

Capitola's Pacific Coast Manor downsizes daily waste

By JONDI GUMZ

Posted: 07/22/2011 01:30:05 AM PDT

CAPITOLA -- Jordan Hay, dietary supervisor at Pacific Coast Manor, is on a crusade to cut waste.

After changing the way things were done, the trash generated by his department at the 99-bed nursing home shrank -- from 185 pounds a day to 20 pounds a day.

"We're shooting for 10 pounds a day," Hay said.

Hay, 27, originally from Ohio, worked his way through college as a cook in a nursing home, then came West.

He joined the nursing home staff three years ago, initially focusing on food quality.

In May, he decided something had to be done about the waste produced by the dietary department.

Here's one example. Everything that left the dietary department -- coffee, soup, yogurt -- has to be covered for the health and safety of the residents. Standard practice was a plastic lid.

When residents didn't eat what was on their plate, it went into the trash. Cardboard and milk containers went into the trash, too.

Hay looked into what this cost over three days. Buying 480 lids: \$131. Food waste containers, \$197. Trash cans \$120. Total: \$448.

He could see potential savings ranged from \$10,000 to \$20,000.

So he called GreenWaste to ask about options. He discovered GreenWaste offered recycling pickup at no charge.

He also learned the city of Capitola subsidized pickup of food waste up to three times per week. The city began offering the program in January, with a goal of composting 50 tons per month.

"I didn't realize these programs were out there," Hay said. "We're already paying for it through our tax dollars."

He talked with Sandy Hale, the nursing home's activities director. Her department, which organizes 15 events a month for residents, used a lot of plastic. She found she could save 600 glasses a month by switching to washable glasses.

Charles Reading of GreenWaste helped with setting up the food containers and the recycle pickup schedule.

Now the nursing home washes and re-uses lids and glasses, recycles cardboard, and composts uneaten food.

Hay organized a weeklong effort this month to show residents as well as the 120 employees on staff what has been accomplished. They planted a tree and GreenWaste outreach coordinator Patty Medina talked about how to recycle. Residents participated in a crafts project to turn old T-shirts into re-usable grocery bags.

"We're trying to change the way they think," said Marise Goetzel, the nursing home administrator.

Housekeepers and others, when asked for ideas, suggested using scrap paper instead of Post-its, washing and re-using plastic utensils and setting up a collection place for soft drink cans.

Over a year, the nursing home could keep three tons of waste out of the landfill, according to Hay's calculations.

"We intend to teach these methods of [waste] reduction companywide," said Rochelle Nations, marketing director at Pacific Coast Manor, which is owned by Covenant Care. "That's 50 facilities in three states."

Seventh Avenue Center, a 99-bed nursing home in Live Oak, has been participating in the food waste program run by Santa Cruz County.

Food services director Sandy Gilardoni hasn't run any calculations, but she sees the difference when GreenWaste does pickups.

"More than half goes to composting," she said.

