



“You Don’t Need a Title to be a Leader”

A book by Mark Sanborn

Stories of Growth in the Activity Profession

ActivTimes is dedicated to facilitating growth and leadership **within** the activity profession. The profession is a profession. It requires mastery of competencies. A person does not need to leave the profession to grow, to become a leader. How does an activity professional take on added responsibilities, more leadership functions, and have more impact on decisions within the organization? What steps can be taken to make this happen?

The stories that follow will give you some thoughts. In reviewing each case, 7 attributes stand out.

- Commitment and Compassion
- Passion
- “Knowledge is Power”
- Promotion of strengths and individual style
- Communication skills
- Mentoring
- Networking

The first story is of stepping stones that spanned 23 years. It is Hayley’s journey.

The steps representing the 7 attributes are in italics, growth through levels of care are in purple.

Hayley started her career in Senior Care at her mother’s feet, literally. Hayley’s mother Wendy was an Activity Professional from when Hayley was in the eighth grade until she died in 2018. During that time, Wendy groomed Hayley in how to *care for seniors and encourage them to meet their maximum potential*.

At age 15, it was only natural for Hayley to start working in the facility as a *weekend receptionist and Activity Assistant* where Wendy worked, Juliette Fowler Homes, in the **skilled nursing facility**. Hayley continued at that position all through high school then took a brief leave from Senior Care to go to college and *received her BA in English Texas A&M University Commerce*.

After graduation in 2008, Hayley jumped back into the work force at an **Independent Living facility** at Golden Acres as the *Office Manager/Activity Manager* in Dallas while *she earned her Master’s in English*. Here she learned to navigate the social dynamics of an Independent community and understand the *behind-the-scenes administration of managing a community*.

The activity position was dissolved and Hayley transferred to **the long-term care building** at Golden Acres where she took over as the lead Activity Professional for the **dementia unit**. Here she became an expert in handling *negative communication reactions (what some would call “behaviors”)* and *how to work in a team*. *During this time she received her MEPAP I and II Certificate and became an NCCAP Activity Consultant Certified*.

Hayley remained with the company and transferred to Willow Bend Mesquite in 2012 where she took over as the **sole Activity Professional for the 120 bed long-term care and rehab facility**. She was able to



completely revitalize the program and *set a new bar for activities* at the community. Management recognized her proficiency in educating and teaching and handed over the reins to *the monthly in-service meetings where she began training staff and caregivers in best practices*

In 2013, she joined the *board of the Activity Professional's Association of Greater Dallas* and began her work *furthering the field and supporting her fellows*. She started creating presentations and lecturing with the Association.

While maintaining her love for seniors, Hayley felt she was missing the opportunity to use her degree and her current positions did not give her enough opportunity to use her gift of teaching. She was hired as an *Adjunct Professor of English at Collin College in 2014 teaching Composition and Rhetoric and Argumentation*.

In 2014, she made a big leap to CC Young where she took over supervision of the Activity Department for *the CCRC campus*. The team grew from a 4 person self-isolated units to a 8 man team of interdependent Activity Professionals. *She oversaw the transition into The Vista – a transitional care unit for Long Term Care, Memory Care, Rehab, Assisted Living, and Day Services – a first of its kind in the nation*.

She remained on the *Executive Board of APAGD* and served as *President for two terms* from 2016 to 2020. Through *connections* at CC Young, she joined *LeadingAge Texas*, an association of not for profit senior living communities. She spoke regularly at conferences and events through LeadingAge Texas, served as Chairperson for the *Social Workers and Activity Professionals Peer Network* from 2018-2019. Also with LeadingAge Texas, she completed the yearlong *Leadership Fellowship in 2018*.

Throughout her years, she has served as a *MEPAP practicum advisor for many new converts* to the field. She is currently a *consultant on the ActivTimes team, furthering the mission of providing excellence in education to enhance quality of life, one person at a time*.

Her biggest piece of advice is to learn time management skills. Activity Professionals need to work smarter and better, not harder and longer. Activity Professionals as a whole tend to be empathetic people which is the best quality an AP can have, yet this empathy makes it hard for a person to say no and can also upset the work/life balance. The strategies Hayley teaches has helped reduce burnout and revitalize tired Activity Professionals. She emphasizes self-care and utilizing strengths by thinking outside the box and even changing the traditional format of an activity department or program to utilize each person's strengths to work at their highest level. She put these strategies into place while at CC Young which allowed the department to flourish.

Hayley lives in Heartland with her husband Mark, her daughter and three part-time step sons, two dogs, and a black cat.

Do you have a story to share? We would love to hear it! info@activtimes