

## **Local seniors use virtual reality to stay engaged and connected throughout COVID-19**

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (June 1,2020) – Although COVID-19 has rocked millions of lives across the country, the senior population has been particularly hard-hit, both in their susceptibility to the virus, and the impact of isolation on their social and emotional health. One local senior living community is taking a creative approach and tackling the problem of social isolation and lack of emotional engagement head on through virtual reality.

The Hearth at Sycamore Village in Fort Wayne frequently engages its residents in virtual reality sessions, complete with headsets provided by Rendever, a company specializing in virtual reality for seniors. “We enjoyed our virtual reality systems before COVID-19 hit, and love them even more now,” said Tellis Young, the community’s Executive Director. “Since our residents can’t get out and about right now, it’s crucial to us to keep them connected and engaged. VR helps us do that.”

“Using virtual reality has helped us sprinkle some positivity and excitement through the building, during which can easily be a dark time,” added Kimberly Draper, The Hearth’s Activities Director. “It’s great to see their faces light up as they try something new and ‘do’ things they’ve never done, like swim with dolphins or even go sky diving!”

Since Rendever’s systems are also integrated with Google Maps, seniors are able to easily see places that hold emotional significance, share stories, and emotionally connect over memories. “One of the ladies who lives with us wanted to show her friends her previous home,” shared Draper. “I was able to pull it up and we ‘walked’ down her street together. She was so proud to show everyone the home she raised a family in. It was heartwarming to see.”

“It was a nice diversion and so nostalgic to see our childhood homes and tour places we’ve always wanted to visit, “ said David Hollman, a retired school teacher and Hearth resident.

“This was the neatest experience ever,” added Bobbie Kendrick, a fellow resident. “I felt like I was right there, and it was such a nice escape from the world as we’ve known it lately. I’ve truly never seen anything like it before.”

Since Rendevers systems continuously upload new VR experiences, the team at The Hearth at Sycamore Village is confident that virtual reality will remain an important part of their residents’ day-to-day lives. “We’re not even close to done yet!” said Young. “There’s still a lot more left to see through virtual reality, and we’re up for the adventure.”

To learn more about virtual reality at Hearth communities, visit [www.thehearth.net](http://www.thehearth.net).

### **About The Hearth**

Hearth Management is a privately owned and operated management and development company based in Syracuse, NY. Founded in 1988, Hearth Management specializes in Independent Living, Assisted/Enriched Living, and Memory Care. Currently, Hearth Management’s operates 15 communities throughout New York, Connecticut, Indiana, and Tennessee.

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