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Local nonprofit Lyngblomsten first senior care provider in Minnesota to be named a Service Enterprise

ST. PAUL, Minn. (June 1, 2017) — Lyngblomsten, a senior care organization that has been serving older adults in the Twin Cities since 1906, recently was certified as a Service Enterprise, a designation given to a small percentage of nonprofits nationwide for their exceptional volunteer programs. Lyngblomsten is the first senior care organization in Minnesota to become a Service Enterprise.

“I think being certified as a Service Enterprise organization fits us really well,” said Jeff Heinecke, President and CEO of Lyngblomsten.

“In my estimation,” Heinecke continued, “our volunteer program is one of the biggest differentiators between Lyngblomsten and other senior healthcare organizations in the Twin Cities. Volunteerism has been a part of our history since our beginnings in the early 1900s, and I think the Service Enterprise certification affirms that what we’re doing is the right thing.”

The Service Enterprise Initiative, or SEI, recognizes nonprofits that strategically engage volunteers and their skills across all levels of the organization to deliver successfully on their social missions. Currently, over 300 organizations in 20 states and Puerto Rico have been certified as Service Enterprises, including 35 in Minnesota.

Tim Overweg, Manager of Volunteer Services for Lyngblomsten, coordinated the certification process for Lyngblomsten. He thinks this designation indicates how Lyngblomsten is a step ahead of other senior care organizations when it comes to volunteer engagement and management.

“Every single part of Lyngblomsten is interested in being on the leading edge and doing things really well,” Overweg said. “This is another area that demonstrates how Lyngblomsten is innovative.”

Overweg said of the hundreds of Service Enterprises across the country, only nine provide services to older adults. And of those nine, only Lyngblomsten provides a full continuum of services, including healthcare, housing, and community-based resources.

SEI is overseen by Points of Light (a national nonprofit dedicated to volunteer service), which works with local organizations to administer the program. In Minnesota, Points of Light collaborates with HandsOn Twin Cities and the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA).

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Lyngblomsten began the process to become a Service Enterprise in the fall of 2016. The process included having staff from across the organization:

- Complete an online survey (the Service Enterprise Diagnostic, or SED) that measured the health of Lyngblomsten's volunteer program,
- Complete over 20 hours of training with representatives from HandsOn Twin Cities, and
- Create an action plan that addressed areas for growth identified by the SED and training sessions.

Katie Walsh, Program Director for HandsOn Twin Cities, worked with Lyngblomsten during the certification process. She already knew that Lyngblomsten was a leader in connecting volunteers with opportunities that enhanced the lives of its residents, tenants, and community participants. So she wasn't surprised by how high it scored on the initial SED assessment.

"This is the highest SED score that I have seen to date," Walsh said, comparing it to the scores of over 45 Minnesota nonprofits with which HandsOn Twin Cities and MAVA have worked. Lyngblomsten's overall score, she continued, was 84 out of a possible 100, which indicated that it already appeared to be operating as a Service Enterprise. "It's fair to say that Lyngblomsten is that 'gold star standard' for strategic and integrated volunteer engagement within an organization," Walsh said.

Lyngblomsten, however, wasn't content with resting on its laurels. "Even though they scored high, the team led by Tim [Overweg] recognized this was a great opportunity to look at where they could streamline and make improvements," Walsh said. She thinks this is one factor that led Lyngblomsten to be certified so quickly. From start to finish, it took Lyngblomsten about eight months to become certified, whereas for most organizations it takes well over a year.

Using insights gained from the certification process, Lyngblomsten plans on pursuing a number of goals over the next several years, Overweg said. These include providing volunteers with more opportunities for skills-based volunteering, creating a culture where all staff see volunteers as important partners in their work, and increasing Lyngblomsten's presence at volunteer recruitment events in the community. Attaining these goals is important, as Lyngblomsten will have to apply for recertification in three years.

"This process forced us to take a look at ourselves," Overweg said. "We certainly want to celebrate what we are doing well, but we also need to look at how we can improve. We always need to keep this as part of our DNA—and I'm confident that we will."

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Incorporated in 1906, Lyngblomsten is a Christian nonprofit organization enhancing the quality of life for older adults of all faiths and cultures through its healthcare and housing facilities and its community-based outreach programs for seniors living independently. Learn more at www.lyngblomsten.org.