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(LONGEVITY) Landmark West Coast Virtual CCRC Champions Aging In Place

Avenidas Village, a Palo Alto, CA-based virtual retirement community, has expanded its services to now include seniors in Los Altos and Los Altos Hills. The Los Altos launch is the latest milestone in the

program's three-year evolution from grassroots upstart to becoming one of Silicon Valley's leading resources for aging in place.

The West Coast's flagship virtual senior community, Avenidas Village is a membership program offered through nonprofit senior resource agency Avenidas. The virtual program was conceived in 2007 during a senior-organized community think tank inspired by the success of Boston's Beacon Hill Village. "One of our first members had a friend who knew about the Beacon Hill program," Avenidas Village Program Director Vickie Epstein tells *HSR*. "Everyone was very excited about it. The group grew from two to 10, and then 15," notes Epstein. "That's when it really took off."

Among the services Avenidas Village provides to San Francisco Bay-area seniors are discounts on services, transportation, free emergency preparedness reviews, legal assistance, medical advocacy, and volunteer opportunities. Participating seniors also have access to members-only amenities such as a website, social and cultural activities, and a directory of fellow members. A service roster of over 140 providers covers a broad spectrum of health, entertainment, and home repair needs, prompting Avenidas to rank the list as one of the program's strongest selling points. "The coordination of our network service providers is really our highlight," says Epstein. "These are vetted providers. We can assure seniors that they are trustworthy."

Now consisting of over 300 members, Avenidas Village represents a diverse cross section of CA's senior population. The program is open to seniors age 50 and up, but the past decade's trend toward aging at home has made a virtual community an increasingly popular choice. "Our median and average age is 78," notes Epstein. "We're evenly divided between couples and singles, but the common ground is that everyone loves their homes and wants to stay independent."

Now in its third year, Avenidas Village has established itself as a pioneer in the evolution of the virtual village. The virtual community's role in the steadily growing aging in place movement is at front and

center, says Epstein. "We have on the horizon here a huge number of baby boomers. The idea of being able to age gracefully, but also actively and connected is where most folks want to be."

Info: Avenidas Village's expansion has also resulted in the launching of a 24/7 support line connecting members with services or care during after hours or on weekends. Visit Avenidas on the Web at:

<http://www.avenidas.org/>.

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