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## Technology makes baby boomers better educated, informed on goods and services

by Dwain Hebda

Access to information via technology has made baby boomers more discerning consumers, say businesses serving this demographic.

“The boomer generation has taken advantage of opportunities that didn’t exist for their parents or grandparents,” said Lisa Henning, executive director of Grand Lodge at the Preserve in Lincoln. “Our residents are very well-educated and know what they want in a senior living community.”

Henning said this new level of sophistication, combined with opportunities for input, has helped shape the roster of activities within the community.

“We partner with Madonna Pro-active for wellness and fitness, we offer live streaming church services and we frequently have professors and other guests come speak at the community,” she said. “And I would be remiss if I didn’t mention our resident-led Tai Chi class.”

For those who utilize in-home caregivers, the story is the same, according to Tim Connelly, franchise owner with Home Instead Senior Care in Bellevue.

“Baby boomers are more receptive to in-home services that will

improve their quality of life,” he said. “Many are already using cleaning services, lawn services, handyman services and others. In-home care is an extension of that quality of life mindset.”

Again, boomers are informed enough to be very specific in the type of services they want and the manner in which they want it delivered.

“Many of our clients first come to us for services such as meal preparation or help with medication management,” Connelly said. “As their needs evolve, we see clients engage additional services such as personal care and other tasks that become especially difficult for those with a decline in mobility or dementia.”

FirstLight Home Care, a provider of non-medical in-home services, has also seen an uptick in seniors who are informed about their options as they age.

“Baby boomers are more educated about the opportunities for various types of assistance to keep them independent,” said Jaye Firmature McCoy, owner. “Their parents were

very limited in their options: Stay at home alone, move in with the kids or go to a skilled nursing facility when things became dire.”

McCoy said as families have spread out, many seniors need help with everyday tasks without nearby relatives to lend assistance, such as a ride from an outpatient procedure, help with showering or med reminders, on up to longer-term needs.



McCoy

“FirstLight Home Care is a ‘gap filler,’” McCoy said. “Today there are gaps in health care, gaps in family availability, gaps in resources in general. We partner with clients, their families and other community businesses and resources to fill the gaps and provide a complete circle of care, safety and independence.”

Even something as seemingly pedestrian as a pharmacy is under increased scrutiny from this generation, which puts additional pressure on such businesses to update their inventory.

“Home modifications

are really growing for us,” said Laurie Dondelinger of Kohll’s Pharmacy. “People want to stay independent and in their own homes because that’s their comfort zone, their ‘happy place’, and for financial reasons.”

“Our home modification division installs stairlifts to get people up and down stairs safely to continue to enjoy their own home, widens doorways so wheelchairs can fit and adds stylish grab bars and other safety features that add elegance rather than a hospital feeling to a room.”

Keeping with customer demand, Kohll’s offers a battery-operated lifting chair used to assist people in the event of a fall and a staircase that turns into a lifting elevator for those in wheelchairs.

“Many seniors are wanting to stay in their homes safely and without being reminded they are aging,” Dondelinger said.

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