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Portfolio

**The Resident Assistant Position: An Overview**

A Resident Assistant has many jobs that help to form strong bonds with residents and to also make sure that the building is safe a secure while on duty. Community development is a big part of the Resident Assistant’s job. They will be tasked to have meetings with their residents at the beginning and the end of each semester to inform residents of important information. In addition, they will create programs to meet the needs of the residents and to help the community. These can provide resources and educational resources, such as academic support, mental health options, and other needed resources. Through all this the Resident Assistant will facilitate a meaningful relationship with the residents.

Resident Assistants are also responsible for helping manage the facility. If there is a maintenance issue, they will contact the work order center and communicate the problem to get it resolved as soon as possible. They will be responsible for checking all rooms and apartments during fire and safety inspections to make sure that the residents are complying. If there are fire safety concerns the Resident Assistant will also take up the role of policy enforcement. This means that they must ensure that the residents are knowledgeable of the university and housing policies and educate the residents on the consequences of their actions. They must also be attentive to the safety of the hall and building as a whole and keep the security of the community as a top priority.

Another big portion of being a Resident Assistant is being on duty once a week and a selection of weekends. During this time the Resident Assistant is on duty they will be available to help the residents from 7pm-7am. The Resident Assistants will also conduct rounds around 7pm, 9pm, and 11pm on weekdays and the same times with the additional round conducted at 2am for the weekends. The purpose of rounds is to make sure that the community is safe and secure for the residents. They will also either sit at the desk or hold the Resident Assistant On-Call phone, which residents can call if needed. These phone calls can range from a simple lock-out to a potentially dangerous situation where the Longwood Police Department is notified. Resident Assistants are also trained for emergency response procedures, such as fires, tornadoes, and/or other natural disasters, and able to instruct others in order to keep everyone safe.

Other tasks that a Resident Assistant complete is administrative tasks. These include helping open and close the communities for each break. They are also responsible for biweekly reports to supervisors, writing incident reports, creating bulletin boards, and working with the rest of the staff to coordinate a campus-wide connection.

Out of all the Resident Assistant tasks that are a part of the job, I enjoy being on duty and creating bulletin boards. I enjoy being on duty because I like working one on one with others to complete tasks and responding to situations. I also enjoy creating bulletin boards because I can be creative with my work. However, I do not enjoy the amount of connections that we need to complete each month because it is very hard to complete in the apartment communities because many residents like to keep to themselves.

**The Role of the Resident Assistant**

Being in an apartment community makes it a lot harder for community development than a freshman dorm, but I still feel like I have able to create meaningful connections with my residents. My most successful connection was in October right before Halloween. I went around to all the apartments and handed out candy and talked with my residents. This was an amazing experience because everyone that I talked to took time to have great conversations, especially with the apartments that are on the floor below me, I have a floor and a half. Other programs of mine include my work with the other new Resident Assistants to create “Hallofest”. This was a successful event were our residents and other Resident Assistants were able to socialize and decorate cookies. It was successful because we were all able to work as a team and bring ideas together to create a wonderful program. In addition to this I also created one set of door decorations, and three different bulletin boards. My best bulletin board was a Scooby-Doo themed around roommate conflicts. My other bulletin board was a destress and had coloring pages. Both were very fun to do, and I enjoyed seeing how the residents interact with the boards and take the coloring pages provided to use.

Giving resources and helping residents sign up for classes and provide them with work-order information is another thing that I have been able to do. Many residents on my floor are transfers so they are new to Longwood University. I have also been able to help some of them navigate their first semester here and help them get involved. I was also able to enforce policy during the fire and safety role. Through doing this I was able to work on my confrontation skills. One example was when I had to ask some of my residents to dispose of alcohol bottles, “trophy bottles”. I was able to deal with the situation and calmly explain to them that even though they were over twenty-one that “trophy” bottles were still prohibited. This is something that I would not have been able to deal with before becoming a Resident Assistant. While on duty I have also had to deal with a fair share of noise complains and roommate issues that my duty partner have been able to handle the situation. This has also helped me learn and grow in different ways in order to develop more leadership qualities.

**The Impact of Diversity, Privilege, and Micro-aggression**

Through working along side people with various ethnicities, races, religions, sexual identities, and backgrounds I have learned a lot about creating an inclusive environment. Coming from a Therapeutic Recreation background I value and support the inclusion of all people of all abilities and believe that it is important to make sure that everyone feels welcomed. However, I still learned a lot about how to include others, for example, one staff member was putting up a bulletin board about safe sex. This opened a conversation about including the LGBTQIA+ community and how to give them tips. This was something that I would not have thought about including on a bulletin board like that, but now I have all the information so I will be able to be more inclusive. I have also learned more about people who are nonbinary, those who do not identify as exclusively masculine or feminine, because there is a resident in my building who identifies as such.

Privilege means that a special advantage that someone or a group that others do not. I feel like this does exist in the Longwood community even though many try to be as inclusive as possible with adding to Longwood policy about privilege and bias towards students. Micro-aggression is everyday verbal and/or nonverbal insults, which can be intentional or unintentional that is hostile and derogating towards another person. Micro-aggression happens everyday on the Longwood campus in the form of jokes and spoken under the breath as people pass. Longwood can better educate by offering more events that stress inclusivity and kindness towards people of all types. A lot of people may not even know that their comments are considered micro-aggression either, so spreading the word on what that means and why it is bad could help stop to as well. This would also help the victims because if they see that Longwood cares, they will be more apt to share their experiences and feel better supported.

**Self-evaluation**

Throughout this semester I have learned how to balance school, work, and clubs. At first, I found it to be hard to separate out all the different tasks from homework, to checking up on a resident, to making it to rugby practice. Eventually I was able to layout a plan and keep notes on all my goals and objectives. This helped me succeed in providing help to my residents, give good advice, and resources. I succeeded in a couple of different areas, such as responding to resident concerns and dealing with emergency situations. When responding to residents I tend to have a calming effect on those who are distressed. Other Resident Assistants have noticed this as well. While I may not be the one to handle the issue all the time, I can help to diffuse the situation and distract others by talking about their classes, weekend, or even their pets. This has been a valuable trait that I have used a lot as a Resident Assistant because many residents can get worked up by small things. For Example, a woman come to the front desk crying because she had left her keys at work. Through talking to her and reassuring her that she would find her keys and then talking to her about her work and what she does I was able to get her to not only stop crying, but also to smile and even laugh. Another thing I feel like I have done well as a Resident Assistant is dealing with emergencies, many people find it hard to deal with certain situations, such as roommate conflicts, flooding, and mental health. Remaining calm through all of this was one of my strong suits. It takes a lot for me to react in a negative way or become nervous. This allows me to deal with the issues at hand, follow protocol, and be as effective as possible.

There are also areas that I wish to continue to grow in, such as furthering my teamwork and communication skills. In the past I have preferred to work alone and “do my own thing”, but now I have access to ten other co-workers and a Resident Education Coordinator that I can turn to for help. This has been a transition for me because I have never had a job working on a team like this one or been on duty with someone. At my summer job I will manage a store and give safety talks alone and since I have been working there for so long a lot of the other workers look to me for instructions. My communication skills are another thing that I would like to work on throughout the next semester because I tend to file a lot of things away and not communicate that it bothers me.

As previously mention I would like to work on teamwork and communication as the landings community. In addition to that I would like to work on getting to know my residents more than I have at this point and try to get them to interact with everyone in the community more. This would help those who are usually stay in their rooms and increase community development. This can happen through a more connections, such as study sessions, movie nights, or cooking together. I have not been able to do any of those this semester, so in the spring I intent to do so. I have already planned a movie night were the residents will watch a scary movie and then talk about safety and how each character could have practiced better safety tips. My last goal for the next semester is to organize myself and my ideas into a detailed planner so that I am better able to stay coordinated. This will allow me to make time for homework, programs, and personal time to relax.

If I return next year, I also intend to grow as a staff member by putting forth more effort into making sure that my community can have amazing events. I would like to change a few things as well that I have done this year. I would complete my bulletin boards and newsletters over the summer so that I do not have to worry about them during the school year. This would help cut down on stress because I will already have a lot of connections finished and planned out. I would still do my first connection with my residents by going door to door, especially if I am in an apartment community, because it was a great way to introduce myself as their Resident Assistant. It also helped me build a rapport with the residents and made them aware of my presence as a peer helper. In addition, I would also still send out biweekly emails informing my residents about specific events on campus because, I found, that many residents were unaware of these amazing events. I would like to learn more about dealing with party issues and under-age alcohol use because I feel like that was not covered well enough in the Fall training.

Some of my goals in the next year as a Resident Assistant would be to organize all my events over the summer to cut down on work and allow me to focus on my academics. I would also like to step up and become a leader within the staff more than I have. Next year I will be a returning Resident Assistant and many new staff members will potentially look up to me. I want to be able to be a good example. Putting more effort into my position is also another thing that I would like to do. This semester I had a hard time balance work and academics, but if I plan then I would be able to put more effort into the job and learn to how to enjoy the work more. I also want to change the fact that I tend to do all my connections in the last week of the month because of my hectic schedule. If I can change this then I would be able to have a more spread out schedule and allow for more structure. Lastly, I would like to put more emphasis getting to know residents because the better they know me the more likely they are to come to my connections and meet others on the floor.

**Personal Growth**

The Resident Assistant experience has been one that I will never forget. Being a Resident Assistant has helped me strengthen my mental and physical fortitude. It has done this by forcing me to actively participate in the community, plan, and be able to section out time for myself to decompress. This has made me develop better time management skills, patience, and responsibility. It was very different then I was expecting, especially on duty, when I realized that around 400 people were in the hands of two college student Resident Assistants and gave me a completely new view of the job and who is a good fit for it. At first, I felt that I would not make a good Resident Assistant or that I would mess up too much, and although I did make mistakes, I feel like I was able to complete my job requirements very well.

From working with the staff, I have been able to work on committees and be apart of a team. This allowed me to enhance my teamwork skills and with assisting residents I have been able to learn more about the needs of people and how positive motivation can change a person’s perspective. As a leader I have grown in a few ways. I have sharpened my skills at confrontation and how to handle incidents, how to compromise, and how to get residents to understand certain boundaries. I have enhanced my communication and event planning skills through working on a team to create community connections.

Throughout this entire semester I have been gaining valuable skills that will transfer beautifully to job in therapeutic recreation. In therapeutic recreation I will plan activities for a certain population and implement them, much like I do as a Resident Assistant. Through this I have learned what works well for college students for activities. Teamwork has also been a very important growth point for my future job as well. Many times Recreational Therapist will work with Occupational, Physical, and Speech therapist as a part of a care team. That team will need to be on the same page when it comes to a patient plan in order to best help the patient. With the knowledge that I have learned through being a Resident Assistant I believe that I will become an even better Recreational Therapist and be able to assist others with kindness and compassion.

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