



INNOVATION AT WORK 2022

Promising Practices Award Recipients That Are Reshaping the Aging Services Industry



Each year, Mather Institute recognizes organizations that have moved away from conventional practices to design and develop innovative approaches to support those they serve. All share the same outcome: in some unique way, each enhances the lives of older adults.

We are pleased to honor eight organizations in 2022.

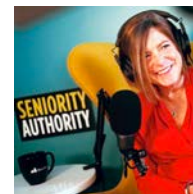
Submissions were strong this past year, with international submissions coming from residents themselves. We appreciate everyone’s willingness to share their powerful promising practices to move the industry forward.

Award submissions were selected based on criteria including

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

Sharing these promising practices reinforces Mather Institute’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 the industry, as other organizations adapt the concepts and transform them into best practices. 🌱

AWARD RECIPIENTS



THE RIVERWOODS GROUP 2
Podcasting about Aging Topics to Reach a Busy Audience



SCRIPPS GERONTOLOGY CENTER AT MIAMI UNIVERSITY 3
Addressing Emotional Aspects of Dementia Caregiving through Training



SPLENDIDO 4
Creating Good Vibrations with Therapeutic Devices in the Fitness Center

HONORABLE MENTIONS



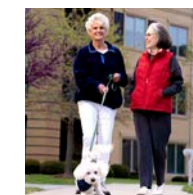
ART AGAINST AGEISM 5
Growing Artistic Activism That Nips Ageism in the Bud



MIRABELLA AT ASU 8
Making Music Together: An Intergenerational Musician-in-Residence Program



ESKATON 6
Teaching Best Practices for Inclusivity of Those with Dementia



MONTEREAU 9
Engaging Resident Volunteers to Survey on Engagement



MIDDLETON GLEN RETIREMENT COMMUNITY 7
Residents Helping Residents Plan for Emergencies

PODCASTING ABOUT AGING TOPICS TO REACH A BUSY AUDIENCE

THE RIVERWOODS GROUP | EXETER, NH | SENIORITYAUTHORITY.ORG

Where can baby boomers turn for reliable answers about a variety of aspects of getting older, from how to talk about difficult issues with their aging parents to planning for their own retirement?

To fill this need, the RiverWoods Group, a nonprofit senior living provider with three Life Plan Communities in New England, launched the Seniority Authority podcast in April 2021. “We knew nothing about podcasts before creating this one, and there are very few podcasts in this space,” says Cathleen Toomey, vice president of marketing. “The podcast was designed to reach the exploding number of older adults who are living longer and have more decisions and options than prior generations.”

It’s hard to get the attention of this “sandwich generation” that is caring for their children and their aging parents. Cathleen says, “We knew they consume podcasts, so we decided to create a series that shares information through interviews with credible authors, physicians, researchers, scientists, and specialists.” Topics range from fitness to finance, isolation to insurance, downsizing to dementia. Each podcast is 40 minutes or less and includes practical recommendations that listeners can act upon.

The Seniority Authority audience has grown steadily throughout its first year, and averages 400 to 600 downloads for every episode, with 32,000 views on its YouTube channel and nearly 1,000 followers on social media. Seniority Authority is available on all major podcast platforms, and even made the jump to television, with short video vignettes of the podcast playing on the local public TV station in prime time.

To browse episodes of the podcast, go to seniorityauthority.org.



TACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

To produce their podcast, the RiverWoods Group purchased a microphone and headset, gathered into a conference room, and prepared for the interviews with Cathleen as the host.

She suggests the following keys to success in starting a podcast:

- 1. Understand the why.**
What is the purpose for the podcast? Is there anyone doing something similar, and if so, how will you differentiate yourself?
- 2. Have a plan for how to build your audience.**
Your marketing team can help with this.
- 3. Establish a realistic budget.**
The RiverWoods Group started their podcast with less than \$2,000 but recommend more.
- 4. Seek out experts in your area.**
Talk to them before you jump in.
- 5. Stay clear on what your podcast is and what it isn't.**
Try to be practical and helpful to the largest number of people possible.

For more information on how to start your own podcast, contact Cathleen Toomey at ctoomey@trwg.org. 🌱

ADDRESSING EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF DEMENTIA CAREGIVING THROUGH TRAINING

SCRIPPS GERONTOLOGY CENTER AT MIAMI UNIVERSITY | OXFORD, OH | MIAMIOH.EDU

There are seemingly countless training options available for staff who care for residents in memory support, but a new, unique offering focuses on managing one's own feelings, as well as those of the care recipients.

Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami University has developed a brief yet effective online course that teaches caregivers of people with dementia the skill of Emotion-Focused Communication.

“People living with dementia have a difficult time verbally communicating their appreciation or frustration to a caregiver,” explains Katy Abbott, executive director, Scripps Gerontology Center and professor of gerontology. “For a caregiver to have the skills and competencies to understand the impact they are having on another person is highly meaningful.” With Emotion-Focused Communication training, caregivers learn strategies designed to build stronger relationships and more positive care experiences for them and care recipients alike.

The program is designed after an evidence-based in-person training that's used as a part of a targeted person-centered intervention. “We utilized a formal assessment of this online course with 240 participants and found that the training significantly increased both knowledge of emotion-focused communication and feelings of self-efficacy regarding one's ability to implement emotion-focused communication strategies,” says Katy. “Participants also report high levels of acceptability, appropriateness, and feasibility, and overall satisfaction with the training was very high.”

The course helps caregivers focus their attention on the outcomes that matter most to older adults, including feeling valued and having positive emotional experiences.



TACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

The course is available to any organization for a nominal fee. This 2.5-hour interactive class includes six lessons that individuals can complete at their own pace.

Course Outline and Objectives

Lesson 1: How to navigate the course and pre-test evaluation to assess what you know before completing the training

Lesson 2: Define Emotional Intelligence (EQ), how to increase your EQ, how to identify your own feelings in response to an event, and how to identify a feeling a person is displaying based on body posture

Lesson 3: How to replace a negative feeling with a positive one

Lesson 4: Increase skills in recognizing and handling emotions in others through active listening

Lesson 5: How to use positive communication to handle emotions in others

Lesson 6: Post-test evaluation

Interested in learning more or utilizing this training with your staff? Visit preferencebasedliving.com/emotion-focused-communication-training/.

For more information on the training, contact Katy Abbott at abbotkm@miamioh.edu. 🌱

CREATING GOOD VIBRATIONS WITH THERAPEUTIC DEVICES IN THE FITNESS CENTER

SPLENDIDO | TUCSON, AZ | [SPLENDIDOTUCSON.COM](https://splendidotucson.com)

Residents at Splendido, a Life Plan Community for those age 55 and better, are taking a novel approach to fitness and wellness routines. In March 2022, the community's fitness center introduced 10 Theragun handheld percussion massage guns and six WaveRoller vibrating foam rollers. These devices are generally used for therapeutic purposes: warm-up prior to fitness activity, recovery activity during workout sessions, cooldown after fitness sessions, and for pain management.

Staff measured the effectiveness of these devices across a six-week program. "The results were remarkable in increasing residents' optimal quality of life," says Todd Lutz, fitness and spa manager. To introduce the devices, trained staff gave a community-wide presentation. Interested residents then signed up for one of three groups. Each group completed six weekly 30-minute sessions:

- introduction of the products, including how they function, therapeutic benefits, and a full-body demonstration
- two sessions reviewed how to isolate specific body areas, with special attention given to how best to hold the device for optimum control and contact
- how to use the WaveRoller and maximize benefits
- Theragun usage during a circuit training workout
- an opportunity to ask specific questions regarding an individual's needs and a post-study survey

"Evidence shows that 88.2% of participants in our pilot noticed marked improvements," reports Todd. Areas of improvement included pain levels, range of motion and mobility, soreness, and circulation. "The most frequently cited area of improvement was upper legs (55.6% improvement), followed by shoulders (44.4%), and lower legs and gluteal muscles (33.3% each)."

The Splendido fitness team plans to offer more Therabody workshops and is using the devices in personal training sessions and circuit training classes. Study participants continue to use the Therabody products on their own and teach others whom they feel will benefit.

"Residents now have access to unique equipment that will enrich their fitness routine and, more importantly, enhance mobility while reducing pain," says Todd.



TACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

It's easy and relatively inexpensive to include the Therabody products in your fitness offerings. Here are some factors to help you succeed:

- ▶ When training residents in using the products, keep the group small enough for adequate personal attention and include ample time for the residents to experiment under supervision during class.
- ▶ Include homework for residents in your training. This ensures that they are engaged with the Theragun through the week prior to the next class meeting.
- ▶ The WaveRoller can be cumbersome to operate. Consider adding a separate course for those who can more easily manage its weight and awkwardness.

For more information on the training, contact Todd Lutz at tlutz@splendidotucson.com.

GROWING ARTISTIC ACTIVISM THAT NIPS AGEISM IN THE BUD

ART AGAINST AGEISM | CHEVY CHASE, MD | ARTAGAINSTAGEISM.ORG

In August 2021, the art alliance Art Against Ageism (AAA) launched a partnership with Keswick, a Baltimore-based aging services campus that includes a nursing home and a community center, to offer an interactive art installation known as an “(Aging Is) Living Tree.” The installation asks participants to write their answers to one or more of the following questions about aging and ageism on individual tags:

- Have you been judged by your age? If so, in what way?
- What do you like about being your age?
- What does getting older mean to you?

Individuals hang their tag on the tree. The result is a tree with more than 100 tags containing responses from staff, residents, members, and volunteers. The tags showcased how participants feel about aging, and the tree revealed an overwhelming sense of positivity among those who hung the tags.

“AAA is innovative because we leverage artistic activism—combining the creative power of the arts to move us emotionally with the strategic planning of activism necessary to bring about social change. In this way, we can tackle and confront ageism with the very people it affects the most: older adults,” says Meg LaPorte, cofounder of Art Against Ageism. “Our work not only addresses quality of life for older adults, it also offers individuals a sense of purpose and belonging through involvement in arts- and advocacy-based activities.”

By creating and implementing endeavors such as the (Aging Is) Living Tree, AAA helps to bring the entire community together through shared experiences.



TRY IT YOURSELF

It's easy to create your own (Aging Is) Living Tree:

Find the Right Tree: You can use a small tree or a large plant (real or artificial) that can stay indoors in case of inclement weather. Make sure the plant has enough branches to hold plenty of tags.

Scout a Location: Find a well-trafficked, public area in your community for the tree, such as the lobby. This ensures everyone feels welcome to participate and helps to draw attention to your project.

Create & Set Up the Tags: Purchase tags with strings already attached, and add the questions to them by writing or adhering clear labels. Use equal numbers of the three questions.

Encourage Participation: Make sure everything (including writing utensils) is easily accessible. Promote participation through newsletters, your staff, meetings, and other vehicles.

Analyze Tags for Ageism: As your tree fills up, remove tags and catalog the written answers. The cataloging effort will give you a sense of the levels of ageist or positive perceptions of aging in your community.

Find details at artagainstageism.org or contact Meg LaPorte with questions at meg@artagainstageism.org. 🌱

TEACHING BEST PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVITY OF THOSE WITH DEMENTIA

ESKATON | CARMICHAEL, CA | ESKATON.ORG

Eskaton, a regional nonprofit aging services provider, set out to help senior living staff and others learn to think differently about living well with dementia and to transform the way they support those with differing abilities. “A group of residents, family members, and staff spent two years identifying best practices that need to be in place in order for communities to be inclusive of all people,” says Therese Ten Brinke, director, strategic initiatives.

These best practices include scheduling to ensure consistent care, offering all-day dining, providing flexible schedules, documenting and honoring life stories, providing access to the outdoors, and changing the community language.

To ensure the sustainability of these practices, Eskaton recognized the need for in-depth training that provides the “why.” So, in 2018, they launched the Well-Being Academy, which offers eight two-hour sessions. “We explore topics rarely introduced in a dementia care training program, such as ageism, ableism, self-fulfilling prophecies, empathy, and the power of language,” says Therese. The academy is offered across 12 communities (including all of Eskaton’s and others), both virtually and in-person, and Eskaton has added a train-the-trainer model that’s been leveraged by multiple other communities and entities.

Participant surveys show the academy is a success, revealing

- 45% increase in collaborative decision-making
- 41% increase in asking older adults for their opinion
- 80% increase in offering flexibility to support older adults’ choice
- 100% increase in offering team members an opportunity to participate in organizational improvements
- 87% increase in frequency of times that team members reflect on well-being
- 31% increase in focusing on living and care




“The Well-Being Academy has a transformative effect: team members leave inspired, understanding that a diagnosis of dementia does not mean the end to living a full and purposeful life,” says Therese.

TRY IT YOURSELF

Form your own exploratory committee or group to articulate best practices for your organization with this advice from Eskaton:

- ▶ Include residents who have cognitive challenges or a diagnosis of cognitive issues. Enlist at least two or three residents from each community (if you have multiple communities).
- ▶ Also, include family members of such residents (not necessarily any relation of people in your group).
- ▶ Enlist a larger number of staff members—both leadership roles and direct care staff.
- ▶ If you don’t have a skilled facilitator on staff, hire an outside expert to lead group discussions to ensure meetings are focused and productive.
- ▶ Solid ideas that come out of group discussions can be implemented right away, even as you work toward building a training curriculum. At Eskaton, each community adopted its group’s ideas, including offering all-day dining, introducing a “fun committee” of residents and staff that planned social mixer events, and more. This way, you can effectively pilot ideas and concepts for the final draft of your training program.

For more information on the Well-Being Academy, contact Therese Ten Brinke at therese.tenbrinke@eskaton.org. 

RESIDENTS HELPING RESIDENTS PLAN FOR EMERGENCIES

MIDDLETON GLEN RETIREMENT COMMUNITY | MIDDLETON, WI | MIDDLETONGLEN.COM

Unlike in assisted living and skilled nursing residences, evacuation plans are not required for senior apartment complexes or 55+ Independent Living communities in Wisconsin. Recent natural disasters such as massive flooding in Wisconsin and wildfires in California, as well as severe weather and electrical outages, spotlighted a reality: regardless of “requirement,” emergency preparedness plans are needed by all senior living residents.

“In our Independent Living community, staff is on-site only during business hours, making it imperative that residents prepare to help themselves and their neighbors during emergencies,” says Susan Heneman, a Middleton Glen Retirement Community resident who chairs the community’s Emergency Preparedness Planning Committee (EPPC).

“What’s in YOUR plan?” is a resident-conceived and -led initiative that offers residents tools and enthusiasm for creating personal emergency preparedness plans. “Our seven-resident committee spent six months researching best practices of other organizations and reviewing resource materials available through CDC, FEMA, American Red Cross, state- and county-level disaster assistance programs, and others,” says Susan. The end result was a multi-level awareness and involvement campaign that included

1. in-person workshops for training and information about “go-bags”
2. “What’s in YOUR Plan?” tools and practice sessions for choosing personally preferred exits and tornado-safe spots
3. creating Neighbor Networks
4. a resident-to-resident resource notebook

The initiative addressed the complex layout of Middleton Glen’s building. Each stairwell was named and labeled with the number of steps from the door to an outside exit, though residents learned that “evacuating” to their balcony could



be more appropriate. “Residents see things differently and have lifetimes of experience to use in creative approaches like this,” says Susan.

About 75% of residents attended a workshop; everyone else received an information packet. Of workshop attendees, 81% said they would create a personal preparedness plan.

TRY IT YOURSELF

This practice can easily be replicated at any Independent Living community with residents willing to lead. Some points to keep in mind:

- ▶ Programs should be place-specific.
- ▶ You can find reputable emergency preparedness information specific to older adults in a careful review of resources from the American Red Cross, FEMA, and various other agencies.
- ▶ Staff or leadership support will be required for logistics like labeling of stairwells and exit routes.
- ▶ Source materials should be reviewed annually and the plan materials updated as needed. Also, any new residents receive an information packet and details about go-bags as part of their orientation.

For more information, contact Sue Berg, resident services director at Middleton Glen Retirement Community, at sberg@middletonglen.com.

MAKING MUSIC TOGETHER: AN INTERGENERATIONAL MUSICIAN-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM

MIRABELLA AT ASU | TEMPE, AZ | [RETIREMENT.ORG/MIRABELLA-ASU](https://retirement.org/mirabella-asu)

A senior living community located on a college campus is a great match for providing intergenerational opportunities, which have been shown to promote healthy and resilient aging.

One such community, Mirabella at ASU on the Arizona State Tempe campus, started a student-musician-in-residence program to connect music lovers across generations. “Each year, up to four graduate-level student musicians are selected from the ASU School of Music, Dance and Theatre to live in the Mirabella at ASU community and provide dynamic musical experiences with community members in exchange for full room and board,” says Lindsey Beagley, director of lifelong university engagement.

Musicians-in-residence each provide one performance and one “flex engagement” per week throughout the 10-month program. The flex engagement is any interactive musical experience that allows students to leverage their skills and creativity in experimental programming. Examples include piano-accompanied meditative yoga, guitar lessons, music therapy, and organizing and reflecting on a campus arts event.

“The students also fulfill a minimum of five hours a week of socializing and interacting with residents to encourage relationship-building that extends beyond a shared love of music and the arts into more evolved, authentic relationships as neighbors and friends,” says Lindsey. “They might join residents for fitness classes, meals, gardening or cooking club meetings, or birthday celebrations.”

This program required buy-in from leadership from both organizations: The ASU School of Music, Dance and Theatre needed to be assured that the program’s requirements would be reasonable given the rigorous demands of their academic program and endorse the program as a valuable opportunity for students. The community operator needed to be willing to allocate the apartments and culinary resources to incentivize highly qualified students to apply.



TACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

Although the unique location of this community on a university campus sparked this innovative idea, this program could be replicated effectively at any senior living community that is close to a college campus.

- ▶ When starting a program like this, the most essential aspect is to determine the mutual benefit for both populations involved and build around that.
- ▶ Keep in mind that students are learning, among other things, the value of their time and expertise, and they should not be asked to work “for free.”
- ▶ Residents will take an active role in the program; rather than simply enjoying the students’ performances, they must add something of value. There should be opportunities for them to share their extensive life experience and knowledge.
- ▶ Make sure participating students are a good fit. Mirabella has a lengthy selection process that includes an audition, an interview, and a mixer event with residents.

For more information on the Musician in Residence program, contact Lindsey Beagley at lindsey.beagley@asu.edu. 🌱

ENGAGING RESIDENT VOLUNTEERS TO SURVEY ON ENGAGEMENT

MONTEREAU | TULSA, OK | MONTEREAU.NET

It's safe to say that all senior living communities rely on resident satisfaction surveys for information. At a not-for-profit Life Plan Community in Tulsa, the residents took it upon themselves to make sure their survey led to change.

Montereau is a member organization of Novare,[®] a consortium of 21 single-site and small-system Life Plan Communities around the US that share resources, including a biannual Resident Engagement and Satisfaction Survey.

At Montereau, the Resident Engagement and Satisfaction Survey is resident-driven and coordinated by a Resident Relations Committee. "In 2021, we had 27 volunteers working two-hour shifts at tables in central locations around the community, offering the survey to residents," says resident and committee chair Gene Callahan. "It paid off!"

Response rates from Montereau reveal the power of having residents solicit surveys, as well as how invested residents are in sharing their thoughts and opinions:

- 95% of independent living residents completed the survey
- 100% of assisted living residents completed the survey
- 100% of skilled nursing residents completed the survey

After receiving the results of the survey, 20 residents volunteered to serve on a Survey Review Committee to examine the results and draft recommendations for consideration by Montereau's Leadership Team.

Gene says, "We drafted a 59-page report on recommendations and presented on this to our Management Team and Committee Chairs, as well as at a special Town Hall for residents." Since then, leadership has held two Town



Hall Meetings for residents to report on progress in implementing the recommendations. "Our key to success was the way leadership embraced the recommendations and then shared the progress made on each recommendation," says Gene.

LESSONS LEARNED

Having residents encourage their neighbors to complete a satisfaction survey sends an effective message and can boost participation far beyond what you might normally get. Here are some tips to try this in your community:

- ▶ **Enlist residents to recruit other residents.**
Approach your residents' council, other committees, or all committees and see if a core group of interested volunteers can be formed. They, in turn, can request help from other groups or individuals.
- ▶ **Lend support resources.**
Leadership and staff can play a supporting role, providing hard-copy surveys, incentives, and snacks. Example: Montereau offered residents who turned in a survey a free drink at any of their restaurants.
- ▶ **Make the survey count.**
For this practice to work, leadership must act on the survey findings. Report back on the actions you will take, the changes you'll effect, and explain if a recommendation can't be met.

For more information, contact Gene Callahan at gcallahan59@gmail.com. 🌱



INTERESTED IN SUBMITTING FOR THE 2023 PROMISING PRACTICES AWARDS?

Nominations will open in April, with a submission deadline in May 2023.

For details, visit matherinstitute.com/promising.

Staffed by a multidisciplinary team of researchers, Mather Institute is an award-winning resource for research and information about wellness, aging, trends in senior living, and successful industry 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 successful employee wellness programs. Mather Institute is part of Mather, an 80+-year-old not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating Ways to Age Well.SM

1560 Sherman Avenue, Suite 1010 | Evanston, IL 60201 | (888) 722.6468 | institute@mather.com

