

A Recipe for Success: Choice Menu

IT'S AMONG THE MOST BASIC OF human desires – to have a voice, a choice, in one's life journey. For most of our lives, we wake up each day and get to decide, for instance, what and when we will eat. By the time residents arrive at PBNC, some feel a deep loss of control in many aspects of their lives. Not the least of these losses is their choice of meals and of when those meals will arrive.

Describing the Choice Menu's positive outcomes, Cheryl says: "We have seen residents eating more at meals, decreased weight loss, and decreased use of nutritional supplements for at-risk residents. Residents who used to eat only a small percentage of their meals and complain about the food are completing their meals with smiles. We hear more positive comments about food, and

ticed that residents were asking for seemingly simple menu alternatives. Because of the existing systems for food purchasing and preparation, the staff couldn't fulfill residents' requests without special trips to the grocery store. Dietary staff put their thinking caps on and devised a plan to equip the kitchen and reorganize the staff to accommodate residents' desire for food choices and, when

“But, honestly, the best reward is watching a resident eat the food she wants, when she wants it, and watching her smile...enjoying every bite because it is exactly what she ordered. I don't know how to really explain it, but watching that sense of happiness in a person makes me know we are doing the right thing!”

Cheryl Havens, PBNC's registered dietitian, was part of the team that recognized this issue as a challenge that, if remedied, could greatly improve the lives of residents. With a financial grant from The Oregon Community Foundation, the dietary department at PBNC has been able to reconfigure and equip the kitchen and staff for an innovative program known as "Choice Menu."

This program offers long-term care residents and short-stay patients a menu – for each meal – that provides several options for entrees, side dishes and beverages. There's even a plan to provide a room service option for short-stay patients.

that translates into improved resident satisfaction and overall better living situations. We are better able to accommodate residents' special preferences and to make meals more resident-directed."

An ongoing goal at PBNC is to give residents the basic right to choose with regard to care, and the Choice Menu program fits perfectly into this goal. As Cheryl notes, "It is our passion to provide the best possible care we can give our residents...in every aspect in which we serve them."

The concept for Choice Menu began about seven years ago. Cheryl had just started with PBNC and no-

appropriate, room service. All that was needed to complete this plan was funding. That's when The Oregon Community Foundation stepped in and awarded the grant monies to launch the program.

Cheryl says the goal of this successful program is to provide customer satisfaction and thus improve residents' lives.

We think Cheryl described the program perfectly. Choice Menu: a recipe for success. ■