

“The most rewarding thing about this,” says Kwok, “is the experience of talking to the older adults; I’ve interviewed them, learned their life stories. It’s really fascinating to listen to 80 years of experience. I’m more aware that growing old is really what you make it. Some residents love growing old, they love their age. Others hate it.”

For Yonashiro, the experience has shattered stereotypes about the homogeneity of the residents: “It has been eye opening [to see] how different and diverse the residents are from each other. They all have different attitudes and habits. I’ve realized the elderly are just as diverse as the rest of us.”

Because her mother, a registered nurse, had managed nursing facilities, Thomas had a pretty good idea of what to expect at Kingsley Manor.

“I was skeptical about moving away from campus life, but when I saw the facility, everything seemed like an incredible opportunity,” says Thomas. “I completely fell in love with it right off the bat, and decided I’d do this even if I had to pay rent.” She says she has made lifelong friends among the residents; one resident enlisted her help to start a Bible study group and cat-sits for Thomas when she’s away. Her next-door neighbor allowed Thomas to interview her for a school assignment, and another resident, a night-owl, encourages her when she’s up late with school work.

“What surprised me was how warm and caring the environment was, and it was my home right off the bat,” Thomas adds. “I became invested and the residents became invested with me. I feel like people are missing out if they don’t sit down and talk with older adults.”

The affection goes both ways, says Kirschner, who says residents reacted strongly when a (false) rumor that the program would be cancelled began circulating.

For Thomas, the worst thing about living at Kingsley Manor is the thought of leaving: “There are times I think I want to live here forever. This has really been my family, my home.”

Nursing Facility to Repeat Residents’ Summer Camp Adventure

St. Andre Health Care Center, Biddeford, Maine

Contact: Nancy Mulvihill, vice president, corporate communications, Covenant Health Systems, nancy_mulvihill@covenanths.org or (781) 862-1634, ext. 235.

Last year, the staff of St. Andre Health Care Center took 16 residents in two shifts to Camp Waban, a lakeside camp in Sanford, Maine, designed for persons with disabilities. The activity proved so popular that St. Andre held a Valentine’s Day fund raiser to be able to take residents to camp again this summer.

As James Corbett, St. Andre’s director of mission, describes it, the decision to take 80- and 90-year-olds camping generated excitement but an undeniable staff apprehension, too. Yet staff’s concerns never materialized, and residents clearly enjoyed the scenic outing and camp activities.

“A 90-year-old resident in the Alzheimer’s unit, who had lost sight in one eye, bounced a basketball and walked the length of

the court,” Corbett reports. “Residents in wheelchairs were able to swing in wheelchair accessible swings ... A resident who rarely left his room while at St. Andre returned to the camp for another shift.”

A new sense of teamwork was forged among staff as well. Says Corbett: “Nurse managers volunteered to help the certified nurse assistant wash residents ... CNAs who only volunteered to stay a



St. Andre Health Care Center

St. Andre resident Reny Remillard Sr. enjoys a boat ride with Camp Waban staffer Dorinda Vezina in Sanford, Maine.

day were staying the entire week, and staff who went by just to visit returned to St. Andre excited and with a heightened sense of awareness to what it means to truly bring joy to another person and to be able to share in that joy as a result.”

The trip also has prompted St. Andre staff to consider how perceptions of residents shape the care they receive and what it means to see another person as a whole human being instead of merely as frail and needing care.

“It has become clear to our staff that the one thing we cannot do is go back to the ‘normal’ way of doing things,” says Corbett. “Residents have experienced something they really enjoyed, and to go back to a monotonous routine would be worse than not going in the first place. The camping experience turned into a tremendous grace-filled moment ... that we are still struggling to understand and recapture ... and as we meet and debrief with staff and residents, we hope to discern ways to make the camp experience the norm.”

Disaster Preparedness Workshops Focus on Needs of Older Adults

Mather LifeWays, Evanston, Ill.

Contact: Theresa Sangram, administrative assistant for PREPARE, tsangram@matherlifeways.com or (847) 492-6790, toll-free (888) 722-6468.

ideas and innovations

Mather LifeWays is offering two-day workshops to equip long-term care providers to respond effectively to crises. The workshops are an outgrowth of PREPARE, Mather LifeWays' award-winning program designed to give long-term care providers resources for dealing with public health and safety emergencies.

PREPARE workshops are intended for the staff of skilled nursing and residential retirement communities, assisted living centers and home health care agencies. The training focuses on:

- Developing and understanding an effective disaster plan
- Understanding the effects of disasters on older adults
- Demonstrating leadership skills during and after emergencies
- Activating community partnerships and back-up strategies in the aftermath of a disaster
- Maintaining order by practicing the plan through exercises and drills
- Involving families in disaster planning

PREPARE workshops are offered in Mather LifeWays' Evanston, Ill., location and at select national locations. A federal grant supports the costs of the workshops and materials. Upcoming workshop dates are posted on www.matherlifeways.com/prepare.

In March, the American Society on Aging recognized PREPARE with the 2007 Healthcare and Aging Award.



Wesbury United

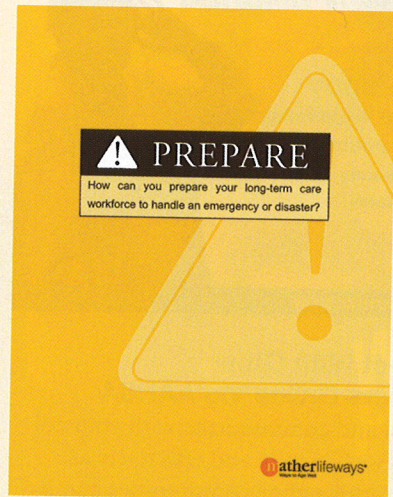
Betty Ferry (left) and Alice Alford, residents at Wesbury United, enjoy the use of the new residents' kitchen.

most excitement.

Thanks to a remodeling not long ago, "we have created a homelike kitchen and decorated and designated it the residents kitchen," Danke reports.

For those who want to cook, an occupational therapy assessment confirms the person's ability to perform kitchen tasks safely, either independently or with staff assistance. Dietary workers review safe food handling and appliance use with resident cooks. The activities department works with residents for simple baking. Food service personnel direct and guide meal preparation when cooking is more involved and will be served to other residents. Only pasteurized eggs are used for independent resident baking, for instance, and dishes that residents wash are rewashed afterward to ensure proper sanitation.

Residents as old as 100 have taken part, and some especially enjoy preparing foods using their own long-familiar recipes.



Nursing Residents

Get Wish to "Cook Like They Used To"

Wesbury United Methodist Retirement Community, Meadville, Pa.

Contact: Barb Danke, food service director, *HCWesburyUnited-Methodist-FoodPA@sodexoUSA.com* or (814) 332-9258.

The resident cooking program at Wesbury's Grace Skilled Nursing Facility began with residents' comments to a charge nurse that they wished they were able to bake and cook like they used to. Sensing a possibility, the nurse recounted the conversation to administration, and a new dining option was born.

In fact, as the nursing facility has embraced culture change, the food and nutrition department has initiated several new activities, including monthly candlelight dinners and monthly cooking demonstrations in which Food Service Director Barb Danke cooks lunch in each unit as well as a breakfast of choice that stimulates residents' senses and increases their food intake. It is the resident cooking program, though, that has generated the

Tell Us About Your Best Ideas!

FutureAge wants to know how you incorporate new thinking and innovation into your operations, services and governance. If you have ideas and experience to share on the topics below (or others), contact *FutureAge* editor Gene Mitchell at gmitchell@aahsa.org or (202) 508-9424.

- Risk management and corporate compliance
- Services in senior housing and assisted living
- Quality First in practice
- Introducing new technologies
- Workforce recruitment and retention
- Marketing and public outreach
- Culture change