



# How to Increase Resident Engagement? This Community Has the Key

By Susan Saldibar

There is no stronger stamp of approval than when a client, who was using your application in one community, leaves and brings your application over to their new community. And when the purpose is to help the community better serve its residents and staff it's even better because, one by one, it raises the bar on the industry as a whole.

The person raising the bar, in this case, is Melanie Perry, a respected industry veteran of 30+ years who serves on the board of the Alzheimer's Association and is director of memory care support services for American Senior Communities (ASC), an Indiana-based operator with 94 senior living communities located throughout the state. ASC provides several levels of care, including memory care for those challenged with dementia. Their wellness-based lifestyle promotes active life enrichment opportunities and the use of the latest technologies and applications.

The technology that Melanie brought with her to ASC is [LifeShare](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner), a platform of applications to help communities provide better communications between residents, staff, and families. And, what's great is that they do it using existing technologies (like tablets, mobile devices, and, the most ubiquitous of all, TV). Melanie took time to respond to a Q&A on how LifeShare is enriching the lives of residents, families, and ASC staff. Here is what she had to say.

## 1. Can you describe the challenge(s) you were having that led you to look into integrated communications platforms like LifeShare?

*"We found that traditional activity offerings were no longer meeting the needs and expectations of our residents, particularly those living with diagnoses of Alzheimer's disease and related forms of dementia. LifeShare provides an easy-to-access platform to reach residents from a variety of wellness domains and from a variety of cognitive levels.*

*Additionally, those who were responsible for authoring activity calendars were finding the process too laborious and time consuming with traditional methods. The calendar authoring program offered by LifeShare is fast, easy, and great looking.*

*Finally, communicating news throughout our communities was less than efficient. With LifeShare monitors stationed throughout our communities, and with the use of the available phone app, our residents and their family members can easily see the events occurring throughout the community every day."*

**2. What were your expectations of the LifeShare solution?**

*“Having utilized LifeShare services with a previous company, my expectations were high, and I was not disappointed when we brought this platform to ASC. We found the team members, residents, and family members embraced the technology almost immediately.”*

**3. What features/modules are you currently using?**

*“We utilize the traditional LifeShare enrichment program offerings, Memory Care-specific offerings, calendar authoring feature, community displays, Coro Music programming, and phone app for families.”*

**4. How has LifeShare benefitted your residents, families, staff?**

*“LifeShare has allowed us to reach more residents with its virtual platform. Music can be played for all, inspirational programs offered even when local providers are not available, residents with dementia can see pictures of their past streaming on their television, etc. Also, families are happy to be able to send emails and pictures to their loved one while being able to see what is being offered within the community each day. Team members seem to appreciate having life-enriching activities easily accessible via user-friendly technology, to offer to residents whenever the situation beckons.”*

**5. Has LifeShare improved family engagement/communication?**

*“Family members seem to very much appreciate having the ability to see what is happening in the community, and planning visits around those events they find to be the most appealing. Our Memory Care families also seem to very much appreciate having the ability to place reminiscent photos on their loved one’s television to help tap into their long-term memories and to help them feel more at home in their assisted living environment.”*

**6. Do you feel that the LifeShare platform has made you more competitive? If so, in what ways?**

*“Absolutely! LifeShare is a very easy service to highlight during community tours and it is a service not offered by everyone, therefore, it has become a differentiator for us. Even the nicely printed, color-coded, professional-looking activity calendar pages help us to stand out from our competitors’ traditionally posted monochromatic monthly calendars.”*

Finally, we asked Melanie what advice she might give to other operators who are uncertain about using this technology?

Her advice is to make sure you have the buy-in of the entire team when adopting LifeShare so that there is a consistent all-in effort to adopt the technology. *“Once you have this,”* she adds, *“the LifeShare team is so great about installing, explaining, and helping to train your team that there will certainly be the highest potential for adoption by your team, residents, and families!”*

