



Case Study: Increasing Resident Engagement and Staff Efficiencies through Technology during COVID-19

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Categories:

- ◆ Reduce Social Isolation and Feelings of Loneliness
- ◆ Increased Resident Engagement, Satisfaction, Social Networking, Connectedness, Quality of Life, and Staff Efficiencies

About the Organization

Organization Name:

Ginger Cove

Main Contributors:

Alena Dailey, Director of Wellness and Engagement;
Stephanie Baker, Resident Services Specialist

Organization Type(s):

Continuing Care Retirement Community

Organization Description:

Ginger Cove is a life-care continuing care retirement community that embraces wellness and peace of mind as a way of life. Life at Ginger Cove affords you unlimited ways to spend today with peace of mind about tomorrow and our financial plan refunds 90% of your entrance fee to help preserve your estate.

Our vibrant, CARF International accredited community nurtures every aspect of your well-being.

Project Description

This case study demonstrates how Connected Living's enterprise communication platform increased Ginger Cove's staff efficiencies while allowing them to explore digital options to reduce resident isolation and increase resident, family, and staff engagement and connection. Through digital signage, mobile application, and, most effectively, an in-room TV channel — this case study reinforces how Connected Living's ecosystem, combined with Ginger Cove's ingenuity, increased resident engagement and mitigated loneliness throughout the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ginger Cove also enhanced their customer experience for employees, residents, and their families by providing accurate and timely information through this digital platform. Up-to-date, consistent communication with all constituents is one of the most effective tools against COVID-19. Connected Living's technology, combined with Ginger Cove's robust COVID-19 response kit, empowered community staff to distribute crucial updates more efficiently. Families and residents continue to benefit from immediate notifications and access to timely information.



Socialization Modality

The integrated Connected Living ecosystem enhances engagement and personalization by connecting everyone to the community through their preferred device. It centralizes input and management of information for the community team, thus increasing their efficiency. From a single web-based point of entry, the team manages calendars, menus, bulletins, mobile push notifications, videos, and more. This ecosystem creates a highly customer-centric environment that is 'always on' to provide exceptional experiences.



The Connected Living Enterprise solution is fueled by a web-based, flexible and scalable enterprise content management system (eCMS) that delivers content and communication to specific audiences at specific times through many endpoints:

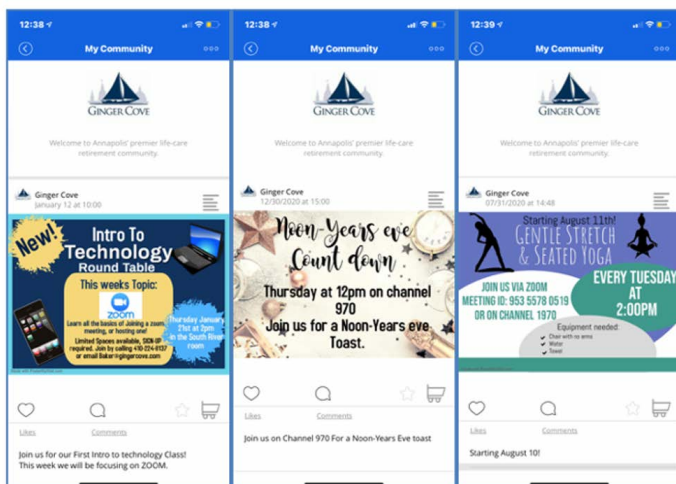
- ◆ Mobile application
- ◆ Digital signage
- ◆ In-room TV
- ◆ Web-based resident portal
- ◆ Alexa Skill

“Thinking of ways to best serve our residents during the pandemic is what prompted us to start exploring digital options even more. Very early on in the pandemic, we began to discuss how to provide access to streaming church services and fitness classes. As a result of the CDC guidelines and a need to meet resident demand, we started both of these programs exclusively on Zoom. Unfortunately, we quickly realized that most of our residents didn't have the technology to utilize these programs. Resident wellness is extremely important to us. We knew that utilizing the in-room TV channel would allow us to implement and connect our wellness programs to each and every resident from the safety of their apartment!”

— Alena Dailey

“Through the Connected Living platform, Ginger Cove leveraged the Community Resources feature to connect the community in the following ways:

- ◆ Introduce new employees
- ◆ Post memorials for residents
- ◆ Host technology video tutorials
- ◆ Showcase cooking demos
- ◆ Share video content recorded in-house
- ◆ Launch a Technology Café

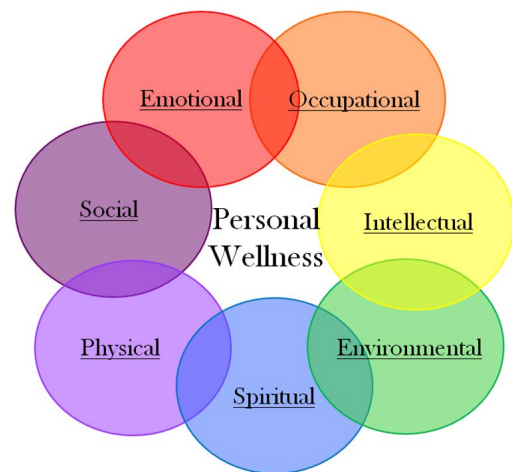


The Technology Cafe provides residents and employees with iPads that are available on-demand. They can access the Connected Living mobile app to ensure they have the latest information. We have increased programming extensively by listening to our residents and then delivering through a multitude of channels. Ginger Cove has also started sharing photos of staff pets and it's delightful!”

— Stephanie Baker

Business Model

Ginger Cove has a culture of wellness that endorses the multi-dimensional aspects of a healthy and fulfilling lifestyle for each resident, incorporating the International Council on Active Aging's seven programmatic elements of wellness: physical health, intellectual health, social health, emotional health, spiritual health, vocational health, and environmental health.



“Our team came together and developed a reformed mission statement for our programming; ‘Plan, Execute and Maintain Digital Programming on the In-house TV Channel That Enriches Resident Lives.’ This statement expands upon our company's wellness program and allows us not only to utilize the TV channel, but also sets the stage for future implementation of other technologies that organizations such as Connected Living offer. We will continue offering digital programming even after covid restrictions are lifted.”

— Stephanie Baker

Implementation Approach

How did we decide what programs will work for the residents of Ginger Cove? With guidance and support from their resident services leadership, we surveyed the independent and assisted living community. We reached out to Resident Champions (community leaders in the book club, religious life committee, etc.) and they reviewed The Great Courses Plus, offered through partnership with Connected Living, to suggest courses of interest. The survey was distributed via email and paper copy, providing multiple modalities for feedback. The survey included questions such as: 'What types of fitness programs do you want to see? What genres of movies do you like? If we were to show education programs, what subjects would you be interested to learn about?' To take it a step further, we included questions about what time of day are optimal for specific programs. The Resident Services Specialist, Stephanie Baker, included her name and contact information was on all documentation so residents could reach her directly to request or suggest content. We made it easy to share feedback and provided many ways for residents to request content and then we gave the residents what they wanted.

Outcomes/ Tangible Results from Use of the CL Enterprise Platform

Occupancy / Health and Wellness / Retention

"Our ability to provide information in a quick and timely manner helped us maintain very low positive COVID-19 cases throughout the pandemic and occupancy was sustained at 96%. We provided video tours, Zoom tours, and gave potential new residents access to the CLC mobile app so they could take advantage of our engaging community resources."

— Stephanie Baker

Staff Efficiency Improvement

"The efficiency of my team has increased by 40%. We have cut down the time required to look through paperwork and phone books to get our information out to the community. We use the CLC app to look up calendar and event information, find locations and phone numbers for residents, staff, and more."

— Alena Daily

Resident and Family Engagement / Increased Access to Information

Resident and family adoption of the Connected Living Community mobile app (integrated with the enterprise platform) increased by 84% in a 14-month timeframe (January 2020 through March 2021). The ease of sharing and providing access to critical information when it matters most was essential to our positive outcomes.

Reduced Feelings of Loneliness & Increased Social Networks

Resident feedback was so high, Ginger Cove needed to create an entirely new calendar comprised of digital content that was distributed throughout the ecosystem, including the in-house TV channel. The array and depth of digital content resembled a TV Guide. Through the close partnership, Connected Living made nimble enhancements to its content management system to optimize this vast digital calendar for printing and display on the digital sign and mobile app.

Examples of content streamed through Connected Living's ecosystem:

- ◆ Live-streamed classes.
 - Residents are connected with their familiar trainers. The PT department facilitates two classes per week. Staff join to help facilitate chair yoga, Zumba Gold, and a gentle stretch and balance class. All of these classes were offered in-house before lockdown but could now only be attended / viewed through the in-house TV channel.
- ◆ Expanded offering of virtual fitness classes.
 - We offer workout equipment, such as resistance bands and exercise balls. If residents need armless chairs, or any other equipment, we deliver it to their apartment. Tai Chi, How to Stay Fit as You Age, and free live classes of Senior Planet are also provided via the in-house TV channel.
- ◆ Community chef and dietitians offer monthly "Teaching Kitchens."
 - Live Zoom meetings educate residents about food and share ways to prepare it. Teaching Kitchens drew a big crowd prior to covid. It was wonderful to offer the same class to residents during the pandemic. They really enjoy the opportunity to learn about food and ask questions to our chef and dietitian remotely.

Increased Quality of Life

During the pandemic, Ginger Cove provided for the wellness needs of its community by going digital on the Connected Living Platform. They built programming around the seven Principles of personal wellness. Programs in all of these realms were sustained through technology.

- ◆ **Physical Wellness:** Physical Exercise Classes, Cooking Programs with Community Chefs and Dieticians
- ◆ **Spiritual Wellness:** Live Church Services, Sunday Morning Meditations, Special Lecture Series
- ◆ **Social Wellness:** Live Socials with Staff, Interactive Game Nights, Social Aspect of Watching the Same Movie
- ◆ **Intellectual Wellness:** The Great Courses, Virtual Brain Health Center, Historic Annapolis, Naval Academy, Live Lectures and Seminars
- ◆ **Occupational Wellness:** The Great Courses, Empowering the Ages, Lectures, Discussion Groups and Meetings
- ◆ **Emotional Wellness:** Meditation and Mindfulness Courses through Connected Living, Nostalgic Shows, Movies, and Locations
- ◆ **Environmental Wellness:** Content Related to Keeping the Environment Safe (especially during the pandemic)

Increased Resident Engagement and Satisfaction — Expansion to All Levels of Living

Digital programming was used to support wellness throughout the community.

- ◆ Supported Virtual Bingo with staff assisting residents that need it.
- ◆ In between programs, especially at night, staff played soothing music and guided meditation during sundowning through the in-room TV channel.
- ◆ Posted recordings of popular music and dance performances from the past.
- ◆ Shared animal programs and intergenerational music therapy that residents joined live on an iPad.
- ◆ Curated travel programs, holiday music, movies, church service, and more

Challenges and Pitfalls to Avoid

Communication & Taking Action

During critical or emergent situations, more communication is better than less or none. The key is to avoid overthinking your communication strategy. Your constituents are waiting for you to get started and to help them engage — even if you don't have all the answers at the moment. The pandemic was a challenging environment and communities needed to move quickly. We learned to establish a regular cadence of communication that our community could count on.

Access to Technology (Community-wide Internet & Dedicated In-house TV Channels)

If you are interested in streaming movies, invest in an umbrella license through the Motion Picture Licensing Company (MPLC). This gives you the right to stream anything to an in-house closed-circuit TV as long as it is a free service to your community. The MPLC ensures copyright compliance.

Lessons Learned/Advice to Share with Others

One communication channel is simply not enough. Employing a multitude of channels, such as the mobile app and in-room TV allow you to enhance the quality of connection, increase your opportunities for connection, and increase your engagement and technology adoption rate. An integrated solution gives constituents a voice. Residents and families need ways to efficiently share opinions. This additional communication positively impacts the customer experience. This allowed Ginger Cove to serve and help residents continue to find and live their life's purpose.

“The more our field focuses on access to simple and easy-to-use technology, the fewer challenges and pitfalls we will see during times of crises. Sophisticated engagement technology combined with purposeful programming and the ability to connect through user-friendly applications has been the key to success for Ginger Cove during the pandemic. Opportunity, purpose, and technology is not a “nice to have,” but a “must have,” and it is essential now more than ever in senior living communities.”

— Darren Noisette

Conclusion

“This pandemic has taught us the importance of sending real-time updates to keep each other informed, safe, and healthy, as often and as quickly as possible. The Connected Living platform -- mobile app and the in-house TV channel platform in particular -- allows the folks of Ginger Cove to execute their COVID-19 Preventative and Response Plans more effectively. It also shows the field that technology can and will significantly impact the lives of everyone involved. Technology can bring us closer together. We are extremely proud to partner with an innovative and forward-thinking provider like Ginger Cove!”

— Sarah Hoit, CEO of Connected Living