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ENRICHING SENIOR LIVES

Life at Lions Gate: Find your best self when you are BUSY!

I looked at my planner today, and all I could see was a wall of appointments. It seems everyone you meet is BUSY from morning to night, and no one is happy about it. We all run from meeting to meeting, dash out to shuttle our kids to after-school activities, and run through the drive thru to pick up dinner. Our weekends are packed with home projects and errands. If we're lucky, we might be able to squeeze in a date night with our spouse or a get-together with friends. We feel like we're on a treadmill where the next workweek starts before we've even had time to recuperate from the last one.

But what if we looked at our busy lives from a different perspective? What if we leaned into the "busy" and embraced it for what it is—"busy" can be indicative of a rich life full of family, friends, and connection.

"Connection" is what we strive for every day at Lions Gate. When you have 300 residents at different ages and stages of life, it takes extensive planning to come up with a broad slate of programming and clubs that will foster true "connection." Being "busy" at Lions Gate means taking advantage of all the services and amenities we have on this campus, and in the process, discovering your best self.

"Humans are inherently social beings," said Meredith Becker, Lions Gate COO. "We tend to function better when we're in a community setting. Seniors are the fastest-growing age demographic in America, as a result of increased longevity and better-quality health care. As seniors age, their risk of isolation increases. They crave 'community' for socialization. And isolation doesn't just impact mood and mental health. Isolation often leads to physical deterioration. In a study from the National Academy of

Sciences, individuals with limited social lives are more likely to suffer from physical inactivity. A sedentary lifestyle can lead to health concerns, including hypertension, coronary artery disease, depression, and anxiety. Many seniors think they are moving to Lions Gate because



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they want the peace of mind they feel with access to the full continuum of care available, should their health needs change in the future. But what they are really moving to Lions Gate for is the socialization. The more you socialize, the healthier you will be. It's a scientific fact, so you can bet we make 'being busy' a priority."

"When I take visitors on a tour of the community, they're always impressed with the beauty of the campus," said Angela Stevens, Lions Gate assistant director of Sales and Business Development, "but when they sit down with me and start asking questions about the day-to-day life at Lions Gate, they are bowled over by how different their lives could be if they moved here. When you live in the home you raised your children in, you're surrounded by memories. It's comfortable. It's familiar. And it's also a little isolated. When you move to Lions Gate, you're surrounded by new people, trying new things, and making new memories for themselves. For those that are young at heart, the possibilities pique their curiosity. They start to think, 'Well, I haven't gone swimming in

years, but there's an indoor pool and hot tub at Lions Gate. I could swim in the middle of January if I wanted to. I could join the Broadway Club and get door-to-door service to see shows at the Kimmel Center. I haven't been to the theater in ages. I could take a beginner painting class in the Art Studio. I've always wanted to learn how to paint. I could go to a concert right downstairs in Commons Hall on a Sunday night. I never go out on a Sunday night!' When you think about all the possibilities at your fingertips when you move to Lions Gate, suddenly the word "busy" doesn't feel like a negative. It feels exciting, and tempting, and FUN! You are completely wrong if you think that living in a senior living community means watching the clock tick down on your life. In today's senior living communities, it means jumping out of bed in the morning and making the most of every minute because there are so many interesting options just waiting right outside your door. At Lions Gate, you can be as busy as you want—morning, noon, and night!"

Kim Clemons, Lions Gate's programming director, packs the monthly Activities Calendar with a wide variety of options so there is something to interest everyone. "The programming at Lions Gate helps people make friends," said Kim. "When you're older, friendships can be as important as family. Not everyone has children and grandchildren close by, so friends become your 'found family.' When I put together the monthly Activities Calendar, I think about all the ways that people can socialize. Some people like the structure of a class and meeting new people on an intellectual level. I have teachers and speakers come in and talk about history, art, music,

ethics, biographies, world travel, and Broadway. It's exciting to find people who share the same interests as you. Other people like to be 'entertained.' That's why we put so much time and thought into hosting live concerts, live dramatic performances, or even featuring an entertainer at happy hour. It's easy to make friends when you enjoy the same kind of music. We also show movies once or twice a week, and that's an entirely different experience, watching a movie in Commons Hall compared to watching it alone in your apartment. Suddenly you're talking about the story with those around you, laughing at the same jokes, and making friends with other movie buffs. We also do Bingo once a month because it gets people engaged and excited. There's no bigger thrill than when you yell BINGO! and everyone around you cheers. It's easy to make friends when you're laughing. And most important of all, I make sure that the Activities Calendar ALWAYS has entertainment at 7:30 p.m. I don't want this community to tuck into bed right after dinner. The residents are thrilled to transition from dinner to an evening class, or take in live entertainment, watch a movie, or play cards. Staying busy is what keeps them young! Some of them laugh and tell me they have better social lives than their grandchildren, and they should! This is the one time in their lives when they don't have to worry about cooking, cleaning, yard work, or anything else. They can focus on themselves and truly enjoying their lives. And if a full Activities Calendar keeps them busy and socializing, they are going to have a better quality of life. Busy is BETTER!"

"It's true!" said Meredith. "Busy really is better. When our residents are busy, it means

they've given themselves permission to do what makes them happy. They find the best part of themselves when they are busy. For some, that means they embrace a life of 'doing' by taking a painting class or swimming regularly or taking part in the buddy program with Kellman Brown students. For others, 'busy' means embracing a life of 'joining.' Here they have the opportunity to try something new by joining clubs like the Yiddish Conversation Club, Book Club, or Short Story Club. For others, 'busy' means embracing their religious lives and going to Shabbat services and Cantor Class. Being 'busy' isn't just burning time. Being 'busy' means putting in the effort to build a rewarding, fulfilling life for yourself. Everyone deserves to have that."

So, as I close my planner on today's busy schedule, and switch off my office light to dash home, I shake off the worry of the day and look back on the parts of it that were meaningful to me. It was great to stop into the Men's Chat & Chew group for a little 'guy time' at lunch. It was fun to poke my head into the Inspirational Horticulture activity to see what gorgeous floral displays the residents had created. It was inspiring to stop into the Ethics in Modern Life class and hear the lively debate the group was wrestling with. I am humbled every day by the intellect, the enthusiasm, and the optimism each and every Lions Gate resident has. They want to be BUSY! And I am reminded that I am lucky to be busy today. I hope to be busy every day of my life.

If you'd like to see what a busy day in the life of a typical Lions Gate resident is like, stop in for a visit.

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