

## **Activity Programming**

**Name of Program:** *Annual Sweetheart Dinner*

**Recommended Duration of Program:** 1 ½ to 2 hours

**Size of Group:** all married residents are invited so that establishes number

**Goals and Objectives:** Designed to provide a romantic setting for a special dinner for all married residents and their spouses; gives them recognition as a couple and a special time of socializing together for each couple but also for all couples to get to know each other better. It is also great PR for your activity department/facility.

**Materials and Equipment:** a separate space large enough to accommodate the event; tables, chairs, center pieces, place settings, place cards, table linens, nice dishes, invitations, camera/film, decorations to set the mood, romantic music/entertainment, token gifts (i.e. Valentine Cards, roses), menu coordinated between dietary and activity departments

**Decorations and Centerpieces:** Valentine themed i.e. red, pink and white floral arrangements, cupids, trellis or archway decorated with valentine theme, etc.

**Preparation, planning and participation:** Plan to hold the event on Valentine's Day if possible. About a month prior to the event, go through resident roster identifying those residents who have a spouse. This is ongoing right up to the event i.e. if a resident comes in the day before the event and has a spouse include them in the event. This means you have to plan for some extra "couples" when doing your initial planning. Design beautiful invitations. Send out to each couple two weeks before the event. They must RSVP a week prior to the event so food counts can get in to the dietary department. Our dietary dept. plans a special meal at no charge to the couples (this is not the same meal served to the other residents that day, but something you might go out for with your significant other for Valentine's Day.) Arrange to have a Barbershoppers Quartet come in during the meal to do singing telegrams to guests and present couples with a Valentine card (to the husband) and a single long stemmed red rose (to the wife). We do pay for the entertainment, cards and roses. The Barbershoppers hand them out when they are serenading them. As the guests arrive, we place them under a trellis archway that is decorated for Valentine's Day and take their "Sweetheart Picture". I take two with the Polaroid and two with the digital camera. We give them one of the Polaroids to keep that day. We then escort them to their seats. Prior to the event, I make place cards for assigned seating (decorated for Valentine's Day of course) and do place settings. I consider each couple and with whom I think they will strike up conversations with/have similar backgrounds/interests. I also set the tables like you might find them in a high-end restaurant, with table clothes and real floral arrangements that I arrange myself. (Prearranged flowers are more costly.) The activity department and management serve as hosts/hostesses and serve the residents and nursing assistants assist any residents that need assistance. All married residents are included unless they are tube fed, we accommodate all diets. This is one of our most raved about events of the year. As I mentioned earlier it is very effective PR for your facility. We include the short-term Medicare residents in this event and they go back out in the community and talk about how special they felt. The best part for me is how special they feel as a couple and it always brings tears to many residents/spouses eyes. (Staff too!)

Submitted by Debbie R. Bera/ADC Public Relations Trustee