



INNOVATION AT WORK 2018

Promising Practices Award Recipients: Reshaping the Aging Services Industry



WE ARE PLEASED TO HONOR 11 ORGANIZATIONS—THE LARGEST NUMBER GIVEN IN ANY SINGLE YEAR.

Each year, through the Promising Practices Awards, Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging recognizes organizations working with older adults in a variety of settings that are moving away from conventional practices by developing and implementing innovative approaches.

For 2018, we reviewed submissions from 35 finalists representing a very diverse and impressive group of entries, including our first international entry. We are pleased to honor 11 organizations—the largest number given in any single year. This larger-than-usual number of honorees is indicative of the high quality of entries this year. Award submissions were selected based on criteria including:

- ▶ innovation
- ▶ outcomes presented
- ▶ replicability of the practice
- ▶ impact of the practice on senior living or aging services

Sharing these promising practices reinforces the Institute on Aging’s commitment to encouraging innovation and creating Ways to Age Well.SM By serving as an innovation incubator, the Institute strives to shine a light on ideas that will benefit many, as other organizations adapt the ideas and transform them into best practices. 🌱



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EMPLOYING THE ARTS TO REDUCE BIAS & ISOLATION SURROUNDING DEMENTIA

Elder Care Alliance | San Francisco, CA | eldercarealliance.org



In keeping with their stated vision of “engaging hearts, transforming lives, erasing boundaries,” the not-for-profit public benefit corporation Elder Care Alliance decided to use an arts program to help erase boundaries for those with dementia and their care partners.

“We want to impact social isolation and reduce bias by bringing everyone together to experience a fun, engaging art program.”

The organization started the Erasing Boundaries program in 2017 by hosting three inclusive arts events called Movie Moments. Held in a local vintage movie theater, each program includes approximately 90 minutes of well-known film clips. Professional emcees with training in dementia inclusion introduce each clip and then follow it with a call-and-response-style group discussion that provides a platform for creative remembrance and sharing of life experiences. Topics introduced by the clips include family, relationships, careers, and military service. Audience members interact with each other and with the emcee, sharing memories, asking questions of each other, and making emotional connections.

In addition to people with dementia and care partners, Elder Care Alliance invites volunteers from sponsoring organizations and people throughout the immediate area.

“We’re not just trying to create fun experiences for people with dementia; we’re trying to change attitudes of those with no family experience with dementia,” stresses Rosemary Jordan, Elder Care Alliance VP of business development & strategy. “That’s why we invite such a diverse group of attendees. We want to impact social isolation and reduce bias by bringing everyone together to experience a fun, engaging art program.”

The program’s success is measured through pre- and post-event interviews with attendees using systematic qualitative interview methodology. Response has been largely positive, and any negative comments are used to make adjustments to future programs.

Elder Care Alliance plans to expand the program into different arts offerings, such as fine arts, dance, theater, and music. “With a diversity of arts types, we believe we’ll be able to reach a much broader audience,” says Rosemary.

TRY IT YOURSELF


Interested in erasing boundaries in your community? This program is easy to replicate. Here are some helpful details to get you started:

Each Movie Moments program costs less than \$3,000, and funding was raised through corporate donors. Donated services and discounted rates help defray the overall expense. Costs include

- ▶ the venue
- ▶ three staff members devoting several hours a week for eight weeks
- ▶ volunteers at the venue
- ▶ extensive marketing consisting of email and social media
- ▶ snacks
- ▶ transportation (Elder Care Alliance received a donation from Lyft)

“We’ve learned the importance of cultivating a regular volunteer corps to help make the day-of-event logistics go smoothly,” says Rosemary.

Elder Care Alliance is planning to create a toolkit that other organizations can use to replicate this program with the arts type of their choice. The toolkit will be available for a low cost, and Skype-based consulting will also be available.

For more information on Erasing Boundaries, contact Rosemary Jordan at rojordan@eldercarealliance.org. 

CONNECTING OLDER ADULTS TO SMART HOME TECHNOLOGY

Front Porch Center for Innovation and Wellbeing | Glendale, CA | fpciw.org

Many organizations recognized the potential of Amazon's Alexa and other virtual personal assistants for maintaining older adults' independence, but Front Porch Center for Innovation and Wellbeing (FPCIW) crafted a plan and a toolkit to bring that potential to life.

"As these technologies become more common, we believe increased opportunities will emerge for older adults to age in place and live more independently," says Megan Park, project coordinator for FPCIW's Voice-Activated Independence and Smart Home Engagement project, or VISHN, says. "We knew that an appropriate program design, community participation, and leadership involvement could add up to a solution with tremendous potential in facilitating the independence and well-being of older adults."

FPCIW developed a pilot program to test Amazon Alexa on Echo and Dot devices with independent and assisted living residents at one of their Life Plan Communities, with the goal of better understanding how voice assistance and home automation technology could help promote greater convenience, independence, well-being for older adults. The project included connecting a device to controls for lights and temperature in each participant's home.

This pilot included creating "Alexa in a Box," a toolkit that allows for easy and streamlined adoption to any senior

...100% of respondents felt that their device overall helped make life easier.

living community. Alexa in a Box includes adoption strategies, technical support protocols, educational programs, and staff engagement opportunities. These include personalized installations with residents, weekly workshop curricula, and continued support from community staff and resident experts.

The pilot also explored how this technology could promote independence and self-management by allowing older adults voice control and automation of their environment. Evaluation of the program looked at the technology's capabilities for relevance, effectiveness, and ease of use for the older adult. FPCIW found that 100% of respondents felt that their device overall helped make life easier, and 82% reported that using a smart plug/lamp with Alexa was "very easy."

This project is successfully live at four Front Porch communities, with plans for adoption at more. FPCIW also has plans to introduce virtual personal assistant technologies at some of their affordable housing communities. "Through our streamlined adoption methods and the success we've had at bringing on additional communities, we have great faith that this project will be able to reach many more of our residents, and eventually other older adults," says Megan.

TACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ **Focus on the "What's in It for Me?" message.** According to Megan, the key message to communicate when recruiting for, sustaining, and growing a Voice First technology program is that such technology has tremendous potential in helping older adults age in place and live more independently.
- ▶ **Listen to feedback, share the results.** Based on survey results, focus group discussions, and anecdotal reports from community members, FPCIW found that participants of this project felt more independent, safer, and satisfied with their experience with the smart home technology. FPCIW used these positive findings to help recruit participants.
- ▶ **Success depends upon active engagement of all parties involved.** During the pilot project, FPCIW learned that while there will be some organic program growth through word-of-mouth of the participants, for the program to remain sustainable and viable, there must be active support, recruitment, and engagement efforts on the part of the organization's leadership and staff.

For more information on the VISHN project, contact Megan Park at mhspark@frontporch.net.



PROVIDING A ROADMAP TO AGING WELL FOR LGBTQ OLDER ADULTS

Iona Senior Services | Washington, DC | iona.org



PRIDE.
No Matter Your Age

IONA
Age Well. Live Well.
Educating, advocating, and providing services
to help people age well and live well – since 1975

The aging service industry is becoming increasingly aware of the impact of loneliness and isolation on older adults, and this is of particular concern for the older generation of lesbian/bisexual/transgender (LGBTQ) people. This demographic faces barriers for successful aging due to lifelong discrimination, social isolation, and social stigma. To help overcome those barriers, Iona Senior Services provides outreach to, and programming for, the LGBTQ community.

“Knowing that LGBTQ older adults face unique challenges, we wanted to create educational programming to specifically address their needs,” says Susan Messina, deputy director of Iona. “We did that through our Take Charge/Age Well Academy®, which offers educational programming designed to help people plan for their aging. After holding two focus groups and piloting two workshops for the LGBTQ

By providing workshops geared specifically to LGBTQ older adults, Iona is breaking new ground.

community, we launched a full-day workshop, offered twice in different parts of DC, with the goal of bringing LGBTQ older adults together to learn and connect.” Iona’s Take Charge/Age Well Academy is an innovative education model that helps Baby Boomers identify and address some of the most difficult challenges of planning for aging, in a supportive group setting where they can also build social connections. By providing workshops geared specifically to LGBTQ older adults, Iona is breaking new ground. “To design these sessions, Iona drew on our knowledge of the psychosocial issues facing older adults in general, our experience teaching classes, our LGBTQ focus group results, and the life experience of the LGBTQ facilitators,” says Susan.

With funding from the DC Office on Aging and in collaboration with seven local aging-in-place Villages, Iona offered “A Roadmap to Aging Well for LGBTQ People Over 60.” Each of the two workshops consisted of large- and small-group discussions of factors that contribute to aging well and strategies for achieving goals and aspirations. They included a resource fair featuring representatives from local aging- and LGBTQ-focused organizations. The workshops were conducted by four facilitators (three of whom identify as LGBTQ), supported by several young adult volunteers who also identify as LGBTQ, which provided an intergenerational component.

The Roadmap workshops promise to be in continued demand, as the historically marginalized LGBTQ population ages along with the rest of America’s Baby Boomers.

TACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

Susan says Iona managed to get the word out through Iona’s clients, plus a small marketing budget that came from a \$12,000 grant.

- ▶ Iona sent targeted emails to their existing list of LGBTQ individuals and those in social services who serve that population.
- ▶ They placed ads in the local LGBTQ paper, the *Washington Blade*, which drew some new people. “We ran just one or two ads for each workshop, and the paper threw in some digital advertising as well,” recalls Susan.
- ▶ They also created a flyer, which was posted in their building and distributed at community events and meetings leading up to the workshops.

Susan estimates that of the approximately 50 attendees of the workshops, she was already familiar with about a third of them; the rest were brought in through the marketing tactics above or word of mouth.

“We can share our curriculum and evaluation tools with other organizations seeking to reach LGBTQ older adults with this type of programming,” says Susan.

For more information on the workshops, contact Susan Messina at smessina@iona.org. 🌱

COLLABORATING ON CREATING A NEIGHBORHOOD FOR VULNERABLE OLDER ADULTS

Presbyterian Villages of Michigan (PVM) | Detroit, MI | pvm.org/locations/rivertown



Years of innovation and collaboration combine to serve multiple needs of Detroit's population of very low to low-income minority older adults. Presbyterian Villages of Michigan (PVM) wanted to help mitigate disparities in health care and housing for this vulnerable population, as well as to provide engagement strategies with the surrounding communities. They partnered with Henry Ford Health System, United Methodist Retirement Communities, and other Detroit-based organizations to create a single neighborhood that encompasses multiple levels of senior housing, programming, and transportation.

"Although many of the components of this program are not new to aging services, the focus on serving this vulnerable population, and the location of all of the services and living opportunities on one campus, make Thome Rivertown Neighborhood one of the most innovative developments nationally in aging services," says Brian

"...the focus on serving this vulnerable population, and the location of all the services and living opportunities on one campus, make Thome Rivertown Neighborhood one of the most innovative developments nationally in aging services."

Carnaghi, senior vice president of development and finance for Presbyterian Villages of Michigan. "The neighborhood addresses many of the issues inherent in the changing landscape of our industry in a unique and impactful way."

The three stakeholder organizations engaged in an intense strategic planning process to define specific community needs and gauge support. A myriad of public, private, and philanthropic funding streams, including \$2 million from the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan for planning and development, combined to bring the neighborhood to life.

"PVM was the master developer and the thread among multiple partnerships that build this neighborhood and keep it going," says Brian. "There are many, many partners that contribute to its success. We have 23 different funding sources, for example, and there is more development to come."

Brian acknowledges that much of the Thome Rivertown Neighborhood success is due to good timing; they began the project during the recession in 2009, when there were abundant federal dollars and construction resources—and in the right place (downtown Detroit has multiple options for available land). However, the model for what PVM planned as an affordable urban senior living community may be replicated by organizations that are able to leverage similar resources.

TACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

How can other municipalities and areas with high numbers of low-income older adults serve their needs? Crucial components include

- ▶ solutions focused on specific unmet needs of the older adult population
- ▶ ongoing collaboration among organizations and agencies
- ▶ pooling of resources (including access to grants and other funding)

For more information on the Thome Rivertown Neighborhood, contact Brian Carnaghi at bcarnaghi@pvm.org.

The Thome Rivertown Neighborhood provides

- ▶ affordable assisted living
- ▶ affordable independent senior apartments
- ▶ the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Green Houses, which support meaningful life in a home-like setting for 10–12 older adults per house
- ▶ PACE transportation services
- ▶ medical and social services designed to improve health, reduce isolation, and draw in the greater community

CHANGING THE PUBLIC'S PERSPECTIVES OF AGING

Bayview | Seattle, WA | bayviewseattle.org



Fueled by research on the impact of perceptions of aging on aspects of well-being in older adults, Bayview, a Life Plan Community in Seattle, initiated a task force of residents, staff, and community volunteers to change the way people perceive and internalize thoughts about aging.

The “AgeUp” task force was born, with its name capturing the spirit of activism, ownership, and pride in aging. The task force empowered its members, offered new perspectives, opened up opportunities for dialogue, and promoted new programs and public awareness. The group met regularly to develop a strategic plan to highlight the following:

- messaging
- resident focus groups
- a research partnership
- transformational aging workshops
- civic participation

These activities were funded through Bayview’s Social Accountability program.

Innovative practices included


- a partnership with a local university to explore relationships among perceptions of aging, life satisfaction, self-efficacy, social engagement, wisdom, and spiritual well-being.
- creation of a campaign name and logo (AgeUp)
- delivery of positive messages and images through a multichannel marketing campaign, including
 - wraps on Bayview vehicles
 - an interactive website
 - a series of podcasts on Bayview’s website
 - speaking engagements
 - participation in civic events in surprising ways designed to challenge public perceptions of aging

“Through messaging, programming, and educating ourselves as residents and staff, we want to make sure this impact is a positive one in our society!” says Nancy Weinbeck, director of residential operations at Bayview.

TACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

Nancy shares some of Bayview’s lessons learned on creating an effective task force of residents, staff, and volunteers to undertake a mission like that of AgeUp:

- ▶ Recruiting a group of older and younger adults who are advocates for your mission but also skeptical is extremely useful.
- ▶ Having individuals on board who are comfortable speaking frankly about their concerns regarding the campaign is necessary to understand potential blind spots and helpful in finding the best ways to communicate to get the message through while avoiding alienation, dismissiveness, or flat-out disregard.
- ▶ Developing a business plan helped the task force write out an executable plan based on goals and objectives with realistic funding needs, timelines, and milestone markers.
- ▶ Constant messaging at Bayview was very helpful in keeping it in front of everyone’s minds.
- ▶ Rallying around a civic event inspired nearly the entire community to get on board despite doubts and fears.
- ▶ Finally, it is paramount to adhere to the meeting schedule and recruit new members to keep ideas flowing, as well as to connect with organizations in the greater community.

For details, contact Nancy Weinbeck at nweinbeck@bayviewseattle.org. 

DOUBLING DOWN ON KEEPING OLDER ADULTS CONNECTED

Covia | San Francisco, CA | covia.org



Covia, a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that includes Life Plan Communities, affordable housing, and aging services, is committed to offering multiple avenues for older adults to connect. They have integrated two existing programs, Well Connected and Social Call, to create a Promising Practice that provides older adults with the opportunity to engage as participants and/or volunteers in one or both programs.

Well Connected offers phone and online activities that build community through group conversations, games, education, and more. Social Call is an in-person friendly visiting program recently expanded to include weekly phone chats. “Now participants and volunteers from across the country come through either program to find a suite of robust connection opportunities,” says Amber Carroll, director of Well-Connected. “It’s a one-stop shop for older adults wanting to connect. No matter how people arrive at our virtual door, they are presented with multiple opportunities to engage.”

She adds, “Not only is this a better management of internal resources, but older adults experience more support and individual attention.”

Both programs leverage older adults as their own solution to social connectivity, with Covia providing the infrastructure, including conference lines, volunteer training, and ongoing support. When older adults join, they are presented with three ways to engage as participants and/or volunteers: in-person visits (where applicable), weekly phone visits, and virtual groups.

Internally, integrating the two programs, including shared staff and resources, ensures a greater web of support for participants and volunteers.

“This person-centered approach is a strong response to the issue of loneliness, offering social-connectedness to older adults wherever they live,” says Amber.

TACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

Covia combined two existing programs to create a new offering that better serves its mission and its customers. If your organization were to inventory its programs or services, would you find opportunities for improving how you serve older adults? Here are some considerations:

- ▶ Have a clear goal in mind when starting out, and remain mindful of the goal as the program expands or evolves.
- ▶ “Our goal for both programs has always been to decrease loneliness and increase social connection,” Amber said. “We can get creative on how we deliver opportunities, but we’re always mindful of the goal.”
- ▶ Be sure the programs or services are born out of a basic need or request from the people in the community.
- ▶ “It is absolutely vital to listen,” Amber said. “The idea to expand Social Call nationally came directly from older adults calling into Well Connected with requests for one-on-one engagement.”

For details, contact Amber Carroll at acarroll@covia.org. 🌱

SHEDDING LIGHT ON HOW OLDER ADULTS WITH LOW VISION CAN MAINTAIN INDEPENDENCE

Geriatric Care Services, Inc. | Zelienople, PA | lutheranseniorlife.org



Vision impairments in older adults can cause a significant loss of function and independence, frequently resulting in falls, and sometimes require older adults with low vision to be moved to assistive housing. Geriatric Care Services created a unique, holistic program designed to help older adults use their remaining vision more effectively, improve their ability to read through use of technology and advanced lighting, and achieve maximum safety through environmental modifications.

“While most low-vision services focus on either environmental modification or vision compensatory strategies, our therapists combine both approaches into one.”

Geriatric Care Services, Inc. (GCS) is the rehabilitation division of Lutheran SeniorLife. It’s an outpatient physical, occupational, and speech therapy service that serves primarily older adults. Occupational therapists in the organization developed a unique low-vision program to help improve the lives of individuals with reduced or low vision, including macular degeneration, glaucoma, and cataracts.

Through comprehensive assessment tools, the therapists retrain individuals to use what is left of their vision to improve their day-to-day function. The purpose of the program is to allow older individuals with vision loss to maintain their highest level of functional independence while still being able to actively participate in activities they love.


“There are similar approaches out there, but the execution and holistic approach of our program is what makes it unique,” explains Leslie Kisow, administrator of LIFE Armstrong County and LIFE Butler County, Lutheran SeniorLife. “Our therapists combine functional home visits with in-clinic treatment methods. While most low-vision services focus on either environmental modification or vision compensatory strategies, our therapists combine both approaches into one.”

GCS also partners with Lutheran SeniorLife’s technology division to provide patients with state-of-the-art low-vision devices. Because the program was developed and implemented by occupational therapists, they are able to train the individuals with all aspect of activities of daily living and functional tasks.

TRY IT YOURSELF

GCS serves older adults within Life Plan Communities, and has expanded this program into the greater community. Their program could be replicated in an outpatient or home health occupational therapy setting. It would require the occupational therapists to be trained in low vision assessment, treatment, and environmental modification, as well as administrative support including therapist education and funding for the low-vision equipment.

“We recommend that interested organizations hold strategic planning meetings with implementation goals, deadlines, and assigned duties to the team members,” says Leslie. She pointed out that involving staff members from areas such as marketing and operations helps bring a diverse skill set to the program.

For details, contact Leslie Kisow at leslie.kisow@lutheranseniorlife.org. 

FILLING A NEED FOR DENTAL CARE IN SENIOR HOUSING

Oak Hammock at the University of Florida | Gainesville, FL | oakhammock.org



Oral health has a huge effect on overall wellness, especially in older adults. Research indicates that deteriorating oral health can lead to aspiration pneumonia, which is a significant cause of morbidity and mortality in both independent living and institutionalized older adults. In order to control oral-health risk factors, Oak Hammock at the University of Florida—a Life Plan Community—opened an on-site, full-service dental practice inside their community.

“We coordinated setting up the practice with the University of Florida College of Dental Medicine,” says Marie Okronley, health care administrator at Oak Hammock. “The practice specializes in gerontology and provides residents with regular dental care and access to 24/7 emergency dental services. The dental team also teaches our nursing staff proper oral hygiene care for residents in assisted living, memory support, and skilled nursing.”

Oral health has a huge effect on overall wellness, especially in older adults.

The dental team provides free oral health materials to residents, and visits patients in the community’s health center to ensure that they have needed supplies and to check on them after surgical and other complicated procedures. The dental team coordinates medically complicated cases with Oak Hammock’s medical director, nurse practitioner, nursing staff, and others in order to provide exceptional care.

“Our residents and their families appreciate the program and we expect to see overall improvements in health outcomes in the long term,” says Marie. “This program is replicable if you have some resources and are able to partner with a local dental school or dental society.”

TRY IT YOURSELF

The dental program was an investment in resident health, adding a valuable service to existing Life Plan Community offerings. Oak Hammock devoted budget and space and secured the cooperation of the university’s dental school as well as health-related departments within their community. Here are some lessons learned from their experience:

- ▶ Purchase state-of-the-art equipment and budget for maintenance and upgrades. “We use high-resolution dental photography to establish baseline oral health status,” says Marie. “Documentation of changes in the patient’s mouth assists the patients and their families in making informed decisions about dental treatment.”
- ▶ Oak Hammock provided free office space to the dental practice in exchange for free training of the nursing staff and some free services to residents.
- ▶ Look for a dentist with gerontological training. You can ask your local dental school or dental society to identify such a person.
- ▶ Do not carpet the dental office for sanitation purposes.

For details, contact Marie Okronley at mokronley@oakhammock.org. 🌿

SQUARING OFF AGAINST PARKINSON'S WITH A UNIQUE BOXING PROGRAM

Plymouth Place Senior Living | LaGrange Park, IL | plymouthplace.org



Plymouth Place Senior Living, a not-for-profit Life Plan Community in Chicago's western suburbs, has developed a unique fitness program for those who have Parkinson's disease that incorporates boxing, biking, ballet, and aquatic exercise.

The innovative program provides proven benefits to the body and mind for those with Parkinson's, and also educates, motivates, provides support, and develops a sense of community. Plymouth Place offers the program to residents and nonresidents alike, ensuring this initiative has community impact, and that it creates a potential client base.

Participants in Boxing for Balance and More have a diagnosis of early-stage Parkinson's disease. Each is required to have a partner to help them during the training; Plymouth Place offers volunteers from the community to fill in, including college

fitness interns. The program, which meets twice a week for an hour, includes the following components:

- boxing, built on the concepts of Rock Steady Boxing, a non-contact fitness program designed specifically for people with Parkinson's
- fitness through concepts from the Delay the Disease program
- biking on tandems and three-wheelers
- ballet/movement
- aqua poles with boxing bags

All of these combine to use the science of neuroplasticity, movement, mindfulness, and music, and make a Parkinson's wellness program current, fun, and interesting, while being adaptable for all ages and abilities.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Rita Lopienski, director of life enrichment at Plymouth Place, stresses the importance of using fitness staff with the correct training certifications. Along with such staff, she says, "any community with available space and the budget or donations to buy the equipment could replicate our program."

Other tips include:

- ▶ Get your residents' buy-in and start with a class for them first. Then build it to involving the outside community.
- ▶ Start partnerships with one or more area community colleges, universities, and high schools to develop a pool of volunteers. Plymouth Place recruited students working on exercise science degrees from Concordia University and the local high school sports programs.
- ▶ Make sure class applicants get assessed by your trained staff and have their doctor's approval to participate.

For details, contact Rita Lopienski at rlopienski@plymouthplace.org. 🌱

BUILDING AN INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SMART HOME TECHNOLOGY

Seniors Independent Living Collaborative | Chicago, IL | silcresearch.org



An Illinois nonprofit has tackled a comprehensive project that approaches multiple angles of using smart home technology to improve quality of life for Illinois's 1.5 million older-adult homeowners.

The project entails:

1. creation of an older adult consumers' guide to smart home devices and services
2. development of an online information clearinghouse enabling older adults to learn about, assess, and arrange for the installation of these devices and services
3. development and delivery of specialized training to equip device installers to effectively interact with older consumers and to meet their specific needs during a service call

"This is the most comprehensive set of resources developed in the US to enable older adults to age better in place using smart home management devices and services," says Doug Newman, director of SILC. "The project was built on more than two years of research that documented the cognitive, physical, and attitudinal challenges

older adults encounter interacting with smart home devices, as well as engineering research that developed device enhancements to address these challenges."

The research team will continue to develop resources to enable older homeowners to better age in place, including:

- a national certification program for the Senior Specialist Installer Training
- an older consumer product testing and rating program for age in place technologies
- a senior care providers' guide to aging in a smart home
- a comprehensive outreach program to national organizations

"We intend that the resources produced for this project will be broadly replicated in other states," says Doug. "To ensure this replication, we plan to promote current and future resources through aligned organizations serving older-adult homeowners across the nation."

TRY IT YOURSELF

If you are interested in implementing a project involving smart home technology for older adults, you can start with some ready-to-use resources from SILC.

- ▶ A 65-page *Consumer Guide to Aging in Place* is available at silcresearch.org.
- ▶ The Illinois Smart Technology Assisting Residents or I-STAR Clearinghouse can be found at i-star.org.
- ▶ Check i-star.org for additional resources as they are posted throughout 2019.

For details, contact Doug Newman at dougnewman@silcresearch.org. 🌱

TEACHING BY DESIGN: CREATING A TRUE INTERGENERATIONAL CLASSROOM

Sherbrooke Community Centre | Saskatoon, Saskatchewan | sherbrookecommunitycentre.ca



“...it’s brought so much energy, joy, spontaneity, and purpose to the lives of our residents.”

Sherbrooke Community Centre, a not-for-profit long-term care home, has taken intergenerational programming to a new level with their “iGen Program”. Now in its fourth year, the program involves having a sixth-grade class from the local public school spend most of each school day at Sherbrooke. The class is mobile and uses different spaces throughout Sherbrooke, which leads to a lot of meaningful interaction with residents and staff. In addition, Sherbrooke staff and residents contribute to the class curriculum each day.

Staffed by two dedicated teachers and aided by Sherbrooke’s staff, residents, and students’ parents, the class follows a curriculum built around Sherbrooke and its philosophy of care. The students form meaningful relationships with older residents through assignments, projects, and extracurricular activities.


“The inspiration for this unique program came from our desire to have more children in our community,” explains Eric Anderson, communications leader at Sherbrooke. “The program just completed its fourth year, and it’s brought so much energy, joy, spontaneity, and purpose to the lives of our residents.”

The innovative program, which has drawn a great deal of interest from students and parents, is the first of its kind in Canada. “The level of immersion and relationships formed between students and older adults is unparalleled,” says Eric. “Parents of the iGen students rave about their children becoming more mature and seeing a rise in their self-esteem. The students learn empathy, compassion, and kindness through their relationships with residents.”

TACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

Sherbrooke Community Centre has created a highly innovative intergenerational program that has tremendous potential impact for residents as well as participating students. Although other senior living communities may not realistically be able to replicate having an on-site classroom, they may consider adopting some elements of the iGen Program:

- ▶ Think big. Rather than planning a weekly visit from schoolchildren, can you offer a daily after-school “open house” and plan any intergenerational activities, one-on-one tutoring, story time, etc. within that structure?
- ▶ Make a commitment. Dedicate space—which can be fluid, as with the iGen Program—staff, and volunteer resources to ongoing intergenerational programs. Breaking down walls and hosting programming throughout your community areas will engage more residents.
- ▶ Partner with schools, churches, or clubs and enlist volunteers. Your staff can facilitate the resident side of the program, but you’ll want supervisors, parents, or teachers to help with visiting children.

For more information on the iGen Program, contact Eric Anderson at eric.anderson@saskhealthauthority.ca. 



INTERESTED IN SUBMITTING FOR THE 2019 PROMISING PRACTICES AWARDS?

Nominations will open in June, with a submission deadline in August 2019.
For details, visit matherlifewaysinstituteonaging.com/promising.

Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging is a respected resource for research and information about wellness, aging, trends in senior living, and aging services innovations. In order to support senior living communities and others that serve older adults, the Institute shares its cutting-edge research in areas including effective approaches to brain health, ways to enhance resilience, and employee wellness programs. Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging is part of Mather LifeWays, a 75+-year-old not-for-profit organization dedicated to developing and implementing Ways to Age WellSM by creating programs, places, and residences for today's young-at-heart older adults.

Learn more about the Institute online at matherlifewaysinstituteonaging.com.