

Food Fills The Stomach, **BUT CARING FILLS THE SOUL**

Why this nursing home cook took a TNA training



What do you do at Southgate Nursing and Rehab Center?

I'm a cook and I love my job! I've been a cook for 8 years at Southgate and prior to coming here, I had my own BBQ stand and was a kitchen manager.

Why did you become a TNA at Southgate?

They asked us to become TNAs (Temporary Nursing Assistants) and go through the training just in case COVID hit our center we would have enough people on hand that could step in and help, but luckily, we have not had any COVID cases! These residents are like family to me so I didn't mind training as a TNA or having to step in if needed, but my main concern was if I was helping on the floor, who would be helping me do my job and cook for the residents.

What is the most challenging part of being a TNA?

Keeping the residents happy. When they can't see their families and they're sad, you have to put your feelings to the side and help them deal with their emotions. That's really hard. Some of our residents have not had a chance to see their family members (for whatever reason) and you can see the sadness in their eyes. It's like a child who can't see their best friend, it's just really tough.

What would you say to people who want to work at a nursing home but are afraid of catching the coronavirus?

People need to realize there are plenty of antibacterial and cleaning products that will help kill the virus on surfaces. Do they need to take precautions and wear their gloves, masks and gowns? Yes, they do, but if they take the necessary precautions, they will be fine. In the beginning, we didn't know a lot about this virus, but we know more now and we can protect our residents and ourselves better.

What do you want to tell the world about the nursing homes during this pandemic?

Don't go by what you hear, come see or call us and find out for yourself. Don't listen to rumors and expect to understand what life is really like inside our center. When you see one of us in our scrubs, maybe at the grocery store or the bank or anywhere, just ask us how it's going and please don't assume the worst or believe the rumors.

How are the Southgate residents doing amidst everything that is going on right now?

Our residents are tested and wear masks so most of them understand we have a virus and that's why their families are not visiting. But some of our residents don't really understand and they go to the window looking out as though they are expecting visitors. When that happens anyone one of us at the facility will go up to them, talk to them and try to help them understand why they don't have any visitors visiting.

Stacey Crabtree is a cook at Southgate Nursing and Rehab Center in Metropolis, IL for 8 years. She says she loves her job and can't imagine doing anything else. One of her greatest joys in her job is when residents come to the kitchen and ask for more food. "I love watching people enjoy what I have cooked for them." ■



Stacey, thank you for giving us a glimpse of what life is like in a nursing home during this COVID-19 pandemic, not only as a cook, but also as a TNA.

~ jw