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Culture Change in Practice

Creature Comforts

Tuesday, June 26, 2007
Posted by Steph Kilen



"Culture Change in Practice" is our own weblog where people can become involved in a conversation about Culture Change as it is practiced by professionals in real nursing homes. Feel free to join the conversation, or post a comment about something you have learned on your journey.

www.culturechangenow.com/weblog

We talk so much about how it is the daily pleasures, creature comforts, if you will, that really make the care in nursing homes *person-centered care* – customizing care and services to each individual’s preference. Perhaps you’ve seen the new TV show, “Creature Comforts,” that features the voices of “fellow Americans” giving their personalities to claymation (animation of clay figures) animals. The June 18th episode, *Winter Wonderland or Wasteland* included a segment titled “The Zoo.” The “fellow Americans,” one would guess from their voices and comments, include a woman who works at a zoo portrayed as a monkey and children portrayed as slugs obviously talking about the zoo. There are some other voices that seem to be those of folks living in nursing homes talking about their experiences there. However, their comments could very well be those of animals living in a zoo. I’m worried now that this is all coming off badly and maybe you just have to see it for yourself (which is really the point of this blog anyway, to see this show online) at http://www.cbs.com/primetime/creature_comforts/. “The Zoo” is part 3 of the episode titled “Winter Wonderland or Wasteland” though the first two parts are fun too.

In general, the show is quite charming (if occasionally a little

naughty...after all, the voices are from candid, unscripted interviews with average Janes and Joes). I’m sharing it with you because I think by hearing some of the things these people have to say in a safe and entertaining way, we may be better ready to hear them. There is a particular piece that features a little bird sitting on the back of a rhino. The rhino talks about how when he first came to “this place” he was lonely and miserable but after he met the bird they became close and now everything was just fine. The bird is so touched she says she’ll cry.

In another piece, the interviewer is talking to another animal (maybe it is some sort of warthog). He asks, “How is the food?” Because of his accent and the animal’s apparent hearing problem, there is a struggle between them for the animal to understand the word “food.” After a bit of back and forth (Food. Fuse? Food. Fooze? Food.) The question finally gets through and the answer is “Well, let’s just say I’m hungry.”

It all reminded me a bit of David Greenberger’s interviews with folks in nursing homes (see <http://www.actionpact.com/stories/duplex.html>) that he publishes in the magazine Duplex Planet <http://www.duplexplanet.com/>. We don’t necessarily need to ask elders for the meaning of life to understand them as people or gain a little wisdom. And frankly, everyday conversations with our “fellow Americans” seem more fulfilling for all involved.