

Presbyterian Manors Gets Residents Online



Skillednursing facility Sterling Presbyterian Manor wanted to find a budget-friendly, simple way for residents to independently connect with their families over the Internet.

Residents in a long-term care facility frequently face a sense of isolation when distance separates them from family and friends. This is echoed in the concern their children and grandchildren feel when they are unable to connect with a parent or grandparent on a regular basis. The Internet offers tremendous opportunities to connect seniors living in long-term care facilities with their families. Yet, despite obvious benefits, several barriers exist when it comes to connecting seniors with the larger community.

In a typical skilled-nursing facility or nursing home, the majority of residents require substantial assistance with their daily care and many face challenges presented by significant hearing and vision loss. This makes using a conventional computer system a challenging prospect. Complicating this is the reality that a large segment of the seniors population have never used a computer. For them, something as commonplace as sending and receiving e-mail represents a significant learning curve. Finally, fiscal and staffing constraints demand that any potential solution not only be cost-effective but simple enough for residents to use independently.

In 2008, Sterling Presbyterian Manor Executive Director, Michael Rajewski attended a conference sponsored by the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (AAHSA)

with the goal of finding a software solution that would allow residents to connect with children and grandchildren. Despite the presence of over 2,000 exhibitors at the Philadelphia event, Mr. Rajewski was unable to locate what he was looking for. "Some of what I saw did too much. Often there was a big focus on games and resident activity but the e-mail portion was a sideline. Or it was confusing or too cost prohibitive. And a lot of what I saw required assistance. You had to have an activity director hook it up and be there – it wasn't designed for a resident to use independently."

Upon his return to Sterling, Mr. Rajewski continued looking, this time turning to the Internet. His search led him to Toronto-based PointerWare Innovations Ltd. and their unique software for seniors.

Sterling Presbyterian Manor

Residents: 67
Average Age: 87
Oldest User: 92

PointerWare is an easy-to-use computer interface that allows individuals to send and receive e-mails and photos, as well as browse the Internet and play games. Large fonts and onscreen buttons and touch screen and voice capability address the challenges faced by people with physical disabilities.

The cost-effective, multi-user license option for assisted living facilities allowed Sterling Presbyterian Manor to scale the implementation of PointerWare as demand for the service grew. No upfront fee and a low, monthly cost of only \$25/month allowed the facility to get started with a core user base of five residents. Easily downloadable over the Internet, PointerWare was initially installed on an existing computer at the facility. It



has since been upgraded with a 15" touchscreen monitor and a keyboard for the visually impaired.

Because PointerWare is easy to install and manage, a minimum amount of staff time is devoted to maintaining the program. New users are easily added to the system, an important consideration in a health care environment where resident turnover is high. The simple login procedure – users login with their own name and use their birth month as a password – is a big plus. "You can't expect a resident who has never used a computer before to remember something more complicated. And if they do happen to forget, it's easy for us to help them," Mr. Rajewski explains.



From the outset, management knew that for PointerWare to be successful, residents would need to be able to use the system independently. PointerWare gets high marks in this regard. Initially, residents are only taught how to use PointerWare to send e-mails. New users are given a very brief one-on-one demonstration, then a staff member assists them in sending an initial e-mail to a family member. It's when the family member responds, often including photos, that users typically get excited about PointerWare and its capabilities. Success hinges on the resident getting a personal e-mail from a family member. Two computer classes are held each month at Sterling Presbyterian Manor to show residents how to use the other features of PointerWare, including games and Internet browsing. By then, residents who have been sending e-mails are already comfortable using a computer and the learning process goes more quickly and smoothly.

PointerWare software has allowed the residents at Sterling Presbyterian Manor to stay connected with their communities. Residents Lorena Hauschild, 88 and Opal Kruse, 81 are prime ex-

amples. Despite never having used a computer prior to being introduced to PointerWare last year, both women now check their e-mail as part of their daily routine and are convinced that PointerWare is something they now couldn't do without. Ms. Kruse, who suffers from vision impairment, is thrilled that she can keep in touch with family members throughout the United States. "It's a way of communication since I can't see to write letters. It's the best thing that's happened." Her daughter, Marsha Hudson, concurs. "I am very thankful for PointerWare. It enables Mom to communicate with her family and friends. Due to Mom's eyesight, she is very limited in performing the tasks needed to stay in touch with family. When Mom sends me an e-mail, it is extra special, as I can hear her voice. When time doesn't allow me to go to the Manor, I send an e-mail and let Mom know I am thinking about her. I thank [PointerWare] for the quality it has added to my mother's life."

Ms. Hauschild's three sons communicate with her regularly via PointerWare, often sending her pictures. They're especially pleased that they can contact her whenever they want to. This past Christmas, when her children asked Ms. Hauschild what she'd like for Christmas, she requested a laptop computer with PointerWare installed on it so she wouldn't have to wait in line for her turn at the shared workstation.

PointerWare is a software platform created exclusively for seniors. PointerWare software runs directly on top of Windows and provides seniors with easy access to email, photos, games and the Internet. Among its many senior-friendly features is PointerWare's use of large buttons that work well with a touch screen monitor, photos to identify email recipients, and optional voice message emails for users with vision impairment and mobility challenges. Since its inception in 2006, PointerWare has grown rapidly. PointerWare software has been selected by several large Long-Term Care and Assisted Living chains as their platform of choice to connect residents with family and the greater community. PointerWare now exhibits at Long-Term Care and Assisted Living trade-shows including the AAHSA conference.



The way you want to live.™



Global

Tel: 1-800-466-5701
Fax: 416-673-8150
www.pointerware.com

U.S.

548 Market St., 31350
San Francisco, CA
94104

Canada

101 College St., Suite 200
Toronto, ON
M5G 1L7