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Retaining workers within a diminishing workforce

by Patricia Roy

Keith O'Neill, President, **Andrews of PEI**, says employers have to be creative to retain valued employees at the best of times. "It's a true two-way relationship. But the availability of workers is shrinking, so having incentives that will help to keep good people at your workplace is key."

Since wage competitiveness for most employers is only possible to a certain point, Keith says offering employee discounts for oil, propane and pharmacy purchases seems to have worked well. "It helps our workers financially and it is an incentive for them to stay with us."

History

The Andrews family of seniors residences was first established in the Charlottetown area in 1986. The business moved to its current location in 1988 and expanded to Summerside in 2000. In 2005, Andrews of Stratford opened. Since then, all three locations have continued to grow and expand.

In 2006, the Charlottetown and Summerside locations were purchased by **Keith** and **Carolyn O'Neill**. In Andrews of Stratford they partnered with **Lynda Taylor**.

Trends

Keith says seniors residences are following a trend which reflect the fact that people want to remain active for as long as they can. This means having a continuity or progression of care as residents' needs change.

Andrews of Summerside is part of that trend. "It is a dual licensed assisted living facility with close to 60 beds. Some residents are more independent while others need help with the activities of daily living."

Community involvement

Keith says the community plays a big role in helping people feel at home in a seniors residence setting. "Our activity director coordinates people who want to give their time to visit, play music, sing, present plays, or dance. Our residents also participate in activities such as art classes, baking, computer lessons, choir, and exercise and walking programs."

Employees

The Charlottetown and Stratford locations employ just over 100 full and part-time team members. Andrews of Summerside has 60 full and part-time employees. "Part-time work suits many of our staff. We have young parents, retired teachers, former federal and provincial government workers and other professionals working part-time."



Andrews of PEI President Keith O'Neill. "At the end of the day, it's all about people," he says. "If you do right by your staff, you will end up doing what is right for the business."

Skills and training needed

Some workers, such as care givers and dietary aides, are trained on the job. "A person needs to be people-oriented to work in this type of environment," says Keith. "If you come in with a mind set of commitment to care and service, you can learn the rest of it. People who work with seniors need to have patience, because as we age, we lose some of our skill sets and it is important to be treated with respect."

Job titles

Jobs at seniors residences include: activity director, chef, cook, dietary aides, facility manager, laundry, ironing, property and grounds maintenance, housekeeping, administration staff, Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, Resident Care Workers and care givers.

Position difficult to fill

"We are always looking for good people. In particular, it is difficult to find nurses specialized in geriatrics."

The facility hires additional staff during the summer months, mostly students. Summer staff get great work experience and cover vacation time for regular staff.

How to apply

Apply in person with a resumé to Andrews of Summerside, Andrews of Charlottetown or Andrews of Stratford. Resumés are kept on file for about six months.

For more information, call 436-0859 or visit www.andrewsofpei.com

www.employmentjourney.com

