

**Academy of Best Demonstrated Practice  
Recipient Remarks 2008  
Serena Collado**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the Academy, Esteemed colleagues and friends....

Thank you for this distinguished recognition and tribute luncheon. I am honored to be selected as this year's recipient of the Catalyst Best Demonstrated Practice award. I am both flattered and humbled to be inducted into the Academy of Best Demonstrated Practice for my work with the SAIL Program at Somerset Medical Center.

My journey to get here has been long, challenging and rewarding; yet one that has shaped by philosophies, style and approaches as a professional. It's still quiet surreal.

If you had asked me as a child what I wanted to do when I grew up, my answer would have been different from the current path I've chosen. You see...I wanted to be the boss of a major corporation and make lots and lots and LOTS of money. So, how did I go from money to seniors?

Before I answer that question, let me preface it by saying that I firmly believe that people and experiences can have a profound impact on your life and decisions you make. To thy own self be true...

Growing up as a child, my parents raised me to care about others and to always do the best job that I possibly could whatever task was given to me. In fact, this belief started at home. When I was twelve years old, I began to clean my grandparent's house every weekend because as aging adults, they needed the assistance. And when I was done cleaning, the house sparkled. This same value carried over to sports. I lettered in Varsity field hockey when I was a sophomore. My drive and competitive nature assisted me in later receiving a scholarship in field hockey to James Madison University.

While studying at James Madison University, I elected to obtain a Bachelors degree in Health Care Administration in hopes of becoming a hospital administrator or an executive in the health care field.

Upon graduating, I landed my first job with CIGNA HealthCare as Medical Economist where I monitored physician utilization and developed capitation fees – you know, all the things that health care providers love so much about insurance companies. It was here that I gained a good business understanding of the health care industry.

After a few years, there was an opening in the Managed Government Programs department. At the time, Managed Medicare was the next biggest cash cow aside from the commercial business. Seeing a potential opportunity, I decided to work on Managed Medicare and Medicaid programs for New York and New Jersey. Later I was hired by

Prudential HealthCare to do the same thing. The Managed Medicare jobs introduced me to the senior market and educated me about health care and insurance issues affecting older adults.

I enjoyed this line of work for several years. Then insurance companies started backing out of managed Medicare programs due to poor reimbursements. Knowing that my position could be dissolved or relocated out of state, I searched for a new job. I was able to apply my experience with older adults from the insurance industry to the start up of a senior affinity program at Somerset Medical Center.

I feel in some way that my grandmother steered me down this path. I remember one day when I was cleaning her house, she told me how difficult it was becoming for her to do certain tasks. She asked me, “Serena, who is going to take care of Nanny when I can not take of myself anymore?” By accepting the opportunity to run a senior affinity program, I felt I could help older adults on a much larger scale.

At Somerset Medical Center, I was hired to develop and grow the SAIL Program, including the development of services and member benefits. Over the years, the program has grown to over 15,000 members and includes some of the award-winning programs and services such as:

Caregiver Programs

Reframing the View of Older Women

Turning Setbacks Into Comebacks

The Art & Science of Healthy Aging

Advocacy Initiatives

Aerobics for the Mind

Fitness classes such as Aquacize, Fit Bones, Chair Yoga, Dance, etc.

While I hope my efforts have enhanced the lives of older adults within the central New Jersey community, it is the older adults who have profoundly impacted my life. Over the last ten years at Somerset Medical Center, I have learned some lessons from the Senior Market:

Lesson #1: The Early Bird Catches the Worm – Have you ever noticed how seniors will arrive about 1 hour early for an event? That’s because a) they want a good parking spot and b) they don’t want to miss out on the good giveaways. This lesson can be applied to business. Innovation and creative programming or services is a good strategy to capture market share before your competition notices and replicates what you’ve done.

Lesson #2: Attention to Detail is a MUST! Because older adults have more life experience, they have definite opinions on how things should run and point out the smallest of errors. As a result, you must think of everything and plan for worst-case scenarios. You are more apt to achieve high satisfaction scores with a well-planned and thought-out program.

Lesson #3: You Can Please Some of the People Some of the Time – The older adult market has high expectations. It is extremely difficult to achieve 100 percent satisfaction; however, if the majority of individuals are happy then you've done your job. To achieve satisfaction, I've found that perceived value is a critical tool when working with older adults. Because many live on fixed incomes, they have the champagne taste with the beer budgets. You must select offerings in which the value appears greater than the cost. This assists in decreasing expenses and driving utilization.

Lesson #4: There are many techniques to increase attendance to health education events but only one **GOLDEN** rule – If You Feed Them, They Will Come. After all, that's how Bruce got all of you here today (Ha, Ha). Thus, this rule is also helpful when engaging physicians and professionals.

Lesson #5: Respect Your Elders. If you want to be respected by this market, you must treat each individual with respect and dignity regardless of physical or mental disabilities they might have. Clint Eastwood once said, "When I get older, I don't want to be turned out to the pasture." What he meant was that he didn't want to be treated like a second-class citizen nor did he wish to be forgotten. As such, programming and service should not be less than the highest quality.

Lesson #6: Live Life to the Fullest, Cause You Never Know What Lies Around the Corner. It's an honor and a privilege to work with these individuals. Your life is touched in so many ways. Yet, sadly, you see how frail life can be. It makes me want to live today if tomorrow was my last. It makes me want to live without regret.

People often ask me what motivates me to serve this population and to serve them with such passion. I can't say that it's anyone thing but a culmination of many. Perhaps, it's

1. Family values to always to do the best job
2. A desire to help people
3. A wish to make an impact on the world, even if slightly
4. A calling to make enhance the lives of older adults, in this generation and for generations to come, in such a way that none will feel forgotten or alone.

I would not be standing here before you today if certain individuals did not shape my personal and professional philosophies or alter my life in some way. I am truly grateful for their guidance and share this award with them. I would like to thank...

1. My parent, first and foremost, for instilling morals in me that valued humanity over wealth or fame.
2. My grandmother for giving me a healthy respect for older adults and for demonstrating reasons to care for the aged.
3. My boss at Somerset Medical Center, Phyllis Kumpf, who taught me the importance of balance in life and work and support all my ideas and initiatives for the SAIL Program over the years.

4. My assistant, Leslie McCulloch and the SAIL Program volunteers who work diligently to serve our adult community and to make SAIL run smoothly.
5. Bruce Mondschain and all the associates at Catalyst Benefits whose support and assistance have help build a strong and well-rounded affinity program in central New Jersey.
6. The Academy of Best Demonstrated Practice for bestowing me with this great honor.

Thank you all.