



Creating Eden in Georgia

Eden at Home Trainer Certification Workshop A Tremendous Success!

Kim McRae, Co-Founder & Coordinator

Culture Change Network of Georgia

The Culture Change Network of Georgia (CCNG) is proud to be the first state coalition to host an Eden at Home workshop. The three-day Eden at Home Trainer Certification Workshop: Creating Quality of Life for Care Partner Teams Living with Dementia took place March 7 – 9th in Atlanta at Aging Services of Georgia’s Center for Positive Aging and was a tremendous success! There were 25 participants from throughout the continuum, including six representatives from Augusta. Our Educator was Laura Beck, Learning & Development Guide for The Eden Alternative. Laura actually developed the curriculum for Eden at Home, and we were very fortunate to be able to “experience” the transformational workshop with her - she did a fabulous job!

Eden at Home (EAH) applies the Eden Alternative’s Ten-Principle Philosophy to improving quality of life for Elders living at home (or participating in any kind of “non-nursing home” community supports and services) and their care partners. A community-based approach to person-centered care, EAH focuses on building collaborative care partner teams that include the active participation of the Elder themselves. Working together, empowered care partner teams help to ensure the independence, dignity, and continued growth and development of our Elder care partners and each other. After the three-day training, participants became Certified Trainers and are equipped to inspire care partners both within their own organizations and out in the community.

Since our beginning in 2008, the CCNG has been very intentional about focusing on the entire continuum of long-term care, and our advisory group includes representatives from all of the key stakeholder groups. We have been working with the Eden Alternative to create a model that other states can use to expand their culture change focus beyond “just nursing homes” into the full continuum of care including home and community-based support and services. For the workshop, we were committed to bring together the state’s key stakeholder groups to infuse the concepts and principles of EAH so that the state can be poised to have the key CARE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS in place to be able to spread and disseminate EAH Care Partner Workshops throughout the state. This fits our mission: “To change the way Georgians think and feel about aging and disability by creating the kinds of support and services we want for our loved ones and ourselves.” We believe that culture change needs to happen everywhere and for everyone, and our vision is to help people who need people have a better quality of life.

Family caregivers and Elders shoulder a tremendous burden as they navigate the long-term care system. The maze of CARE TRANSITIONS is proving to be a daunting task for those who work





in “the system” as well! By bringing together representatives from across the continuum for the three-day workshop, we were able to share a common language, focus and philosophy that will enable us to work as a COMMUNITY to provide Elders, family caregivers and the entire care partner team with a better quality of life. In addition, by experiencing the workshop together, we were able to focus on building our relationships with each other and the various organizations represented, which will help break down the “silos” between the different “venues” of care.

To date, most of what is written about culture change is about nursing homes, and it is in the “language and vocabulary” of the nursing home world. As we have been expanding our focus beyond the “walls” of nursing homes out to all environments and all people, it is often difficult for people to “translate” and imagine what culture change looks like and feels like in their world. The EAH curriculum provides a common language and framework that beautifully and eloquently gives people the tools and the words to make culture change and person-centered life real for everyone.

Zandra Matthews, Director of Supportive Services at Lutheran Towers, an affordable housing community for seniors in midtown Atlanta, has been an advocate for culture change since she first learned about it in 2006. She was a participant in the first Leadership AAHSA (now Leading Age), and she actually visited the original Green House in Tupelo, MS. Zandra is also an active participant on the advisory group for CCNG. Lutheran Towers has been very visionary in “translating” the philosophy and principles of culture change into the “world” of affordable housing. After participating in the workshop Zandra said, “THIS was the MISSING LINK! Now I have the language and the framework to help us take culture change to the next level for our organization.”

The Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission (CSRA RC), a regional AAA, sent a strong contingency of six! Lauren Spivey, Elder Rights Program Manager for CSRA said, “I have heard nothing except positive feedback about the training. Tomorrow we are having a staff development day and are devoting the whole three hour program to an overview of the EAH training and how to implement it in our region.” They have also added an overview of EAH to the agenda for an Elder Rights Conference that they are holding in June.

Walter Coffey, CEO/President of Aging Services of Georgia and Co-Founder of CCNG, said, “It was so thrilling to watch the energy of the group build throughout the workshop. By bringing together the different players from the continuum in an intentional way and looking at the big picture of “the system” of long-term care, they were able to see how all of their roles and contributions fit together. The group now really understands that the Elder – or the PERSON – has to remain at the CENTER as they “experience” the continuum of long-term care. It is “the system” that needs to learn how to work together and communicate with each other in order to make culture change a reality for every person in every setting. I believe this was a very





CULTURE CHANGE Network of Georgia

I long, as does every human being, to be at home wherever I find myself.... Maya Angelou

transformational experience for everyone who participated, and I look forward to watching it unfold as they take what they learned back to their organizations.”

Eden’s first principle states: “The three plagues of loneliness, helpless and boredom account for the bulk of suffering among our Elders.” By focusing on the PERSON – regardless of the setting – Georgia’s COMMUNITY OF CARING will be able to focus on eliminating these plagues and helping to improve quality of life for everyone involved in the continuum of care throughout the state. Our participation in hosting our first EAH workshop and bringing together such an amazing contingent of enthusiastic representatives from the continuum, was a great step forward on our journey to change the culture of long-term care in Georgia!

Laura Beck wrote in her newsletter, “Two weeks ago, members of the Culture Change Network of Georgia came together to acknowledge their varied roles on the continuum of care at Eden at Home Trainer Certification in Atlanta, Georgia. This particular culture change coalition is committed to addressing care as a continuum, and given their creativity and enthusiasm, we have no doubt they will achieve great things. May their commitment be a reminder – it can be different, no matter where Elders live!”



Georgia Eden at Home Trainer Certification Workshop Graduates 2011

