

VIDEO GAMES:

Not Just for Your Grandchildren

Over the past 20 to 30 years, video games have become part of American culture. Whether at home, on the road, or in an arcade, our society enjoys being entertained by these interactive adventures. Traditionally, video games have been perceived as strictly children's entertainment—but all of that is changing.

The Nintendo Company recently released their newest video game system, the Wii, which has allowed all age groups, including older adults, to participate in ways never thought possible. With games like interactive bowling, grooming a horse, or even participating in aerial combat, this technology is bridging the age gap and allowing older adults to have the same fun that their grandchildren have been having for many years.

Retirement communities such as Splendido at Rancho Vistoso in Oro Valley have seized this new phenomenon to get their residents excited about the technology. In the next few months, Wii gaming centers will become part of the activities, including Splendido's health center, Sonora.

Scott Rydecki, program coordinator for Splendido, has been training the community staff on the ways the Wii can be used not just for fun, but to help enhance motor skills, balance, and hand-eye coordination. At this time, all certified nursing assistants at Splendido are trained in the system and how to incorporate it into the daily routine of the residents.

"With the Wii controller being a remote control, the amount residents are able to participate compared to other video game systems is amazing," said Rydecki. "Older adults with sore joints and carpal tunnel are more likely to enjoy swinging a controller, simulating a bat or tennis racket, compared to pressing small buttons and moving a joystick."

Rydecki and the rest of the



Splendido at Rancho Vistoso's staff train each other on the Nintendo Wii for use at Sonora, Splendido's new health center.

staff at Splendido have been meeting with residents to find out which Wii games they have interest in playing. Based on their interests, as well as the game's ability to be easily picked up and understood, residents have been responsive to many of the gaming options available to them.

"We have a resident who grew up on a farm and has expressed interest in some of the pet-related programs," said Rydecki. "At the other end of the spectrum, we also have a resident who is a former admiral who is very excited about playing as a World War II fighter pilot. The game library available for the system is vast and meets many

different interests, especially for the short time it has been around."

Playing the Wii is even possible for adults with physical limitations, said Fred Randolph, administrator of Sonora at Splendido. He has seen residents who are confined to a wheelchair participate in a boxing program and easily knock out their computer opponent.

"Even with residents who are in the assisted living or memory support programs, the Wii has programs that allow them to interact as well as help them remember and participate in activities they enjoyed earlier in life," said Randolph.

The staff at Splendido has seen not only the physical benefits behind the fun games, but also some of

the bragging rights that come from Wii competitions. Residents who used to participate in bowling leagues can form Wii leagues to compete against each other and the contests can become heated.

"It's amazing to see video games help residents feel good about themselves," added Randolph.

Rydecki and the staff have also seen several of the residents calling home to challenge their grandchildren.

"This is proof that some who may just have a hard time swinging a club or lifting a bowling ball can hold his or her own and beat some of today's avid gamers," said Rydecki. "The Wii really has gotten Grandma to have a connection to

her grandchildren and have fun doing it for both parties."

With technology moving forward at such a rapid pace, it's only natural for older adults to firmly grasp it and enjoy every second. Nintendo and the Wii are certainly making that possible, especially at Splendido.

Opened in 2006, Splendido at Rancho Vistoso is a Continuing Care Retirement Community that offers resort-style living for adults 55 years and older.

The community offers high-end, upscale resort-style living through the 10,000-square-foot Saluté Spa & Fitness Center, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, 24-hour concierge service, four dining venues, an 18-hole putting course, cinema, and the health center, Sonora at Splendido, which will open in early 2008. To learn more about Splendido or to schedule a tour of the 27-acre community, call 520-878-2612 or visit www.splendidotucson.com.