

Caring Clown Pilot Program

Date:	August 19, 2009
To:	Advisory Committee on Long-Term Care Homes & Services
From:	General Manager, Long-Term Care Homes & Services
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

One of the proposed actions in the strategic planning objective of enhanced involvement of the 55+ volunteer group was to pilot with Ryerson University for a mature student program with residents.

The Caring Clown Program, offered to students at The Chang School of Continuing Education, Programs for the 50+, will allow students to perform, within a supervised practicum, a clown show which they have created at each of four selected sites within Toronto Long-Term Care Homes and Services. Students will practice their skills by clowning with individual and small groups of residents in common area rooms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager recommends that the Advisory Committee on Long-Term Care Homes and Services endorse the request for up to \$3,700.00 expenditure from the General Donations Account to provide on-site shows and practicum for the Caring Clown pilot project.

Additional costs associated with this course are the responsibility of The Chang School of Continuing Education at Ryerson University.

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications to the operating budget arising from this report.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Ryerson University is prepared to offer the Caring Clown course this fall. Admission will be determined by the course coordinator based on an application and interview. Enrolment for the pilot will be limited to eight (8) students. Upon successful completion, students will have opportunities to volunteer as Caring Clowns within the homes.

The program builds on the skills that students learned in “Introduction to Clown”, with a focus on the understanding and practice of techniques that can be applied to the caring concept of clowning in therapeutic facilities, with an emphasis on clowning in long-term care.

The program includes class work, the creation and performance in clown shows, and a supervised practicum with Program Coordinator/Instructor Lynda Del Grande who will assist students with pre-show site visits, show development, liaison, on-site supervision, debriefing, evaluations, program assessment and recommendations.

While it is difficult to provide the cause and effect between humour and health, there is much learning on the subject that supports the adage that “laughter is the best medicine”. Anecdotally, benefits include increase muscle relaxation, pain reduction, increase respiration, lower blood sugar and better sleep patterns.

COMMENTS

The program objectives for the Caring Clown Pilot include student learning on:

- The history of Caring Clown.
- The principles and value of therapeutic humour and laughter and related research.
- The various roles of a Caring Clown.
- Making an entrance. What to do, what not to do.
- A process for developing their clown.
- How to use their unique gifts and talents.
- Ways of finding their clown voice and physicality.
- Where to start with costumes and make-up.
- Ideas for working with props.
- Ethics of Caring Clown.
- The importance of practicing good hygiene and taking precautionary measures related to infection control.
- Information related to aging, dementia and other chronic illnesses.
- Positive ways of responding to challenging situations.
- Ethical issues and standards of practice in a long-term care home.

By partnering the pilot with Toronto Long-Term Care Homes and Services, students will gain practical experience in long-term care by creating and performing in clown shows,

participating in mix and mingle sessions with residents, and clowning with individual and small groups of residents as part of a supervised practicum.

There are sufficient funds in the General Donations Account, \$13,254.18, to cover this request.

Coordinators of Volunteer Service at Castlview Wychwood Towers, Carefree Lodge, Cummer Lodge, and Fudger House have been very supportive and welcome the opportunity to host the shows and practicum for the pilot. Residents with dementia, those who take little part in existing resident programs, are more socially isolated or face language barriers have been targeted for this pilot program.

The pilot program will be evaluated with a report back to Advisory Committee. For the clown students, this will include peer and self assessment on class work, creation and performance of shows and the in-home practicum. Long-Term Care Homes and Services will monitor resident benefits including participation, social inclusion, stimulation, and communication and the Volunteer Program will track retention of the caring clowns.

This pilot program supports the divisional leadership and engagement goal of collaboration and partnership; it encourages unique volunteer participation of caring clowns and provides a new opportunity for residents that are enjoyable, therapeutic and entertaining.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

- (1) Course Syllabus