

Team Recognition Activities With Long-term Benefits

By Colleen Ashworth

In 2002, a Team Recognition Committee (TRC) was formed at The Hospice of East Texas to create some fun for an often-stressed and weary staff. We hosted monthly potlucks to celebrate staff birthdays, and organized the holiday party and company picnic. However, over time, through initiatives like our Hospice Heart Program, Two-Cents Tabloid, and True Blue celebration, the committee's creative work has evolved into an important initiative that is helping to shape the culture and direction of the entire organization.

Hospice Heart Program

No emotion compares to that of feeling loved and appreciated, and our organization's Hospice Heart Program was designed to do just that—to make staff feel loved and appreciated for all they do, for each other, for our patients and families, and for our organization.

The TRC created a simple nomination form on which colleagues, patients, families, and volunteers could submit a special story or kind word about a member of the organization's team, and placed boxes throughout our facility where the forms could be submitted. At the end of each quarter, the TRC reviews each of the nominations and chooses a recipient for the quarter's Hospice Heart Award. At potluck luncheons to which the entire staff is invited, all of the stories are shared, all of the nominees receive certificates, and the quarter's award winner is announced.

The Hospice Heart Program has helped to foster a culture of appreciation both formally, through the Hospice Heart Award, and informally, at staff meetings and greetings in the hallways (from something as simple as "thank you to Alice for helping me carry all those boxes to my car" to "Steve stayed late to help us get a patient admitted").

Two-Cents Tabloid

Facing some tough decisions during this economic recession, our organization's leadership team asked the TRC to assist in gathering staff input on cost-saving measures and business development opportunities. The committee members came up with the idea of asking staff for their "two cents worth" on ways to cut costs and grow our business. As part of the initiative, the TRC produced a monthly "Two-Cents Tabloid" that highlighted many of the ideas and gave special recognition to those staff who submitted creative and workable suggestions. The effort created a culture of participation and helped the staff take ownership of the organization's financial stability and growth.

continued on next page

The committee's creative work...is helping to shape the culture and direction of the entire organization.

True Blue Branding Initiative

Finally, the TRC played a big role in supporting The Hospice of East Texas' branding efforts. Over a period of six months, our entire staff transitioned to wearing royal blue scrubs and uniforms in order to create greater awareness and recognition of the organization within our local community.

A change like this can be difficult to make, and the charge to TRC was to make it a fun and positive experience. At the end of the six-month transition period, the TRC held a "Blue Blast Blowout" with a free hot dog lunch and anything and everything blue we could think of—blue balloons, Blue Bell ice cream, blue corn chips, blue Rice Krispies Treats,[®] blue Margaritas (non-alcoholic of course), blue trivia games and blue gift cards for the winners, and more. The staff and volunteers came donned in their new blue scrubs and uniforms, and had a "fa-blue-us" time.

The TRC has taken pride in supporting the staff of The Hospice of East Texas. While the work has been fun, it is also changing the culture and direction of the organization in many positive ways. ↙



Colleen Ashworth is the executive administrative coordinator at The Hospice of East Texas (Tyler, TX) where she has worked for six years. She also serves as the Team Recognition Committee leader.