Gerontology students to be honored May 1

Every spring semester since 2000, Sacramento State lecturer Nancy Schier-Anzelmo has paired students in her Gerontology 103 practicum class – formally called Applied Care Management in Gerontological Practice – with elderly residents of local assisted-living facilities.

On Thursday, May 1, 65 residents of the Chateau at River’s Edge and its sister facility, Chateau on Capitol Avenue, will host a thank-you dinner at River’s Edge for their 80 student mentors from the current Gerontology 103 class.

“The marvelous generational interaction is truly the key component of this program’s success,” says River’s Edge executive director Mary Erickson. “While our residents flourish and benefit with lasting relationships, it’s a genuinely shared reward between senior and student.”

The Applied Care project has three stipulations: The student and senior together set a goal at the beginning of the semester; the student must meet with his or her senior partner for 20 hours to provide guidance and support; and at semester’s end, both student and senior must demonstrate that the goal was accomplished.

“The course provides volunteer residents with one-on-one support to enhance personal development and foster an appreciation of lifelong learning,” says Schier-Anzelmo, an Alzheimer’s/dementia specialist. “Resident volunteers are strategically placed with one or two students. The student’s goal is to find a need and help the resident achieve a positive outcome.”

Among the seniors’ goals are learning to use the Internet or their smartphone, organizing their grandchildren’s photos in albums, taking a yoga class or starting a walking regimen. Meanwhile, the elders provide the students with real-world experience that prepares them to work in the fast-growing field of gerontology.

“It’s an intergenerational exchange and has been a beautiful thing to watch,” says Schier-Anzelmo. “The students and their elders together set a goal that will help to empower and make the residents more self-directed.”

For media assistance, contact Sacramento State’s Office of Public Affairs at (916) 278-6156. – Dixie Reid
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