

Senior Living Options

Retirement

Redefined

BY CLAIRE ROGERS



ABOVE: A cozy community area in Villa Hermosa highlights the homey environment. RIGHT: Green Valley's La Posada offers healthy dining options, such as this grilled shrimp salad.



Irving J. Olson delicately holds a cricket between his thumb and forefinger as he hustles down the hall. With the impish grin on his face, one might think he'd planned to scare a classmate with it. But the 96 year old is already out of class for the day and is rushing home to photograph his latest subject.

Olson is having the time of his life at Splendido, a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC). Among the many options for senior housing, CCRCs typically provide a full range of services from independent living, to assisted living, to skilled nursing care and, in some cases, memory care for those with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. The combination of all facilities on one campus allows residents to avoid some of the upheaval that comes with a health crisis. Other types of retirement housing include active adult communities such as Sun City Vistoso in Oro Valley, Sunflower in Continental Ranch and SaddleBrooke near Oracle, where free-standing homes surround a clubhouse with meeting, fitness and craft facilities. These are sometimes called age-restricted resort communities or 55+ communities because at least one member of a residing couple must be 55 years old. Residents do their own cooking, cleaning and home maintenance chores, yet they get the benefits of a social life with neighbors who have similar interests and a resort-style community.

At later life stages, active seniors who become less enamored with household duties may look for a place that includes some assistance with landscape maintenance and home upkeep. Independent living facilities such as Villa Hermosa and Fellowship Square in Tucson can provide everything from dining to housekeeping, freeing up residents to enjoy hobbies and a social life. These facilities are sometimes offered in conjunction with assisted living services, such as at Broadway Proper and Amber Lights, both in Tucson, where services extend to cover needs such as transportation and medication management.

La Posada in Green Valley, Splendido in Oro Valley and The Forum in Tucson provide even more services, extending to skilled nursing and Alzheimer's care.

"I love my apartment. I can look out on the mountains and see the sunrise," says Laurene Keltner, of her place at The Forum in Tucson. Keltner moved in on her daughter's suggestion. "I've been very happy here, I couldn't ask for anything more. I can stay busy and do as much or as little as I want."

Keltner enjoys the variety of activities, which include card games and puzzles, exercise classes and a happy hour on Fridays, but her favorite is the journal and memoir writing class. In fact, she's finished her memoirs and plans to get them published.

Mary Jane McConnell also moved to retirement housing to be among friends, though her primary reason for moving into The Forum was the central location. Close to her doctor and shopping, The Forum provides free transportation within a five-mile radius.

"Some people choose to be among their own type," says McConnell, who appreciates how residents dress for dinner. "My husband loved to be dressed nicely; it's a nice standard," she adds.

“ Our mission is to create ways to age well. ”

"This is no ordinary old age home," notes Irving Olson of Splendido. "The ordinary way is for ordinary people. I wanna do things," he says of his interests in travel, photography and writing.

"Our mission is to create ways to age well," says Mary Leary, president of Mather LifeWays, the parent company for Splendido. Companies such as hers are very focused on the next generation coming into retirement. As with their earlier life stages, baby boomers are redefining how their third act will play out.

"They want lots of choices; baby boomers are not a one size fits all generation," adds Leary, a boomer herself. Of major concern to today's 50- and 60-somethings is how to stay healthy and active well into their 70s and 80s.

To aid this effort, Mather LifeWays heads up the Institute on Aging, which conducts research and education for the retirement

housing sector. Among the trends identified in a recent survey by the institute are the need for a broad variety of amenities and the desire for active living and wellness programs.

In response to increasing demand, some retirement communities are expanding their offerings by adding a variety of dining options and putting more emphasis on health and wellness. Transportation also is becoming an increasingly important service to seniors.

"People are not sitting around in rockers waiting for time to pass," says Tim Carmichael, vice president of marketing for La Posada, a CCRC in Green Valley. He points out that residents of CCRCs tend to be planners: they've planned for their schooling, their families, their careers and now, their retirement.

The economy is fluctuating and home prices and portfolios tend to be down, so some people may be reluctant to commit to a change right now. As Carmichael points out, "the common thread for everyone considering a move to a CCRC is that you get a day older every day. You can't guess how you're going to function tomorrow."

With CCRCs in particular you have to qualify both financially and physically, so it's best to apply while you're healthy. A senior fitness qualifying test includes a strength test, a two-minute cardio step test and balance, agility and flexibility testing.

Many residents recommend taking a tour of the facilities, trying the food and talking with residents before deciding where to live. Those who've made the move to retirement housing on their own initiative are most often happiest with their new surroundings.

"People shouldn't move here if they're not ready; the change can be both dramatic and traumatic. I adjusted well because I was ready, it was my idea and my kids accepted it," explains Dottie Davis, a resident at The Forum.

Social connections in good retirement communities form quickly and interest groups are often defined by the residents. "Make sure you're comfortable being around other people," says Ray Davies at The Forum. "You've got to be social and active and use your brain."

Laurene Keltner advises others to make the move while they are healthy, because it is easier



ABOVE: Handmaker Jewish Services for the Aging has assisted living and skilled nursing facilities.

to make friends and adjust to the new living arrangements.

Finding a suitable assisted living facility may be more involved. "Even though this is assisted living, you still want to be as free from needing assistance as possible," says Janet Kells, a resident at Handmaker. She points out that small details in the design of an apartment will determine if you need extra help. Is the shower easy to get into and out of? Will the sink area accommodate a wheelchair? Is the kitchenette appointed with conveniences like a freezer, a dishwasher and a microwave for those times when you don't want to go to the dining room?

Free from the worries of cooking, cleaning and upkeep, seniors in these active communities freely share their talents and dedicate themselves to staying healthy for as long as possible. "It's doing a wonderful thing for your kids," says Patricia Linden, because it frees them from worry as well. Linden came to Splendido when it became obvious that her husband Jim would soon need assisted living or nursing care. Her neighbor John Wickham points out: "It's better to be five years too soon than five minutes too late."

What follows is a sampling of Active Adult Communities and Assisted Living Facilities as well as other options that offer both. Due to the large number of local facilities that cater to retired individuals, this list is not a comprehensive one. Not included are Alzheimer and dementia facilities, individually owned homes and facilities that accommodate 10 or less occupants. *Tucson Lifestyle* contacted many local communities; those that responded are included here. For more information visit www.tucsonlifestyle.com. ▶

BELOW: A fully equipped kitchen at The Fountains at La Cholla.





Activities at Splendido include everything from exercise classes to fashion shows to wine tasting seminars.



Splendido's residents can enjoy fine dining at Marbella.

Splendido

13500 N. Rancho Vistoso Blvd.

Tucson, AZ 85755

(520) 878-2600

www.splendidotucson.com

Continuing care retirement community.

Age Restriction: 55 +

Number of Residents Facility Can Accommodate: 306 +

Licensures, Accreditations & Certifications: N/A

Options Available: Villa homes: 1,697 to 2,049 square feet; 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments: 846 to 2,931 square feet

Activities Available: Putting tournament, theater trips, on-site live music, film focus group, book club, UA football games, pets & friends, writer's workshop and more

Fitness Facilities: Cardiovascular and strength equipment, group exercise classes, locker rooms, indoor and outdoor pool, whirlpool and personal training sessions

Transportation for Residents: Town Car and bus available

Added Value: Movie theater, art studio, full-service spa, 18-hole putting course, four restaurants, billiards and a library

Meals Provided: Four on-site restaurants. Residents can choose the 21 meals a month plan or "decide as you dine"

Costs: 90-105 percent refundable entrance fee. Price range of homes, \$189,900 to \$783,900