

A LETTER FROM GINA BERRY

Greetings fellow RSCs ☺

**So, What DOES An RSC Do?**

Over the years, I've managed to plagiarize, pilfer, and procure a few vague sentences for the daring soul who asks me what a Resident Service Coordinator does. Upon hearing my response, the inquisitor usually feigns understanding and enlightenment, but quickly moves on to a safe, inane topic like "the war on terror".

Yes, it seems it's easier to deal with Middle Eastern politics than to comprehend that "as the Resident Service Coordinator, I promote self-determination in community housing by assisting residents in accessing and securing services that might enrich and enhance their lives. Among other things."

The truth is, as I approach my 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an RSC, I don't have a clue how to describe what it is I do, especially the "other things" part.

At 8am, Ms. Amberstein opens the door of the building for me and says, "You missed a great one last night. Gladys burnt her dinner and set off the fire alarm. The firemen were here, and one of them yelled at Morton because he wouldn't get out of the hallway, and Vera damn near broke her leg trying to get down the stairs when Oodles the Poodle jumped out of Clara's arms and ran her leash around Vera's ankles."

I smile. I need a cup of tea.

At 8:15am, I check my email and find out I need to complete a report by the end of the day – in addition to the other paperwork I have.

At 8:45am, I visit Morton. We talk about the fire alarm and he admits he was drunk and belligerent. He says it won't happen again. I tell him I hope it doesn't, because the next time he'll be thrown in jail for the night on drunk and disorderly, especially if I get called in from my nice, cozy little house to deal with him.

A little after 9 am, I start going through the files to work on the report my employer needs. Representative Howard calls to remind me about the meeting to work on rehabbing the alley behind the Bardwell. A resident at Park Village calls to tell me about the police visiting his building 4 times last night. Mrs. Mayfield stops by to ask me about the dinner I'm having on Friday. One of my co-workers wants to know if she can get an update on vacancies for her report. Mrs. Bugsby wants to know if I can fill out the commodities application for her. And Waylan wants to show me his "memorial book for Sheila" for the 82<sup>nd</sup> time this month.

A little after 10 am, I start going through the files to work on the report my employer needs.

At 11:15 am, I see Clara coming to get her lunch. I talk with her in the back office about keeping control of her dog during emergency situations, and she agrees she should apologize to Vera for Oodles. I compliment Oodles on her new sweater.

At 11:25 am, I see Gladys. We talk about the “fire”. She forgot the stove was on and she went to visit her friend down the hall. We spend some time talking about ways to remember the stove is on so she doesn’t have any accidents in the future.

At 11:50 am, I take “lunch.” This is (my dog) Cody’s time – Cody’s walk. We stop to smell everything. We point at squirrels. We chase birds down the phone lines. Sometimes we let the homeless guy at the library pet us (well, Cody does) and sometimes we bark at him to remind him to mind his manners.

At 12:20 pm, I eat my sandwich at my desk while I type up a letter to the resident at Park Village who had the police visit 4 times the previous evening. I remember I made a cup of tea in the morning but didn’t get to drink it. It’s cold and goes well with lunch. I call the fire department and tell the Chief I talked with Morton.

At 12:50 pm, I walk the 2 blocks over to the bank where Rep. Howard and the City’s VIPs have gathered to lay out plans for the “park” behind the Bardwell House. There are a couple “big fish” from our tiny pond in the room. I feel like a goldfish... cracker. The plain kind. Not the kind with cheese.

At 2 pm, I type up the report my employer needed and fax it to him. I meet with a resident who has a “quick” question about Medicare Part D, and talk to the maintenance man at Park Village about the police visiting 4 times the previous night.

At 3 pm, I meet Mrs. Bugsby to fill out her commodities application. On the way back to my office, Ms. Dillon asks me if she can help with Friday’s lunch. I hear a choir of angels singing and the light from her halo blinds me for a moment. I regain my vision just in time to see Mrs. Talksalot coming down the hallway. I make a mad dash for the stairs, noticing the blur of Ms. Dillon as she rushes into her apartment and locks the door. I feel badly for avoiding Mrs. Talksalot, but I can promise I’d feel worse if I had talked to her. Yup, she’s that bad.

At 3:30 pm, I snake my way from the back stairs to my office. I close the door carefully, so nobody will hear me.

I have to pee.

I open the door just as Mrs. Talksalot gets off the elevator.

Damn that instant karma.

At 3:50 pm, I finally get to the bathroom. I don’t turn the light on. It’s pitch black, and quiet, and – for the first time all day – I take a deep breath and relax. I think about how nice it is to have a few moments all to myself, and then I hear keys rattling the bathroom door.

I decide to play a joke on the maintenance man (who happens to be my husband). I stand in the corner. He opens the door and turns on the light.

“Boo!” I yell, as the light comes on.

“For \*%@\$ Sake!” the maintenance man (the one who’s **not** my husband) screams. He slams the door and yells at me, but I can hardly hear him I’m laughing so hard and tears are running down my eyes. I’m glad, now, that Mrs. Talksalot held me up. It was sooooo worth it.

At 4 pm, I work on some paperwork. Quitting time comes and goes. My husband finally comes to get me a little before 5 pm. The dog dances around my office while I gather up my stuff.

I think I spend about 90% of my time “among other things”. I can’t describe my job. What I do is fleeting and intangible. Tomorrow there will be little trace of the work I did today. Morton will get drunk again, and he’ll be belligerent. It’s who he is, and what he does. Gladys will burn her dinner again. She’s showing signs of dementia. Oodles will break someone’s neck before too long because Clara can’t hold on to her, what with the arthritis. Mrs. Mayfield will ask about Friday’s dinner right up until Friday afternoon, because she’s lonely and needs someone to talk to – if just for a minute. Waylan will want to show me the memorial book for the 83<sup>rd</sup> time because he can’t get over the loss of his friend and his heart is still hurting. The police will visit Park Village for the very same resident because he’s on a downward spiral of drug addiction that no one can help him get out of.

And I will work with all of them again – and help with what I can.

Because I love them.

Among other things.

*“A true friend is one to whom you can pour out all the contents of your heart, chaff and grain together, knowing the gentlest of hands will sift it, keep what is worth keeping, and with a breath of kindness, blow the rest away.”*

*Native American Wisdom*