

LeadingAge Illinois Leadership Academy

Creating a new era of excellence in aging services



Action Learning Plans (ALP's) 2018-2019

ACTION LEARNING

Action learning is an adult learning theory based on the ideas of Professor Reginald Revans back in the 1940's in the United Kingdom. It is a learning-by-doing approach which encourages people to work together to solve a problem or improve performance. Importantly, the group spends time reflecting on what they are collectively learning during the process. The method stands in contrast with traditional teaching methods that focus on the presentation of knowledge and skills.

Each fellow was asked to create an Action Learning Process of interest to them and of benefit to their organization. As a leader, it is vitally important to learn how to facilitate the group process, and inspire/motivate others to achieve goals and improve quality within the organization.

Each fellow in Leadership Academy created a presentation that described what their Action Learning Process is, why they selected it, and how it benefits their organization. They worked with their coaching teams to provide and receive counsel, guidance and feedback. The presentations were made during session #4 at the LeadingAge Illinois Annual Meeting in April.

Here are the Action Learning Processes in alphabetical order by last name.

**ERIN CONLEY
ADMINISTRATOR
BETHESDA REHAB & SENIOR CARE**

Briefly describe your ALP and your reason for doing it.

In the 12 years that I have been working in long term care many things have changed. Staff retention, complexity of residents and available resources are just a few. The expectations of residents, families and physicians has also changed over the years. The regulations have become more stringent and have affected the amount of time that administration is able to focus on patient care. While communication has also been an imperative part in the satisfaction of residents, families and physicians it has become more difficult. Lack of time and training of front-line staff and directors are two big reasons; however, communication tends to go on the back burner due to all the other pressing issues day to day in long term care. Lack of and poor communication and customer service have resulted in increased complaints and overall unhappiness.

The ALP that I have selected to work on with my team at Bethesda is improving effective communication and customer service. Specifically, improving communication among staff, residents, families and outside providers including physicians. This will enhance the culture of the building and the satisfaction of staff, residents, families and outside providers. The goal is for staff to be happier which will then mean that they will be more engaged, exhibit good customer service and provide better care. Ultimately, residents, families and outside providers trust will grow and satisfaction will be high.

What Long-Term impact do you hope your ALP will have on your organization or the field of senior living?

The long term impact that I hope effective and proactive communication will have is that there will be a decrease by 20% in the amount of:

Grievances

Irate residents/family members

IDPH open cases

Abuse allegations

Liability and cost issues

Increase morale of staff: effective communication will prevent them from being frustrated about issues and information that wasn't communicated.

Residents and family's customer satisfaction will increase, and they will not want to discharge back to community which results in a positive financial impact for the community.

More programs focused on the resident because administration's time can be spent on increasing programs and not solving grievances or writing reports to IDPH. Goal is to implement 3 projects/programs by the end of 2019.

The culture of long-term care will be more positive.

The specific amount of grievances, abuse allegations, IDPH open cases will be tracked and monitored more efficiently and diligently. A spreadsheet will be created that will track the amount of each issue received. Specifically, the date the concern was received and the resolution date will be included. I will look back and obtain the number for 2018. A rating system from 1-5 will also be created to rate the severity of the concerns.

Process will include:

Making staff aware that communication/customer service is an issue at department meetings.

Explain change is difficult. Some staff will embrace and some will bridge the gap.

Ask staff to think about a "WHY" statement. Their personal WHY statement along with the organization's "WHY" statement.

Effective communication/Customer Service training will be done annually by IPMG Risk Management group. The administrator or designee will conduct it during orientation and existing staff will also participate via the online Relias learning training program.

Abuse/Neglect training will be conducted by the administrator or designee during orientation process, annually & through Relias training.

What leadership lessons have I learned as a result of working on ALP?

This project effects all residents (including short term rehab, sheltered care, skilled nursing), families and staff (directors and front line).

Emotional Intelligence: Implementation of this project will require change and acceptance from all directors and staff. The key to successfully getting the staff to embrace and practice good communication and customer service is to be sure their emotions are in check and that they understand and utilize self-awareness strategies. Managing individual emotions in a group setting so that successful change and buy in can occur.

X-Model of engagement: Taking time to evaluate my team and determine where they fall on the engagement model will assist me with determining which employees to in service and focus on first. Poor communication and customer service can be a reflection of employees being in the "crash and burners" or "disengaged" stages. Communication and customer service will improve as they leave those stages and enter into the engaged or almost engaged stage. Once they are in either of those stages they are overall happier and more effective employees.

Six thinking hats: Each Director and front-line staff member wears a different thinking hat. Depending on the hat that they wear will depend on how they communicate and what they communicate to their coworkers, residents and family members. Despite their specific thinking hat there is meaning in what they are communicating and value. By understanding the six thinking hats it helps to understand why someone might think or react a specific way. For example, a black hat tends to be negative or points out faults in a plan or design. They tend to communicate a critical negative judgement or potential problem, but there is something positive that could be added by listening to that person's voice.

Remembering the “WHY” statement: The WHY statement can help staff stay on track when things get complicated, communication lapses or when there are grievances. Remembering WHY we are focusing on this issue will be important to keep pushing this program to successful completion.

Riders & Elephants: As an organization we need to find the bright spots and direct the riders (staff) to where the final destination should be. While the final destination would include the residents, families and all staff being satisfied and happy there are smaller destinations that can stopped at on the way to the final destination. Improvements and decrease in the amount of grievances would be an example in reaching a smaller destination. The elephant can complicate this process and the elephant needs to stay motivated. The path to the final destination may not be straight. In fact, it is likely to have curves and maybe some jagged edges, but with hard work and consistency the final destination will be reached.

What other observations or insights from your ALP do you wish to share?

Leadership Academy has given me the opportunity to evolve personally and professionally. Since the start of leadership academy, my knowledge has expanded, and I have learned many tools that allow me to be a better leader. The tools along with the support and accountability from other Fellows gives me the confidence to carry out this ALP. I understand that failure may occur and this ALP might not be as effective as I currently envision. However, after speaking with an Executive Director during a round table session I have realized that failure isn't terminal, it's educational. My team and I will learn together and gain some insight from the ALP. You learn from mistakes by experience and adjustments can be made throughout the process. Success and improvements can't be made unless you try and stay focused (don't look down) on the final goal.

**MARGIE HAWORTH, LCSW
SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR
CLARK-LINDSEY VILLAGE IN URBANA**

Briefly describe your ALP and your reason for selecting it.

My ALP looks at improving the admissions process for our long-term skilled nursing unit. Currently when a new resident is expected to arrive, the room is often not ready yet. Sometimes there is no bed in the room or if there is, then the bed is not made. At times items from the roommate have spilled onto the new resident's side of the room. Also, staff do not know much about the new resident who will be moving in.

I would like to work to improve this whole scenario. Working with admissions, nursing, CNAs, Life Enrichment and housekeeping I would like for there to be a more seamless transition from home to their new residence. I would like to create a work group that includes each of these disciplines as well as possibly a resident who recently made the move and can give good insight as to what would have been better for them.

I envision getting the rooms cleaned and set up well before a new resident arrives. I hope to get to know the new resident prior to admission and pass on information to the nursing staff about their new resident. Information might include their social history, their likes and dislikes and their preferences for care. We would also work with family to bring in items prior to the resident moving in so that when the new resident arrives, they will see familiar items surrounding them.

What long-term impact do you hope your ALP will have on your organization or the field of senior living?

I hope that by creating a more caring environment when people move into our Skilled Nursing unit that it will set the tone for their whole stay with us. My hope would be that this would increase communication among all involved and help the resident and their family members feel more at ease with the transition. This process should help to cut down on the number of concerns raised by family members when they are entrusting us with the care of their loved one.

What leadership lessons have you learned as a result of working on the ALP?

In creating this ALP there are a few Leadership Tools that I am drawing on and continue to learn from. One is the idea of building interdisciplinary teams and the benefits of hearing from many different points of view. I will also draw upon my new knowledge and understanding of different communication styles and the way different people think about situations (6 thinking hats).

What other observations or insights about your ALP do you wish to share?

It is my hope that in working on this ALP I will be able to continue to grow as a leader and continue to draw from everything that I have learned during this incredible experience.

**CHRISTIAN HILL
MANAGER IT APPLICATIONS AND DATA ANALYTICS
CJE**

Briefly describe your ALP and your reason for doing it.

Our Holocaust Community Services program has received funding to increase the number of clients that it currently serves. The HCS program is a new addition to CJE as of two years ago and many of its processes are unknown or undefined. Most of the services utilized by our HCS clients are not provided directly by CJE staff but rather the client is reimbursed for services they are currently receiving through other agencies or by hiring additional services that these new funds provide for. CJE currently does not have the capacity to handle the expansion of these new services and may be forced into a decision between declining this funding, or hiring several new staff members to manage the work load.

The primary increase in the workload will be in the finance department. The finance department currently has the burden of receiving service receipts that serve as proof of service rendered. They must then check this against existing services rendered payments to ensure that there are funds available to pay for additional services. Finally, they must enter data from new requests and process the payments and checks to return to the clients. This is challenging as the finance department is ill equipped to do this amount of data entry and lacks the firsthand knowledge of the services rendered that the HCS department has.

My goal will be to review all of the current internal processes by both the HCS team and the finance team and create a new streamlined process. The reason for selecting this project is to enable the acceptance of these funds to provide these new services to these seniors without the need of additional full time employees.

What long-term impacts do you hope your ALP will have on your organization or the field of senior living?

My major hope for this project is to display to the organization and to educate the leadership team the value in undertaking this type of work effort. The entire first half of this action learning process was devoted to meeting with different departments to understand their work processes. These departments focus on very different goals. It was a major requirement to understand each person's role in every department in order to design something completely new and incorporate the use of technology in order to decrease the overall workload for everyone involved. During the first part of this project, staff members were hesitant to spend the time needed to complete this project.

By the time the project was complete we had successfully saved the organization at least two full time positions with the possibility of greater efficiencies in the future. However, while the project was on-going, this did not seem like a realistic possibility to those involved. It is my hope that in the future, these types of projects will be seen as an investment and that more people will be open to change.

What leadership lessons have you learned as a result of working on the ALP?

The major leadership lessons I have learned during this process relate to the challenges in leading a project that takes place over many different departments with many different groups of people.

A group of individuals that are tasked with providing services may not see the benefit of increasing capacity in an area of the agency that does not directly provide services to clients. They may also keep different hours or have different priorities throughout the day.

Addressing the concerns of a disparate group of teams was the primary challenge I had to overcome. Once I did, the rest of this project seemed to fall into place. Each team contained different personalities that had to be managed in different ways. Additionally, each team had a different perception of where the work effort should be taking place and these were often completely opposite of each other. The managing of personalities was the key takeaway from this project and in the final analysis was the part of the project where most of the energy and effort was spent. Where I had assumed the major effort would be, that of the actual design, creation and implementation of the new technical solution, ended up being a minor piece of this project.

What other observations or insights about your ALP do you wish to share?

At the end of this project we were able to offer more services to more clients with fewer staff. I would like that to be the major take-away for my organization. This is a major lesson learned on the value of leadership and the return on investment on quality project management. The time spent on this effort and indeed on future similar efforts should not be seen as a distraction diverting attention away from daily activities. It should instead be seen as a one-time payment of time spent in order to increase efficiency and reduce the work load for all staff.

Another important insight I have discovered is that it is imperative that leadership be able to see past the invisible lines that divide each sub group of employees in the agency as the return is too valuable. Seeing the agency as a whole instead of separate groups of individuals performing separate tasks would have doomed this process.

Instead, we walk away with a template for increasing services and reducing inefficiencies and cost. We have increased our capacity and this is the type of objective and goal that everyone in this field is currently looking for.

ADRIANA HUGHES
HR ADVISOR
PRESENCE LIFE CONNECTIONS/ASCENSION LIVING CHICAGO

Briefly describe your ALP and your reason for doing it.

I would like to create a “community” within our communities. My ALP is to modify our verbiage with the hopes it catches on in other ways. We call our work hallways either “halls” or “units”. I would like to try something new and call them “teams”. I think we need to represent that we are a team no matter where you stand on the hierarchy or the position you hold in the community. We cannot function as a whole without each other. Many employees think that just because you are a nurse you do not have to answer a call light (I have received these complaints before). Or just because you are an activity assistant and not in EVS you cannot remove overflowing trash from a resident’s room when the EVS worker has not had time to reach that room yet. I want to promote teamwork in a way that will be beneficial for the residents, employees, leadership and may even have a financial reward. These “teams” will be responsible for their hallway in ensuring residents always have what they need and each team member have what they need to successfully do their job. Reading “5 Dysfunctions of a Team” showed me how much work we need to put into our communities so we can have that great balance that is rewarding for all that work there as well as our residents. Those that work together in a team are also more likely to have a positive work experience and create an all-around positive work environment. When we work in the field we work in, it becomes a part of our life and lifestyle. It is not a matter of just being a “job”. It is who we are and who we are, are people who help those who cannot entirely help themselves anymore. It is in our nature to do well and help in any way we can to create a great atmosphere.

What long-term impact do you hope your ALP will have on your organization or the field of senior living?

This will help reignite the passion and our culture in our communities. We have recently gone through a transition and I believe the idea of a “team” will go a long way for those who continue to be uncertain. We will always need staff and we will always need to care for our residents. The more our employees work as a team, the better quality care our residents will receive. This will also promote teamwork within our own management team. We should all be willing and able to help any department as much as we can to help run a smooth and successful operation. Employees are more likely to follow the actions of their managers. If employees see their managers working with other departments and assisting other employees as much as they can, they are likely to follow their actions and do the same. I am also hopeful that we will also see a reduction in agency and promote more employee engagement by rewarding those employees for always showing up to work. Each week a team successfully shows up to work with no call offs, we will select one shift to implement a bonus – to be given to employees and managers in that team. In the long-term, this will help keep agency out of our communities thus creating a better environment. We will be using that money we have used for agency spend, to benefit our own staff.

What leadership lessons have you learned as a result of working on the ALP?

In order to promote teamwork, everyone has to believe in it. It is a top down initiative because if our employees do not see our own leaders working together as a team, what will make them want

to work as one? The videos, handouts, exercises and journaling is something that I will take with me to show other leaders to inspire them to create a successful department and culture within our communities. Learning how to wear different hats from a leadership perspective and from an associate perspective is a great experience and one that will help in all aspects of work. I would also like to provide them an outline of “5 Dysfunctions of a Team”, to demonstrate what can happen when the group does not work together. This book resonates with me and is something I will continue to pass on to our leadership. I would like to share some of these experiences with our managers – without giving too much of the academy away – to show them different ways we can effectively manage our team and what happens when we have those who do not want to be a part of the team.

What other observations or insights about your ALP do you wish to share?

As I bring the idea of “team” to our leadership team and show them some examples, I would like to ask for their feedback as to what they would think would work in their respective community. Each of our 20 communities are different and unique in their own way and some ways may work better than others. I would like to do the “uses of a brick list” exercise and come up with ways this can be effective because the more they think outside of the box the more productive we will be. Mind mapping will also be a helpful tool in accomplishing my ALP.

When managers help to roll out this initiative, managers and employees will have the opportunity to hold themselves accountable for their work and work ethic and they will be able to see the positive impact they can create by working as a team. I am hopeful we will do some team building exercises from our list and exercises prior to rolling this out to our communities. Our team strategy will impact morale as well as retention and engagement. Our staff will be held accountable and it will be up to them as to whether or not they receive a monetary bonus. I believe putting this in the hands of our staff shows that we value them and want to reward them for their dedication to our organization and the residents.

The Academy has shown me the kind of leader I am and the kind of leader I want to become. It has given me a voice in my professional and personal life and has pushed me to start doing and implementing. This ALP will be a work in progress and I look forward to seeing the outcome.

**COURTNEY KARL
DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES
THE LUTHERAN HOME**

Briefly describe your ALP and your reason for selecting it.

The goal of my ALP is to improve the overall transition process for a short-term patient in the rehab setting who has chosen to reside in the healthcare setting following completion of their rehabilitation. Through evaluation of successful and suboptimal transitions, a set of standards will be created to enhance the transition process. The resident should feel welcomed as they enter the new unit and feel their move was anticipated and individually planned.

Patients choose to move into the Lutheran Home following their rehabilitation stay often because of the quality, competent and compassionate care provided in the rehabilitation units. It is an honor when an individual and their family chooses to convert to permanent status at the Lutheran Home and the move should reflect the gratitude felt by the entire interdisciplinary team.

I have chosen this ALP to ensure that the clinical needs and status of the patient are successfully communicated to the new interdisciplinary team providing care to the patient. Information regarding social preferences and needs will be communicated between social service staff and life enrichment team members to aid in adjustment and ease the transition to a new lifestyle. First impressions are everything and a successful first day in a new environment will pave the way for continued satisfaction.

What long-term impact do you hope your ALP will have on your organization or the field of senior living?

There are countless options for long term care in the area around the Lutheran Home and beyond. Retaining current long term residents is critical to sustain operations. Successful transitions with continued quality care will lead to overall satisfaction of our residents and their families. The standardization of the transition process will help the staff understand expectations and become habit for each move. The residents will benefit from increased communication between discharging and receiving team members, leading to improved continuity of care. It is hopeful that with improved, deliberate and standardized communication between units, potential risks associated with any resident will be reduced.

What leadership lessons have you learned as a result of working on the ALP?

Implementing a new idea can be challenging. The lessons learned in "Switch" help us understand the necessary steps and ideas needed to lead a team towards a goal. Initial buy in of the interdisciplinary team and directors is necessary. Sustainability and continued use of standardized measures will need to be monitored and managed. How can we lead the elephant and the rider in the beginning and for the long term? I have learned to identify what is needed to help the staff and directors feel motivated to participate in this new initiative.

The Leading Age Leadership Academy has helped me identify who I am as a leader and where my strengths and weaknesses lie. The Academy taught me to observe and evaluate systems that had been in place for years and gave me the confidence and skill to revamp some old practices for the betterment of the staff and those entrusted in our care.

What other observations or insights about your ALP do you wish to share?

I hope the ideas in this ALP will grow and evolve through trials and team member insight and recommendations. Our industry is always evolving and changing. I hope to prepare the team for fluidity and flexibility in all practices to ensure successful transitions now and in the future.

**AJDINA MARTINEZ
ADMISSIONS & MARKETING DIRECTOR
PRESENCE FOX KNOLL RETIREMENT COMMUNITY**

Briefly describe your ALP and your reason for selecting it.

For my ALP I decided to do a potluck lunch with all the staff every 2 months. I noticed the morale going down due to changes within the company. There was no feeling of being part of the team so I thought what better way to try to connect with everyone than through food and go over concerns, questions, and talk about important topics. I believe food brings everyone together and it almost feels like family. We have a variety of different ethnic backgrounds in our community and the potluck would bring all of them together.

What long-term impact do you hope your ALP will have on your organization or the field of senior living?

I hope that staff feels appreciated and it has a positive impact so that they carry that throughout the day during their work time and with residents. We would also connect more and understand each other better. We would feel more of a team instead of feeling like we're on a one-man-island.

What leadership lessons have you learned as a result of working on the ALP?

One of them is definitely to listen. I always used to think about how to respond rather than just to listen. Now, I just listen and I understand more where they are coming from.

What other observations or insights about your ALP do you wish to share?

It has taught me how to connect with others and that just a small compliment goes a long way. The first potluck made an impact. We would talk about each other's recipes and complement each other's foods. I also have other managers asking to take turns with the potluck. For the next potluck, we will discuss any issues we have and answer questions. I also would like to gather ideas on how to make our community better. The plan is also to pick a topic for every potluck and go over it with the staff (example; customer service, dementia 101, admissions/tours, etc)

I believe for our community, this will increase team work, positive morale, and understanding each other better.

**JENNIFER O'BRIEN
CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES
WESLEY WILLOWS**

Briefly describe your ALP and your reason for selecting it.

Employee retention initiatives are a priority at Wesley Willows. This includes not only employee recognition and rewards programs, but also as we make decisions, we consider how these directly impact employees. Currently, we have solid programs in place where we recognize employees; however, we need to take it a step further. We need to keep employees engaged, interested, and excited not only about their job, but about Wesley Willows & senior living!

The Employee Retention Program will create a new way of engaging employees. This program will focus on engagement within each department and give supervisors the opportunity to play a key role in this initiative. I want to provide all levels of management with a framework of tools and resources to utilize in their departments. This will help them see employees from a different perspective, as well as give them tangible ideas to implement on a day-to-day-basis.

The Employee Retention Program will include training to introduce the “why is this important?” and the “how do I implement this?” The supervisors will have the freedom to implement their own ideas and share them with other supervisors. This will be an ongoing and fluid program to allow for new ideas to be implemented and help keep the program fresh.

What long-term impact do you hope your ALP will have on your Organization or the field of senior living?

The Recruitment Committee will become “Recruitment & Retention Committee”. This committee meets bi-weekly to discuss ongoing initiatives, status updates, as well as new ideas. Employee retention will officially become a new focus of the committee.

Wesley Willows has a solid employee recognition program in place, however, employee engagement needs to become a recognizable component of our organization to improve employee retention and reduce turnover. We want employees to be excited about work they do every day and have an understanding of how they make a difference in lives of seniors, no matter what position they have.

I identified the need for an Employee Retention Program because of ongoing challenges I see at Wesley Willows. As with most, if not all organizations, turnover is at the top of our concerns, but really it goes beyond this. I see the need for all departments to get involved and take ownership of improving employee engagement. Creating a culture of engaged employees at every level will foster an environment of excitement, passion and teamwork. Engaged employees will want to perform well, learn and ultimately grow within Wesley Willows.

What leadership lessons have you learned as a result of working on your ALP?

I have learned to embrace input and help from others with projects I am leading. Instead of thinking I am solely responsible for new initiatives, I have opened my mind to hearing perspectives of others and accepting assistance with projects. I have come to enjoy project management as a result of this. I have also learned to avoid paralysis by analysis. I still have room to grow in this area, but it is at the forefront of my thoughts when working on project.

What other observations or insights about your ALP do you wish to share?

My experience with the Leadership Academy has broadened my view of what leadership really is. I have learned new skills, but more importantly, I have learned how to approach leadership with an open mind while valuing the contributions of others. This new mindset has created an excitement within me to start the new Employee Retention Program. I look forward to gathering input, implementing the program and seeing the impact it has on employee morale and turnover.

**DAWN OWTEN
BUSINESS OFFICE MANAGER-HR ADMIN.
PATHWAY TO LIVING INC.**

Briefly describe your ALP and your reason for selecting it.

Training and retention I believe in my experience is a huge part of an organization's success. Most employees want to do a good job; they enjoy coming to work especially when they feel that they are being trained properly and are contributors to the organizations' success. Fears for organizations in hiring new employees are as follows: time invested, money spent on orientating employees, uniforms, drug testing, fingerprinting etc, and of course losing the employee's skill set to other organizations. A well designed training program can actually increase retention in organizations when a new employee is fully educated about his/her position, the job is self-satisfying, a passion is shown by the trainer for that organization, management is passionate and excited about their mission statement, and there is dedication from long term employees. I chose this ALP because of the on-going training I feel is needed in my community, to try and retain my employees through positive environment (VIVA) and open door policy at its best. It is crucial to have a well thought out training plan for new employees, so the organization continues to see improvement in the community's retention process. I plan to improve the training in my community by providing each department with updated job descriptions as well as implementing a checklist for each department to follow for new employees. I would like to implement a Buddy (Mentor) system, this would work by choosing one team member who is a star performer in each department to train with the new employee of that department for the first 2 weeks of the his/her training. This Buddy would be someone that the new employee would be able to rely on and trust. The new employee would have a voice to be able to speak freely about the training they are receiving. This approach would also provide Buddy recognition for a job well done and know that they are a value to our organization. I feel this could reduce the retention in our organization as well as limit losing potentially great candidates to other organizations.

What long-term impact do you hope your ALP will have on your organization or the field of senior living?

I feel that a well-designed training program and great retention would not only make my community thrive; it would also make employees feel empowered because of the knowledge and proper training tools they would have to do their jobs with passion and pride. Having an empowered employee both seasoned and new would make residents happy, would allow for the team members to get to know one another better and show employees that management care tremendously about our employees well-being. This program will give us long term employees with proper skill sets, great environment, and excellent team work. This new program will also cut down the cost of money spent on retraining new employees to replace those that do not stay with our company, reduce stress for the hiring manager to find the qualified talent, and minimize frustration of our residents who feel like they are always, trying to get to know someone new. Retaining our employees will lead to improved employee and resident satisfaction surveys. When employees and residents are happy and in sync with one another, it creates a wonderful environment in which to work in. I feel if employees are trained properly and are appreciated for all of their hard work and time, our organization will be able to retain very valuable individuals long-term.

What leadership lessons have you learned as a result of working on the ALP?

- The importance of being able to make changes for employees to grow and be able to trust me as a leader.
- Never too old to “Switch” and make changes that make us better at what we do.
- Change can be good. As a leader, it is important to listen to others and relate back what they need from me as a leader
- It is our job as leaders to help our employees succeed and grow as individuals.

What other observations or insights about your ALP do you wish to share?

The training and retention is still a work in progress in that my community is still relatively new. My journey with the LeadingAge Leadership Academy has helped me tremendously to realize that in order for change to occur, it is important for listening to take place. In addition, follow through and action must follow so that trust can occur. Trust is critical for effective leadership and I will work hard so that my team members feel that they can trust my leadership. Being able to work, teach, and train in a positive environment with compassion for the leader that I want become.

**LESLIE PAQUETTE
LIFE SERVICES MANAGER
FRIENDSHIP SENIOR OPTIONS**

Briefly describe you ALP and reason for selecting it.

My ALP is to conceptualize a new wellness program for our Independent Living community at Greenfields. I'd like to develop a Wellness Center that offers office hours for a Physician(s) to come to Greenfields to care for their patient's onsite, at our community. Other benefits could be laboratory services, wellness screenings, and preventative health resources.

Currently our Assisted Living area has the convenience and benefits of a Physician that comes to our community. One benefit in this, is an increase in access to care. Having a PCP come to the community diminishes some of the barriers to seeing the doctor, which may include poor motivation to see your doctor or lack of transportation. It also increases continuity of care between patient, Doctor, the associates providing care and our community. I selected this as my ALP because I believe that it's a need for our IL residents. As residents age, they often then give up driving and getting to the doctor becomes difficult. Also, as our residents age, their mobility may decrease. Navigating a parking lot, front entrance and possibly many floors of a hospital or doctor's building to get to their doctor can become too difficult or impossible, therefore leading to missed appointments. Options for assistance in getting to an outside doctor are costly. Finally, residents often express feeling like a burden when asking family to take them to appointments. Having a doctor on site would increase continuity of care, accessibility, and improve staff communication with physician.

What Long term impact do you hope your ALP will have on your organization?

The long term impact I hope this new program will bring to our organization is preventive health programs, a partnership with our ACO, and specialists meeting the needs of our community. Some specialists may include: Cardiology, pulmonology, and dermatology. Further impact would be improving of quality of life and stabilizing health concerns for those whom found it difficult to see outside doctors. The need for preventative health resources and professionals would be surveyed and evaluated regularly to maximize the impact and benefits.

What leadership lessons will you apply to your ALP?

One leadership lessons learned they I will apply to this ALP is following my true north. Since joining the team at Greenfields, I have wanted this opportunity for our residents.

Another leadership lesson that will be utilized is building teams to accomplish this goal. I will need to network with outside entities and request time and skills of others within my organization. I will need to develop a team internally to help strategize and implement the new program.

A third leadership lesson I'll use is the lesson learned from the LAILA island activity. Describing the goal of the program and getting and giving clear expectations, directions & guidelines will be important to developing this new program. I will need to keep asking questions (Why?) to further understand aspects of the program I have not thought of yet.

I will also need to use the concept from the '6 thinking hats' lesson to view the program from all angles in order to be successful. Information that needs to be gathered, how the residents and

community might feel about the new program, what will the benefits be, what difficulties lie ahead, what are the possibilities and finally a breakdown of how to manage the process. I'll have to use experts in other areas to supplement areas of knowledge/expertise I'll need help in.

Developing a new program with limited space will require innovative thinking. Our community currently does not have a space available to support such a new program. A task team should be created to help brainstorm ideas. Visiting other communities and learning various ways of running a Wellness center would be beneficial.

Finally networking with our ACO and Physician's offices will be vital. I'll need to form relationships with office managers, doctors, nurse practitioners, community health liaisons, concierge doctors, and more to be identified during the process.

Other thoughts I'd like to share on this ALP is my thought process on how to proceed. I am in the initial phases of discussing the project with my Director of Life Services and the ED at our community. My Director and ED have also expressed an interest in this program for our IL community. I will continue to discuss with each of them my ideas and solicit their feedback. Another next step is to survey the residents for their input on the potential program. I have consulted with a local physician that sees patients at an Assisted Living on her opinion on the new program. She shared that newer Physicians would likely be eager to participate to build their caseload and would be a great place to start in the recruiting process. I will be calling office managers at other 'internal clinics' at CCRCs or freestanding facilities and ask for their input on how their program began and continues to function. I plan to tour other wellness centers in CCRCs to help visualize the opportunities at our community. I'd gather and estimate of financials to present back to my director and ED. I'd present the concept to the fellow leaders here at my community for their support and shared knowledge. At some point would create a task team, project plan and time line for the Wellness Center Concept.

CARLOS PENA
SOUS CHEF, DINING SUPERVISING
MONARCH LANDING NAPERVILLE

Briefly describe ALP and the reason for selecting it.

My goal as a Food & Beverage supervisor is to reintroduce the use of recipes for all menus like soups, sauces, entrees, desserts, etc. In order to help our culinary team by making the food more tasteful and colorful.

This will help our team to improve and understand many different ways and methods of cooking as well as implementing the flavors and textures. Doing this will also mean that meals can be made without guessing, thereby reducing stress among the staff. Food costs and expenses can potentially be reduced by making sure the recipes are accurate so that the right amount of ingredients can be purchased. Teamwork among kitchen staff will be improved because everyone will know exactly what is needed and everyone will be able to effectively communicate with other kitchen staff what is needed, where it is needed and when it is needed.

Any resident feedback, good or bad, can be easily used to change what our recipes use and allow staff to know what changes have been made so that they can adjust what they make to meet resident and family expectations.

What long-term impact do you hope your ALP will have on your Organization or the field of senior living?

I believe that the use of friendly recipes at Monarch Landing, will make our team stronger and the learning process more efficient. Plus, the recipes will make our food look and taste good. Our residents will be happier with higher quality food options available. Happy residents mean they will be more likely refer their friends who will be able to bring the establishment to full occupancy and allow for more revenue for the company. Lastly, happy residents will make our team very confident and proud, creating an opportunity for them to be even more engaged at work.

What leadership lesson have you learned as a result of working on your ALP?

My ALP process can make a difference in our culinary team and residents at Monarch Landing because this initiative will enrich the quality and texture of our food that they eat. We will get better responses from our residents once we start to reintroduce recipes for our menus. In addition, our culinary team will feel more confident every time when they prepare any food for our resident's or family members.

Trust is critical for an organization and it is valuable in the kitchen as well.

The more the kitchen staff has trust in each other the better they can work as a team. Without trust a team falls apart and loses effectiveness and efficiency. The residents will feel that impact through the quality of the food they receive during mealtimes. If the team is not working together, the food will be worse than the food could have been if they had been working properly together as a team.

One-way Trust can be earned is through good communication. Recipe utilization is on way in which the head chefs can universally and thoroughly communicate with their team. The menus and recipes should be put together by the head/executive chef or the sous chef, preferably both.

Both chefs would talk and decide when certain recipes are used and how long they stay on the menu. In addition, the introduction of recipes will also reduce stress for the staff so that in the event a person is out of the kitchen, all others will have a plan in place to follow to ensure quality and consistency.

There should be plans in place in case there are missing staff for any reason. With plans in place covering a number of situations that staff would be missing, the rest of the kitchen staff can work and worry less about what they need to do to cover the missing person's workload.

What other observation or insights about your ALP do you wish to share?

The importance and impact of this ALP can for Monarch Landing can be significant Monarch Landing, I believe in the need for this program and its potential to positively impact on our organization's reduce stress among the team and most importantly, create an event better experience for our residents and their families.

I understand and accept that the outcome may not be exactly what I hope it will be, however that does not diminish its opportunity for success.

To be a part of the Leading Age Leadership Academy, I have been able to learn and grow on a personal and professional level. I am becoming more proficient at utilizing many of the strategies that I have learned through the Academy. One of the biggest lessons learned is that I understand it is almost normal and okay to fail at times and if you do, it makes you stronger. Another takeaway is that problems and solutions can be looked at and addressed in a variety of different ways.

As such My ALP is a work in progress. I can see where we are headed and know that every day is a learning process but, at the end, results will be well worth the effort.

**JUDY PETERSEN
ASSISTED LIVING DIRECTOR
FRIENDSHIP VILLAGE OF SCHAUMBURG**

Briefly describe your ALP and your reason for selecting it.

As I have worked in several senior living communities, I have seen many nurses and caregivers interacting with residents that have many complex medical issues. They run the spectrum of fiercely independent to totally dependent on the staff to help them day to days. These seniors that they are serving have many complex physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual needs. The staff is always available to them 24/7 and 365 Days a year.

I am currently implementing a process of developing a support group for the people who serve our residents, the nurses and the caregivers. The reason I have selected this particular group is that I have seen over the years “caregiver burnout” from the demanding tasks they perform day after day. It appears that nurses and caregivers are very good at caring for others, but many do not entertain or pay attention to “self-care”. Work/life balance issues are never talked about at staff meeting or at shift exchange. The idea of self-leadership is foreign to many people. Staff have many responsibilities whether it is at home or at work. The idea of doing something for themselves does not come first and foremost in their minds. Our work cultures and the worldview that we are looking through these days, reinforce the idea that the more you work and the harder you work, the more successful you are. They do not pay attention to their energy needs and most are juggling so much, they do not even take the time for themselves to rest, recover and refuel.

What long term impact do you hope your ALP will have on your organization or in the field of senior living?

My goal for the ALP is to teach and model to the staff who are directly working with our seniors, that it is ultimately important for them to take care of themselves.

As we look to the future, and realizing that our baby boomer generation will be our next clients, there will be a need for many more caregivers and nurses. My hope is that as the care staff cares for themselves, that they will be fully engaged in serving our seniors. They will be better equipped to care for these aging seniors. Staff retention and recruitment will be impacted and there will be less turnover. As they share with their peers, and attend these groups, they will see the value and be able to better manage their energy. It is said that compassion is not complete, if it is not directed at the one who gives it. I would hope that this initiative would impact our staff not only at work, but in all areas of their lives. Ultimately they will understand that work and life balance is critical to high performance. Their families, friends and everyone whose life they touch will be impacted in a positive way.

This will eventually become a very contagious effort. As we interact with our peers across the campus, my goal is that all staff would see a difference in our interactions, and they would be curious to know how we are accomplishing these high energy relationships. Eventually, the whole campus of 850 staff members would be open to exploring more time for self-care. This will assist in inter-departmental meetings and initiatives. This will also help to position our organization for continued growth as promote the growth of individuals at all levels of the organization. Investing in the workplace of today will indeed promote healthier relationships and skills in the workplace of tomorrow. Staff will then encourage their families and friends to be part of our Friendship family.

Staff will be more enthusiastic about coming to work, and they will be able to meet the daily demands of our population.

What Leadership lessons have you learned as a result of working on the Action Learning Plan?

As a leader in my organization, I am charged with setting the climate for my team and for my department. The concept of energy management verses time management, has been translated to me as self-care. Regardless of the amount of time that I have been reminded of this, I know this does not happen easily or overnight. Discipline and integrity are key components to accomplishing change and reaching a goal. Whether at work or in our personal lives, we have to be committed to change physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. I realize that I cannot be fully engaged and fully present if I am not taking time for recovery. Work and life balance is critical to sustaining high energy. How I treat my body, mind, emotions and spirit will reflect in how I lead my life. I have heard that the most important person I will ever lead is myself. When we are in the caring for people business, as we are in healthcare, it is even more important to care for ourselves first. This is not a selfish concept but an intelligent one. As I implement my Action Learning Plan, I have to remember and remind myself that these principles apply to me as well. I can care for my team and my managers only after I apply these same principles to myself. This can be a very rich and rewarding experience, but only out of giving in a way that is healthy. The rituals that I create for myself will be very different than what other people create for themselves. The better we take care of ourselves, the more efficiently we can reach out and care for others. A lot of withdrawals go into caring for others, and when we take care of ourselves, we are adding deposits into our emotional tanks.

What other observations or insights about your Action Learning Plan do you wish to share?

One of the lessons that I have learned so far is to be open to and welcome and ask for feedback. I have only had one session so far, and it was not at a time that I had originally planned for. As I included my direct managers in my decision process, they suggested that I conduct the session at a different time when the groups attending would be smaller and more intimate. Having an open mind to change can truly be a blessing. I have learned that even when we do not necessarily agree with all of our colleagues, that it is important to listen to all suggestions and be flexible and open to different opinions and ideas. Another observation after only one session, is that I have to keep my expectations realistic. Just because I think that self-care and work life balance are important, not everyone will necessarily agree or even be interested in the topic that I present on. This will then be an opportunity to be more creative and innovative as I have discovered through the Leadership Academy. I also understand that changing a culture can be hard but not impossible. People that are committed to their profession are loyal people. I also realized that I can turn this new learning into an opportunity to tie this initiative to our Strategic Plan. Customer intimacy includes everyone, residents, staff members and families.

**LEON ROMAN
EMBARK SENIOR LIVING**

Briefly describe your ALP and reason for selecting it.

My APL is to revamp the Convenience Store with complete service operated by the Dining Service Group. At the present time our convenience store is operating. However, it is run by and/or operated by volunteer Residents.

The reason I selected this as my ALP is because since it is run by volunteers, there is no consistency in hours of operation as it is only operational when volunteers are available. By taking control of the Convenience Store, services will be available during set hours for the residents. Additional services will also be available w/a Café Style feel and operational deli station.

In addition to services being available it will also promote socializing amongst the residents in between dining hours.

What Long Term impact do you hope your ALP will have on your organization?

I feel that my ALP will have a positive impact at our location. Presently, the convenience store is only featuring canned goods, packaged foods, and some household items. With the Convenience Store fully operational, made to order beverages, hot soups, and sandwiches will be available. We would be providing an added service to our residents.

What leadership lessons will you apply to your ALP?

In order to carry out my ALP, it will require that the entire team be involved. I want to motivate/enable my team and support their suggestions, to make this a team effort. I will utilize the Vision Board lesson to create the tentative steps needed to accomplish this goal.

Another leadership lesson that will be utilized is building teams to accomplish this goal. By twisting the environment and pushing my team members out of their comfort zone and taking a leadership over given goal, will direct us as a whole towards accomplishing this ALP. By doing this, we will make our location better for our residents and prove to be an asset to the organization. It will also bring a welcoming spirit amongst other department team members. At the end of the, we are all to work together in conjunction for the benefit of our organization.

**DAN STEGBAUER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
COVENANT VILLAGE OF CROMWELL – A COVENANT RETIREMENT COMMUNITY**

Briefly describe your ALP and your reason for doing it.

The ALP I selected is to create a leadership development program as I transition to my new campus. The leadership team at that campus has been working diligently to improve employee satisfaction, engagement and retention while also lowering turnover. Investing in the current team will have an impact on all these areas. As we look for innovative ways to differentiate in a tight labor market, this program has the opportunity be viewed as a value-add to staff looking to get more out of their job than just performing their day-to-day tasks while also developing skills for future roles.

This program is a tool that would help the campus be on the forefront of developing and investing in team members in ways others are not. By successfully creating a leadership program at the campus level, staff will inherently remain a part of the community longer, recruit their friends and family to work here, and be more satisfied.

What Long-Term impact do you hope your ALP will have on your organization or the field of senior living?

The long-term impacts would benefit the individuals participating in the program, as well as the campus. From the participant perspective, the impact would be developing additional skills that can be utilized in other roles throughout the campus, or in an unrelated field, depending on their career aspirations. In going through the program, the participants would realize their strengths, weakness and interests for development opportunities. The program would push them outside of their comfort zone by requiring them to take on stretch projects as well as a capstone initiative that would fall outside the scope of their job description but align with their interests at the time.

From the campus perspective, the impact would be more internal referrals being realized through employees participating in the program. Additionally, higher employee satisfaction, engagement and retention would be realized. Turnover would decrease in departments where we would anticipate participation in the leadership academy. Campus collaboration would improve as frontline staff are exposed to the leadership team and have opportunities to build relations that might otherwise be difficult to create in the normal working environment. Last, the campus would benefit from longer tenured staff, which is always a resident and family satisfier.

Taking a more macro view, the program would lend itself to building a strong bench of leaders that could be utilized throughout the rest of the organization. The hope would be to keep the talent internal, but the employees could seek opportunities at other senior living organizations or in completely different industries.

What leadership lessons have I learned as a result of working on ALP?

In order for this initiative to be successful, I will have to integrate myself into campus operations to understand the reasoning behind the current satisfaction, engagement and turnover results. Building relationships and trust with the team will be important to get honest, constructive and actional feedback. There is a lot of change taking place at the campus I am transitioning to, so communicating the “why” to the team will be important. Knowing more about change management through the book “Switch,” there will be the rational side of knowing there is opportunity to develop a program like this, but also the emotional side of knowing change is hard and it is easier to remain in a comfort zone. With other changes happening at the campus, this will be “one more thing.”

Going through the exercise of “LAILA Island” I understand the importance of clarity, accessibility to answer questions and concerns, as well as needing to lay out a clear roadmap of what the program will look like from start to finish while also continually reinforcing alignment with the campus goals.

Being new to the community, it will be imperative to gain the support of a first follower. This person will need to be an influencer on the campus and could help gain momentum with the idea and get others on board. A project like this cannot be done by one person in a vacuum and will require the support of most departments and leaders on campus.

What other observations or insights from your ALP do you wish to share?

The Leading Age Illinois Leadership Academy has reiterated the importance of self-development while also seeking opportunities to stretch outside of one’s comfort zone. One of the principles from “Power of Full Engagement” is to build capacity, we must push ourselves beyond our normal limits, training in the same systematic way that elite athletes do. While challenging, this provides an opportunity to develop new skills, build confidence, as well as identify areas where people want or need to grow. To this point, I see the value in creating a program that focuses on frontline staff members and provides an outlet for those with the desire to grow.

Being a part of LAILA gave me the confidence to pursue an opportunity at another community within my organization. I believe the self-reflection, journaling, and leadership skills learned and developed over the last year played a key role in my confidence in knowing what strengths I can rely on and what areas I will need to seek support during the transition with additional responsibilities. I want to pay this forward to others with a thirst to learn and develop as I do.

I also enjoy thinking outside the box and creating innovative ways to meet the needs of a community. Based on my experience in LAILA, I’m confident a successful program at the campus level would be one way to create higher staff satisfaction, enhance employee engagement, while also lowering turnover.

BEN STEVENS
ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
COVENANT RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES

Description and Relevance:

To date I have not spoken with a senior living provider who does not struggle with staffing on an ongoing basis. There are numerous studies and articles focusing on the existing and looming shortage of staff for the healthcare industry. As senior living providers we are competing amongst each other, but also against hospitals and the healthcare industry at large. More frightening still, some of our staff with lower pay bands will be lured to jobs outside the industry and “gig labor”. We need people to care for our people! Doesn’t that sound strange? I believe this highlights an old and troubling trend that as leaders we focus disproportionately on our residents. I do not suggest that we can turn a blind eye to our end users or to quality. I do suggest that as leaders we are not the primary service providers to our end users. The people who are the primary service providers need to become “our people” or they will become someone else’s “people”.

An internal survey of staff engagement indicated that our staff want to feel like they are up-to-date on campus happenings. They also want to feel more cared for by management citing that part of care means getting relevant and timely information. Think about how difficult it is to get the same information to hundreds of people in a similar amount of time. We have stand-up meetings, but sometimes that provides a more day-to-day tactical set of information and favors day shift and full-time staff. We have quarterly all-staff town-hall meetings which tend to not be “all-staff” and, again, favor full-time and day shift.

Further, I believe that these meetings do not give our staff information in a relatable format. Increasingly our people are used to receiving and digesting information in images, infographics, and short videos with subtitles. The language of social media. The focus of my ALP is to identify a mode of communication that will be engaging to my people.

Desired Future Impact:

In the next three months I want to be using new systems to be communicating relevant and timely information to my people. Remember the staff responding to engagement surveys saying that they want to feel more cared for? A big part of care is feeling like you belong rather than merely fitting in. Author and researcher Brene Brown’s research lead her to the conclusion that belonging is when you want to be somewhere and people want you to be there too. Fitting in is when you want to be somewhere but the people there don’t really care if you’re there or not. I want my people to feel like they belong. Part of making people feel like they belong is communication with them in a way that they understand. Also, listening. Listening is a universal language.

In order for the information being communicated to be received as relevant and timely we have to listen and take stock of thoughts and feelings of people around us. You don’t have to look very far to find a message or agenda being pushed that fails to recognize the cultural climate. As we seek to evolve, innovate, and provide value for our end users it’s essential to make sure that our people are along for the ride. In reality we’re riding their wave.

Lessons Learned:

During this process of investigation and learning I realized a few things about imposter syndrome and relevance of message. Although one of the primary focuses of my research initially was on the specific system or mode of communication, I struggled with the messages themselves. The thought of recording short social media messages seemed shallow and self-serving. During the time that I was working on this project I was voluntold to lead a devotion among a group of over 50 peers. You should know that I am not ordained or religiously educated in any official way. Further, I can recollect a sermon I heard in my childhood from a particularly gloomy, yet well-intentioned, pastor about the special place in God's wrath for people who misrepresent his word. Yikes! As I prepared for this devotion I experienced imposter syndrome – the psychological pattern in which an individual doubts their accomplishments and has a persistent internalized fear of being exposed as a fraud. Because I am not trained to interpret and teach the word of God I adopted and cited a sermon from a pastor. Que internal voice, "great work, Ben. Why don't you just pop in a tape? That's what substitute teachers do."

As I continued to prepare for the devotion I prayed to have good intentions with the devotion and that it would be meaningful and bring the people who heard it closer to God. A few days after the devotion I recounted the experience with a personal guide, and found that this experience was more widely applicable to leadership and communication. First – I am not a research scientist or a theologian, so the odds of me imparting knowledge to others that is of my own finding and scientifically or socially valid is less likely than sharing information that others have found. Sharing (and citing) information others have found does not make me a substitute teacher. Second – the relevance and intention of the material being communicated is more important than the person presenting it. When we speak or communicate with people it provokes a sense of self-consciousness. What will people think about me? Is the information I'm sharing common knowledge and therefore redundant and annoying? Well, if the information is useful and relevant to our people and some of them have already heard it they should appreciate that it is being shared with others.

Other Observations/Insights:

Going through this process of research and reflection has lead me to knowledge and thoughts that I otherwise would not have considered. I began this process looking for a video messaging system that allowed me to send short videos to a few hundred people in an easily accessible format. I ended up learning a lot about my internal voice, and some healthy responses to some of my negative internal messages.

**CHAD ULERY
PLANT OPERATIONS MANAGER
MONARCH LANDING & THE SPRINGS @ MONARCH LANDING**

Briefly describe your ALP and your reason for selecting it.

My ALP consists of implementing a program in which administration and managers are encouraged to participate in a program in which sit to stand adjustable desks can be purchased under a minimal charge or payment program to help with the purchase.

What long-term impact do you hope your ALP will have on your organization or the field of senior living?

The long-term impact is to encourage healthy habits. Benefits include boost in productivity and energy levels, improves mood and focus, cuts down on weight gain, and can reduce back pain.

What leadership lessons have you learned as a result of working on the ALP?

I really like the exercise we did in third session with the peacock feather and looking at the big picture. When people start participating in the ALP program the rewards won't be overnight but in the long term they will see good results and hopefully encourage them to start new healthy habits as well.

What other observations or insights about your ALP do you wish to share?

In session two Nadia shared her IT directors ALP in which he implemented Echo Dots into the residents' rooms for ordering food, syncing up with call light system, etc. I thought this was really interesting and that is how I came up with my ALP.

**AUSTLYN UTEG
LIFESTYLE SPECIALIST - MARKETING/SALES MANAGER
PATHWAY TO LIVING/VICTORY CENTRE OF GALEWOOD**

Describe your Action Learning Project

At Pathway to Living there is a common mission “Change the way Society think about seniors and Senior Living” we accomplish through caring to know and making it matter. Today with high turn-over rates and the world of staffing shortages in health care, especially in senior care residencies, residents and team members often do not feel invested in each other. Residents can feel uncared for and staff underappreciated. My Action Learning Project will be Resident and Team Member Familiarity or Intimacy. The reason I choose this project is the disconnection between our Residents and Team Members. The line staff specifically does not appear truly invested in the seniors beyond them being their day to day work detail. In turn the residents are not invested in staff and do not feel they are reliable beyond a select few team members. Bringing customer-staff intimacy will create a better understanding between the two. Overall this will create an environment with less service failures and attendance issues. In an environment where residents and staff have open communication any care issues will be addressed more quickly and more understanding will exist. Bring intimacy and familiarity will improve the overall environment for both seniors and staff members. Resident and Team Member Intimacy should concentrate on.

- Familiarity
- Intimacy
- Understanding
- Patience
- Bonding

Long-Term Impact

The long term affect that is the goal of this Action Learning Project is to create an environment that both residents and team members seek to be a part of, fostering relationship that build warmth and common goals between staff and residents, and create a positive impact on all that live, work, and visit our community. Building on the company's mission and bringing that to life with a community that feels different from other senior living residences the moment you walk through the door. This should create an environment where all partake and make decisions about the happenings in the community. It should set the community up for increased engagement of both team members and residents. Resident and Team member contentment would improve with familiarity and understanding and both would learn patience for the other.

Lessons that I learned during this Action Learning Plan were

I learned that it was not that easy to get the necessary people motivated to work on the Action Learning Plan. Just, because it might be something that you are passionate about, does not mean others are. The reasons may vary and sometimes “directing/leading the elephant” is not always as easy as we would like, it is very much a work in progress. Another lesson I learned is sometimes there is not a clear picture of who the first follower needs to be, so you will need to reanalyze and evaluate what needs to happen and who needs to be involved over time. Scheduling meetings with key players was a difficult process and takes know myself well and what strengths I bring into the situation and what weaknesses. Using the tight loose tight method even when building a concept, scheduling meetings and explaining your vision is important. I learned this is the beginning of journey that will keep evolving over time.

Other Insights and Observations

- During this I have also learned that my shadow side of personality slipped through by not saying “no” enough and making time for the Action Learning Plan as much as I would have liked.
- That the fact that my team received “The Power of Full Engagement” to present was not a mistake. This, the steps to be fully engaged was a continuous struggle for me between work and family obligations to find time to set aside to effectively be fully engaged.
- Leadership is made of a plethora of understanding, insights, skill sets, and work.

**SARAH WATSON, MSW
DIRECTOR RESIDENT SERVICES
BROOKDALE LAKE SHORE DRIVE**

Briefly Describe Your ALP and Your Reason For Selecting It

During my time working in Senior Living, there has been a consistency in the lack of young people working in the industry. It can be extremely difficult moving up the management track because for young people because they are constantly being compared to those who have been in the business for thirty plus years. And while, you cannot do much as it relates to your age and experience, you can continue to take Continuing Education Courses and work on gaining experience in other arenas.

Many organizations are composed of experienced Executives and members of their Leadership Team with either a small few of those being young people or none at all. The gap is large and apparent.

The ALP that I have selected to work on is composed of a Mentoring Program, Retention Program and Succession Program. The purpose of this program is to engage Front Line Associates, Supervisors and / or Managers with their Executive Team in order to understand the future goals of the Associates and provide any guidance, support or advocacy they need in order to meet their goals. In actively taking a role in the future of your own Associates, you will be building a relationship with an Associate you might not otherwise have had, training them in a manner that will allow them to be a successful leader, which in hand, might spread amongst others they are working with or leading, and allow them to transition in to a role in an easier manner in both the long or short term.

If, and hopefully, when this Program is successful, you will see more engagement amongst all of your Associates, and also a better experience for your Residents.

What Long-Term Impact Do You Hope Your ALP Will Have on Your Organization or the Field of Senior Living?

The hope for this Program is that we, as a Community, are engaging our Associates in a meaningful way. The interaction between Front Line Associates, Supervisors or Managers with their Executive Team can be a very daunting thought. This Program will break down that stigma and allow for a more fluid relationship that allows for open and honest communication on what the goals and aspirations are for our very own Associates. In turn, your Associates are hopefully, more likely to remain within your Community or Company and will provide the same type of Mentoring as was done for them.

This Program has the ability to accomplish the following –

- Appeals to those who wish to work in Senior Living, however, have not yet decided on the path they hope to take
- Allows for the passive Associate to become comfortable in growing as it will be done in a safe manner
- Allows for the Retention of Associates as you are continually promoting from within

- Increases morale amongst all Associates within the Community. Front Line Associates, Supervisors and Managers will become more comfortable with the Executive Team as the time spent with them will include more depth than it does currently. In turn, the increased Mentorship and Training applied to those in the Program will be shared amongst those they are working with thus promoting a more positive environment for all Associates and Residents
- Can potentially be used as a Succession Program in the event an Executive or Leader in the Community leaves the Community or is out on some type of extended absence.

What Leadership Lessons Have You Learned as a Result of Working on the ALP?

The Leadership Program as a whole played a part in this ALP. I have learned that you do not have to have thirty plus years' experience to be looked at as a Leader in your Community or the field, you really just need to promote Culture Change and be willing to learn from those around you and be open to teaching those who wish to be taught.

- The Peacock Feather had a significant role in my ALP coming together. This idea can virtually be applied to anything that you or your team might be discussing. I found it to be significantly important when looking at the potential of Associates within the Community.
- The Why Statement. We have already begun forming a Retention Committee within the Community that includes both Associates and Residents. It will be important for everyone involved in the Committee to continuously focus on The Why and that our overreaching goal to find out how we all can better serve.
- The First Follower / Dancing Guy Video is also going to be a vital learning tool for those Associates in the Mentoring Program. It is important for them to understand that during the time they are being mentored and onward or going forward, they might have to step away from the mold and be that First Follower. It will be imperative they understand the importance of identifying those moments and it will be instrumental in their growth path.
- The Lollipop Moment is also an important teaching moment for those who are going through this Program. It allows for them to practice and implement skills they are learning without actually sticking out as they still might be in a position where they are uncomfortable with being looked at as a leader.

What Other Observations or Insights About Your ALP Do You Wish to Share?

The Leadership Academy has allowed me to grow both personally and professionally. I was a bit apprehensive at first in joining as I did not believe it was something that I would enjoy or be able to relate to. I have already begun to implement these teachings in my day to day tasks and during presentations. I feel that this opportunity and journey has allowed me to be a better asset to my Community and a better Leader for my Associates. I think the most important takeaway that I have from the Academy, aside from everything we have learned, is that I need to invest the time in my own development so that I can continue to grow as a Professional and Leader.