Health Services Management & Community Development (HSMCD) Alumni Career Profiles

Whether you are a first year student exploring career and major options or an alumnus who is thinking about a job change, alumni career profiles provide opportunities to learn about a professional’s career path and decision-making process. Alumni career profiles are provided for students exploring degree options or alumni who are considering a job transition to learn more about the career paths taken by our program graduates. The profiles provide a glimpse of the wide range of careers available to Health Services Management and Community Development Professionals.

Alumni Career Snapshot

- Gary Cook, Class of 2007
- 1st Position after HSMCD Graduation: Quality Control Officer & Green House Guide, Asbury Park
- Current Position: Admissions Coordinator, Kansas Masonic Home

“I appreciated the instructors bringing in outside speakers that brought real-world experiences and what they did on a daily basis into the classroom. Site visits - what a tremendous experience that was to go on the job and see the facility first-hand.”

Why did you choose to major in HSMCD? If you were starting out again, what would you do differently?

For me it was like coming home. I have a Bachelor’s degree in nursing, but didn’t have the energy to go back to nursing, but I wanted to contribute to the health care of people. I said, “Why not the elderly?” I knew I could bring the experience by being an older person myself and it fit for my “second half” career. My first career was in hospital nursing and then aviation. Looking back, if I’d had exposure to this degree earlier I probably would have stayed in health care instead of deviating to another field first.

Describe your career path since graduation.

I received my license as a long-term care administrator and was hired at Asbury Park. I took a three week vacation after graduating from the HSMCD program before beginning my position at Asbury Park.

What advice would you give to someone just starting the HSMCD program?

Absorb everything you can. Become that sponge. Get everything you can out of the program. Ask questions nobody else would ask. Have a drive for knowledge.

What did you enjoy most about the HSMCD program?

Most of the instructors came across as having some experience in the field. This was important to me. They brought real world experience into the classroom.
Where did you do your practicum and what did you learn from it?
Total Home Care and Hospice is where I did my practicum. It was a wonderful experience. What I learned is the “cultural legacy” of an organization. As a new administrator, you have to learn the cultural history and those long-standing beliefs of the workers. I did my practicum paper on cultural experiences in the workplace. You need to respect the culture developed over time in a workplace.

What is your current position and how long have you been with your employer?
I serve as both the Quality Control Officer and Green House Guide for Asbury Park, a continuing care retirement center. A Green House is a residential home for a group of elders. It is a radical departure from traditional skilled nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Green Houses are places where elders can receive assistance and support with daily living and clinical care – without the assistance and care becoming the focus of their existence. For more information on Asbury Park and the Green House Project, visit our website at www.asbury-park.org.

Describe the main responsibilities of your position.
As the Quality Control Officer, I am responsible for the overall quality in the organization. Employees need to feel they have quality experiences in their work as well.

What are some of the things you like to do in your work?
I like meeting with the staff I work with on a daily basis. Being able to encourage them and listen to their concerns. Talking with and encouraging the staff and the elders. I am an “encourager”.

What do you find most challenging about your job/graduate program?
The regulations and sometimes not having enough time to do everything I plan to do in the day.

What skills are most important for your kind of work?
People skills. The ability to communicate and listen. You need to have good listening skills. Learn to listen.

Where, in your opinion, is the best place to look for a job in this field?
Probably the best place is where you do your practicum or AIT. Long-term care offers the greatest opportunities. It has the greatest demand.

What job search methods did you use to obtain your current position?
I did my AIT at the place I became employed. I initiated opportunities to learn and do. I was a self-starter. I didn’t wait for department heads to come to me, I went to them. I wanted to do more. When there were areas I saw room for improvement, I offered suggestions. They appreciated that. Be willing to go beyond what is expected of you.

What professional organizations do you belong to?
Some of the organizations I belong to require a long-term care administrator’s license in order to join. I’m a member of numerous organizations.