Title: A new role and a new program

Project Description: After 8 years of being Rose Villa's Director of Social Services, I was given the opportunity to be the Assistant Administrator of Health Services. This new position included the role of the in-home care administrator, a new program and concept at this community.

Leadership Analysis:

- I was given the opportunity to take more of a leadership role and move from a position that I had held for 8 years into a new position at Rose Villa—Assistant Administrator of Health Services. With this new role came new responsibilities, some of which include supervising staff (monitoring schedules, hiring, firing, completing performance reviews), program development, policy and procedure writing, staff training and orientation, managing client grievances, and monitoring quality of care. The timing of the Leadership Academy was perfect. It offered me tools, feedback, and guidance in making my new position as Assistant Administrator successful.
- Tangible benefits to my project: Hiring qualified staff, keeping a focus on decreased turnover, monitoring and maintaining client satisfaction, program development to take the new in home care program outside of the Rose Villa community boundaries. Intangible benefits to my project: Successfully leading a new program and supervising staff gave me self-confidence and greater sense of responsibility and ownership to what I do every day. There are also intangible benefits to Rose Villa, such as improved employee morale through the excitement of being a part of a successful, growing program.
- This project was possible because of the support I had from my direct supervisors and the coworkers I was supervising.
- Communication with both my direct supervisors and coworkers was key. One-on-one communication works best for my team and me. Completing performance evaluations is also a great tool to communicate to staff how things are going.
- A few of the challenges I faced along the way were: Finding ways to challenge others to try new and innovative ways to do their work. The in home care agency was a new way of thinking about services that we had always provided, just in a new, reformed way. It was challenging, at times, with staff that had worked at Rose Villa for 20+ years, to assist them in growing and redefining their work to meet the needs of the in home care agency and to keep them motivated and challenged. Another challenge was keeping staff informed of the 'big picture' of what we aspire to accomplish and what the dream of the future entails. Often the front line staff are very task focused and set to a routine. It was challenging at times to demonstrate to them the greater story, the overall impact, and how this program would continue to grow. A third challenge, maintaining confidence in my own skills as a supervisor. Keeping my three rings (as referenced in Juggling Elephants) balanced was a focus that I had to keep in the forefront. It is easy to jump into a new role or project and become completely overwhelmed and get discouraged, or neglect other aspects in life that are equally relevant/important..
- Reading books about leadership and discussing these challenges with both my supervisors and with others within my Leadership Academy class were ways that I overcame these challenges.

Taking risks, even when there is a chance for failure, was indeed another way to tackle these challenges. Clear communication with staff was key to me turning these challenges into successes. Also, allowing time for myself to have a break, to turn my cell phone/email/computer off and focus on nurturing the self was critical in overcoming the above identified challenges.

- The biggest surprise to me with my new role and responsibilities was realizing that there are many resources outside of Rose Villa's formal boundaries—many other great leaders and perspectives to learn from. Reaching out to other organizations for innovative ways on how to grow and improve is so important. The Leadership Academy and the conferences supported by Leading Age do a great job at linking new leaders with seasoned leaders. The CEO interviews throughout the year were immensely thought provoking and inspiring.

- Three leadership behaviors that were critical for me to learn during the course of this project were: Be clear about my philosophy of leadership (Elicit Greatness)—this behavior was what I was ranked least frequent in and wanted it to be a goal of mine to improve on, Experiment and take risks, even when there is a chance of failure, and Ensure that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.

- Keeping my focus on being clear about my philosophy of leadership (Elicit Greatness) was crucial to my success. It quickly became relevant to so many new responsibilities that I had—hiring, firing, staff retention, training/orientation, program implementation—just to name a few. Experimenting and taking risks was a more difficult leadership behavior to overcome. I have a personality of wanting perfection and organization and everything to work out the first time around. I learned aspects in the Leadership Academy to assist me in confidence in taking risks, to be passionate about what I do, and to see potential in everything (The Shakelton video and discussion greatly influenced me with this leadership behavior.) The 3rd behavior, ensuring that people grow in their jobs, learn new skills, and develop themselves, was something that I felt like I had been achieving (through supervising student interns over the years), but wanted to improve on. The book Encourage the Heart was helpful in describing ways to praise people for a job well done, find ways to celebrate accomplishments, and to make it a point to let people know about both their and my confidence in their abilities.

- Leadership growth will continue to be an ongoing learning experience. I have discovered some great leaders within the long term care industry that I plan to stay in touch with to continue to learn from them. I also look forward to mentoring future leaders in next year's Leadership Academy.

Rachel Rushing