

AHVRP 2017 Retail Excellence Award



Mary Plathe, Volunteer Services Manager, Orange City Area Health System, Orange City, IA

Background:

The Gift Garden opened in May of 2006 when the Orange City Area Health System opened its new main campus. The 525 sq. ft. gift shop is open 6 days a week, Monday-Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm and Saturdays 9:00 to noon. The Gift Garden is a retreat within the health system for patients, families, visitors and health system staff. As you step inside the shop you are immediately soothed by the upbeat music, volunteer greeting and beautiful lighting and design. The shop may be small, but with its unique boutique design, offers a large inventory of ladies apparel for all ages, home decor, kids and baby items, jewelry, fashion accessories, gifts, games, greeting cards, spa items and of course food! Our dedicated volunteers brew fresh coffee and bake almond patties and cookies daily. They also assist customers with apparel fitting, gift selection and information on new merchandise. The Gift Garden draws in a large sector of shoppers from area communities, with 80% of business coming from the community and just 20% staff payroll deduct. Behind the scenes numerous volunteers unpack freight, enter merchandise into the POS system and freshen displays weekly. Sharp dressed and accessorized mannequins line the corridor outside the shop, inviting guests inside to find acquire the entire outfit! Each Gift Garden customer leaves the shop with a gift bag and tissue, for a grab and go gift. Customers are invited to share an email address to receive notification of upcoming sales and promotions. All funds raised are gifted to the health system to benefit the patients and families served by Orange City Area Health System.

Level of volunteer impact on staffing:

The Gift Garden is exclusively staffed with volunteers, in fact, 60 individuals are currently trained to staff the shop. Two volunteers are staffed each four-hour shift, 8:00am to 12: 15pm and 12: 15pm to 4:30pm and Saturday 8:30 to noon. Several additional volunteers work behind-the-scenes, unpacking freight, entering merchandise into the POS system and designing and freshening displays after hours. Since freight arrives daily, several volunteers contribute many hours keeping the storeroom neat and tidy. The Gift Garden is managed by the Volunteer Services Manager, who is responsible for all aspects of the shop, including the training, shop layout design, buying, scheduling and financial management. The Volunteer Services Manager reports directly to health system administration.

Engineered for sustainable and growth:

In recent years many changes have come to the Gift Garden. Shelving units housing gifts and home decor, have been changed out for apparel displays. The shelving units are not utilized in the storeroom to keep new merchandise organized. The bottom 18" perimeter of the shop was designed with cupboards for storage. All cupboard doors were removed and converted to open shelving. Apparel displays also include shelving above for lamps, home decor and displays. A nice selection of lamps for sale in the shop also add additional light to make the merchandise "pop". New compact greeting card spinners were installed with slat wall affixed to the back side for more display space. A state-of-the-art POS system was acquired to categorize all inventory - so hosting sales and promotions is seamless for our volunteers. All items automatically ring up at the sale price. We have extended shop hours by 1 /2 hour Monday-Friday to accommodate our customers. Our pricing structure is very important. Therefore we use a formula that keystones wholesale pricing plus freight. We have learned that, even though, apparel prices seemed a bit high at first, customers are willing to pay for a brand name and quality merchandise. We host numerous promotions throughout the year. Customers who have provided the Gift Garden with their email address, receive notification of sales and promotions. Health system staff and the volunteer team also receive sale emails. The Gift Garden created a Facebook page that is populated weekly with new merchandise and specials. Mannequins are utilized to assist shoppers combine apparel pieces and fashion accessories

for a grab and go outfit. Gift Garden volunteers attend annual training and are required to familiarize themselves with new merchandise information provided by manager.

Marketing innovation:

The Orange City Area Health System marketing director designs promotional posters and advertisements for the Gift Garden. Auxiliary board members distribute posters in five surrounding communities. Posters are also posted throughout the health system and on each table in the cafeteria. Sale information is also posted on the Gift Garden facebook page. Display volunteers put together complete apparel groupings that are photographed by a volunteer for the facebook page. The Gift Garden hosts an annual Ladies Night Out style show at the event center, highlighting nearly 100 trips down the runway by 25 models. Children's clothing is also modeled. Centerpieces for the style show consist of Gift Garden merchandise. All apparel choices modeled along with centerpiece items are for sale that evening. For a \$20.00 admission fee, all attendees receive appetizers, dessert and a discount coupon for the shop. A cash bar is also available. All year long Gift Garden discount coupons are distributed to new moms after delivery, all employees on their birthday, volunteers on their birthday and another for Christmas, new patients in the clinic, all attendees at health system educational events hosted by the health system. This ensures that every new patient, volunteer, new mom and our staff visit the Gift Garden at least once a year! Everyone loves a bargain! The Gift Garden also sells gift cards that are redeemable in both the shop and the main campus cafeteria. Another great convenience for staff.

Employee engagement:

Healthcare facility associates are notified by email when the Gift Garden is running any sales or promotions. Each health system employee also receives a discount coupon on their birthday. We also sell logo wear items in the Gift Garden, which staff in many departments wear as uniforms. Several times a year we host "Staff Appreciation Day" and all employees/associates wearing a nametag receive 20% off their entire purchase. Also, any staff attending an in-house educational event receive a Gift Garden discount coupon. We also provide free coffee and cappuccino to all volunteers working at the health system.

Patient and family experience:

The Gift Garden provides service recovery items for staff to access when needed. It may be a pot of coffee or a plate of fresh baked cookies delivered to a waiting room when a physician is running behind or could be a gift card given to a patient or family member as a result of our healthcare team not being able to meet their expectations. We provide free cookie coupons to all mammogram patients and discount coupons to all new moms delivering in our hospital. The Gift Garden provides chocolates and gourmet coffee in the women's imaging waiting room daily. The Gift Garden provides chocolates to the housekeeping department that are placed in the patient rooms after daily cleaning. The Gift Garden supplies balloons to nursing home residents celebrating a birthday (senior care is a department of the health system) and to health system associates celebrating a milestone anniversary.