An Innovative Approach To Enhance The Quality Of Life For Residents, Employees And Guests
Mindful is an important part of Sodexo’s overall approach to creating an environment of multidimensional wellness for residents, contributing to their independence, vitality and overall happiness.

Eating healthy and leading active lifestyles is important to today’s seniors, especially members of the Baby Boomer generation. Mindful is an effective way to address this need while attracting new residents.

Lifestyle seminars can be established to reflect the desire of residents who want more programs on physical activity and health and wellness.

Achieving an optimal quality of life is a balance between nutrition, diet and exercise.

That balance has to take into account the age, special conditions and individual needs of each resident. Central to this effort is providing healthy, nutritious foods that balance nutrition with enticing flavors to create an indulgent way to enjoy health.

Mindful by Sodexo achieves this balance and helps residents, staff and guests make healthy dining choices. The program focuses on transparency of ingredients, delicious food, satisfying portions and clarity in messaging. By readily sharing the ingredients and nutritional information of the Mindful menu items being offered, consumers are better educated about which foods are part of a healthier choice so that making those choices soon becomes second nature.

Based upon extensive research of marketplace trends, Sodexo’s executive chefs and registered dietitians worked together to create an exciting collection of recipes that are sure to satisfy every appetite. From complete meals and delicious entrées to inviting sides, soups and snacks, Mindful offers something for everyone and for every type of dining environment.
MINDFUL FUELS COMMUNITY INNOVATION AT SHENANDOAH VALLEY WESTMINSTER-CANTERBURY

At Shenandoah Valley Westminster-Canterbury (SVWC) in Winchester, VA, wellness is an important part of the senior community’s philosophy and commitment to its residents and staff. In the spring of 2012, a wellness initiative was launched and included as one of its goals, the incorporation of more healthful options into the dining program. Mindful has played a big part in helping the community achieve this goal.

According to Becky Smith, registered dietitian at SVWC, the Mindful program is a perfect fit for the community’s wellness initiative. She stated, “I kept getting requests from residents saying, ‘Well, you always tell us to eat healthy, so how can we know which items on the menu are healthy?’ Mindful helps address this through the use of a special icon that lets everyone know what items fit the Mindful criteria. Now our residents, staff and visitors know what dining selections are better for them.”

To help introduce Mindful at SVWC, Smith and her colleagues decided to host a special tasting party to help alleviate any hesitation residents and staff might have about the new healthy selections. She stated, “We set up a special tasting station outside of the Bistro complete with balloons, flowers and sample portions of certain selections that we felt people may be reluctant to try. Another manager and I help everyone navigate through the tasting party and describe the dishes in detail. We encourage everyone to give us feedback so we can decide what items would be the best candidates for menu placement. The tasting party proved so successful that it is now held every three months, coinciding with the arrival of a new Mindful kit.”

Sodexo’s on-site dining team implemented Mindful in SVWC’s Bistro (retail restaurant) as well as in the senior community’s resident dining room. Overall, many of the community’s existing menu items were updated with Mindful counterparts, while a number of daily lunch specials were replaced with the program’s featured selections, called Heroes.

“The Mindful Program has become an important component in the selections we offer at SVWC. More and more residents and staff are looking for healthy/low fat dining options. We have implemented Wellness Wednesdays which feature items from the Mindful menu, and we are serving healthy snack options at our quarterly Town Hall meetings with staff. If we are going to promote health and wellness from a company standpoint, then we need to practice what we preach. The Mindful program is one way to help us accomplish this goal.”

Jeannie Shiley, CEO
Shenandoah Valley Westminster-Canterbury
HEALTHIER DINING CHOICES ACCENTUATED AT THE PINES AT WHITING

The Pines at Whiting in Whiting, NJ predominately utilizes the Mindful program in their small retail operation called the Cove, which is only open for lunch. But according to General Manager Shaneika Johnson, the dining team is experimenting with a number of ways to expand the availability of Mindful selections. Johnson explained, “Right now, we’re working off of a weekly cycle of specials in the retail area that includes a Mindful soup that is offered daily, as well as a variety of pre-packaged Mindful entrées for grab-and-go dining. We also have a few other options that can be ordered on demand that are not in the grab-and-go area. The soups have proven so popular that we now offer them in our resident dining area for dinner too.”

Johnson added that overall, Mindful has been a welcome addition to the community’s dining program, especially in addressing ever-growing requests from residents and visitors for healthier options. She added, “A lot of people want to make healthier decisions but at the same time are often hesitant to try something new and different. To increase the overall appeal of the Mindful selections, we’ve done a number of different things including tastings to help everyone see just how delicious eating healthy can be. Now I think we’re probably at a point where those who love it, absolutely love it. In fact, they never want us to change the menu. They definitely have their favorites!”

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Pictured are members of the dining team that spearheaded the implementation of Mindful at The Pines at Whiting (L-R): Lester Ward, supervisor; Christopher Famularo, executive chef; Timothy Hirchak, asst. general manager; Shaneika Johnson, general manager and Shawn Gallagher, supervisor.
“Mindful has been an excellent addition to the programs offered by Sodexo. I personally find it helpful when making choices at lunch. It is great to know that what you are ordering fits your diet needs. In addition as an organization, it is important to have healthy alternatives for staff. Many of the choices are delicious and the food variety is outstanding. In today’s world, health care insurance costs are based on your expense record. Frankly, this program can play a role and help us control the rising expense of healthcare insurance. We truly appreciate it.”

Eric Ghaul, CEO
The Pines At Whiting

Shaneika Johnson also noted that because the Mindful program is so complete, it offers a great deal of flexibility for implementation, regardless of the size of the dining program or community. She stated, “The key is to select those menu items and materials that best meet the culture and philosophy of your community, both today and in the future. As resident populations continue to evolve both in terms of lifestyle preferences and ethnicity, a program like Mindful is going to become even more important to meet the demands of the baby boomer generation.”

BEST PRACTICES FOR IMPLEMENTING MINDFUL IN SENIOR COMMUNITIES

When implementing Mindful in a senior community, Registered Dietitian Becky Smith and General Manager Shaneika Johnson offered the following insights:

During regular menu meetings, discuss with the team how to incorporate the Mindful items.

Consider hosting special tasting parties to introduce new Mindful items, especially those that residents might initially be apprehensive about trying.

Use the tasting parties as an opportunity to explain more about the featured selections, the ingredients being used and how the items benefit residents’ health.

Keep it simple when you initially start the program. Maybe just add one of the Mindful Heroes as a lunch special to see how people react and then grow from there. Start with what you know will work in your community and build on that success.

Leverage the wealth of support materials and resources that are included with Mindful to support your community’s marketing efforts.

Resources

While Mindful can be utilized in both retail and resident dining venues, it can also be easily adopted by staff and guests for use at home with their families. To support this effort, Sodexo has created an entire website complete with a wealth of valuable tools and resources to facilitate following the Mindful approach at home.

To learn more, please visit www.mindful.sodexo.com.