



Thanksgiving, Grandmother's House, and LifeShare Technology

By Pam McDonald

When I was a kid – which seems like a hundred years ago but actually is closer to half that – Thanksgiving always meant a trip to Grandmother's house. Instead of "over the river and through the woods," we meandered down Highway 99, where we were stopped in one Podunk town after another by its one traffic light.

There were seven of us – Mom, Dad, us four children, and a 100-pound German Shepard, along with luggage, sleeping bags and groceries packed into the car for a 3-hour journey – and that was one way!

Needless to say, it was a trip we didn't make often, so I really didn't get to know those grandparents very well, or the aunts, uncles, and cousins who lived near them. What a difference today's communications technology would have made!

Today's Technology

For example, [LifeShare Technologies](#), a Senior Housing Forum partner, adds massive communications functionality, internet connectivity, and digital infrastructure to ordinary TVs, I would have been able to connect – monthly, weekly, or even daily – with both sides of my family tree.

LifeShare Tech is simple, hassle-free system, consisting of a compact set top box loaded with sophisticated software that allows today's grandparents (including me) to use a simplified remote control to quickly and easily share, via an ordinary TV, emails, photos, and videos with family and friends – regardless of geographic distance and without a computer.

Seniors who live independently in their own homes can enjoy LifeShare Tech's myriad features, including sending and receiving content; playing games; listening to their favorite music; keeping up with current events and the news; and much more. Senior communities utilizing the system gain greatly enhanced communications capacities for their staff, their residents and their families.

They can transmit important information and notifications en masse to all residents or specific messages to individual residents. They can post community activities and menus, as well as photos and video of community life. They also can use the system to keep staff apprised of significant community information, and, via LifeShare's robust family mobile app, they can enable residents' families and friends to easily stay in touch.

Family Mobile App

Steve Rusche, Co-founder and CEO of LifeShare Technologies, points out, “The mobile app is available for Apple and Android devices and can be downloaded free at iTunes and Google Play.”

He says, “There are actually a couple of ‘flavors’ of the app depending on how users login. If the resident uses the in-room LifeShare service, family members with a unique login and password can access and manage the account, uploading pictures, selecting news feeds, setting up custom messages, or adding events to the resident’s personal calendar, such as family birthdays, doctor’s appointments and their standing pinochle game.”

Users of the family app can also see all the activities, menus, and announcements posted by the community. Steve says, “The app keeps them informed, and provides information they can use to encourage their loved one to stay involved and active. (‘I see they have Wii bowling tomorrow at 10. You love bowling. Why don’t you try it out?’)

Keeping Everyone in the Know

“Given the resources so many senior communities give health promotion, dining and activities, they’ll want to ensure they are making residents, family, and even staff aware of the variety of things they are doing.”

The mobile app also provides a simple means for families to contact the community if needed. Individuals can quickly send a message to the activities, maintenance, or executive director.

Steve explains that the community can also allow access to information through the app whether the resident uses the in-room LifeShare or not. With a unique PIN, family, friends, and staff can connect to facility personnel, link to the community’s website and Facebook pages, and view maps to the campus.

Families can access activity schedules, menus, and announcements, while communities can use the app to “push” notifications of upcoming events (for example, family night) and receive RSVPs.

We can all be thankful for today’s technology that enable us to so easily maintain contact and connection with those we love. Happy Holidays!



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