

Project Summary
Linda Saunders
Dallas Retirement Village

For my project this past year I changed the focus of the Recycling Committee to the conservation of resources. The Recycling Committee became the Conservation Corps. This was driven by the need to identify waste and misuse of the organization's resources and identify ways to conserve.

Through these efforts DRV has benefitted with monetary savings of office supplies. Less tangible benefit is a heightened awareness for all of us to be good stewards of resources. It is too early yet to know if there will be an impact in the misuse of some of the other resources we have targeted such as linens.

All DRV employees and residents are stakeholders.

Regular meetings with the Conservation Corps determined what projects we agreed would be most beneficial and practical. From there communication to directors and front line staff at director's meetings and all staff meetings. I discussed this topic at some of my dining department staff meetings, there were occasional company wide e-mail messages and an article in the DRV newsletter rounded out the formal communication. I also employed impromptu face to face discussions with staff in various departments.

Challenge #1 has been to keep other members of the Conservation Corps engaged. In an environment such as ours where we each face a challenge to continually reprioritize our workloads as new demands arise daily, it is extremely difficult to keep a specific project alive, especially one which can be regarded by some as unnecessary or intangible. Challenge #2 was to convince people who do not see the necessity. #3 was for me to find the time to accomplish some of the projects.

I overcame these challenges through patience, renewing my focus on the goal as needed and persistence. We are not through yet as the final larger project will not be started for another 3-6 months.

My biggest surprise has been how many front line staff has gotten behind this initiative. I have had much more buy-in from them than from many of the directors and supervisors. Since many of the directors seemed less than enthused, I focused on the facilities supervisor since his buy-in is critical to the completion of my final project, which is to install a piece of equipment in one of my kitchens which will save an estimated 30% of our water/sewer cost for that area.

The leadership behaviors most useful to me have been developing cooperative relationships, being more vocal about recognizing people for their contributions and challenging people to try new approaches.

I have learned that at times it is beneficial to slow down a bit and not charge ahead before cooperative relationships have been forged and a mutual goal is well established. This is very difficult when I am also trying to be sensitive to the time commitments of

others! My behavior has shifted to a much more collaborative one with staff of all levels.

I have been diligent in practicing recognition for staff in as many ways as I can, utilizing everything from a simple on the spot "well done" to more formal certificates, awards, gifts, cards and recognition at all staff meetings. Rather than those efforts taking a back seat to other tasks which at times seem more important, I challenge myself and the supervisors in my department to continually seek out ways to recognize staff for the things they do which specifically supports DRV's mission.

The plan for my own growth is to keep learning and actively applying the behaviors that were identified through the LPI. My goal during this past year has been to make myself a better leader so that I can be a good mentor to the supervisors and others in my department seeking to improve their own skills and knowledge. I have implemented a ladder system for staff development and intend to keep growing that system. I will be continuing to find ways to offer my staff resources to enrich their contributions. I have committed to being more active in the state association for foodservice professionals that I belong to, as I see that also as an important resource for my staff.