

NEW IDEAS AND SOLUTIONS FOR AGING SERVICES IN KANSAS

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GERTI Provides New, Fresh Ideas for Long-Term Care Employees

The Geriatric Education Resource & Training Institute (GERTI) reached a new milestone in January 2007. The 1,000th student attended the GERTI course, which began October 13, 2003. The students came from 144 different organizations throughout the state of Kansas and the Kansas City metropolitan area.

GERTI offers an "Advanced Education in Long-Term Care" course to anyone employed a long-term care setting. The course focuses on resident-centered care, culture change, death and dying, dementia care, surveys & regulations, employee development, and more. GERTI also has offered an "Alzheimer's and Dementia" course, along with a quarterly offering of "Management & Leadership for Long-term Care."

Attendees of the GERTI programs always give them a phenomenal response.

"I would highly recommend it to anybody," said Brenda Ball who works at Olathe Good Samaritan Center and went through the program last September. "It was a very good program, and I would love to do it again."

Ball first heard about the GERTI programs through the Good Samaritan Center where she started working about six months ago. Good Samaritan routinely sent employees through the programs, and they recommended it to Ball because it was different and went over a lot of applications for working with elders.

After attending the program, Ball felt like she had a new way of thinking from what was originally taught in other classes.

"When I first learned about nursing it was very formal, institu-

tionalized, and old fashioned," said Ball. "Now there is more one-on-one involvement, more personalization, human contact, and even talking to an elder like they are a friend of loved one."

Some of the best things that Ball learned from the training was how much nursing and medicine have changed, how much more they know about the aging process now, and how many different approaches you can take when working with elders. She learned this through employees from other organizations during group sharing. It was a great way to see how others do things, what has worked, what has not worked, and then building off that foundation. She really enjoyed the group sharing and talking about how to take an idea and make it more resident-centered in her organization.

Ball also felt that the instructor was excellent and the videos were very touching. She didn't think any of them were out-of-date like some other educational sessions, but they gave you a great firsthand look at some of the topics discussed.

"The program is also like a reflection," said Ball. "If you do it with co-workers, you can reflect on what you are all doing, and then start to make changes."

Ball has been making some changes at Olathe Good Samaritan Center from what she learned in the class. She is working on an education program to be held once a month for the Alzheimer's Unit. She wants employees to have a better grasp on what to say to someone with Alzheimer's versus someone who is aging normally.



Learning at GERTI

"This program is good for someone who has never worked with the elderly population, because it helps you know if this field is right for you, and gives you a feel for what working with the aging is like," said Ball. "If you have worked in the field for a long time, it is also good for you, as it gives you a new angle on how to take new ideas back to your work and implement them."

Many Kansas long-term care providers utilize GERTI training for new and existing staff and proactively ask that GERTI courses be brought to their areas. GERTI evaluations and feedback indicate that GERTI education has made a positive and lasting impact on job satisfaction in the workplace.

Ingram's Business Magazine honored the GERTI program in 2005 with Hero in Healthcare Award. GERTI instructors have presented at KAHSA and AAHSA in 2005 and Pioneer Network in 2006.



If you would like more information on the Advanced Education in Long-Term Care course or would like to know when GERTI will be in your area, please call Chris Osborn at (913) 477-8252.