Glamorous Volunteers

Published on Tue, 09/30/2014 - 7:51am

I’m always on the lookout for organizations that support the development of young leaders and person-centered care. I recently had the privilege of interviewing Rachel Doyle, Founder and CEO of GlamourGals (http://www.glamourgals.org/). GlamourGals is furthering BOTH the movement of person-centered care and young leaders, and doing it in a unique way!

1. First, tell us in your own words, what GlamourGals is all about.

   The GlamourGals mission is to inspire and organize teen volunteers to provide ongoing companionship and complimentary beauty makeovers to women living in senior homes.

   We are working to build a movement of young leaders who provide a solution to elder loneliness. Our vision is to end elder loneliness through a volunteer program that engages teens in critical skill-building experiences and promotes their development as leaders in the community.

   Manicures and makeovers are just half the story. GlamourGals’ teen volunteers are organized locally into chapters, which consist of approximately ten members led by teen leaders. Chapter leaders recruit, train and organize their volunteers with the support of GlamourGals National.

   Chapters are established in high schools and colleges as independent school clubs or as permanent service activities within existing service clubs. Chapters commit to visiting their local senior home at least once a month to provide GlamourGals’ signature program of manicures and makeovers. In addition to makeovers, chapter leaders plan meetings, recruitment, training and fundraising events, which involve their school and greater community.

   The GlamourGals “GG” experience is all about bringing color, conversation, and meaningful embrace into the lives of seniors who are separated from the community.

   You can learn more and keep up to date with us at @glamourgals or Instagram @glamourgals, Facebook.com/glamourgals (http://facebook.com/glamourgals) and @ggfounder

2. What life changing moment occurred for you that made you realize you wanted to support teens work with elders?

   When I was 17 my grandmother passed away in a senior home. She had lived far away so I didn’t get to see her that often. I wanted to create something to honor her, do something that my friends would enjoy and something that would put a smile on someone’s face. I thought, why not use makeup (something we all love) as a way to connect my friends with women like my grandmother. The makeup became the hook to get girls involved. It also gave choice to the elderly we met and allowed us to interact in a meaningful way, not just pushing a wheelchair.

3. When you started, did you envision GlamourGals would turn into the organization it is today?

   At 17, I really had no understanding what a “not for profit” organization was. It was as a student at Cornell where I met amazing professors like Dr. Deborah Streeter who allowed me to take the time to research and develop the concept into an organization.

   During college GlamourGals became a formal not for profit to help meet the demand for the program and I started recruiting board members. I remember leading my first board conference call in a broom closet, on a pay telephone in Warren Hall at Cornell in between classes. Now, I am constantly inspired and driven to work harder by my team and the outreach I receive from girls who were involved when I started GG and still want to remain involved, as well as by new volunteers who have never known me, and my GG story.
4. Describe for me one of the most meaningful moments you witnessed through your organization.

It was with this experience that I realized what I was doing was not just nice but necessary. It happened about a year into volunteering. Faye sat quietly, as I greeted her, with her hands clasped and didn’t move so much as a slight nod. For about an hour I smiled and chirped about school, embraced her, applied rouge on her cheeks and dabbed lipstick on her lips, complimented her smooth skin and yet she didn’t smile once.

I double-checked with the activities coordinator – “Does Faye want a makeover today?” and she nodded yes. Yet, I left the makeover feeling like a failure – it was the first time a woman had not even smiled back at me.

That evening, I received a call from the activities coordinator. I got nervous. I thought, maybe I was in trouble. As we were discussing the makeover, Faye entered our conversation. The coordinator informed me that was the reason for her call. She shared, “Faye had been severely depressed, and had stopped eating. It was after our makeover that she picked up her fork.”

It is a moment like this that can really change you.

5. What do you envision for the future?

I want to continue to build an organization that operates with an entrepreneurial and creative mindset. We will, in turn, provide the resources that our volunteers need to be successful in their service and make an impact in the lives of elderly women. I want to utilize technology to grow and reach more people in dynamic ways.

I want us to never lose our core values of mutual respect, communication and compassion as we grow as an organization. Ultimately, we are building a movement of compassionate young leaders who, through our volunteer chapters, are actively making a difference in the lives of the elderly we serve.

6. How can our readers in senior housing support your work? What do you need from us in order to do more of what you do?

I want to thank you, Denise for allowing me this platform to share about our work.

Sign up for our e-news mailing list! We send email correspondence about once a month.

Become a GG Visionary. We are looking to recruit 150 visionaries to help us build 150 chapters. Visionaries commit to an ongoing monthly donation of any amount (in celebration of our 15 year anniversary next year we ask for $15 but welcome any support). You can become a GG Visionary here (http://www.glamourgals.org/).

If readers are based in the NY area, we would love their support at our events. They can check them out here: www.glamourgals.org/events

7. Leave the leaders in senior housing with one piece of advice:

Again and again I am amazed by the wealth of life experiences the elderly share during our visits to the senior homes. It is truly enriching to witness this exchange between the generations. The staff there play a crucial role in the wellbeing of the elderly we all serve. I encourage leaders to foster among their staff compassion and genuine interest in the wellbeing of the elderly residents. These interactions will transform someone’s day from just doing their job to adding value to someone’s life.

To find out how I support GlamourGals mission click here (http://www.glamourgals.org/denise-scott-gg-wallington-high-school-chapter-sponsor/) and to read Rachel’s interview with me. You too can support GlamourGals mission!

Denise Scott

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Denise speaks for organizations and associations on the topics of leadership, employee engagement and person centered care. She helps forward thinking organizations improve the resident and staff experience through assessment and strategic goal setting. Denise has lots of great resources posted at her website www.cultureoutcomes.com (http://www.cultureoutcomes.com/) and you can always reach her at Denise@cultureoutcomes.com (mailto:Denise@cultureoutcomes.com)