An adult school develops curriculum to meet the state’s skyrocketing need for home health care

BY GAIL ALLYN SHORT

Six years ago, program coordinator Joan Prigian attended a symposium on the shortage of home care aides in Marin County. It just so happened that her employer, the Tamalpais Adult School, was looking to expand its course offerings to include career training.

“I was seated next to the then-director of a home care agency, and she said Tamalpais needed to start a class because they couldn’t find enough workers,” Prigian says. “There’s a huge demand because people are living longer, and because of COVID-19, more people are reluctant to go into assisted living facilities. They want care in their homes.”

So Prigian and the agency director teamed up to develop a home care training program at Tamalpais Adult School. They first connected with a community college in Southern California that offered a home care course and used their curriculum as a model to develop a program on an adult school level, she says.

Tamalpais also consulted with local home care agencies to find out what they expected their workers to know, Prigian says, and eventually hired a local high school nurse to teach the course.

Today, Tamalpais’ free home care course is in its fifth year and is in keeping with California’s Master Plan for Aging to grow the state’s caregiving workforce by 1 million.

Classes are held three times a year. Students can take 40 hours of in-person instruction for 12 weeks or 35 hours of online training for 10 weeks. The course covers topics such as nutrition, food safety, fall prevention, first aid, hospice care and infection control, including how to prevent COVID-19 infections. The program offers an ESL component for students as well.
Overall, 98% of the students complete the course to earn their certificate of participation and an invitation to attend a school-sponsored job fair, she says.

“It’s become very successful,” she says and offers this advice to adult school administrators looking to add a career training program to the mix:

“Jump in and start collecting partners and information,” she says. “You don’t have to do it alone because chances are your community will be excited that you’re wanting to do this.”

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Joan Prigian, Home Care Aide Program Coordinator Tamalpais Adult School
WHY IS THE HOME CARE PROGRAM IMPORTANT?

“It's a continual battle to find good qualified caregivers. Now the Tamalpais Adult School has added another avenue for us to attract caregivers. Their home care graduates not only understand what's required to be a good caregiver, but also the requirements of the California Department of Social Services and the Home Care Services Bureau.”

Vicki Wildman, Corporate Recruitment and Compliance Manager, Visiting Angels

“The home care aide course has an excellent retention rate and most students finish the course with 100 percent attendance. They've also given positive feedback in post-course...
surveys stating that they learned practical information relevant to the job that has also benefited them personally.”

Deborah Meshel, Co-Teacher, Tamalpais Adult School

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