

The Palace Continues to Appeal to Seniors in Tough Economic Climate

BY KERRY GREEN

MIAMI—Despite the downturn in the economy and tough housing market, older adults continue to be interested in Senior Living Communities.

At The Palace Management Group, one of South Florida's leading companies specializing in senior housing and care, the marketing team has noted an increase of inquiries from potential residents and their families.

“Although seniors may be thinking twice about selling their homes, the benefits of living in a Senior Living Community far outweigh remaining in the home,” said Helen Shaham, President of The Palace. “We encourage them to make the move now, rather than later.”

According to Shaham, Senior Living Communities such as The Palace are often viewed as a luxury instead of a necessity; however, seniors can enjoy a care-free lifestyle for an amount comparable or even lower than their current monthly expenses.

“The reality is that The Palace is not that expensive when compared to the expenses we were incurring to maintain mom's home” said Michael Backer, whose mother Yetta, has been living at The Palace Renaissance for six years. “The mortgage, taxes, insurance, utilities, home & lawn maintenance, security, laundry, housekeeping, food, car expenses, occasional entertainment, and everything else...before even mentioning personal care & medical supervision... it all adds up very quickly. Additionally, The Palace provides so much more than we could have ever done in our home. And they provide one more important thing that we could never provide – socialization. And that's huge!!!”

Often, the largest asset a senior has is their equity in their home and they may be reluctant to sell in a flat or a declining market. Shaham and her team have been encouraging seniors to have realistic expectations about the value of their real estate.

“While they may not be able to sell a home for the price it was last year, it's important to keep in mind that most seniors bought their homes decades ago and may still have a considerable amount of equity in the real estate,” she explained. “Accepting today's price may still offer enough money to make a move financially feasible.”

Today, seniors wishing to begin a carefree lifestyle in a Senior Living Community are finding new, creative ways to overcome the obstacle of selling their homes. Some have turned to ‘repurposing’ the home, allowing a family member such as a grandchild who recently graduated from college, to rent the home.

The Palace also recommends securing the services of a Realtor who routinely works with seniors. A Seniors Real Estate Specialist (SRES) specializes in the needs of maturing Americans and has the knowledge and expertise to counsel seniors through major lifestyle transitions.

“We've looked at the housing market here in South Florida, and we understand the seniors' apprehension,” said Shaham. “So we came up with our own program, a new “Security Agreement” program which allows us to better respond to our customers' needs.” Under this agreement, prospective residents can move to The Palace paying only a discounted monthly rate (whatever they can afford without selling the home) while they await the pending sale of their home. Once the home is sold, The Palace is reimbursed the accrued rental difference with minimal interest fee.

“There has been very positive feedback about the program, as our seniors understand the benefits of living in one of our Senior Living Communities and are anxious to begin enjoying this lifestyle sooner rather than later,” said Shaham. “Families have found that under certain circumstances the vacated home (without all the accumulated personal property of the seniors) has more appeal to buyers, which in turn speeds up the selling process. In fact, a family who recently took advantage of our Security Agreement program was able to sell their home in Aventura's Mystic Point within a month. It's a win-win for all parties.” Another way

to get to use your equity is a “reverse mortgage” which has been advertised by many banks recently.

The Palace has also received an increase in calls from residents and their families who initially thought “Aging in Place” in the senior's own home was the perfect solution to the current real estate market situation, but now realize that that was not the answer.

“Aging in Place” carries with it lots of small “details” that until you encounter them, you won't be able to anticipate them... One of these “details” is necessary home renovations which can be both financially and mentally overwhelming for seniors. What may begin as the installation of a grab bar in the shower can easily turn into the widening of doorways or the lowering of the kitchen counter to accommodate a wheel chair. And if the senior's home have stairs...well, let's not go there... “Let's face reality” says Shaham. “While younger people can wait to see what the future will bring, even if this future may be a few years down the road... Seniors do not have this luxury of waiting. Seniors owe it to themselves to take advantage of the benefits of a senior living community today --- tomorrow is not guaranteed. The peace of mind, comfort, care and security offered at Senior Living Communities are immeasurable and cannot be compared to anything else.”

The Palace's Continuum of Care in Kendall includes The Palace Suites - Independent Living Community; The Palace Renaissance & Royale Assisted Living Communities and The Palace Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. It also includes The Palace Gardens Assisted Living Community in Homestead; Homestead Manor Nursing Home and The Palace @ Home, a Medicare-Certified Home Health Agency. Recently, two new projects were added: The Palace at Weston – Luxury Living for Those 55 and Over, and The Palace Tel-Aviv, a Continuing Care Retirement Community in Israel. And currently there are two communities under development – The Palace at Weston Senior Living and The Palace at Coral Gables. For more information, please call (305) 270-7000 or visit www.thepalace.org.