

Differentiate Your Community by Embracing Family

If “we have a really nice Sunday brunch” is your best example of how your community creates an environment that brings families together, then you’re behind the curve. Creating family-friendly environments is a growing trend in senior living, but one that doesn’t get a lot of attention. It should, and the marketing team should be the loudest proponents for this on the community staff. The family’s experience while visiting your community directly impacts your reputation and referrals.

A quick example – an old friend of mine was back in town visiting her folks who had just moved to the area’s newest senior living community. As we sat in the community’s club area, my friend said, “Can you believe this place has been open less than a year and they didn’t build it with Wi-Fi?”

Think about all the technology we carry around that won’t work – from my friend’s iPad to a grandson’s iPod. Sure, residents can get Internet service through their cable subscription, but what about the family? Is your community creating barriers to family visits or supporting them? Strong intergenerational interaction is so important to both successful aging and resident satisfaction.

Here are a few community initiatives we’ve come across that illustrate what can be done:

- Wi-Fi, at least in the Bistro or common areas, so games and computers work
- Coffee Shops/Bistros with extended hours, offering a place to visit, get a snack, or treat grandkids to ice cream
- An outdoor playground, so kids have something to do while families visit
- Reduced prices in the dining room for children 12 and under, so it costs less to bring the whole family
- Kids’ meals on the menu – just offering chicken strips and french fries can do the trick
- Friday night family swimming
- Hosting kids’ birthday parties in the theater with movies and catering
- Kiddie manicures at the spa for girl’s day with grandma
- Events created for families – how about an exotic animal show (great for pictures on Facebook)

These are just a few ideas that demonstrate how communities can operate with the whole family in mind. It requires thought, and not all residents will embrace these accommodations. But as we think about communities as a place where life happens – supporting strong family interaction should be an ongoing goal.

What are you doing to support this?

Source: [GlynnDevins](#), Ken Curnes blog comments