



## *Volunteering in Skilled Nursing Facilities*

Volunteers give the most valuable gifts – they give themselves and their time. Volunteers in skilled nursing facilities enhance the quality of life for residents through their kindness, patience, and enthusiasm. Many nursing home residents have no visitors; a volunteer that helps fill that void can be invaluable.

If your organization is thinking about starting volunteer outreach to a skilled nursing facility or assisted living facility in your community, here are some questions to consider:

- Are your potential volunteers open to engaging with older adults with life experience?
- Are your potential volunteers ready to work with individuals, groups, and to learn new skills?
- Are your potential volunteers able to commit to regular attendance?

If the answers are yes, there is a skilled nursing facility out there waiting for you! Here are some steps toward establishing an ongoing volunteer relationship for yourself or your group:

- ❖ Find a skilled nursing or assisted living facility in your local area.
- ❖ Contact the Activity Director at the facility. He/she is usually the point person for coordinating volunteer efforts. Some facilities may have a Volunteer Coordinator overseeing the volunteer program. If this is the case, the Activity Director can refer you to that person.
- ❖ Discuss the interests of your organization and ask about volunteer opportunities at the facility. Are they a good match?
- ❖ Realize that volunteers in skilled nursing facilities require background checks, some training/orientation, and proof of immunizations. These measures are all in place to ensure the ongoing health and safety of facility residents as well as volunteers.
- ❖ Ongoing volunteer outreach works best when you or a representative from your organization works closely with the facility's Activity Director/Volunteer Coordinator to discuss expectations, needs, and challenges.

Please consider establishing a volunteer relationship between your organization and a skilled nursing facility in your community. The benefits to your volunteers and to elder residents will be many!