

## Program profile

### The busy bees of Active Aging Week

When it was time to plan Active Aging Week last year, staff members in the activities and wellness departments at Brandermill Woods Retirement Community sat down for a brainstorming session. What would encourage residents to participate? How could the week include multiple dimensions of wellness?

The teams' solution was seven days of diverse activities, all coordinated around the theme of "Catch the Buzz—Bee Active."

"Once we got going, we took off!" explained Amy Willmarth, director of resident services for independent living. "Most of the credit goes to Maria Mast, a member of our activities and wellness team. Our team sat down to brainstorm for Active Aging Week. We started with 'Be Active' and then came up with the idea of having a different highlighted 'Be' day...which led to 'Bee' and then Maria took it and ran with it."

The week's activities were outlined in a booklet given to the residents that explained the reason behind each activity. An incentive program was developed to reward each participant. Bee Active t-shirts were printed for residents and staff. With a theme and new and favorite activities at the ready, Active Aging Week began.

#### Creating buzz for the week

Staff members in all departments were excited about the week's program and promoted it to residents. During the week everyone wore Busy Bee t-shirts and some added antennae. The front desk was wreathed with a black-and-yellow striped bunting as a constant reminder.

In addition to the booklet that everyone received explaining the purpose of the week and listing the activities (see page 15), the



On Bee Smart day, busy bees learned how to use the Nintendo DS Brain Age game.

in-house television station kept residents informed of the week's activities.

An activity that kicked off the week and immediately got many people involved was the poster board holding the childhood photos of residents and staff. The photos were placed in the lobby and residents were challenged to guess who the individuals were.

Staff joined in the fun by participating in activities when it didn't interfere with their work. One motivation for the staff to encourage participation was a contest among communities who shared the same management group. As Willmarth notes, "Our employees are very proud of Brandermill Woods."

Because of activities such as the spelling bee, Healthy Active Aging word game and the ending movie, residents in assisted living and nursing care were able to participate and earn punches for the incentive prizes.

#### Incentives for great prizes

When residents attended an activity, their Busy Bee card was punched. A person who had five punches or more was entered into a drawing for a prize. The prizes included:

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- Dinner with Graham for 2 (Graham is the director of dining services, and a monthly gourmet dinner created by him for a small group of residents is a very popular event)
- One free Sunday Brunch
- Gift card to the Beauty Salon
- Transportation ticket
- Meal card
- Burt's Bees basket
- Busy Bee tote bag
- Two 30-minute massages
- GRAND PRIZE: \$500 off the next month's rent!!!

Because of the incentives, residents attended programs they typically did not visit. The staff heard lots of comments from people who said they were going to try more and different programs in the future.

### Measures of success

There are approximately 230 residents living at the community, and throughout the week there were about 2,800 participants in all the activities. That's an average of 12 card punches per resident.

"We did attract new residents along with the regulars," said Lisa Keppler, who was then foundation and public relations manager, "because we had such a variety of events and lots of excitement. We feel the whole week was meaningful and fun."

The cost of the week was paid for from the community's marketing and advertising budget because staff members felt the week was a way to market Brandermill Woods.

This year, Willmarth affirms, the community will again participate in Active Aging Week. While the staff was worn out after last year's event, they are motivated because of the great fun everyone had. Besides, Willmarth says, "it is important that we always challenge ourselves to raise the bar on the services we provide for our residents."

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To celebrate the week, staff embraced the yellow and black color scheme and wore antennae. A resident's goose helped with the marketing.



Residents joined in during a yoga demonstration on Bee Fit day.



A crafts fair highlighted Bee Creative day.

*Brandermill Woods Retirement Community (www.brandermillwoods.com) in Midlothian, Virginia, is a continuing care retirement community managed by CSRA. CSRA challenged all their communities to produce Active Aging Week events.*



## Catch the Buzz—Bee Active Active Aging Week at Brandermill Woods

### Monday: Bee Yourself

- Pick up your Brandermill Woods Active Aging T-shirt and “Busy Bee” punch card
- Get to know your neighbors and staff. Name tag week begins.
- Youth picture display of residents and staff in the lobby.
- Laughter is the best medicine! Jonathan the juggler entertains.

### Tuesday: Bee In-Tune

- Get in touch with the world around you! Take a driving tour through the James River Park System.
- Take care of your inner self. Afternoon activities: Tai Chi, chair yoga, yoga demonstration, Osteoball demonstration, paraffin hand dips, shoulder massages
- Enjoy the tunes of the Richmond Jazz Society at night

### Wednesday: Bee Smart

- Puzzle book delivered to all residents to complete and turn in.
- Make as many words as you can out of the phrase “Healthy Active Aging” and turn in.
- Match wits with staff and other residents. Games set up in the Living Room.
- Learn to play Brain Age Games on the Nintendo DS.
- “Maintain Your Brain” program with the Alzheimer’s Association.
- Signature non-alcoholic drink (“Bees Knees”) available at Happy Hour.

### Thursday: Bee Fit

- Stay in shape. Take a fitness class or observe a fitness class.
- Free blood sugar tests from local pharmacy.
- Stay safe. The therapy department talks about strategies to stay safe, prevent falls and increase balance.

### Friday: Bee Creative

- Watch a floral design demonstration and sign up to do one.
- Celebrate the talents of residents and staff at the art show reception.
- Get a drawing done by a caricature artist.

### Saturday: Bee Involved

- Treat a charity, treat yourself. Donate items to the Virginia Food Bank or to the Salvation Army and receive ice cream off of the travelling ice cream truck.
- “Bee” a good neighbor. Visit your friends in assisted living and in the healthcare center.

### Sunday: Just Bee

- Since you were “busy as bees” all week, end the week with the movie “Young at Heart.” Turn in answers to the quiz that follows the movie.