



CENTER FOR TECHNOLOGY
INNOVATION AND WELLBEING

Contributor:

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The LeadingAge Center for Aging Services Technologies (CAST) is focused on accelerating the development, evaluation and adoption of emerging technologies that will transform the aging experience. As an international coalition of more than 400 technology companies, aging-services organizations, businesses, research universities and government representatives, CAST works under the auspices of LeadingAge, an association of 6,000 not-for-profit organizations dedicated to expanding the world of possibilities for aging.

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Sharing Life Stories to Enhance Engagement and Improve Resident-Centered Care Using LifeBio

Categories

- Reduce Social Isolation
- Reduce Feelings of Loneliness
- Reduce Depression
- Reduce Use of Antipsychotics
- Increased Resident Engagement and Satisfaction
- Increased Quality of Life
- Increased Staff Efficiencies
- Increased Happiness
- Increased Subjective Wellbeing
- Increase Volunteer Engagement

Organization Name

Front Porch

Organization Type

Life Plan Community, Assisted Living, Memory Care Facility, Active Adult Communities, Affordable Housing, Independent Living and Skilled Nursing Facilities

Organization Description

The Front Porch Center for Innovation and Wellbeing (FPCIW) is part of Front Porch, one of Southern California's largest not-for-profit providers of retirement living, active adult and affordable housing communities. In collaboration with innovative partner organizations, the FPCIW reaches across cultural and socioeconomic barriers to meet the diverse needs and enhance the well-being of Front Porch residents and the older adult population at large. Using technology as a tool to solve real world problems, the FPCIW pilots and diffuses innovative technology solutions that change lives and make a difference, especially for older adults. Its core initiatives aim to assist in maintaining brain health, enhance social connectedness, promote engagement and growth, empower control over health and wellness, prevent emergencies or serious events and increase resources and support for formal and informal caregivers.

LifeBio

LifeBio helps people engage and share deeply using reminiscence therapy to capture life stories. LifeBio connects seniors and families to enjoy personal stories now while creating a lasting legacy. LifeBio also empowers staff and volunteers to know more about each person's background to improve quality of life and health outcomes.

Project Description

LifeBio (www.lifebio.com) worked with Front Porch to capture the unique life stories of residents while promoting meaningful social connectedness and engagement. Front Porch uses LifeBio to ensure the powerful stories of seniors and the Greatest Generation are known with LifeBio helping to ensure these priceless stories are preserved. Volunteers, family, or staff connect face to face or even via Skype to ask seniors the LifeBio questions to build each person's Life Story Book and 1-page Life Story Summary. The summaries are a "quick read" for staff to get a more detailed background about the residents for more meaningful ongoing social engagements.

Socialization Modality

Life Stories, Social Network, Photo Sharing, Rehabilitation, Facilitated Communications and Conversations

System Embodiment

Laptop, Desktop Computer, Tablet, All-In-One Computer, Smartphone

Business Model

FrontPorch pays LifeBio a License Agreement (Annual or Monthly Subscription) and offers the service as a standard of care.

Implementation Approach

LifeBio is an evidence-based reminiscence program that provides organizations with the ability to capture life stories effectively and consistently.

Within Front Porch, tools such as LifeBio's online portal (www.lifebio.com) and the LifeBio app are made available to residents and to people, such as family, staff, or volunteers, who may engage with the older adult resident to help record their biography. A series of thought-

provoking questions are asked and answered— usually anywhere from 10 questions to 200 questions depending on the resident's interest. LifeBio also gives access to journals such as the About Me Journal, and social engagement tools like LifeBio 101 class materials, Story Cards, and MemoryBio for daily or weekly interactions in groups. As the program begins, LifeBio staff delivers online "Getting Started Training" for key staff members--typically from marketing/admissions, social services, life enrichment, volunteer services, and health services. LifeBio Connect Volunteer Training is also available. Front Porch's Center for Innovation and Wellbeing provides ongoing technology and communication support to locations implementing the LifeBio program.

LifeBio flexes to adapt to each campus' needs within the Front Porch communities. For some locations, LifeBio is focused on enhancing the memory care program of the community by knowing more about each person's background and specific interests—to personalize programming. In other communities, LifeBio is primarily utilized for wellbeing and engagement of independent living or assisted living residents with staff, family, volunteers connected through the power of storytelling in small groups or through one-on-one visits (in person or even via Skype). For Veteran's Day, LifeBio supported Front Porch's interest in recording as many veterans as possible using the platform.

LifeBio provides proprietary questions to help people create a complete story customized to describe stories of survival, hope, or wisdom gained. LifeBio's online platform publishes and archives the story, photos, and videos online. The Story Team at LifeBio provides edited, bound, and shipped Life Story Books and 1-page Life Story Summaries back to the community---to give residents easy access to view and share their biographies with family, friends, and staff. Staff members benefit from a displayable 1-page Life Story Summary to ensure direct care staff see and know more about the residents. LifeBio's Story Team provides the support needed to reduce the amount of time Front Porch's staff members spend in completing biographies.

LifeBio's capabilities make it possible for family members to communicate detailed information

about their loved ones' lives, especially for those with Alzheimer's or in end of life situations. Digital recording options via the web, app, or even via phone interviews are made available to Front Porch communities for the needs of the Summer House memory care areas.

Issues impacting residents and communities

- **Loneliness** is a risk to health and can lead to added cost of care. Not unlike smoking, alcoholism, and obesity, loneliness has been found to lead to early death (Holt-Lunstad, Brigham Young University) with an increased risk for heart disease and other chronic conditions. Loneliness has even been found to raise the risk of dementia by 64 percent. Thus, Front Porch and LifeBio work together to ensure people of all ages are more socially connected and engaged.
- **Dementia** steals memories and knowledge of the person's past, making it hard to connect sometimes. LifeBio works with Front Porch to capture life stories for residents living independently. If they move to memory care later, their own stories are already documented for themselves and professional direct care staff to know more in the Summer House memory care areas of Front Porch communities. LifeBio also helps family members of those with dementia share about their loved ones using LifeBio's online portal or other tools.
- **CMS (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid) requirements** for person-centered care, promoting wellbeing, and improved behavioral health treatments for those with dementia are key. Knowing more about each person impacts overall quality, and a new research study underway with the State of Ohio Department of Medicaid is evaluating LifeBio's impact on anti-psychotic drug use in long-term care.

Outcomes

Iowa State University quantitative research of the LifeBio approach found a statistically-significant increase in feelings of subjective wellbeing (satisfaction with life) and increased feelings of happiness for 50 people, age 65 and older. The next phase of research continues with 200 people.

The Mayo Clinic is currently in the midst of a National Institutes of Health grant that includes LifeBio as an intervention for people with early-stage Alzheimer's Disease. Initial findings show an improvement in mood for those experiencing reminiscence therapy using LifeBio. The State of Ohio Department of Medicaid has contracted with LifeBio to begin working to achieve these goals as a pilot in participating nursing homes in Ohio: 1) Improvements for residents in satisfaction with care; 2) Reduction of antipsychotic medications; 3) Improvements in emotional health and quality of life and a reduction in

depression; 4) Improved satisfaction with care from the family point of view; 5) Improvements in perceptions of nursing aides in the areas of job satisfaction and staff retention; 6) Improvements in person-centered care and rapport between staff and residents.

Qualitative data and examples from LifeBio Authorized Organizations in 30 states finds LifeBio reduces social isolation, reduces feelings of loneliness, increased resident engagement and satisfaction, increased quality of life, improved staff/resident relationships, and increased revenue by supporting marketing/admission revenue goals (especially for memory care).

Challenges and Pitfalls to Avoid

LifeBio requires a commitment to social engagement for ideal success. Life Enrichment, Volunteer Services, and other professionals may need to commit more time to one-on-one engagement or in recruiting and training volunteers to assist with the LifeBio project in their communities—to everyone's benefit. LifeBio is more focused on engagement than on entertainment. Also, LifeBio is ideally communicated to residents and families upon admission so that immediate steps can be taken to setup a LifeBio online account. As with many programs, the biggest challenge is communication so that residents, families, staff, and volunteers are aware that LifeBio is available.

Social Connectedness & Engagement— Outcomes & Testimonials

RESIDENT PERSPECTIVE-Dick Cotton, age 92, Resident of Casa de Manana—a Front Porch Community

"A few months ago, Kelly Hillegeist, our Life Enrichment Director, connected me with Genesis, a student from the University of California San Diego, who helped me record my LifeBio. She spent time interviewing me and typed up what she learned. She came back and showed me my story and my wife and I made a few corrections. Genesis was outstanding. After I got my LifeBio book back, my wife and I decided to give copies of it to my five children and 12 grandchildren. Someday when they want to know about their grandma and grandpa, it will be in the book! Everybody loves it! LifeBio did a beautiful job. Everything was so clear. Two weeks ago, my wife, Evelyn, and I had Genesis and her boyfriend over and we had lunch at Casa de Manana. She is a very talented young person."

STAFF PERSPECTIVE-Kelly Hillegeist (Life Enrichment Director, Casa de Manana)

“Thank you so much for you and your team’s diligent work to make our resident’s stories perfect. They have been so pleased with the finished products!”

VOLUNTEER PERSPECTIVE-Fan Miao, Masters of Aging Service Student, University of Southern California (Volunteer, Villa Gardens—a Front Porch Community)

Dapeng and I are from China and we are both students at USC. When we first met Richard, age 95, we were nervous because of our different cultures and different ages. But as we began talking and learning about his life story, he told us of the many people that became friends in China years ago, and he enjoyed sharing the Chinese paintings and antiques he loves in his home at Villa Gardens (a Front Porch community). This was our first time talking with an American resident of a retirement community for so long. It helped us gain valuable experience communicating. The following summer we worked with residents at Villa Gardens’ Summer House who have dementia. We learned even more about communication. It is important to know the life story to deliver the best care.”

STAFF PERSPECTIVE-Katherine Custodio (Life Enrichment Director, Villa Gardens)

“The responses we received from the residents and the overall experience of the project gave us more insight into our residents--what they value and their humility. This helps us to design programs and activities that are truly resident-centered. My sincere thanks to LifeBio for giving our residents the opportunity to share their stories and for helping us to honor them.”

Video Links

[LIFEBIO PROCESS – HOW IT WORKS!](#)

[WHY LIFEBIO IN SENIOR LIVING & HEALTH CARE](#)

[WHY LIFEBIO IN MEMORY CARE](#)