

Peak performance:

Senior living communities achieve the Pinnacle

The 2022 ICAA NuStep Pinnacle Award highlights North America's exemplary senior living communities for wellness. These communities also lead the joint program's Beacon Award honorees

by Julie King, MS

Fueled by the mindset of embracing life's possibilities to age better, senior living communities are increasingly shifting their emphasis to wellness. According to the "ICAA State of the Wellness Industry 2022" report, 61% of survey respondents believe that their community will be based in a wellness lifestyle, with options for care, by 2025.¹ So senior living communities are

reassessing their organizations, reimagining possibilities and expanding offerings to meet rising expectations. As wellness cultures proliferate, these communities learn from each other—and staff, residents and the industry benefit.

At the same time, amid this increasingly competitive playing field, maintaining the status quo is no longer an automatic indicator of success. Ongoing innovation and evidence of progress are necessary to stand out and be recognized today.

Inspiration can be found in the 2022 ICAA NuStep Beacon Award winners—25 senior living communities in North Amer-

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Moorings Park Grande Lake features a resort-style pool among the amenities on its 55-acre campus in Naples, Florida. Image courtesy of Moorings Park Grande Lake



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The active lifestyle at John Knox Village of Florida features prominently in marketing for the Pompano Beach community. Image courtesy of John Knox Village of Florida, Inc.

ica that are regarded as the “Best in Wellness.” Of these, the top five also receive the prestigious ICAA NuStep Pinnacle Award for exceptional performance.

“As the industry’s competitive spirit continues to drive the wellness model forward, it is our privilege to honor organizations at the forefront,” says Colin Milner, International Council on Active Aging® founder and CEO. “And as communities step up their games, winning a Beacon and Pinnacle Award, or maintaining a previous award

ranking, has become both a greater challenge and significant achievement.”

A profile of Splendido at Rancho Vistoso (Tucson, Arizona), the number one-ranked 2022 Pinnacle/Beacon Award winner in the senior living category, will appear in an upcoming *Journal on Active Aging*® issue. Here, we showcase the four recipients that round out the top five. These award-winners serve as outstanding examples of excellence in wellness in senior living communities.

John Knox Village of Florida (Pompano Beach, Florida)

A four-time winner of the Beacon and Pinnacle Awards, the 56-year-old John Knox Village (JKV) focuses on innovation. “We’re always looking at how we can be the most innovative in all the ways we serve residents in every level of living and care,” says Monica McAfee, chief marketing and innovation officer for the life-plan community. “We try to find opportunities that are out of the box and drive us to create the most fulfilling wellness programming.”

More than 30 fitness, wellness and life enrichment activities are open to JKV residents daily. Examples include aquatic and studio fitness classes, lifelong learning, technology support, spiritual life discussions, cooking classes, trivia and games, movies, and museum and restaurant outings to community partner venues.

“Re:tired,” an external JKV marketing campaign, showcases the community’s active lifestyle to playfully debunk the notion that age means slowing down. Ads feature residents actively enjoying life, with the encouraging message, “*Don’t Age Out. Age Up.*”

To promote resident engagement, the USD\$35-million Pavilion opened in June 2022, housing the 380-seat Cultural Arts Center (CAC), two restaurants and a bar. The CAC also is available to the broader community for Broadway-style performances.

Additional highlights of the 70-acre campus are the Aquatic Complex, with two pools, pickleball courts and bocce ball, as well as the Center for Healthy Living (CFHL), which opened in May 2021. Launched through a partnership with Everside Health, Johns Hopkins Healthcare Solutions and Holy Cross Health, the CFHL provides residents with a dedicated geriatrician, and staff with routine well care and sick care from a certified physician assistant.

McAfee points out that the diverse wellness culture at JKV can help nourish emotional,

Honoring North America's best and brightest in older-adult wellness

Wellness is no longer simply a program; it's an expected culture and a way of life that permeates and defines organizations. The ICAA NuStep Beacon and Pinnacle Awards honor organizations and individuals whose achievements, innovations, directions or commitments in wellness stand out as guiding lights for the active-aging industry.

A panel of industry experts selects award-winners in three categories: senior living communities, community centers (seniors centers, parks & recreation facilities, adult day services), and CEOs. Twenty-five senior living communities receive the Beacon Award. Among these winners, the top five communities join the five leading community centers and CEOs as Pinnacle Award recipients.

Winners of the 2023 ICAA NuStep Beacon and Pinnacle Awards will be announced in the fall. For more information about the awards program, visit <https://beaconaward.icaa.cc>

physical and mental health and maximize longevity. "The ability to elevate cultural arts, support cognitive brain health, provide balance assessments and dedicate Spiritual Life programs for residents are examples of our holistic approach to well-being," she says.

Residents have a voice in planning, evaluating and analyzing wellness offerings by serving on 11 Resident Senate Committees with a staff liaison. In addition, the JKV Board of Directors includes three to four residents that are voting members.

For higher care, JKV has adopted The Green House® model, which is based on the core values of "meaningful life" in a "real home" provided by an "empowered staff."



At John Knox Village of Florida, in Pompano Beach, fitness classes are led by licensed professionals and include personal coaching. Image courtesy of John Knox Village of Florida, Inc.

Differing from traditional skilled nursing and rehab centers, JKV's The Woodlands embodies the design, ambiance and comforts of one's personal home.

"We are constantly in a state of discovery in discerning the needs, wants and desires of our residents, as well as the strategies to appeal to future residents," McAfee explains. "Meeting the residents where they live, setting goals and providing motivational support are key to a successful wellness journey."

Maravilla Santa Barbara (Santa Barbara, California)

At Maravilla Santa Barbara (MVSB), residents are "all in" with events, programs and activities that focus on wellness, according to ZEST Director Jill Hyers. "Our residents thirst for new experiences, and we're all about fighting ageism by showing seniors that they can lead active, fulfilling lifestyles."

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*For residents of Maravilla Santa Barbara in California, pool volleyball fitness class is just one of the ways that they can ‘Move your way.’
Image courtesy of Maravilla Santa Barbara*

On this 20-acre community—which has won the Beacon Award four times and the Pinnacle, three—many experiences take place at the fitness center, art studio, clubhouse, and craft, card and games rooms, as well as the two salons, two swimming pools/spas, two movie theaters and three libraries. Additional amenities include the croquet/putting green, walking paths, and internet café, bar and bistro.

MVSB meets all residents “at their needs” to encourage their wellness journeys, Hyers states. For the community, which provides memory care and independent and assisted living, “supporting all levels of wellness means a well-rounded curriculum including mind, body and soul activities on all calendars.”

An engagement platform empowers residents to comment in real time and to

contribute to programming, while staff can “pivot in real time with adjustments” and track attendance, Hyers notes. People “tell us what worked and what didn’t and why. Everyone is part of the process of making future decisions.”

To combat the isolation effects of COVID-19, a new program offers wellness modules such as stress relief, sleep therapy, fitness, anti-inflammatory food plans, and brain fitness. “Since the pandemic, even the healthiest seniors have lost a step,” Hyers points out. “Our evidence-based lifestyle program will bring our seniors back and move them forward.”

Residents inspire engagement by thinking outside the box and embracing the “can-do” culture. “They are ‘influencers,’ inspiring others to take chances and fight

ageism,” says Hyers. For example, at age 95, Muriel goes rock climbing at the Rock Gym, and 98-year-old Halina exercises with 4 lb. weights but aims for 5 lbs. when she’s 100.

“Being ‘too old’ is not an excuse in our community,” Hyers notes. “Ideas are tossed around—like creating an actors’ studio, learning to paint, running a game show, or starting a new sport—and we invite residents to observe and join at whatever level they want. Then we celebrate their successes.”

One new idea emerged when Denny, a former newscaster, moved in to the MSVB community in 2021 and started creating YouTube videos capturing some outings, celebrations, sporting activities, and more.



Maravilla Santa Barbara, California, offers a well-rounded wellness curriculum to meet residents 'at their needs,' says ZEST Director Jill Hyers. Image courtesy of Maravilla Santa Barbara

"Folks say that they have a crazy idea, but look at us with an eagerness of possibility," Hyers shares. "They get input, support and voila! They have power and success."

So, a Cardio Drumming float in the Solstice parade and a flash mob are in the works. "The list of things that are possible is growing each day," Hyers says. "Once you push the envelope, you can't unseal it. Our residents want to challenge themselves to go further with ideas of a best-case-scenario life in a retirement community."

Moorings Park Grande Lake (Naples, Florida)

Opened in April 2020, Moorings Park Grande Lake (MPGL) creates a customized wellness roadmap for residents by way of an assessment and orientation process to the wellness department, examining

strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, and then setting goals.

"We want to help residents build confidence and redefine the meaning of 'aging,'" comments Director of Wellness Brett Swanson. "MPGL provides wellness services for all levels of care and throughout significant life transitions, so no goal is too big or too small to achieve, proving that age is just a number."

The community's wellness culture centers on seven dimensions of wellness as the foundation for successful aging. "Using a person-centric approach helps us recommend the different dimensions, so that everyone has something that engages them," explains Swanson. "By embodying compassion, positivity and accountability, we empower our residents to live an active

lifestyle that will enrich their quality of life and help them age successfully."

The MPGL concierge physician works with the wellness team to develop a fully holistic program. "Our concierge physicians and personalized healthcare programs are an integral component of our approach, which coordinates their fitness and wellness plan with their primary doctor," Swanson adds. Staff also conduct quarterly check-ins with residents to revisit their roadmaps, provide accountability and make any modifications and changes necessary to promote success.

At the heart of the 55-acre lakefront campus—which features rubberized walking paths and a resort-style pool—is The Center for Healthy Living, located in the Club-

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At Moorings Park Grande Lake in Naples, Florida, The Center for Healthy Living includes a fitness center, spa services, cognitive zone, and more. Image courtesy of Moorings Park Grande Lake

house. Here, residents can conveniently access the concierge physician, outpatient rehabilitative services, the fitness center, wellness programs, a golf simulator, spa services, an art studio and a cognitive zone.

To ensure residents' views inform future directions, a Residents Council includes a wellness committee that reviews integration of the wellness dimensions in programming. These committees re-evaluate services at monthly meetings to ensure MPGL meets needs at every level, Swanson says. Also, personal feedback from residents not only helps guide directions but also how staff deliver and implement services.

Residents are integral providers of the community's wellness programming as well.

Among the 10 resident-run special interest groups are the international and current affairs roundtable, book club, Bible study, and fishing group. Additional resident-led programs include walking groups, a bocce ball league, choral groups, and more.

"We encourage our residents to take active leadership roles in our community by tapping into their unique skills," Swanson notes. "These resident-led groups are a win-win where residents feel valued in sharing their knowledge."

Educational opportunities also are popular. Residents can participate in the Lifelong Learning Enrichment Series, Florida Gulf Coast University's Learning for Life Academy and MPGL's Ask the Expert Series,

where topics have ranged from climate change to Alzheimer's disease.

"Much of our success stems from a desire to be an 'un-retirement' community," Swanson points out, "and residents express that their engagement and enrichment in wellness programs brings them opportunities that they otherwise wouldn't have access to. For all residents participating in wellness programming, we strive for an outcome of living longer, healthier lives and squaring the aging curve" [compressing morbidity].

Meadowood Senior Living (Worcester, Pennsylvania)

Winning a second ICAA NuStep Beacon Award and its first Pinnacle Award,



In Worcester, Pennsylvania, Meadowood's memory care residents enjoy equine therapy. Photo: Kevin York Photography. Image courtesy of Meadowood Senior Living

Meadowood forgoes a blanket definition of wellness and a “one-size-fits-all” approach. Instead, the life-plan community promotes wellness as holistic, multi-dimensional, and in the beholder’s mind and body.

Meadowood begins by establishing where individuals are on their wellness journeys. “We ask questions,” says Becky Anhorn, senior director of fitness and wellness. “We talk about what they’ve done, and what they envision for their future.” In addition, “we encourage our residents to examine what wellness means to them; we help them set goals to prioritize this; and we diversify our playbook to reach those who won’t necessarily seek out wellness opportunities,” Anhorn explains.

Among the many amenities to pursue wellness on the 131-acre campus are: bocce, croquet, and shuffleboard courts; walking paths and trails; a putting green; ceramics and arts studios; a wood shop; fitness facilities; pools, and the Victory Garden. Activities also include pickleball and wiffleball, ballroom dancing, the Meadowood Players theater group, seated tai chi, and equine therapy for memory care residents.

Connecting residents and employees are events like the Frosty Frolic annual pool plunge, Spring Fling, Senior Prom and Turkey Trot. The campus-wide Flugel Fest features bands, karaoke, a beer garden, the Trivia Cab and more. Plus, Second Satur-

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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

NuStep, LLC
www.nustep.com

Award-winners

John Knox Village of Florida
<https://johnknoxvillage.com>

Maravilla Santa Barbara
www.srgseniorliving.com/communities/santa-barbara-ca-maravilla

Meadowood Senior Living
www.meadowood.net

Moorings Park Grande Lake
www.mooringspark.org/moorings-park-grande-lake

Splendido at Rancho Vistoso
<https://splendidotucson.com/>

Print

King, J. (2023). “Best in Wellness” centers foster environments for living better longer. *Journal on Active Aging*, 22(1), 60–68. Available free online to ICAA members in the “Articles” library [“Management articles”, “Industry development” category] at www.icaa.cc

The editors. (2022). ICAA NuStep “Best in Wellness” award-winners revealed for 2022. *Journal on Active Aging*, 21(6), 22–25. Available free online to ICAA members in the “Articles” library [“Management articles”, “Industry development” category] at www.icaa.cc

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The Grove Pit is among the intimate outdoor spaces where residents socialize on the Meadowood campus in Worcester, Pennsylvania. Photo: Kevin York Photography. Image courtesy of Meadowood Senior Living

day Salons offer discussions on recorded lectures in the One Day University library.

“We are most proud of continuing to expand our programming across all dimensions of wellness to better nurture body, mind and spirit,” Anhorn stresses.

After residents requested to expand wellness efforts into the wider community, Meadowood decorated a high school hallway for a post-prom party and formed a relationship with a local café working with young people of all abilities. Besides raising funds for these young adults’ vocational development, residents and staff attend dinner and bingo every week, according to Anhorn.

They also enthusiastically support two Meadowood-sponsored Little League teams.

In the works is a partnership with a local college to enhance intellectual wellness programming, with outreach underway to do community work and other activities with high-school students.

Driving Meadowood’s success is a team effort from leaders, staff and residents, along with the community’s new therapy dog, Beacon, named for the ICAA NuStep Beacon Award.

“We’re fortunate that Meadowood’s leadership team believes in the wellness mission,”

says Anhorn. “Each contributor is a thread in the fabric of our culture, and we pride ourselves on the strength and beauty of the cloth we weave together.” She adds, “The Pinnacle Award is a validation of our belief that dedicated wellness programming is such an important part of the senior experience. Our ultimate goal is to get everyone in the community to participate in wellness in some form. And when they do, we’re their biggest cheerleaders!”

Lighting the way

Every 2022 ICAA NuStep Beacon and Pinnacle Award winner deserves recognition for their wholehearted commitment to fostering wellness cultures in which

older adults can thrive. In their earnest pursuits, they empower individuals who seek to flourish and extend their longevity.

“As wellness expands, we are delighted to see such enthusiastic support of virtually unlimited potential,” says Jane Benskey, marketing communications specialist at Plymouth, Michigan-based NuStep, manufacturer of inclusive fitness equipment. “These awards are a powerful testament to the diligence and dedication of leaders, staff and residents that truly are transforming aging.”

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

Reference

1. Ryan, P. (2022, June) ICAA State of the Wellness Industry 2022. Vancouver, BC: International Council on Active Aging. Available for download at https://www.icaa.cc//listing.php?type=industry_research

Aspiring higher: North America’s top senior living communities in wellness

Representing the “Best in Wellness,” winners of the ICAA NuStep Beacon and Pinnacle Awards are commended for outstanding performance in leading the way, fueling active aging and enhancing the lives of older adults. Congratulations to all recipients.

2022 ICAA NuStep Pinnacle/Beacon Award winners

1. Splendido At Rancho Vistoso (Tucson, Arizona)
 2. John Knox Village of Florida (Pompano Beach, Florida)
 3. Maravilla Santa Barbara (Santa Barbara, California)
 4. Moorings Park Grande Lake (Naples, Florida)
 5. Meadowood Senior Living (Worcester, Pennsylvania)
- ### 2022 ICAA NuStep Beacon Award winners
6. Moorings Park (Naples, Florida)
 7. GenCare Lifestyle Seattle at Ballard Landmark (Seattle, Washington)
 8. Tapestry Village Gate West (Toronto, Ontario, Canada)
 9. Fellowship Village (Baskin Ridge, New Jersey)

10. Leisure World Arizona (Mesa, Arizona)
11. Arbor Terrace Naperville (Naperville, Illinois)
12. Royal Oak (Sun City, Arizona)
13. Still Hopes Episcopal Retirement Community (West Columbia, South Carolina)
14. Moorings Park at Grey Oaks (Naples, Florida)
15. Tapestry Arbutus Walk (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada)
16. Tapestry at Victoria Harbour (Victoria, British Columbia, Canada)
17. Kavod Senior Life (Denver, Colorado)
18. Williamsburg Landing (Williamsburg, Virginia)
19. Galloway Ridge at Fearington (Pittsboro, North Carolina)
20. Maravilla Scottsdale (Scottsdale, Arizona)
21. The Atrium at Navesink Harbor (Red Bank, New Jersey)
22. Westminster at Lake Ridge (Lake Ridge, Virginia)
23. Seabury (Bloomfield, Connecticut)
24. The Mather (Evanston, Illinois)
25. Matthews Glen (Matthews, North Carolina)