



*The Florida Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
Innovation Exchange*

Submission

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<i>Date of Submission:</i>	3/23/07
<i>Title of Innovation:</i>	<i>Life-Long Learning: The Ability and Interest are Life-long</i>
<i>Topic for Submission:</i>	Topic: Quality of Life
<i>Audience:</i>	Retirement Communities (CCRC or fee for Service) Assisted Living Facilities

1. DESCRIPTION OF INNOVATION:

Life Long Learning - The Interest and Ability are Life Long!

The peak at which we optimally learn is moving up the age spectrum at the speed of enlightenment. It used to be thought that only children could learn in an organized way. Now it is known that not only do we continue to learn as we age, but the practice of learning new things is one of the surest ways to combat memory loss. We are urged by everyone from Dr. Andrew Weil and Dr. Gary Small (gurus of memory and aging) to our own family doctor to take on new mental challenges at every turn.

It is also well known that volunteerism not only extends life, but greatly increases the quality of life.

The Academy at Shell Point capitalizes on these two schools of thought by providing an array of

opportunities to learn as well as opportunities to teach on a volunteer basis. Seniors giving of their lifetime of knowledge and experience instructing their peers who are eager for mental stimulation is a win-win situation at Shell Point Retirement Community.

Started in 2001 by a request from residents to have life-long learning opportunities right in their own community, *The Academy* at Shell Point has grown to a three semester per year program offering at least 70 presentations each semester.

The areas of focus of the Academy include:

- *Computer College* - All technology based courses.
- *Coffee With A Neighbor* - An opportunity to get up close and personal with an interesting resident or management personnel.
- *Legacy Seminars* - A focus on financial and end of life issues.
- *Academy on the Go* - Educational field trips.
- *Mind, Body and Spirit* - A focus on the whole person.
- *For the Love of Learning* - Everything else! Language, history, current events, nature and environment, comparative religions, etc.

Our residents' thirst for technology training, as well as the unique abilities of many to teach technology, has resulted in a plan that allows the community to keep up with the latest technology by charging a "user fee" of \$5 for each course taught in our Computer College section of the Academy. The funds generated are portioned out according to recommendation from our resident/staff Technology Advisory Board.

A resident Academy Advisory Board sifts through the myriad of offers and potential courses and makes recommendations, as well as sorts and collates the evaluations from each course. In addition to rating the offering and the instructor, evaluation forms provide each resident the opportunity to say what they would like to see offered.

2. **BUDGET:**

The Academy began as a zero-based budget program and to this day remains a minimal cost to Shell Point as all classes taught by staff or residents are taught on a voluntary basis and all classes taught by those from outside our community are paid for by minimal fees from residents.