

Case Study:

Increasing Resident Engagement, Satisfaction, Social Networks, and Quality of Life Through VR Technology



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Categories:

- ◆ Increased Resident Engagement and Satisfaction
- ◆ Increased Social Networks
- ◆ Increased Quality of Life

About the Organization

Organization Name:

Burcham Hills

Main Contributor:

Alesha Williams, Life Enrichment Director

Organization Type:

Independent living, assisted living, memory care, long-term care, short-term rehab, outpatient therapy, and rehab

Organization Description:

Burcham Hills is a special place of radiant smiles and warm embraces, where the inspiring beauty of our gardens and grounds surrounds our community with life and color, and we're always evolving to find new and exciting ways to meet changing needs and serve residents with the utmost positivity and grace. This includes independent living, assisted living, and memory care.

Project Description

Through a Render deployment at Burcham Hills, we sought a technology-driven solution that would support the development and enhancement of social connections for our residents. We believed that through the delivery of Render's virtual reality programming and experiences, a reduction from the impact of loneliness and isolation arising from COVID-19 would be achieved. By aligning ourselves with an organization like Render, there appeared to be clear advantages in support of our marketing and sales teams, who could leverage the power and popularity of virtual reality to attract new residents to our community and elevate our community and corporate branding.

Socialization Modality

Audio chat, photo sharing, life stories, games, facilitated communications and conversations, virtual reality.

System Embodiment

Tablet, virtual reality headset

Business Model and Implementation Approach

Located on 38 beautiful acres near Michigan State University and just a few miles from the Michigan State Capitol, Burcham Hills has been East Lansing's leading not-for-profit senior living community since 1974. As a Life Plan Community (also often known as a continuing care retirement community, or CCRC), we make aging in place simple by offering a comprehensive continuum of care for every stage of life—including independent living, assisted living, memory care, long-term skilled nursing, and short-term rehab—right on our campus. We also provide outpatient therapy for recovery from illness, injury, or elective procedures.

At Burcham Hills, we're committed to a holistic approach to total senior health and well-being. That's why we provide a wide variety of programs and services that focus on all eight dimensions of wellness. In July 2022, we began our partnership with Render by introducing its virtual reality engagement platform to our community and deploying the system at all levels of care: assisted living, independent living, and memory care. This, along with a number of other tactics, helps Burcham Hills support older adults' desire to age in place. The current model for deployment sees staff deliver at least one session per week at each level of care, meaning Render

is a core part of the activities program in our community and impacts the aging experience across the entire continuum of care we offer.

Burcham Hills has a unique approach to staffing. Many of our employees are cross-trained to support all areas of the community. This means that if there is a shortage of staff in one part of the community, another employee can jump in and help out. This fosters a sense of overall support and teamwork, where everyone is part of a single group, as opposed to being divided into separate social groups based on their level of care. This, we believe, promotes an overall sense of unity. Since Rendeever is used by all levels of care at Burcham Hills, no resident misses out on the benefits of virtual reality. Increasing social connection is core to Rendeever's mission, and our deployment strategy means that Rendeever is impacting our entire community, rather than a select few groups, which complements our community approach to care and further empowers our staff to address the challenges tied to social isolation across our entire campus.

The staff at Burcham Hills is special—their passion and love shine through their work and commitment to improving the quality of life for older adults. While life enrichment is their job, they treat it as a passion and purpose. Moreover, part of the deployment model involves Burcham Hills recreation staff leveraging the support and partnership of Rendeever's Community Engagement Team. In collaboration with Rendeever's team, our staff takes full advantage of in-depth training, coaching, and ongoing support, all of which is provided regularly. On account of this strong model, ongoing communication, recommendations, and motivation are provided by Rendeever's team, making our ability to take full advantage of the platform quite simple. Our team also likes to take advantage of data provided by Rendeever. Regular check-in calls are led by a Rendeever employee to discuss usage analytics and detailed reports on system usage. Each month, a report showcases the experiences being used most, opportunities to deliver new and exciting sessions to residents, and updates about the up-and-coming features of the platform. All this information allows our team to make valuable adjustments that maximize the value to our organization and magical moments for our residents. It is truly a team effort!

Data suggests that Burcham Hill is one of the top-performing communities among Rendeever's 500-plus North American partners, indicating that our implementation approach is not only valuable to our

own community, but that the lessons learned from our deployment can help other partners find great success as they provide VR-enabled magical moments for their residents.

The myriad features Rendeever offers—including explore, passport, videos, activity guides, or applications—allows our team to cater to specific interests. There are enough ways to use Rendeever that something can be found for everyone. This means our life enrichment staff can easily honor the individual needs and interests of residents.

"The reactions from our residents are a huge catalyst for success. The more excited they are, excited about their experiences, the more eager we are to do more sessions and get similar reactions!"

— Alesha Williams, Life Enrichment Director,
Burcham Hills Retirement Community

Outcomes

Increased Resident Engagement and Satisfaction

"Without data, you're just another person with an opinion."

— W. Edwards Deming, Management Expert

With this in mind, we are very proud to share that in less than a year, Burcham Hills has used Rendeever to deliver more than 400 individual sessions, in excess of 1,280 experiences, and more than 3,300 unique moments to our residents. Residents have also enjoyed over two full days in a virtual reality environment. It is through each of these experiences that Rendeever has helped residents at Burcham Hills engage with their community in new and exciting ways, leading to a level of resident satisfaction that is incredibly valuable not only to our residents but our staff as well.

Increased Social Networks

The Rendeever platform has enabled residents to connect with others in our community who share similar interests, passions, and hobbies. Not only that, these new social networks have been able to use Rendeever, over and over again, to maintain these new relationships and continue fostering a sense of community and belonging.

Increased Quality of Life

We understand that social isolation has a negative impact on older adults because it can lead to physical and mental health problems, cognitive decline, and reduced quality of life. As such, it's important for older adults to stay socially engaged and connected to others to maintain their overall health and well-being. Given this, Rendeever's addition to our community has provided our teams across the continuum of care with another essential tool to create more engagement and satisfaction for our residents. We have a more empowered staff, a more engaged community, and we are able to provide a better quality of life for our residents than ever before.

Challenges and Pitfalls to Avoid

Ensure that all staff members are fully trained and equipped to use the technology effectively. With turnover and new hires, it's important to consistently provide comprehensive training to all staff to ensure that residents receive the full benefits of the program.

Keep track of which experiences are being used most frequently! This will help you explore new features and ensure that you are maximizing the potential of the platform. By only focusing on a limited number of experiences, you may miss out on the full range of possibilities that Rendeever has to offer. Your Rendeever Community Engagement Manager can provide useful insights and work with you closely to create engagement plans.

Prioritize your residents' preferences over your own assumptions. By building a program tailored to their interests, you can ensure they're getting exactly what *they* want out of the technology.

Take advantage of the communications sent by Rendeever to encourage team members to explore new experiences that have come out or to involve residents in Rendeever Live programs.

Lessons Learned/Advice to Share with Others

Take advantage of the Rendeever Community Engagement Team. Their expertise and support can guide you through every step of the process, from initial planning to ongoing use of the system. Don't hesitate to reach out to the team for help and advice—they're there to support you every step of the way.

With their enthusiasm and commitment, Rendeever "Community Champions" can become advocates for the technology, inspiring other staff to incorporate it into their programming and encouraging residents to try it out. This creates a ripple effect of excitement and enthusiasm that leads to a successful deployment.

We use Rendeever's resident engagement platform to provide shared experiences that enhance our residents' lives. However, the success of this platform hinges on selecting experiences that truly resonate with your residents. By involving them in the experience selection process, you can ensure that their voices are heard and programs are tailored to their specific interests.

Rendeever is a great way to demonstrate your community's dedication to using the latest technology to benefit your residents. Collaborate with Rendeever on marketing and press opportunities to showcase what makes your community special!