

# SHINING STAR NOMINATIONS



A SUPPLEMENT TO NEWS FROM THE HAVEN

Following are the essays written for Fairview Haven's Shining Star nominations ...

## AL KUPFERSCHMID — 2008 WINNER OF OUTSTANDING MANAGEMENT AWARD

We have a shining star in environmental services that brightens the lives and lightens the loads of all with whom he comes in contact. Like the shining star that he is, he doesn't make a lot of noise, but he sheds a lot of light. He exhibits respect and caring to each of our elders to make them feel right at home.

He took the title of Maintenance Supervisor approximately 9 years ago and became responsible for the physical upkeep of our Home. His management responsibility extended to three maintenance employees, all males. It took our star no time at all to establish priorities and to begin to build professionalism and a willing work ethic into his department. It wasn't long and, under our star's watch, his team began doing repairs and upgrades in-house that for years required us to hire expensive outside contractors. His expertise and professionalism was quickly appreciated by our elders as they recognize he treats their needs and concerns as his own. He understands this is their home and has set a standard of neatness and cleanliness that our customers have come to love. No wonder every year our Confidence Satisfaction Surveys give our maintenance department nearly perfect marks.

Our star's ability to inspire his staff to excellence and strong customer service is noticed by all his co-workers. Several years ago, when our Laundry Supervisor retired, our laundry employees let it be known we didn't need to search for a replacement. They wanted our star to take them into his galaxy and lead them. And lead them he did.

He spent time to get to know the laundry crew and implemented changes which were designed to improve efficiencies, as well as meet the needs of those he directs.

A few more years passed and our star assumed responsibility for nine more employees as he was placed over our Housekeeping Department. In just a few years, our star went from managing three men to managing a staff of nearly 20. With his quick sense of humor, his humble approach and his insistence that our elders come first, he is able to blend three departments into one. Hence his current title is Director of Environmental Services.

By coordinating these three departments into one, he is leading the way for our entire Home to remove departmental barriers to the delivery of care for the elders we serve. In prior years, room changes or new admissions could be a real challenge, but under the leadership of our star and with his emphasis on customer service, our elders' moves are seamless.

Our star's management style is always about building character in those he directs. We often hear him ask the question, "What is best for our home and those we serve?" He has put the following motto on all the homemakers' cleaning carts: "What's going to set you *apart* is the *quality* of service you provide."

Our star is also a leader at our Home on culture change. He has restructured our housekeepers into

homemakers who are responsible for specific areas and residents. This has really helped in the development of relationships between staff and residents, which is so critical to the delivery of person-centered care. He and his staff are always asking how we can transform our Home into *their* home. He challenges us all in questioning, "What would it take to make *us* happy to live here?" He keeps his crew busy updating lights, upgrading floor coverings and modernizing halls and elders' rooms as he utilizes a host of volunteers for interior designs and task completion.

Our star is always going above and beyond the call of duty. He could surely never be accused of working banker's hours as he seems to be on the job 24/7. He often comes in early or burns the midnight oil to help set up for or clean up after one of our many resident-centered events. No wonder his staff is willing to work extra hours or cover for each other. They have been led by example.

One area where our star really shines is his willingness to assume additional tasks. As the chairman of our Safety Team, he has taken our Home to new heights. Under his leadership, our Workman's Comp mod factor has plummeted and he saves our Home approximately \$25,000 each year. In addition, he has organized us into a true safety *team* and instilled in all of us a sense of pride in keeping our home accident-free. Under our star's watch, we went nearly two years without an incident of lost work days. Our star has really put some teeth into our safety team as we work with our elders to address their safety needs. When safety team makes a request, it is rarely denied.

Perhaps the most endearing quality of our shining star is the love he has for those he serves. There are times when an agitated resident needs someone with a kind heart and listening ear. We have seen our star sit down and joke with a confused and combative resident and get them smiling. By the time he works his magic, they are sharing a drink or a treat like old friends. 'Not my job' doesn't occur to our star and doesn't fly with those he directs. He often exhorts them to spend the time needed to really care for our elders. He encourages them to be a listening ear as he recognizes we all are responsible for our elders' care.

Our shining star has cast a brilliant light around our home. Our elders and co-workers are blessed to be illuminated by his glow.

## NICK KAEB, VOLUNTEER

"I'm looking for the man that helps everyone." This was the request of one of our residents recently. She preferred wheelchair assistance from our Shining Star volunteer who indeed does 'help everyone.' Although she couldn't recall his name, she recognized his special brand of caring.

This Shining Star volunteer moved into our independent living apartments in 2005 and immediately started asking where he could help out. Keeping busy is very important to him and he has chosen to fulfill this by volunteering throughout our campus. We are very thankful for this!

The first job our Shining Star tackled was orga-

nizing the shop for our maintenance men. Picture empty coffee cans and sour cream containers holding nuts, bolts, screws and such like all mixed together. Our Shining Star took on the job with his usual cheerful willingness. For many hours and days, he sat in the basement sorting the hardware supplies by size and type into labeled containers. Just imagine how much time this has saved our maintenance men to be able to find what they need very easily!

After that project was complete, our Shining Star volunteer launched into a new project of sorting thousands of greeting cards that had been donated to us. As he worked his way through the dozens of big boxes, he proved once again what our environmental services director says about him, "When I give him a job to do, I don't have to worry about it anymore. He takes his time and does a great job. I know I can count on him to get it done." After the cards were organized, our Shining Star put them in a card rack for residents, staff and visitors to use.

Our Shining Star volunteer has a special empathy with residents as he has coped with and overcome physical challenges all his life. He has been unofficially designated as the transporter in our independent living apartments. Frequently those who reside in our independent living apartments have difficulty ambulating long distances. Since they are in an independent environment, there is no staff available to assist them. That's where our Shining Star comes in. Many of these apartment dwellers have come to depend on our Shining Star to push their wheelchairs to the on-campus beauty shop or to activities in various locations. They discuss their schedules with him daily at mealtimes and he organizes his schedule around their transport needs. Since he is younger than most, they treat him as a son. Without his help, many of them could not live at their current level of independence.

Our Shining Star volunteer also visits the care center living area every evening and transports residents to and from the dining room. He knows that there is less staffing in the evenings and provides support accordingly. These residents also anticipate his arrival and appreciate his kind helpfulness. He learns to know each person individually and chats with each one.

When the activity staff plans an outing, our Shining Star volunteer is there. He transports residents' wheelchairs to the front door and then assists with loading into our wheelchair-accessible bus. His job is to raise and lower the wheelchair lift, while assuring the safety of the residents.

More recently, our Shining Star volunteer can be frequently found vacuuming the long hallways in our various independent living areas. He enlisted for this never-ending task and saves our homemakers a lot of time; time that they can invest in cleaning the residents' rooms. No wonder staff says, "We appreciate his work very much!"

Our Shining Star volunteer is a regular at our community Alzheimer's/dementia support group meetings, transporting various other apartment dwellers so they can attend as well. He is compas-

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sionate and supportive to all who attend the meetings as he has experience coping with dementia in a close family member. He displays the heart of a caregiver with this individual.

In fact, he brings his heart to whatever task he does, earning the following comments from staff and residents: "He's very helpful and friendly."

"He's always cheerful and willing to help wherever he can."

"He puts his whole heart into whatever he does."

"He does an excellent job."

"He tries very hard to make the best of his situation and he is an overcomer."

It is this cheerful, helpful spirit that our Shining Star volunteer sprinkles wherever he goes on our campus, warming each person that he helps. He is a very worthy candidate for the Shining Star volunteer award.

### **LISA MCDONALD**

I have a C.N.A. that I would like to nominate for the LSN shining star award. This C.N.A. works full time and is a full-time student working to get into a nursing program. She has worked for our facility for two years and is an outstanding C.N.A. This C.N.A. is a dedicated worker. She gets her work done in a timely fashion and is willing to help out others when she can. Her caring attitude for the residents is felt by the residents and the staff. If something needs to be done, this C.N.A. will do it. If asked to do something for the residents, "no" is not in her vocabulary.

This C.N.A. has been wonderful with the Alzheimer's patients that we have had. Just recently, we had to send one of our residents to another facility with an Alzheimer's unit because we could not provide the care here that she needed. When the family tried to take this resident with them, the resident would not get up out of the chair to go. Staff members, as well as family members, tried to coax her to go, but she refused. This special C.N.A. then came and was able to gently coax the resident out of the chair and lead her to the door.

This kind of action is typical of this C.N.A. She is always around to help when needed. If this C.N.A. has worked her shift and someone calls in for the next shift, this C.N.A. will, if possible, stay over part or all of the next shift, or come back later to pick up part of the shift. This C.N.A.'s normal shift is first, but she has been willing to fill in on all three shifts. She always comes to work ready and willing to work with a positive attitude and just does what needs to be done regardless if it is "her job" or not! You can find this C.N.A., when she is in the room with a resident, just talking with them as she is caring for them, fulfilling their emotional needs as well as their physical needs. She always tries to make sure that a resident's needs are all met before she leaves a room. If the resident needs a nurse, this C.N.A. finds the resident's nurse to let him/her know that the resident needs them. This C.N.A. is kind and caring with our residents and meets them on their level.

For these reasons and more, I feel this C.N.A. is worthy of the Shining Star Award for front line staff. Her example is one that can be followed by others and she is a wonderful asset to our residents and our staff here.

### **DEBRA SPENCE**

"I am so happy to be a part of this facility's family. Thanks for holding on to my file; this job is PERFECT for me!" This was what our star had to say about her job in a recent thank you note that

she left on my door. We would totally agree, that one of the newest members of our facility's family was made for her job as Medical Secretary. Though she has only been a member of the family for two months, we are confident that this star will continue to shine at our facility as long as God gives her the opportunity to work!

We have a strong desire at our facility to free up some of the time our nurses spend on paperwork and give them more of an opportunity to spend time with our residents. Because of this, we hired our medical secretary to assist our nurses with tasks that can be completed by a non-licensed individual. Our star jumped right in without much training at all. One of the first task that she took on was assisting our careplan team with the implementation of a new electronic care plans. She has done a lot of data entry and then shown a lot of patience with our careplan team as they are slowly working through the glitches of a new system.

One day, our star stopped me in the hall and asked "I would really like to speed up the process of inputting these careplans. Could I please take my laptop home tonight and work on them in my free time?" It isn't too often you have an employee that wants to take work home with them!

Talk about patience — in a recent meeting about computerized charting, we discussed the barriers that our facility will face with going electronic. One of these major barriers is the fact that we have some nurses that are rather inexperienced on the computer. Our star stepped up to the plate and explained to us that she believes in every one of our nurses, and she has confidence that they all can learn the system we are considering. She volunteered to speak to each of our nurses individually to find out their confidence level when it comes to computers. She is now spending time individually with those that she found to lack confidence to show them how to operate a computer on a general level. She has also spent a great deal of time with our new restorative nurse helping her learn how to move around on our software, etc.

How about the residents? This star impressed many the day that she showed up for an interview. She was found in the lobby visiting with one of our dementia residents with her hand on her shoulder lending an encouraging word. And, to this day, if she has any free time from her duties, you will often find this star sitting in our living room visiting one on one with our residents lending them encouraging words and the touch of love.

Reviewing our star's resume and life, you know that she has a heart for those in need. She served several years as a missionary in third world countries before getting involved in healthcare. Recently (in her fifties) she took in her nephew (a boy now aged 7) who needed a home. When she was given the opportunity to adopt him, she just couldn't refuse. She truly has a heart of gold, and she has opened that heart to the residents and staff of our facility.

Our star is always a positive influence on those around her. You won't hear her chiming in to the rumor wheel at our facility nor will she support any negativity. She keeps her comments positive about all. She has a gentle sense of humor and yet is sensitive to the feelings of others. Recently, our star came to my office and apologized for making a jesting comment during a stressful situation. I informed her that her lightheartedness eases the tension that stressful situations have.

In visiting with a visitor recently, they shared with me how impressed they were with the new medical secretary. They commented how friendly

and accommodating she was. This is exactly what you will notice about our star, she goes out of her way to make all our visitors feel welcome and makes sure they are getting their needs met.

### **LOUDIA STEFFEN**

Our home, like many other Nursing Homes, has gone through a lot of changes over the past couple of years. As you are well aware, change is very difficult for the majority of people to accept, and it takes a special person to roll with the punches. Well, we have one of those special people in our business office. This star has been here for just over five years, and has seen a lot of change.

Just a few months ago, our business office was approached with the idea of changing the computer software they use. The current software had been in our facility for several years with a major upgrade just when our star started working for us. That upgrade was a huge challenge, and so you can imagine the fear I had when I approached our office staff with this idea of changing. After a few days of not knowing where I stood in the eyes of the business office staff, I heard our star tell one of her co-workers, "I'm excited about this change."

Now understand, our star isn't a young pup. Our star is very close to retirement age, though we won't possibly allow that to happen! She took every opportunity to be involved in training sessions — even when the training didn't apply to her tasks as Accounts Payable Clerk. In fact, she cut a trip short in order to arrive home in time to attend a training session. Her words were "I don't want to miss any training!"

When our Accounts Payable Clerk left recently, our star who was working as our Human Resource Clerk wanted a change. She asked if she could move into the Accounts Payable position and again has taken every opportunity to learn things about her job. She has been a great help in streamlining processes to make sure bills are paid on time and efficiently.

Unfortunately, in the past several months, our office has taken on a new look, as two of the three staff members have moved onto different jobs. This left our star as the person with the most experience. She has been looked to quite often to help resolve a problem, or to find an important paper that no one seems to know about. There have been times that she has searched for hours, but she always comes up with what we need.

Our star doesn't stop with the duties on her job description. Recently we hosted our annual benefit dinner and auction. Our star was there to help like she is every year. She came the night before to help set up the auction and stayed until way past her bedtime. Then, the next day (her day off), she drove in early to help finish setting up. Then at the event, she stationed herself at the cashier table and stayed to help get everyone checked out. Everyone was gone and cleanup efforts were under way. You would think by now our star would be home in bed. Nope, she was found in the business office helping to count the money and get the deposit ready for the bank!

Not only does our star actively help out at the annual benefit auction and dinner, but she can be found at every special activity hosted for our staff and residents. She is truly devoted to the residents and staff at our facility. As I write this nomination, I am reminded of a sign in my office. "A house is made of brick and stone, but a HOME is made of love alone!" Our star makes every effort to make our edifice a HOME!