



# Lynne Katzmann:

Leading the way in  
senior living wellness

**Winner of a 2022 ICAA NuStep Pinnacle Award, Juniper Communities' founder and CEO discusses how and why her organization prioritizes wellness and demonstrates what wellness leadership means in the senior living space**

*by Julie King, MS*



*Team members celebrate Juniper Spirit Week at Juniper Village at Paramus in New Jersey. According to Founder and CEO Lynne Katzmann, Juniper Communities' philosophy 'connects passion with purpose for residents, associates and the broader community'*

*The ICAA NuStep Pinnacle Award introduced the new category of Wellness CEO in 2022. This category honors five leaders that demonstrate outstanding dedication to fostering a thriving wellness culture in a senior living community or community center. The first winner profiled is Juniper Communities' Dr. Lynne Katzmann. Upcoming issues of the Journal on Active Aging® will profile other award-winning CEOs to illuminate how their organizations' successes with wellness reflect their leadership.*

Inspired by her grandmother and driven by a professional goal to make the world a better place—one where we can “live fully throughout all seasons of life”—Lynne Katzmann, PhD, has spent 35 years innovating and expanding the senior living company she founded in 1988, at age 32. Today, Juniper Communities boasts 29 locations in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Colorado and Texas. The organization employs 1,750 individuals, with the capacity to serve 2,300 residents. It's also

the only woman-founded, owned and led firm among the 40 largest long-term care and assisted living providers in America.<sup>1</sup>

In 2022, Katzmann won an ICAA NuStep Pinnacle Award for Wellness CEO. Colin Milner, the International Council on Active Aging's founder/CEO, calls her “an incredible visionary and thought leader

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Lynne Katzmann, PhD, won an ICAA NuStep Pinnacle Award for her leadership as a wellness CEO

who has helped lead the active-aging industry's evolution."

Katzmann and Juniper are senior living pioneers in promoting wellness as an integral part of aging. The company's all-encompassing integrated approach to person-centered care has created a culture that fosters wellness in every aspect of residents' lives.

Led by Katzmann, Juniper exemplifies what ICAA's industry research suggests: A wellness culture thrives when it's prioritized from the top.<sup>2</sup> According to brand leadership expert Denise Lee Yohn, everyone from board members and CEOs to middle managers and employees is responsible for building an organization's culture, but responsibilities will differ based on a person's role and function.<sup>3</sup> A CEO's attitudes and actions, whether passive or active, will greatly influence wellness implementation. That's because C-suite executives, especially CEOs, can catalyze efforts

and boost a wellness culture with their buy-in, support and vision for wellness; or they can be a barrier to success with their lack of commitment and backing.<sup>2</sup>

Juniper's successes reflect innovative wellness leadership in the senior living space. Below, Katzmann tells the *Journal on Active Aging*<sup>®</sup> how the company approaches wellness, how it uses data and technology to integrate wellness and healthcare initiatives, why it focuses on "wellspan" goals, and how it envisions its future.

## Embracing wellness in senior living

When she first established Bloomfield, New Jersey-based Juniper Communities, Katzmann had the goal to transform the traditional skilled nursing facility (SNF) model. Initially, the company purchased rural, undermanaged SNFs before pivoting to assisted living communities in 1994. Since then, the organization has grown by strategic acquisition and now offers all levels of care, including independent living, memory care, skilled rehabilitation centers and long-term behavioral healthcare.

"From the beginning, I wanted a wellness culture and was committed to a socially responsible business that would do well by doing good, which I got from my grandmother," Katzmann says. "Fundamental to the work I do has always been being a part of something bigger than myself and making the world better." [Ed. See the box "Origins with Oma" on page 28 to learn more about Katzmann and her grandmother.]

"For Juniper, wellness is the overarching umbrella that encompasses the care, services, programs and encouragement we provide to support and sustain active bodies, engaged minds and fulfilled spirits for senior living," Katzmann states. "Our philosophy revolves around being 'alive in all seasons,' connecting passion with purpose for residents, associates and the broader community."

Juniper fosters "wellspan" to enable individuals to live better longer, Katzmann

continues, thereby "adding quality to the additional years we desire in our lives." Mental health is a key focus as well. Support in this area includes access to digital resources, along with live webinars by mental health professionals every quarter.

Unsurprisingly, Katzmann considers wellness "an essential priority" at her organization.

## Prioritizing wellness in programs

So, how does Juniper Communities prioritize wellness? "We nurture the seven dimensions of well-being through programs that empower our teams to offer a personalized approach," Katzmann says. "Our culture and programs embrace innovation and inspiration to deliver ever-evolving care, activities and services." As examples, she mentions the following:

- "Catalyst, our ecosystem of health and well-being services, curates to meet each individual's unique needs, allowing them to pursue their 'wellspan' goals.
- "Connect4Life, our high-tech/high-touch approach to healthcare, aims to reduce hospitalizations.
- "REfresh, our mind-body approach, focuses on revitalizing and reenergizing both associates and residents."

Juniper has woven wellness into the fabric of its culture. "[F]rom the programs we create to the associates we hire," everything is rooted in and focused on wellness, Katzmann observes. When it comes to workforce, she points out that associates consistently recognize Juniper as a Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup>, with the company also making *Fortune*'s Best Workplaces in Aging Services<sup>™</sup> list.<sup>4</sup> "Onboarding experiences, personal wellness plans, performance profiles, and membership menus for selected services all curate meaningful and engaging activities to achieve personal and collective wellness goals," she reveals.

## Showing leadership

When asked how Juniper has demonstrated leadership in wellness, Katzmann



*A Juniper resident displays her artwork during an art show. Company CEO Lynne Katzmann explains, 'For Juniper, wellness is the overarching umbrella that encompasses the care, services, programs and encouragement we provide to support and sustain active bodies, engaged minds and fulfilled spirits for senior living'*

highlights what she considers an industry-leading commitment to wellness. “We employ a data-driven and person-centered approach to empower individuals to live their best life, focusing on improving their ‘wellspan,’” she says. “Our wellness programs combine structured and unstructured opportunities to promote physical, social, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, environmental and vocational health. This holistic approach has brought positive changes in managing chronic pain, anxiety, depression and various health conditions,” she adds, “resulting in improved quality of life and reduced hospitalizations.”

When it comes to Juniper’s strategic planning process, Katzmann explains that integrating wellness into this process is critically important to the company. “We continually

invest in research to create programs that improve lives,” she comments. “Implementation at the community level occurs through on-site training and management.”

To expand, Katzmann returns to discussing Connect4Life and Catalyst.

Connect4Life, a chronic care management program and Katzmann’s brainchild, “monitors individuals 24/7 and integrates care across the continuum using a high-tech/high-touch approach,” she explains. Coordinated by a medical concierge, this program addresses fragmented care in order to improve accessibility, satisfaction, and clinical and functional outcomes.

On the other hand, Catalyst “brings together health and wellness lifestyle manage-

ment services, implemented by a lifestyle concierge,” Katzmann shares. This program is also designed to foster partnerships with the local community, “making senior housing settings integrated community hubs.” She adds, “By building a supportive infrastructure, we can track the success of programs and identify additional needs.”

Catalyst is available for a membership fee to residents, as well as to nonresidents in some locations. Observes Katzmann, “I realized that we could do more to promote well-being using subscription-based and technology-supported services if we were properly paid for it.”

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*Coordinated by a medical concierge, the Connect4Life chronic care management program seeks to avoid hospital admissions by addressing fragmented care to improve accessibility and clinical and functional outcomes*

## **Providing resources for wellness**

Given the costs involved in wellness initiatives and infrastructure, how Juniper allocates resources emphasizes its commitment to prioritizing wellness. “Over 60% of Juniper’s budget is dedicated to wellness,” Katzmann reveals. “This includes spending on staffing care providers, such as CNAs and nurses, as well as engagement and wellness programming, including connections/activities, lifelong-learning programs, fitness and well-being programs, and virtual classes, among others.”

Where does the company obtain the resources to fund its wellness programs? In addition to resources from resident payments, which support efforts in Juniper communities, “we receive significant volunteer support, but perhaps most importantly, we form partnerships with external organizations,” Katzmann explains.

“An excellent example is our partnership with Music Theater International called ‘Broadway Senior,’ which brings the joy of participating in Broadway-level performances to multiple Juniper communities,”

Katzmann says. “We also collaborate with Penn State University nursing program, OLLI [Osher Lifelong Learning Institute], Alzheimer’s Association Memories in the Making, and many more.”

## **Innovating healthcare**

Beyond its mission “to nurture the spirit of life in each individual it touches,” Juniper embraces wellness as the foundation of its commitment to healthcare’s Triple Aim: better care, better quality and lower cost.

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“The American healthcare system is changing, and the number of people entering Medicare is growing, which isn’t sustainable,” Katzmann points out. She notes that chronic illnesses—like diabetes, obesity, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease—are involved in 70% of all deaths but aren’t fixed by the current medical intervention model. Instead, they require chronic care management and lifestyle changes—which is wellness.

So Juniper became an early adopter of technology and data to power its high-tech, high-touch approach aimed at helping individuals cope better with chronic conditions to improve quality of life, reduce hospitalizations and improve health outcomes.

“Technology is core for us and a necessary enabler,” Katzmann notes. “Data and analytics are our biggest drivers that inform management decisions, so we can provide a better experience.”

Key performance indicators include emotional well-being, social connectivity, vitality, balance, strength, fall prevention, and dementia management. “We collect over 100 data points each month, which are directly or indirectly related to resident well-being,” Katzmann says.

Partnerships such as Theralink—part of the Connect4Life program—allow Juniper to integrate cognitive and rehabilitative therapies. “By consolidating data from Theralink

programs and outside providers into a single electronic health record [EHR], we create a more comprehensive wellness profile for each person,” Katzmann explains. Also, Theralink Vitality Checks measure fitness, health and overall wellness.

Further, Connect4Life has proven to deliver significant clinical results. In 2016, Juniper commissioned researchers to review hospital admissions and readmissions for the same illness within 30 days of discharge. The company’s rates for both measures were significantly below other senior living communities, Katzmann says, plus they were lower than the rates for Medicare beneficiaries in the United States.

## Origins with Oma

Lynne Katzmann’s maternal grandmother, or Oma, unknowingly served as her granddaughter’s inspiration to launch Juniper Communities. Considered ahead of her time, Oma became an entrepreneur in the 1920s, owning a furrier business in Germany to earn a dowry. She continued to work after marrying and learned to balance her professional and personal lives when she had a baby at age 36. Five years later, she and her family, who were Jewish, fled Adolf Hitler’s reign for the United States with virtually nothing but gratitude for being alive.

Oma, a people person, eagerly shared her wisdom and her wicked sense of humor. The solution-oriented survivor maintained a positive view of aging, riding a motorcycle in her 70s and living in her own home until she became frail and died at 93.

“She always told me that you have to work with what you have, keep a positive attitude and find a way to be satisfied,” Katzmann recalls. “She took the initiative, solved problems and aged beautifully. I try to emulate her.”

Katzmann faced her own challenges growing up in the 1960s as a first-generation Jewish immigrant in the predominantly Italian Catholic working-class neighborhood of Cedar Grove, New Jersey. “I was a little different, and not one of the popular kids,” she says. “By sixth grade, I was miserable. But I was old enough to realize that this didn’t matter. So I embraced who I was and determined to be myself and find the people with whom I could grow and thrive.”

Harnessing Oma’s survivor mentality, Katzmann went on to earn a bachelor’s degree in sociology and language, literature and history from Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. A doctorate followed

in economics from the London School of Economics and Political Science. After six years working in the health-care industry, she launched Juniper in Bloomfield, New Jersey, in 1988.

“Juniper is similar to me—a little different, and not for everyone,” Katzmann observes. “I’ve always been transparent about our mission and values, and I’ve found that some people are skeptical and others gravitate toward them.”

Reflecting on 1996, when the company refocused its efforts to fulfill its vision of changing the face of aging, Katzmann states, “We are an ageist society, and we realized that we needed to look at things differently. That has not changed, and our North Star has remained the same over 35 years. Wellness has been a core value and a strategic objective for Juniper Communities.”

Based on the results of the Connect4Life program, and aiming to promote senior living as a population health solution, Katzmann helped form the Perennial Consortium, a small group of senior living providers, to develop an operator-owned Medicare Advantage network. It began accepting enrollees in

2020, and was operational in Colorado and Ohio in 2021. Another plan in Pennsylvania is anticipated to launch in 2025.

### Leading the way forward

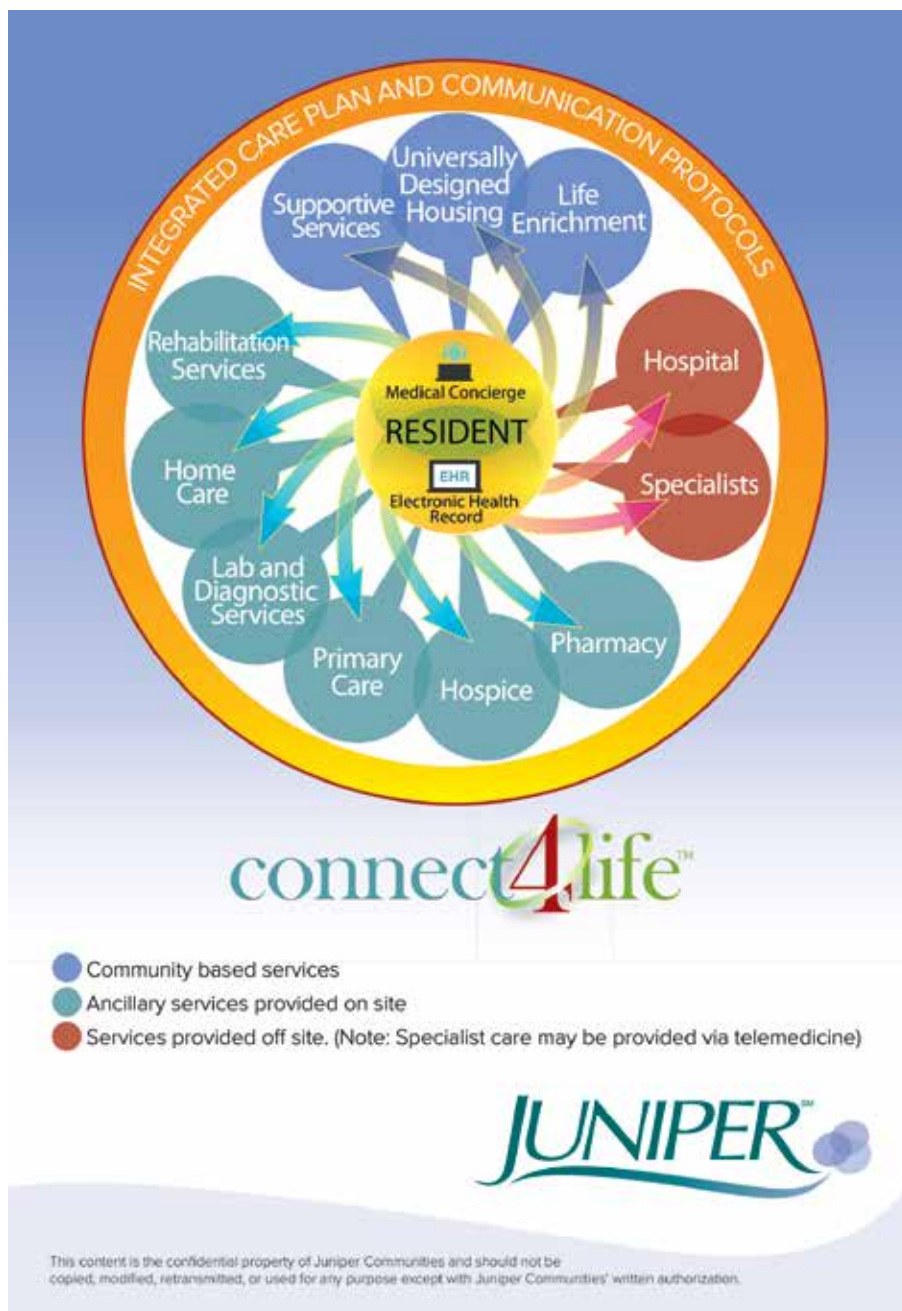
Asked about challenges over her career at Juniper, Katzmann takes issues in stride.

“We’ve aligned with people that share our values, and I’ve found that being fueled by good values gives you the energy to solve problems and push ahead. My strategy has been to never give up.”

Katzmann is proud of Juniper’s distinct culture. She credits her colleagues, many of whom have worked with her for more than two decades, as “incredible people with amazing grit and energy.”

Noting that retirement is “not in the cards” for the next several years, Katzmann remains committed to curating specialized environments for aging populations and to

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**Figure 1.** Juniper’s Connect4Life provides residents with a ‘high-tech, high-touch’ program that integrates care to improve outcomes. Source: Juniper Communities

### Resources

#### Internet

ICAA NuStep “Best in Wellness” Awards (Beacon and Pinnacle Awards)  
<https://beaconaward.icaa.cc>

International Council on Active Aging (ICAA)  
[www.icaa.cc](http://www.icaa.cc)

Juniper Communities  
<https://junipercommunities.com/>

NuStep, LLC  
[www.nustep.com](http://www.nustep.com)

#### Print

The editors. (2022). ICAA NuStep “Best in Wellness” award-winners revealed for 2022. *Journal on Active Aging*, 21(6), 22–25. Available free with login to International Council on Active Aging members in the “Articles” library [“Wellness articles,” “Business profiles” category] at [www.icaa.cc](http://www.icaa.cc)

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Associates from Juniper Village at Brookline decorate the community bus to ride in the Pride Parade in State College, Pennsylvania

reimagining senior living as a population health solution that is part of the post-acute care spectrum.

“Hard work, fired by creativity, resilience and purpose, will propel us forward and map a new life for older adults,” Katzmann says, referencing a quote from Margaret Mead: “Never doubt that a small group of citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

*Julie King, MS, has been a certified group exercise instructor and personal trainer for more than 25 years. She holds multiple certifications and a master’s degree in science*

*(kinesiology). Over her career, King has led virtually every class format—including indoor cycling, mat pilates, yoga, kickboxing, boot camp and aquatics—at commercial health clubs, corporate fitness centers, wellness centers, schools and online. She also has served as a fitness director, fitness/wellness coordinator, health club manager and a contributing editor for Club Business International magazine. King has been published in Club Industry, Club Solutions, Campus Recreation, National Fitness Trade Journal, Recreation Management and Fitness Management. She can be reached at julie.king1@comcast.net*

## Juniper Communities’ guiding lights

**Vision:** To make the world a better place where each of us can live fully throughout all seasons of life. Juniper provides an experience, not a product. This experience is one we work diligently to tailor for each stakeholder so we may enhance their quality of life.

**Mission:** To be the people, places and programs that nurture the spirit of life in each individual we touch.

**Customs:** To nurture well-being by encouraging an active body, an engaged mind and a fulfilled spirit.

*Adapted from Juniper Communities’ Corporate Fact Sheet at <https://junipercommunities.com/about-us/juniper-communities-media-relations/>*

## References

1. Juniper Communities. (n.d.). Corporate Fact Sheet. <https://junipercommunities.com/about-us/juniper-communities-media-relations/>
2. Ryan, P. (2018). Visions of the future: ICAA Active-Aging Industry Trends Survey 2018. Vancouver, BC: International Council on Active Aging. Available in the “Reports” section at <https://www.icaa.cc/research.htm>
3. Yohn, D. L. (2021, February 8). Company Culture Is Everyone’s Responsibility. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2021/02/company-culture-is-everyones-responsibility>
4. Great Place to Work. (n.d.). *Fortune Best Workplaces in Aging Services™ 2021*. <https://www.greatplacetowork.com/best-workplaces/aging-services/2021>

Images courtesy of Juniper Communities





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### Photo key

*With its mission focused on nourishing each person's 'spirit of life,' Juniper Communities 'nurtures the seven dimensions of well-being through programs that empower our teams to offer a personalized approach,' says CEO Lynne Katzmann*

1. Residents celebrate after acting in 'Mary Poppins.'
2. A community poetry project invites participation.
3. A Juniper resident holds a poem from the project.
4. Beekeepers harvest honey.
5. A REfresh class revitalizes residents and associates.



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