

## **Reprinted from the Wittenberg Enterprise, Thursday, December 8, 2011**

The Homme Home of Wittenberg has been participating in a quality improvement grant along with 9 other nursing homes in the State of Wisconsin to study the positive effects that aromatherapy and essential oils have on the elderly residents of the nursing home. The concept behind the grant was to utilize essential oils that have been used for over thousands of years to improve nursing home residents' lives and to reduce the use of manufactured medications that have costs to the taxpayers as well as having negative side effects upon the residents.

The quality improvement grant was initially developed by St. Paul Elder Services in Kaukauna, WI and Brewster Village in Appleton, WI. St. Paul Elder Services and Brewster Village studied the positive outcomes that essential oils and aromatherapy had on these individuals, and submitted their initial results to the State of Wisconsin. The project was approved by the state to widen the study to other nursing homes. As a result of Homme Home's participation in the Wisconsin Alliance of Quality for the Aging as well as the Wisconsin Association of Homes and Services, the Homme Home was asked to participate in this program.

Homme Home began participating in the aromatherapy and essential oil grant in April of 2011. As a part of the program, Homme took a sample of six residents on its dementia unit that suffer from behaviors, confusion, anxiety and other ailments that utilize PRN or as needed medications to cope with these ailments. This sample of six residents had used a combined total of 133 non-scheduled as needed medications for pain and anxiety.

Through the training that Homme Home staff received, they were encouraged first to utilize an essential oil such as lavender or Peace and Calming to remedy a resident behavior, rather than a pharmaceutical medication. In addition oils could be used to eliminate pain related to sore joints or injuries. When Homme Home staff used the oil as a non medication intervention they would apply the oil to the skin, or use a diffuser to release the oil into the air. During activity programming as well as in common lounges, essential oils would also be used to reduce the potential for agitation.

Over the course of the grant, the sample of six residents reduced their non-scheduled as needed pain medications by over 75%. Month over month, reductions in medications were seen and the residents on the dementia unit experienced fewer negative behaviors, agitation, anxiety, depression, and delusions. Also through this program, Homme Home found uses for other essential oils as well. Oils such as Frankincense, Thieves, and Eucalyptus were able to help combat upper respiratory symptoms and reduce high dependence on liquid oxygen. Thieves is a blend of oils that was developed around the time of the Black Death (plague) and got it's name from people stealing the ingredients to produce it. Hence the name thieves.

Over the last 9 months Homme Home has collected and correlated data for the quality improvement grant and submitted it to St. Paul Elder Services for full grant submission. The grant will however end December 31, 2011, but Homme Home is committed to

continue to use essential oils in the nursing home to provide its residents the highest quality of life as well as treat its residents with a holistic approach.

Homme Home's participation in the aromatherapy and essential oil grant has generated a lot of excitement among Homme employees, family members, residents and physicians. With this excitement, Homme Home made a decision to allow employees and community members to purchase essential oils at a discounted rate. It is Homme's hope that any profits from employee and community purchases will be used to fund purchases of essential oils for residents.

Homme Home will be hosting an educational program on the use of essential oils which will be open to the general public and medical community. Barbara Fett RN from St. Paul Elder Services will be at Homme Home on Friday December 16, 2011 at 1:00pm to discuss essential oils. Her discussion will include: how to select essential oils, how to apply essential oils, and a brief discussion on the benefits of use of various oils. This is open to staff, family members, residents and members of the community and will be held in the chapel.