate individuals in the early, middle, and advanced stages of the disease on causes, treatments, and resources to improve overall quality of life. If you or someone you know might be interested in participating in the Parkinson's 101-301 series, please contact Lindsay Penny at lpenny@neurology.unc.edu.

Connecting the Pieces: Diversity



Why should long-term care staff be interested in reading another article on diversity? We know that diversity is important and our lives are filled with it. We know that diversity isn't just about race. It's about age, physical capabilities, ability to communicate, hobbies, schedule preferences, religious preferences, and family dynamics. As long-term care staff, you work with diversity every day to improve the quality of life of people that are different than you.

So, why should you spend the time to think about it even more? Well, for two reasons: you and your residents. As an employee, your co-workers and supervisors should be respectful of your differences, and you of theirs. When a workplace is respectful and acknowledges the unique characteristics of each person, it becomes a better workplace. Retention and productivity increase. In turn, the residents benefit. They will feel respected and honored when they live in an atmosphere where diversity is respected and honored.

To help you get started, or continue your understanding of the uniqueness of others, here are a few guidelines you can follow:

- ⇒ Know yourself. What is your culture? What are your beliefs, life experiences, and thoughts that influence what you think about the older adults you care for?
- ⇒ Demonstrate a willingness and desire to learn about each resident. Where are they from? What are their life experiences and religious beliefs that influence how they see the world?
- ⇒ Develop new skills or modify current ones to meet the needs of residents. How do you say "hello" in their native language? What activities can celebrate a resident's heritage or lifestyle? Does their family have suggestions on ways to better communicate?
- ⇒ Demonstrate respect, curiosity, and a desire to understand the differences in your residents. Ask them questions and respect their answers, even if you don't agree.

On February 11, 2011, the Ombudsman Program provided an opportunity for staff to learn more about diversity in many of its forms. "Connecting the Pieces" was an all day event held at the International Civil Rights Museum. The morning had educational sessions offered by a diverse group of experts including those representing the Latino community, Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgendered issues, spirituality, and physical disabilities. An hour long tour of the museum was offered after lunch. Thank you to all long-term care facility staff who came and immersed themselves in the concept that everyone is different and it's okay to embrace that difference.



**How to work together
when we all think differently.**

Experience the Snoezelen Room



Imagine being in a room filled with colored lights dancing on the walls, gentle sounds playing in the background, wonderful scents floating in the air, and bubble tubes – all designed to be stimulating but not overwhelming. This is what residents with dementia experience when they visit the Snoezelen Room at Morningview Assisted Living & Alzheimer’s Care in Greensboro.

Snoezelen (*pronounced* like “SNOOzelen”) means to seek out and to relax. Its concept was defined in the late 1970’s by two Dutch therapists. While working at an institute in Holland, the two therapists learned of the positive responses a colleague elicited from a severely challenged client while exposed to a sensory

environment he had assembled. More than twenty-five years ago the Snoezelen concept was considered very radical. Today, after discovering the benefits, it is considered a safe, non-threatening, and effective therapeutic tool for residents in long-term care who have diagnoses such as dementia, stroke and traumatic brain injury, chronic pain, behavior and mood disturbances, and all who may be sensory deprived due to a physical or mental condition.

At Morningview, residents participate in thirty minute sessions that are monitored by staff. The goal of the unit is to provide a relaxing environment in which residents, relatives, and staff can develop a therapeutic relationship, which does not require any intellectual response. The room has been a hit with most residents, especially those who are in the mid and stressful stages of Alzheimer’s disease. Some residents enjoy 1:1 time in the room while others enter the room in a group setting for conversation and reminiscence. Some residents have even been inspired to dance in the room to music from their era. Family members and relatives also enjoy the room as a place to relax.

Staff members monitor the effects of the room using an Agitated Behavior Scale both before and after sessions along with blood pressure and pulse checks. In other situations, they monitor particular goals. For instance, one resident with Alzheimer’s disease began to lose weight because of distractions in the dining room. He was transitioned to the Snoezelen room for his lunch meal. While in the room, he was able to feed himself with prompting and gained 2.8 lbs within the first month!



For more information or to experience Snoezelen for yourself, contact Morningview Assisted Living & Alzheimer’s Care at (336) 545-3444.

Introducing Our Newest Staff



Ellen Taylor Atkins

Ellen Taylor Atkins is the principal of *Long Term Care from Ellen*, a long-term care insurance planning firm and an affiliate of EMM Financial Services Inc. of Greensboro, NC. She has thirty years of experience in financial services and eleven years of specialization in long-term care planning. She brings to her clients a working knowledge of quality planning solutions and a vital connection to long-term care providers. Ellen has earned group clients as large as the Moses Cone Health System as well as working with individuals and families to provide insurance solutions for long-term care.

Ellen is a graduate of the University of Miami with a degree in organizational communication. She is a Fellow in the NC Institute on Aging and a 2010 Senior Leadership Initiative graduate. She is a frequent speaker at local and state conferences about the importance of long-term care planning. Her passion for her work and her advocacy for seniors is based on her experience as a caregiver for her mother, a victim of Alzheimer's disease. Ellen is also the mother of two sons and grandmother of four granddaughters. In her role as Project C.A.R.E. Family Consultant, Ellen will help participating families in Alamance, Caswell, Guilford, and Rockingham counties by guiding them to community resources such as adult day care programs, in home aide services, and other entities who can provide the primary caregiver with relief or respite. The program is being guided by two physicians from UNC-CH and is intended to produce evidence-based results such as reduced hospitalizations.

Charlotte Williams, a native North Carolinian, grew up in Wilson, NC and graduated from Wilson County Schools. She earned a Master of Arts degree in Education from East Carolina University and a Bachelor of Science degree in Public Health Education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. As a Health & Wellness Specialist, Charlotte is passionate about providing timely solutions for health and wellness needs. She comes to the Area Agency on Aging with 15 years of experience creating community health, public health, and health education solutions for individuals, communities, and organizations. Previously she has worked as a school health administrator in Rockingham County Schools and health teacher in Guilford County Schools. When "walking the talk", you can find Charlotte at a Zumba or kick-boxing class. She believes that by improving their health and quality of life, people can reach their fullest potential.



Charlotte Williams

As the MIPPA & Wellness Coordinator at the Area Agency on Aging, Charlotte will be identifying and contacting Medicare beneficiaries who may be eligible for the Part D 'Extra Help' within the region. She will also be designing outreach activities aimed at preventing disease and promoting wellness among older and disabled adults.

Please help us welcome Ellen and Charlotte!

Welcome New Community Advisory Committee Members!

Caswell County:

Alice Robinson - Joint CAC

Davidson County:

Barbara Barnes - Nursing Home CAC

Thessia Everhart-Roberts - Nursing Home CAC

Brenda Pruettt - Nursing Home CAC

Guilford County-Nursing Home:

Debbie Spohn-Hickcox - Nursing Home CAC

Diane McLaughlin - Nursing Home CAC

Randolph County:

Robbin Adams - Adult Care Home CAC

Rockingham County:

Victor Armstrong - Joint CAC

Community Advisory Committee members are the link between facilities and the community. Their work to ensure that Residents' Rights are upheld results in improved quality of life for Nursing and Adult Care Home residents. If you are interested in serving as a Community Advisory Committee Member, please contact (336) 294-4950.

Resources! Resources! Resources!

Veterans National Caregiver Support Line

On February 1, 2011, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched a new toll free National Caregiver Support Line. This will serve as a primary resource/referral center to assist caregivers, Veterans, and others seeking information about caring for a veteran. Callers will be able to access information about VA and community caregiver support resources and obtain referrals to Caregiver Support Coordinators at VA Medical Centers. The line is open Monday - Friday from 8:00 am - 11:00 pm and Saturday 10:30 am - 6:00 pm Eastern Time. The National Caregiver Support Line Toll-Free Number is **1-855-260-3274**. In addition, the VA will be providing expanded education and training for caring for veterans at home, counseling, and support groups, and an enhanced website for caregivers. The new website can be accessed at: <http://www.caregiver.va.gov>.

Pioneer Network- Design on a Dollar

The Pioneer Network, a culture change education and advocacy organization, has launched Design on a Dollar to help long-term care facilities determine and implement low cost environmental changes to help create a homelike environment for their residents. The information can be accessed at: <http://www.pioneernetwork.net/DesignOnADollar/>

Mark Your Calendar — Upcoming Events!



March 9-12, 2011: Allied Team Training for Parkinson, Chapel Hill, NC

This comprehensive training program in Parkinson's care designed for healthcare professionals includes: key symptoms and treatment approaches for all states of Parkinsons disease, specialized assessment and care techniques, participating in interdisciplinary care teams, and key concepts in health literacy and culturally responsive services. Fee for registration, CEUs available. For more information visit <http://www.parkinson.org/attp>.

March 15-17, 2011: Household Leadership Training, High Point, NC

For more information visit: <http://www.culturechangenow.com> or call (414) 258-3649

March 25, 2011: Webinar: Enhancing Quality of Life Through Recreational Therapy in the Nursing Home

This webinar will discuss the role of recreation therapy in long-term care. It will review CMS definitions, roles of recreational therapists in relation to MDS Sections F and O, as well as the current evidence of recreational therapy's role on care quality.

For more information visit: <https://secure.confertel.net/tsregister.asp?course=533601&mcode=ATRA>

April 8, 2011: Overcoming Trauma and Loss: Tools for Rebuilding, Greensboro, NC

15th Annual Regional Mental Health Conference sponsored by the Mental Health Association in Greensboro.

For more information visit <http://www.mhag.org/conference.cfm>

April 14, 2011: Aging is Good Business: 6th Annual Summit, Raleigh, NC

It is *good business* when your employees and your customers approach aging with positive physical and cognitive fitness. This year's Aging is Good Business summit is Thursday afternoon preceeding the Southern Gerontological Society 32nd Annual Meeting. Sponsored by the UNC-Greensboro Gerontology Program. For more information visit <http://www.uncg.edu/gro/aigb/aigb2011/index.html>

April 27-29, 2011: North Carolina Association on Aging Annual Conference, Greensboro NC

Areas of concentration for the conference include adult services, senior centers, caregiver services, senior nutrition services, and leadership. For more information visit <http://library.constantcontact.com/download/get/file/1101485950052-40/2011.NCAOA+Registration+Packet.pdf>

May 20, 2011: Center for Creative Aging Symposium, Greensboro, NC

The 2011 CCA Symposium will feature two tracks - Visual Arts and Dance/Movement. Workshops are designed for artists and staff in long-term care and healthcare. More information is available at : http://www.cca-nc.org/ccanc_specialevents.html

Piedmont Triad Council of Governments

Area Agency on Aging

Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

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Please share your copy of *The Advocate* with others in your facility:

Administrator
 Activities
 Social Work
 Admissions/Marketing
 DON/Nursing
 Resident Care Director
 Resident Council
 Family Council
 Finally, Post it on the bulletin board!