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## COMMUNITY LIVING SOLUTIONS

CREATING A BRIGHTER FUTURE  
FOR SENIOR LIVING

WISCONSIN





# COMMUNITY LIVING SOLUTIONS

## CREATING A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR SENIOR LIVING

by Mark Crawford

In a short five years, Appleton-based Community Living Solutions has become a leader in building senior living facilities throughout the Midwest. That is not a very long for having developed such a stellar reputation.

"I kept hearing their name come up in various discussions and it seemed like they were always getting the best projects that were available in our industry," says Dan Goodier, administrator for the Christian Community Home in Osceola, a small town on the border with Minnesota along the St. Croix River. "We contacted them about our upcoming project and asked for a preliminary proposal. They translated all our ideas and goals into a fantastic design that captured our vision perfectly. They won the job and we could not have made a better choice of contractors."

One thing quickly becomes clear when talking with President and Partner Tom Martin—the entire team at Community Living Solutions has genuine compassion for the seniors for whom they build.

"We select our clients as carefully as they select us," says Martin. "Once we enter into a business agreement, our clients become partners. Because our goal is to provide business solutions that will take our partners well into the future, our relationships continue into the future as well—their continued success is of paramount importance to us."

"Community Living Solutions really knows the senior living market, with true experts on their staff."

Christian Community Home — Osceola, WI



Unlike many general contractors, Community Living Solutions serves only one market—the senior living industry. As a result they have developed a deep expertise in this kind of specialized work, including minimizing disruption in the daily lives of the seniors who already reside on-site.

“Community Living Solutions really knows the senior living market, with true experts on their staff,” states Kirk Haverland, Vice President of Larson Engineering in Appleton. “One of the most impressive things to me is their emphasis on helping clients get what they really need. They also assist with finding funding sources. Their construction experts make sure construction budgets are appropriate and not exceeded.”

“It’s very important to anticipate every challenge that may arise prior to starting a project, and to seek and share information from the staff serving seniors on site,” says Martin. “We remain open and flexible and always communicate with those delivering and receiving care.”

A strong relationship with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services is also needed to build senior living facilities; more regulations, planning, inspections, and paperwork are involved. “We have great respect for the DHS,” says Martin. “They look at safety for seniors in a totally different light, which is reflected in their regulations. But that is a good thing—in our planning and construction we think like a caregiver, or a resident, rather than a contractor or builder. Our job is to build the most positive living environment possible—that cannot be done for this type of facility with the mindset of the typical builder.”

Community Living Solutions specializes in design/build new construction and extensive remodeling/renovation. Services include strategic planning, visioning and consensus building, financial analysis, market studies, master planning, feasibility studies, architectural design, construction, and interior design.

“We are a \$3-4 million company that is expanding at a responsible rate,” says Martin. “We thoroughly enjoy partnering with skilled-care providers. They are care-driven, community-minded, and exist on thin margins. We want to deliver the best possible value for their money and want every dollar spent in such a way that it adds the most value.”



**Glarner Lodge** — New Glarus, WI

### **Delivering the Perfect Solution**

Community Living Solutions was formed in early 2007 with a focus on work within Wisconsin. Since then the company has grown from five employees to sixteen and completed projects in nine states. “Because we have developed national repeat clients, we have expanded our geographical reach and build facilities for them in other states,” says Martin.

Community Living Solutions partners exclusively with senior living providers. Many of its projects are continuum of care campuses that provide skilled nursing, assisted living, and independent senior living. “Because of our experience we can guarantee a depth of knowledge

and resources few others can provide,” says Martin. “Our skilled team of planners, architects, and construction managers use a unique process that incorporates visioning, market assessment, and financial feasibility to ensure that the planning, design, and construction management solutions we deliver enhance marketability, increase revenue, and maintain a strong bill of financial health for the future.”

Community Living Solutions joined AGC in 2007 and has benefitted from many of its programs and services. “For example,” says Martin, “during the last year we have utilized and appreciated services in safety, governmental relations, legal consulting, and 401K program coordination. They do a great job of keeping



**Glarner Lodge** — New Glarus, WI



**United Pioneer Home** — Luck, WI

us informed on key issues and trends.”

Of course, one of those trends is financing. “One of the greatest challenges is how to help clients find financing,” says Martin. “We have had positive success in creatively finding sources of funding for our clients.”

Another emerging challenge is the financial health of trade contractors and suppliers. The company has implemented a number of additional safeguards to both identify financially challenged entities prior to engaging them and to protect against default, such as requiring financial qualification statements, bank references, letters of credit, and/or bonding.

## **Selected Projects**

### ***Glarner Lodge, New Glarus***

Started in August 2009 and completed in eight months, this 32,000-square-foot assisted living apartment complex with Swiss architectural features was built into a steep hillside in New Glarus. The 26-unit residential care apartment complex is adjacent to the main New Glarus Home campus.

“To assure optimal placement of the new building, a master plan for the complete campus was created to show the long-term repositioning of the organization,” says Martin. In addition to the new apartments, the master plan called for the replacement of the skilled nursing facility and conversion of the existing skilled nursing facility to community-based residential facility units. It also introduced a 48-unit congregate independent living building while preserving the ability to develop 24 additional duplex cottages. Community Living Solutions provided the planning, design, and construction services for this project.

“We are very grateful for the expertise and professional guidance that Community Living Solutions (CLS) brought to our organization to achieve our goals for the construction of Glarner Lodge,” comments Executive Director Roger L. Goepfert. “Their sensible approach to problem-solving and to any project changes was invaluable. The entire team seems genuinely concerned about the project being exactly what the customer ordered. Communications were concise and fully detailed. Our project ended up being on time and within budget, which are two things that are extremely important to a senior living provider.”



### **United Pioneer Home, Luck**

Community Living Solutions built this 53,000-square-foot nursing home in eleven months, replacing a 50-year-old facility. The new 50-unit skilled nursing home consists of two 12-unit households and two 13-unit households. The main dining rooms feature a moveable wall that allows for the space to become one large gathering area for all 50 residents during large social gatherings.

"The design they provided mirrored our vision for elder care," indicated Executive Director Dan Valentine. "The architectural team made excellent suggestions about the flow of living space. They also assisted us deeply with financing."

Valentine indicates the project was very well planned and took less than a year to complete, with winter conditions a non-factor. "The bidding process was totally transparent," he adds. "We viewed every bid and nothing was hidden. We were also allowed to use local contractors, which provided local jobs and helped our community."

### **Christian Community Home, Osceola**

Construction on this 52,000-square-foot nursing home began in November 2011 and was completed in October 2012. Osceola lost its only nursing home in 2007 and the community partnered with the hospital and Christian Community Home of Hudson to build a new nursing home on the new hospital campus site.

"The facility was designed to invoke feelings of home, rather than an institution," says Tom Lemkuil, Senior Architect and Partner with Community Living Solutions. "We created small-scale, 20-bed household wings in order to break the size of the facility into more intimate parts, while still providing as much choice as possible for the residents in their daily activities."

Each household contains a den, screen porch, laundry facilities, activity spaces, and access to exterior garden courtyards. The community center of the building contains a large open dining area with a display kitchen at one end so the residents can see and smell the food being prepared. From this dining room the residents can access a large interior courtyard, which allows for exterior dining in the warm months while providing daylight to the center of the interior spaces.

"They did a great job," indicates



**Christian Community Home — Osceola, WI**





Administrator Dan Goodier. "This is also the first project we've ever had where all the contingency funding was returned—they never promised us anything they couldn't deliver."

### ***The Pines, Valparaiso, Indiana***

This 25-year-old retirement community was in strong need of updating and expansion. It faced numerous challenges including poor visibility/accessibility from the main thoroughfare, long double-loaded corridors, small common areas, and a lack of adequate space for large group activities. Community Living Solutions built 25,000 square feet of additions and completed 40,000 square feet of remodeling. The \$10-million phased project started in November of 2007 and was completed in October of 2008. The facility was 100-percent occupied throughout construction.

"The highlight of the project was the transformation of the core area of the community," says Martin. This central hub now includes a bistro/café, activity room, wellness/fitness/spa center, beauty parlor/barber shop, mailboxes, and multi-purpose space to accommodate large groups as well as chapel services. Ten new and several remodeled upscale apartments strategically located in each of the four wings provide opportunities for updating both interior and exterior architecture.

"From the beginning to the end of this project we felt like a real partner," says CEO Laurie Mullet. "They listened carefully to all our ideas. Tom Martin became a trusted advisor in many decisions, such as how to best relocate residents and staff. The crews were very conscientious about making the construction schedule fit around our residents' schedules. They were generous enough with their time to hold weekly meetings and construction updates with residents and even built an observation deck so residents could watch them work. Long after Community Living Solutions had signed off on the project we had a carpet concern; Tom came down and took care of it right away—we really appreciated that."

### ***Bridgepath-Morrow Home, Sparta, WI***

This 30,000-square-foot administrative and community-based residential assisted living building was added to the Morrow Home continuing care retire-



**The Pines** — Valparaiso, IN





**Bridgepath-Morrow Home** — Sparta, WI

ment community (CCRC) campus. The project started in June of 2010 and was completed in February of 2011. The expansion was needed to provide memory care and frail/elderly assisted living care options in the Sparta community.

"Communication with the Community Living Solutions team was outstanding," indicates Michael Bonello, Executive Director for the Morrow Home Community. "Throughout the entire process, the Community Living Solutions team was highly attentive to our needs and would immediately respond to all our questions and requests. They also discovered some very needed funding to complete the project and helped with approvals and paperwork. They came in below budget. Everything was transparent. It was a great experience."

### Future Plans

Community Living Solutions has a true passion for creating a better quality of life for older adults and those who care for them. "We are driven by a genuine

desire to create innovative, engaging and sustainable business solutions that streamline operations, increase marketability, and maintain a strong bill of financial health," says Martin. "Our sales volume has been increasing over the last few years, due mainly to increased market share based on our specific market expertise. We expect this to continue."

A key part of the company's success is that they take the time up front to fully understand what a client's needs are (or assist them in actually determining what those needs are). Then they begin project discussions with beneficial trend presentations and visioning. "Everyone has a voice and contributes to the final project," says Martin. Committees continue to work together as the project evolves, ensuring an excellent flow of communication and feedback. Furthermore, Community Living Solutions doesn't disappear once a project has been completed. "We maintain our relationships with clients to ensure their continued satisfac-

tion and success into the future."

One of Martin's goals for Community Living Solutions is to never grow so large that management does not know the names of the children of all the employees. They've held true to this belief. "The commitment to have a relatively small company with a family culture has allowed us to maintain profitability and exceptional client satisfaction, especially during the economic challenges that face the construction industry today," says Martin. "We will continue to focus on the senior living industry while maintaining a small and talented company of professionals to accomplish our work. As we move into new geographical and service markets we will expand our capability through responsible internal growth and further development of strategic partnerships within our industry." ■

*Community Living Solutions has been a member of the AGC of Wisconsin since 2008.*