Moving Beyond Assisted Living

AgeSong University has moved from “assisted” to “community” living. AgeSong’s philosophy is that we can learn from each other at any age or stage or ability.

Those who live at University are called “community members” or “elders,” rather than “residents” of an “institution.” Those who work at University are called “carepartners,” rather than “caregivers.”

Ten “gerowellness” interns provide therapeutic one-on-one and group engagement at University. Jojo, who has lived at AgeSong communities for over 20 years, says, “I can live at any AgeSong community as long as there are gerowellness interns.”

Community members are empowered to contribute their wealth of skills and experience through meaningful engagement. Multiple groups, directed to the needs and desires of community members, are scheduled daily.

A continual flow of artists, educators, scientists, and school groups add to the vibrancy of the elder community.

Living at AgeSong University is like armchair travel, going on a cruise around the world within the familiar surroundings of your living room.
Celebration of holidays are important to community members because they remind us of the time of year and bring back memories and stories.

AgeSong University celebrates holidays from many spiritual traditions to honor the rich multicultural backgrounds of community members. In May, we shall celebrate Cinco de Mayo, Mother’s Day, and Memorial Day. In June, we shall celebrate Father’s Day, Flag Day, and Summer Solstice.

Community members often lead the discussion on holidays around the world. From these discussions, we hear different points of view and interpretations of holidays we celebrated in our youth. We reconnect family stories about holiday occasions and experience new ways of celebrating the holidays in an elder multicultural community.

**May/June Special Events**
- May 5: Cinco de Mayo
- May 14: Mother’s Day
- May 15: CCSF Guitar
- May 16-17: Alta Vista School
- May 23: Movie Moments
- May 27: Ramadan begins
- May 29: Memorial Day
- June 14: Flag Day
- June 18: Father’s Day
- June 20: Summer Solstice

**From Custodial to Relational Care**

On April 13, Dr. Julia Wolfson demonstrated to a group of community members and staff how to apply the concept “From custodial to relational care.” She introduced a process that can be used by anyone in service, including carepartners, elders, family members, support staff, and leaders. Julia, who is from Australia, works internationally with people and organizations to create safer, more relational, and inclusive communities in which to learn and grow with purpose, friendship, and contribution.

**Upcoming Book by Dr. Julia Wolfson, Elders Academy Press**

**Cosmic Rainbow Hearts Is Coming to AgeSong University**

Monday, May 22, Shannon Bronson will introduce Cosmic Rainbow Hearts to AgeSong University elders. Her motivation is “to create tools for expressing love in mind, word, and action.” Her process is to start by teaching Yoga and Tonglen meditation. Then elders work individually on their own hearts to co-create a Cosmic Heart Mandala. Shannon teaches elders the meditation, gives them the template, and then gets out of the way. She says:

*My experience at AgeSong has been challenging, uplifting, sobering, heart-opening, and life-changing. I learn more and more about the preciousness and fragility of life and the strength and courage it takes to live it. Although I started serving the elders as their teacher, I find myself humbled to know that it’s really me who is learning from their wisdom.*
**Born in St. Petersburg**

Leo and Maia were both born in St. Petersburg. Leo said he remembers the bad times: Stalin, Lenin, Malenkov. He remembers being told he must be Communist, so he left the country. Prior to leaving St. Petersburg, he had worked as a cook, so he found a job cooking in New York at the Renaissance Restaurant, owned by a Russian nobleman, perhaps the same man who helped him escape Russia.

Leo’s parents died in Russia; his father at 47, his mother at 77. After living in the USA for over forty years, Leo travelled as a tourist to Russia, visiting Latvia, Estonia and Ivanovo and then his birthplace, St. Petersburg.

Maia speaks mostly Russian, but tries to communicate in English. She remembers St. Petersburg as cold, but warm and beautiful in the springtime. She nearly always has a beautiful smile, which draws people in and conveys a sweet happiness.

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**Actor Joins the AgeSong University Community**

Jim’s background is all theater. He studied drama at the University of Portland, spent some time in Ashland, and worked with theater groups in both San Francisco and Portland, as well as the movie industry in San Francisco. His focus was on ensemble work, seeking dramatic or humorous moments in contemporary works, through both traditional and improvisational theater. He commented, “Theater is always there. It’s alive. That’s why I like it.” He especially enjoyed working with different people in groups, getting to know them and working through different theatrical challenges with people he knew and respected.

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**A Historian and a Poet**

Michael earned a Ph.D. in Scottish History, spending five years in Edinburgh, Scotland. He researched a major medieval family in Scottish History. After receiving his doctorate, he taught history and continued to be an activist in Act Up!, seeking a cure for AIDS and supporting ERA for women's rights. Michael, who was inspired by several summers in his youth working as a guide at a Shaker Village, considers himself an environmentalist as well as a feminist, and is most concerned about the future of our planet.

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**Appreciating the Help of Teachers**

Teresa spoke only Spanish as she played in the village of Dique la Vigna. At the age of 7, she moved to Cordova, Argentina. She then went to the National School, finishing in the sixth grade and going on to night school at the age of 11. Teachers helped her through a system geared to help underage students. A special test allowed her to graduate from high school so she could join her family moving to the USA. After finishing the El Monte School, the family moved back to Cordova, where Teresa went to college. A professor from the USA came to visit and helped her pass the Pasadena City College test so she could graduate in Cordova.

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**Special Thanks to Karen Mulander Magoon**

Karen, beloved storyteller and piano player, conducted all the interviews on this page. She loves to hear stories of community members. The community members that she interviewed have a variety of backgrounds and experiences. The mixture of long- and short-term community members keeps the environment of the community both fresh and stable.
We look forward to hearing from you!

Dr. Denny Noss, Executive Director
dr.noss@agesong.com

Anna Allas, Associate Exec Director,
anna.allas@agesong.com.

Kathy Nguyen, Wellness Director, knguyen@agesong.com

AU Reception, aureception@agesong.com

Guess what’s new at AgeSong University!