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## **Landmark Research Shows Improved Wellness for Residents of Life Plan Communities**

*5-Year Study Offers Insight into Social & Intellectual Benefits over Community at Large*

**Evanston, IL (April 27, 2023)** – This week, Mather Institute, the research area of Mather, an 82-year-old not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating Ways to Age Well<sup>SM</sup>, announced findings from its longitudinal Age Well Study. This five-year study, designed in collaboration with neighboring Northwestern University, is the first large-scale national evaluation on health and wellness among residents of Life Plan Communities. The new findings are available in a report that can be downloaded from [TheAgeWellStudy.com](https://TheAgeWellStudy.com).

The Age Well Study was conducted by surveying a total of 8,228 residents living in 122 Life Plan Communities around the US annually across the five years. In Years 1 and 5 of the study (2018 and 2022), the resident responses were compared to a demographically similar sample of older adults living in the community at large.

The newly released findings reveal that residents of Life Plan Communities continue to report better physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and vocational wellness than their community-dwelling counterparts over a five-year time span.

“We’re gratified that the latest results of the Age Well Study support the value of Life Plan Communities,” said Mary Leary, President and CEO, Mather. “Residents living in this type of community reported better outcomes in five of six different dimensions of wellness in 2018, and five years later they continued to report *significantly* better health than those living in the community at large. That’s a powerful indicator of aging well.”

Cate O’Brien, PhD, Senior Vice President of Mather Institute, adds, “Year 5 of the study not only compared the health and wellness of the two groups of older adults, it measured changes across five years for both groups. We found that, naturally, both groups saw some decline with age over five years, but residents of Life Plan Communities maintained higher levels of wellness, with more favorable ratings in social and intellectual wellness in particular.”

### **Highlights of the findings include:**

- In Year 5, Life Plan Community **residents exhibited better self-reported health and higher levels of moderate physical activity** compared to older adults from the community at large.
- From Year 1 to 5, **social contact significantly increased for residents.**
- From Year 1 to 5, **overall engagement in intellectual activities significantly increased for residents** and decreased for older adults in the community at large.

- Changes in emotional and spiritual wellness were more favorable for older adults in the community at large, while the **two groups reported similar changes over time in physical and vocational wellness.**

"It may seem surprising that social engagement *increased* for residents during the pandemic, yet data across the five years consistently emphasize the social benefits of Life Plan Communities," states Dr. O'Brien.

It should be noted that in Year 5, more than 50% of community-at-large responses were received prior to the start of the pandemic vs. 100% of residents responding two years into the pandemic. (Community-at-large older adults were last surveyed between April 2018-June 2019 and March 2020-March 2021, vs. early 2022 for residents).

The Age Well Study's statistical models examined 1) differences in wellness between groups (residents from Life Plan Communities vs. older adults from the community at large), 2) changes in wellness over time (Year 1 vs. Year 5), and 3) whether the changes in wellness were different for Life Plan Community residents compared to the community-at-large respondents. Analyses controlled for age, gender, income, education, and marital status.

A demographically similar sample of older adults living in the community at large was drawn from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) conducted by the University of Michigan. In addition to Northwestern University, Mather Institute collaborated on the study's design with ASHA, LeadingAge, Ziegler, Novare<sup>®</sup>, Life Care Services, and National Investment Center.

### **Learn More in a Webinar**

**Researchers from Mather Institute are hosting live webinars to review their findings, and all are welcome to join.** The 30-minute webinars are scheduled for Thursday, May 18 at 11:00 a.m. CT and Wednesday, May 24 at 1:00 p.m. CT. Registration and details can be found at [TheAgeWellStudy.com](http://TheAgeWellStudy.com)

### **ABOUT MATHER**

Based in Evanston, Illinois, Mather is an 82-year-old, not-for-profit organization that creates Ways to Age Well.<sup>SM</sup> Mather Institute serves as an award-winning resource for research and information about wellness, aging, trends in senior living, and successful aging service innovations. Known for its vision of changing the way society views aging, Mather is committed to transforming practices, perspectives and language surrounding aging, and partnered with LeadingAge in 2015 to change the category name for Life Plan Communities. The landmark Age Well Study is the latest example of its commitment to the senior living industry. To learn more about Mather Institute, or Mather senior residences and community-based initiatives, find your way to [www.mather.com](http://www.mather.com).

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