

BITS & BYTES



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▶ Technology proved to be a lifeline for staff members and residents alike during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a newly released survey by K4Connect. According to the report authors, more than 40% of the staff members surveyed estimated they saved more than 50% of their time per month with innovative technology.

▶ Augmented reality — think the Pokemon Go game — may have many benefits for older adults. But designers, for the most part, are not developing the software with this age group in mind. That is according to scientists at the University of Bath in the United Kingdom and the Bath-based charity Designability. In a study, the researchers found that adults aged 50 and older are more likely to be able to execute AR-prompted tasks displayed on a laptop when a “ghosthand,” as opposed to an arrow, demonstrated the actions.

Residents travel anywhere, virtually, thanks to program

BY ALICIA LASEK

Senior living residents in California are getting a chance to immerse themselves in fantasy travel and adventures from the comfort of home as participants in a virtual reality program supported by a local energy company.

The program will be provided to 1,300 assisted living, memory care and hospice residents at 10 senior living communities in Bakersfield. The program recently kicked off at Brookdale Riverwalk, a continuing care retirement community. Seniors wore light (470-gram) headsets to experience various fantasy scenarios with 360-degree panoramic view of the surroundings, such as a front row seat at a Broadway hit, driving a race car, and tours of famous countries such as France, Italy and Egypt.

Users participate individually, in pairs or in a group, along with caregivers. The technology provides the experience of physical sensations as well — such as the feeling of weightlessness in a tour of the International Space Station.



Photo: MyndVR

An older adult and caregiver participate in a virtual reality experience.

The program is fully underwritten by Vaquero Energy, a local utility, in partnership with virtual reality tech developer MyndVR. Local senior living communities and hospices receive training and access to MyndVR’s library of immersive experience.

“Research is showing the enormous benefits VR can bring to the health and well-being of shut-ins, those dealing with memory loss,

depression or other challenges, as well as to those who just can’t do some of the things they used to enjoy,” said Vaquero President Ken Hunter, who chose to deliver the program in his hometown.

The technology is helpful in assisted living and memory care communities — especially for distraction and reminiscence therapy, MyndVR CEO Chris Brickler told *McKnight’s Senior Living*. ■

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