

Community Tech with a Purpose at UCH.

For Ohio-based senior living provider, United Church Homes, community engagement and a strong sense of culture are key to their impressive growth. Recently we sat down with the Director of Customer Experience, Amy Kotterman, to chat about their expansion into middle-market independent living and how Touchtown fits into the mix.

Purposeful Living a Every Turn

The United Church Homes experience is like no other. With more than 4,500 residents in 15 different states, the feeling of warmth you get when stepping into a UCH community is uniquely recognizable. The organization aims to transform older adult services from institutional-directed care to person-directed care that promotes choice, dignity, respect, self-determination and purposeful living throughout every community and level of care.

However, COVID-19 illuminated the need for engagement technology to keep their members informed, connected and feeling that same sense of UCH community. “We found there wasn’t a system in place to communicate important information such as a construction project or vaccination clinic unless we went door-to-door to deliver a notice for 127 apartments in one of our new communities,” says Amy. “It’s really opened our eyes to the fact that we need better ways to communicate this important information to all of our residents.”

In addition to communication challenges to residents, Amy shares their initiative to get back to the purpose-driven culture that makes United Church Homes so special. “This last year was challenging for everyone. We followed state and federal guidance to keep everyone as safe and healthy as possible, yet we were thrust back into the institutional practices of service delivery which resulted in talking about ‘patients’ and ‘units’ and ‘facilities’ again. Where did ‘community’ and ‘resident’ and ‘neighborhood’ go?”



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With these challenges in mind, Amy set out to find a partner that could help, and Touchtown came in at just the right time for them.

A Connected Platform to Streamline Communication

So far, United Church Homes has employed Touchtown at six locations (including the corporate office) to implement more efficient channels of communication and boost community engagement. With an in-room TV channel, a custom Community App and plenty of digital signage, each UCH community is setting up a connected platform to streamline communication to all residents, staff and even visitors.

The decision to implement Touchtown couldn't have happened at a better time, too. As UCH continues to add new communities to its portfolio, establishing the United Church Homes branding at every location becomes even more important. "One of the reasons we're so excited about Touchtown is having the ability to easily manage the United Church Homes branding across all locations, while still giving each community the freedom to customize their information and messaging based on their unique needs," says Amy.

The Future is Looking Bright and Well Informed

In chatting with Amy, it is apparent that the features and functionality of the Touchtown platform will support their current communication needs. But can it scale and grow alongside UCH and their person-centered, customer-inspired program called "Live It"? Amy will be the first to tell you how much Touchtown already embodies the three core tenets of Live It. "Touchtown is going to impact all of them!" she exclaims.

[Touchtown] provides a multitude of ways to communicate the same information to everybody.

Amy Kotterman
United Church Homes

Living Life with Purpose

"Just because you've moved into a senior living setting, you don't lose what you've done and accomplished over the last 60, 70, 80 years of your life. The aging process is wonderful – you have new opportunities every day to engage with, educate and share your passions with others."

Social Connections

“It’s really a matter of accessibility and sharing and making connections.” Through Touchtown, United Church Homes residents can more easily connect with one another. Whether they find neighbors with common interests via a resident directory or sign up for a new class offering, Touchtown facilitates personal connections across the entire community.

Safe & Sound

“We look forward to being able to reopen and re-engage but we know many of the [safety precautions] we put in place last year are going to be maintained. They’re also going to be communicated through our marketing campaigns to ensure prospective residents (and their families) feel comfortable to move in.”

Communicating health and safety practices will continue to be a priority, and as we look forward to a world with visitors and families back in the community, a tool like Touchtown makes a big difference in being able to manage that messaging efficiently.

“Overall, Touchtown is a huge component of [Live It] for everyone to be connected — to know what’s going on and what opportunities they’ll have at our communities.”

No Generation Without Tech

So, what’s next for United Church Homes in their efforts? Amy’s starting with a bit of research to find out exactly what tools each resident needs in order to provide meaning and purpose for them. “We need to find out how many of our residents have smartphones, how many have tablets, how many have computers, how often do they use them, and what kind of training is needed?”

