

50+ Housing

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A Walking Tour — All in One Room

Willow Valley Retirement Communities is a continuing care retirement community (CCRC) in Lancaster, Pa., and is home to more than 2,300 residents from 37 states. Residents are sophisticated and well-traveled, but the community's Welcome Center didn't match their profile or meet their expectations.

Willow Valley realized its Welcome Center needed a complete renovation to present a superior first impression on those who had made the trip to find out more about nearby Lancaster, and more about the Willow Valley community as a retirement destination.

The community's marketing consultant, **Creating Results**, began with in-depth analysis of current and future residents, their needs, desires and aspirations. Recognizing the gradual shift in age that will occur over the next decade, as the Silent Generation is joined by Baby Boomers, the firm designed a mix of traditional and multimedia displays.



Curved walls move visitors gently through an overview of Willow Valley Retirement Communities and its surrounding local area.

The concept was to make the display area feel like part of the journey Willow Valley residents make to the community. A formerly typical rectangular room was freshened with curved walls. These created a welcoming pathway for visitors, who stop first at an orientation wall illustrating which states are represented at Willow Valley. "The Perfect Union" display allows newcomers from other states to physically add their state's peg. Maps and photography demonstrate the local area's culture and history, as well as the proximity to regional east coast attractions.



Interactive displays are engaging, but there are also places to sit and talk with sales counselors.

Multimedia screens line the curved back wall, introducing the broad product offerings, lifestyle, amenities, rich programming and the community's impressive cultural center. The Welcome Center now appeals to all five senses. Visitors can see resident artwork, or browse books about local authors and painters. They can listen to a recent Cultural Center performance, or peruse the community Journal that lets residents share experiences they've enjoyed, such as day trips or excursions abroad. Site plan tables let visitors and counselors work together, while touchscreens on adjacent walls allow them to connect a campus location with pictures of the product.

The Welcome Center journey ends at a giant landscape image of one of the community's lakes, viewed through a custom Palladian window (a main element in the community's logo and much of the architecture). The display serves as a backdrop for snapshots that sales counselors can send the prospects to remind them of the visit. This creates an automatic follow-up opportunity and a reason to share email addresses. The sales counselors also can keep a copy for their files. Having a visual image of prospects is helpful when making follow-up calls and recognizing prospects when they return for be-back appointments.

The Welcome Center has been transformed to match Willow Valley's brand characteristics of innovative leader, and embodies its dedication to providing a superior environment. Visitors continually comment on the beauty of the space, and their feeling that the Discovery Room is comfortable and easy to navigate.



The redesigned Welcome Center at the Willow Valley Retirement Communities in Lancaster, Pa.

Todd Harff, president of **Creating Results**, leads a talented and experienced creative team that excels at helping clients develop and implement comprehensive marketing programs. He is an active member of NAHB's 50+ Housing Council.

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