



What Makes an Aging Experience Iconic?

5 Essentials to Ensure Your Residents are Happy, Healthy, and Thriving

Iconic (n.): widely known and acknowledged, especially for distinctive excellence

Society assigns the term “iconic” to the best of the best: Beyoncé, Lord of the Rings, Meryl Streep, and deep-dish pizza (we’re willing to stake our reputation on this one). These people and products are iconic because they’re a cut above the rest. They exceed our expectations and inspire progress and innovation.

But when we asked ourselves what makes the experience of aging iconic, we realized there were no common cultural touchstones. So we took it upon ourselves to create the definition. An iconic aging experience includes...

- Meaningful connections throughout the community
- Ample opportunities to build community
- Deep family relationships
- Holistic wellness
- Convenience at every turn

Here, we explore how these elements manifest for those in senior living – and the role Icon plays in enabling communities to deliver the highest quality of life to those in their golden years.



1. Meaningful Relationships Throughout the Community

A great aging experience means staying in touch with the people you love. But an iconic aging experience involves not just maintaining relationships. It means deepening existing relationships and creating new ones. Specifically...

New residents are welcomed by existing community members

When older adults join senior living communities, they're changing nearly everything about their daily lives, from the place they sleep to the people they see. And though many residents have had decades to perfect it, making friends isn't easy at any age. In an iconic aging experience, every member of the community feels welcomed with open arms.

One way to make this easier: online member directories that let residents get in touch with one another and form relationships with those who share similar interests.



You can just scroll to see who the newest people are! [The member directory] helps me keep an eye out so I can say hi and welcome them.

Resident at All Seasons Ann Arbor



There are countless opportunities to share hobbies and form new ones

Residents join communities after years of developing and refining their own hobbies, from scrapbooking to winning fantasy sports leagues. An iconic aging experience is one where it's easy for residents to find others who enjoy those hobbies.

Senior living technology, like our Community Engagement platform, makes this simple by centralizing everything residents want to share and view, whether it's

dining reservations or invites to the weekly poker night.



I put the book club meetings on [Community Engagement] and they're well-attended because of the platform.

Resident at All Seasons Ann Arbor



It's easy to keep up with what's happening in the community

Maintenance requests. Dining reservations. Menu options. Choir rehearsals. Community announcements. Mail deliveries.

That's just a smattering of things residents need to monitor on any given day. It's a lot. An iconic aging experience means that information is easy for everyone to access and consume. And while word of mouth may travel fast, there's a faster way for residents to get updates on their to-dos: voice assistant technology.

In fact, during the pilot programs at Arcadia and 15 Craigside – two communities we serve – 91 percent of residents used Icon's voice technology at least once a week. One resident even noted:



[Voice technology] is an excellent service, especially for those suffering from physical challenges.

Resident at Arcadia Family of Companies



People remember important milestones

Whether it's an anniversary or a birthday, it's heartwarming to hear others wish you

well. These moments make a senior living community *feel* like a community. Still, with hundreds of residents in a typical community, those “Happy Birthday” wishes add up.

Our [bi-directional communication platform](#) takes that calendar management off staff members’ plates. Once your team has added resident milestones, our platform automatically sends the “Happy Anniversary!” messages. That ensures every resident feels seen on their special day(s) *and* helps reduce your staff workload, which also means...

There's time to chat

You can’t have an iconic senior living experience unless residents, loved ones, and staff are fully integrated into the community. There has to be time to regularly check in and hear how everyone is doing. But with jam-packed days, it’s tough for staff to foster meaningful relationships with each resident and family member.

This is where our [Family Engagement platform](#) comes in. With it, family members can independently check everything from when the community cookout is happening to the pilates classes their loved ones have attended. Yes, this saves staff time. But it also gives families the information they want – instantly.



When families want to hear more about their loved one’s care, our platform gives them a way to directly message staff. Not only does this build the staff-family

relationship, but it's also one reason family members from [communities like The Monarch at Richardson](#) sing its praises:



**Family Engagement is a great platform
for sharing information!**

The Monarch at Richardson



Iconic senior living communities, first and foremost, keep everyone connected.



2. Ample Opportunities to Build Community

Senior living isn't about shuffleboard and bingo – it's about pursuing passions and building long-lasting relationships. Just look at the [growth in the active adult market](#). Older adults want...

- Relationship-focused living.
- Access to one another and to communal spaces (fitness centers, houses of worship, dining establishments, etc.).

But social participation isn't just vital for the active adult segment – [it's vital for everyone's healthy aging](#).

A satisfactory senior living experience gives older adults fun events to attend. An iconic senior living experience [offers older adults compelling activities](#) and the tools to organize and engage with them independently.

In other words, engaging events aren't the end-all-be-all for building community; they're one piece. Below, we'll sketch a few scenarios of what an iconic senior living experience can look like for residents and staff.

Freely planning and organizing events

Say a group of residents discover they're alumni of the same university. They all keep up with that university's sports programs and want to organize watching parties. These niche interests might not have broad enough appeal to warrant staff-led programming, [so it's up to the residents to organize](#) and drum up interest in the game-day shenanigans.

That's a lot easier when you have a Community Engagement portal. With it, residents can manage their own internal groups and committees. That means they can share the time of the watch party, a description of the event (is it a regular season game or part of a tournament?), and who's planning to go.



[Community Engagement] is quick. It's easy. You can check what's going on and when something is happening.

Resident from All Seasons Senior Living



Enjoying content on demand

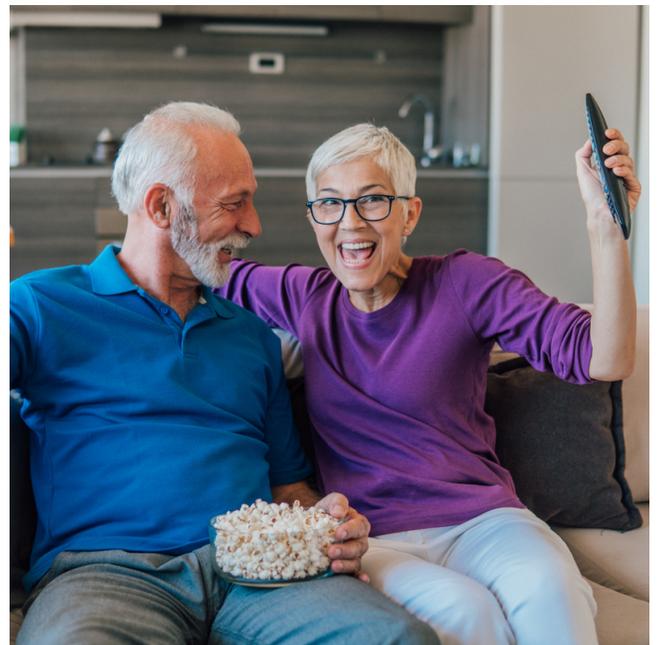
Whether due to illness or because they're traveling with family, residents aren't always able to attend events hosted by the community. Maybe it's an aerobics class. Maybe it's a choir rehearsal. The point is, these events often become part of a routine, and missing out on them can alienate residents from their schedules and each other.

An iconic aging experience is one that engages every resident, regardless of ability or location. That's made easy with technology [like in-room TV channels](#) and engagement platforms that live stream broadcast on-demand content for residents to enjoy wherever they are.



The recent move to In-Room TV and Digital Displays from Icon has been a perfect opportunity for us to streamline and improve communication with our residents, associates, and visitors.

Mark, Director of Technology at Life Enriching Communities



Creating programming personalized to your community

Every senior living community is unique. Sure, there are some events that are bound to be a hit almost anywhere (who doesn't love a [good holiday cookie contest?](#)). But older adults aren't a monolith. Your community might be filled with a high number of bird watchers, for instance. And it's up to staff to translate these interests into events that excite and delight residents.

Tools like [Calendar Central](#) and Community Engagement make it possible for staff members to track the popularity of community-led events. Noticed a high turnout for your [summer stargazing night?](#) Calendar Central will confirm that hunch and break down who attended the event, the average attendance of events in your community, and more.



Icon streamlines calendar building. I love how responsive it is. If I change the schedule residents can see that in real-time.

Staff Member at All Seasons Senior Living



3. Deep Family Relationships

Relationships with family are important at any phase in life, from graduating to retiring to, yes, moving to a senior living community. Each of these milestones changes the relationships people have with their loved ones.

With the [impending silver tsunami](#), more family members than ever before will need to discuss long-term care plans with older loved ones. Moving to a senior living community is a massive change. But done effectively, it can deepen familial connections. Here are three reasons why:

1. **It lets family be family.** Caring for an older loved one isn't easy. There are [often multiple chronic conditions](#) to stay on top of, fitness regimens to manage, and routines that require strict adherence. When families make the decision to move their loved one into a senior living community, they do so with the knowledge that their loved one is now in a place that will fully support their physical, emotional, social, and mental needs.
2. **It helps loved ones keep in touch more regularly.** If an older loved one has lived on their own, it's likely that a community's staff is able to keep them in touch with their family more often than before. In other words, with the support of senior living staff, families may see and speak with each other for more than just the holidays or milestones like anniversaries.
3. **It expands older adults' social circles.** It might seem like forming new relationships comes at the expense of the relationship residents have with family. But that's not true. Being around like-minded individuals improves older adults' mental health. And when older loved ones are in good spirits, that makes it easier for them and their families to connect. It also means families don't need to worry whether their loved one is socially isolated.

Of course, to ensure the move to senior living is positive and deepens relationships, communities need the right systems in place. It's one thing to say you'll offer daily updates on an older adult's wellbeing. It's another entirely to share those updates in a way that's easy for staff to send and families to read.

An iconic senior living experience involves the use of technology to strengthen the

bonds between family members and older loved ones.

Maybe that's with Family Engagement platforms that confidentially share wellness check information.

Maybe it's with bi-directional communication platforms that allow staff to text, call, or email families with updates on their loved ones or on emergencies in the community (building evacuations, lockdowns, etc.).

With the right senior living technology, there's no wondering whether Grandma's arthritis has been acting up, or if she's been attending yoga classes. Families have a direct line to their loved ones and to the people caring for them.



If a new resident has made a friend or attended their first activity, I'll send a photo to the family.

Lois, Programs Director at Benchmark at Forge Hill



Remember, family members are an integral piece of a senior living community. And with technology, staff can loop them in fully – so they feel like a part of the community.



4. Holistic Wellness

There's been a massive trend around wellness-driven lifestyles in senior living – [three out of five senior living communities](#) plan to base their care on a wellness lifestyle in the next year. This makes sense, too, given the context of what we're seeing in senior living more generally. Older adults want to ensure their golden years are as fulfilling as possible. Wellness plays a key part in that.

Establishing this emphasis on wellness [takes more than offering the occasional meditation class](#), though. It requires a holistic approach. What is that? Put simply, it factors in all [eight dimensions of wellness](#):



Physical



Intellectual



Emotional



Social



Spiritual



Vocational



Financial



Environmental

In an iconic aging experience, residents have opportunities to focus on each dimension of wellness, whether that's by attending exercise classes (physical), journaling sessions (emotional), or chapel services (spiritual).

For communities to properly facilitate these wellness options, though, they need the right infrastructural support. That means support that streamlines staff workflows and securely records all necessary health information for residents.

You might be noticing a theme here: senior living technology can foster iconic aging

experiences in various ways. Yes, staff may use the Family Engagement platform to send photos of loved ones at the community's Secret Santa event. But staff can also use Family Engagement's HIPAA-compliant messaging app to directly share resident health updates with families.



Some residents' family members are concerned about social isolation, so they use the Family Engagement platform as a way to encourage the family member into going out.

Staff Member at All Seasons Senior Living



In an iconic aging experience, staff can also enhance wellness offerings by tracking resident behaviors.

Say your life enrichment team notices a formerly engaged resident has stopped coming to community-led events. With Calendar Central's attendance data, your team can verify that suspicion and choose whether they need to follow up with the resident or their family.

Or maybe you check attendance data and find that, in general, residents usually stop attending flexibility training courses after the first few sessions. This might signal that your team needs to change the course itself.

For an aging experience to go from satisfactory to iconic, your team needs resident data. And they need a platform that makes it easy to translate this data into strategies that promote holistic wellness for every resident.



5. Convenience at Every Turn

Whether older adults are moving to communities to finally get out of landscaping duties or to find more accessible accommodations, convenience is vital.

But offloading errands and chores aren't the end goal in an iconic senior living experience. An iconic senior living experience is one that delivers convenience so people feel free to do the things they love, from finally chipping away at that reading list to traveling with friends to local art exhibits.

We're seeing more [older adults use – and want – technology](#). A huge driver of that demand is the convenience technology offers. But the right technology doesn't just save residents and staff time. It also makes life easier. Here are a few ways that might happen for residents:

- Checking everything from activity calendars to maintenance requests on one easy-to-navigate portal.
- Using voice technology to check the weather, community announcements, and the Jeopardy! question that's been giving you fits.
- [Turning off the lights or closing the blinds](#) with the tap of a button via your smart home device.

This convenience extends to staff. And when staff can save time, residents get better care.

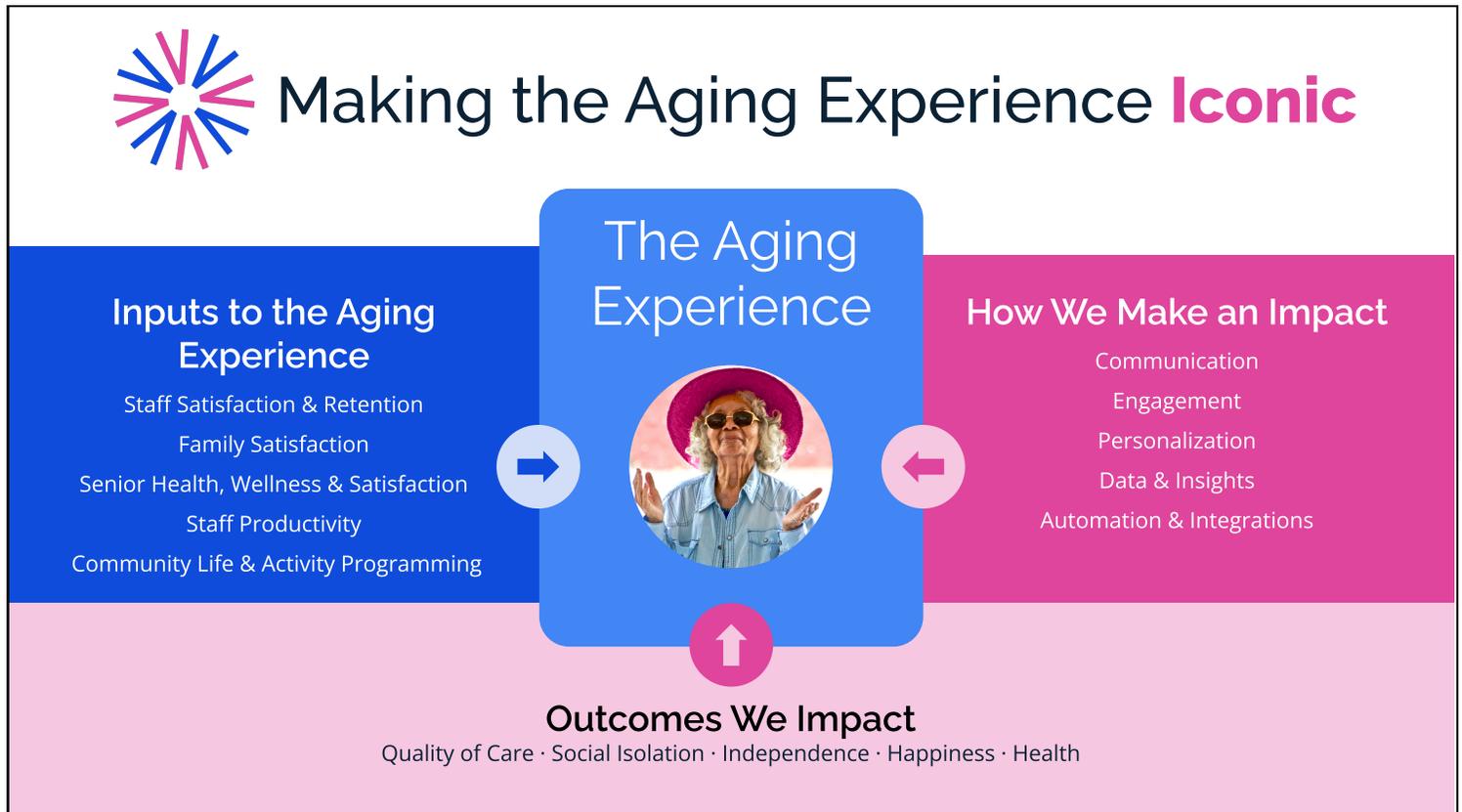


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Staff Member at All Seasons Senior Living



It's helpful to think of this technology as producing a domino effect. For instance, smart home technology gives residents the ability to regulate their own environments. When residents can regulate their own environments, staff don't need to turn off lights or turn down the air conditioning in every resident's room. This saves staff time.



The same logic applies to community engagement platforms. They allow residents to independently check dining menus, mail deliveries, and maintenance requests. Because residents can look over this information, staff can dedicate the time they save to administering high-touch care, crafting stimulating life enrichment calendars, and building more rapport with residents.

Another way of thinking about technology for older adults: it streamlines the work that needs to be done, so residents and staff can do the things they love.

In an Iconic Aging Experience, Every Community Member Feels Engaged and Supported

If there's a broad takeaway here it's this: an iconic aging experience isn't just felt by residents. Staff feels it. Family feels it. And it's up to senior living communities to cultivate that iconic aging experience – by including and supporting their members.

Maybe that's with on-demand life enrichment programming. Maybe that's with smart home technology. Maybe it's with "Happy Birthday!" messages. Or, even better, it's all three (and then some).

This inclusion and support pays dividends for care and satisfaction.

When staff feels supported – and saves time with senior living technology – that helps them do their jobs more effectively and efficiently.

When families gain visibility into the lives of their loved ones via family engagement technology, they feel more at ease.

When residents use technology for older adults, they can live their lives more authentically and enthusiastically.

A senior living community strengthens and grows when every member (staff, residents, and families) can connect with one another. That's why we created Icon – to build bridges between every part of a senior living community.



Having Icon is a great selling point. The senior population moving into our communities today uses a lot of tech, and their children rely on it. It's what they're searching for when they look for a senior living community.

Samantha Prinster, Director of Marketing and Communications at Cedarhurst Senior Living



Interested in delivering an iconic aging experience to your community? [Reach out.](#)
We'd love to help!