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## **Inexpensive ways to rejuvenate recreational offerings for the retirement community**

Recreational programs can make or break an age-restricted community. No longer is it enough to offer the occasional trip to the casino or the weekly bridge club. Today's retirees want quality of life; they plan to spend their days growing old gracefully with fun and vigorous leisure activities.

Active adult communities that combine a variety of lifestyle and entertainment amenities have become the standard within the retirement industry. But as retirement communities age and the interests of seniors change, managers will have to find new ways to revitalize recreational programming in order to continue meeting the needs of their residents.

In some cases, the solution will be to renovate or develop new amenities. This can be very costly and possibly lead to a drastic increase in HOA fees. Creativity will go a long way in rejuvenating your recreational offerings both on and off site without spending large amounts of money.

### **Outings**

Community outings are an important aspect of a recreational program because they allow residents to build relationships with their neighbors in new settings. Each outing should be unique. Instead of offering residents trips to the shopping mall, allow them to experience new and exciting adventures.

The Colony at California Oaks in Murrieta, Calif., organizes extraordinary outings, including a chocolate tour of downtown Los Angeles and trips to the local military base to dine with active soldiers. In other

communities, residents are given the opportunity to visit horse races and attend local festivals.

Each region of the country offers a variety of unique and fascinating festivals, tours, shows and other events that residents will find interesting. Revitalizing event programming can be achieved by consistently evaluating the local leisure activities. Always keep an eye out for grand openings and special events such as traveling museum exhibits or chili cook-offs.

Bring entertainment to the community. Organizing memorable on-site events is essential to a successful leisure program because they build a sense of community. Some communities only offer movie nights and barbeques, but to truly engage residents it is necessary to be creative and offer something new each month.

Think outside the box and stage events such as celebrity impersonators, flea markets, themed balls, car washes, treasure hunts, mystery dinners and wine and cheese tastings. Coordinate a resident fashion show similar to the Huntington Landmark Community Association in Huntington Beach, Calif., which allows its residents to model the latest fashions in an annual show. Keep residents entertained by maintaining an open mind and not discarding any ideas. These types of events are extremely fun and can be organized at little cost.

Clubs and fitness programs. It is also important to provide a wide variety of clubs, classes and fitness programs as part

of a community's recreational offerings. Today's seniors are more focused on healthy living; they consider physical and mental exercise to be very valuable. By beefing up the activity and hobby agenda, a community's management team can stimulate the interests of its residents community-wide.

Some communities offer residents a monthly wine club, jazzercise and line dancing classes. For example, Laguna Woods Village in Laguna Woods, Calif., formed a Baby Boomer Club to gather neighbors for activities such as the Art Walk in Laguna, dancing at Brio and the Dana Point Boat Parade.

Bocce ball, scrapbooking, poetry, singing, dog walking and wood-working clubs are also very popular with the senior community.

In addition to clubs, a community should focus on providing health and physical fitness programs, such as Pilates, yoga, weightlifting, aqua aerobics and walking. Chair-exercise classes have become popular because they allow seniors to exercise with less risk of injury or strain.

Adding a few entertainment or fitness clubs and classes to the leisure program can be relatively inexpensive. It may only require purchasing a few supplies or enlisting a local expert to instruct residents. The management team should always stay abreast of the latest hobby and fitness programs.

Planning for a revitalized recreational program

When a community updates its recreational program, it is important to make sure the activities it chooses meet the interests of its residents. Surveying residents is the best way to identify interest. From there, the community's management team will be able to choose the right mix of activities. Getting residents involved by starting a social committee is a second option; it provides

direct guidance and can ensure the programs take off.

How much money the community plans to allocate toward the program and where it will come from must be determined next. To generate funds, the community can choose to slightly increase monthly HOA fees, or fundraise, which is a fun activity in itself. Once in place, evaluate the program annually and scale back as necessary.

When planning activities, it is crucial to keep in mind that many seniors have fixed incomes. The community's management team should be courteous about which events they choose and how much they will have to charge for them. When dealing with vendors, make sure to conduct research and get competitive rates and quotes.



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