



## Twilight Zone? No, It's Much Better!

*By Susan Saldibar*

I have never heard of the concept of a “bus to nowhere and everywhere” until the folks at [Sage Age](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner) told me about Bridges by EPOCH, a group of memory care assisted living communities in the greater Boston area and Connecticut. Basically, their “bus to nowhere and everywhere” is a “bus stop” complete with bench, a transit map and bus top sign. The only thing missing is the bus. But, believe it or not, it's taking many residents exactly where they want to go.

My initial reaction was, wow, this reminds me of one of those Twilight Zone episodes; the ones that were really interesting because they had an “existential” tone that made you stop and think.

And the more you learn about it, the cooler the “bus stop” idea is. What the folks at Bridges By EPOCH help us to understand is that, while it may not be you and me, there are plenty of passengers for the “bus to nowhere and everywhere”. Because, what it does is to give individuals with dementia a sense that they can still “go somewhere”. They are not stranded, not boxed in, which can cause a lot of anxiety for those challenged with memory loss. It also provides a springboard for conversation. So, a caregiver might ask a resident sitting at the stop, “Where was your favorite place to visit when you were young?”

While the “bus to nowhere and everywhere” really caught my attention, there are some other cool things Bridges by EPOCH communities are doing as well.

- **Research-Based Design:** Designed to create a homelike environment, there are no long hallways to navigate and lots of cozy areas for quiet time, to be spent reading, listening to music or just relaxing.
- **Smaller, more intimate communities:** There are no more than twenty suites per community. So there is much more of a family feel to it.
- **Melody Connections:** Bridges by EPOCH has done a lot of research into the therapeutic qualities of music. They have created a program that facilitates a resident’s love of music by creating personal playlists for them and providing iPods with headsets to enable each resident to enjoy music from special times in their lives.
- **Continued Care:** Residents are cared for from day one all the way through the remainder of their days with the community.

Innovation, creativity and a willingness to think outside the box could be what’s needed by community operators to survive and thrive in this volatile industry. And I think they’ll also need to demonstrate an authentic desire to provide residents with a life experience built around their needs, not someone else’s needs. Certainly not investors’ needs!

So, it’s encouraging to hear words like those of Alicia Seaver, VP of Memory Care Operations for Bridges by EPOCH in a video. “When you look out the dining room to the courtyard and you see a bus stop, it’s empowering. Because it tells a memory impaired person, ‘You can leave whenever you want’, allowing them to still engage with their community. I find this key to their empowerment.” She adds, “Where are you going today? Where would you like to go today? Getting those conversations going is the answer.” I agree. Do you?

You can learn more about [Bridges by EPOCH](#) and what they’re doing here.



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