

Roberto Muñiz, MPA, LNHA, FACHCA

*President and CEO, The Francis E. Parker Memorial Home
Piscataway, New Jersey
by Gina LaVecchia Ragone*



Roberto Muñiz believes unique housing models and value-added services are the future of the senior living industry. His company, the 100-year-old Francis E. Parker Memorial Home, Piscataway, N.J., which operates two long-term care facilities, one assisted living and one recently opened adult day care facility in central New Jersey, is innovating with alternative service models for elder care. In addition to new, leading-edge “neighborhood” designs for long-term and assisted living, Muñiz and his team created a unique day care format that could serve as a model for other providers.

While adult day care is not a new business, the branching out of long-term care (LTC) providers into this arena—and leveraging the rich array of services that LTC facilities can provide—is an innovation worthy of attention.

“We wanted to concentrate on value-added services in adult day care,” says Muñiz, describing the idea for the Parker At The Pavilion Day Center in Highland Park, N.J. This led to the development of both a social program and a medical program, utilizing Parker’s fitness and aquatics centers, classrooms and theaters, as

well as rehabilitation facilities and medical suite for physicians’ appointments. Parker also extended its robust day care offerings to include services such as administration of medication and even bathing, all in an effort to remove seniors’ obstacles to living at home and to ease the burden on family members.

After seeing the success of the program, Muñiz was eager to see it replicated, not only by his own company, but also by other qualified providers. Last year, Muñiz and the Parker staff hosted New Jersey Deputy Services Commissioner Lowell Arye to advocate for the replication of such programs throughout the state. Shortly thereafter, the Human Services Department removed a moratorium on licenses for adult day health services. Now, providers with relationships to Medicaid Managed Care Organizations can obtain day care licenses and launch programs like Parker’s day care center.

The change, Muñiz says, is a great step toward broadening the options to consumers and their families. “This is an opportunity for great organizations to provide adult day care in their facilities and give the opportunity to seniors and their family members to participate in programs such as ours,” he says.

Hoping more could be done to extend Parker’s reach, Muñiz and his staff applied for and received a \$25,000 grant from the Leading Age Innovations Fund to launch a program to bring similar day care services to seniors who could not leave home. In June, Parker will implement Parker Day Club at Home, a social outreach model that will provide in-home activities, meals and limited health monitoring to seniors in five low-income areas in central New Jersey. Muñiz cites the importance of providing “a social opportunity to engage individuals and provide the social stimulation people need,” adding, “If it succeeds as we think it will, thanks to Parker’s substantial endowment, we will continue the project beyond 2014.”

Muñiz gives much thought to the future of the senior care industry. “I think that we as an industry need to be prepared to change. As leaders, we must be conscious of shifts happening around us and start preparing for these changes,” he says. “We need to make sure the culture of person-centered programs remains true, and where they are not in existence, we need to take responsibility and implement changes. Long-term and assisted living also needs to continue to advance the creation of specialized neighborhoods based on the needs and acuity of individuals and think about what the neighborhoods of the future are going to look like.”

In the meantime, Muñiz and his team will continue to forge ahead in providing innovative day care services for seniors. “Over the next five years, we will work to triple the number of individuals we serve, and we will become a leading resource for other organizations.” **LTL**

Gina LaVecchia Ragone is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

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Robert Muñiz
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