



Easter parade at The Bridge at Ooltewah, a Century Park Associates Community in Ooltewah, Tennessee

## Social Distancing Gets Creative

Editorial by Cheryl Slavinsky May 4, 2020

Across the country, team members at senior living communities have gone to extraordinary lengths not only to keep residents safe and healthy during the coronavirus pandemic, but engaged and connected, as well—despite social distancing mandates.

At Meadowood Senior Living, a non-profit Life Plan community with 400+ residents in the Philadelphia region, Fitness and Wellness Director Becky Anhorn and her staff have continued to offer various wellness classes, either virtually or outside with social distancing.

They've created their own exercise videos to post on the residents' Intranet and live stream classes such as dance fitness, yoga, Tai Chi, and Pilates. They lead outdoor wellness walks and host fitness classes in a different courtyard every day, so residents can socially distance but still exercise and support each other. Personal trainers visit residents' homes for one-on-one sessions.

To address spiritual health, staff also hold guided meditation outside each morning. The campus chaplain's Friday ecumenical service is delivered via live streaming, as are a rosary and hymn sings.

Meadowood Health Center staff take activities to individual residents in carts to engage them while also practicing social distancing. Carts enable facilitation of manicure/pampered hands, arts and crafts, and hallway dance parties, sing-alongs, bingo and exercises—even a small oven for cookie baking. Staff also helps residents connect with their families by using FaceTime on iPads.

Virtual nature programming includes live feeds and videos from the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association.



Fitness classes move outdoors at Meadowood Senior Living



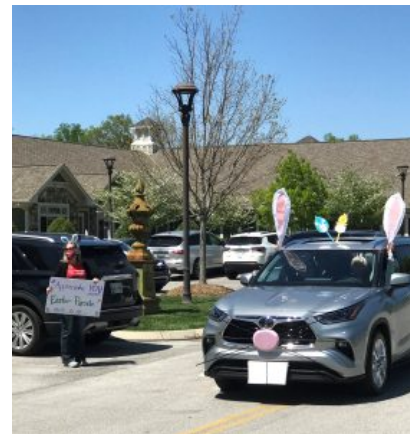
Cookie baking on the go at Meadowood Senior Living

"Meadowood has always taken a team approach, and during this pandemic is no different," said Paul Nordeman, president and CEO of Meadowood Senior Living. "Our dedicated staff are our everyday heroes, and they are delivering an even higher level of service during this time. We are deeply appreciative of their efforts, especially helping one another and caring for our residents. Nearly 100 residents have also stepped up to volunteer to help things run smoothly, including delivering packages and dining menus and staffing the screening table. Residents and staff take care of one another, and we are grateful for their valiant efforts."

Meadowood resident Paul Felton, 100-years-old, recently left a message for Nordeman that he would help wash dishes and clean, since he did those jobs while attending college.

At The Bridge at Ooltewah, a Century Park Associates Community in Ooltewah, TN, Executive Director Jill Day used Constant Contact to communicate with residents' families in early March to gauge interest in a Good Friday Easter Parade. Complete with an RSVP, the parade was strategically planned with specific times and rules to ensure social distancing for the overall safety of the 100 residents.

With a total of 48 cars participating, Day said, "I had originally thought of two things: make our residents smile and give the kids something to do, and look forward to all week. I never realized what it would do for our team. Our love tanks were rejuvenated, our hearts are full. This wonderful parade was just what everyone needed. We are all in this together!" With a three-story building, the parade was coordinated floor by floor, lasting two hours. A heartwarming video can be seen here.



*Easter Parade at The Bridge at Ooltewah*

Waltonwood Lake Boone, a senior living community in Raleigh, NC, knew the importance of Easter Sunday to its residents. The community's courtyard configuration was perfect for a service led by resident Reverend Kermit Braswell and his wife Alice. The service featured prayers, messages of hope and several songs as residents listened and sang along from their balconies.

Also in Raleigh, The Cardinal at North Hills, one of 20 Kisco communities across the country, is using its courtyard to bring residents together to help maintain a sense of routine and normalcy while practicing safe social distancing. Every day at 11 am, residents head out to their balconies for daily announcements, a flag raising, singing of patriotic songs and reciting of the pledge of allegiance. The Cardinal has also rearranged landscaping to allow residents to "visit" with their family members. Residents are able to call their loved ones, while physically seeing each other through the window.

Cardinal resident Deanna Hill, waiting for a courtyard concert to begin by violinist Hollis Brown with her little dogs Gracie and Lucky in a stroller, caught the attention of a Raleigh newspaper photographer and was featured on the front page of The News & Observer.

"I'm incredibly proud of our associates who have gone above and beyond during these unprecedented times. They continue to provide a five-star level of service and come-up with innovative ideas for our residents," said Tom Ford, executive director of The Cardinal. "As always, our top priority is the safety of our residents and associates."



*Daily patriotic service at The Cardinal at North Hills*

At Emerald Court, a Kisco community in Anaheim, CA, what started as a way for senior living residents to share positivity and uplift each other at Easter turned into a most wholesome message of gratitude and appreciation for the associates and residents.

Residents provide their wisdom, holiday wishes, birthday plans, and favorite things that help get them through the day since the COVID-19 pandemic began, as well as thank the "busy bees" staff for their friendliness, energy, support, singing and delicious room-delivered meals in a video that was produced and shared on the community's Facebook page.



At Roland Park Place, a life plan community in Baltimore, MD, Darren McDonnell, one of the marketing associates and a local dinner theater performer, decided to use his talents to help raise spirits of residents during this time of isolation.

*Landscaping rearranged for family visits at The Cardinal at North Hills*

Several times a week from different spots around the building, McDonnell brings his karaoke machine to the campus with Shelli Lordcinotti, a friend who also has an entertainment background. They perform a short concert of Broadway show tunes, standards and songs familiar to residents—always ending with a patriotic song. Seniors participate from their balconies, and for some, that's their only adventure out.

"I come out, and we sing with him, and we clap, and we wave. He's adorable," said resident Betsy Hughes, who was interviewed when WBAL-TV came out to capture the fun in this story with video.

"At Pegasus Senior Living, we have been going above and beyond every day to ensure our residents stay healthy, both physically and emotionally," said Becky Leaf, sales & marketing specialist at Town Village Crossing Independent Living in Arlington, TX, who shared a video of resident Dick Phillips' 96th socially distanced April 15 birthday parade. "We understand that it is highly important to acknowledge and celebrate birthdays and other special occasions."

At Mustang Creek Estates of Keller in Keller, TX, caregivers and staff recently took on the roles of stylists and nail artists to give residents a "spa day." Residents have been missing their normal hair and nail appointments with a hairdresser whose weekly visits were halted due to social distancing. With curling irons and plenty of nail colors to choose from, staff made residents feel like they'd just been to the salon. The only thing missing was cuts and colors, which they thought best left to the professionals.

"For many of our residents, getting their hair done is the highlight of their week. We're so happy that spa day was huge a success and brought back that same joy," said Melissa Meyer, Mustang Creek Estates of Keller's executive director. "I'm so proud of how our caregivers and staff continue to take these changes in stride and come up with creative ideas for our community."



*Caregivers and staff host spa day for residents at Mustang Creek Estates of Keller*

Caledonia Senior Living & Memory Care in North Riverside, IL, welcomed Chicago Med Actor Nick Gehlfuss for a virtual bingo session to bring a bit of fun to its residents while safely socially distanced. Gehlfuss called each round of bingo via video conference. The virtual game was made possible by the donation of iPads and a 65-inch screen TV from generous community members.

"We were very excited to virtually welcome Nick to Caledonia Senior Living & Memory Care," said Gus Noble, President of the Chicago Scots, Illinois' oldest charity. "Our entire staff is grateful for the opportunity for our residents to entertain themselves with a game of bingo with the virtual company of those who support them outside of the facility on a daily basis. These times are difficult and stressful for all, and we look forward to bringing some new fun and excitement to our residents with this unique event."



*Virtual bingo with Chicago Med Actor Nick Gehlfuss at Caledonia Senior Living & Memory Care*

## Credit

### **Cheryl Slavinsky**

*Editor*

As editor of Senior Living News, Cheryl curates the news and writes a weekly feature story. She also plans the education portion of the HealthTAC events produced by Senior Living News and moderates the executive panel discussions. Cheryl has consulted with senior living clients for more than 20 years and served as senior public relations strategist for Varsity, a marketing and sales consulting agency focused on occupancy for retirement, assisted living and continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs)/Life Plan communities, and more. She previously managed national media relations as Rite Aid's director of public relations.