

Caring Days AT

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Project Executive Summary

Our community partner is Caring Days. Caring Days is a program through the Oktibbeha County Community Counseling Services for elderly patients in need of psychosocial rehabilitation. The clients at Caring Days suffer from psychosocial disorders such as memory loss, anxiety, slurred speech, etc. They are always so sweet and happy to have people to sit with them and play bingo or just listen to their stories. The clients love to do arts and crafts, puzzles, board games, and tell you about themselves. They are considerate of the other clients and they treat each other with respect. Some of their strengths are their willingness to do just about anything with our team, their enthusiasm, and their sincerity. Caring Days is an amazing place, but they are severely lacking puzzles and games with all the pieces, DVD's, and supplies to do the arts and crafts they want to do.

For our service project, we put on a tailgate for the clients of Caring Days. Each client speaks so highly and lovingly of Mississippi State football, so we wanted to bring that game day experience to Caring Days in an interactive manner. As a team, we were able to collectively collaborate on the decor as well as the food choices. We were able to be flexible in our busy schedules in order to put in late nights and find a common time to throw the tailgate so we could each be there to participate and interact with the clients. We arrived at the event at Caring Days early to set up as a group. We decorated the facility with a tent, posters, games, flowers, and food. We took into consideration what would be the easiest food to share and to eat for the

clients. We were able to utilize our budget in order to carefully buy supplies and plan for this event. We set up the tailgate and played music to create a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere. We allowed each of the clients to fix a plate and indulge in food and conversation with each other and with our team. After we all finished eating, we sat everyone down to present the gifts of games and movies to the clients. Our team's handwritten letters were then read aloud to each of the clients thanking them for their special roles in our lives, moments created, and favorite memories. It was the moment where we were able to disassemble any barriers, and we all built closer relationships with each other. We engaged in conversations that have impacted each of us tremendously, and we were able to accomplish our goals all while learning more about ourselves from the clients.

Our overall goal for this project was to bring beautification and enlightenment to Caring Days. Our team wanted to leave Caring Days better than we found it, meaning we wanted the actual home to look nicer and the patients there to have more activities and games that are in better condition than they currently are. We wanted to be able to create memories with the people of Caring Days that will leave a reminder of us and encourage them throughout time. The main goal of this service project was to show them that they are loved by providing a fun tailgate for them and then surprising them with new, nice games and DVD's. We were able to accomplish everything that we wanted. Even though we did have a few bumps in the road, we were able to accomplish our overall goal and really make the people at Caring Days very happy. We were able to not only impact Caring Days, but we were also able to further our individual leadership and communication skills in the process.

While we established relationships and personal connections with the clients of Caring Days, we continued to look for paths to incorporate new ideas to improve the lives of the clients.

As a team, we encouraged the clients to participate in group games as well as group discussions. When we planned for the tailgating event, each member of our team was able to capitalize on personal strengths as they developed new characteristics that pushed their leadership characteristics to their limits to explore new traits. We anticipated to learn more about time and money management, communication, leadership, dedication, and teamwork. We were able to establish these characteristics and put them in place in order to provide the best community partner project possible to impact our community partner the most. We planned for the tailgate to encourage engagement of clients who all have different interests, which in turn was able to disassemble the “cliques” present in the facility. The clients were able to break down barriers and create a more cohesive community within Caring Days. We hoped to create an entertaining and exciting environment that will stimulate the clients who are quite shy. We were able to lead the soft spoken into more dominant roles through encouraging interaction while playing the new games we purchased for the clients. They were able to learn about their own leadership and communication skills by participating in our facilitated games. Once we officially held the tailgate, our clients were overjoyed the entire time and we were really able to get to know them on a deeper level, which was able to establish more stable relationships in their lives, which will in turn be able to create trust and cooperation.

Our weekly service and service-learning project supplied us with the experience of communication and involvement in our communities. We were to apply our lessons from this semester and utilize the characteristics of each individual team member in order to complete a successful project by becoming more independent, creative, organized, experienced and innovative. Working with our team provided us with valuable skills that lead to the betterment of ourselves as well as for the clients of Caring Days. We were able to capitalize on

our new skills and apply them to our work to the clients and establish love, communication, stability, and enlightenment. By giving back to Caring Days from our own personal learned lessons, we were able to create a more positive attitude among the clients that also encouraged the breaking of “clique” barriers to ensure more community within the facility.

Other than Caring Days being a facility that we want to impact and remember, we also learned things along the way. Our challenges and lessons were very meaningful and we learned a lot as individuals. Some of our greatest challenges were communication, time management, and sacrifice. Our team struggled in the beginning on communicating with each other. That struggle gave us a lack of options and creativity. If you do not speak your mind and contribute then maybe something helpful will not get acknowledged as it should. The creeping deadlines were also a challenge. We had to learn to be more responsible about the things we had to do and eliminate stress from our vocabulary and our mindset altogether. Time management and organization has allowed us to get a lot of things done that we would not have been able to do at the beginning stages of our mission. We also had trouble prioritizing and dedicating ourselves wholeheartedly, but now we have overcome that by seeing what we can do and our outcomes of our actions. Our team had to refocus and realize a lot of things. We had to sacrifice our norms and realize we are committed to accomplish a goal as one. We had to be bold in our commitment and have an open mind to a lot of things that we were not completely used to.

Our greatest lesson learned was cooperation. It is not easy stepping out your comfort zone. It is hard to cooperate with people that you may not have worked with before or do not feel comfortable working with. As leaders, we learned to work together and eventually overcome our difficulties. Another important lesson would be how people are way stronger together. As they say, “Teamwork makes the dream work!” Another leadership lesson we learned would be to

listen and to get work done as early as possible. Your idea may not be the best idea every time, and it may not always work, but you just have to accept that and contribute the best way possible. If you get work done when it is assigned, or as early as possible, it brings less stress to your life. Getting work done early eliminates cramming and procrastination, which are two of the worst habits.

We expected to learn some minor pointers on leadership, only to add to what we already are skillful in. We also expected to learn how to be leaders, as far as working together with others and being responsible when it comes to hard situations. Also, we expected to learn how to commit ourselves and be a positive remembrance for our Community Partner (CP), Caring Days. We expected to learn each other, and our CP, so we could be the best possible. What surprised us most would be the fact that individually we are only as good as we are together. If you are working with a team, individuality does not exist much because it is more about everyone as a whole. When that big factor is realized, groups and teams will run a lot smoothly.

These challenges have definitely impacted our team tremendously. Out of a variety of things we have learned in our lives, we will use these lesson for sure. The skills we have learned will be able to be applied in our daily lives, so that we can go on outside of Day One to the best of our abilities. Communication is a key factor in life and it helps to avoid chaos and just give a mutual understanding. Sacrifice and priority can also be used in our daily lives to know your priorities and flexibility, and to put our more meaningful responsibilities first. Our team has come a long way in learning for the goal we have set for our community partner. To listen, critically think, and call it to action is our motto.