LeadingAge® CAST
center for aging services technologies

Case Study:
Supporting Residents' Technology through In-House Support Program
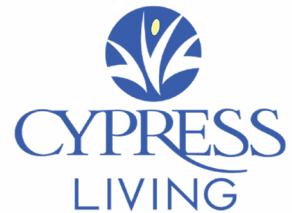
CYPRESS LIVING

Categories:
◆ Technical Support
◆ Education and Training
◆ Programming

About the Organization

Organization Name:
Cypress Living

Main Contributor:
Joe Velderman, MCP, Vice President of Innovation

Organization Type: In-Home Care, Assisted Living Facility, Long-Term Care Rehab Facility, Skilled Nursing Facility, Memory Care Facility, Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC)/Life Plan Community.

Organization Description

Cypress Living is the architect of innovative senior living solutions in Southwest Florida. Inspired by the forward-thinking clients we serve, Cypress Living tailors care services to anticipate, meet, and exceed the lifestyle needs and expectations for each individual in their homes and in our communities.

As part of our efforts to bring new ideas to southwest Florida, we are developing Cypress at Home, an in-home service that allows older adults to thrive while aging in place. Within this highly sophisticated in-home care model, we are providing high-quality services and solutions to enhance everyday lives.

We are also expanding the resources and capabilities of our flagship community, Cypress Cove. Right now, leaders in the field of senior living are collaborating on the design of The Oaks at Cypress Cove — a 12-acre scenic neighborhood of luxurious apartments and villa homes built on property in the northwest corner of the Fort Myers, Fl. 400-acre medical campus known as HealthPark Florida.

The ultimate mission of Cypress Living is to empower older adults to lead rich, engaged, and purposeful lives.

Project Description

In an effort to continue to provide enhanced value, safety, and security to its residents, Cypress Cove has developed an in-house resident technology support program that offers a broad range of as-needed in-home services for older adults living in our vibrant Life Plan community.

"Many residents coming to Cypress Cove are arriving with an expectation of not only having a robust and reliable technology infrastructure, but also senior-friendly in-house IT support" says Joe Velderman, Vice President of Innovation. "I was leaving work late one evening, and I saw one of our residents carrying a 27" iMac computer to his car. Of course, I immediately went to assist him and asked where he was taking his computer. He mentioned needing some support and that the local Best Buy was his only avenue for assistance. I knew right then that we had an opportunity to do better."

To meet the desires of a more technology-fluent senior population, Cypress Cove has created, within its resident services department, a full-time position that provides resident technology support. But without an anticipated resident service demand, Cypress Cove thought it was important to incorporate several audio-visual related

service functions into tech-service program. It has become a perfect marriage of responsibilities. So much in fact, that technology use by residents has increased dramatically (from an estimated 40 users five years ago to well over 200 resident users today). One might conclude that Cypress Cove's dynamic tech support service program has played a large role in an ever-expanding resident interest in, and use of, technology.

Business Model

Today, residents can reach out by requesting technology support through a variety of means. Cypress Cove is leveraging its Worxhub software to create work order requests each time a resident needs assistance. As work tickets are resolved, time is recorded in the Worxhub software and billed at an hourly rate. Charges flow from Worxhub into PointClickCare - similar to any facilities-based request - and get invoiced back to a resident.

Fees for any installations, setup, or support is just $15 for each 30-minute increment (a minimum of 30 minutes for each visit). Residents seeking one-on-one technology training are billed at $40 for each 30-minute increment.

Cypress Cove is also committed to educating residents and offering technical know-how. Every week, sessions hosted in common areas of Independent Living where residents can come and ask any question about technology. "It's similar to an Apple store 'Genius Bar,' but we call it 'Tech Time with Tiger,'" explains Cypress Cove Associate Executive Director Mary Franklin. The organization, she explains, is fortunate to have a very patient, compassionate individual heading up this resident technology support effort … and he prefers to go by the nickname "Tiger." These educational walk-up sessions are completely free of charge and have quickly become a helpful interlude appreciated by our residents.

Implementation Approach

We mentioned in a previous segment that to meet the desires of a much more technology-fluent population, Cypress Cove created a full-time position under its resident services department to provide technology support exclusively for residents.

We have realized though that the scope for providing this concierge level of support can become vast very quickly. And to keep some parameters around the program's scope, the organization has defined that generally it will provide basic technology services for installation, set-up, support, and one-on-one training. Promotional material has made it clear to residents that the program administrator may not be able to resolve all types of technology issues presented.

Outcomes

Program outcomes have been very positive. Residents enjoy having a trusted source for IT support and training that is available to them on campus. We see that because of this availability, residents feel more comfortable adopting new technologies, such as Amazon Alexa and Apple Watch, knowing that they can reach out to someone if they get stuck. The program also benefits Cypress Cove administration budget by offsetting approximately half of the the cost of personnel involved in this program through resident tech support billing.

"It's a great opportunity for our organization to bring in some entry-level technology talent, have them learn about senior-living, and mentor them about how technology is supporting and enabling older adults" says Velderman. "It's my expectation that we'll be able to promote this type of individual to a higher-level technology position in the future and continue to be able to groom new talent."

Cypress Living sees a massive demand for these services too. Cypress Cove's sister organization – Cypress at Home – is already piloting many in-home technologies to help seniors stay connected. "We eventually see a need for other individuals like 'Tiger' supporting our in-home client wants and having them remain connected with our organization, while utilizing Internet of Things devices for telemedicine, remote patient monitoring and mHealth initiatives," explains Velderman.

Challenges and Pitfalls to Avoid

One challenge that providers will need to be prepared for relates to the vast array of hardware devices, software applications and online services that residents interact with. Every individual is unique and has unique hardware with unique configurations; and each user has unique online

services that they subscribe to, or need help with. It can be overwhelming for a single individual to be proficient in all of those different nuances. Cypress Cove saw a number of residents who wanted to be personally hand-held through a support experience and did not care to understand or really grasp the logic behind some of the technology.

It would be beneficial for beginning programs to provide a questionnaire for residents to fill out prior to their initial in-person help appointment. If the support professional can understand the challenges, objectives or goals prior to the appointment, it is much easier to create a support experience that is efficient and more targeted.

Lessons Learned/Advice to Share with Others

Each community will need to determine the desire by their residents for this type of in-house technology support. Some communities will have a stronger demand for this than others; but as more and more boomers move into senior living communities and begin to take advantage of long-term senior services through home and community-based services programs; technology support is an expectation.