

What A Difference A Day Makes!

by Fran Mancl, CNA

“What a difference a day makes!” Those were the very words that came to mind while driving home from a retreat day sponsored by the Iowa CareGivers. The retreat day was entitled, “Direct Care: The Toughest Job You’ll Ever Love.” It was a day to reawaken a person’s passion for direct care and to inspire action to support all those who have made direct care their profession. Again, *“What a difference a day makes!”*

Being a Direct Care Professional means every day that you are led to hard work, sacrifice, the expenditure of your time, thought, strength and energy for someone else who needs care or for some cause that requires compassion, empathy, patience, and concern. It becomes the toughest part of your job in direct care.

Working full-time in the field of direct care means you may have to deal with frequent staff turnover, staff not showing up for work, and changes in staffing patterns and work assignments. There are days in direct care when one has to pick up the slack, work extra hours, or be called to work on a scheduled day off. The stress can cause one not to feel the best about the quality of care given to those who need and require it.

It was so needed and a wonderful experience taking a brief retreat from the challenges and stress of direct care; taking a break from “The Toughest Job You’ll Ever Love.” The retreat was not merely a vacation or a get-away from the workload of direct care. It was a chance to be reflective and reawakened to the heart and soul of the profession one loves the most—being a direct caregiver.

The retreat day provided time for being with others in the profession of direct care and to share personal caregiving stories. Over a refreshing continental breakfast and leisurely lunch we looked at and shared ideas on why being in direct care is important to us; the qualities it takes for us to be good direct care workers; the skills we need to succeed in direct care; the supports we need to remain in direct care; why we continue to do what we do in direct care; and how we help make positive changes in the lives of those we serve. The best part was that all of our comments were not ignored, overlooked, or judged. They were listened to in an atmosphere of understanding and acceptance.

Some of our stories were shared with a few tears and others with joy-filled relief and laughter. In the end, those of us attending the retreat believed the emotional, physical, and spiritual investment made in direct care is all about building awesome relationships of care with many who need it. It is a tough job but in the same breath it is a life-giving profession. There was mutual agreement that the retreat day made a positive difference in our attitude, our perspective, and our commitment to direct care. Our profession is loved and valued despite a lack of recognition, a questionable wage, and need for training and continued education.

What those of us in direct care are willing to work and sacrifice for indicates what we regard as important and valuable; what we regard as our treasure. And that treasure is relationships of quality care with those needing our caregiving acceptance and support.

Any one of us involved in direct care can test the strength of our devotion by our willingness to do whatever it takes to ensure those we serve are cared for with dignity and reverence for life. For them we give up our own comfort and schedule. That makes it “The Toughest Job You’ll Ever Love.” Those receiving services of care from our hearts and hands make it worth it.

In these months of summer, many take vacations and retreats from their job, their profession. Wish that I could give every direct caregiver what I received from attending the retreat day, “The Toughest Job You’ll Ever Love.” *What a difference a day makes!*

Thought to Ponder: Direct Care is “The Toughest Job You’ll Ever Love.”

Question for Reflection: Is direct care the treasured profession that draws you, what counts most for you, to which you give your all?

July 2015