The Young Bloods Club

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Sponsored By:

GERICARE
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The Young Bloods Club

In 100 words or less, briefly describe your Best Practice.
The Young Bloods Club is what we call our residents who are 59 years of age and younger. Young Bloods are a special group of people with different needs that go above and beyond the medically-based services skilled-nursing facilities typically provide. The purpose of Young Bloods is to let them know that they don’t have to “fit in” and feel like everyone else. Accepting their environment is not the same as assimilating to their environment. We want them to remember who they are, who they were, and say, “Yes, we are different; we are special; we are Young Bloods.”

What problem does your Best Practice address, and what is its primary purpose?
There is an old adage that says, “Everyone is part of something greater than one’s self.” There is great truth in that comment. Each of us is, or has been, a part of a family, neighborhood, city, or country. We may also be a part of groups, organizations, religions, fraternities, and work forces. But larger than any other affiliation, each of us belong to a generation.

A generation can be defined as a group of people born roughly within a 20 year time period during the same era in history. Members of each generation share similar social conditions, historical events, economic trends, and technological advancements. Understanding the personalities of each generation is a valuable tool as to what makes each so discerning with reference to education, politics, religion, and leisure. Generational knowledge gives us a timeless approach and foundation as we interact with residents.

Many people are reluctant to acknowledge the generational gap between our younger residents and the majority of the skilled-nursing facility’s population. There are many delicate issues involved. We tend to want to make every-one “blend in.” Although they may receive the same medications, treatments, therapy, and meal tray as the elderly residents, THEY ARE NOT THE SAME! Your Baby Boomers, Gen X’ers and Gen Y residents will never “blend in.” They have been raised to stand out, stand up, and be heard. SO WE NEED TO LISTEN!!

We need to recognize them for their differences and not try to overlook them. They are forced to accept that the life they once planned to live out to its fullest, no longer exists. It is our job to help them cope with these feelings and provide them with opportunities to look at life in a different perspective. Maybe it’s not the life you wanted to live, but IT IS LIFE and it can be lived with joy, happiness, and laughter.

What group(s) of residents and others are involved in your best practice and how does it work? (Who and how many are helped, what are the benefits to these people, and what methods or procedures/protocols are used to get results?)
The Young Bloods Club is open to all residents whose age fits within our guidelines (59 years and younger). The number of the group varies depending upon our population. Others involved include staff from various departments and/or volunteers/family members. The Activity Department meets with the Residents monthly to plan the
upcoming month’s event(s). They are also the ones who coordinate with other departments, volunteers, and/or family members as needed to carry out and implement the plans. Dietary assists with coordinating meal times when going on field trips, providing with supplies to help make things, and they may cook or bake special things for events. Therapy will often help the Young Blood resident work towards a goal which will allow them to participate in many of our out-of-facility events. For example, they may set a goal to have the ability to transfer in and out of a vehicle, or propel their wheelchair independently so that they may go to a Young Bloods event. Therapy has also gone on trips with the group to assist with transferring residents in and out of the vehicles. The CNA’s work diligently to assure that the residents are ready in time to go out or to attend the group within the facility. The Nursing Staff works hard to make sure that all medications, treatments, etc., are done prior to the resident’s departure from the facility, and if any medications will be needed while out, they have them prepared. The Care Plan office also double checks to make sure that all residents who are Young Bloods have a special care plan written by the Activity Director. Mental Health services are often provided to our younger residents to help them cope with their many psychological and psychosocial issues. The entire facility pulls together to help with fund raisers. Family members and/or other volunteers have assisted with taking the group out to events and doing things with them in the facility.

What has your Best Practice accomplished and how have you been able to tell this? (You are permitted to give numbers and/or use specific “before and after” examples)

We implemented the Young Bloods program in 2002. The fact that it is still in use and continuing to become more and more active, is a sign that it is effective. In our industry, programs come and go as advances and changes are made, so to have a program that has been in effect for 11 years still going, and growing, says a lot about what it has accomplished. The Young Bloods Club is only as successful as its members. We are able to gauge the success of the program by the activities they plan. The more comfortable and confident they feel, the bigger their plans become. It allows them to feel like they still have some control over what they do with their lives. They are provided with opportunities to reconnect with the community and as a former Young Blood member once stated, “It helps me feel normal again.”

We take for granted the “normal” things we do or have in life. We go out to eat, go shopping, take a walk through the neighborhood, go to our children’s school plays, and go see a movie. How would we feel if we were no longer able to do those things? We try to provide some sense of “normalcy” to a special group that is anything but “normal.” We have gone out to local restaurants for lunch; shopped on the Town Square; attended community events such as the Grease Festival, Fiddler’s Convention, Summer Nighttime Concerts on the Square, Art on the Square; attended school plays at a local elementary school as well as worked their Book Fair; attended Pep Rallies and parades for the local high school football team; shopped at various locations and department stores; picnics in the park; neighborhood walks; grilled out; have catered lunches; cooked our own lunches; happy hour; played games, watched TV and movies, and listened to music from their generation(s); hold special holiday parties; work on the facility Facebook page and do other things online. The list of the various types of things we have done can go on and on. We attempt to do what they want.

These events do not always take place in group settings. We also do a lot of one-on-one things with our Young Bloods. We try to provide them with some special attention and provide them with opportunities to express their feelings and emotions without others around.

What problems, obstacles, or challenges might other facilities face in replicating part or all of your innovation? Were there any adverse effects or any ways that things turned out differently than you planned? Do you know of any other facilities which have tried this or a similar best practice idea?

There are minimal problems to starting your own Young Bloods or similar program. The biggest obstacle is your staff’s ability to open their minds and rethink the structure of the skilled-nursing facility. People have to see beyond the front door. There has to be a willingness to try new things. Go beyond bingo and bible study. Go beyond the idea that your residents are elderly and fragile. You may also face some challenges from the younger residents. They are dealing with many issues, especially upon their initial admission. They may be angry, bitter, depressed, acutely ill. They need supportive staff and peers in their life to help them adjust and cope with their new environment.
What was the cost to implement your Best Practice (include dollars, staff, supplies, equipment, etc.)? How did you pay for it?
The cost for starting a Young Bloods Club or other similar program in your facility is minimal. It is free to offer a setting which allows them to come together and get to know others with similar interests and backgrounds. There are costs to do many of our events, but we raise money through various fundraisers, or often we receive donations from staff or other family members. We are also blessed to have a very supporting community and when we call to make reservations or plan things, the restaurant, organizations, etc., will often offer a discount or donate/comp things. Establishing good relations with businesses and organizations in your community can be helpful in keeping your costs down.

What are the reasons you consider this Best Practice to be excellent and innovative?
The Young Bloods Club has been an excellent program at our facility on several different levels. When we go out and do things in our community, we are seen and noticed. We take pictures and greet people and talk about our facility. We will often submit the photos to our local newspaper. The businesses we go to will take photos and post them on their Facebook page. We do the same. It is wonderful PR for your facility and all the attention the residents receive does wonders for their self-esteem. The program has allowed our younger residents to be around others their own age and has provided them with opportunities to remain young. It has given many of our younger residents their self-confidence back. So many negative issues have surrounded them and they have forgotten who they were. They have become, “that poor young woman who can no longer walk,” or that “sad young man with that crippling disease.” Through the various events we have and the extra one-on-one attention and time we give our younger residents, many have been reminded that their illness or disability does not define them.

“Everyone is part of something greater than one’s self.”

For our residents ages 59 and younger, that something is Young Bloods.
On the Town Square

Trip to the Fiddlers’ Convention

Shopping at the Local Hardware Store

Italian Luncheon

Election Day at the Polls

Christmas Dirty Santa Game

Summer Concert on the Square
Baked Potato Bar

Play the Game Headbanz

Hugs For Everyone!!

Trip to see “Oz The Great and Powerful” in 3D
Lunch at
Cracker Barrel

Forming
Friendships

Poker
Dice

You Sank My
Battleship!

Spending Time with the
Youth in our Community

BCS Championship
Game Tailgate

Yo Quiero
Taco Bell!