

Southeast region implements peer coaching network

Submitted by *Michelle Thompson, Project Coordinator (SEH)*

Southeast Home Care Services (SEH) Regional Director **Melinda Phillips** has worked tirelessly to create a culture of feedback and growth for the region. In an effort to create a real-time leadership development experience for all directors, Melinda consulted with Kathleen Kane, managing director of Liberty Business Strategies. Kathleen has been a true asset to Bayada Nurses, and has facilitated multiple leadership workshops for directors in the past. According to Kathleen, "Peers have a unique and helpful vantage point to each other. They are able to see a very real version of who someone is as a professional."

Peer coaching is essentially using a peer or group of peers to clarify your thinking, understand your own responses, and choose a course of action. Southeast directors have been grouped with fellow directors (four to five in a group), and a division director sponsor of the program. The directors have been trained in the necessary coaching skills of effective listening, high-gain questioning, and feedback, and are using a standard process and set of tools, co-developed with Liberty Business Strategies. Since March, the groups have been meeting once a month via teleconference in a completely confidential forum to share current opportunities and issues, and gain the benefit of peer coaching. The first four rounds of calls were supported by Kathleen, Training (TRN) Director **Karen Hojda**, and Associate Director



Ron Ross as process consultants. The groups are now self-managing.

In late July, all Southeast directors and sponsors came together at the NC Learning Center for a "check in" workshop facilitated by Kathleen and Karen. During the session, participants gave feedback on the peer coaching process to date, discussed opportunities to refine skills, and made agreements on how to move forward. Directors had candid discussions about their thoughts on the program thus far, and agreed that their questioning skills had greatly improved, allowing them to more effectively drill down to problem solve with their teams. Instead of simply solving problems and putting out fires, they are helping their teams come to the solution on their own.

According to Boone, NC (BOO) Associate Director **Matt Barbee**, "Peer coaching has helped me obtain different points of view. Usually, I tend to seek out like-minded individuals



for advice and guidance. This experience has helped me look at situations from a completely different perspective."

Azalea (AZA) Division Director **Jennifer Baney**, who is also a program sponsor, adds: "I have seen directors become clearer in their critical thinking skills and more strategic with their questioning. They are not simply going straight into fix-it mode. I think our directors have developed a wonderful support system and now feel more comfortable reaching out to peers for feedback and advice."

SEH directors are scheduled to meet again in October to agree on next steps for peer coaching work. If you have any questions about the value or process of peer coaching, please feel free to contact Melinda or any of the SEH division directors: Jennifer, **Mary Jane Barlow** (MIM), **Patrick Daly** (BOP), **Virginia Steelman** (JAS), or Karen in TRN. ■