

Senior Independent Living: Hillary's Story

(Article take from aplaceformom.com)



It's 7:30 am on a Friday morning. Hillary Kenyon, 72, has already decided that today will be a Nordic ski day. So the resident of Touchmark at Mt. Bachelor Village, a senior independent living community in Bend, Oregon heads twenty minutes away to Mt. Bachelor for a couple of hours of cross country skiing. Heavy clouds have discouraged her from heading to the chairlifts, but it's no big loss. She has already skied three days this week.

"I haven't found the time to sit down for the last 50 years," the Connecticut native explains. "And since I moved to Touchmark two years ago, I have more to do than ever."

Rigorous activities like cycling, hiking, and skiing, once reserved for athletes' decades younger, are gaining popularity with seniors living in communities. Gone are the days when retirees fill their days with shuffleboard and flower arranging. Touchmark at Mt. Bachelor Village has long distance cycling clubs, downhill, and cross-country skiing groups, even clubs for mountain biking enthusiasts.

"I tried the really hilly trails," says Kenyon, who rides her hybrid mountain bike a few times a week, "but decided all those bumps were no longer for me."

Not every resident of Touchmark and other resort-style [retirement communities](#) plans his or her day around cycling and snowshoeing. Fitness remains a touchy subject for many of Touchmark's residents, especially those who have never considered exercise a leisure activity, says Dr. Marge Coalman, EdD, Director of the Full Life Wellness & Life Enrichment Program for all of Touchmark's properties. "I have interviewed many men over the age of seventy-five about what they like to do and they will just look at me, because all they have done, all their lives, is work." But organizations like the International Council of Active Aging, of which Coalman is also a board member, are working hard to change this behavior.

"We have to work exercise into their goals," Coalman, a graduate of Stanford's Exercise Physiology for the Aging doctoral program, explains. "We don't even use the term "exercise"; we speak of fitness.

"Active aging is definitely changing. At Touchmark, we sit down with our new residents and ask them what they plan to do physically with their next thirty years. We have people in their 60's who are taking up snowshoeing, cross country and even downhill skiing, residents who move here and become exercise fiends."

Another trend in senior independent living communities is the lowering age of residents. The average at Touchmark's communities, which span from the Pacific Northwest to Wisconsin, was in the mid-eighties a few years ago. Today, there's an influx of people aged 55 to 65 who are choosing to move to these environments, to connect with a peer group of lifelong learners.

"As this younger group moves in, we've needed to modify our programs, to change our campus by adding espresso machines and other amenities," Coalman adds. "The people who we see moving into our communities share a great interest in remaining active. They are also active volunteers within the community and within the neighborhood schools."

The baby boomers have still yet to appear in senior independent living developments in really large numbers, but many resort-style retirement communities are under construction in anticipation of their arrival. Central Ohio's White Oak community will occupy 27 acres and boast luxury condominiums for seniors over 62 years old, according to a recent article by Tim Tresslar in the Dayton Daily News. The project will feature walking trails and a timber frame lodge, and will feature suites as well as free standing cottages and villas. The community will even offer a horticultural center for its gardening members.

Though there won't be shuttles to a world class ski resort at White Oak like there are at Touchmark at Mt. Bachelor, residents will still stay plenty active with an indoor-outdoor pool and full gymnasium.

"What leads people to environments like ours is the draw of community," Coalman says. "The social connectivity is a great contributor to remaining physically fit."

In Bend, Kenyon has adjusted her activities to reflect the interests of the friends she has made since moving here from across the country to be closer to her daughter's family. "I've taken up snowshoeing because it's something I can share with my friends who don't ski," she explains. "I also cross country ski with friends from my neighborhood. When I do ski downhill it is often with my daughter and granddaughter."

Kenyon lives in a two-bedroom cottage, a short walk from the community's main lodge and activity center. It is one of several living arrangements that is typical of resort-style senior independent living communities. Cottages are ideal for single retirees; there are larger homes for couples; and all three

lodges feature suites as well as common areas, art studios, and multipurpose rooms for movies, lectures, and other group activities.

“Our seniors are definitely getting the message that they’re going to be here for a while,” Coalman says, “that if they want to stay engaged, they have to take the initiative. Wellness is not a spectator sport.”

RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME SERVICES

Also called personal care homes, adult family homes, and residential care facilities for the elderly, this is a live-in housing and care option for people who do not have skilled medical needs, such as a feeding tube or daily injections. Generally, a residential care home provides the following:

- A room, either private or shared
- Meals
- Varying levels of assistance with daily living activities, such as toileting, bathing, and even money and health care management
- Custodial care, such as laundry, housekeeping, and transportation to doctor appointments
- Reminders to take medications or actual medication administering.

Adult family homes “are wonderful for individuals who are looking for a smaller-home-like setting,” says Charlotte. “They’ll eat home-cooked meals in the kitchen. [The home] will have a front porch or back porch and a garden. [It] will offer lots of one-on-one tender loving care.”

Article taken from aplaceformom.com

In the Houston area there are many residential care homes and facilities as well as senior residential communities such as Eagle’s Trace. It is well worth researching all your options and not ruling anything out until you have looked at each one and how their amenities will benefit your loved one.