



CAREERS IN AGING WEEK (CIAW) IDEA FILE

How-tos, Timelines, and Suggestions
For Careers in Aging Week and Beyond

CAREERS IN AGING WEEK IS APRIL 19-25, 2020

HOW AND WHY TO MAKE THE OUTREACH EFFORT

Most of us are concerned with getting direct hires, immediately. But the goal beyond that is to engage partners to build a pipeline of job-ready candidates today and into the future.

To do this, you'll need to share stories, open your community, or get out to the neighborhoods around your communities. This booklet provides ideas on some activities you can do and how to implement them in ways that won't take all your time. Some of these are good for communities and some work better on the corporate level.

If this is the first time you've worked with a school or other partner, you may be starting with a one-off visit, event, or activity. On the other hand, if you already have a history together, this is your chance to extend your partnership.

Either way, you want to open the door to a lasting, mutually beneficial relationship. Not everyone will stick around for the whole journey.

But trust that everything you do will make a difference. You'll open eyes to new possibilities, help change stereotypes about senior living and aging, and show how senior living contributes to your greater community's quality of life.

Start with learning to tell a story, then move to a visit or activity at your community, then move to more complex activities such as job shadowing. Or start with a social media post, then telling your story at an event or job fair or going online with an "Ask Me Anything". Or start with a visit to a classroom, then a visit to the community, then more in-depth activities. Or do just one activity.

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FIRST THINGS FIRST

Ideally, do this prep by the end of February

Download the [Senior Living Works Engagement Toolkit](#). This has materials you'll need to plan, promote, and hold an activity or event.

Talk to your supervisor. With some providers, some of these activities are decided and planned at the provider corporate level. Other providers have particular best practices and guidelines they want all communities to follow. You want full buy-in, especially with anything involving media or public officials. So check in first. You can also ask about what resources may be available to you (training, materials, swag, travel reimbursement, etc.). Talk about your plan, how much time it will require, who needs to approve it, what kinds of templates or processes for activities you can use, and who else might be involved.

Confirm and deploy all proper security and safety practices. Safety first! When hosting a community visit, work with the security team to ensure your community practices are followed. You may need a list of visitor names, or visitors may need to be reminded to bring identification. The "Invitation Approach" (page 7) will help with this. You may want to give a reminder to visitors that they are entering people's homes.

Team up to choose an activity. Brainstorm and plan with a small group. You'll want to include sales and public relations or community relations directors, and include dining, housekeeping, and maintenance if the activity will have an impact on their work. People who have been teachers, in marketing, or in real estate could make a great contribution. This is a very good opportunity to show employees and residents that they're listened to and that they make a difference. Another great resource is volunteer residents. Consider how they or their families might be involved.

Spruce up social media pages. Tune up your community social media pages and identities, or create a professional social media identity for yourself, where you can share career information without having it get lost in other posts. Join any social media or listservs you think may be good for reaching potential participants in your activities. Local groups are best. Check the rules and environment of each group before posting. Scan a page or two of posts for recent and productive activity by a variety of people and an engaged group leader. Of course, make sure to check your company or organization's social media policy and coordinate with the public relations team.

Make a list of targets. Start creating an invitation or participant list. Comb for contact info of people who have expressed interest in the past. Contact teachers or colleagues who are interested in bringing a class or similar group. Determine good online yet local places to reach your audience—Facebook groups, job boards, college or high school newsletters or online media, and local health care or hospitality professional groups are a few places to investigate.

Get an understudy. Find a partner who can help, so the momentum doesn't stop if you have conferences, time off, travel, etc.

Important reminder: Envision the outcome. Set up a way to track results and to follow up. This can be as simple as a clipboard where you collect names and emails or as elaborate as a data report with charts and graphs.

To know what's right for you, start with your purpose: Do you want a pool of job applicants? Do you want to raise the profile for senior living in general? Do you want more resources to do more next year? Do you want this to be easier for the next person?

And remember, results aren't always in the form of numbers or data. Qualitative results are as important as quantitative.

Depending on what you're after, here are some ideas for tracking and communicating your results:

- Write up a short snapshot, with some data if possible, of your goal areas before doing the activity—like taking a “before” picture of a room you're rearranging. You can't know how far you've come until you know where you started.
- Start creating a small contact list of fellow professionals (teachers, etc.) who share your goals for opening opportunities in senior living. Check in with them individually occasionally or set up regular meetings to get their feedback and ideas for new activities.
- Send a short pulse poll to all participants—a class or a group of visitors—and create a report on results you can share.
- Use social media counting tools to get data on engagement.
- Collect comments to use as testimonials or examples to share within your organization, on your website, or with partner schools.
- Gather results so you can lobby for more resources, use them in advocacy, or apply for grants or funding. Research the kind of support you're looking for first, so you collect the correct results data.
- Share lessons learned with [Argentum's Senior Living Works](#), so we can pass them along!
- Celebrate your results and thank all those who helped make it work!

GET A JUMP ON THESE ACTIVITIES

- **If you'd like a local proclamation**, research what's needed for your city. Some areas require proclamation requests be made up to two months in advance. Check with senior living associations or your organization before going for a state proclamation or one for a large city, to make sure someone else hasn't already done that effort. See a sample on page XX.
- **If you'd like to do a school activity**, decide on what grade level and type of school you'd like to visit. Research two possibilities and get contact names and emails. Look at the school calendars, as well, to select a few dates to propose. Public school and college calendars are usually available online, so you can find a time that's not during vacation or exams. Then make your contact to set up a first meeting. If you already have a relationship with a school, touch base and propose a few dates for them to choose.
- **If you want to do an open house or community visit**, check for good dates for your community and for the audience you're after. You may want to avoid holidays, for instance; or a weekday may be better for a high-school visit. One of the most important parts of these activities is creating your contact and invitation list, so you'll have the right people, and the right number of people.
- **If you want to invite a political leader**, start researching now and make initial contact. Possibilities include a mayor, county or city councilmember, or state or federal lawmaker. next person?

GETTING PEOPLE TO SHOW UP: USE THE INVITATION APPROACH

You've put up plenty of flyers and posted online. Why didn't anyone show up?

Because they need an **invitation**.

It's simple human nature to want to be invited, to want to know what you'll be doing when you get there, to have an idea of the people participating, and to know you can look forward to feeling a sense of a good outcome afterward.

Paying attention to this need is the secret to a successful event. Using an invitation approach rather than blasting out announcements and hoping for the best also lets you better plan for numbers and supplies.

So shape your activities to give visitors a directed experience with a projected outcome—it lowers the stress for all concerned.

Here are some tips:

- Frame announcements as a personal invitation, using “you”-centered language. It makes it more special and prompts a response.
- Realize many don't respond with RSVPs these days. Consider a round of emails or calls in the days before the event just to check.
- Use your applicant tracking list to reach out to job fair participants and people who are working who might be looking for a change.
- Consider using an E-vite or similar service—but choose a simple, professional-looking template.
- Many people of any age don't read email. You might @ people on Twitter with your invitations or send an announcement via Instagram. Whenever you're gathering contact data, ask if texts are OK or how they prefer to receive information.
- Paying for a narrowly targeted Facebook or Instagram ad can sometimes give a good return on investment. (Read the conditions carefully!) Invitations or announcements on LinkedIn are more expensive but can work well, especially for prospects who might be older or seeking professional positions.
- It's probably safe to assume that teachers and administrators do still read emails. To get a good attendance, target teachers in related fields and ask them to offer extra credit for the community visit, or to make the visit a class activity.
- Have a set of inexpensive cards printed with the invitation and a request to go to your website or invitation service to register. You can leave or post these on campus or in local spots when appropriate.
- Set up reminders to registered participants before the event. It's helpful to include information about dress, transportation, parking, whether food will be served, etc.

WHAT ABOUT MEDIA?

See “First Things First: Talk to your supervisor.” It’s very important that media contact be done under guidelines and with full knowledge of your provider company. Be prepared to share and amend your plan as needed. **Collaboration and coordination with the communications or public relations department may be required, and it will also help ensure success.** It’s the communications/public relations corporate department’s job to be sure media, public officials, and other events are created in a way that’s safe and meaningful for all concerned. They have the knowledge base to make things easier.

For Careers in Aging month/week, traditional media, such as a local newspaper or news channel, may or may not be worth exploring, depending on your objectives. Target your planning to your purpose; why do you want to be in a local online or print publication? Will it help you reach your goals? Is there a risk in letting a publication control the story?

Think broadly about media: A high school or college paper article or broadcast may be a great way to reach your audience. A local podcast or talk radio show on area issues or businesses could be another place to raise awareness—and you get to control the narrative.

If you determine you’d like to try for local media coverage, here are some general tips:

- Think like a reader. What would make you click on a story?
 - Sycamore Senior Living Has Open House
 - The Best Jobs No One Has Heard of—and How to Get Them
 - Residents at Sycamore Senior Living Grill Mayor on Transportation Cuts

An open house in itself isn’t news or very interesting. Connect your event to something people care about.

- If you’re inviting a political figure or celebrating a proclamation, you may get media depending on the person, but the general public will probably not be interested. The political figure may bring their own media or public relations, however, and may mention the event on their website.
- Get permissions for photos and interviews straight well beforehand and give media your guidelines. Make clear that these are for preserving dignity and rights of residents.
- Think about lighting, backgrounds, and activities that will make your community look good visually. Standing and posing is a last resort.
- Check with your organization about press releases. They may have samples and styles you can use. But it can be more effective to call or email an individual reporter who has written about employment, elder, or health care issues.
- Try making your first contact a local columnist or opinion writer. They have more latitude on what they cover, often have the most readers, and are some of the most interesting and persuasive writers.
- Local or city magazines can offer good coverage, but they can need to know about your event several months in advance.
- Some publications will publish a press release without editing or changes. They may also print photos. But paying for a news release service does not get a good return on investment; avoid it.
- Get samples and search online for your community’s name for a week or so after the event and add these links to your results measurement.

STORYTELLING TIPS

Telling your story of your experience in senior living, what you love about it, or how you got here is the most powerful tool of engagement you have. Take an hour or two to hone yours, so you'll be ready to share.

Consider who else in the community would be an ideal spokesperson for senior living. Often, we expect this role would fall to the executive director, director of nursing, human resources manager, or other senior professional. While they may be able to do that, someone else might be better able to relate to your target audience. For example, high school nursing assistant students probably will relate to an early-career caregiver. Of course, you'll want to choose carefully for someone who is **positive, enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and dependable**.

Here are some tips from professional speakers and storytellers:

- People are naturally curious. They want to know about you, so be confident.
- Keep it short. You don't have to tell the full timeline. This isn't about repeating your resume, but about engagement. You can share important information about training and experience later.
- If you get really good, you might have a one-minute and a three-minute version of your story. There is no harm in repeating your story to different audiences.
- Think about your story as an "elevator speech"—how you'd describe your job and careers in senior living in a one-minute elevator ride. This is very similar to how you'd do it for a job interview, but for a different audience: Start strong, give the information, and sum it up at the end.
- Practice your story. Say it to yourself in the car, or to a friend. You'll find natural points for emphasis and detail the more you speak the words out loud.
- Start with the "why?" of your story. What do you want listeners to take away from it?
- Use details. How old were you? Did you dress in certain fashions?
- Use an actors' trick: **sense memory**. This means getting people to feel your story by remembering and using sensory details, such as the temperature in an attic room, the taste of a mango, the smell of your grandmother's cookies, the favorite song of someone you care for.
- All emotions welcome. You can share something funny, or sad, or both. But think about why it was funny or sad and draw out that point.
- Struggle makes a story. What did you struggle with? What challenge did you face? How did you get through it? Why did it matter to you to keep trying? What was your lesson or reward?
- Make the first sentence or two something that grabs attention. "I was 16, and I was about to lose what meant the most to me." "Ever since I was 10, I knew that I wanted to X." "Have you ever jumped into the ocean and had a cold wave knock you down? That was what my first day of work was like. But..." "Last week, I met the smallest dog I had ever seen in my life."
- A genuine story from the heart doesn't have to follow any rules. Be true to your own voice.

Here are a few *story prompts*—questions to get you thinking, ones that can evoke memorable details.

- What was your first encounter with older people or senior living? Was it what you expected? Did you take to it immediately?
- Did you have a dream or vision growing up of what you wanted to be? How does your work now fulfill that dream—or did your dream change?
- What's the best thing that happened to you at work last week—or the best thing that happened at work ever?
- Did you ever find yourself applying something you learned at work to a challenge in your life?
- What was your hardest day at work? How did you get through it?
- What's your favorite part of your work shift? Getting coffee with residents in the morning? Saying goodnight? An activity?
- Have you gone through an emergency or natural disaster? This one can be tricky, but it happens—and people should know the range of what they might deal with in this work. See if you can also relate lessons learned or a positive or hopeful outcome.
- Who's your elder hero? What did they teach you that you often use at work?
- What's your favorite movie, TV show, or book—and how does it relate to your work? (Go for something upbeat and not too obscure if you want to use this prompt; "I love all the Star Wars movies, one of the best parts is seeing how the characters age and change...")
- What's your proudest moment in senior living?

COMMUNITY VISIT TIPS

- Intentionally invite small groups of interested and motivated people.
- Give people **something to do** together.
- Keep the time on the short side—two to two-and-a-half hours is good. Leave room for getting in, introductions, set up, and getting out.
- Or, alternatively, plan an intensive immersive day; hold activities and breaks for questions, discussions, and sharing impressions.
- Plan a QUICK icebreaker activity for smaller groups. Don't leave introductions open-ended ("Why don't we each introduce ourselves") or it could run too long or too short.
- You can incorporate the icebreaker with the arrival. For instance, have visitors write on a nametag their name and a description of their role, their personality, or their favorite activity ("nursing student," "bubbly," "travel").
- If visitors are from a single class or group, subtly get them out of their comfort groups by pairing people up, creating small groups at random, and using place cards at dining events.
- Let your community know in advance what's happening and how they can get involved—residents and staff alike. Have specific things for them to do, from the setup to the end, considering their roles, abilities, and stamina. When appropriate have them gather information or results to talk over later.
- Take photos or have others take them when appropriate for resident privacy; you can use them for your results file, community newsletter, etc.
- **Remember your purpose and goals and let everything you do contribute to that!** If side ideas and distractions tempt, keep track and save them for later or change your purpose (not advised, but it happens).

SCHOOL VISIT TIPS

- Check the Senior Living Works toolkit first, for ideas and materials.
- Consider whether you want this activity to be the beginning of a relationship with the educational institution, a department, or a group of educators. Senior Living Works materials and webinars and other Ambassador activities will help you do this.
- ***Give people something to do.***
- Check with teachers about what they would like you to convey and whether there's a best method to convey it.
- Check on taking and sharing photos. Many schools have students sign a blanket photo release.
- In today's classrooms, from middle school to college, students often collaborate and work in teams. You might put the class into teams for a short activity.
- Another trend throughout education is the flipped classroom: Students get basic information to view or read before the class—sometimes it's a video lecture—then class time is spent in interactive work or discussions. You might want to send an advance video (two minutes at most) such as a resident story from your provider or one made at your community, or a summary of what was learned at the class. The blended learning model also takes the lecture out of the classroom and uses teams and interaction. Inquiry-based learning uses compelling questions to come to knowledge. The important takeaway here is that stand-and-lecture is not the best format for today's students.
- Either know your tech equipment backwards and forwards, or don't use it. Setup time, glimpses of your personal screen saver or email flashing across your slides gives time for attention to wander off. Unfairly, it can also reinforce the myth that people in senior living aren't tech-savvy.
- Check with the teacher on whether you can take photos to use for social media and your results file.
- Give them a survey near the end of the class—three to five questions tops, one open-ended, no names.
- Keep your sense of humor. Also recognize that aging is a topic that makes many people uncomfortable. Younger people might handle this discomfort with snickering or jokes. Steering toward talking about someone older whom you know and love can help everyone get back on track.
- At college level: Ask for emails so you can send them opportunities.
- Senior Living Works has slide decks and handouts ready for you to use. Make it easier!

SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

According to surveys, most people have little to no idea about the field of senior living and our careers. In addition, they may have little exposure to traditional media such as television news and newspapers. If you are serious about breaking through and reaching a wide group of potential jobseekers, mastering social media will be key.

Note: Know your company, community, or provider social media guidelines and stay true to these.

- Start by using the social media channel you're most comfortable with or the one your community uses most.
- You might want to add in one more channel or set up your social media to have your posts appear automatically on several channels for this month—Instagram and Facebook, for instance.
- Look for #careersinaging and like, share, and comment. Share helpful articles or meaningful essays from good sources and include the hashtag.
- Before you share, do a quick check on the source, to be sure it's not a spammer or suspicious.
- You can use this info from the Pew Research Foundation to plan your channels:
 - Facebook tends to be popular with women ages 30-plus. Facebook has many secret and closed groups for different professions—a simple search can show which might be useful to you. Look for activity, civility, relevance.
 - Instagram is the biggest channel for ages 18-29. Instagram requires compelling images. You can use images from nature, views of your community (without residents) or selfies (you look great, so don't hesitate).
 - Snapchat is the second-biggest channel for ages 18-29. Search for "how to use Snapchat in recruiting" for instructions and ideas.
 - Twitter has a smaller reach, but it is popular with journalists. It's also slightly more popular with scientists, academics, and people of color. All these make it worth trying. It's also extremely easy to use. That means it's easy for some people to get in trouble—say, by retweeting a questionable source or unwittingly spreading controversial or confidential information. You should minimize the risks by establishing clear procedures and having someone double-check before hitting the send button.
 - YouTube has the largest and most widespread popularity, likely because of its wide variety of content. If you like making videos, you can make and post to a private channel. It's excellent for posting presentations or webinars.

THE HOW-TOs: THE OFFICIAL PROCLAMATION

(May be more appropriate for provider corporate level)

Go for a proclamation if you need...

- To start or continue a relationship with an elected official
- To hang other news and activities on, e.g., “For Careers in Aging Month, which was officially recognized in the State Senate, the community has several activities planned...”
- To elevate the reputation of your field
- To make residents feel good
- To give you something to boast about

Proclamations need to be written in a certain style and follow a process for submission. These vary from area to area. Just Google your area and “proclamation” to find out how. Although there are rules to getting a proclamation, it’s pretty easy to do.

Try for a city, town, or village proclamation first. Check with your state-level professional association or with your provider before trying for a state or large city proclamation, so you don’t duplicate efforts.

Be sure to credit all the associations involved in Careers In Aging. Here’s an example of how to do that:

Whereas the Gerontological Society of America (GSA), the American Health Care Association/ National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/ NCAL), Argentum and Senior Living Works, and LeadingAge organizations each make significant contributions to supporting the education, training, and career pathways that ensure older adults can experience a high quality of life; and ...

It’s also a good idea to mention how many jobs and how much money senior living brings to your state. To get that data, go to seniorlivingimpact.org.

[Here’s an example of the proclamation requirements for Virginia](#). The state provides a form and the deadlines (no less than 45 days before the date needed, for instance).

And [here’s a link to a typical city/mayoral proclamation \(from Toledo, Ohio\)](#). This city needs only 14 days’ notice and an email with the proclamation content and a few other details.

SAMPLE PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the direct-care workforce and senior care providers are an essential component to allowing older Americans to age in-place with dignity and respect providing personal care and services to enhance quality of life; and

WHEREAS, the direct-care workforce—Nursing Assistants, Home Health Aides (HHAs), and Personal Care Aides (PCAs)—are the primary providers of paid hands-on care, supervision, and support for older adults in the United States; and

WHEREAS, aging services encompasses a wide scope of rewarding occupations including gerontologists, registered and licensed practical nurses, business managers, recreation workers, chefs and culinary workers, and physical therapists; and

WHEREAS, senior living offers opportunities for career paths for direct care workers to advance within the senior living industry and across related service industries; and

WHEREAS, workforce development initiatives to support senior living career paths for direct-care workers and other essential professional and paraprofessional jobs are crucial to the wellbeing of older Americans;

Now, therefore, I, _____, do hereby extend my support to all observing April 19-25 as Careers in Aging Week.

THE 30-DAY SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGE

Take the Careers In Aging month challenge—post on your favorite social media site every day with something you love about your work and #careersinaging. It can be a selfie, an image from nature, or a text image. Here are some ideas to start with.

I love my job in senior living because:

- Someone said I lit up her day
- I got someone who had been sad to smile
- I helped someone heal
- I talked to a couple who have been married for 60 years
- I see people make new BFFs every day
- It reminds me of the spirit in each person
- The food is great!
- People talk to me like I'm in their family
- I'm getting paid to get my RN
- My company pays for me to get to work
- My schedule is so flexible
- Benefits! Benefits! Benefits!
- There's caring all around
- I get to dance at work

COMMUNITY VISIT ACTIVITY: CREATIVE ACTIVITY

Middle school and up, 5-8 people

Do this if your purpose is to:

- Introduce a small group to the senior living experience
- Introduce a small group to memory care
- Follow up and encourage interested students after a class presentation
- Interest students in art or occupational therapy or recreation
- To tee up a job shadow with an activities director

Opening five to seven spaces in a class or gathering for painting, music, yoga, chair exercise, or other activities is also fairly simple if you keep it small and limited. It can work for full school classes or larger groups if you have the space.

What it takes:

- Setup and preparation; talk with activities director
- Plan a short introduction and welcome with the activities director to frame the experience. Have the activities director tell their story of how they got interested in senior living.
- A post-activity download with the visitors and the activities director can answer questions and lead toward next steps.

Follow-up:

- Get contact information for those interested in the activities director path for potential job shadow or other activity.

COMMUNITY VISIT ACTIVITY: CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

Middle school and up, 5-25 people

Do this if your purpose is to:

- Introduce a group to the senior living experience
- Follow up and encourage interested students after a class presentation
- Interest students in dining services or recruit for waitstaff
- To tee up a job shadow with a chef or dining manager

People can be at their most energetic in the morning, so it can be a good time to socialize, with coffee, pastries, and fruit.

What it takes:

- Place cards, to ensure there are both visitors and residents at each table. If residents aren't participating, for younger students, you can line them up and send each to different tables in turn, so they'll mix.
- Check on dietary restrictions, and have something for those who are gluten-free, vegan, halal, etc. (Enjoy this glimpse of the future of dining and how complicated it may be.)

- Waitstaff. You will be paying them to work and to be ambassadors, so you'll want to talk to those who work to make sure they know the purpose.
- Kitchen staff. Depending on the complexity of the menu; loop them into the purpose, too.
- A good schedule is about 15 minutes to talk at the table and begin breakfast, then stories, then questions.
- Depending on your purpose, you may want waitstaff, kitchen staff, chef, or dining director to tell their stories and answer questions.

Follow-up:

- Get contact info or give job application info to those interested immediately in server or kitchen jobs.
- Get contact info for those who would like to have another activity, such as a job shadow.

COMMUNITY VISIT ACTIVITY: CAREER SPEED DATING

Technical high school, community college, college level, 10-30 people

Do this if your purpose is to:

- Attract those already in or close to being in the job market
- Give those beginning nursing or similar study a look at a senior living career path

This is a mashup of a job fair and speed dating. Students or potential employees get up to 10 minutes to hear the stories of those working at your community and ask questions, and vice versa. Students can get in line to talk to another person after their “date,” and the mini-interviews can continue for as long as there’s time.

What it takes:

- Time. Three to five community staff need to be available and uninterrupted for up to two hours. This may involve dining and activities being at the activity at the same time.

- Tables and chairs. Form as many lines as there are staff participating.
- Something to keep students busy when they’re in line, so they don’t get too loud. Some keep the lineup several yards back from the tables, so the individuals on the “date” can focus.
- A timer.

Follow-up:

- Students can fill out contact info as they wait in lines; then they can hand it in to staff when they have their mini-interview.
- Have cards or other information for online job applications available.

COMMUNITY VISIT ACTIVITY: CONCERT OR MOVIE NIGHT

High school or college level, 10-20 people

Do this if your purpose is to:

- Introduce students to senior living
- Have a starter activity that doesn't require a lot of interaction
- Leverage an already occurring event to make things a little easier
- Have a first or second event for interested students

Invite selected students or a class to a concert or movie night at the community.

What it takes:

- Extra chairs for the event
- A manager or supervisor to make sure things are going OK
- Ask students to let the manager or supervisor know if they'd like to pursue a job shadow or another meeting

Follow-up:

- Save the RSVP list for an invitation to a second event
- Contact interested students

COMMUNITY VISIT ACTIVITY: THEME TOURS

Technical high school, community college, college level, 5-10 people

Do this if your purpose is to:

- Get people headed for other career paths to consider how these relate to senior living
- Set up a relationship with an academic department or technical school so it can include senior living in its teaching and opportunities

A custom tour or presentation led by an expert can open senior living as a career path to those in other professions. An executive director can give a tour to MBAs or those in hospitality. Sales and marketing can go over their digital marketing plans. Maintenance and an operations leader can lead technical school students on a tour.

If your community is new or recently renovated, try for an architecture or design class—designers often like to talk about their work and what's behind it. Policy or land planning classes can use your community as an example of fulfilling neighborhood and transportation needs. Ditto for dining, recreation, health administration, public health, and more.

Be guided by the strengths of your community and those of the educational institutions nearby and look for areas where you already have contacts, to make it easier.

What you need:

- A very good invitation list, or a teacher who has a small class or can select a group of students (or grad students).
- An expert, or an expert plus the executive director to accompany.
- Ideas and materials from Senior Living Works about engaging educational institutions.

Follow-up:

- Unless you encounter someone you want to hire or mentor, most of the follow-up will be done by the teacher. The people involved may be a one-off; the program itself can happen every semester or every year.
- University or college media or alumni publications may be interested in this—ask the teacher to share basic info with the college media relations office or send a short email yourself. Ask sales and marketing to track and get copies of any media that results.

COMMUNITY OR SCHOOL VISIT ACTIVITY: INNOVATION CHALLENGE

Middle school through grad school, 20-30 people

Do this if your purpose is to:

- Get people headed for other career paths to consider how these relate to senior living
- Get students thinking differently about senior living
- Follow-up activity after a community visit, theme tour, etc.
- Generate brilliant ideas!

This activity can be held at a community or at a school. *Doing* always wins out over telling. So rather than tell students how great senior living is, put their minds to work so they'll have to see it for themselves, through creative thought and problem-solving.

What it takes:

- Divide students into competitive teams and present them with a challenge. The challenge can be shaped to age level and experience or study area. Some ideas:
 - Some people don't like the food—how can we make it better without spending more money?
 - Invent/envision a gadget that could help older people in their daily lives
 - How can the community increase sustainability?

- How do we solve the workforce challenge?
- How could new tech help the community?
- What can a senior living community do about NIMBY issues?
- How do we increase occupancy?
- How do you envision this senior living community in five years? In ten?
- You can include residents on the teams as well.
- Tables, chairs, adult team leaders depending on the age of the participants, snacks, and perhaps prizes.
- Each group presents its ideas briefly at the end.

Follow-up:

- This is another activity that could merit media coverage—explore what would be available to you.
- Take photos and post them in the community, so residents and families can see this activity.
- Check in with the teacher to get reactions, whether the class did further work on the solutions, etc.

SCHOOL VISIT ACTIVITY: MYTH BUSTING

Middle school through early college

Do this if your purpose is to:

- Get people headed for other career paths to consider how these relate to senior living
- Want to engage a class and keep them thinking after you've left

This generation of students is very concerned with justice, fairness, and bias—and that's good. You can tap into that energy by looking at ageism, stereotypes, and myths.

Write down answers as you ask students a series of questions such as:

- What words describe an old person?
- What does "aging" mean to you?
- What do old people like to eat?
- What do old people like to do?
- What will you be like when you're old? How will you look and feel? What will you do all day?
- Do most old people stop working?
- Are old people mean or nice?
- Do old people have trouble using their phones and TVs?

Rather than go right into contradicting stereotypes, let the counterpoints emerge in discussion. Some additional questions can help with this:

- Is there an elder in your life? What do you do when you're together?
- What do you like best about an older person you know?
- Think back on today and yesterday. How many old people do you think you saw? What were they doing?

You can then share some myth busting stories from senior life and your community, and/or write a new definition of "aging" or "old person."

What you need:

- Ability to be dynamic in interacting with students
- Chalkboard, dry erase board, or paper easel
- Materials from Senior Living Works Ambassador Toolkit
- Stories from senior living that contradict the myths

Follow-up:

- You could coordinate with the teacher on having students write a description or draw a portrait of an older person they like, interview the person on video or recording, or write or draw a vision of themselves when they are old. If you can, get one of the results to share with your community and to save.

SCHOOL VISIT ACTIVITY: ENVISIONING

Middle school through early college

Do this if your purpose is to:

- Wake students up to the many careers associated with senior living
- Get them thinking at any level about the opportunities ahead

This activity gets students thinking creatively about how different careers they envision for themselves can connect to senior living. Briefly describe your community, using Senior Living Works Ambassador materials if you like.

Then ask the question: What do you want to be? Or: What are you studying? You then ask them to connect that career in some way with senior living. You can give a few examples, depending on the age group:

- Lawyer: Prosecutor for elder rights, helping with estates, making real estate deals for developers and investors, general counsel
- Basketball player: Coach a Senior Olympic team, recreation director, exercise teacher, physical therapist

You can write down words and answers on a board or divide the class into teams and see who can come up with the most career descriptions. Have some hints and prompts available (e.g., “What if the people living there need help with their computers?”)

What you need:

- Ability to be dynamic in interacting with students
- Chalkboard, dry erase board, or paper easel
- Materials from Senior Living Works Ambassador Toolkit

Follow-up:

- Take photos of the career lists to share in future presentations or with your community.
- Direct high school and college age to the Job Board.

ASK ME ANYTHING (AMA)

Adults

Do this if your purpose is to:

- Engage people interested in senior living but not sure if it's for them
- Reach job seekers at a targeted level
- Educate and erase stereotypes about senior living

The AMA is an easy, low-investment activity, easy to carry out on several kinds of social media platforms. It's a virtual interview or Q&A. Mention your website, job board, or community job posting as often as you can while you answer questions.

What you need:

- Some facility with social media, or someone who can help you
- An identity on a platform

- Platforms usually give instructions and some give tips on how to promote your event
- Ability to think fast
- Some basic prep so you'll be able to answer questions—plus a plan for handling weird ones
- Two or three ringers—friends or colleagues who can prime the pump by asking a question if things get slow

Follow-up:

- Ask participants to follow you on social media
- Count your participants, likes, etc.
- Print out the session and use the questions and answers for further activities

INVITE A POLITICIAN

(May be more appropriate at the corporate level)

Do this if your purpose is to:

- Be a good neighbor
- Bring awareness to your community
- Get more attention to workforce issues
- Weigh in on job and economic development programs
- Start an advocacy relationship

Mayors, city council members, county executives, heads of workforce or economic development departments—they are all good candidates to invite to your community. Asking state representatives or U.S. congresspeople is also possible, with the ask typically coming from a corporate office or state professional association.

What you need:

- Ability to wait or change plans at the last minute if necessary
- Someone to take photos
- Material from the [Senior Living Works Engagement Toolkit](#) on the extent of the senior living workforce crisis

- Material from Senior Living Impact (seniorlivingimpact.org) on the economic impact and numbers of jobs senior living brings to your state
- A few issues important to residents and staff—more public transportation needed, an easier pipeline from technical high schools to senior living direct care worker, etc.
- Consider whether this merits a media advisory prior to the visit

Follow-up:

- Staff or residents might want to write letters or emails reinforcing the importance of the issue you discussed, the economic impact of senior living, and the statistics on workforce.
- Post photos and write a press release about the visit for local media and your community news or wait to see if the political figure posts one and share that.

LIBRARY, NEIGHBORHOOD, OR CO-OP WORKSPACE JOB FAIRS FOR OR DISCUSSION

Adult

Do this if your purpose is to:

- Find and recruit older workers, career path changers, people re-entering the workforce
- Tap into an audience other hiring sources can overlook
- Educate people about senior living

Offer a one-off workshop or information session in a community space, where you can share expertise that's related to senior living but is also of general interest:

- How to tune up your resume for senior living jobs
- Interview tips for senior living jobs
- Transitioning into a senior living job
- Jobs in senior living for older workers

You may need to avoid mentioning your community or recruiting on the spot, depending on the rules of the space you use. This can also be a low-cost way to practice doing presentations or public speaking.

What you'll need:

- A space. Library meeting rooms are often free and rented through a sign-up system. Some community centers charge to use a room. A local

house of worship, a private school, or even some businesses have meeting rooms as well.

- Co-op workspaces are another option. Some offer educational their members; if they do, you could get on the list. Meeting rooms are often members-only or for a charge, but if you see potential there, you could team with a member on a presentation. Also, some offer pay-as-you-go plans.
- As you research a good site, check the rules: Most libraries and community centers do not allow commercial or promotional activities. Keep your presentation on the educational side of things, and don't push your own community on anyone.
- Flyers or notices to community papers work well for this audience. Leave flyers at the space you've chosen and in coffee shops, delis, or groceries nearby, if you can.
- Get the information about chairs, tables, and Wi-Fi before planning. You may have to set things up by yourself.

Follow-up:

- Collect contact information and contact those that might be good at end

COLLECT STORIES

Staff

Do this if your purpose is to:

- Show appreciation for staff
- Have a wonderful demonstration of company culture for new employees
- Create a vibrant collection that could be read or watched for years to come

With respect for people and in keeping with your community culture, see which staff members might be interested in sharing their stories in writing or on video. These do not have to be carefully crafted or perfectly made. Keeping these roughly the same length (and short) helps keep staff, including you, from being overwhelmed by the task. You can also use this to practice storytelling and story listening, to have more meaningful engagements with residents.

Bind the printed stories into a scrapbook or do more formal, or post stories or videos online. Share a few with new employees and with residents, to reinforce the connections in your community.

ABOUT CAREERS IN AGING WEEK (CIAW)

The [Gerontological Society of America](#) (GSA) began the annual [Careers in Aging Week](#) (CIAW) effort in the 1990s, to raise awareness about the diverse careers available in the field of aging. People are living longer and populations are aging worldwide. The demand for professionals with expertise in aging is growing rapidly. Businesses, clinics, coalitions, organizations, universities, colleges, and other parties across the world observe CIAW to help bring greater awareness and visibility to the wide-ranging career opportunities in the field of aging.

The program has grown in breadth of support; partners include [American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living \(AHCA/NCAL\)](#), [Argentum](#) and [Senior Living Works](#), and [LeadingAge](#).

ABOUT SENIOR LIVING WORKS

[Senior Living Works](#) is a resource to highlight “Careers in Caring”: careers and opportunities in the dynamic senior living industry. Our industry has a range of careers that share one thing in common: a passion for serving the residents in our care. Through its website, webinars, and resources, Senior Living Works provides free, open access to information about career paths and training, education and scholarships, and job openings, as well as help for employers. The Senior Living Works initiative is led by Argentum and underwritten by [OnShift](#) in an effort to meet the current and future workforce needs of the senior living industry.

ABOUT ARGENTUM

[Argentum](#) is the leading national association exclusively dedicated to supporting companies operating professionally managed, resident-centered senior living communities and the older adults and families they serve. Since 1990, Argentum has advocated for choice, independence, dignity, and quality of life for all older adults.

Argentum member companies operate senior living communities offering assisted living, independent living, continuing care, and memory care services. Along with its state partners, Argentum’s membership represents approximately 75 percent of the professionally managed communities in the senior living industry—an industry with a national economic impact of nearly a quarter of a trillion dollars and responsible for providing over 1.6 million jobs. These numbers will continue to grow as the U.S. population ages.

