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Implementing Tech for Seniors Wins Friendship Village National Awards

St. Louis, MO (December 2, 2022) - Finding the ways technology fits well into our lives is always a challenge, especially for our senior population. In order for seniors to adopt it, new tech must feel truly helpful and never just be the latest gizmo or gadget that feels like a burden to use.

Recently, the two [Friendship Village](#) senior living communities in the St. Louis region have been implementing new tools to keep their residents healthier, happier and more connected to the world around them. And this successful integration has earned Friendship Village national Gold and Silver awards at this year's [McKnight Tech Awards and Summit](#).

The Gold award was for Friendship Village's extensive use of [VirtuSense's VSTBalance](#) technology. VSTBalance utilizes an Artificial Intelligence unit with sensors to record data and evaluate a person's fall-risk in a simple, 15-minute assessment. Minimal training is required for staffers to use VSTBalance and evaluations can be done without having to leave the campus. Using the collected data, an action plan involving specific, simple activities is immediately created to help boost strength and agility and reduce the likelihood of future falls.



Friendship Village Wellness Coordinator Colleen Pratt with resident Alverna Nary giving an agility assessment using the VSTBalance (CQ) unit (shown in background) at Friendship Village.

“Adding a few easy exercises done in the home can quickly help them become more steady and confident on their feet,” said Friendship Village Wellness Coordinator Colleen Pratt. “And when a resident is less fearful, they are often more active, happy and engaged within the community.”

[According to the Centers for Disease Control](#), in 2019 about 3 million falls among older adults required emergency room visits—resulting in more than 34,000 deaths in people 65 and older.

“Seniors know how traumatic falls can be, so taking steps to prevent them can be very empowering,” said Carmen Fronczack, Friendship Village Chief Revenue Officer.

Friendship Village also received The Silver award from McKnight for the community’s use of the Amazon Alexa-based program, [SmartCompanion](#). Alexa is familiar to many, and the new SmartCompanion program pairs seamlessly with Alexa to cater specifically to seniors, their families and caregivers.

SmartCompanion gives residents hands-free access to phone and video calling, 24/7 emergency response, daily medication and social/activity reminders, and entertainment. Beyond keeping them informed, it helps seniors stay engaged and empowered—especially those with sight or other physical impairments. The program also becomes a sort of “virtual roommate” to reduce social isolation while also increasing the quality of life for the residents and their families. Friendship Village is also using SmartCompanion for [FV at Home](#), giving home health clients an instant sense of security and the knowledge that their caregiver is a simple “Alexa?” question away.

According to [data cited by the CDC](#), nearly one fourth of adults 65 and older are considered to be socially isolated. Older adults are at increased risk for loneliness and social isolation because they are more likely to face factors such as living alone, the loss of family and friends, chronic illness and hearing loss.”

On average, Friendship Village users engage SmartCompanion 84 times per week, with some using it as often as 400 times per week. On the staff side, Friendship Village’s nursing staff logged over 100 uses at a single nursing station during a sample week.

“As someone who helps oversee the welfare of so many residents, using technology like VirtuSense and SmartCompanion is the sort of thing that brings so much peace of mind to seniors as they enjoy their retirement years with us,” said Carmen Fronczack. “I think this approach to using this technology sets us apart and we look forward the next great tool to improve the lives of others.”

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Additional photos can be found here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/cxrdmcg144pnii3/VSTBalance%20Unit.jpg?dl=0>

Friendship Village Senior Services is a faith-based, not-for-profit organization devoted to providing a full range of senior living options. As the only provider of the Life Care program in the St. Louis metro area, Friendship Village guarantees residents access to all levels of health care—all on one campus—at a predictable cost for life. Friendship Village continually invests in wellness programs and technology to keep residents living well and independent, longer. From independent living, to assisted living, memory care, skilled nursing and in-home care, Friendship Village continues to build the future of senior living.