



Are Your Communities On Demand or Something Not So Good?

By Susan Saldibar

How accessible is your community? I don't mean "walk through the doors" accessible, but mobile app accessible. In other words, "on demand," like other apps, via a thumb swipe and a tap?

The term “on demand” gets tossed around a lot these days. Movies on demand, live streaming of TV shows on demand, and so on; all from your phone! You may love this idea or hate it. It doesn’t matter. It’s here and now it’s making its way into senior living communities. Are you ready?

I caught up with Miles McCollum, Director of Sales for [LifeShare Technologies](#), (a Senior Housing Forum partner). We talked about their LifeShare Family Mobile App and how both residents and family members are using it to get much coveted “on demand” access to everything going on in the community, wherever they are, 24/7. And it makes sense as the smartphone continues its move towards outpacing laptops and tablets to become the de facto standard for accessing the internet. And, as [Pew research](#) points out, smartphones are rising in popularity among older generations. 31% of 75-79-year-olds own smartphones. And while the percentage drops to 17% for age 80 and older, the percentage continues to increase, especially as senior living communities provide more technology learning opportunities for residents.

Miles tells me he is seeing much greater adoption of their mobile app by senior living communities, especially as they continue to roll out new features. Here are a few ways residents and families are using LifeShare's Family Mobile App:

- **Keep up to date.** For all the obvious reasons, having 24/7 access right from your phone to all that is happening inside the community provides the ultimate visibility. For residents, they can know they have the latest information, even when there are schedule changes; something virtually impossible to do with paper calendars. Families of residents can use the app to instantly have a window on everything happening in the community.
- **Be more involved.** Families tell Miles that having access to all the activities and menus gives them the means to get more involved. In short, mom or dad can't hide behind their walls anymore. Now sons and daughters know what's going on. "It gives them some added 'ammunition' to get a loved one more involved in activities," Miles tells me. "They can say, 'Mom, I can see that they have movie night tonight and are showing your favorite film. Are you going to go down and watch it?'" And, instead of hunting around for a paper calendar, a resident can simply open the app on their smartphone and see what's on the dinner menu or when an activity is scheduled.
- **Planning for calls and visits.** Using the app, residents can coordinate with family members on visits and phone calls. Family members can check activities before going to visit mom or dad. They know what's happening at any given moment so that they can time their call or visit accordingly. If there is a change to any activities, they'll see the update in real time, rather than getting all the way to the community only to find that a schedule change gets in the way of a visit.

I asked Miles about resident adoption of the app and he relayed a recent call he got from a resident at one of their client communities. The resident told him that he was having coffee with a friend who pulled out his phone and was checking all the activities planned for the day. When he asked how he "did that", the friend said it was the LifeShare mobile app and that it's free for all residents and family members to download. "So, I walked him through downloading the app, and gave him the PIN to sign in," Miles says. "While doing so, he got so excited and expressed his gratitude that he could now look at his phone for the events, instead of trying to find his printed calendar every day." Moments like those make it all worthwhile, Miles tells me.

Family members also tell Miles that the app has given them a peace of mind they didn't have before, especially those who may live remotely. "They can see, at a glance, what activities are in progress and what meal their loved one is having," Miles says. It's a way of keeping connected to their loved one, he tells me. "It's an important resource which we are happy to provide to our client communities. It makes us feel good because it's making a big difference to families, just knowing it's there, ready and waiting for them to use," he adds.

LifeShare makes their Family Mobile App available for anyone to try out so you can see it in action for yourself. You can find out more about it [here](#).



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