What a Difference a Year Makes, Thanks to MN Policymakers Who Support Senior Care Reform

By Krista Siddiqui, Administrator

I hesitantly took my first administrator position one year ago at Zumbrota Health Services. I was sure I was in over my head and overwhelmed with all the things I had to learn about long-term care. In graduate school we learned about healthcare finance, regulation, leadership and many other facets of long-term care; however, I was not prepared for the crisis I walked into with regard to staffing, recruitment and retention.

I came into this position without a Director of Nursing and a lot of staff turnover. It didn’t take long to realize that because of our rates and the subsequent funds not available for competitive staff salaries and benefits, we weren’t able to keep people from leaving to move to a much more lucrative paying hospital job. We would spend the money to invest in employees’ education and CNA classes so we would have staff, but our low wages didn’t keep them long, and we saw ourselves being the nursing staff trainers for area hospitals and clinics.

One incredibly important issue in healthcare is the importance of continuity of care and having staff who know the residents, know their likes, dislikes, ailments, what makes them happy, who their families are, what to do when they’re in pain. These are all aspects of care that come with consistent staff who are providing care day in and day out. Having new caregivers filtering in and out continuously is not the way our seniors deserve to be cared for. We knew this, but we couldn’t do anything about it — until now.

The passage last year of the senior care reform bill and implementation this month has already made tremendous changes in our facility. Because of Zumbrota’s unique challenges and the fact that we had over 50 percent of our nursing positions unfilled last fall, St. Francis Health Services, our parent company, allowed us to implement the changes that were scheduled to come with the new rate setting system effective January 1 on October 1.

For the first time ever, we were able to offer a pension to our staff members who worked a minimum of 20hrs a week. This meant that the company would contribute to their retirement savings, even if they weren’t able to. We were able to change our health insurance benefits to offer employer fully paid health insurance to full-time staff members along with a generous employer paid contribution to their Health Savings Account. Finally, we were able to increase wages and benefits, substantially, for our health care workers.

I’m extremely happy to report that as of today, we have exactly one opening in nursing. We have recruited so many nursing assistants and nurses that we can now be even more discerning about the people we hire to care for our residents. This could never have happened without the legislature prioritizing our senior population and recognizing that the care we provide them is directly proportional to our ability to provide our staff a livable wage and healthcare that they can afford.

So much has been done in past year and I am so very grateful, but we still have a long way to go to ensure our loved ones receive the care, dignity, and choices that they absolutely deserve. Minnesota has chosen to put its aging population high on its priority list, and those of us who work with these amazing seniors couldn’t be more proud of this decision.

A year into my job as Administrator of Zumbrota Health Services looks so very different than it did one year ago, and I can’t tell you how excited I am to see the differences that are being made. Thank you, Minnesota.
UPCOMING ACTIVITIES AT THE CARE CENTER
March 18 - Monthly Birthday Party 2:30p
April 4 - Remembrance Service 2:00p
April 15 - Monthly Birthday Party 2:30p

Activity Department is taking donations for:
- Tape Players
- Bingo prizes: stuffed animals, small knickknacks, microwave popcorn and candy.
- Tennis Balls for exercise group
- Craft supplies
- Smaller size flower pots
- Potting soil
- Plants: annuals or perennials, house plants or outdoor plants (We are having a spring plant sale. Watch for details!)

Zumbrota Health Services
Valentine’s Day
King Dale Benbrooks & Queen Doris Bartsh

February 17th, Zumbrota Health Services (ZHS), hosted a legislative open house with Representative Steve Drazkowski and Senator Matt Schmit. ZHS wanted to extend our appreciation for the investments made in nursing homes last legislative session and for making Minnesota seniors and their caregivers living and working in these settings a priority.
Ingredients
2 cups all-purpose flour + 1 tablespoon, divided
2 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. salt
½ cup oil (coconut, vegetable, or canola)
2 tsp. vanilla extract
2 eggs
1 cup granulated sugar
1 cup plain Greek yogurt (or sour cream)
Zest & juice of 1 lemon
1 cup blueberries
Lemon Glaze
¾ cup confectioners’ sugar
1-2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Blueberry Lemon Bread

Instructions
Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 9x5 loaf pan with cooking spray and set aside.
In a small bowl, toss the blueberries with 1 tablespoon of the flour and set aside (this helps to prevent the blueberries from sinking).
In a large bowl, whisk together 2 cups of flour, baking powder, and salt. Set aside.
In a separate bowl, mix together the oil, vanilla, eggs, sugar, Greek yogurt, lemon zest, and lemon juice. Combine the wet and dry ingredients, just until smooth. Do not overmix or your bread will come out tough. Lightly fold the blueberries into the batter.
Pour batter into prepared loaf pan and bake for 50-60 minutes. The bread will be finished when a wooden toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.*
Once bread is finished, remove from oven and allow to cool for about 10 minutes in the loaf pan. Remove from loaf pan and transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.
Once bread has cooled, whisk together the confectioners’ sugar and lemon juice. Start with one tablespoon of lemon juice and whisk well. If your mixture is too thick, slowly add up to one more tablespoon of lemon juice. You want the glaze to be thin enough to drizzle, but thick enough to set up on the bread. Using a spoon, drizzle the glaze on top of the bread. The glaze should harden up a little more after about 15-20 minutes.

Notes
*If bread begins to brown too much on the top, tent with aluminum foil. I used some foil for the last 10-15 minutes of baking.
*Store in an airtight container on the counter for up to five days. Bread will freeze well for up to two months.

Zumbrota Health Services (ZHS) recognizes outstanding employees who have made a significant contribution within the facility each quarter. It also offers an opportunity for all employees to recognize their peers for their exceptional job performance. There are nine different criteria that a candidate must meet in order to be nominated; a positive attitude, provides service that reflects ZHS’ Core Values, and carries out additional responsibilities beyond their regular job assignment, for example.

Teresa Lawson, Housekeeping Aide, was nominated for the Employee of the Quarter – December, 2015! Teresa provides invaluable input so that the department’s day-to-day tasks run smoothly, maintains a positive attitude, and pays close attention to our resident’s likes and dislikes. Teresa joined ZHS in July of 2015, and while working close to home is fabulous, she says it’s the caring, compassionate and committed co-workers that she enjoys most. Teresa grew up in Wanamingo, but has lived in Zumbrota for the last 20 years. She and her husband have three children; Benjamin, Peter, and Elizabeth, and two grandchildren; Leila and Braelynn. A few of her hobbies include gardening, going to garage sales, camping, and scrapbooking.

As the Employee of the Quarter, Teresa was presented with a certificate of recognition as well as being recognized in ZHS’ publications, a 10-meal punch card from the facility, an Employee of the Quarter polo shirt, and parks in an honorary parking spot during her reign. Teresa was also, the winner of the Employee of the Year drawing, with a weekend get-away at the Fitgers Hotel in Duluth, MN!

Congratulations, Teresa! We are honored that you are a part of our dedicated team of health care professionals!
Zumbrota Health Services had their annual Employee Appreciation Dinner on Saturday, Feb. 27 at the Zumbrota VFW. Our lucky award winners: Teresa won the 2Truths and a Lie Game—as any good social worker should. Sue won the customer service award—and a cup touting her awesomeness. Holly won the Hard Worker award—and a blinged out hard hat! Jacob brought home the Bubbly Personality Award—along with an awesome bubble gun! Ray won the Duct Tape Award for being able to fix anything—and a totally cool duct tape wallet. And Bonnie won the Resident's Choice Award—along with the coolest hearing aide trophy!!! Thanks guys for being AMAZING!!!