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# ENGAGE



2024 *Chefs'*  
COMPETITION:  
INTERVIEW WITH THE WINNER  
AND HEAD JUDGE INSIDE

INVOLVING RESIDENTS IN  
*Emergency*  
PREPAREDNESS

QUALITY  
*Champions*

*Reader's*  
**SURVEY**  
INSIDE  
PAGE 39



2024  
AWARD  
WINNERS

ISSUE 10 | FALL 2024



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# IN THIS ISSUE

FALL 2024

## LEGISLATIVE POLICY & LEGAL AFFAIRS

### Grassroots Advocacy

Discovery Double Dip  
10

AHCA Sec. Weida Tours  
Memory Care Community  
29

## OPERATIONS & REGULATORY

### Is Your Roof Ready for Hurricane Season

14

### Ask Monica

17

### Cutting Through the Red Tape

17

### Communication & Coordination

When Disaster Strikes  
18

### Embracing Change

Pivoting to Meet the Needs of  
Seniors in 2024

24

### Critical Role of CEMP Plans for New Communities

26

### When A Gift Becomes a Kickback

Gifts from Florida Pharmacies  
to Long Term Care Facilities

30

### Involving Residents

in Emergency Preparedness

33



ON THE COVER  
FSLA Chefs'  
Competition 2024  
Winners pose with their  
trophies. Left to Right:  
Anthony Polito, Troy  
Smith, Bas Nijmeijer

Photo Credit:  
Katie Truelove, ktcreative

## MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

### Preserving Sweet Traditions

A Recipe Book Inspired by Family and Love  
12

### St. Augustine Plantation Disaster

And The Role of FSLA  
37

## LEADERSHIP

### The Hot Seat

with FSLA's Team  
6

### We are Family

A Word from FSLA CEO  
9

### A Celebration of Excellence

2024 Best of the Best Awards  
22

## MEMBERSHIP

### HRA Assumes Management of Sabal Palms Senior Living

28

### Quality Champions

FSLA Members Achieve  
Deficiency-Free Surveys and  
100% Occupancy

32

### Member Highlights

Celebrating Our Communities  
35

## EDUCATION & EVENTS

### FSLI Career Trainings

13

### FSLA Leadership Academy

The Next Chapter  
16

## CULINARY & HOSPITALITY

### FSLA Annual Chefs' Competition

Chefs Compete, Seniors Win  
20

## FSLA STAFF

Gail Matillo, MPA  
President & CEO

Jason Hand, Esq.  
COO & General Counsel

Kristin Quirk, MS  
Membership & Partnership Director

Katherine Upton  
Education & Engagement Director  
Executive Editor, ENGAGE Magazine

Jimmie Fay Griffin, LPN  
Accounting, Membership &  
Regulatory Manager

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## ENGAGE STAFF

Editorial and Business Offices  
2292 Wednesday St. Suite 1  
Tallahassee, FL 32308  
850-496-2562 | floridaseniorliving.org

Publisher: Gail Matillo  
[gmtaillo@floridaseniorliving.org](mailto:gmtaillo@floridaseniorliving.org)

Executive Editor: Katherine Upton  
[kupton@floridaseniorliving.org](mailto:kupton@floridaseniorliving.org)

Creative Director: Katie Truelove  
[ktcreative@me.com](mailto:ktcreative@me.com)

Advertising & Editorial Submissions  
[engage@floridaseniorliving.org](mailto:engage@floridaseniorliving.org)

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# A MESSAGE FROM FSLA BOARD CHAIR



As we reflect on the success of our recent Annual Conference at the Ritz-Carlton, I'm filled with gratitude for the dedication and commitment of our members. The conference provided a valuable platform for networking, education, and inspiration, and I'm confident that it will continue to shape the future of senior living in Florida.

As you may know, this edition of *ENGAGE* is our Emergency Management-focused issue. In today's world, preparedness is more important than ever, and I encourage you to explore the articles and resources within to learn more about how to keep your communities safe and resilient.

I want to take a moment to emphasize the value that FSLA brings to our members. Our association is dedicated to advocating for our industry, providing educational opportunities, and fostering a sense of community among our members.

**Advocacy:** We work tirelessly to represent the interests of our members at the state and federal level. Our advocacy efforts include lobbying for legislation that supports our industry, advocating for fair reimbursement rates, and promoting policies that improve the quality of care for seniors.

**Education:** We offer a variety of educational programs and resources to help our members stay informed about industry trends, best practices, and emerging technologies. Our educational offerings include webinars, conferences, and workshops on topics such as regulatory compliance, leadership development, and resident care.

**Community:** The Florida Senior Living Association is more than just a professional organization; it's a community of like-minded individuals who share a passion for providing quality care to seniors. We offer opportunities for our members to connect with each other, share experiences, and learn from one another.

Whether you're a senior living executive, a caregiver, or a service provider, we believe that our association offers something valuable for everyone. By actively participating in our events, networking with fellow members, and staying informed about industry trends, you can strengthen your business, enhance the quality of care you provide, and make a positive impact on the lives of seniors in our state.

Thank you for your continued support of the Florida Senior Living Association. I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events.

JOE JEDLOWSKI, MBA/MHA  
*President, Distinctive Living*



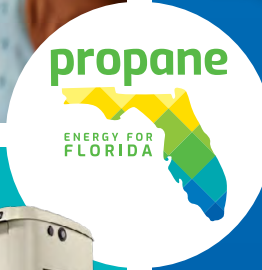


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# the hot seat

with the FSLA Team

we asked,  
**Jimmie Fay, Kristin  
and Katherine answered**

*Kristin, what do you enjoy most about visiting members around the state?*

The best part of visiting our member communities is seeing how happy the residents are. It's so heartwarming to see them smiling and laughing.



Read more about visits with members on p. 34

NAME

*Kristin*

**FAVORITE SEASON OF THE YEAR?**

Spring - I love reflecting on the past year and setting goals for the new one. Spring is all about renewal, growth, recharging and getting reorganized for exciting, new beginnings!  
*Plus who doesn't love a good Spring cleaning?*

**WHAT IS A HIDDEN TALENT OR HOBBY THAT YOU BRING TO YOUR WORK?**

**HUMOR!**

*I think it's important to enjoy the little things in life, always find the funny, and do my part to lighten the mood and boost team morale.*

**WHAT INSPIRES YOU?**

Believing that I can make a difference. By waking up each day with a mindset to do the right thing, be kind to everyone, and do my part to help others and animals-I believe that I am contributing to the overall good in the world and it gives me a sense of purpose and fulfillment. I love brightening people's days-even if it's just for a moment!

NAME

*Jimmie Fay*

**FAVORITE SEASON OF THE YEAR?**

I love Fall! To me it is a season of reflection, resetting, resting and regeneration.

**WHAT IS A HIDDEN TALENT OR HOBBY THAT YOU BRING TO YOUR WORK?**

I love to read!

**SHARE A FAVORITE MEMORY FROM YOUR TIME AT FSLA:**

The first time I helped a community member overcome an obstacle.

**WHAT INSPIRES YOU?**

Helping other people be successful and giving people a reason to smile.

**FUN FACT:**  
*Jimmie Fay has chickens and often brings eggs to share to the FSLA office.*



NAME

*Katherine (or Katie!)*

**FAVORITE SEASON OF THE YEAR?**

**FALL!**

*Birthdays, Holidays, and the BEST weather make this my favorite time of the year*

**WHAT IS A HIDDEN TALENT OR HOBBY THAT YOU BRING TO YOUR WORK?**

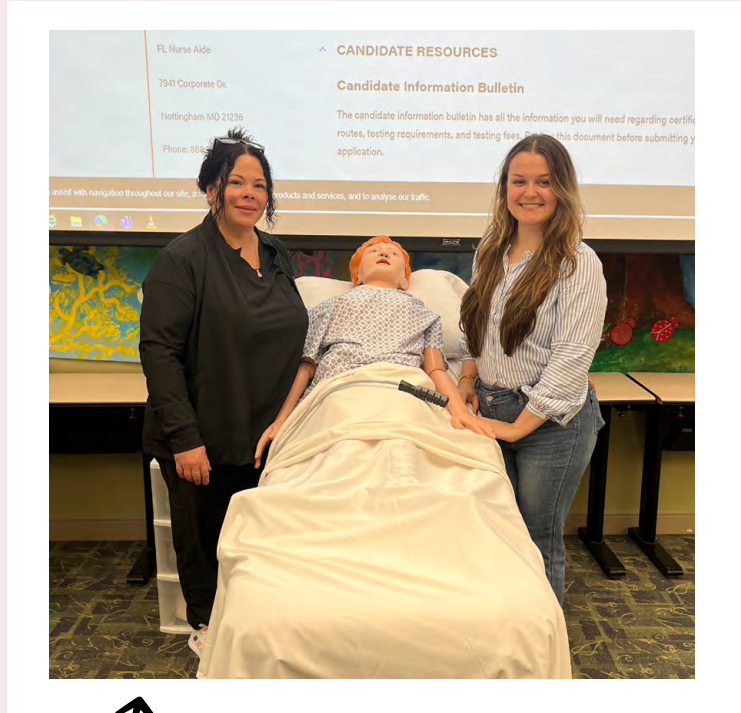
I love to paint and do crafts in my spare time - I'd like to think my creativity helps with *ENGAGE!*

**WHAT INSPIRES YOU?**

I am inspired by people helping people - seeing natural acts of kindness.

**SHARE A FAVORITE MEMORY FROM YOUR TIME AT FSLA:**

Seeing the Best of the Best award winners' who are unknowingly nominated for their devotion to their communities. Watching them become emotional as they accepted their recognition at our recent conference was so meaningful to me! This makes the work we do at FSLA feel very meaningful.



*Katherine, you have been working diligently to enhance and expand FSLA's education including the new career training classes, what do you feel is the best part of these programs?*

It has been a great joy and undertaking thinking of new ways to expand our education. Now with our extensive educational catalog in one place on the FSLI website, I believe the best part of these new programs is the accessibility it provides the busy professionals of FSLA member communities. It is our job to make their job easier!

**WANT TO SEE ALL THE UPGRADES TO OUR EDUCATION OFFERINGS?**

Dive in and explore all that FSLI has to offer. It's a fantastic way to keep learning and growing in your career. Scan the QR Code to begin browsing the new course catalog!



**FUN FACT:**

*Kristin and Katherine both graduated from Florida State University. GO NOLES!*



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## A Word from FSLA CEO

By Gail Matillo



GAIL MATILLO, MPA  
President/CEO,  
Florida Senior Living Association



Florida Senior Living Association is celebrating its 11th year this fall, and we are so proud to represent the “Best of the Best” Senior Living communities throughout the state - hundreds of well-known and respected industry partners, and collaborations with experts in our field.

Inspired by a mission and an incredible and talented team, the association is focused on constantly evolving, improving and cultivating our core principles and beliefs to drive the association forward. They are not just words on a page, but they are the foundation of everything we do, guiding our daily actions and decisions.

1. **Do the Right Thing** – Integrity is the cornerstone of our success. We are committed to making the right choices, even when it is difficult. This belief shapes our interactions with each other, our members, and the entire industry.
2. **Obsessed with Better** – Excellence is a journey, not a destination. We strive for continuous improvement, always looking for ways to innovate and enhance our work. This obsession fuels our growth and keeps us ahead of the curve on happenings in our business. We keep up with the latest trends and protect the industry from costly and burdensome laws and regulations.
3. **All in the Same Boat** – Strategy and collaboration are key to our collective success. We support each other, celebrate

our achievements together, and face challenges as one. Our diverse talents and perspectives are our greatest strength. We are all in this together, working towards shared goals and providing great service, care, and quality of life to the residents you serve.

4. **Now is the Time** – Action is the engine of progress. Together, we will seize opportunities and tackle problems head-on. FSLA is the leading and exclusive advocate for assisted living, memory care, and independent communities. Our commitment, dedication, and passion set us apart as the most trusted partner in this profession.

These beliefs are the bedrock of our culture, shaping our identity and driving our success. Together, we will continue to achieve great things, making a positive impact on each other and the communities we serve.

**If you are not currently a member, we invite you to join FSLA** - the go-to association for senior living in Florida.

FSLA is at the forefront, shaping legislation and policies that directly impact your communities and daily operations. Being a member will save you money, improve your operations, and provide you with the most up-to-date information on the latest trends, best practices, and regulatory compliance. We look forward to serving you!



## Grassroots Advocacy

Discovery Double Dip - Aston Gardens  
Tampa Bay hosts Candidate Forum and  
FSLA Tours Discovery Village Tampa Palms

By Jason Hand, ESQ.

Discovery Senior Living has heard FSLA's call to action for needed grassroots advocacy! On Thursday, August 8th, Aston Gardens at Tampa Bay hosted its first Candidates Forum for the upcoming Primary Election. Resident **Mickey Castor** orchestrated the forum and acted as moderator. **Jeannie Hitzegrad**, Director of Celebrations at Aston Gardens at Tampa Bay, assisted Mickey with coordinating the event.

Resident Mickey Castor said: *"My focus in organizing a candidate's forum is that I only invite candidates we can vote for. This way, there is a best of interest for the candidates because they know their constituents... seniors vote. ... Every candidate is there to answer questions from the residents. I had several people come up to me afterwards who said, 'I learned so much!' One of them said 'I would have really regretted if I hadn't come to this.' I try to give the residents some basic background and I think that is what we accomplished today. As long as I am here, we will have them every two years."*

The forum consisted of: Florida House District 66 Candidates, Hillsborough County Commission Candidates, and

Hillsborough County School Board Candidates. Each group of candidates was able to speak, followed by a Q&A session from the Aston Gardens residents.

One of the candidate speakers was incumbent House District 66 **Representative Traci Koster** (R-Tampa). Rep. Koster is a true friend to FSLA and has supported seniors and our senior living industry on many issues – even sponsoring funding for FSLA's CNA On-The-Job Training Program. Rep. Koster said: *"Thank you so much for having me and all the candidates, I think this was a great event. You had such a great turnout of residents, and I think it's important to re-engage. Since COVID there's been a lot less engagement I would imagine from most of the residents, so I think this was a great opportunity to get people re-engaged with their local politics. I really appreciate you having me."*

Moving to Discovery Senior Living's second act of grassroots advocacy, on Thursday, August 1, FSLA's President & CEO, **Gail Matillo**, and COO & General Counsel, **Jason Hand**, toured Discovery Village of Tampa Palms, to learn more about how Discovery operates a regular ALF with an integrated memory care component. Discovery's Regional Director of

Resident Care *Melissa Rogers RN, C-AL, CDP*, Executive Director and *Angeline Hernandez* greeted FSLA and showed off their beautiful building.

While Gail was marveling at the building's beautiful architecture, I was especially impressed with the movie theater and walk-in swimming pool (although I may have inquired if I could swap the popcorn for some whiskey and cigars!)

One area we learned about – which will likely be a component of future legislation – was that since COVID-19, memory care services have expanded to take on additional roles of behavioral health care. No longer is memory care exclusively reserved for residents with ADRD – now they also care for residents with related behavioral issues.

We also learned about ways in which Discovery enriches the lives of its memory care residents, like allowing residents from the regular ALF to visit with their peers in the memory care unit, and supervising & escorting memory care residents outside of the unit to enjoy other areas of the property. It warmed our hearts when we learned that one husband in the ALF section visited his wife in the memory care unit every day! The day we were there, they were even celebrating an anniversary.



**JASON HAND, ESQ.**  
COO & General Counsel  
Florida Senior Living Association



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## Preserving Sweet Traditions

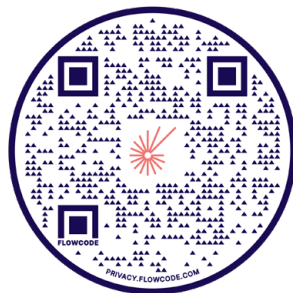
A Recipe Book Inspired by Family and Love

By Katie Truelove

Submit your Resident or Employee provided Recipes to be featured in FSLA Recipe Book!

Download our Submission Form:

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One of the most cherished gifts I received growing up was the time spent in the kitchen with my "Grammy", *Virginia Hocutt*. Her love for cooking was a reflection of the care she put into every meal, and she always had the best recipes. Holiday gatherings were a time for her to make each family member's favorite dish, and the kitchen was filled with warmth, love, and the rich aroma of tradition. Her best advice to me about cooking was simple yet profound: "Try everything."

My grandmother's cooking journey began out of necessity. She learned to cook to survive, and one of the stories that always sticks with me is how her mother would draw the hands on the clock to show her when to put the cornbread in the oven while the rest of the family worked in the field. These little moments of resilience and creativity are what make cooking such a powerful way to connect with our past.

With these memories in mind, I'm excited to share that FSLA is collecting recipes, stories, and sweet traditions for a very special project: a community recipe book called *A Heaping Helping of Joy: Recipes, Stories, and Sweet Traditions*. This collection will celebrate the foods and family memories that have shaped our lives, and we invite you to be a part of it.

Whether it's a recipe handed down through generations, a dish that brings back memories of holidays, or a story tied to a favorite family meal, we want to fill the pages of this book with the heart and soul of our community. It's also a wonderful opportunity to submit a recipe in honor or memory of a loved one. Our goal is to gather 200 recipes by October 31, 2024, and we hope to have cookbooks available in time for the holiday season—a perfect gift that will preserve and pass down these traditions.

As a thank you for contributing, each participant will receive a free copy of *A Heaping Helping of Joy*. This book will be a beautiful reminder of how food and family intertwine to create lasting memories and a shared history.

Let's preserve these joyful moments together. Complete the form on our website or download the submission form and drop it in the mail, and join us in celebrating the recipes and stories that bring joy to our tables and hearts.



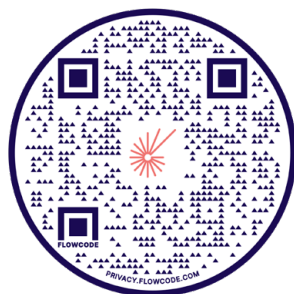
KATIE TRUELOVE

Chief Creative Guru + Solutions Hero, *ktcreative, LLC*,  
FSLA's Marketing Consultant



### View All Upcoming Career Training Events

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# FSLI Career Trainings

By Lori Barnes, PhD, APRN, ANP-BC

As the healthcare landscape evolves, so too do the educational and certification opportunities available for those committed to improving the quality of care in assisted living facilities (ALFs). The Florida Senior Living Institute is excited to offer new courses in Medication Tech, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). The best part is that we are scheduling these combo courses at ALFs near you!

### Medication Technician Courses

Medication Technician courses are becoming increasingly important in Florida's ALFs. These courses provide specialized training for staff to manage and assist with the self-administration of medications safely and effectively. The curriculum covers all state of Florida guidelines, ensuring a well-rounded educational program. The value of a Medication Technician certification is multifaceted. Firstly, it ensures that medication is administered accurately, minimizing the risk of errors that could adversely affect resident health.

### Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Courses

Certified Nursing Assistant courses remain a cornerstone of training for staff in assisted living facilities. These courses offer comprehensive instruction in patient care, including personal hygiene, mobility assistance, and vital sign monitoring. The CNA certification process emphasizes both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, equipping staff to provide compassionate and effective care.

The value of CNA certification in assisted living settings cannot be overstated.

CNAs are often the primary caregivers who interact with residents daily, making their role crucial in maintaining residents' comfort and dignity. A CNA's training allows them to respond promptly to residents' needs, manage their daily living activities, and observe and report to healthcare professionals. This level of care is essential in ensuring that residents receive attentive and personalized support, which significantly enhances their overall quality of life.

### CPR Classes

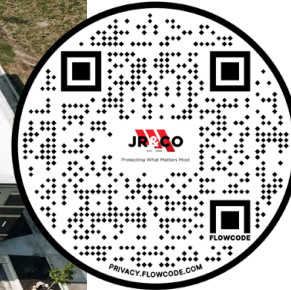
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) classes are vital for all healthcare providers, including those working in assisted living facilities. CPR training equips staff with the skills to respond effectively in emergencies, such as cardiac arrest or choking incidents. These courses cover the latest CPR techniques, including chest compressions, rescue breaths, and the use of automated external defibrillators (AEDs).

The value of CPR certification in an assisted living context is profound. Emergencies can arise suddenly, and having staff trained in CPR ensures that immediate and appropriate action can be taken to save lives. For residents, knowing that the staff is prepared to handle such situations provides an added layer of security and peace of mind. CPR certification not only enhances the safety of residents but also contributes to a culture of preparedness and professionalism within the facility.

Join us in our effort to ensure patients receive competent, effective, and safe care—enroll today!

LORI BARNES, PHD, APRN, ANP-BC  
Director of Nursing Education, Veritas Nursing Academy  
FSLI Trainer





## Is Your Roof Ready for Hurricane Season?

By Joe Swigart, JR & Co Inc.

**B**y far, the most valuable possession of any senior center is its occupants. “Stuff” can be replaced, people cannot! Keeping people safe is the primary task of any building. Your roof, then, is your first line of defense. Sun, rain, hail, wind, and debris attack the roof more than any other place on your structure. Since the roof is not self-healing, it is your job to protect it against hundreds of elements. Preventative maintenance is essential for rooftop longevity.

Here is a list of practical considerations regarding rooftop maintenance:

### Get a Professional Roof Inspection

Biannual or annual inspections by a licensed roofing contractor are recommended. Regular rooftop maintenance will extend the life of the roof several years. A roof condition report will offer pictures and the condition of your roof in its current state. In the event of damage from a weather event, these pictures are helpful to assess what impact the storm had on your roof.

### Preventative Maintenance

Preventative maintenance is usually a simple routine duty that is performed at your convenience. When you have a leak from your roof, it is an emergency! You must stop what you were doing and address it “*now*.” After dealing with the leak, one must clean up the water and someone is usually unhappy. Getting ahead of these issues saves money, and offers peace of mind.

### Fix Minor Repairs Right Away

Even the tiniest nicks in membrane and shingles can lead to mold growth or major damage in short order. Evaluate how *everything* looks. Is there anything loose? Are the shingles curled up? Is there granule loss? Are there any loose fasteners/screws? Five minutes with a caulking gun can save you a lot of headaches in the future.

### Trim the Trees and Shrubs

Leaves clog gutters. The wind causes branches to scrape your roof. Severe wind and lightning can bring down tree limbs that may weigh more than a ton. A little yard maintenance is part of good rooftop maintenance.

### Keep Gutters and Drains Free of Debris

The easiest problem to identify and solve can become a major problem if neglected. A clogged gutter can cause water to go behind the gutter and rot the fascia, or flow, over the gutter, creating erosion. Clogged drains can easily turn into elusive internal leaks. Gutters should be evaluated at least monthly, and maybe more often during the rainy season.

### Have a Plan in the Event of Roof Damage

Do you remember the school fire drills? Everyone knew what to do and where to go in the event of an emergency. What is your plan if your roof is compromised because of severe weather? Do you have a reliable roofing contractor that you can contact that will respond quickly? Do you have an action plan to get the water intrusion stopped quickly?

A reputable roofing contractor will offer an “*emergency dry-in*.” A roofing crew responds quickly and usually applies a temporary membrane to stop the leaking. This gives you the time to assess the damage and determine the best course of action. You may only need a repair, but what if a complete roof replacement is necessary? That is not something you want to be deciding while water flows into your building.

Some roofing contractors will suggest using a storm tracker. The roofing company is notified if there is extreme weather in your area. This enables them to be poised and ready if you need them.

If you have considered the above recommendations, good for you! If not, a reputable roofing contractor can help you be ready for hurricane season.



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# FSLA Leadership Academy

The Next Chapter

By Katherine Upton

The recent Florida Senior Living (FSLA) annual conference was a resounding success, filled with insightful sessions, networking opportunities, and the celebration of the numerous talented senior living professionals who comprise the FSLA community. One of the many highlights was the graduation ceremony for the latest Florida Senior Living Leadership Academy cohort. These resolute individuals, hailing from assisted living facilities across the state, have completed a rigorous professional development program designed to enhance their leadership skills and prepare them for future challenges within their careers.

The Academy graduates, representing various roles such as executive directors, business office managers, memory directors, culinary directors, and more, have demonstrated exceptional dedication and growth throughout the academy. Their accomplishments, as they can be seen advancing in their careers and implementing notable change, are a testament to their hard work and the invaluable mentorship they received.

As we bid farewell to this outstanding 2024 Academy cohort, we eagerly anticipate the start of the new Fall 2024-2025 Academy, which will welcome a fresh group of aspiring leaders. This program continues to be a cornerstone of FSLA's commitment to fostering excellence in senior living.

“

*“This was an awesome experience. Thank you all for becoming my new Senior Living Family.”*

-Deborah McCourt,  
The Sheridan at Hobe Sound; Leadership Academy 2024 Graduate

”

View Deborah's Testimonial



## Introducing the Advanced Leadership Academy

In a groundbreaking move, FSLA is thrilled to announce the launch of the first-ever Advanced Leadership Academy exclusively for Alumni of the original Academy. This program is designed to take these professionals' leadership skills to the next level, providing them with advanced training and mentorship opportunities. Alumni will have the opportunity to engage in thought-provoking discussions, collaborate with peers, and gain valuable insights from industry experts.

By investing in our Alumni, we are not only recognizing their achievements but also empowering them to become even more effective leaders in their communities.

Together, we are shaping the future of senior living in Florida.

**Nominate a rising leader in your community to join the waitlist for our next Academy.**

[floridaseniorliving.org/leadershipfsla](http://floridaseniorliving.org/leadershipfsla)



**KATHERINE UPTON**  
*Director of Education & Engagement,  
Executive Editor of ENGAGE  
Florida Senior Living Association*





MONICA WILSON, MS  
ICEBridge, LLC

Have a question about assisted living operations?  
Ask Monica: [Monica@icebridgetraining.com](mailto:Monica@icebridgetraining.com)

# Ask Monica



*Our assisted living license is up for renewal. Our comprehensive emergency management plan still has not been approved. What do we do?*

Assisted living communities must submit with the license application, either an approval letter for the emergency plan, or documentation of submission for review within the last 365 days.



*How much emergency water are we required to store onsite?*

The rule states that assisted living communities must either store sufficient water for drinking and food preparation or have a plan for obtaining water in an emergency that is reviewed by the county emergency management agency. The comprehensive emergency management plan criteria give the county agencies quite a bit of discretion to determine the amount of water required. Most counties have instituted their own requirements, so it is imperative to check with the county to determine options for storing and securing water for emergencies and the amount of water the county expects the community to secure.



*How often do we need to update our sheltering and aid agreements for our emergency plans?*

While in the past some counties allowed these to renew automatically, the revised emergency planning criteria indicates these agreements are to be updated annually.

## CUTTING THROUGH THE RED TAPE

**Q: Can failure to provide portion sizes on the menu result in a survey deficiency and if so, why?**

**A:** In accordance with 59A-36.012 Food Service Standards, there must be portion sizes listed either on the menus or on a separate sheet. Otherwise, there will be a deficiency accordingly in the survey.

The residents must be provided the standard minimum portions of food unless the resident chooses to eat less. Such a deviation should be documented in the resident's chart and the physician should be notified if it is a continuous occurrence.

**Q: Where can we find the most current 1823 form?**

**A:** You can go to the AHCA website to download a copy. If you have gotten the 1823 from a different location, be certain that the form is dated April 2021 as you must be utilizing the current form. Please note that the format allows the data to be entered electronically and does not require it to be handwritten. This makes the process less time-consuming for the physician.



JIMMIE FAY GRIFFIN  
Accounting, Membership and Regulatory Manager  
Florida Senior Living Association



# Communication & Coordination With Emergency Management

When Disaster Strikes

By Jason Hand, ESQ.

With hurricanes before us and in our rear-view mirror, FSLA wants to remind our members of two key aspects of emergency response - communication & coordination. While this applies to residents, families, and staff – it also applies to Florida’s emergency management personnel.

FSLA reached out to *Kevin Guthrie*, the Executive Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management (DEM) for key advice regarding the importance of ALFs to communicate and coordinate with Florida’s emergency management & disaster recovery resources.

Kevin stated, *“I encourage facilities to maintain strong relationships with their local emergency management offices, as well as the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) and the Department of Health. We strongly encourage ALFs to contact their local county emergency management office and ask for help immediately if they lose power due to a disaster.”*

This communication and coordination is not only common sense but also required by law. For example, if telephone service is unavailable during an emergency, the ALF must

request assistance from local emergency management personnel or law enforcement to maintain communication. See, Rule 59A-36.019(3)(b), F.A.C.

Practical experience has taught us that contacting local offices may be difficult due to power outages, damage to buildings, etc. In this event, Kevin reminds us that *“DEM has regional coordinators that can help put ALFs in contact with resources. You can find a map with contact information for your regional coordinator at FloridaDisaster.org/Regions.”*



In another example, remember that ALFs are not only required to evacuate the premises during (or after) an emergency if directed by the county emergency agency – but to also report the evacuation to the county emergency management agency and AHCA within 6 hours of the evacuation order (or when the evacuation is completed). See, Rule 59A-36.019(4), F.A.C. The facility must assist in the relocation of residents and must cooperate with outreach teams established by the Department of Health or emergency

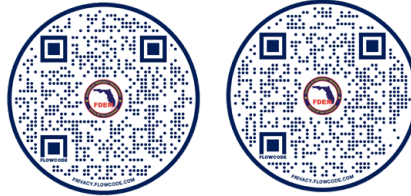
management agency to assist in relocation efforts. See Rule 59A-36.019(4)(f), F.A.C.

Kevin reminds us all that “[h]aving easy-to-transport medical information for all your residents is crucial in the event an evacuation order is called. This includes all residents’ physician contacts, prescriptions, and emergency contact information.” Kevin’s focus dovetails into a core tenant – that resident needs and preferences must

be considered to the extent possible in any relocation decision. See Rule 59A-36.019(4)(f), F.A.C.

In conclusion, Kevin reminds all of us, “Know that the State of Florida stands ready to support assisted living and long-term care facilities in getting back to normal operations quickly after an emergency or disaster!”

Additional resources available by scanning codes below:



“

“As we enter the peak of hurricane season, make sure your facility plans are in place, and you have what you need to ensure your residents and patients will remain safe if a storm strikes.”

-Kevin Guthrie, Florida DEM Executive Director

”



JASON HAND,  
ESQ.  
COO & General Counsel  
Florida Senior Living Association



## Build a Resilient Community

During hurricane season and year-round, natural gas helps you meet residents’ needs:

- Gourmet meals, hot showers, plus comfortable and safe environments, even during a power outage.
- Less susceptible to storm damage.
- 3.3x more affordable than electricity.



Learn how natural gas can benefit your assisted living community: [floridagas.org/ALF](http://floridagas.org/ALF)



### DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that in the wake of Hurricane Irma, nearly 7 million customers lost power, yet only 300 customers lost natural gas service?



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# FSLA Annual Chefs' Competition

Chefs Compete, Seniors Win

By Katherine Upton

In an exclusive interview on FSLA Partner *Aaron Fish's* podcast *"Tips with Trestle,"* *Shawn McGregor*, Division Executive Chef at Healthcare Services Group, praised the annual Chefs Competition and reminisced on the backstory of how this highlight event came to fruition.

The competition was born from the desire to raise awareness and showcase the culinary skills within senior living communities. It began 5 years ago, as an initiative by McGregor, Head judge. It quickly gained traction, becoming a highlight of the FSLA's annual conference.

## A Unique Format Focused on Fun and Creativity

Unlike traditional cooking shows, the FSLA competition emphasizes camaraderie and showcasing individual talents. Chefs compete with a pre-selected protein (like Mediterranean chicken) but are free to add their own unique touches and creativity. This allows the judges to experience the diverse culinary styles and approaches taken by chefs within senior living.

## More Than Just a Competition: Benefits for the Industry

The FSLA competition serves a vital role in the senior living industry:

- **Elevates the Perception of Senior Living Food:** It dispels stereotypes by showcasing the culinary expertise and innovation happening within senior living communities.
- **Collaboration and Inspiration:** Chefs learn from each other's techniques and approaches, fostering a spirit of collaboration and generating new ideas.
- **Publicity for Senior Living Operators:** Participation in the competition creates positive publicity for participating communities, highlighting the quality dining experience they offer.

## Getting Involved: Tips for Chefs

Aspiring chefs who want to participate in future competitions can take note:

- **Practice Makes Perfect:** As Chef McGregor advises, practice your dish multiple times to ensure it's perfect.
- **Embrace Creativity:** Don't just follow recipes; use the competition as an opportunity to express your culinary creativity.
- **Seek Mentorship:** Connect with experienced chefs for guidance and support.



The FSLA Chef's competition is more than just a culinary showcase; it is a testament to the commitment of our industry to providing exceptional dining experiences for seniors. By celebrating the talent and creativity of our chefs, we are reinforcing our dedication to quality and innovation.

The 2024 Annual Chefs competition once again showcased exceptional culinary talent within the senior living industry. This year's competition was particularly noteworthy, with chefs from across the state delivering innovative and delicious dishes that also cater to the unique dietary needs and preferences of seniors.

The coveted title of 2024 Florida Senior Living Chefs Competition Winner was awarded to *Troy Smith*, Director of Culinary Services of Discovery Senior Living. Troy's winning dish impressed the judges with its creative flair, exceptional flavor profile, and artful presentation.

To listen to the full interview with Shawn McGregor, Division Executive Chef at Healthcare Services Group, tune in to Aaron Fish's podcast *"Tips with Trestle"* for the episode *"Chefs Compete, Seniors Win."*



**Interview with Troy Smith, Director of Culinary Services Department,  
Discovery Senior Living, 2024 Chefs' Competition Winner**

**Katherine:** What first inspired you to pursue a career in the culinary arts?

**Troy:** My mom's support and encouragement were instrumental in shaping my decision to pursue a career in culinary arts. With her guidance, I took the leap to follow my dreams and enroll in culinary school. I am grateful for her belief in me and for nurturing my love for food and cooking.

**K:** What drew you to work at Discovery Senior Living and how long have you worked there?

**T:** One year ago, my Executive Director, *Janann Holt*, opened the door to Discovery Village.

**K:** What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

**T:** Spending time with my 14-year-old daughter, Trinity. Also, watching movies and going out to eat, as well as spending time with my parents. Trinity brings so much joy and energy into our lives!

**K:** What was it like for you to compete in the annual culinary competition at FSLA?

**T:** The pressure was high, but the thrill of showcasing my culinary skills was truly exhilarating. As the competition heated up, I drew upon my past experiences in the kitchen, and I pushed myself to

deliver perfection. The adrenaline rush fueled my determination, and I gave it my all.

**K:** What were the key elements of your winning dish?

**T:** The key elements of my winning dish were a perfect balance of flavors, presentation, and attention to detail. I used the right balance of seasoning, ensuring that every bite was bursting with flavor.

**K:** What are some of your favorite ingredients to work with? Do you have any favorite dishes that you like to make?

**T:** Beef and seafood. Whether it's searing a perfectly cooked steak or delicately preparing a seafood dish, working with these ingredients is always a joy for me.

My favorite dishes, however, are the ones that remind me of my mom's Southern-style recipes. I love putting a modern twist on them to make them my own.

**K:** Do you have any advice for those looking to achieve their goals in the culinary field?

**T:** Prepare yourself for working long hours but always keep a healthy work-life balance. Use high-quality ingredients and stay true to your unique cooking style.

*P.S. Next year, you can expect to see me defending my winning title!!*



**KATHERINE UPTON**  
*Director of Education & Engagement,  
Executive Editor of ENGAGE  
Florida Senior Living Association*



# A Celebration of Excellence

The 2024 Best of the Best Awards

By Katherine Upton

Awards Sponsored By



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Florida Senior Living Association (FSLA) recently hosted its 2024 Best of the Best Awards Ceremony during the ENGAGE2024 Annual Conference, highlighting outstanding achievements across the senior living industry. This event honored the dedication, resilience, and innovation of leaders, caregivers, and employees who are continually raising the bar for care and community life in Florida.

## Recognizing Industry Leaders

The ceremony began with FSLA CEO *Gail Matillo* welcoming attendees and recognizing the industry's standout performers. The first award, Industry Partner of the Year, was presented by FSLA's first Board Chair, *Mary Sue Patchett*, to Patriot Angels for their ongoing support of senior living communities. *Suzette Graham* of Patriot Angels accepted the award, expressing her gratitude for the recognition. Also invited to the stage with Patriot Angels was *Ms. Jane Westlake*, cover image and featured story from our Summer issue of *ENGAGE*. After receiving a framed image of her cover photo, Jane offered some advice to the audience, saying, "It is important to always enjoy life."

## Special Recognition for FSLA's Longtime Supporters

A particularly touching moment occurred with the presentation of the Outstanding Attendance Award, which went to *Dante and Mary Lou Pia-Chasie*. The couple has attended every FSLA conference since its inception in 2013. Their daughter, Mary Sue Patchett, congratulated them and expressed her love and gratitude for their consistent support over the years.

## Honoring Exceptional Employees

The Employee of the Year award, presented by *Melinda Skirvin*, founding FSLA board member and Chief Wellness Officer for Five Star Senior Living, went to *Alicia Reyes*. Alicia was celebrated for her leadership, organizational skills, and collaborative efforts, which have significantly contributed to the success of her community. A tribute video highlighted her contributions, and Alicia was honored for her selfless dedication to her team.

The Caregiver of the Year award went to *Ciera Lewis*, whose remarkable story moved all those in attendance. Despite being diagnosed with stage 4 ovarian cancer, Ciera never missed a

day of work, balancing her treatments and her job caring for residents. Now cancer-free, Ciera continues to exemplify the dedication and passion that earned her this recognition.

## Excellence in Leadership and Marketing

Mary Sue Patchett returned to present the Sales and Marketing Director of the Year award to *Ginnie Vinson*. Ginnie's empathy and commitment to families, even when they couldn't become residents at her community, stood out as exemplary. A video showcased her efforts to go above and beyond in helping those in need, demonstrating her selfless approach to her role.

The Executive Director of the Year award was given to *Antonietta Caicadeo*, recognized for her outstanding leadership and her ability to maintain a turnover rate below the national average. Under Antonietta's leadership, her community has thrived, achieving two deficiency-free AHCA surveys, an impressive accomplishment that reflects her commitment to excellence.

## Outstanding Achievements and Leadership

The Outstanding Achievements Award was presented to *Amanda Waterstradt*. Known for her strong leadership and her ability to care for both her staff and residents, Amanda's dedication has earned her the respect and admiration of her community.

The final award, Outstanding Leadership, was awarded to *Josh Freitas*, Vice President of Program Development for Certus Premier Memory Care. Although Josh was unable to attend the ceremony, he shared a video message, and his award was accepted by *Ashley Braden*, Community Relations Director of CERTUS Senior Living at Dr. Phillips.

As the ceremony concluded, Gail led a round of applause for all the winners, acknowledging their incredible contributions to the senior living industry. The 2024 Best of the Best Awards served as a powerful reminder of the dedication, compassion, and innovation that drive the senior living profession forward.

*Special thanks is also due to 2024 Awards Sponsor, WelcomeHome Software. Chris Mohrman, Vice President of Marketing, joined winners on stage and helped present the awards.*



Patriot Angels, Industry Partner of the Year



Ms. Jane Westlake



Ashley Braden, on behalf of Josh Freitas



Amanda Waterstradt



Antonieta Caicadei



Ginnie Vinson



Ciera Lewis



Alicia Reyes



Mary Sue Patchett on behalf of her Parents



Special recognition was also awarded to Senator of the Year *Colleen Burton* (not pictured); Representative of the Year *Ryan Chamberlain* (pictured left); Lifetime Achievement Award Winner *Leader Michael Grant* (pictured center); and Outstanding Leadership Award Winner *Kim Smoak* (pictured right).



## Embracing Change

Pivoting to Meet the Evolving Needs  
of Seniors in 2024

By Mica Giles, MHA, CALA, CDP

In the world of senior living, one constant factor is change. As we progress through 2024, it becomes increasingly clear that the needs and desires of seniors are evolving rapidly. New influences and advancements have shifted societal norms, and there is a stronger focus on individualized care. Over the last ten years, I have been privileged to work as an executive in senior living communities, first in New Jersey and now in Florida. This journey has given me a view of the significant shifts happening within the industry. Now more than ever we must be ready to adjust our strategies—reshaping our methods and catering to the expanding and evolving needs of the seniors under our care.

### Understanding the New Senior

The senior population of 2024 differs greatly from that of a few years ago. Present-day seniors are well-informed, adept at using technology, and tend to hold higher expectations for their quality of life. They desire more than a place to reside; they are seeking an active community where they can continue to learn, interact with others, and flourish. This change calls for a reassessment of the services and offerings in senior living communities.

In the past, senior living used to solely focus on providing basic care and living arrangements. Nowadays, it's about

creating a supportive environment that caters to the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of seniors. Seniors now place a value on wellness programs, opportunities for continuous learning, and staying socially connected. They aim to uphold their independence while also having support available when needed. This shift calls for us to reassess our services and be open to adjusting our strategies in line with evolving expectations.

### The Role of Technology

Another transformation in senior living has been the integration of technology. The COVID-19 pandemic expedited the adoption of tools, a trend that has since continued to gain momentum. Seniors are becoming increasingly adept at using technology to keep in touch with loved ones, manage their health needs, and find entertainment. By 2024, technology is no longer an added bonus; it has become essential. Senior living communities must embrace advancements by incorporating smart home technologies, telehealth services, and virtual engagement platforms. These resources enhance resident's quality of life by granting them independence through access to services that may have previously been inaccessible. Shifting towards a technology-driven approach will be vital in meeting the expectations of today's seniors.



**Personalized Care and Services**

Another aspect that senior living communities need to adapt to is offering personalized care. The outdated one-size-fits-all approach is no longer effective. Today's seniors seek care that is customized to meet their needs, preferences, and lifestyles. This includes providing wellness plans, dietary choices, and activities that cater to the diverse interests of our residents.

Personalized care also involves establishing connections with residents. Developing relationships and understanding their unique backgrounds, obstacles, and goals are vital in offering the necessary support. By prioritizing care, we can enhance the overall experience for seniors, ensuring that they feel appreciated and understood.

**The Importance of Community and Social Connection**

As the landscape of senior living evolves, nurturing a strong sense of community becomes increasingly important. Social isolation has become a pressing issue in light of recent events like the pandemic. Seniors desire to be part of a community where they feel connected and involved. This necessitates creating environments and initiatives that promote interaction, cooperation, and significant bonds.

Our focus should shift towards establishing communities that serve not only as residences, but as places where individuals truly belong. Creating spaces that encourage social interactions, hosting various events to cater to different interests, and fostering an inclusive environment are key factors in helping older adults maintain their social connections and improve their overall well-being.

**Conclusion: Embracing the Future**

Looking ahead, it is evident that the senior living profession must adapt and grow to meet the changing needs and expectations of seniors. Embracing technology, providing care, and nurturing a strong community spirit are crucial aspects of this evolution in 2024. This calls for flexibility, innovation, and a dedication to progress.

I have seen firsthand the resilience and adaptability within the senior living field over the years. With this mindset and strategies, I believe we can continue offering exceptional care and assistance to our elderly population as they navigate through life. While challenges lie ahead, there are also opportunities for us to make a positive impact. Let us welcome opportunities to make a meaningful impact. Let us embrace the change, and lead the way into the future of senior living.

“  
*Let us welcome opportunities for us to make a meaningful impact.*  
”



MICA GILES, MHA, CALA, CDP  
*Sumter Senior Living*





## The Critical Role of Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans for New Senior Living Communities

By Damon Thomas, Senior Vice President, Providence Senior Living

Securing that initial license when starting a new senior living community is a significant milestone, marking the readiness to offer high-quality care to our residents. Among the many requirements for obtaining this license, having a robust emergency management plan is one of the most critical steps in ensuring that the community is prepared for emergencies from the outset. It's not just about meeting regulatory demands; It's about ensuring that the residents who will call this community home are protected, no matter what challenges arise.

### Understanding the Regulatory Requirements

Senior living communities serve some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Many of our residents come to us with complex medical needs, cognitive impairments, or physical limitations that make them particularly susceptible to harm in the event of an emergency. The Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) and local emergency management offices recognize this vulnerability and have stringent requirements to ensure that we are prepared to handle various emergencies and natural disasters.

One event that left an indelible mark on my memory, and which profoundly highlighted the importance of

Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans (CEMPs), was Hurricane Irma in September 2017. This powerful storm wreaked havoc across South Florida, but it was the tragedy at a rehabilitation center in Hollywood, Florida that truly underscored the critical need for preparedness. The facility lost power, including its air conditioning system, leading to dangerously hot temperatures inside. Tragically, twelve residents died from heat-related issues before the facility could be evacuated.

This devastating incident prompted then-Governor *Rick Scott* to issue emergency rules requiring all assisted living facilities and nursing homes in Florida to install generators capable of maintaining a safe indoor temperature during power outages. These rules were later codified into law, making it mandatory for such facilities to have backup generators in place. In Florida, obtaining an initial license for a senior living community does not require the final Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) to be submitted upfront. Instead, new communities must submit their CEMP within 30 days after obtaining the license. This plan must clearly outline how the community will protect its residents, staff, and property during an emergency and demonstrate that the community can continue to provide essential services during and after an event.

## Key Components of an Effective Emergency Management Plan

An emergency management plan for a senior living community must be thorough and cover a range of potential scenarios. Some of the critical components include:

1. **Risk Assessment and Preparedness:** Identifying potential hazards that could affect the community, such as hurricanes, floods, fires, or pandemics, is the first step. The plan should include strategies for mitigating these risks, such as building reinforcements, staff training, and maintaining adequate supplies of food, water, and medications.
2. **Evacuation Procedures:** Clear, well-rehearsed evacuation procedures are essential. The plan should detail how residents will be safely evacuated, particularly those with mobility issues or special needs. It should also specify evacuation routes, transportation methods, and the location of shelters or alternative care facilities.
3. **Communication Protocols:** In an emergency, communication is key. The plan should outline how the community will communicate with residents, staff, families, and emergency responders. This includes having backup communication systems in place in case of power outages or network failures.
4. **Staff Training and Roles:** Every staff member should know their role in an emergency. Regular training and drills are necessary to ensure that everyone is prepared to act quickly and effectively. The plan should also address staffing needs during an emergency, including how to manage potential staff shortages.
5. **Resident and Family Involvement:** Engaging residents and their families in emergency preparedness is crucial. Residents should be aware of the emergency procedures and have a personal emergency plan in place. Families should be informed about the community's emergency plan and how they will be kept informed during an emergency.
6. **Continuity of Operations:** The plan must ensure that the community can continue to provide essential services during and after an emergency. This includes maintaining access to medications, medical care, and other critical resources. The plan should also address how the community will recover from an emergency, including repairs, staffing, and returning to normal operations.

## The Importance of Compliance and Inspection

Before a senior living community can open its doors, it must pass a rigorous inspection process. Although the final Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) is not due until 30 days after obtaining the license, it is important to ensure the community is prepared to address potential emergencies from the start.

During quieter moments of the start-up process, take the opportunity to review preliminary plans and assess the community's readiness to implement them. Evaluate not only the written plan but also the community's preparedness to execute it, which may include reviewing staff training records, inspecting emergency supplies, and conducting drills.

## The Broader Implications

While securing an initial license is the immediate goal, the importance of an emergency management plan extends far beyond regulatory compliance. These plans are essential for protecting the lives and well-being of residents, staff, and visitors. They also play a critical role in maintaining the community's reputation and financial stability.

In the event of an actual emergency, a well-prepared community can prevent injuries, save lives, and minimize damage. Conversely, a poorly managed emergency can lead to devastating consequences, including loss of life, legal liabilities, and damage to the community's reputation.

For new senior living communities, developing and maintaining a robust emergency management plan is not just a regulatory requirement—it is a moral obligation. While the final plan must be submitted within 30 days after obtaining a license, the importance of being prepared from day one cannot be overstated.

By prioritizing emergency preparedness, senior living communities can lay the foundation for a safe, resilient, and successful operation. These plans are not just a part of the process—they are the blueprint for creating a community where residents feel safe, families have peace of mind, and staff are empowered to provide the care and support our residents deserve.

### DAMON THOMAS

Senior Vice President, Providence Senior Living

*Damon Thomas is a 30-year veteran of the senior living industry, with leadership experience at some of the nation's largest senior living companies. He is currently the Senior Vice President at Providence Senior Living, an Ambassador for Bridge the Gap, and a Founding Member and Board Member of the Florida Senior Living Association.*





## HRA Assumes Management of Sabal Palms Senior Living

Officially Transitioning the Community to HarborChase Palm Coast

By Harbor Retirement Associates

Harbor Retirement Associates (HRA) assumed operational management of Sabal Palms Senior Living on July 1st, changing its name to HarborChase of Palm Coast and making it the 11th HarborChase community in Florida. Located at 2125 Palm Harbor Parkway in Palm Coast, Florida the two-story Protea senior living community offers 82 assisted living and memory care apartments within minutes of Jacksonville International Airport, Daytona International Speedway, Jacksonville beaches, golf courses, and historic St Augustine.

*“HarborChase of Palm Coast is a perfect addition to our portfolio of Florida communities and fulfills a regional need for a high-quality, full service and amenity-rich senior living community,”* said **Mark McBride**, Chief Operating Officer for HRA. *“Our team looks forward to offering new residents, their families, and the associates of HarborChase the many benefits this community has to offer.”*

HarborChase communities focus on serving seniors by providing exceptional amenity choices and award-winning hospitality. Accredited chefs prepare seasonal, farm-to-table selections daily in five on-site eateries, ranging from on-the-go casual fare in Counter-Offer to fine dining in The Grill Room. HRA immediately added all HarborChase restaurants to their new Palm Coast community. Life enrichment programs and highly trained professional care partners deliver resident-focused care and vibrant parallel programming.

Access to licensed nurses and 24-hour care staff, concierge service, housekeeping, and daily transportation are included

in this ECC licensed community. Full-service bar, club room, theater, activity rooms, fitness center, and salon and spa create a resort-like lifestyle for all residents and guests.



The Grand Opening celebration of HarborChase Palm Coast is scheduled for Thursday, October 17th from 4:00pm to 7:00pm. Themed, “All Aboard,” the event is a nod toward Henry Flagler, the architect of modern Florida resorts. Guests will ride the rails as each HarborChase restaurant is transformed into historic hotels built by Flagler from St. Augustine to Key West.

Personalized tours and restaurant reservations can be scheduled seven days a week by calling HarborChase of Palm Coast at 386.225.4070. Walk-in tours are welcome every day.

*Harbor Retirement Associates (HRA) is a regional senior living development and hospitality management company, focused on Independent Living, Assisted Living and Memory Care senior living communities. HRA operates 20 communities in 8 states and is partnering on the renovation or construction of supplementary communities. For more information, visit [HRAseNIorliving.com](http://HRAseNIorliving.com) or [HarborChase.com](http://HarborChase.com).*





## Grassroots Advocacy

AHCA Secretary Weida Tours Memory Care Community

By Jason Hand

If you attended FSLA's summer conference, ENGAGE 2024, Welcome to The Wild Side of Senior Living, or if you've previously read *ENGAGE* magazine, you have heard us talk about the importance of grassroots advocacy. Sharing your community's story with a VIP is a tremendous opportunity to put a "face" to assisted living communities. This direct input from you, your employees, and your residents helps lawmakers better understand the challenges you face and see firsthand why strengthening the senior living model is so important to our nation's aging population

On Wednesday, July 31, FSLA toured The Estates of Hyde Park with AHCA leadership, including *Secretary Jason Weida*, *Chief of Staff Stefan Grow*, *Deputy Secretary Kim Smoak*, and *Director of Legislative Affairs Jim Browne*. The Estates of Hyde Park is a Senior Lifestyle memory care community in Tampa, Florida – with a beautiful view of Hillsborough Bay!

Guiding AHCA and FSLA's visit were *Megan Couch*, Executive Director, and *Richard Tourney*, Regional Director of Operators. During the tour, we learned about the community's "Embrace Memory Care" signature program, which the

U.S. News & World Report rated as Best Memory Care Community of 2024.

Embrace is built upon the five principles of Wellness, Enrichment, Challenge, Connection, and Creativity. These principles provide the philosophy for residents living with dementia and give guidance for providing residents with opportunities to be engaged, to experience socialization, connect, and meaningful moments.

FSLA wishes to thank The Estates of Hyde Park for offering to host Secretary Weida and his leadership team at AHCA!

Our grassroots advocacy efforts are just beginning, so please reach out to FSLA so that we can coordinate a tour and give your community a chance to brag to these and other VIPs about the wonderful world of senior living in Florida!



**JASON HAND**  
COO & General Counsel  
Florida Senior Living Association



## When a Gift Becomes a Kickback

Gifts from Florida Pharmacies  
to Long-Term Care Facilities

By Martin R. Dix

The Florida Board of Pharmacy permits pharmacies serving residents and patients at long-term care facilities (nursing homes, ALFs, homes for DD residents, etc.) as either Special Closed System Pharmacies or Community Pharmacies. Normally, the pharmacy and the long-term care (LTC) community have a written agreement that governs the relationship between them. The pharmacy sends the patients' prescription medications to the community for administration, but the community does not actually pay for pharmacy services itself. Instead, the pharmacy relies on patients/residents and their insurance plans for reimbursement.

While the LTC community can recommend the contracted pharmacy to their patients/residents, the patients/residents are free to choose their own pharmacy. With that said, most choose the pharmacy selected by the community as their pharmacy provider. For that reason, we often see multiple pharmacies competing to serve the same communities, and there is a temptation for the pharmacy to offer, or for the community to demand, free products or services to induce the community to select one pharmacy over another. Of course, cash payments from the pharmacy would be illegal. However, other in-kind inducements can range from likely legal to clearly illegal, and no one wants to guess wrong and end up in one of those ugly orange jumpsuits with a bunkmate named "Switchblade." A discussion of examples of questionable gifts follows below.

Government payers such as Medicaid or Medicare pay for many patients'/residents' pharmaceutical care, so if there are inducements to recommend or refer patients/residents to particular pharmacies, the federal Anti-Kickback Statute (AKS) can be implicated. The AKS is an intent-based statute with extremely harsh penalties, including fines of \$25,000 per violation, prison time of five years per violation, and exclusion from participation as a provider in federal health care programs. The OIG has historically taken the position that the AKS' intent requirement is met if one purpose of the payment or service is to induce referrals. Florida also has multiple laws prohibiting fee splitting and the payment of inducements and kickbacks that impose substantial criminal penalties.

### Free e-MARs and e-MORs

One area where we sometimes see issues is when a pharmacy offers, or the community demands, free e-MORs or e-MARs for the facility. Kickbacks do not have to be cash, can be direct or indirect, and the government can prosecute both the giver of the gift and the recipient. There is no de minimis exception, so even a \$4 per month e-MAR can be a kickback. Moreover, the Board of Pharmacy rules specify that providing "patient medical records systems" to communities at "no charge, below market value or below

cost” in exchange for the pharmacy business is a violation. There is an AKS safe harbor for a person or entity (other than a clinical laboratory) providing electronic health records to another provider. However, multiple conditions must be met for the arrangement to meet the safe harbor, including that the recipient must pay at least 15 percent of the costs of the e-MORs. It can be awkward to ask for payment for “free” e-MARs, so the parties sometimes ignore the 15 percent requirement at their peril. Not fully meeting a safe harbor does not necessarily equate to a violation of law, but it would be unwise to pass up the chance to use an available safe harbor.

**Free Over-the-Counter Drugs and Dietary Supplements**

Another area that raises concerns is a pharmacy providing free over-the-counter drugs and dietary supplements (OTCs) to communities so they can provide them to their patients/residents. The free goods can function as an inducement to both the patient/resident and the community because the community can use the offer of free goods to convince patients/residents to enroll in the community.

Offers of or inducements to patients with care reimbursed by Medicare or Medicaid can also run afoul of the beneficiary inducement prohibition in the Federal Civil Money Penalty Statute (CMP). However, the U.S. Office of Inspector General has published a “de minimis exception” per gift to a patient of \$15 or less up to a maximum for all gifts of \$75 per year. The gift’s value is the value to the patient rather than the cost to the pharmacy. While this “safe harbor” helps as to the CMP, it would not help as to the offer of free OTCs to the community

For the full article, scan the QR Code:



under the AKS. Again, pharmacies that offer and communities that accept such gifts do so at their own risk.

**Free Training**

Providing free training for community staff is another common avenue to illegally induce communities to hire the pharmacy for the community. The Board of Pharmacy prohibits this conduct as a free service to the community. Free services such as free training offered to community staff are likely kickbacks under federal law and may constitute patient brokering under Florida law. There is not an issue with communities paying fair market value for such training.

**Both the Giver and Receiver at Risk**

While this may seem like this is just a problem for the pharmacy, the communities are also at risk. Federal law allows prosecution of the communities under the AKS, and Florida has laws making it illegal for nursing homes and ALFs to receive kickbacks.

*“What if I don’t look good in orange or want a bunkmate named Switchblade?”*

First, avoid contracts that provide free goods or services from the pharmacy or other providers to the community. Most of these contracts do not pass the smell test. If you are a member of a trade association, check with them and see if they have guidance, or consult with experienced healthcare counsel to help guide you in structuring these arrangements.



MARTIN R. DIX  
Partner, Akerman LLP

*Martin (“Marty”) Dix is board-certified by The Florida Bar in Health Law and practices with Akerman LLP Health Care Practice Group in Tallahassee, Florida. Marty’s practice includes work in the areas of pharmacy/health care law dealing with nearly all aspects of the drug delivery system, representing retail, institutional, and long-term care pharmacies, pharmacists, drug wholesalers, DME providers, and many other areas. His practice is healthcare regulatory in nature, representing clients on a variety of licensing, disciplinary, and transactional matters including representing assisted living facilities. Marty has represented clients before AHCA, the Florida Department of Health, Boards of Pharmacy and Medicine, Florida Department of Business & Professional Regulation, and all federal and many states’ drug/pharmacy regulatory agencies. He is Treasurer and on the Board of the American Society for Pharmacy Law.*



GAIL MATILLO, MPA  
President/CEO,  
Florida Senior Living Association

# Quality Champions

## FSLA Members Achieve Deficiency-Free Surveys and 100% Occupancy

By Gail Matillo

Florida Senior Living Association would like to celebrate, recognize and congratulate the following communities for their recent successes.

### Deficiency-Free Surveys and 100% Occupancy

The Inspired Living at Tampa is celebrating being 100% deficiency-free for 6 years. Congratulations to *Charles White*, Executive Director and *Michelle Costa*, Sales Director for being Inspired Living Champions. This community was also named *Best Memory Care by U.S. News and World Report*.

The Inspired Living at Sun City is celebrating 100% occupancy. Congratulations to *Charles White*, Executive Director and *Luisa Fulla*, Sales Director for being Inspired Living Champions. This community was also named 2024 Best of Senior Living by *A Place for Mom*.

The Inspired Living at Ivy Ridge is celebrating being 100% deficiency-free for almost a year (will be a year next month). Congratulations to *Charles White*, Executive Director and *Angelica Figueroa*, Sales Director for being Inspired Living Champions. This community was also named 2024 Best of Senior Living by *A Place for Mom*.

In the Innovation Senior Living family, two communities are celebrating. Sunny Days Assisted Living Facility and The Club at Haines City are both celebrating being 100% deficiency-free. *Pilar Carvajal*, Innovation Senior Living Founder & CEO, says, "I am extremely proud of my teams and their deficiency free renewal license surveys."

FSLA is so proud to represent the Best of the Best senior living communities in Florida. Our members are dedicated and committed to protecting the residents and their well-being. Receiving zero deficiencies means that our members are operating in total compliance with state and federal regulations – a job that is not easily accomplished but is so admirable when achieved. We welcome any FSLA members with survey results they would like to share to contact us so we can spread the news!





# Involving Residents

## in Senior Living Emergency Preparedness

By Monica Wilson



Involving residents can significantly enhance the effectiveness of emergency preparedness and provide a sense of empowerment and control. Holding regular activities with residents to review and practice response helps keep emergency preparedness top of mind for everyone in the community and emergency planning becomes a regular, ongoing and expected activity throughout the year for both staff and residents.

### Benefits of Involving Residents in Planning

- **Unique Needs and Perspectives:** Residents have a deep understanding of their specific needs, limitations, and preferences. Their input can help highlight factors the community may have overlooked, and plans can be tailored to address their unique circumstances, ensuring that they are effective and appropriate.
- **Increased Preparedness:** By being actively involved in emergency planning, residents can become more aware of potential hazards, understand their roles and responsibilities, and develop coping strategies. This can lead to increased preparedness and resilience.
- **Improved Communication:** Engaging residents in the planning process can foster open communication between residents and staff. This can help to ensure that information is shared effectively and that residents feel supported during times of crisis.
- **Enhanced Sense of Community:** Residents who feel connected and supported are more likely to be resilient and recover quickly from disasters. Residents also care about what happens to the staff in their communities and understanding how staff will be supported in their emergency response roles fosters a sense of security and community.

### Ways to Involve Residents

- **Host Informational Sessions for Residents and their Families throughout the Year:** This provides opportunities for all parties to ask questions and to know what to expect in advance of an emergency response. Sharing information about the community's plans for evacuation, emergency power, communication methods that will be used, and how to contact community staff during non-emergency times helps residents and family members develop confidence and can reduce anxiety during an actual emergency.
- **Provide Fun and Interactive Activities for Residents:** Host a safety scavenger hunt, have residents create posters or artwork for upcoming planning meetings or exercises, create collages of safety tips or design personal emergency kit labels. Create games such as matching



“  
*It's important to be flexible and offer multiple ways for residents to get involved and ensure their participation is comfortable and meaningful.*  
”

games, trivia, or bingo with emergency response and preparedness themes. Create a Family Feud style game for independent living residents for items to include in an emergency supply kit.

- **Conduct Regular Emergency Exercises and Include Residents:** Conduct regular emergency exercises beyond fire and elopement drills to test the effectiveness of emergency plans and identify areas for improvement. Involve residents in tabletop discussions to help them understand their roles and responsibilities and to build their confidence in their ability to respond to emergencies.

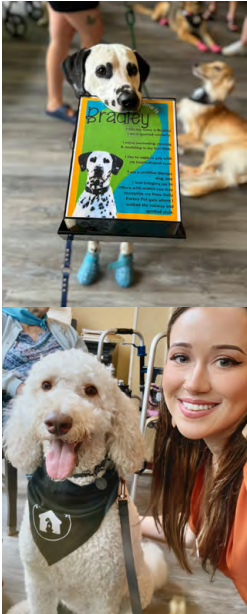
Involving residents in emergency planning may come with challenges. Cognitive impairments, mobility issues, and varying levels of engagement can affect participation and understanding. It's important to be flexible and offer multiple ways for residents to get involved and ensure that their participation is comfortable and meaningful.



MONICA WILSON, MS  
ICEBridge, LLC

# Member Highlights

CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITIES



## The Club at St. Cloud

### Paws & Papas!

On July 9th, The Club at St. Cloud hosted an event that introduced five therapy dogs to their residents. This was a kickoff for a monthly event for their community and it was a major success! The residents had an absolute blast meeting and engaging with the five therapy dogs during their recent visit, and the dog's presence lit up the room!

The room was filled with laughter and excitement as the dogs, with their wagging tails and playful antics, delighted everyone. The energy and warmth brought by the therapy dogs created a vibrant, joyful atmosphere, making it a memorable and heartwarming experience. It is so important to keep the residents smiling and happy, bringing forth activities that bring comfort and engagement for all.

One of the residents was quoted saying, *"We had so much fun today with the dogs and our neighbors. Please do this again!"* Due to having such positive reactions from the residents, The Club at St. Cloud is now considering launching a community dog program across their portfolio, and having the therapy dogs visit regularly!

## Jacksonville, Florida

While going to Jacksonville, FL for FSLA's last free CNA Bootcamp, I decided to stop by some member communities to meet with the staff and drop off some goodies to show our appreciation for their hard work and dedication as they care for their residents.

I visited Camellia at Deerwood and toured around the beautiful community. I always love walking around and seeing the residents smiling and engaging with one another. The staff were so friendly and attentive as they joined in various activities with their residents. I could tell everyone was happy to be there!

A new FSLA member that I had the pleasure of visiting was Starling at San Jose. Being a new member, it was great to discuss with their staff the benefits they receive, the ways we support their community, and how we can always assist with any regulatory questions. I was also excited to talk about FSLA's upcoming events and our new recipe book!

Another member that I loved visiting was Brookdale Mandarin. I had the opportunity to meet with the staff and dropped off some cupcakes as a sweet afternoon treat. It always brightens my day when I can express our gratitude for everything they do.



KRISTIN QUIRK, MS  
 Director of Membership & Partnership  
 Florida Senior Living Association



**FSLA loves to visit our members! If you would like us to speak at or tour your community, please contact Kristin Quirk, Director of Membership & Partnership at [membership@floridaseniorliving.org](mailto:membership@floridaseniorliving.org) or (850)-708-4972.**

## National Assisted Living Week!

## Celebrating Members!

For National Assisted Living Week, I celebrated the week visiting member communities around the state. It was a pleasure to bring by cupcakes, flowers, copies of *ENGAGE* and FSLA merch, a handwritten card signed by the team, and as a special “Thank you!” to the hard work and dedication of our member communities and their staff – FSLA provided \$10 off our extensive



## St. Augustine Plantation

## Team Recognition Ceremony

FSLA was proud to attend the Team Recognition Ceremony at St. Augustine Plantation Assisted Living & Memory Care to honor the team heroes from May 10th. This ceremony included special guests, *Secretary Michelle Branham* of the Department of Elder Affairs and *Commissioner David O’Keefe*, Leon County, District 5. This ceremony recognized and honored the 13 team members for going above and beyond and for their exceptional dedication and commitment to resident safety during the May 10 tornadoes in Tallahassee, FL. Read more about this on page .

Secretary Branham honored St. Augustine Plantation Assisted Living and Memory Care staff for their commitment and heroism during the May tornadoes that caused significant damage to the facility and presented both the “*Calm in the Storm*” and the “*Stronger than the Storm*” awards. Commissioner David O’Keefe presented the “*When Times Get Tough, We Rise*” award, and it was apparent that both Secretary Branham and Commissioner David O’Keefe were honored to participate in presenting these awards to the remarkable staff being recognized.

**It takes a village** when it comes to caring for residents during a time of disaster. We can’t thank the team enough at St. Augustine Plantation, namely *Megan Griffin*, Executive Director, and the team at Elegance Senior Living, *Austin Payne*, Regional Vice President of Operations, and *Kaitlin Cavinder*, Senior Vice President of Finance, for ensuring safety to the residents.

FSLA was honored being able to help support our members during this time and were thrilled to watch these heroic individuals be recognized for their outstanding efforts and extraordinary bravery. A job well done to all. We could not be prouder!

View local news coverage of this event by scanning the QR Code below.





## St. Augustine Plantation Disaster

And the Role of FSLA

By Sandi Poreda, APR

The strength of community can be a powerful force, and the aftermath of a disaster can put this force on full display. **Megan Griffin**, the Executive Director of St. Augustine Plantation in Tallahassee, knows this is true from personal experience.

Early on the morning of May 10, three tornadoes tore through the capital city, causing significant damage to hundreds of homes and businesses. At St. Augustine Plantation, the night shift was closely monitoring the weather and when alerts began to sound, they quickly ushered residents into interior rooms. Moments later, most of the roof over the memory care building was destroyed, with debris landing on beds occupied by residents just minutes earlier.

*“The damage was extensive, and water was pouring into the building,”* recalled Griffin. *“But for our team to follow procedure as perfectly as they did, our residents didn’t even have so much as a skin tear. It was incredible.”*

After the storm, the challenges started in earnest. Griffin said the Memory Care building was uninhabitable, and state regulations prevented the memory care residents from moving into the unsecured Assisted Living building. So, Griffin reached out to the Florida Senior Living (FSLA) team. *“Lots of people say they’re there to help but don’t show up,”* she said. *“But FSLA was there, bridging the gap with AHCA, helping us solve the biggest issues... they said ‘ok, we’re here, how can we help?’ And that was huge.”*

Working with FSLA, Griffin connected with Tapestry Lakeshore and within hours, was able to move 12 memory care residents and several staff members into Tapestry’s memory care neighborhood.

*“St. Augustine Plantation may be our competition, but they are also our neighbors, colleagues in industry, friends, and part of the Tallahassee community,”* said **Joe Signore**, President of Tapestry Senior Housing Management. *“Caring and community go hand in hand. Opening our doors to our neighbor during a time of need is the right thing to do.”*

The team at Tapestry worked together with the leadership from St. Augustine Plantation to not only accommodate the residents, but also to provide comfort to the families.

Once the residents were placed, FSLA continued providing support. Nearly everything in the memory care building had been flooded, and residents needed clothing, shoes, toiletries, and other essentials. FSLA President & CEO **Gail Matillo** connected with Goodwill Industries of the Big Bend to coordinate a delivery of clothing within just a few hours.

*“Our organization stands ready to support during natural disasters,”* said **Kim Gay**, Chief of Staff at Goodwill Industries - Big Bend, Inc. *“Collaborations like these are crucial in providing timely assistance and relief to those in need.”*

Gay and Matillo quickly communicated clothing sizes and other needs. Matillo shopped for toiletries while Gay collected the clothing items. The two women met for the first time in a Tallahassee parking lot to complete the transfer, and Matillo personally brought the delivery to Tapestry.

*“Being able to offer assistance in such a critical time of need is exactly why FSLA exists,”* said Matillo. *“Nothing is too small or too large for our team to tackle, and we want to be that resource for our members when they need us.”*

Griffin credits FSLA for helping St. Augustine Plantation solve many of its most

critical issues after the storm, along with her staff members. As soon as the weather cleared and the request for help went out, team members began showing up from all sides.

*“Some people walked miles to come help. Some jumped fences, or hiked through the back woods,”* she said. *“It really was incredible. The sense of community was very strong.”*

If your community wants to add FSLA to your list of trusted advocates, reach out to [membership@floridaseniorliving.org](mailto:membership@floridaseniorliving.org) to inquire about becoming a member.

“*“Lots of people say they’re there to help but don’t show up,” she said. “But FSLA was there, bridging the gap with AHCA, helping us solve the biggest issues...they said ‘OK, we’re here, how can we help?’ And that was huge.”*”



SANDI POREDA, APR  
*Bulldog Strategy Group, FSLA PR Consultant*



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GENDER:  MALE  FEMALE

LOCATION (CITY, STATE):  
\_\_\_\_\_

RELATIONSHIP TO SENIOR LIVING:  
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