

**Give me a "C"! "C"!
Give me an "O"! "O"!
Give me an "N"! "N"!
You get the picture....**

Give me continuing education. If the last time you were in a classroom was in high school or college, you'll probably be riding the bench at a Seniority community. We are big believers in our ability to always improve. There are certainly new skills and techniques that can be learned as we serve our residents.

Seniority University provides online opportunities for all of our team members to grow and learn. My personal list for the next six months includes: Conflict of Interest; Corporate Compliance; Elder Abuse; HIPAA Standards; Residents' Rights; Employee Handbook and Workplace Harassment. We require team members to complete specific education courses that are relevant to their responsibilities.

We also consider our hospitality initiative, Seniority Spirit, to be a continuing education process. Every day, our team members gather for a huddle in which some topic of importance is addressed. Today my huddle will deal with assuming positive intentions about those with whom we work. Every huddle is a learning opportunity — to hear new ideas from others and to learn more about fellow team members.

We believe that our commitment to learning is visible to our residents and their families. Satisfaction surveys reinforce this belief.

Continuing education is important for our residents as well. I have always felt that once one stops learning, one begins to die — at least intellectually. Our community programming has grown in substance and breadth during the past 20 years. We used to refer to resident programming as The Four "B"s: birthday, bingo, bridge



*Joe Anderson
President, Seniority, Inc.*

and bible. Today's residents expect — and deserve — something more challenging. That's where continuing education and resident programming intersect.

Residents benefit from "brain fitness" and they benefit from having team member support and encouragement to continue their learning. We encourage family members to add to the learning environment. Sometimes we automatically associate wheelchairs and walkers with mental decline, but that wheelchair-bound resident might be the sharpest mind in the community.

In summary: always keep Learning! Keep your mind — and the minds of our residents — fully engaged every day.

ADMINISTRATOR HONORED FOR EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE

A face painting activity ignited Courtney McLaughlin's passion for senior living in 1998.

"The first community I worked at had a field day, and I saw tears of joy on residents' faces as team members and volunteers painted clowns, cats and butterflies," says McLaughlin, now executive director at two Oklahoma memory support communities — Belfair of Shawnee in Shawnee and Belfair of McAlester in McAlester. "It was a simple activity, but it left such a memorable impression."

As a teenager, though, McLaughlin never imagined a career in senior living. Encouraged by his parents to volunteer, he pulled weeds, served in the cafeteria and called bingo games at a family owned retirement and skilled care community in Fort Worth, Texas.

"I didn't want to be there, and I swore I would never work in senior living at the time," he recalls.

McLaughlin moved to Dallas to sell real estate after graduating from college in 1994. He developed relationships with assisted living providers because many



Courtney with team members.

of his clients needed help finding housing for their aging parents.

Recruited by Atria Senior Living for marketing support in 1997, McLaughlin worked for several companies and grew his professional skills over the next several years, first handling marketing

and public relations and later shifting into sales and operations. He moved to Oklahoma in 2004 and joined Seniority as an executive director in 2014.

"At first I was reluctant to work in senior housing, but I began to understand how every day was an opportunity to provide joy and happiness to residents," he says.

McLaughlin hopes to spark that same passion in all of his team members. That's why he found Seniority Spirit, the company's hospitality initiative, particularly impressive.

"It takes committed team members who really believe in what they're doing to create exceptional environments

for older adults," he says. "So I began imagining how Seniority Spirit could inspire team members to make a difference for residents and their families."

In recognition of his commitment, the Oklahoma Assisted Living Association (OKALA) honored McLaughlin

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TEAM MEMBERS BENEFIT FROM ONLINE EDUCATION

Pamela Davis has a personal motivation for studying Alzheimer's and other types of dementia through Seniority University.

"My grandfather has memory loss," says Davis, concierge at Fresno, California's Cottonwood Court. "So I enjoy taking classes about how to better interact with people. I've learned a lot about how to deliver the best possible care through this training."

Whether assisting residents or their own families, other team members agree: The free online university is just one way that Seniority helps team members deliver exceptional care.

Every team member takes customized online classes through Seniority University, Davis says. Caregivers, for instance, might learn how to prevent falls and injuries, while executive directors may study elder abuse or resident rights.

"I've discovered the importance of getting to know individuals and understanding how they're feeling, even if they can't easily express themselves," she says.

Elsy Rivas uses Seniority University to renew her certified nursing assistant (CNA) license every two years. She appreciates the ability to continue her education despite her busy schedule as a resident assistant at Nikkei Senior Gardens in Arleta, California.

"It's easy and accessible anywhere, which means we can always continue to learn," she says.

In addition to online education, team members gather every morning for a daily huddle, where they cover an educational topic and share special moments in their work.

These learning opportunities benefit residents and team members, Davis says. She's discovered more about people's behavior through continuing education.

"Everyone is different, so it's up to us to learn as much as possible to provide individual care," she says.

ADMINISTRATOR HONORED FOR EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE Continued from Cover

with the Administrator of the Year award on April 21.

"I can't think of anyone more dedicated to this profession and deserving of this award than Courtney," says Melissa Holland, OKALA's executive director.

McLaughlin builds lasting, genuine relationships with everyone, says Marci Minor, Belfair's business office manager.

"Courtney's passion and dedication to providing exceptional care for seniors is unwavering," she says. "His consistent quality and valued service is unlike any I have ever seen. We are so lucky to have him here at Belfair and could not imagine a better person to be the best administrator in Oklahoma!"

McLaughlin has learned a lot about seniors since volunteering as a teenager.

"We are all still individuals, even if we need extra support," he says. "None of us are ever old inside."

Does Face-To-Face Matter?

A smile, handshake or discussion over coffee: How much does face-to-face communication matter?

In-person meetings are gaining renewed importance, despite the fact that more people are conducting business and studying online.

Students enrolled in online courses missed the social interaction with peers and instructors, according to research from the Akron Beacon Journal. And the global research firm Oxford Economics found that ev-

ery dollar invested in business travel results in \$12.50 in added revenues and \$3.80 in new profits.



What's the solution? Promote individual and meaningful interaction, even when face-to-face communication isn't available, argues Nate Sleeter, columnist for InsideHigherEd.

"Online interactions are not necessarily worse — just different," he says.

ENROLL IN FREE EDUCATION

An introduction to finance, fundamentals of music theory and critical perspectives on management — these are some of the free classes anyone can take through Coursera [www.coursera.org], which offers hundreds of online courses through top-ranked, international universities.

More than 12 million people use the service, which offers most courses on fixed schedules with video lectures, weekly exercises and exams. Students can pay to receive an optional certificate for completing the requirements.

Similar ventures, such as Udacity [www.udacity.com] and EdX [www.edx.org], also provide free education through partnerships with Ivy League universities.

