

ABOUT THIS MODULE

Included here you will find a sampling of some of the pages out of this educational module which is intended for use by nursing homes who wish to promote more social, non-traditional models of long-term care. The intent of these modules is to assist organizations in implementing progressive, innovative approaches to care that should make a significant difference in the quality of care and the quality of life for those living and working in long-term care environments. Full copies of the modules in pdf format are available. Please contact us for the fee schedule for these modules at gerontology@ksu.edu.

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The development of PEAK materials was supported by the Kansas Department on Aging and the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services through a Title XIX contract and matching funds provided by Kansas State University, Kansas Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, Kansas Health Care Association, and volunteers from the Long-Term Care profession.

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Revised December 1, 2003

Pioneering Change

**Community for Nursing
Home Residents
Education Module**



to

**Promote Excellent Alternatives in Kansas
Nursing Home**



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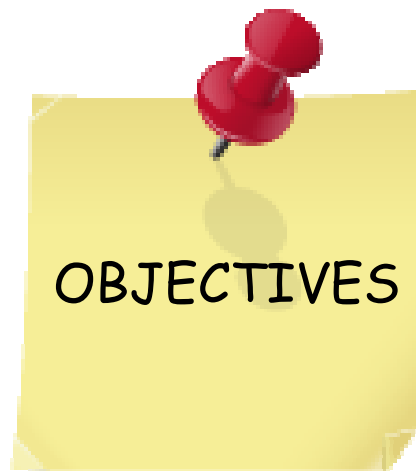
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Course Objectives

1. Develop an understanding of community within the nursing home.
2. Create an awareness of the importance of being involved in a community.
3. To highlight strategies for fostering community both within the walls of the nursing home and with the surrounding community.





Community for Nursing Home Residents

"...when people are considered to be "in-community", they are part of a group of individuals who provide mutual support, caring and connectedness"

(Peterson, 1997, p. 2)

For as long as he can remember, Marty enjoyed starting each day with a cup of coffee and conversation with his friends at the local McDonald's. Once he moved into the nursing home, he no longer felt up to traveling to McDonald's but missed his friends. Rather than letting this piece of Marty's life end, staff members contacted the gentlemen in the coffee group and asked them to start having coffee each day at the nursing home. The nursing home provided space and the coffee to the group. The gentlemen bring their own McDonald's mugs! Marty may be living in the nursing home but he is still "in community" with his coffee group friends and the nursing home.



One of the greatest joys many residents remember is spending time connecting with others and being part of the local community. Many share stories of community fairs, festivals, friends and dances. Being part of a community makes a person feel connected to something greater than him or herself and feel a sense of belonging. When a person enters the nursing home, they may lose the connection to community and the benefits from participation. These community connections need not be lost. Community can be created within the nursing home and maintained with the broader community around the nursing home. Marty provides a wonderful example of how person-centered

care can lead to community connectedness that never has to end.

Envisioning Our Community Activity

Each person perceives community differently. Definitions include everything from place of residence to shared ethnicity. In order to build community within the home, the group must develop a shared vision. Working together to develop a vision provides an opportunity to develop shared experience and shared symbols, which are both key elements of community. This activity first has small groups of residents and staff working together to define community, then builds a group definition and strategies for building it. The facilitator should let the groups know that the definitions could include the way we want it to be, who is part of the community, what takes place there, and feelings and connections between groups and individuals.

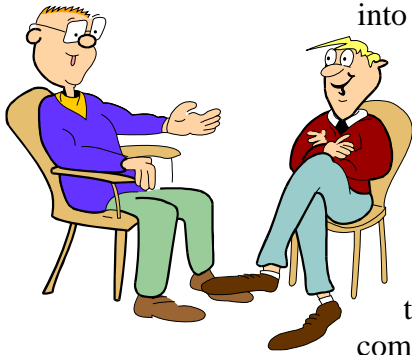
Divide the participants into groups of four making sure each group has residents and staff members. Each group of four will need poster paper, several colored markers, scissors, magazines for cutting out pictures and a glue stick. The group will have 30 minutes to make a pictorial definition of community and develop answers to the following questions:





- Did everyone in the group have the same concept of community?
- How did you reach a consensus?
- What elements does your group feel are most important?

After the groups are finished, each should take a turn discussing their poster and sharing their answers to the discussion questions. Posters should be hung on the wall where people can view and discuss them. At a later time, the group should reconvene to make one poster that incorporates the ideas of all of the groups



into one shared definition of community. Once the definition is developed, the group should discuss strategies for implementing their ideal community.

Remember, as persons in the community change, so too must the vision of the home. This activity should be repeated periodically to see if the definition and strategies are still in alignment with the ideas of the group. Involvement from as many different people as possible will make this activity more valuable. Research has shown that communities are more accepting of activities, policies, and programs when a

variety of individuals are involved (Mattessich et. al, 1997).

What is Community?

There are numerous definitions of community. For the purpose of this module, community will be defined as "*people who live within a geographically defined area and who have social and psychological ties with each other and with the place where they live*" (Mattessich et. al., 1997, p. 6).

This definition is easily applied to the nursing home environment since residents all live within the same walls and are also in the same broader geographic community. According to the authors of the definition, social ties include kinship and friendship connections as well as participation in community-wide activities. The psychological ties include feelings of attachment, identity, a sense of belonging, as well as commitment and camaraderie with other occupants of the community. The social and psychological ties to community are what this module is intended to help foster.



Being Part of a Community

Communities and the opportunity to participate in them are an important part of and determinant of health for both an individual and a group (McAllister & Silverman, 1999). People need to feel that they belong. This includes feeling valued as a member of a group, receiving support from others and having emotional sustenance (Peterson, 1997). People have a need to be connected to others around them and this need does not end because a person is older



or has chronic health conditions. People always need people!

Al Condeluci, a leader in community building, believes there are three critical elements for belonging, inclusion and community membership. These include:

- Being acknowledged
- Being appreciated
- Being accepted (Condeluci, 2008)

To demonstrate these, he points to the theme song to the well known television show Cheers which states "You wanna go where everybody knows your name and they're always glad you came." This simple song has a powerful message and gives a clear understanding of what being part of a community feels like.

For people to have this feeling within the nursing home community, residents and staff must know every individual and encourage each person to share things that are uniquely them (both good and bad) with the community. This might be asking a resident with a special talent to perform for the group or asking a resident with knowledge on a topic to share their thoughts with others in the community. It could even be as simple as saying, "good morning" and asking a question that demonstrates your understanding of the individual and that person's current joys or concerns. It certainly includes providing opportunities for each person to contribute to the community in his or her own unique way. Such inclusion is vital to community and individual success.

"Without a sense of caring, there can be no sense of community."

Anthony J. D'Angelo

At Villa Maria in Mulvane, Kansas, part of becoming a community has included learning about the individuals who live there. Staff members decided they wanted to give residents a purpose and realized one of the best ways to do this was to find out more about the residents. In the process, they found that one gentleman was previously a mail carrier. He came to Villa Maria from an assisted living facility where he never left his room. Upon moving in, he began delivering mail to the other residents six days a week. This gives him a reason to get up and get moving. He has benefited not only from having a purpose but also from the social interaction with other residents. Another resident, who has a master's degree in social work, was exhibiting some negative behaviors. Once staff members began giving her the opportunity to use her skills the behaviors diminished. She has helped staff members problem solve, given them ideas on how to help other residents adjust to life at Villa Maria and provided some training to staff and residents. She was searching for ways to get attention and feel needed. Since making these discoveries and utilizing the knowledge, residents have opportunities to feel useful and be fulfilled.



For residents to have a sense of community the connections must not only be between residents and staff

members but must also occur between residents. Find ways to encourage residents to get to know each other. At a recent conference, the presenter suggested having a get to know you question of the day or week. The question could be sitting on the dining room table or could be



used in learning circles. The intent of this is to get residents to share their stories and to encourage connections to develop among residents. It is very difficult to feel connected to someone about whom little is known.



In her research related to homelessness among the institutionalized elderly, Judith Carboni (1990) suggests that those living in a nursing home share many of the same interactions with the environment as those who are homeless. She found that residents experience the same sense of powerlessness, non-personhood (loss of identity and not belonging), disconnectedness (loss of place and memories, no future), insecurity, meaningless space (shared space), placelessness with no journey (no boundaries and dependency) and lack of boundaries (lack of privacy). Carboni suggests these feelings like homelessness may be overcome by building a "holistic, nurturing, affirming, and healing community in the nursing home." (Carboni, 1990, p. 36) The meaning of community and the benefits from participation could have an impact on many of the feelings of homelessness experienced by those in nursing homes.

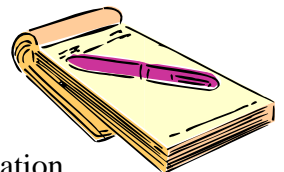
Are We a Community?

It is difficult to know if residents within the nursing home feel a sense of community without asking them. To get a feel for the sense of community within the nursing home, residents could be asked to answer a few of the yes/no statements below. These are taken from the Neighborhood Sense of Community Scale (Nasar & Julian, 1995). If the home utilizes a household or neighborhood model, neighborhood or household could be inserted instead of community. This would provide

information on the sense of community within each household or neighborhood instead of the home as a whole. If a resident answers no to any of the following questions the interviewer may want to explore the reason for the answer with the resident.

- I am quite similar to most people who live here.
- If I feel like talking, I can generally find someone to talk to right away.
- My friends in this community are part of my everyday activities.
- If there was a serious problem in this community, the people here would get together and solve it.
- What is good for this community is good for me.
- There are people in this community, other than my family, who really care about me.

The responses given to these statements can be used to gauge the sense of community within the building. The responses could also be used for community building. Completing this assessment with a variety of residents and doing this survey frequently will ensure the information is accurate. A staff member or a resident who is interested in community building could conduct this study.



Building Community Within the Walls of the Nursing Home

With an understanding of community and its benefits as well as an idea of what the residents and staff would like the community to look like within the home it is time to develop an understanding of how to build community. The term community