



When Senior Living Leaders Give . . .

By Susan Saldibar

I often wonder how many great people there are out there who want to give around the holidays, but never get around to giving at all?

I thought about this after a chat last week with Jacquie Brennan, Vice President of [Vigil Health Solutions](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner). First of all, Jacquie strikes me as a very giving person. She shared a story last year about the recent loss of her mother before Christmas and the void that was (at least partially) filled by her participation in her local Santas for Seniors program. This year Jacquie brought the tags for a local Stocking Stuffers for Seniors program into her office and was overwhelmed by the number of people who wanted to participate but didn't know the program existed. She said it got her thinking about ways to connect senior living communities with those folks with good intentions who may not turn them into action.

So how can you better provide avenues for giving in your community?

Here are some things that you may already be doing or have thought of doing that Jacquie has seen work well:

- **Reach out to your greater community.** As Jacquie says, "There are those folks out there who would like to give but don't know how to do it. Invite those in your greater community to get involved in your programs, whether it's to help your own residents or outreach to others in need."

- **Conduct your own “Santas for Seniors” program, but make it year long.** Most of us know this program in which you pick the name of a senior and get a special Christmas gift for them. If the senior is open to it, you can even meet him or her and develop a relationship. The holidays can be a valuable time to strike up a longer lasting friendship.
- **Let your residents contribute their time and energy to local charities.** Helping others is also good for residents. Many senior living communities channel their residents’ talents and skills into baking or making care packages for local charity. It not only helps those less fortunate, but provides a greater sense of purpose and meaning for residents.
- **Involve your staff in company-wide donation decisions.** Does your team know about the donations your community makes each year? Consider giving them a chance to provide input. It will give them a voice within your organization, but will raise their awareness of donations that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Jacque also observed that nothing is more powerful than for leadership to demonstrate their own “giving heart” during the holidays, not only to their own residents, but to others in the greater community. “Most people will want to help in whatever way they can, sometimes they are just don’t know how,” says Jacque. “By sharing your own story, it may give someone else an idea or inspiration to do the same,” she adds.

What does your community do to encourage and provide avenues for giving during the holiday season? What have you seen work well and how do you include both staff and residents? I bet there are some really creative ideas out there that others would benefit from knowing about. Leave a comment if your community is doing something special to promote giving this holiday season.



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