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## New Assisted Living Community In San Francisco Opens To Great Response

San Francisco, CA - Gleaming tile floors and 17-foot ceilings. Huge windows that let in lots of light and fresh air. Striking entryways and warm, white walls featuring revolving art - modern art - installations. A rooftop garden and indoor/outdoor Zen meditation retreat. All just a stroll away from vibrant mix of upscale coffee shops, chic boutiques and award winning restaurants.

If you didn't know you were touring a new assisted living community for the elderly, you might think you were stepping into an upscale loft development aimed at fashionable downtown urban hipster types.

However, the unexpected look and feel of the just-opened Laguna Grove Care home in San Francisco is just the beginning of one group's visionary approach to elder care. Tucked away in a quaint, sunny street in the City by the Bay, the folks at AgeSong are quietly fulfilling their mission to create an entirely new model for therapeutic environments for the aged

AgeSong, Inc. began in June 1995 when three brothers, first generation Iranian-Americans, sought to improve Western society's view of aging and the elderly. The Shabahangi brothers pledged to help the elderly live meaningful, full lives in residential communities by providing nurturing environments that care more comprehensively for them physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

This commitment was the motivation for the opening of AgeSong's first facility, Hayes Valley Care, a 47-bed assisted living community for frail elders. Ten years later, AgeSong has grown to include the brothers' sister, a fifth business partner, and the new Laguna Grove Care, a 56-bed community which opened August of 2005. Laguna Grove is the most recent in a series of homes the team from AgeSong has planned for urban environments around the greater Bay Area.

A world away from the typical 'treatment' model found in virtually every other senior community, AgeSong believes, not in treating old age as a negative condition, but in honoring our seniors with reverence. They have the understanding that just as our bodies change as we age, our life experiences, knowledge and souls continue to blossom. There is no better time to learn, grow and appreciate life.

AgeSong's entirely new approach to care begins with the design criteria for each community. For example, AgeSong encourages interaction between their inner community of residents and outer community of neighbors by creating retail spaces on site that are either used or operated by elders.

Robert Nader Shabahangi, Ph.D., one of the founders of AgeSong says, "Elders are a core source of wisdom and grounding for our rapidly paced society. Integration of elders into our urban communities in a proud and more visible way brings the young and old closer together, creates possibilities for parents and grandparents to be closer to their children and grandchildren, offers our youth on-going mentorship, and empowers our elders with a sense of purpose and meaning."

Further, the interior design of each facility desires to create a healing environment while providing space for interfaith reflection and meditation.

Paramount, AgeSong has also developed its own specialized approach to programs dealing with all facets of assisted living, Forgetfulness Care (AgeSong's way of de-stigmatizing what is commonly called dementia and/or Alzheimer's) expressive arts therapy, memory improvement training, hospice, behavioral and mental health care. These programs are resident-centered, interdisciplinary and support a continuum of care for the changing expressions of aging. That is the AgeSong difference.

AgeSong's central paradigm shift lies in how they see and treat elders as whole human beings with rich emotional and spiritual needs in addition to their need for physical care. To that end, AgeSong's strategic partnership with Pacific Institute, a non-profit counseling, education and research organization, provides each resident with the services of doctoral psychology and/or marriage and family therapist interns. These masters and doctoral students are an integral part, not only of the holistic care AgeSong provides, they also keep the symbiosis flowing between the aged and younger community members. Each is given the opportunity to learn with and from the other.

When the Laguna Grove Care facility opened its doors to much fanfare, not to mention the blessing of a group of highly regarded Buddhist monks, a rabbi, a catholic priest, as well as members of various other religious denominations, it was California Congresswoman and

Democratic Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi who went out of her way to publicly laud the new center as, "What we all hope for in elder care services. This safe and beautiful environment, with character and warmth, creates a community that feels like home."

After previewing the new Laguna Grove facility, Jill Gilbert, president of Gilbert Guides, a guidebook to the very best long-term care facilities, said that AgeSong was "Looking at everything they should be&every detail."

*SOURCE: AgeSong, Inc.*