

New Technology Makes Senior Living Safer



There are a variety of reasons why retirees choose to move to a senior living community, but safety tops the list of motivators for most families. The decision to make the move from a long time home to a retirement community is usually a family decision, involving not just the senior but the adult children as well. Thanks to developments in technology, families in the mid-Atlantic region with loved ones in senior living facilities are being offered the peace of mind that their relatives are being well care for thanks to companies like **ResponseTECH** who offer a unique state-of-the-art line of products and services for retirement communities that include wireless nurse-call systems, wandering resident systems as well as access control and cameras.

There are several types of safety concerns that worry the families of seniors. Most common are falls and wandering, while some are focused on maintaining communication to reassure family members or providing reminders of important events like social activities or even medication times. All of these concerns have a common element: the need to keep a watchful eye on residents without literally employing someone to follow them around. Developments in wireless communication and information processing now allow safety and independence to meet.

The standard fall protection at retirement living communities has typically been the pull cord strategically placed in the apartment. When this cord is pulled, a signal goes to a fixed location that must be manned at all times with someone prepared to initiate a response. This is less than ideal for both the community operator and the resident. For the community, it ties a valuable staff member to a desk and can leave gaps in protection if that person turns away even for a moment. More importantly, it greatly limits where in the community the resident is protected. Most falls do not happen inside the apartment; and even for those that do, many times the fallen resident can not get to the pull cord. With a wireless protection system,

safety is no longer tied to the pull cord.

One of the advantages of a senior living community is the social life that is offered. Taking advantage of that requires getting out of the apartment; the best retirement living experience involves getting out and about the community campus. Whether the resident prefers golfing, crafts, card playing, discussion groups or just a nice walk, feeling safe to do all of these things will enhance resident life. Retirement Living is not just an apartment, it is a community and a way of life. *These new systems place a wireless bubble over the entire campus.* From smaller free standing Assisted Living communities to large multi-level campuses, these systems are scalable, making it easy to start small and add features and coverage over time.

According to **ResponseTECH** President Avner Skolnik, "After moving a relative to a retirement community, families would like to know that their loved one is fully protected. Relying on pull cords and nurse visits is not enough, and that's where **SARA** comes in."

SARA (for **S**ituational **A**wareness and **R**esponse **A**ssistant), one of the new technology products offered to retirement communities, combines software with hardware to monitor, alert and report. **SARA** monitors events typically found in a senior communities and alerts staff via two-way radios, phones, cell phones, pagers, text message or email about falls, wandering or any event that needs attention. The traditional standard of notification to a care supervisor within the facility is maintained, but now the ability to include multiple responders on and beyond the campus is added. It can even integrate to many existing nurse-call systems, so there is no need to replace working systems. For example, an existing working pull cord system can remain in place, and be enhanced with a module that adds features like remote notification, call escalation and reporting. As pieces of old systems fail over time they can be replaced as needed with new technology. Both the short and long term costs are lower and the big system replacement project that inconveniences residents with dust and ripped open walls never comes. Costs are reduced and the ser-

vices to residents are enhanced.

SARA is extremely user-friendly and eliminates the need for constant presence at the monitoring console. It searches for potential emergencies, looking in places that are difficult for facility staff to monitor. When **SARA** detects a problem, it notifies the appropriate people, wherever they are, by voice or text so they can respond quickly. The nurse call function even works outside the facility, extending protection to courtyards, grounds and parking lots.

SARA stores all of these events and alerts into a historical reporting system to aid with accountability and staff management. Reporting features are an important component of these new systems. Information about daily events, such as the speed with which calls for assistance are answered, make the entire staff accountable for their work and give administrators the information that leads to assurance that everything is being done to ensure the well-being of their residents.

The unique "voice" of **SARA** can also call residents and family members to keep them aware of emergencies, community events and activities. Activity directors have reported participation in community events increased by as much as 50% after systems were installed, helping residents to realize the full value of their retirement living experience.

Important monitored events include more than just falls. Sometimes wandering is an issue, particularly when dementia is a motivator for the move from home. Traditional systems simply wired anticipated exit points and sounded a general alarm when it appeared that someone had eloped. Wireless interactive systems can do far more, including continuous tracking of residents with wandering risks. The old panic response of "someone has escaped" followed by frenzied head counting and a wide search is replaced by the ability at any moment to pinpoint the location of each resident. When a resident goes where he/she should not, there is still an alert sounded, but there are no questions about whom it is or where they are, eliminating the need to disrupt the fragile stability of the remaining dementia residents.

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wellspring

Mid-Atlantic Wellspring Alliance Welcomes 3 New Facilities!

Adventist Organizations Sligo Creek, Bradford Oaks and Springbrook Join in September

The Mid-Atlantic Wellspring Alliance is proud to announce that it will be expanding in September to include three skilled nursing facilities from the Adventist system, raising the total number of participating organizations to twelve.

The new organizations will be coming into the Alliance at a great time to take advantage of two major training sessions planned this fall for participat-

ing Alliance organizations, on nursing leadership and leadership management. The Alliance welcomes Brenda Rice, administrator of Sligo Creek and her staff, Lori Lusby Hamilton, administrator of Bradford Oaks and her staff, and John Holly, administrator of Springbrook and his staff.

In addition over the summer, Sandy Sanders, Vice President of the Mid-

Atlantic Alliance has been meeting with all Alliance member organizations to discuss their needs, and consult and support clinical and management staff in their efforts to implement the Wellspring model in their facilities.

Wellspring is a quality improvement and culture change program that's been supported by The Beacon Institute since 2004. Participating organizations include: Glade Valley Nursing & Rehabilitation, St. Elizabeth's Rehabilitation and Nursing, Augsburg Lutheran Home, Oak Crest Village, Broadmead, Charles County Nursing and Rehabilitation, Homewood at Williamsport, St. Catherine's Nursing, and The Methodist Home of DC."

New Technology

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The system is already installed in several Metro DC area facilities and is easy to add to existing buildings. The advantages of this technology extend beyond senior living communities. Recently, **ResponseTECH** donated a wireless video entry and security system at a shelter for victims of domestic violence. "As a wireless system, **SARA helps keep costs down, shortens installation time and minimizes disturbance to residents and infrastructure.**" "These systems are the next level of protection. **They** save lives, reduce liability and attract new residents. Knowledgeable consumers will demand this kind of protection when choosing a retirement community," said Skolnik. With more retirees choosing to remain in their own homes, senior living communities will see an increasing need for this marketing message to stay competitive.

Moving to a retirement community is a big decision. Having made it, seniors would like to be able to remain in the new home they have chosen for as long as possible. Improving safety and enhancing the retirement experience does just that!

Headed up by long-time Bethesda, Maryland resident Arner Skolnik, ResponseTECH provides a full, enhanced package for small and large retirement communities that includes wireless nurse-call systems, wandering patient systems as well as access control and cameras. Committed to serving the community, ResponseTECH has completed several charitable installations as well. For more information about SARA or other ResponseTECH products and services, call 301-469-8050 or visit www.responsetech.us.

Information Technology Case Study



Situation:

Asbury Communities, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization consisting of six CCRCs in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Oklahoma, utilized numerous software programs to track and measure financial, marketing, operations, human resources and clinical data.

The Challenge: Capture and manage data from numerous software programs at all levels of the organization, so that management has minute to minute information about key business indicators.

Solution: Develop a tool to increase the usability of critical data elements in order to optimize business processes and work flow.

The Tool: "Sharelink"- a proprietary software system allowing Asbury Communities to:

- Focus on the right information – the primary corporate measures used for benchmarking include:
- Net operating margin
- Census and occupancy
- Staff turnover and retention
- Survey results
- Clinical sentinel events
- Fundraising and development
- Communicate effectively – real time data is displayed using a dashboard format in which discussion boards are superimposed so that managers may communicate with each other. This facilitates information sharing and allows for access to be granted to certain departments.

- Make better decisions – with accurate up-to-date information, Asbury Communities is able to make decisions quickly and focus on the right issues at the right time.

Critical to the implementation of "Sharelink":

- Buy-in: Information technology (IT) needed to focus the company on using the "Sharelink" site rather than depending on paper. IT slowly migrated information from phone numbers to menus to forms, and finally to performance measures and report centers onto the "Sharelink" intranet site. Employees are now incredibly reliant on the system and embrace upgrades.
- Results: Technology created the means to achieve new goals for performance excellence resulting in several Asbury Communities receiving bronze and silver Malcolm Baldrige awards. Over the last three years, Asbury increased net operating margin, decreased staff turnover, and improved performance in all tracked areas.
- Industry expertise: "Sharelink" was created by The Asbury Group, a wholly owned subsidiary of Asbury Communities. The Asbury Group consists of IT professionals with more than 16 years of long-term care experience. Their in-depth understanding of the needs and challenges of the industry have made the implementation of "Sharelink" a success.

Chip Burns, developer of "Sharelink", VP and CIO of The Asbury Group is

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