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**National Study Reveals State Of Wellness Programs
In Senior Living Communities**

Programming, design and operations contribute to culture of wellness

The passion and energy of the Baby Boomer generation has redefined society for decades. Now, as this generation heads into retirement, its life-affirming values have spurred a cultural shift in the way people view and plan for retirement. For Boomers, whole-person wellness is not a concept but a way of life and they expect quality choices in how they spend the years of retirement rolling out before them.

To understand this cultural shift and develop a national profile of wellness-program components in continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs), the National Whole-Person Wellness Survey was recently conducted by three institutions: Mather LifeWays, a not-for-profit organization that enhances the lives of older adults by creating "ways to age well" through community initiatives, senior living residences, and the Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging; Dorsky Hodgson Parrish Yue, an architectural firm specializing in design for senior living; and Ziegler Capital Markets Group, a financial services company with expertise in financing senior living projects.

The recently released final report from this survey provides great insight into the progress that CCRCs have made in developing a "culture of wellness" and how communities are working to meet the needs of Boomer retirees.

The National Whole-Person Wellness Survey examines the programming, physical design and operational elements of CCRCs to identify how some have achieved a culture of wellness. Three stages of wellness were identified and labeled as Trailblazers, Travelers and Tenderfeet. These labels measure the different points on a CCRC's journey to a comprehensive culture of whole-person wellness. The survey found that almost any community has the potential to be a Trailblazer, but about half of today's CCRCs are Tenderfeet.

The final report revealed that most retirement communities are accelerating their focus on quality of life and wellness. Whole-person wellness embraces self-responsibility and direction, optimism, self worth and lifestyle choices. To measure whole-person wellness, the survey examined a CCRC's programming, design and operational elements through six dimensions of wellness, including physical, social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and vocational.

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“A major goal for the survey was to assess how CCRCs are incorporating the elements of whole-person wellness from a philosophical, staffing, physical and financial standpoint,” said Dr. Perry Edelman, Principal Investigator of the study and Director of Outcomes Research at the Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging. “The findings have significant implications for CCRC residents, but also for staff and entire senior living communities.”

In a culture of wellness, everyone is a participant, from residents and staff to the surrounding community. Additionally, respondents reported that the factors most essential to creating a successful wellness program are organizational commitment; program/activity variety; trained/experienced staff; programs appropriate to residents’ abilities; and financial resources.

In identifying clusters of CCRCs in terms of their progress toward a culture of wellness, eight specific organizational aspects of wellness were examined, including:

- Written wellness objectives for the community
- Resident wellness team or team that includes residents
- More than two departments included in wellness team
- Staff wellness is part of mission statement of objective
- Staff uses resident wellness programs
- Staff-only wellness programs
- More than two groups use wellness programs (excluding residents)
- Staff hired in the past five years specifically to implement wellness programs

The extent to which each CCRC incorporated these elements into its community identifies where it is on the journey toward a culture of wellness.

- Trailblazers have a well developed culture of wellness exhibiting most, if not all, of the eight components. About one-fifth of the respondents were in this category; 100 percent included staff wellness as part of their mission statements and enabled staff to use resident wellness programs. Trailblazers believe their wellness program had a major impact on the reduction of residents’ use of medication and on the health care center. They also reported a greater impact of wellness programs in terms of the organizations’ visibility and image in the community and in the ability to obtain greater market share.
- Travelers have traveled varying distances toward a culture of wellness, with 70 percent having four to five of the basic components. About one third of the respondents were in this category. The majority of Travelers have hired staff in the past five years specifically to implement wellness programming and have more than two departments included on wellness teams. However, only 12 percent included staff wellness as part of the mission statement and/or objectives.

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- Tenderfeet have almost no culture of wellness, with 97 percent having two or fewer of the eight components. Slightly less than half of the CCRCs surveyed were Tenderfeet. None had hired staff in the past five years specifically to implement wellness programming and only 10 percent had staff-only wellness programs. However, 26 percent had resident wellness teams and 29 percent had two or more departments included on wellness teams.

The survey also assessed the impact wellness programs have, from quality of life for residents to image building within the community. Using 25 items and a seven point scale, with seven signifying the greatest impact, respondents ranked the impact of wellness programs a 5.4 for overall quality of life. Moreover, each of the 25 items evaluated, scored at or above a four. Using the same scale, the survey measured the impact of wellness programs on the satisfaction of residents and family members, and on the decision to join the community. Nearly three fourths of respondents scored family member satisfaction a five or greater and more than half scored the impact of wellness programs on the decision to join the community a six or seven.

Wellness is also affected by physical design. The survey identified the spaces CCRCs provide and the wellness dimensions the spaces relate to and their locations within the CCRC. To achieve wellness, spaces should be designed to meet residents' needs and encourage participation in the programming developed for those spaces.



“Designing for wellness, not illness, is now the focus in senior living – and it’s with a holistic approach,” said Cornelia C. Hodgson, head of Dorsky Hodgson Parrish Yue’s Senior Living Studio. “This study has provided a crucial benchmark that will enable us to better understand the correlation between whole-person wellness elements and physical design, programming and financing.”

Design space was evaluated based on its capacity, ceiling height and number of windows because they rate the appropriateness of the space for function, “specialness” of the space and exposure to nature. Four design trends emerged that influence whole-person wellness:

- Size of space – successful spaces were sized appropriately for the wellness function they served.
- Natural light – most successful spaces had at least some windows, with physical and social dimensions having many windows and spiritual spaces having the least
- Usage – most successful spaces tended to be used five to seven days per week, except spaces for worship
- Location – most wellness spaces are distributed throughout the campuses, but in relatively close proximity to other wellness spaces



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Operationally, managing the costs of a wellness program was cited by more than half the respondents as one of the top five most important factors in successful programming. Most respondents reported that wellness program costs had increased in the past five years while more than a third reported that they had stayed the same. However, cost increases are largely attributed to expanded activities and services. While most CCRCs are currently not charging fees to nonresidents for use of their wellness programming, many are considering it for the future as an opportunity to generate revenue.

“A critical component of our role as senior living’s leading underwriter is to educate both senior living providers and investors regarding senior living strategic thinking,” said Dan Hermann, Managing Director and Group Head for Ziegler Capital Markets Group. “These survey results describe the characteristics and impact of various elements of current and future wellness programs that will raise all readers’ understanding of the importance of whole-person wellness programming in successful senior living organizations.”

Reasons cited for the rising costs in wellness programming over the past five years include increases in the number of activities, extended programs and increased participation in programs. However, to cover these costs, the majority of CCRCs will consider raising resident monthly fees to cover programming, while others will consider alternatives such as fundraising, fitness center membership fees or individual program usage fees.

The National Whole-Person Wellness Survey examined programming, physical design and operational elements of CCRCs to give senior-living providers a better understanding of how the concept of wellness is incorporated into their facilities and what its impact is on both residents and staff. The survey identified the senior-living industry’s best practices and sheds light on how wellness-related programs are being implemented.

Just as importantly, the survey identified ways wellness-related changes have been made in the past and what changes will be needed for future generations of senior-community residents. The results clearly indicate that most communities have begun to embrace the idea of whole-person wellness, and most anticipate expanding their wellness programs in the coming years. To that end, this research is essential to establishing a baseline for senior living community wellness, which all CCRCs can use as a map to track their progress on their journey to whole-person wellness.

About Mather LifeWays: Mather LifeWays is a 50+-year-old not-for-profit organization committed to creating Ways to Age WellSM. The organization demonstrates its commitment to aging well through senior living residences, community programs, and Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging. From independent living to assisted living and skilled care, Mather LifeWays’ senior residences comprise a continuum of living and choices.

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Community programs, including Mather LifeWays' successful - More Than a Cafe concept, provide access to community resources and life-long engagement. The Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging is dedicated to advancing state-of-the-art translational research and sharing information on successful service innovations. Through its combination of research, education, and services, Mather LifeWays is a national resource on the well-being of older adults.

About Dorsky Hodgson Parrish Yue: Rooted in the unwavering belief that environments affect people's behavior, the national architectural firm, Dorsky Hodgson Parrish Yue (DHPY), creates innovative and sensitive designs for the full continuum of care, from active adult and senior living communities to those providing highly specialized services for well being. DHPY focuses its design and planning capabilities in senior living, residential and commercial – all are being incorporated in many of their projects to bring together the many facets of mixed-use developments. With an interest in environmental sensitivity and sustainable design, the firm employs LEED-certified professionals and is a member of the United States Green Building Council (USGBC).

DHPY has three strategically located offices in Cleveland, OH; Ft. Lauderdale, FL and Washington, DC. For more information, visit www.dorskyhodgson.com.

About Zeigler Capital Markets: Zeigler is the leading underwriter of financing for nonprofit senior living providers, serving the financing and strategic planning needs of senior living and housing providers across the nation. In addition we provide financial risk management and advisory services; merger and acquisition expertise; investment management services; seed capital; FHA-mortgage banking; and capital and strategic planning. As the Wellness Survey and resulting research reflect, Zeigler is also committed to the advancement of industry research and education.

Zeigler has achieved a unique position within the nonprofit senior living finance industry due to their ability to implement financing solutions that incorporate a variety of financial tools. The firm has cultivated a combination of products and services that accommodate the most complex financings for virtually every type of nonprofit senior living provider.

Credit structures and financing instruments utilized are:

- Tax-exempt and taxable bonds
- Fixed-rate and variable rate bonds
- Unenhanced and credit-enhanced bonds (Letter of Credit, Private Insured, and FHA-Insured)
- Extended Rate Adjustable Securities (EXTRASSM)

Zeigler offers a range of educational offerings and industry-focused information for senior living providers and capital markets participants (investors, credit enhancers, and the rating agencies). Educational opportunities range from the annual Zeigler Senior Living Finance + Strategy conference and the Zeigler CFO Workshop SeriesSM, to periodic Zeigler CFO Hotline queries and weekly electronic news-letter, **Z-News**.

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