



The ORANJ TREE

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Let's Build an Unbeatable Team In 2011

by Dan Hartley



ORANJ leaders do their best as “movers and shakers” for residents of CCRCs in New Jersey but they can only be effective if you are willing to be “shook.”

Let me give you some examples.

A few years ago ORANJ decided to fight a proposed bed tax. The state wanted to levy a \$10.50 per day tax on all nursing home beds and ORANJ wanted the state to carve out an exception for Assisted Living beds. We wrote a model letter and asked residents to write their representatives to support the exception. The result was such a deluge of letters that the state begged us to stop and then agreed to our legislative request.

Another example occurred when we were making the case for a law to mandate that at least one resident serve on each CCRC's board of trustees. We asked residents to come to Trenton to demonstrate the importance of the legislation and to help us support our leaders, who were making formal presentations to the state senate and assembly. Several

CCRCs sent cars full of enthusiastic resident supporters and after the successful conclusion of the final hearing we received a resounding round of applause.

Contrast this with the half-hearted response to ORANJ's recent request for letters to federal representatives to extend the exception process whereby physicians can seek to increase the allowable cap on physical therapy, speech and occupational therapy. The current cap is a severe hardship for those needing more than \$1800+ worth of therapy in any one year. ORANJ sent to presidents of Residents Associations/RACs a model letter and a request to solicit letters of support from their residents.

Unfortunately, in this case, some people apparently have dropped the ball: the presidents of the Residents Associations/ RACs who did not elicit the letters of support, the residents who did not write the letters, and the vice presidents of ORANJ who monitor such activity. In the new year, let's work together with enthusiasm and build a team that moves and shakes our CCRCs to bring about important changes.

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THE ORANJ FALL MEETING

On October 20, 2010, more than 100 residents and guests attended the 43rd semiannual meeting in the beautiful dining room/auditorium of Harrogate in Lakewood.



As morning speaker, Michele K. Guhl, President and CEO of NJAHS (NJ Association of Homes and Services for the Aging), described its main functions as advocacy for bills, policies and regulations affecting these services, and as providers of educational programs for their staffs.



Senator Robert W. Singer, currently representing the 30th District in NJ, and serving his 23rd year in the Legislature, was the afternoon speaker. He touched briefly on a variety of issues that require serious scrutiny, such as our vastly expanded pension system and the enormous outlay for educational programs along with its disparities and deficiencies. Closer to home, he discussed his concern about a looming deficit in physicians, especially general practitioners, and the spiraling costs of medications, fueled in part by advertising.

HOW TO SURVIVE IN DIFFICULT TIMES

We recently interviewed Brian Lawrence, President and CEO of Fellowship Village, concerning his presentation on how a CCRC can make it through an economic downturn. Below is the gist of his remarks.

When times are tough, as they have been in the last 18 months, if you serve in a for-profit CCRC you rely on your financial results to give you standing, but if you're in a not-for-profit operation your success depends on your commitment to living your mission. Our mission helps us set our priorities and manage all facets of our organization.

To fulfill our mission we need to preserve a strong financial foundation. We need to make sure that our operations do not depend on our investment income or donations. We need sufficient cash reserves, strong operating margins, and continuous examination of operating efficiencies.

During difficult times we need to invest in ourselves, in our services and in our infrastructure in order to meet the needs of our residents or prospects and also because it is the right thing to do. This is the residents' home and we want to make sure this is the best home they will ever have.

Having a good reputation is critical to resident referrals, one of our best sources for new prospects. We have found that open and frequent communication is a key to success. We listen to our residents and staff, hear what they say, and then respond.

We also include our residents in the decision making process because this directly impacts their comfort in their home. For example, we recently created several joint resident-management committees that worked together to upgrade our facilities to keep our appearance up to date and welcoming to current and prospective residents. To upgrade our services we have expanded our Wellness Center program, started an "at home" concierge service for our residents, and developed an enhanced staffing model for our Health Center.

We also give back to both residents and staff to show that we appreciate them. Recently, two residents received special recognition from us and from NJAHS (the NJ agency that serves the aging). See article in the Summer 2010 issue of the ORANJ TREE. Staff is recognized through many special staff appreciation events.

In order to promote cooperation between our seasoned management team and dedicated staff, we provide generous support to Human Resources, encourage proactive team meetings, and conduct strategic planning with both the board and management.

We also pay a great deal of attention to our marketing and community relations programs. We make sure that people in the community know who we are and what we do, to create a presence out there. We demonstrate that we are partners with the broader community.

I'll leave you with one last thought: Living our mission and our core values every day inspires us forward.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE TRANSPORTATION SURVEY

In the summer of 2010 ORANJ sponsored a survey of resident transportation policies, which was conducted by Jean Samson of Winchester Gardens and Barbara Shreve of Arbor Glen. Completed questionnaires were received from 23 of the 24 members of ORANJ. A full report of the study as well as the questionnaire can be found on our website at oranjccrc.org.

The results show that all CCRCs use one or more vans or buses for local medical appointments and food shopping, usually at no charge. Charges for trips to distant medical appointments as well as to cultural events are generally based on mileage. 14 CCRCs do not charge for trips to cultural events. One facility provides a rented limo for residents attending cultural events at \$20-25 per person.

All except five CCRCs make some arrangements for transportation on evenings and weekends. One CCRC arranged such transportation through an

outside vendor and one has a staff member on call to pick up residents from the hospital on weekends or evenings.

All communities have a scheduler/coordinator for transportation and usually a fixed schedule for food shopping and local medical appointments. The lead time to schedule transportation varies greatly, mostly 2 or 3 days but up to a maximum of 7 days at one community.

Destinations vary. Some CCRCs provide transportation to polls on election day, to New York and Philadelphia museums, concerts, airports, churches, train stations, libraries and zoos as well as leisure time shopping on weekends.

Eight CCRCs have lists of resident volunteer drivers. Four of these require that residents using the service sign a waiver. The CCRCs do not take responsibility for these volunteer drivers.

THE APPLEWOOD MUSIC SUITE

Applewood Estates has established a music suite in an apartment formerly occupied by the late W. Rae Young and dedicated in his memory. It seems particularly appropriate as Rae was a music lover and proficient on the piano and the organ in his apartment. He was the accompanist of the Applewood Chorus. He also played the bass violin in the Monmouth Symphony Orchestra for 30 years. Many may remember Rae for his work with ORANJ.

The suite contains a Knabe piano once owned by a former resident and a Baldwin theater organ donated by a current resident. Recently a piano lab has been added in one of the former bedrooms. It contains a Clavinova Yamaha digital piano with three attached keyboards and four monitors to display music digitally. It is used for teaching piano

playing to more than one student at a time. The suite also gives room for those who wish to practice on their own instruments and much-needed storage space for music owned by our chorus. Small groups may practice singing or playing together.

The apartment happens to be located at the end of a hallway, with the wall between it and the next apartment already soundproofed during building, and opposite a stairwell, so noise is not a problem. The experienced director of the chorus, Marjorie Stine, a retired public school teacher and an Applewood resident, gives instruction in the piano lab and for students learning to play various instruments, including children of staff members.

Ann Cooper, Applewood Estates

LIVE THEATER BY PLAYREADERS OF MEADOW LAKES

And they did it without memorizing the script!

Last November, twelve residents under the direction of staff member Judith Hawk, gave a memorable performance of “Harvey.” In contrast with the usual play-reading group, this was a performance with plenty of action, entrances and exits, props and costumes. But true to their heritage, actors had access to the full script, either in their hands or lying on a prop. The actors were prepared by several rehearsals that required reading through the script. As a result, the actors had effortlessly memorized parts of the play and therefore were not “glued” to the words but free to move around the stage and act during the performance. One memorable scene was the spectacular entrance of Harvey, the Pooka, with top hat and attached rabbit ears, played by Jay Zimmer, the CEO.

This is the 10th performance by the Playreaders since 2005. In the beginning, the playreaders merely read

through plays together. Gradually they have become braver but they still avoid memorizing the lines because, like all of us their age, they fear the onslaught of “senior moments” when names and keywords disappear from memory. These lapses are a nuisance in casual conversation but a calamity in a formal, scripted dialogue.

This year there was only a single performance of the play, albeit to a full house. Possibly, future plays will be given additional performances. Residents who were unable to come to the auditorium were able to watch a live broadcast of the play in their apartments. Meadow Lakes has installed a system whereby everything in the auditorium, including budget presentations, is available in broadcast form. This keeps people from feeling isolated, even when handicapped.



Harvey makes an entrance.