



THREADS

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2021: ISSUE 13

An EVS superstar

Meadowbrook Manor in Illinois
recognized for excellence



Vending machines
for PPE on the go

How to make sure
every voice is heard

Virtual realities of
remote connectivity



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compassion you
can’t teach.”

Jeremy Jenich, assistant administrator,
Meadowbrook Manor-Naperville

The environmental services (EVS) staff at Meadowbrook Manor-Naperville has long been beloved by residents and other employees alike. “They have a compassion you can’t teach,” says Jeremy Jenich, assistant administrator at the 245-bed, post-hospital Illinois center for rehabilitation and extended stay.

So when Jenich read about Medline’s first-ever EVS Superstars – VIPs of Clean Award, he saw an opportunity to pay tribute to Victor Vasquez, Meadowbrook’s director of EVS,

and his tireless team. Jenich reached out to staff members throughout the rehabilitation facility and at the home office, Butterfield Health Care Group, to ask people to share tributes to their EVS colleagues.

"I never thought that we would win," says Jenich. "I just thought the nomination would be a nice gesture of support." But it seemed that people were eager to find a way to show their appreciation to Vasquez and the EVS team as they coped with the coronavirus pandemic. The response was overwhelming.

"When I found out we won, it felt like a dream," says Jenich. "There was just an outpouring of congratulations. We had our vice president of operations and our owners reaching out to Victor. That was really all we wanted – for our housekeeping team to know how much we appreciate and love them."

Award-winning teamwork

Launched to coincide with September's Healthcare Environmental Services Week, the contest drew nominations from nearly 100 facilities around the country. "Medline Industries, Inc. recognizes that EVS staff members are essential front-line workers. They are cleaning and disinfecting every single day, and lives depend on it," says Tamara

Dick, senior product manager at Medline. "We planned the contest prior to the pandemic, but it has really brought to the forefront why EVS jobs are so vital."

Dick traveled to Naperville with Tracy Vekemans, sales specialist in post acute care for Medline, to present the award in person – with proper masking and social distancing, of course. "We have stayed in close contact with the Butterfield Health Care Group and know the challenges and frustrations our post-hospital facilities are experiencing," says Vekemans. "It was very moving to see Victor and his team appreciated. The award couldn't have gone to a better facility."

Vasquez has been with Meadowbrook for the past five years, overseeing a six-person crew during the day and two people on the evening shift. True to his humble nature, he was quick to share credit for the recognition he has received.

"I am very proud to have this team. It is amazing how proud they are of what they are doing here," says Vasquez. "We've been working so hard, especially with the pandemic, and just to receive this award means a lot for us."

He also acknowledged his assistant, Rosanna Coleman. "She is a great co-worker," he adds. "We can think the same thing." Jenich concurs: "They are both on the same page and doing things the same way. I think they communicate telepathically!"

Patient-centered care

Recognizing residents' unique needs and preferences is the foundation of Meadowbrook's hallmark patient-centered care. "We are a stop for people from hospital to home, and we are also people's home for the rest of their lives," says Jenich. "With that comes challenges. Our mission is to create a person-centered environment to bring comfort and happiness to these people who don't want to give up their independence."

The EVS team plays a valued role in providing that sense of home, and Meadowbrook residents get to know the staff as they clean and care for their rooms. They strike



up conversations and build lasting relationships.

"Victor and his team do a wonderful job with our residents," says Trisha Burke, social services director at Meadowbrook. "They take pride in what they do, and it really shows."

In fact, it is not unusual for residents to notice and comment if one of the EVS staff members is out for a day. "We have some of our most consistent staffing with the housekeeping team," says Jenich. "I feel that it's rare for long-term care to have that longevity, and it is an absolute testament to Victor and Rosanna."

Coping with a pandemic has caused myriad challenges for the residents, from quarantine-mandated room changes to isolation from family members. "We're a huge family, and with the pandemic restricting visitors, everyone's role has taken on a new dynamic," says Burke. "Our housekeeping staff has really stepped in to take on new responsibilities."

For example, when a resident needs to move out of his or her familiar room, Vasquez and his team carefully pack each belonging to ensure a smoother transition. They even take photos to make certain everything is set up just as it was before. Additionally, with family communications limited to phone or videoconferencing, Vasquez has helped with translating information for Meadowbrook's Spanish-speaking clients.



AN INVESTMENT IN SAFETY

As the realities of the pandemic first unfolded last year, there was a sense of anxiety among staff at Meadowbrook Manor-Naperville. "Initially, everybody was a little nervous. Were we going to have the resources and PPE [personal protective equipment] we needed to care for our residents and ourselves?" says Jeremy Jenich, assistant administrator. "Our questions were very quickly addressed with a resounding 'yes' from our ownership."

In addition to providing ongoing communication and support for robust infection prevention protocols, the home office (Butterfield Health Care Group) purchased a Solaris Lytbot to provide innovative UV light disinfection throughout the building. "From the beginning, Butterfield has been on top of everything," says Tracy Vekemans, sales specialist in post acute care for Medline Industries, Inc. "It was impressive to see ownership take the initiative to invest in the Lytbot in order to keep their residents and staff safe."

Meadowbrook EVS director Victor Vasquez was quick to complete the Solaris training modules and begin operating the Lytbot throughout the facility. "This is one of the main new layers of infection control that we have implemented to eliminate harmful pathogens," says Jenich. "It takes additional manpower, but I don't think Victor has said 'no' to anything in his life."



“Victor and his team do everything with smiles on their faces because they care about our residents. With the pandemic, you hear a lot about nurses and doctors being heroes, but I will tell you, our housekeeping staff members are unsung heroes as well.”

Trisha Burke, social services director, Meadowbrook

"We want our residents to be able to spend time with their families. We want them to be happy, and it is much more difficult without having families here. Victor and his team do everything with smiles on their faces because they care about our residents," says Burke. "With the pandemic, you hear a lot about nurses and doctors being heroes, but I will tell you, our housekeeping staff members are unsung heroes as well."

Loads of laundry

Prior to the pandemic, some residents' family members tended to their laundry needs. However, changing guidelines meant that all laundry needed to be processed in-house. Added to that has been the influx of linens from quarantine-mandated bed changes and the increased demand for washable personal protective equipment (PPE). Again, the environmental services team has been getting the job done.

"We have a person in laundry who I think is an absolute wizard," says Jenich. "She can look at a set of clothing and, without looking at any names or labels, say 'that belongs to 105, that belongs to 215.' That's how long she's been here, and that's how well she knows those residents." He adds that if a resident asks about a particular article of clothing, Vasquez and Coleman are the first to hunt for the item and get it returned.

"Something as simple as the facility having to do all the residents' laundry is a big deal to people, and our laundry staff members have really stepped up," says Burke. "Even when the pandemic ends, I would venture to say that 95 percent of residents will continue allowing the staff members to do their laundry."



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Staying the course

The pandemic has brought frequent updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), enhanced cleaning protocols, and the need to don cumbersome PPE. Vasquez and his team, however, have remained steadfast in their commitment to provide residents and staff with a clean and safe environment.

"One constant through this pandemic has been our housekeeping department. They are just warriors, and I think that stems from Victor and Rosanna's leadership," says Jenich. "What I think the pandemic has done is bring to the forefront the importance of infection control and a clean facility. If we are looking for positives, I think a positive that has come out of this is that the whole team is being properly appreciated now." ■

2021 EVS AWARD NOMINATIONS

Interested in nominating your facility for a Medline EVS award this year?

Keep an eye out for details of **Medline's 2021 EVS Superstars – VIPs of Clean Award** and let us know how your facility is:

- Celebrating your EVS team
- Improving employee morale and retention
- Reducing infection
- Boosting patient satisfaction
- Increasing efficiency
- Implementing top-notch training

Show off how your EVS team stands out to make your facility shine.