

Ms Magda Pienaar
Eden Alternative SA
By Email

15 October 2019

Dear Magda

VALUE OF EDEN ASSOCIATE TRAINING

As requested, I am giving you a bit of feedback on our experience regarding the Eden Associate training. As you are aware, we have more than 45 certified Eden Associates at the Ron Smith Care Centre. Although the number of trained Associates perhaps exceeds the official requirements, we took a conscious decision to ensure all our professional nurses, staff nurses and enrolled nursing assistants become Eden Associates. We apply the same view for the training of office and support staff as well as for supervisory staff in catering, security and housekeeping. We also regard the training of our informal leaders as very important, regardless of position.

Initially we thought that we can follow the Eden Alternative philosophy with a handful of staff being trained as Eden Associates. However, the culture change required to follow the Eden Alternative route is huge and requires the transformation of one self, how one thinks, interacts and responds at all times. It requires unlearning many past beliefs and behaviours and thinking purposefully about life in the care centre from a resident's perspective. Although in-house training to create sensitivity and to warm the soil is important, we found that in-depth training of as many staff as possible brings the greatest rewards. The Associate training allows staff to become immersed in the culture, develop a new mind set and test their understanding with experts in a supportive environment. The practical nature of the training also helps to bring the concepts close to home and for each to make it their own. The staff have come back refreshed and empowered and we have seen the team spirit that develops between them, knowing they can rely on each other for support, to be sounding boards for each other and to plan new initiatives together.

We regard the cost of the training as an investment in the quality of the service we wish to provide. We would not have been able to achieve the changes that have taken place at the Ron Smith Care Centre without this investment and thus regard it as an essential expense. The positive changes at the Ron Smith Care Centre have also inspired other Rand Aid services to follow the Eden Alternative route, thus training for village staff and other residential care services will continue as well.

We thank the Eden team for their ongoing interest and constant support throughout our journey.

Kind regards


Zabeth Zuhlsdorff
General Manager: Services and Advance Division