



The Masterpiece Living Mosaic– Lyceum Edition

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Lessons From The Leaders

by Teresa Beshwate, MPH

Nearly everyone believes in the philosophy and concepts of successful aging. No one disputes the decades of research that proves that aging is largely based on lifestyle choice, and most agree that environment is a powerful force in helping people make healthier choices. Anyone who knows about successful aging research believes that it must be applied in order to impact individual lives and organizational cultures— and this is why organizations partner with Masterpiece Living (MPL).

While most believe in successful aging philosophically, how do leaders actually lead – tactically – in the context of successful aging? A group of highly effective leaders in the Masterpiece Network, Cindy Hogan, President of Christian Living Communities, Fran Werner, Wellness Manager at SQLC's Querencia at Barton Creek, Alicia Fenstermacher, Corporate Director of Community Life, Presbyterian Senior Living, Dennis Gradillas, Vice President & Regional Operations Manager at ABHOW, and Justin Spooner, Regional Director of Operations at Lifespace Communities, gathered at Lyceum 2016 to share how they operationalize MPL and lead the movement every single day.

The evolution of a culture begins with every team member. The most cutting edge of MPL partners have revisited human resource processes and documents with the lens of successful aging. At Christian Living Communities, which partnered with MPL during the economic downturn as a means to rebound and differentiate from competitors, the performance appraisal was renamed Gifts and Growth

conversation, during which, leaders discuss successful aging and career growth. ABHOW and Lifespace are also revising job descriptions, performance appraisals and other related documents and processes.

All four corporations utilize the Centers for Successful Aging (CSA) criteria, provided by MPL, as a strategic growth plan. Leadership support is critical in continuous growth of organizations. Fenstermacher, Gradillas and Spooner all attend MPL Strategy Sessions at the communities they oversee, and most have achievement of the CSA certification on the strategic business plan. Christian Living Communities is the first to have all of its communities certified.

“We wanted to create a pathway to distinction which means daily focus on continuous improvement and also on achievement,” explains Hogan. “That created a competitive spirit between communities. No one wanted to be left behind.”

“Successful aging is simply the right thing to do,” shares Gradillas. “As leaders it is important to lead a successful aging lifestyle personally and to be directly involved in helping communities constantly strive to improve, so that all residents and team members can reap the benefits of an environment that lives and breathes successful aging.”



From left: Fran Werner, Cindy Hogan, Justin Spooner, Alicia Fenstermacher, Dennis Gradillas

Late Life Love

by Cera Meintzer, MS

Connie Goldman, former NPR radio host of *All Things Considered* and current CEO of Connie Goldman Productions, educated Lyceum attendees about the importance of romantic love in late life.

In her presentation, “Late Life Love,” Connie suggests that, as a society, we have many shared beliefs about what romantic love should and should not look like for older adults. These beliefs are not grounded in reality, but in our own



misunderstanding of the needs and desires of older adults in the later part of their lives.

Up until the last decade or so, older adults living in senior communities were treated with scorn if they showed affection for one another. Sleepovers and rooming together were looked down upon and not permitted. It was common thought that sexual desires and affection were something older adults had no need for. It was as if this essential part of the human experience simply disappeared at a certain age, or with a heavy load of morbidities.

As a successful aging leader, Connie has made it her mission to collect stories about the diversity of aged love. These stories are published in her book *Late Life Love*. Connie shared some of these warm and loving stories with the Lyceum attendees. The overarching message is that love may look a little different for older adults, but the importance it holds is just as relevant as at any other stage of life.

Cultivating a Successful Aging Team

by Cera Meintzer, MS

Kay Van Norman is the founder of Brilliant Aging. She sits on both the board of the International Council on Active Aging and the American Senior Fitness Association. In her engaging presentation, “Cultivating a Successful Aging Team – Rallying Family and Caregivers,” Kay challenged Lyceum participants to evaluate the cultural aging messages in their personal lives and workplaces. To do so, she suggests that participants review the views, messages, and scripts that they receive from their families, communities, and team members.

Kay’s core point is that, “Aging does not happen in a bubble. Aging is not an isolated event.” Humans are affected by the physical and cultural messages that surround them daily. As successful aging leaders, our call to action is to change the negative, paternalistic, disease-based messages of aging into messages of responsibility, empowerment, and health.

Kay reminds us that evaluating our culture is no easy task. It means having tough conversations within our families, not just about how we want to die, but also about how we want to live. Changing the culture within our communities involves cultural training and education for every team member. It means cultivating strong leaders that walk the talk of successful aging. Communities and families must change their language and their attitudes about the aging process. Kay’s closing remarks were powerful: “We must take age out of the equation and focus on possibilities not disabilities.”

Masterpiece Living’s mission is to change the experience and perception of aging.

Will you join us? Visit MyMasterpieceLiving.com for more about the movement!