

In this issue:

- Mental health for staff the Spencer way
- Glen Waverley on a winning streak
- Weeding out the generation gap
- Better Practice in Aged Care Awards

FRONT COVER:
Staff and residents enjoy painting at St Joseph's Aged Care Facility

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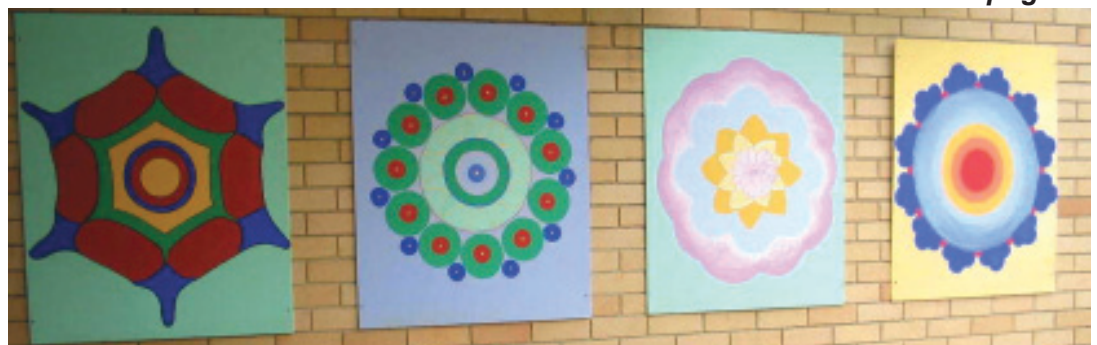
Pencils, paints and dementia

A dream to do things differently. The dream becomes reality. The result: a day of fun, laughter and the realisation that positive things can be done to ease the sadness that dementia often brings.

For some time, many residents with dementia at St Joseph's Aged Care Facility in Lismore, NSW, had spent their evenings colouring and painting.

Registered Nurse, Deslie Falls, explains that this activity seemed to calm the residents and was enjoyed immensely. The residents' concentration and the pleasure shown on their faces when they completed their artwork caught the attention of

Cont'd page 3



The finished works

Just a word...

By now all providers should have received a letter and details about the revised application for accreditation and the modified Better Practice in Aged Care Awards.

Our aim was to listen to those who use the application forms, and make them more user friendly and quicker and easier to use. The details are available on our website along with a new set of fact sheets. If you cannot download the application form, a CD version and technical



support is available by telephoning 1800 462 235.

I encourage you to submit your application and accompanying documents electronically.

We've also taken the opportunity to consider feedback from providers and modify the Higher Ratings Awards. The new Better Practice in Aged Care Awards will help highlight programs run by homes that have led to improved quality of life for residents.

Some examples of better

practice have already been highlighted in the first of six Better Practice events around Australia. The Adelaide event on 19 and 20 May covered topics as diverse as bridging the generation gap through a garden project with young people (see details in this issue), to sexuality and dementia, and quality and safety in medication.

I think an important part of these events is making contact with colleagues and discovering practical ideas and reassurances from their experiences. There are a lot of positive stories about aged care. Unfortunately it is not those that usually make the media.

Through the Better Practice events and *The Standard* we hope to bring about that balance.

Mark Brandon
Chief Executive Officer



Tasmania
17 June

Register now!

New South Wales
21 & 22 July

Register now!

Victoria
25 & 26 August

Queensland
29 & 30 September

Western Australia
10 & 11 November

For more information or to register, go to www.accreditation.aust.com or contact the Better Practice events team on (02) 8831 1028.

Staff movements

Ms Lynn May, the NSW State Manager, has taken up the temporary role of National Accreditation Manager to project manage the high volume workload expected during the next peak of accreditation. Her contact number is 02 8831 1039.

Ms Victoria Crawford has been appointed as acting NSW/ACT State Manager. She has been working in the Accreditation Division as Manager, Operation Services.

Pencils, paints and dementia cont'd

care staff, which led to discussions about extending the painting idea to a bigger project. As the painting occurred during the evenings, most families and many staff members were not there so missed the simple delight of play and achievement the residents experienced.

The dementia unit had, as Ms Falls describes, “a very unattractive courtyard with brick wall and wire fence”. Discussions inevitably led to painting a mural for the courtyard. After much preparation, the tools, the paints, the boards and the people were ready for a 9am start. Staff, family members and friends volunteered their time and, together with residents, enjoyed a day of painting and fun.

“It was the best of days in many ways. The residents were somewhat hesitant at first but there was



Joe and wife, Bonnie (resident) enjoy painting together

enough support from the many volunteers to coax them along. The quiet buzz once everyone became engrossed in the task was really exciting,” said Ms Falls.

Sharing a BBQ lunch was also helpful in nurturing the family atmosphere of the day.

There is no way to measure the impact of pleasure. But as Ms Falls explains, the time spent in preparing, participating and enjoying the outcome was invaluable.

“The relationships between resident, family and staff in the caring

process are always fragile. Most of the conversations with family are about the challenging and heartbreaking

times in the journey of dementia. Being able to come together for a common task that is also fun, just brings a little balance back,” she said.

With the success of the painting project, St Joseph’s is looking at introducing targeted family projects as a regular part of their future in sharing care in the dementia unit.

St Joseph’s Aged Care Facility is committed to providing meaningful activities to people with dementia that enhance their feelings of security and wellbeing. Their ‘Pencils, paints and dementia’ project is testament to that commitment. St Joseph’s has been accredited by the Agency for three years until 18 March 2006.



Jack and Bernie (residents) with university student Amalia

Mental health for staff – the Spencer way



The emotional needs of staff are just as important as those of the residents they care for, yet sometimes they can be overlooked. Spencer Residential Aged Care facility in Wynyard, Tasmania has recognised the effect that occupational stress can have on staff's mental wellbeing and, in response, have developed a "Mental Health for Staff" program.

The program, as DON Susan Hope explains, came about as lots of good ideas do: by accident. Staff were attending an educational session on the Management of Challenging Behaviour facilitated by a Dementia Support counsellor, and as the session progressed, it turned into a debriefing counselling session. The staff reported tremendous benefit from this impromptu debriefing and so "Mental Health" has now become a regular monthly activity.

"Staff have learned that

people cope in different ways and whilst some will cope with a situation with no difficulty, others may find it causes distress," Ms Hope explained.

"In the same way, they now accept that not everyone works at the same pace and that patience and support of co-workers is often the key. They

understand the importance of being able to unwind, and taking time out to enjoy breaks and most importantly of supporting each other. The meeting also allows for potentially stressful situations to be defused before they grow," Ms Hope said.

The effects of such a program are far reaching. A workplace such as Spencer Residential Aged Care Facility, that caters for the needs of its staff results in an increase in staff and management morale which ultimately means better care for residents.

Your say

Thank you to everyone who took time to fill in and send in the readership survey sent out with the April issue of *The Standard*. We have had an overwhelming response to the survey and are currently in the process of collating and sorting the information and suggestions received. We hope to use the suggestions as a springboard to improve *The Standard*. Keep an eye out for improvements over the next few months.

Do you or someone you know fit the bill?

Due to the feedback we received from the readership survey sent out in the last issue of *The Standard*, we are extending our profile section to include staff, volunteers and residents of aged care homes. If you believe that you or someone at the home you work or live in deserves a mention in our newsletter send us a note and let us know. Contact the Editor by email, fax or letter.

Weeding out the generation gap

The Agency's first Better Practice event for 2005 was held last month in Adelaide. The successful event covered a range of topics from dementia and mental health to ethics, medication, falls and enhancing the image of your organisation.

"Weeding out the generation gap" was presented by Linda Wallace, Manager of Springvale Residential Centre in Victoria, under the topic of Volunteers.

One of the greatest challenges in today's society is how to keep the generations coming together. Linda Wallace spoke about an ambitious gardening project at her facility that included volunteers from the



Proud resident Mary displays the colourful garden created by the residents and volunteers

broader community and in particular young people.

The project involved a partnership with the local council, volunteers, local businesses, year 10 horticulture students, residents, families and staff. Everyone came together fortnightly to work on propagating plants in new hot houses, rejuvenating existing garden beds, and the development of a hydroponic garden for growing plants and fresh produce.

Ms Wallace spoke about the success of the project, in bringing old and young people together to 'weed out the generation gap'. She said residents enjoyed the experience bonding with local young people and continue to show an interest in the gardens and maintaining the delightful display of



Resident and volunteer enjoy the gardening project

flowering plants as well as fresh produce to sell at the home's annual market day.

For more information on the project, contact Linda Wallace, Manager of Springvale Residential Centre on email lw Wallace@southern-cross.org.au.

For more information on the Agency's Better Practice events or to register, go to www.accreditation.aust.com or contact the Better Practice events team on (02) 8831 1028.



Better Practice in Aged Care awards

A change to the accreditation process is that the Higher Ratings Awards have been modified and are now called the Better Practice in Aged Care Awards. The Better Practice awards take effect from 1 July, but you can apply now with your new accreditation application if you wish.

The Better Practice in Aged Care Awards are presented for better practice in any program run by your home that benefits the lives of your residents.

The introduction of the new Better Practice in Aged Care Awards are a direct result of feedback from homes, assessors and the industry.

Feedback about Higher Ratings had suggested that the process was complex and at times cumbersome. Homes felt that the extra effort required to apply for higher ratings was a drawback.

The new awards are much more simplified – to understand and to

- Awards are for a program that improves the lives of your residents
- You apply at the same time as you re-apply for accreditation
- There is no fee for applications
- You can nominate up to three programs at your home
- You'll receive a certificate and profile on the Agency's website
- As well as opportunities to be involved in the Agency's Better Practice events

apply for. You simply need to demonstrate how a particular program within your home improves the lives of your residents.

You nominate for an award at the same time as re-applying for accreditation. There is no fee for nominations. The award is not linked to the accreditation period granted to a home as the award is not judged over all of the Accreditation Standards.

To be eligible for the awards:

- You must be a Commonwealth-funded aged care home
- Your home must be fully-compliant with the Accreditation Standards for 24 months preceding your application.

To receive an award, you need to demonstrate how your program represents better practice in improving the lives of your residents based on:

- research and feedback
- measurement and monitoring of effectiveness
- evolving and improving
- your home's continuous improvement system.

The criteria and application are available on the Agency's website www.accreditation.aust.com.

A judging panel will assess nominations, with 'achievers' receiving a framed certificate and a better practice profile on the Agency's website, as well as the opportunity to be involved in one of the Better Practice events held across the country.

Glen Waverley Home on a winning streak

Glen Waverley Nursing Home in Victoria is special, according to CEO-DON Shirley Frigo (pictured right). If the number of awards a home receives is an indication of whether it is special, then Glen Waverly clearly is.

In the last few years, the home has been either a finalist or winner in 11 separate competitions including three times finalist in the Minister's Awards for Excellence in Residential Aged Care. The home has now added to that list by taking out the 2004 Australian Achiever award for Melbourne's Retirement and Care Services category.

The Australian Achiever Awards are an independent award system, based on

assessment ratings from a businesses own customers.

Shirley says the awards are a reflection of the tight sense of community within the home.

"Glen Waverley is not just about staff or just about residents. It is a community: a home. We foster that sense of community in everything we do."

One of the ways the home does this is through a strong emphasis on their staff care program. The program recognises that if staff are happy, residents are happy.

"By keeping our staff happy, they stay. For residents this means they have carers who they know and that makes the

world of difference to them."

The home regularly runs audits to gauge staff happiness, staff stress levels as well as resident satisfaction. Due to the small size of the home (74 staff, 49 residents), when conducting audits, they are able to get 100% sample.

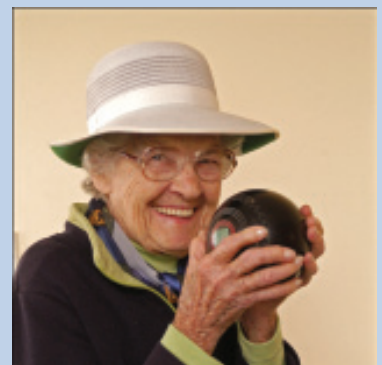
This, as Shirley explains, further increases the sense of community as everyone gets to have their say. Family open days every fortnight also add to the community feel of the home.

Put simply, Shirley explains that the home's "aim is to provide the highest possible standard in nursing home care." The awards they have received highlight the genuine sincerity of that endeavour.



Positive images of residents

Congratulations to Keith & District Hospital Inc. in South Australia for their initiative in developing a perpetual calendar showing positive images of residents in their home. Contact the hospital on (08) 8755 1555 for a copy of the calendar



Gwen and Delcie (left) and Ivy pictured (right)