

# Senior Living Advisory Board

## *Autumn Newsletter*

November 2016



*By sharing your opinions and ideas with us each month, you help us understand what future senior living residents want and need. We use this information to help develop the communities of tomorrow.*

*This edition of the newsletter covers findings from recent surveys and profiles of recent sweepstakes winners.*

### **Community Elements and Attributes**

In August we asked what you are looking for in a senior living community overall.

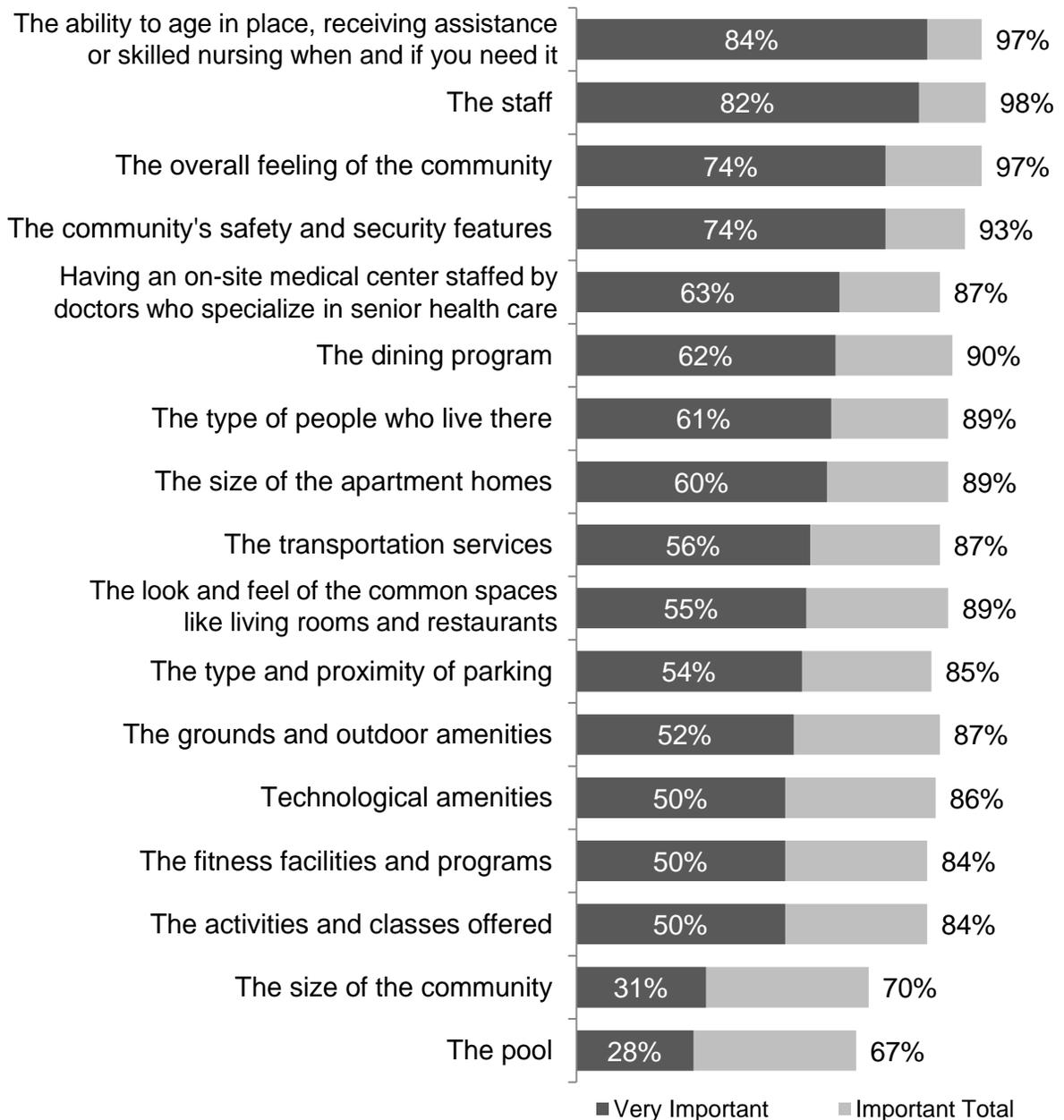
We asked about the intangibles—the defining characteristics and feeling of a community. Panelists place “friendly/welcoming,” “active,” and “health conscious” at the top of their lists of desired characteristics. Few say “formal” or “luxurious” are the characteristics they consider most important.

We also asked about the more concrete elements one might use in evaluating a senior living community. The first thing we noticed in the results is that all of the elements are important to a majority of panelist, as Figure 1 shows. This reinforces how vital it is for senior living providers to excel across the board if we are to truly meet residents’ expectations.

*The Senior Living Advisory Board Is an Initiative of  
Erickson Living’s Market Intelligence Department*

Panelists say the most important elements are the ability to age in place, the staff, and the overall feel of the community. Safety and security features and having an on-site medical center are also important to the large majority of you.

**Figure 1**  
**Importance of Elements in Evaluating a Senior Living Community**



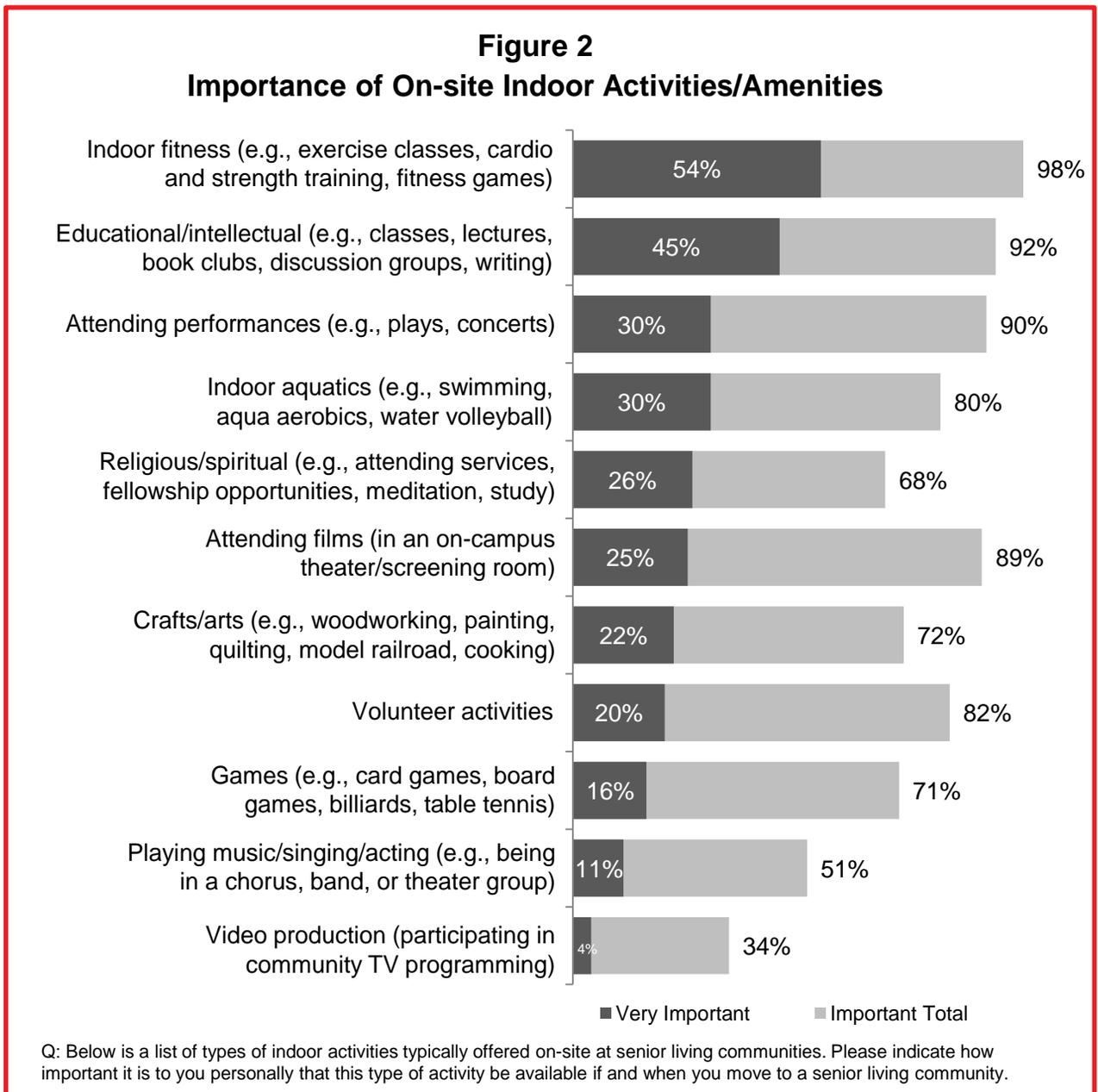
Q: In selecting a senior living community, how important would each of the following be to you personally?

## Activities/Amenities at Senior Living Communities

One of the advantages of living in a senior living community is the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities both on campus and off. Over the last several months we've asked what activities you want to have on campus—both indoors and out—when and if you move to a senior living community.

### Indoor

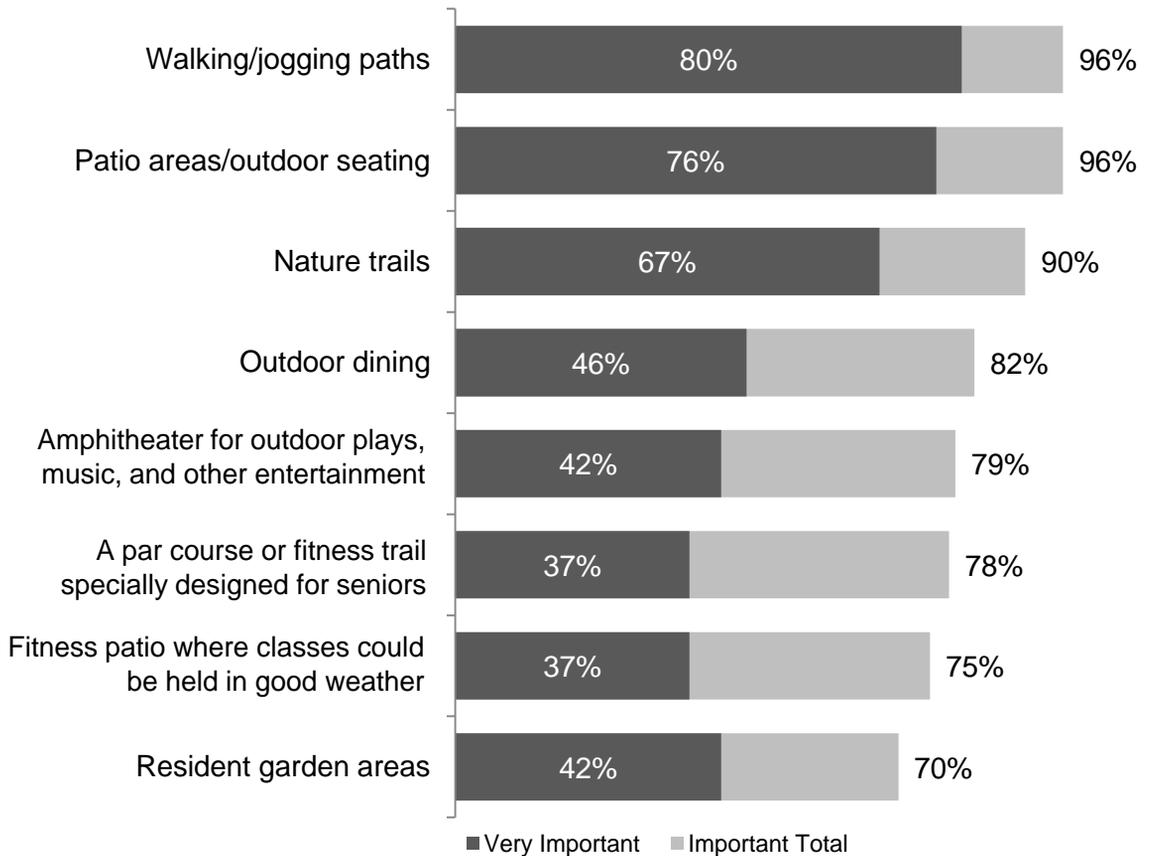
As Figure 2 shows, when it comes to indoor activities, panelists have many interests. Topping the list are indoor fitness options, intellectual pursuits, attending performances, and aquatics.



## Outdoor

Our most recent survey was about outdoor options. We asked about the importance of over two dozen activities and amenities. All the elements we asked about had a core group that considered it a must-have. Figure 3 shows the most popular items—those that 70% or more consider important.

**Figure 3**  
**Eight Most Important On-site Outdoor Activities/Amenities**



Q: Please indicate how important it is to you to have this type of outdoor activity/space on-site if and when you move to a senior living community.

Many panelists were interested in a variety of outside sports facilities, the most popular being a putting green (46% said this was important), bocce (41%) and horseshoes (37%).

Having a variety of outdoor environments is also important to panelists. Large majorities feel it is important to have landscaped areas (97%), lawns (92%), wooded areas (89%), and ponds (82%).

We also asked why is it important to you to have outdoor activities and amenities on-site at a senior living community. Most of your answers had to do with health, fitness, and fun.

*“I find the outdoors inspiring and relaxing. Having those spaces will also help me to feel less confined, especially when moving from a large home with a lot of ground.”*

*“Life Balance; Cabin Fever Solution; Personal Time; Physical Activity Enhancement.”*

*“I like to be active and it is a good way to meet folks and/or have an activity to do with a friend.”*

*“Exercise in the fresh air with sun and a breeze is physically, emotionally, and psychologically very important to me and all seniors.”*

*“I would like everything to be self contained so that I don't have to drive everywhere. Suppose that I can't drive?”*

*“Access to fresh air and pleasant outdoor spaces are essential to mental and physical health. Regardless of fitness level, outdoor activities and accessible recreational areas are essential to my choice of senior living community.”*

*“Walking and birding are daily activities for me and I would prefer to be able to do these on site rather than have to drive to them. I'm more likely to spend more time and do them frequently if they are available close by.”*

## Information Sources

This summer we asked where panelists get information about senior living communities—other than from communities themselves—and how trustworthy they find these sources. Here's some of what we learned:

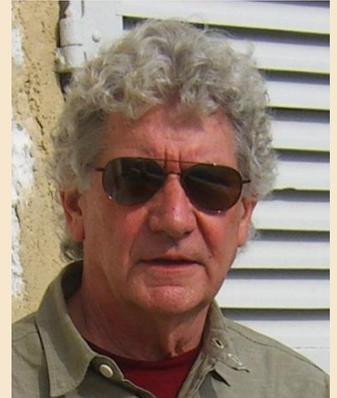
- Friends and family are the most used source, and also the most trusted.
- The second most used source is organizations and publications that focus on older adults such as AARP or the Beacon newspapers. The majority of panelists find these organizations and publications to be a trustworthy source of information about senior living communities.
- The mainstream news media is the third most often used source. However, panelists are somewhat suspect of the trustworthiness of the information received.
- Relatively few panelists have looked for information from websites like seniorhousingnet.com or mylifesite.net that help people research senior living options.

## Senior Living Advisory Board

### *Sweepstakes Winners*

#### William “Bill” Sommers

Bill Sommers grew up in Greenwich Village, right near the Washington Square Arch. After graduating from CUNY (City College of New York) he continued his studies in atmospheric science at MIT and SUNY-Albany. It was at SUNY that he met his best friend and wonderful wife of 46 years, Alicia.



After six years in Southern California, Bill and Alicia settled down in 1979 in Great Falls, VA, right outside Washington, D.C. In 1994 they built their current home in Great Falls.

Bill spent his career with the U.S. Forest Service working as a research scientist studying forest fires—work that took him all over North and South America, Europe, and Asia. He was a Senior Executive Service (SES) National Research Director at Forest Service headquarters. Alicia worked as a Senior Defense Systems Analyst at the Government Accountability Office.

Bill and Alicia both retired in 2000. They have kept busy in the past decade and a half. Bill works part time at George Mason University, continuing his research. Alicia resumed her interest in painting; she paints large acrylic abstracts. They take spin classes at the gym three times a week. The Sommers also travel—taking one or two trips a year. Their most recent trip was to Scandinavia this past June. A highlight was visiting Bergen, Norway, the birthplace of atmospheric science.

Lately, Bill and Alicia have spent a lot of time downsizing. In August 2017 they will be moving to Cherry Blossom Square, the newest building at Ashby Ponds, Erickson Living's community in Ashburn, VA. They are looking forward to enjoying the vibrant social scene at Ashby Ponds. They also like that they will have easy access to all of D.C.'s museums, parks, and restaurants, especially once the Metro's Silver Line reaches Ashburn.

At 73, Bill is looking forward to no longer having to worry about home upkeep and maintenance and instead having more time to take advantage of all Ashby Ponds and the nearby area have to offer.

Bill and Alicia plan to use the \$100 Amazon gift card to buy something for their new home at Ashby Ponds.

## Marie Weeks

Marie Weeks grew up in North Philadelphia. Marie and her husband Mike—also a Philadelphia native—met in Wildwood on the Jersey Shore in 1968. They married in 1969. Soon after their oldest, Michael, was born they moved to Audubon in Montgomery County to the home they have lived in for 44 years. Daughter Jennifer and son Mark followed soon after.

Marie worked in nursing before having her children and returned to the field when her children left home. For the 10 years prior to her retirement at 62 she worked in the post-surgical recovery room at Hahnemann Hospital.

Mike worked in the newspaper industry. For the last 20 years of his career he worked in production for the *New York Times*. He set up the systems that enabled nationwide home delivery of the paper. So, if you receive a same-day *Times* on your doorstep in Boston, Denver, or Detroit, you have Mike to thank!

When Mike retired the Weeks became snowbirds, traveling back and forth between Audubon and Sarasota. In her retirement Marie volunteers at Marian's Attic, a thrift shop that supports Laurel House, a domestic violence agency and shelter. When she is in Pennsylvania she spends one day a week caring for her grandchildren: Gabriella, who is almost 2, and big brother Conor, age 5. Marie notes that Conor, like his dad at that age, is curious and has a great vocabulary. His current interest is the constellations—he can name them all!

Marie enjoys traveling and recently returned from a cruise to Nova Scotia, where she visited the Bay of Fundy, site of the world's highest tides. Other ports of call included Nova Scotia's capital, Halifax; Portland, Maine; and Newport, Rhode Island, where she viewed the Gilded Age Mansions.

Most of Mike and Marie's friends have downsized and some, including Marie's sister Anne, have moved to senior living communities. Marie has begun to research a variety of senior living options, including Maris Grove in Glen Mills, but notes that Mike is reluctant to move.

Marie has always enjoyed learning new things and meeting new people. She will continue to do so whether she and Mike remain in their Audubon home or move elsewhere.

Marie used her \$100 Amazon gift card to renew her Amazon Prime membership.

## Helen Stefanov

Helen Stefanov and her seven siblings were "army brats." The family lived all over the U.S. They also spent three years in Japan during the U.S. Occupation and Korean War.

After high school, Helen and her identical twin, Cathie, moved to Kansas City for college. Following their freshman year, they entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet where they completed their nursing education and advanced education.

Both women continued clinical nursing roles, administrative, and collegiate teaching of nursing, leaving the order 16 years later. Upon leaving, Helen assumed clinical nurse specialist roles in hospitals, colleges, and universities. Community mental health work with seniors was among her favorite positions.

Helen married her husband Jan in 1971 as he was completing his Ph.D. at the University of Missouri. Jan's work took them to the nation's capital where he began a successful career at AARP. Ultimately Jan became the Director of National and International Activities. In the early 1990s, Jan managed programs teaching AARP volunteers strategies for helping seniors in the former Soviet Bloc to organize and advocate for themselves in post-communist societies. This work allowed Helen and Jan to visit many parts of Eastern Europe during this interesting transitional time.

Shortly into retirement, Helen and Jan moved back to Kansas City to be close to Cathie. Helen was a hospice volunteer and worked with abandoned, stray, and feral cats. Helen and Jan had planned to do more travelling, but unfortunately Jan soon fell ill. These days, Helen, at 80, spends her time caring for Jan, now 88, who is in the late stages of Parkinson's and Myasthenia Gravis diseases. Cathie died two years ago in a fall on icy steps.

When the time is right, Helen plans to move to a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC). She will opt for a CCRC over other senior living options because she values the peace of mind provided by the continuum of care.

Tallgrass Creek—Erickson Living's community in Overland Park—is a top contender. She feels Tallgrass Creek residents enjoy more flexibility than residents at other CCRCs. Wherever she moves, Helen plans to take part in many activities and clubs, swim, and use the fitness facilities. She will volunteer and continue her involvement in social justice causes.

Helen reports that the \$100 Amazon gift card came at the perfect time as she had been planning to buy Jan some CDs of peaceful music she was introduced to in her contemplative prayer group.

