

Inspiring Community Engagement with Long-Term Care Facilities

Communities are essential to the physical and mental health of everyone, including long-term care residents. During the COVID-19 pandemic, residents were isolated from their communities both inside and outside of their facility. Many residents who were separated from their friends, loved ones, and neighbors, during the pandemic showed signs of mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety. Now that restrictions have been lifted, residents are re-establishing their roles in their communities.

Getting Involved in Your Community

A community can have many levels. It can be inside or outside a facility. It can include loved ones, other residents, facility staff, and members of the greater neighborhood or city. Residents have a right to participate in communities within their nursing home and in the greater community surrounding their facility.

Building Community Within the Facility

Ideas for building community within the facility include:

- Hanging posters with short biographies outside residents' doors or in a designated spot in the facility
- Creating a "Resident Hero" bulletin board that spotlights one resident a month
- Hosting a book club or discussion group
- Organizing a resident and staff talent show
- Holding themed dinners, barbeques, or afternoon tea parties
- Curating educational experiences including classes and speaker events
- Inviting guest authors, politicians, community leaders, musicians, comedians, religious leaders, or artists to do seminars, perform, or teach classes

Resident Councils

Another way to participate in the community is to become part of the nursing home's Resident Council. Resident Councils help raise the voice of the residents to facility administrators. They share concerns and work with administrators to increase the quality of care and the quality of life for residents living in the facility. They can also build the community in the nursing home by planning events and inviting the outside community to participate!

Becoming Part of the Larger Community Outside the Nursing Facility

In addition to being integral members of their nursing home community, residents are also important members of their neighborhood and city. Residents can build community with their neighbors outside the facility by:

- Organizing trips to museums and art galleries
- Attending community events like block parties, fairs, or cultural events
- Attending religious services
- Having picnics in the local park
- Sponsoring an open house and inviting the community in on tours of the facility to show them their activities and what's happening in the nursing home
- Inviting local children to come trick-or-treating or to celebrate other holidays with residents
- Inviting schools or children's groups to visit, or "adopting" a classroom
- Attending plays, music events, or sporting events
- Planning shopping trips
- Using social media to connect with other people with similar interests
- Participating in art, educational, or fitness classes or events
- Attending city or county council meetings
- Connecting with civic organizations

Right to Self-Determination

Residents have the right to choose the activities they join, to participate in person-centered care-planning to fit their personal and cultural preferences, to interact with members of the community and participate in community activities inside and outside of the nursing home, and to organize and participate in resident councils.



Resources

- Download or purchase copies of the Community Building **Enrichment Book**.
https://theconsumervoice.org/uploads/files/events/2022_Enrichment_Book.pdf.
- Check out ideas for special **Dining Themes**.
<https://theconsumervoice.org/uploads/files/events/Dining-Ideas.pdf>
- Host a **Learning Circle** to develop common ground between residents.
<https://theconsumervoice.org/uploads/files/events/Learning-20CircleActionPact.pdf>.
- Celebrate a **Resident Hero** every month.
<https://theconsumervoice.org/uploads/files/events/Resident-Hero-16-revised.pdf>



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