

Creative Program Ideas for January 2012

The birthstone for January is the garnet.
The flowers are the snowdrop and carnation.

National Activity Professionals Week is January 22-28, 2012

In January we celebrate activity professionals during **National Activity Professionals (NAP) Week**, January 22 to the 28. This year's theme is: *Staying in Tune with Activities*. Normally it is the activity department's job to plan celebrations, but in this case the activity professionals are the honorees, and someone else should plan the celebration.

NAP Week was created by the National Association of Activity Professionals (NAAP) to provide a format for facilities to honor and recognize the dedicated activity professionals who contribute significantly to the residents' quality of life. As activity professionals, we should use this week to provide education to the interdisciplinary team, volunteers, and families about the role we play in the residents' lives. This can be done through in-services, speaking to the Family Council, designing fun activities for the interdisciplinary team to participate in, hosting an activity-based "fair" similar to a health fair, etc.

One way to promote cooperation among the interdisciplinary team is to take this opportunity to have the activity professionals distribute Hershey's "hugs and kisses" to everyone assisting with the activity program and/or helping the residents pursue their leisure interests. Have your staff keep track of everyone receiving the "hugs and kisses" and then make certificates for each helper, acknowledging them as an "official member" of the activity team. Distribute the certificates at the end of the week during a special social honoring the activity professionals.

Be sure to make this week special for yourself and your staff. You deserve it!

Celebrity Birthdays:

January 1, 1919 ~ **J. D. Salinger**
January 2, 1942 ~ **Helen Herron Taft**
January 3, 1939 ~ **Robert (Bobby) Hall**
January 4, 1935 ~ **Floyd Patterson**
January 5, 1928 ~ **Walter Mondale**
January 6, 1878 ~ **Carl Sandburg**
January 7, 1942 ~ **Stephen Hawking**
January 8, 1928 ~ **William Blatty**
January 9, 1928 ~ **Judith Krantz**
January 10, 1949 ~ **George Foreman**
January 11, 1930 ~ **Rod Taylor**
January 12, 1876 ~ **Jack London**
January 13, 1933 ~ **Frank Gallo**
January 14, 1940 ~ **Julien Bond**
January 15, 1937 ~ **Margaret O'Brien**

January 16, 1932 ~ **Dian Fossey**
January 17, 1706 ~ **Benjamin Franklin**
January 18, 1904 ~ **Cary Grant**
January 19, 1839 ~ **Paul Cézanne**
January 20, 1896 ~ **George Burns**
January 21, 1738 ~ **Ethan Allen**
January 22, 1937 ~ **Seymour Cassel**
January 23, 1919 ~ **Ernie Kovacs**
January 24, 1916 ~ **Jack Brickhouse**
January 25, 1919 ~ **Ernie Harwell**
January 26, 1880 ~ **Douglas MacArthur**
January 27, 1948 ~ **Mikhail Baryshnikov**
January 28, 1936 ~ **Alan Alda**
January 29, 1737 ~ **Thomas Paine**
January 30, 1941 ~ **Richard (Dick) Cheney**
January 31, 1872 ~ **Zane Grey**

Important Dates to Remember:

January 1 ~ **New Year's Day**

January 2 ~ **Tournament of Roses Parade:** 9:00 a.m. CST

Rose Bowl Game: 1:00 p.m. CST

January 5 ~ **Elvis Aaron Presley's Birthday Celebration Day**

January 16 ~ **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday**

January 23 ~ **Chinese New Year** (Year of the Dragon)

Celebration of Life Month: With the New Year comes a "clean slate" – a new beginning, a new life for all of us. Gather the residents into small groups and ask them what kinds of activities they would like to engage in over the next 12 months. Bring a calendar and pad of paper to jot down the residents' ideas. Come prepared with two or three choices for various times of the year as conversation starters. Help the residents understand that their lives still have meaning and they have a lot to give. Offer suggestions for possible volunteer opportunities:

- After school tutor;
- Adopted grandparent;
- Resident Council member or officer;
- Deliver mail or newspapers to residents;
- Make crafts for a craft fair; and
- Reporter for the facility's newsletter.

Get Organized Month: This is an opportunity for you and your staff to organize the department, desks, cabinets, storage, files, etc. Start the New Year off right by using this month to get everyone organized for the rest of the year. Sort through anything lying around the department and either find a dedicated place for it or get rid of it! Set specific times during the week for you and your staff to do this. At the end of the month, surprise the staff with a small prize to the person(s) who accomplished their goal of becoming more organized. This is also an excellent time to clean and organize your computer files!

Quality of Life Month: Ask the residents how they define the phrase, *quality of life*. Write down the residents' responses. Explore ways the staff can help the residents add meaning to their lives. Make a list of the things that provide meaning for the residents. Brainstorm ways the staff and families can assist the residents achieve the goals they continue to strive for, e.g., ride a camel, learn to square dance, publish a short story/poem, bowl a perfect game, etc. You can find ways to help the residents realize their dreams by using your imagination, technology, community contacts, volunteers, and organizations like *Second Wind Dreams* (http://www.nursinghome.org/pro/frmNewsletter.asp?strFile=/pro/newsletters/closeup_new/2002/cu0474.html).

Bird Feeding Months (January through March): Now that the ground is frozen, the birds that stay throughout the winter may have difficulty finding food. Ask a volunteer or someone from maintenance to collect all the birdfeeders around the facility. Have the residents help repair and repaint the birdfeeders. Ask the families of the residents who have expressed an interest in bird watching, to purchase birdfeeders for the outside of their loved one's windows. Have the residents make pinecone birdfeeders using suet and wild birdseed. Ask the maintenance department or volunteers to hang the feeders in the lower limbs of trees around the grounds. The instructions for making the pinecone birdfeeder can be found at: http://www.enviro-explorers.com/pinecone_web_page/pinecone_feeder_index.html.

Mentoring Month: Almost everyone has a mentor. If you haven't told that person, take this opportunity to do so and to thank them for being an example to you. Mentoring Month also provides an opportunity for you and your staff to mentor members of the interdisciplinary team. Share your skills with others and teach them how to do a specific activity with the residents. Encourage the other departments to take advantage of this opportunity to establish a mentoring program across all disciplines.

January 4 ~ Trivia Day: The residents love trivia. It gives them a chance to show off all the unimportant facts they have stored in their brains over the years. Hold a series of trivia competitions on each floor/unit throughout the day. In the afternoon, bring the individual winners together for a final trivia round to determine the facility's greatest trivia buff. Use the many trivia books available for residents in long term care settings or go online to design your own questions. Visit the following websites for sample questions: <http://www.triviaplaining.com/> and <http://www.triviacountry.com/>.

January 6th ~ Anniversary of the *Wheel of Fortune* Premiere: Many of the residents enjoy watching and playing *Wheel of Fortune*. This popular game show premiered on this date in 1975. It was hosted by Chuck Woolery and was aired during the day. Pat Sajak became the host in 1981 with Vanna White as his assistant. A nighttime version was added in 1983 which continues each evening at 6:30 p.m. (CST) on ABC. Organize a *Wheel of Fortune* tournament and involve as many residents as possible. Choose the top three players from each floor/unit and have them play against each other until a top player is crowned. Provide prizes for the top three players.

January 8 ~ Show and Tell Day: Play show and tell with a twist – put 10 common items in separate brown paper bags. Distribute the bags to individual residents with instructions to peek in the bag, but not to let the other residents know what is in the bag. Have the residents take turns describing the item in their bag. The resident who guesses what the item is receives it.

January 13 ~ Anniversary of the First Radio Broadcast: On this date in 1910, radio pioneer and electron tube inventor Lee De Forest arranged the world's first radio broadcast for the public in New York City. Discuss the influence of radio on the residents' lives and how radio changed communication throughout the world. Discuss the radio shows the residents enjoyed while growing up, e.g., *The Jack Benny Show*, *The Shadow*, *Gun Smoke*, *Ma Perkins*, *The Red Skelton Hour*, etc. Play some of the residents' favorite radio shows throughout the day.

January 15 ~ First Super Bowl: Anniversary: On this date in 1967, the Green Bay Packers won the first NFL-AFL World Championship Game, defeating the Kansas City Chiefs, 35-10. Discuss the evolution of the Super Bowl. Determine if any of the residents have traveled to a Super Bowl Game and discuss some of the game highlights.

January 21 ~ National Hugging Day: Hugging is something that anyone can do and is a healthy form of touch. Encourage the staff and volunteers to spend the day hugging anyone who'll accept a hug. (**Note:** It's important to ask if the person would like to be hugged, as some individuals do not like to be touched.) Directions for making your own hug coupons are included with this article. Distribute the coupons to the residents and staff. Encourage everyone to redeem their hug coupons throughout the day.

January 21-22 ~ Bald Eagle Appreciation Days: The eagle is our national bird; a symbol of our nation's strength. Many types of eagles were almost extinct, but thanks to national protection laws the eagles are returning to the skies. Discuss what can be done to help these conservation efforts. Determine if any of the residents have seen an eagle in its natural habitat and where they saw their first eagle in the wild.

January 24 ~ Compliment Day: Encourage the residents and staff to compliment at least five individuals before the day ends. Receiving a compliment can really boost one's self-esteem, which is essential to the residents' sense of well-being and quality of life. Giving compliments forges bonds, dispels loneliness, and just plain feels good.

January 29 ~ Puzzle Day: Set up a jigsaw puzzle on a table in a main gathering spot for residents. Ask a few residents who enjoy doing jigsaw puzzles to begin putting it together. Encourage the residents and families to add a few pieces to the puzzle during their visits. When the puzzle is completed, glue it together and have it framed. Hang the framed puzzle in a common area for the residents to enjoy.

Directions for Making Hug Coupons

1. Printable business cards make thrifty hug coupons that you can print out in sheets. You can use standard business card templates from your computer's programs to get started.
2. Choose a font for your hug coupons. Arial and Time New Roman are common fonts to use, but most computers have fancier fonts you can use.
3. Add an image from your clip art selection. Keep the image within the crop marks on your template.
4. Make up your hug slogan. Coupons might say "HUG ME NOW!" or "Good for One Free Hug." Add taglines such as "Never Expires" or "Because I love you!" to support your hug request.
5. Print out the cards on standard, perforated business card sheets.
6. Fold your finished hug coupons along the perforated lines, separate and store in a convenient place. Hugs are now just a coupon away.

Hug Coupon Sample:

