



Delta Dunklin Democrat

NHC Recreations Director Ridings keeps patients active

Saturday, January 27, 2018

Jeff Dorris jdorris@dddnews.com



Kayley Ridings, Recreational Director at NHC HealthCare keeps the residents active. “We try to make sure they have things to do. We really try to pay attention to what individual patients like.” Pictured is Ridings. Photo by Jeff Dorris, staff

Years ago, senior living centers and nursing homes were commonly referred to as rest homes.

Not anymore.

Activity is the key word thanks to research that supports an active mind and body assists in healthy longevity. January 21 through 27 is National Activity Professionals Week and Recreation Director Kayley Ridings at NHC HealthCare knows how to keep her patients active.

Ridings and her team pride themselves in their unique activities, such as specialized memory enhancement tools and theme days.

Ridings, a native of Reeves graduated from Senath-Hornersville High School and then attended Arkansas Northeastern College in Blytheville where she completed the nursing program.

“While going to school I worked part-time at NHC in the Activity Department,” said Ridings. “I did that up until I graduated nursing school.”

After graduation Ridings discovered she wasn’t interested in a nursing career.

“I realized I did not want to be a nurse,” she said. “I have much respect for the profession, I just felt I went to school to do the wrong thing.”

After almost two years Ridings returned to the Activity Department at NHC and worked with Tommy Allgood, the Activity Director at that time.

“I worked with Tommy for around two years and when he retired I took over the position,” said Ridings.

“I love my job,” she said. “I love everything about it.”

Ridings has been the Recreational Director since September 2015.

“You come to work everyday and you get to make people happy,” said Ridings. “You get to make people feel good and help them enjoy their life. It’s a great thing.”

Ridings states that the activity calendar stays full.

“We have activities seven days a week,” informed Ridings. “We have evening activities.” Ridings continued, “We try to keep them as busy as possible. We try to make sure they have things to do on their own. We really try to pay attention to what individual patients like.”

Ridings shares that the Activity Department at NHC HealthCare has much support from everyone including the administration team.

“A real plus with NHC is that we have a Regional Activity Director,” stated Ridings. “She comes down and helps us ensure we’re doing what we need to be doing. She has trainings with us.” “NHC realizes that activity is part of wellness,” she said. “They place a lot of emphasis on that. NHC HealthCare offers many unique opportunities for their patients. One area in particular is a patient favorite. “We’re really excited about our Ice Cream Shop,” said Ridings.

The Ice Cream Parlor features a variety of ice cream bars such as ice cream sandwiches, strawberry sundae bars, popsicles, and also offers scoop ice cream.

All ice cream is free to patients.

“They love it,” said Ridings.

“We do big group activities but we also have patients that we work with one-on-one,” provided Ridings. “It’s individualized programming. We go into the rooms of the patients who are bed bound and do sensory stimulation with them. That way everybody here is getting some kind of activity.”

The activity team also incorporates engagement opportunities for memory impaired residents.

“We also work on the Bootheel Commons Alzheimer’s Unit,” said Ridings. “We have specialized programming to help with their memory.”

The patients at NHC HealthCare are offered a variety of activities to participate in.

“On a daily basis we pitch horseshoes, ring toss, knock down cans,” said Ridings. “We also have movies every Thursday and Friday nights. We have bible study on Wednesday night and church services on Sunday. We have bingo three times a week.”

Ridings shares on some of the more unique options offered to NHC patients.

“We have our Cook’s Corner every month when the patients come out and get to cook something,” she said. “They really enjoy that.”

Another fun feature is Dine-In lunch.

“We do dine-ins every month as well,” stated Ridings. “The patients get to pick a restaurant here in town that they want to eat from and we give them a menu and they get to order and we bring it to them. They’re still getting to experience the places they love to eat in town like McCormick’s and Bill’s BBQ.”

Ridings has high praise for her team comprised of Courtney Ingram, Courtney Rushing and longtime employee Nancy McRill as well as volunteers.

“We have the best volunteers,” said Ridings. “We appreciate all of our volunteers but Rita Redman and Linda Redwine, they’re here all the time. Rita brings her dog out to visit with patients.”

Ridings stresses the care and attention given to patients at NHC HealthCare.

“We want the patients to be happy,” she said. “When they’re here they are treated like family. We’re going to do everything in our power to make sure they have the best care from activities, nursing, social services. Everyone is considered family. It’s a good place to be.”