



Whole-Person Wellness: A Winner for Residents of Horizon Bay Communities

Jim Concotelli, MSW, PhD

Horizon Bay Senior Communities recently received the 2008 Best of the Best Award from the Assisted Living Federation of America (ALFA), recognizing the most innovative operational excellence strategies of the past year. Horizon Bay, which operates 70 communities in 15 states including independent living, assisted living (AL), skilled nursing care, and memory care facilities, was recognized for its signature *LiveWell!* programs. The program was developed with a goal of providing opportunities for residents to remain healthy in body, mind, and spirit through programs and events that support and empower them to live full and vital lives, regardless of health concerns.

Whole-Person Wellness Approach

LiveWell! is based on the concept of whole-person wellness. The National Wellness Institute's multidimensional model of wellness and MacArthur Foundation Study of Successful Aging criteria were used as a foundation to develop programs and events with a whole-person focus. In addition, Andrew Weil's Healthy Aging philosophy of integrative, natural, and preventive medicine helped influence the unique holistic health dimension of the program.

LiveWell! encompasses the 6 dimensions of wellness—physical, emotional, social, spiritual, intellectual, and vocational. Each community develops a well-balanced monthly calendar of events that offers programs to address each of



Residents of Horizon Bay Senior Communities participate in ForeverFit, one aspect of the *LiveWell!* Program.

the 6 dimensions. Residents have opportunities to maintain physical activity, socialize, learn new skills, volunteer, attend cultural outings, explore their spirituality, and, most importantly, have fun and thrive within the community environment. *LiveWell!* provides programs and events adapted for each level of care offered at Horizon Bay communities.

Three components comprise the *LiveWell!* program: Resident Programs, ForeverFit, and an Educational Series.

- **Resident Programs:** These programs and events include leisure and recreational activities such as excursions to cultural events, social events such as theme parties, musical entertainment, arts and crafts, book clubs, card games, movies, intergenerational programs, and religious and spiritual programs. Two programs, Matter of Balance and Mind Aerobics, have proven to be favorites among residents. All new residents participate in an orientation and complete a lifestyle and interest survey.
- **ForeverFit Program:** ForeverFit programs offer opportunities for residents to improve strength, gain endurance, enhance flexibility, and maintain balance through a variety of fitness and exercise modalities including strength training, yoga, tai chi, walking clubs, sit and be fit exercise classes, fitness centers, and aquatic programs (the latter two where available). ForeverFit also includes FitnessBucks, a motivational and incentive program for residents that rewards consistent participation in ForeverFit classes.
- **Educational Series:** The Educational Series provides professional speakers on a variety of healthy aging topics. These monthly programs are part of an ongoing series that includes guest lectures by community experts in the medical, health promotion, fitness, and social service fields. The series helps create a small college atmosphere and provides a variety of lifelong learning opportunities for residents. Each community also hosts an annual fun and fitness health fair for residents and the public.

Residents and Reciprocity

A new concept in wellness is reciprocity, which is the belief that seniors enjoy feeling that they are giving back to society, not taking away or being dependent on society. Each community encourages residents to stay active. Some examples include:

- Serving on the resident program and planning committee, which advises the program manager about special events and ongoing programs that are interesting and meaningful
- Teaching arts and crafts classes or lecturing on specific topics
- Participating in fundraising activities that benefit local charitable organizations
- Assisting as administrative volunteers by welcoming



Strength training is one exercise modality that is part of the ForeverFit program.

new residents, mailing information, or providing community tours

Matter of Balance Fall Prevention Program

Each year, Horizon Bay implements a new wellness initiative. A past initiative was “A Matter of Balance,” a fall prevention program developed by Boston University that addresses the fear of falling and teaches fall prevention strategies and exercises. The evidence-based program has been proven to promote participation in activities and socialization and enhance overall health and wellness. It is also effective in reducing the fear of falling.

Mind Aerobics

The newest wellness initiative is Mind Aerobics, which is a mental fitness program based on the science of the mind and the understanding that the brain can change for improved performance at any age. Mind Aerobics was modeled after research conducted by Gary Small, professor of behavioral sciences at UCLA, and includes memory training, nutrition education, physical activity, and information on stress reduction strategies.

Standards of Excellence

Horizon Bay has learned that improving residents’ lives means offering programs and services that keep residents happier and healthier. For Horizon Bay that means higher resident satisfaction and retention, lower acuity levels, and a positive financial impact.

In 2007, *LiveWell!* Standards of Excellence were established and implemented. These standards provide staff with guidelines for developing their program so that at every level of care residents are encouraged to remain active and independent.

These standards include:

- Development of the resident programs department to include regional support

- Enhancement of the resident programs and project committees with monthly meetings to encourage resident input and discussion on recent and upcoming programs as well as provide opportunities for residents to play a key role in designing their own projects and events
- Annual resident interest surveys to solicit input from residents on programs and events that are meaningful and interesting for them. The assessments measure residents' interest in transportation, outings, exercise programs, games, intellectual and educational programs, religious and spiritual programs, arts and crafts, movies, wellness services, and volunteering. The results from this process provide guidelines for program development to meet residents' needs at each community.
- New resident protocols and an orientation program
- Annual resident satisfaction survey

Measuring Success

Annual resident satisfaction surveys are conducted in partnership with an outside agency. The survey measures resident satisfaction in each key area of operations and care, including resident programming. The scores rank overall satisfaction with LiveWell and provide specific ratings on meaningfulness of activities, communication and information about programs, organization, variety and frequency of programs, staff receptiveness to ideas, and courtesy of staff. The outside agency compiles a national database of other seniors housing operators. This allows Horizon Bay to benchmark its results.

Success in meeting the Standards of Excellence is also measured through site visit reports from regional staff. During these visits, regional managers evaluate and rate each community on the overall development of the *LiveWell!* Program. A detailed report and development plan provides each community with information to aid ongoing enhancement of the program. As part of this report, residents and staff are interviewed for their feedback on the program components and calendar of events.

Overall Results

Since the implementation of the new Standards of Excellence, the overall quality of resident programs at Horizon Bay communities has improved. The success of this initiative has been measured through resident satisfaction results and site visit reports.

Following are some results from the most recent resident satisfaction surveys:

- Overall satisfaction with resident programs has improved from last year.
- Horizon Bay scored in the top 15% of operators in the national database for satisfaction with resident programs.
- Rates of resident participation for Horizon Bay are above the national average and continue to improve year to year.



A Horizon Bay resident teaches painting classes. Reciprocity is part of the concept of resident wellness.

The surveys show that more than 60% of Horizon Bay residents participated in 2 or more programs each week, and 30% of residents participated in 5 or more, well above the industry norms.

In a qualitative analysis of resident satisfaction comments, the following represents feedback that indicates the success of the Standards of Excellence and the program's impact on resident life through community programs:

- Heritage residents lauded the excellent programming and outstanding exercise facilities, friendly informal atmosphere, great maintenance, and the events that are "varied, educational, and entertaining."
- Pinecrest Place residents raved that they were "very active and busy."
- Vernon Hills residents expressed satisfaction with entertainment, activities, and educational programs.
- Sakonnet Bay Manor residents like the social activities and high level of entertainment and describe the community as very active.
- Specific comments from residents included:
 - "I like the emphasis on fitness."
 - "This community has so many interesting activities that I enjoy being involved with. I enjoy learning something new at this stage in life."
 - "This is a great experience!"
 - "If anyone is bored, it's their own fault."
 - "Life is interesting every day."

A site visit reporting system, developed and administered by regional program staff, showed that 80% of the Horizon Bay communities meet the *LiveWell!* Standards of Excellence.

ALC

Jim Concotelli, MSW, PhD, is vice-president of resident programs at Horizon Bay and is responsible for developing and managing the *LiveWell!* Program.