

 SENIOR HOUSING NEWS

CHANGEMAKERS **2023**

The **pioneers** driving the **future** of senior living

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The pioneers driving the future of senior living

The pace of change in senior living continues unabated — a transformation largely driven by visionary industry leaders prioritizing the needs of residents, families and staff. In times of significant shifts, this leadership is vital to the clinical, technological and operational progress necessary to flourish in the current senior living landscape.

We're delighted to recognize our 2023 cohort of Changemakers in this compilation of exclusive interview excerpts from a series brought to you by Senior Housing News in partnership with Yardi®. Delve into the perspectives and change management approaches of our 2023 Changemakers, and discover how they're gearing up to restructure the industry in the coming years.

Visit seniorhousingnews.com/changemakers to explore the complete series.



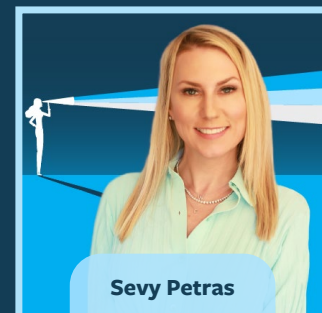
Earl Parker



Jodi Guffee



Doug Dollenberg, Jr.



Sevy Petras



Doris-Elle Sullivan



Dan Madsen



Sarabeth Hanson



Leigh Ann Barney



Rod Burkett



COMPANY HEADQUARTERS
Fort Wayne, IN

Sevy Petras

CEO & Co-Founder, Priority Life Care



Sevy Petras is the CEO of Priority Life Care, an Indiana-based senior living provider offering IL, AL and MC services with an emphasis on finding ways to offer affordable living options for all older adults.

With over two decades of senior living and finance experience, Petras set out to build a platform focused on providing an alternative long-term care solution to those on Medicaid programs throughout the US.

Through the Changemakers series, Petras talks about her background in senior living and the ways she believes the senior living industry is evolving to meet the next generation of senior living customers. She discusses the importance of positioning frontline staff to succeed, while outlining ways leadership can foster growth and new ideas.

What is the single greatest driver of change in today's senior living operating environment?

Petras: I really think there's a new guard in town. There's a lot of young, new, fresh faces, I feel like, in terms of an operations perspective.

There's all these new companies that have popped up and come with a lot of experience behind them. Maybe they're newer companies, but they've got the experience behind them. There's a lot of new companies that are coming up with new innovative ways, bringing ideas from other industries.

I think that with some of the new players and faces, it comes with an air of openness and collaboration. I think that's really the piece that's going to drive us forward, is I think that a lot of us leaders or rising leaders, whatever you want to call us in the industry, we all talk and we share. There's a lot more leaders who have come from different areas within our industry. I think that that has brought with it just a promise of a new day and a promise of a different attitude. Even people who've been around a long time are like, "You know what, you're right. It's time for some new leadership. It's time for some new thoughts."

“It gets me excited that we're at a time now where there are so many people willing and eager to make changes within our industry that we're no longer the outliers.”



COMPANY HEADQUARTERS
Cave Spring, VA

Doris-Ellie Sullivan

President, Retirement Unlimited Inc.

Doris-Ellie Sullivan is President of Retirement Unlimited, Inc., a senior living operator with a 21-community portfolio in Virginia and Florida. She came to the senior living industry by way of the U.S. Armed Services where she was a nurse.

Her history of service and dedication to those who need help have guided her throughout her time in senior living. Now, at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sullivan reflects on her journey and what it means to make change.

In her interview, she walks through some of the top ways she has changed as a leader since she started in the senior living industry, and she explains the importance of transparency and collaboration as the industry evolves.

What is the single greatest driver of change in today's senior living operating environment?

Sullivan: It's our resident – our customer. That's multifaceted. It's what is our customer looking for.

What is our customer's expectation? Then all that change comes, whether it's technology, innovation, design, amenity, or nursing, all of that revolves around our customer and understanding who our customer is.



Change is always tough, even when it's good for you.



COMPANY HEADQUARTERS
Seattle, WA

Dan Madsen

Chairman & CEO, Leisure Care



Dan Madsen is the chairman and CEO of Leisure Care, a senior living operator that has in recent years refocused its paradigm of aging and revamped its online presence to signal that it is ready to meet the needs of current and future residents.

Madsen began his journey in the senior living industry in the late '80s. Now, after 32 years in the industry, the leader of Seattle-based Leisure Care, Madsen talks through the Changemakers series about his time in the industry and how the focus should always be on the residents.

Through the Changemakers series, he discusses some of the key areas in which senior living will change over the next five years, and he also talks about best strategies for leaders managing through resistance to change.

If you could change one thing about the senior living industry, what would it be?

Madsen: Right now, I would say that post-COVID, it's getting back to or [regaining], however you want to look at it, having fun and really enjoying what we're doing with our residents, our prospects, and our employees.

That was a very difficult time, and our focus was on saving lives and working hard with our hero employees and those types of tough conditions.

I think being able to focus forward and really have fun again, and create joy in all of our businesses, both at our home offices and out in the field at our properties.



A lot of people, perhaps most people, don't like change. I think as a leader you need to learn to push through and commit and persevere and complete.

[READ THE FULL INTERVIEW HERE](#)

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COMPANY HEADQUARTERS
Vero Beach, FL

Sarabeth Hanson

President & CEO, Harbor Retirement Associates

In the early days of 2018, Sarabeth Hanson made the jump from Chief Financial Officer to CEO of Harbor Retirement Associates, a senior living operator based in Vero Beach, Florida.

With a 36-community portfolio that spans 14 states, HRA has in recent months made waves with new social media marketing strategies and its Taste of HarborChase campaign which invites the surrounding community to enjoy the fine dining available within a senior living community.

Hanson now reflects on her five years at the helm of HRA and what it means to make change in senior living.

What is the single greatest driver of change in today's senior living operating environment?

Hanson: I think the biggest driver of change is who are customers going to be in five years. There couldn't be a bigger delta between who we are serving today and who we are about to serve.

The baby boomers have lived their life very differently than their parents. I think that's typical. You see it but we've never seen it as predominantly as we are right now.

The greatest generation, quite frankly, they were very comfortable and accustomed to routine. They had Prince Spaghetti Day every Wednesday. That's what mom made every Wednesday night for dinner. They went to the same local restaurants in their little local hub.

The baby boomers are willing get in an airplane and fly across the country for the exact cheeseburger that they're looking for. I think that the biggest thing about what we're doing and why we're doing it now is because we are looking at our future consumer.

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When you're being disruptive or you're making change, I would say the best advice is to be able to invest the time to tell the story as to the why behind the change and the outcome that they should expect with the change.

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COMPANY HEADQUARTERS
Louisville, KY

Leigh Ann Barney

CEO, Trilogy Health Services



The baby boomers are coming, and Trilogy CEO Leigh Ann Barney is focused on how best to serve them. Change is at the center of those efforts.

While Covid has already brought plenty of change to the senior living industry, Barney believes there is more on the way around building a new customer experience for the next generation of older adults. Trilogy's portfolio numbers almost 130 campuses in Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Michigan and now Wisconsin.

Through the Changemakers series, Barney discusses change through a lens of senior living service delivery and technology. She also talks about how she sees transparency as a key tool to managing resistance to change at Trilogy.

What is the single greatest driver of change in today's senior living operating environment?

Barney: It's our coming generation of customers and their changing needs and desires in how they want to live. I think they're going to want to have a lot more voice in their own care versus it being left to their loved ones as much as it may have been in the past. They are wanting to have things that they're used to having in their own life when they live more independently, and they are keeping themselves independent as long as possible.

I think this generation of boomers, their taste and what they're looking for will be different. That's what's changing in how we're looking at what we offer. From the physical plan of the building to our dining experience and our life enrichment experiences, all of those things are gearing around what we see the future consumer looking for.



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I believe in keeping transparency. I try to be very open. I think the more information you give people, the easier it is for them to understand and change.

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COMPANY HEADQUARTERS
Bourbonnais, IL

Rod Burkett

Co-Founder & CEO, Gardant Management Solutions



Rod Burkett, is the Chairman of Gardant Management Solutions, an Illinois-based senior living provider. Gardant is the 25th largest senior living operator in the country with 54 communities and over 2,300 employees.

Through the Changemaker series, Burkett talks about his background in senior living and the ways in which Gardant is advancing operations and care within its portfolio, along with finding new ways to support its employees and further efforts on expanding affordable senior living options for all.

Burkett has led the company since its founding in 1999 as BMA Management. He's helped grow the company to also become the largest provider of affordable assisted living communities in Illinois.

If you could change one thing about the senior living industry, what would it be?

Burkett: The magic wand would make the accessibility and affordability more consistent across the nation. It is definitely a state-by-state program. To me, it is a shame that, where you live if you're 85 years old and where you live is going to have an extreme impact on possibly your quality of life. If and when you need assisted living and a hundred miles in one direction might give you a lot more, a lot less access to assisted living based on which side of the state line you're on.

I would really like to see if, I think there's several states that have proven that programs can really work pretty well and whether it's managed care, whether it's HCBS Medicaid waiver, the use of low-income housing tax credits. Anyway, but there's a lot of variability across the states and I'd love to see our nation take programs that have worked and expand them to have a lot more consistency and continuity across the country.

“

I think as human beings, we have some built-in resistance to change. I think as businesses, we owe it to our customers to never become extinct. We have to change and be both proactive and reactive to all that internal and external forces that impact our business.

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COMPANY HEADQUARTERS
Baltimore, MD

Doug Dollenberg, Jr.

President & CEO, Brightview Senior Living

Brightview Senior Living President and CEO Doug Dollenberg, Jr. believes change is inevitable — and necessary.

Dollenberg, who took the reins last year after previous CEO Marilyn Duker stepped back from her role to serve as co-chairperson, is laser-focused in 2023 on improvement at the company's 46 communities.

Through the Changemakers series, Dollenberg talks about how he often views change as a sometimes uncomfortable but necessary step in a business that is evolving as quickly as senior living. He also describes how change must be a collaborative process, and not only dictated from the top-down.

What is the single greatest driver of change in today's senior living operating environment?

Dollenberg: First, it's our ongoing rebound from the pandemic.

Our industry has to rebound occupancy and margin in this post-pandemic environment, and that's going to require change in selling and pricing and marketing and revenue, and expense management.

The other big driver is staffing challenges. The senior living industry, like so many other industries, is having staffing challenges. That's going to continue to require changes to recruiting and retention approaches.

This is only going to become more challenging as the ratio between those of caregiver age and seniors continues to move in the wrong direction.

Then the third big driver is continuing to meet the service needs and expectations of our residents. They understandably have high expectations. They should have high expectations. We need to make sure that our service is outstanding and living up to the expectations of our residents.

I don't get excited about change, per se, but I'm very comfortable with change. I fundamentally believe that change is an important part of the formula for business success.

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COMPANY HEADQUARTERS
Portland, OR

Jodi Guffee

COO, Radiant Senior Living

Radiant Senior Living Chief Operating Officer and Co-Owner Jodi Guffee is proud of her time in the senior living industry, even though she has in the past worried that she didn't belong there.

Yet she has proven herself a leader and a disruptor and then some, from developing employee "care plans" to spearheading CRM research that is changing the way Radiant does business. Now with nearly a quarter century under her belt with Radiant Senior Living, Guffee ponders how change happens and what will change next.

What is a word of advice for managing resistance to change?

Guffee: We bring a resident into our communities and they have a very detailed care plan — from the fact that they like their coffee black at 8 AM to they need a shower assist. What we've started to do is recognize every single one of our employees or potential employees needs to also have their own "care plan." We need to know very individually who these people are and how we meet them at their place of need.

We call this their "FORD," which stands for their family, occupation, recreation, and their dreams. Once we've identified this in the first week, we've got this down to a policy and procedure and a QA that we follow implicitly.

At the end of week one, we task our department heads and others to find out at least two things about a new employee's FORD. Then we get all together around that and we say, "This is what we really know about Sarah. She has two kids, she's a single mom. These are her needs. She would love to take her kids to do some thing or other." Then we come up with a personalized gift around that FORD and we send it to the home.

We don't just give it to the employee, we send it to the home where their family will see how vested our company is in their mom or dad or whomever. Then it brings their family into our family. Then when mom has to work late or has to work a double shift or can't make it home for dinner, there's more grace in understanding why that's happening and that we do care about her as a person.

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...risk-takers, I believe, are the ones who affect change and set the path for those who might be fearful to do that.

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COMPANY HEADQUARTERS
Charlottesville, VA

Earl Parker

CEO, Commonwealth Senior Living



Commonwealth Senior Living CEO Earl Parker joined the industry almost three decades ago. Needless to say, he's seen a lot of change in that time.

With the pandemic's impact fresh in mind, Parker is leading changes in 2023 related to getting back to pre-Covid brand standards for the company's 37 communities. Central to that effort is a need to make operations friendlier to staff.

Through his Changemakers interview, Parker discusses the ways in which he has changed since he got into the industry in the 1990s. He also talks about the need for more iterative changes, and why continuous improvement is something he feels strongly about.

What is the single greatest driver of change in today's senior living operating environment?

Parker: The single biggest driver of change today, I believe, is the staffing challenge.

Not only the staffing challenge that we see before us today, but the future too. If we look five years into the future, we can see the shift in demographics. Having less people to care for more people. We're still struggling as an organization to say, "All right, what do we do with that?" We're really focused on workforce development and bringing new people into the senior living workforce. We've dedicated significant new resources in our organization. That's part of our strategic plan to really try to do that.

It's also the volume of demand that's going to be coming. When I talked with our team at our conference this week, I said the demand and the customers are not our problem. We're going to have plenty of customers who want to be a part of our company and our product and our services, but it's being able to build that team that's going to be able to support them and provide the care and services for them that we have to be focused on.



I think change is, to varying degrees, a challenge for everybody. The real thing that you have to identify, which is easier said than done, is that resistance to change impedes our progress or our ability to be successful.

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