



## Figuring Out the Best Method to Minimize Falls and Elopements

By Pam McDonald

It's a fact of life – in senior living communities, residents sometimes fall and they sometimes wander away. I believe all communities take precautions to minimize such events and the possible harm that can result, but some methods used are just better than others.

Marjorie Todd is the Chief Operating Officer for Highgate Senior Living, which offers independent and assisted living as well as memory care in communities in Arizona, Montana, Washington, and California. She believes [Blue Willow Systems](#), a Senior Housing Forum partner, is an extremely effective fall and elopement detection, location, and notification method.

She says, “Before using Blue Willow System, we were using standard door alarms, pendants, and room alert buttons, as well as hiring more staff to keep their eyes directly on our residents . . . My immediate safety needs were to have a way for my staff to respond faster when a fall occurs.”

### How Blue Willow Systems Works

Blue Willow Systems combines wearable resident wristbands with sensors placed throughout the community. The sensors transmit signals that are processed by sophisticated software programming.

When wandering or a fall is indicated, the system automatically sends alerts to caregivers via both mobile devices and desktop computers. All the data and reports are stored in the cloud for staff workflow management.

“Each day that goes by,” Marjorie explains, “the system evolves and continues to get better and better. [It] ‘learns’ and is more accurate in understanding each residents’ movements and what is a fall for each individual resident.” Marjorie points out that the system can distinguish “a fall from just a resident help request.”

## Partnering With Blue Willow

“At Highgate, we take a holistic approach to caring for our residents . . .” Marjorie notes. “Blue Willow Systems matches our brand . . . [the] non-invasive nature of what we offer our residents and how we care for them. They are a great partner. Their entire team is aligned with us as people caring for human lives,” she says.

“I decided to install Blue Willow Systems in Great Falls, Montana . . . and they worked so closely with us as their primary Pilot. [This] community is a place [where] a resident with dementia, wandering outside, could be a matter of life and death. It can be a very harsh place for a senior to live.”

She notes that the Montana community also is where she has her most diverse staff from all generations, as well as the greatest number of staff who don’t use technology, even email.

## Results So Far

“My greatest surprise was from my staff, our residents, and their families . . . quickly adopting the system. Our residents didn’t resist, at all, wearing the BlueBands. Those with dementia seem to find it familiar, like a watchband . . . [while] our completely aware residents understand it is there to help them.

“People make a decision to move their loved one to a community for a variety of reasons – mostly peace of mind. We now have a level of credibility using Blue Willow Systems, to prove we are caring. We now have a way to effectively measure and monitor outcome for resident care.”

Marjorie concludes, “We cannot prevent falls, but with Blue Willow Systems we can start to see patterns of falls, patterns of movement, times of day when fall occur or when and if my residents decide to wander. This helps us to be the most effective in caring for them.

“The team at Blue Willow Systems has been so great to work with and we are working with their team to install in our other communities.”



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