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HERE TO STAY

**PANDEMIC INSPIRES
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SPRING 2022

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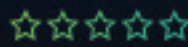
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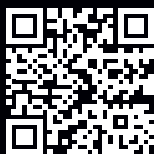
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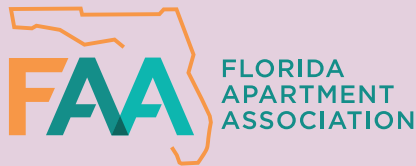
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Adaptability is Key

BY KRISTI NOVAK, CAM, CAPS | ALTMAN MANAGEMENT COMPANY

WHEN I STARTED MY multifamily career 19 years ago, one of the first things I learned was that you never know what the day might bring. It's actually what made me so excited about this career – no day is the same as the day before. "Expect the unexpected" doesn't begin to capture some of the days and weeks I've had, and the past couple of years have only confirmed what we already knew.

Two years ago, the multifamily industry was really put to a test. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we closed our offices and amenities, implemented enhanced cleaning practices, and came up with creative events for residents who were staying home. Our staff members were deemed "essential workers," and their jobs became more stressful than ever. During those early days of dealing with the pandemic, we began rethinking how we did business. The way that we operated had changed. New employee policies had to be written, new resident protocols were put into place, and a new way to lease apartments was established. The pandemic changed so quickly that new policies and procedures needed to be written and implemented monthly, weekly, and sometimes daily. Those who were willing to change succeeded, and those who were not willing definitely struggled.

In 2022, virtual and self-guided tours, work lounges for our stay-at-home residents, and other pandemic-inspired changes have become part of the new normal. The industry continues to face challenges such as hiring deficits, maintenance supply backorders, and higher costs

for just about everything. Many residents are still working from home or just spending more time at home, and we need to be responsive to their changing needs and demands. With the high rent increases we have seen over the past year, residents are looking for a lot more service.

You have probably heard the saying, "The only constant in life is change," and that definitely applies in the multifamily housing industry. Some changes are more challenging than others, and some seem

to come fast and furious. The key to keeping up and even getting ahead of the changes is to be adaptable. You must accept that things will change and keep moving forward. Adaptable people can possess

elasticlike energy, a willingness to bend, to break habits, and to challenge themselves when their circumstances change. They tend to face problems, pivot among distractions, and calmly proceed forward. Adaptable people are prone to think ahead and consistently focus on improvement.

Each day I have become more and more comfortable with metaphorically taking my hands off the steering wheel, trusting my instincts, and thinking on the spot. Though adaptability may not be inherent in you, it is something anybody can learn with time. Adjusting your expectations will go a long way in helping you flow with the winds of change. I do not have a crystal ball, nor do I know what the future will bring, BUT I do know that there will be more change, and our industry will continue to shift.

I encourage you to adapt with the shifts and changes – after all, that's how we survive and grow. **MF**

**"We cannot direct
the wind, but we can
adjust the sails."**

— UNKNOWN



Let's Get Strategic

BY CHIP TATUM, CAM, CAE | EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

AS I SIT HERE, I am nearly three months into one of the most exciting opportunities of a lifetime – the chance to serve as the Florida Apartment Association's executive vice president. I feel like I blinked and now we're in the second quarter of the year, and already we have accomplished so much as an industry and as an organization. I cannot thank our members and our local affiliates enough for the warm welcome and the eagerness to engage.

The past two years have been stressful and frenetic for so many of us in both our

"I believe that people make their own luck by great preparation and good strategy."

—JACK CANFIELD

personal and professional lives. When you are faced with an ever-changing set of variables and an increasingly complex operational environment, it would be easy to be lured into thinking you have not accomplished much. That could not be

further from the truth. In just my short tenure here at FAA, I have seen firsthand that this industry is resilient, innovative, creative, and engaged. Each and every day, you and your teams are learning to thrive and implement new processes — from

virtual leasing to maintenance and resident engagement. If you take a moment to pause and reflect, I am willing to bet you will see how much you, your teams, and your organizations have evolved and how well equipped you are to tackle what lies ahead.

The Florida Apartment Association and our local affiliates have been evolving along with you. One of our core responsibilities as an association is to “read the tea leaves” and ensure that we are adapting to meet the needs of a housing industry that is constantly changing. So far this year, we have onboarded new public relations resources, launched the next phase of economic and housing opportunity research, begun the updated FAA Compensation and Benefits report, hosted a successful Legislative Conference in Tallahassee, Florida, engaged senior leaders with fresh content via the Property Management Executive Forum, and so much more.

Initiatives like these do not happen by accident. They require planning, engaged leadership, resources, and a determined cadre of dedicated volunteers like so many of you. Much of what has been accomplished is the direct result of our association’s road map: the strategic plan. This year, we will be updating the strategic plan, and we will be asking you to weigh in on what the future of the Florida Apartment Association looks like. During the second and third quarters of the year, FAA will be conducting a series of focus groups and distributing electronic surveys to members to provide an opportunity for you to influence our strategic priorities.

The 2022 Strategic Plan will provide the inspiration, opportunity, and directives to better serve the membership, local affiliates, leaders, and Florida’s rapidly growing rental housing industry. The Strategic Planning Task Force, co-chaired by Jordan Petras (Highmark Residential) and Lee Rogers (JMG Realty/Asset Living), has already been hard at work identifying specific priorities and constituencies to involve in the process. In the coming months, we will be engaging our senior property management leaders, on-site professionals, supplier partners, past and emerging volunteer leaders, and local affiliates to better understand how well we currently meet their specific needs. If you are interested in actively participating in the

process, please reach out to me to see what opportunities may be available.

As FAA endeavors to grow and evolve as an organization, this presents a unique opportunity for each of us to focus on the future. In preparing this article, I stumbled on an excellent piece from *MasterClass* that identifies common characteristics of strategic thinkers.

5 Characteristics of Strategic Thinkers

1. **Strategic foresight:** Strategic thinkers have the ability to think ahead and anticipate potential problems. They know having a backup plan can help them pivot quickly.
2. **An inquisitive mind:** [They] aren’t afraid to question or challenge conventional thinking. They know asking the right questions is as important as finding the right solution.
3. **A flexible attitude:** Good strategists have the ability to pivot when a course of action isn’t providing the intended results. They’re also flexible when it comes to reassessing their own ideas and assumptions as new information comes to light.
4. **An ability to connect the dots:** Strategists have a knack for identifying patterns and making meaning out of overarching trends.
5. **An ability to contextualize information:** Thinking strategically requires seeing information through the lens of the past, present, and future to address both short-term and long-term goals.

(Strategic thinking: 5 Characteristics of Strategic Thinkers, *MasterClass*, February 25, 2022)

Each of the five characteristics enables people to better accomplish goals, grow, and plan for the future. What do you want to prioritize in your professional or personal life? What resources do you need to fuel your professional growth? I am committed to thinking strategically and would love to hear from you about your strategic priorities. Make sure you respond and share your insight and feedback with us as we prepare to better meet your needs. Thank you for your efforts to house our fellow Floridians and for your engagement with the association! MF

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A photograph of two hands, one from the left and one from the right, cupping a bright, glowing sun. The sun is positioned in the center of the hands, creating a warm, golden light that fills the frame. The background is a soft, hazy sunset sky with warm orange and yellow tones. The hands are silhouetted against the bright light of the sun.

HERE TO STAY

PANDEMIC INSPIRES
CHANGES WORTH KEEPING

BY DARLYN FINCH KUHN

Loelis Barandica mostly remembers everyone being scared, all the time, on so many levels. As regional director of education for ConAm Management, a national provider of multifamily real estate services, it's her responsibility to ensure that the corporate employees, property managers, maintenance workers, and cleaning staff are all properly trained to provide excellent service to the owners and residents of about 4,000 rental units in Florida. But the always-challenging tasks of listing, leasing, and maintaining apartment homes became exponentially more complex in the early spring of 2020, when lockdowns were instituted to keep out a killer virus called COVID-19.

Appointments Required

"It was mandated for our offices to be closed," said Barandica, "so we couldn't even allow residents or prospects to come through the door. Community managers were considered essential workers, but only residents with actual emergencies were allowed to enter the offices to speak to them, and then only with an appointment. It was really stressful, because how do you tell an upset resident that he can't come into my office and have a conversation with me? We needed to become resilient and have tough skin, and at the same time show empathy in our conversations."

Tracey Mater, senior vice president of operations at Contemporary Housing Alternatives of Florida Inc. (CHAF) said her company, a 30-year-old provider of affordable housing units in the Florida multifamily market, also now requests appointments for residents to come into the office so that the number of people and the length of exposure for the staff is limited. She said, "We have reduced our hours that we're open to the public to give some uninterrupted time to the property managers."

Both Barandica and Mater believe that appointment-based office visits are beneficial, and will continue, at least for the foreseeable future.

Enhanced Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

ConAm allowed corporate employees to work from their homes and provided computers, internet service, and cell phones to make that possible. But some jobs, such as on-site maintenance and cleaning, could not be

done remotely. "Everyone was terrified at the beginning of the pandemic, but specifically the maintenance workers having to enter apartments would have a set of COVID-related questions for the residents, with no guarantees they were receiving truthful answers," Barandica recalled. "So even though we provided PPE like gloves, masks, and even a full HAZMAT suit at the time, we really didn't know how contagious this thing was." She described the paranoia of wondering if she was taking the virus home to her family and said she would take all her clothes off at the entrance to her home at the end of the workday and go wash her whole body right away. Any packages she received at home or the office were immediately sprayed down with disinfectant, as well.

Mater concurred. "We do not enter homes if someone has symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19, and of course masks are provided to our staff if they want them," she said. "We also keep COVID tests in the HR department in case a staff member feels like they need to be tested." CHAF also hired two additional assistant managers to ease the workload.

These precautions will likely stay in place to provide peace of mind to workers.

Virtual Tours

Over time, as more information became available about the virus and ways to keep as safe as possible from it became known, ConAm began to adapt to the crisis in innovative ways. For example, rather than face-to-face appointments for leasing agents to show apartments to prospective residents, tours became either virtual (via pre-recorded YouTube videos or an agent walking through with an iPad showing the apartment via FaceTime) or self-guided, with features such as smart locks allowing prospective residents to gain access with a limited-time code. ConAm likely will continue to use these popular innovations even after COVID-19 becomes endemic.

For many multifamily operators, virtual tours went from "maybe someday" to "need it now," said Steve Fiske, founder and chief product officer at iApartments, a national company based in Tampa that provides seamless and cost-effective retrofit installations of smart device technology such as thermostats, lights, and locks. Fiske said, "It's no secret that the self-enter

industry has been fast-tracked by about a decade due to the pandemic.” He said people in the apartment industry used to tell him that the technology to allow people to tour properties on their own schedule without having anyone with them would probably be adopted in the future, but they were in no hurry to give it a try. “The entire multifamily at large just rapidly adopted this as soon as the pandemic hit,” he said.

Prospective residents are now able to tour an apartment home on their own schedule, without any human interaction, to avoid risks, said Fiske. “We’ve launched hands-free access for common-area readers so you no longer have to tap anything; you actually wave your hand in front of the reader, and as long as you have the apartment’s app on your phone and you have a valid credential, you can gain entry.” Wayfinding is a crucial part of self-guided tours, so iApartments provides turn-by-turn directions throughout the property, allowing access to clubhouses, gyms, pools, and any other common areas the property managers want included in the tour.

Once prospective residents are inside an apartment, smart devices with Alexa-integration take over to

answer the prospects’ questions. After the tour, the access permission expires, negating the need for a property manager to manually change access codes for each new prospect.

These innovations are so popular with agents and prospective residents that they will be available even after people are no longer wary of face-to-face meetings for health reasons.

Enhanced Sanitation

Any time a person enters a ConAm model apartment, a sanitation crew or property manager follows to clean and sanitize the property for the next guest. This protocol is in place for common areas such as pools, gyms, and outdoor grilling areas as well, according to Barandica, and is delegated to a specific extra staff member or, in some cases, to a staffing company, which can get very expensive. This adds a layer of complexity to the property management profession, as the extra costs associated with additional staff and cleaning supplies have to be factored into forecasts and explained to anxious property owners.



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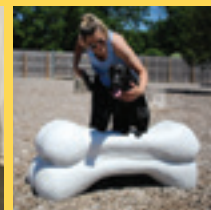
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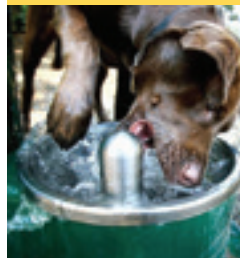
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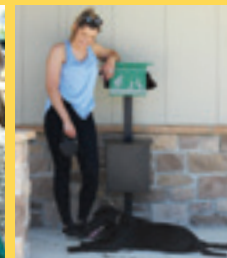
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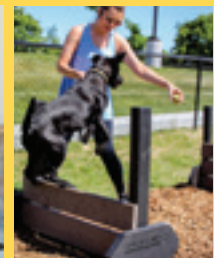
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But since no one knows when the next virus or variant will appear, owners can expect to see that line item on their budgets for quite a while.

Innovative Payment Programs

Not helping to relieve owners' anxieties were eviction moratoriums that went into effect once residents began to lose jobs due to the pandemic. Barandica said ConAm's vice presidents immediately communicated with their property owners to obtain approval of

easy-pay programs to allow residents who were facing financial hardship the option of paying what they could, when they could. In this way, she said, the residents kept their fiscal responsibility at the forefront of their minds, even when they could not pay everything they owed all at once.

As the job market recovers and restrictions on evictions loosen, some property owners may return to strict, pre-pandemic payment guidelines, but others will have found that understanding and flexibility go

Apartment Industry's 'Unprecedented' Hiring Challenges Persist

Recruiting, training, and retention are being emphasized even more in 2022.

BY PAUL BERGERON

It's not just your company that is struggling mightily to hire and sometimes train and retain employees.

"What our industry is seeing now in terms of hiring demand is unprecedented," said Michelle Chapman, a Florida-based branch manager with The Liberty Group-Multifamily Staffing Company, who has worked in the apartment industry for 27 years (22 of which were at the on-site level).

Part of the demand has been created by workers choosing to leave after having taken time during the pandemic to reevaluate their lives and careers, often wanting to reinvent themselves or readjust priorities, Chapman said.

Others are leaving their jobs or apartment careers, having fallen victim to burnout stresses.

Swift Bunny in January issued a report based on employee satisfaction. Its chief communications officer, Kara Rice, said results show "very high stress levels" in employees – and not just for on-site staff.

"Regional managers, too, are burning out," Rice said. "This hadn't been the case a while back, but it's alarming. Turnover leads to more stress, and those operational challenges just snowball. It's very disruptive, and we're in a disruptive state already."

Rice said regional managers are expressing a lot of frustration about their corporate offices' inability to get information they need to pass on to their site teams within 24 hours. This concern increased from 9% in 2020 to 24% in 2021.

"Positive testing for the omicron and other variants has just made all of this worse, including with supplier partners and their product delivery times," Rice said.

Flexible Work Schedules

Companies are looking for ways to increase flexibility in their workers' hours to satisfy those workers, Rice said.

"Maybe an employee can be just as effective working from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., and one or two days per week at home, given their outside, personal responsibilities," she said. "Companies are even considering four-day workweeks."

"The disruptions of the past two years have proven that working from home some or all of the time is possible for many jobs, and employees who have experienced that are reluctant to give it up. The pandemic experience has revealed that it's important for employees to be able to take care of the things they have to do in their lives outside of work."

"Employers should consider accommodating employees' desire for flexibility if they want to retain and attract team members."

Stay Interviews

Stay interviews are proving to be one effective way to help retain workers and prevent the need for exit interviews.

Regular one-on-one meetings between supervisors and their reports help to keep lines of

► **Continues on Page 10**

a long way toward keeping otherwise good tenants in place during temporary rough patches.

External Resources

In addition, ConAm managers informed residents of federal, state, and local food and rental assistance programs. “The perception was that everyone was staying home collecting unemployment and everyone was happy,” Barandica said, “but was that \$600 check really enough for a family of six, if there was no other money flowing through the house due to the pandemic?” As a renter herself, she felt she had to be an advocate for both the residents and the owners.

“Our owners trust us, because we have transparency. We have nothing to hide. It’s so important to have these open lines of communication, so that we can help the owners on the side of collection and also help the residents find the resources they need.”

CHAF not only assisted residents with locating county, state, and federal funding resources, but also stepped up in-house assistance by creating an innovative program called “Back on Track” that allowed residents who had proven income or job loss due to COVID-19 to offset overdue rent via community volunteerism, at a rate of \$100 per hour. Mater said that more than \$20,000 of overdue rents had to be written

► Continued from Page 9

communication open and encourage transparency of feelings and ideas.

“Stay interviews can also help leaders identify team members who may be at risk of quitting,” Rice said.

As for job tenure, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics said the average is about four years, and yet every category in property management registers lower than that, according to Swift Bunny’s results. On-site management’s average tenure is 3.3 years; on-site maintenance is 2.6 years; and on-site leasing is 1.3 years. (For regional managers, it’s 6 years, and for corporate operations, it’s 6.6 years.)

Swift Bunny reported that 81% of rental housing employees say they are “likely” or “very likely” to remain with their companies for the next 12 months.

On-site leasing has the greatest uncertainty about staying, followed by on-site managers, and 57% of on-site employees “strongly agree” they are interested in a new role in the next year.

Focus on Retention

Stephanie Ingram is chief operating officer at Mahaffey Company, a third-generation family operator with 21 apartment communities and nearly 17,000 apartment homes.

Mahaffey has many long-term employees (some with 20-plus years), and Ingram said it is focused more on employee retention than recruitment.

“We’re a long-term-hold type of company and our employees tell us that they appreciate that,” Ingram said. “In this buy-and-sell community

environment, they know they won’t be surprised to come to work one day to learn there’s a new owner or they’ll have to transfer to another property.”

Nonetheless, Ingram said wage pressures are real and job candidates’ desire to work has been unsteady; several who were invited for interviews didn’t even show up, she said.

Mahaffey has had success using quarterly reports from the Economic Research Institute, which breaks down jobs and salaries by ZIP code, description, and years of experience of the worker. She benchmarks her employees’ salaries with that and uses it when determining wages with her employees.

She said recently she’s seeing the trend to offer “stay bonuses” to employees in high-transaction markets for real estate. Jacksonville is one market that has experienced heavy transaction volume lately, Ingram said.

Mahaffey has also focused greatly on identifying employees who have high growth potential and is making sure those employees can see a career path with the company.

Trends in Training

Proper training, especially at the onboarding stage, is crucial for companies’ retention strategies.

“We’re hearing from employees that onboarding has not gone well; 45 percent are saying that their first week was disorganized, especially at the site level,” Rice said.

“This is dangerous, especially when it comes to retention. Employees feel like they can’t contribute

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because they don't know what to do, and some are even being ignored by other workers. This can cause new-hires to think they made a poor choice and even head for the exit."

Aside from onboarding, Katie Wrenn, director of training and development with WRH Realty Services, Jacksonville, said COVID-19 has pushed the industry along toward more virtual training.

"Many today are more understanding about how to use these tools because they've had to use them the past 21 months during the pandemic, and they saw more of it while their kids were home, taking classes online," she said. "Most workers are not ready to give up in-person training but are more open to online training."

Wrenn said trainers have to be willing to be patient and to help the employees through virtual learning. "Many employees aren't used to learning virtually and need more hand-holding than others."

As for the virtual or in-person trainers, Wrenn said they've had to learn skills that help to make them better presenters.

"In many cases, online training is their only option, so they've had to get more creative to make the classes more enjoyable, such as using polls," she said. "It can be horrible having to just stare at a PowerPoint, so you have to make it more fun. By doing this the right way, the human element isn't completely gone."

Ultimately, Wrenn said, how training is conducted and accepted comes back to the company's culture. "At companies where employees were taken care of and are listened to, they are getting through this because the culture is shining through," she said. "For those who didn't, this can be tough."

Where to Find Workers

The overall workforce choosing to reevaluate their careers has also created opportunities for apartment company employers.

"As an industry, we might be losing people, but this is a chance for us to find new people and educate them about our industry," said Chapman, who focuses on the Orlando and Jacksonville markets. "If they have the talent and drive, in general, our industry can train them to use those skills in our industry."

"We can show them that working in property management is not a stagnant career. It's a stable

career in an essential industry — housing. For example, you can start as a porter and work up to maintenance supervisor."

Once Employee Prospects Are Identified

Bry Carter, vice president of sales and recruitment at The Phoenix Staffing, which has offices in Florida, said hiring successfully will come to companies that emphasize a training mindset.

"We look for potential candidates who might not have even known that the apartment industry can provide a career track," Carter said. "We promote the benefits of working in this industry: strong employee benefits in an industry that is recession-proof and COVID-proof. Housing is essential. Unlike other hospitality areas such as retail, hotels, and restaurants, the jobs will always be there."

She said recruiters are having difficulty finding workers who are certified, "but there are people who have the kinds of skills our industry needs and can be trained further."

"For example, we look to strong customer service professionals who might be looking for a career change, and doing that on-site at an apartment can give them that. Or maybe there's a handyman who can become a more complete maintenance professional."

The Phoenix Staffing researches and reaches out through Indeed, Facebook, and pop-up stands at shopping malls and local events and invites potential candidates to attend training events in a given market. The training is led by The Phoenix Staffing, and these candidates can see if the industry is a good fit for them.

"We spend an hour or so with potential candidates to get to know them and see if they would like to attend our free three-day training program for make-ready techs — almost like a college admissions process," Carter said.

"Often, these potential candidates have the skills; they just didn't know how to express them 'on paper' in their resumes. They want to make a career change; they just don't know how to get hired into our industry."

Creativity and Planning

Hiring demand is and always has been greatest for maintenance workers, said Darrin Rohr, president and CEO of HH Staffing Services in Sarasota.

► **Continues on Page 14**

off by the company as bad debts, so the program led to approximately 200 hours of community service that residents performed at Pinellas County charities, including Hope Villages of America and the High Point Neighborhood Family Center.

Connectivity

With more and more residents beginning to work from home, ConAm performed major upgrades of some of their properties to meet the demand for adequate digital connections. They also emphasized in-unit amenities such as smart home devices. Grocery and hot-meal delivery are major conveniences that work-from-home residents appreciate, as well, and it is likely that demand for these perks will increase, not decrease, over time.

Enhanced Care for Workers

ConAm is also finding ways to help their associates relieve stress and achieve better work-life balance, such as instituting Wellness Wednesdays through the Strive online platform. Workers can challenge themselves and others to choose a healthy lifestyle with mental health resources, meditation, healthy recipes, and more.

CHAF believes that concern for the welfare of their essential workers is of paramount importance, so they

purchased a new headquarters building to consolidate their property management staff under one roof.

According to Mater, this has led to “better support, collaboration, teamwork, and cooperation.” The company also focused on additional events, pay, recognition, and time off from work to enhance employee well-being.

Heather Calderone, regional vice president of sales at ResMan, a property management software company with offices in Plano, Texas, and Miami, Florida, said ResMan realized early on that the pandemic could be here for the long haul. They decided to stay engaged with their newly remote workforce via weekly 30-minute companywide standup meetings to share metrics, feedback, and recognition of successes. They instituted Awardcodes at these meetings, so that employees could talk about something a co-worker did that really made a difference. But feel-good moments weren’t the only things discussed at the standup meetings; people felt free to talk about the impact that pandemic-induced loneliness was having on them and found that sharing those feelings with others who felt the same way was helpful.

Recognizing that isolation has an effect on physical and mental well-being, ResMan launched a WellRight wellness program through a platform provided by their

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professional employer organization. Workers participated in challenges to drink plenty of water or to walk a certain number of steps daily, and people on track to meet their goals got shout-outs at the standup meetings.

The success of the WellRight program led to a program called ResManEvolved, which encompassed the wellness challenges but also included policy changes like a flexible paid-time-off schedule. “Our team members don’t accrue PTO, and there’s no PTO maximum,” Calderone said. “This allows our team members to take the time off that they need to take off.”

ResMan also instituted No-meeting-Fridays, and avoids scheduling internal meetings on Fridays whenever possible. When they realized that team members were still not taking much time off, the company introduced ResMan Recharge days, such as the Friday before Memorial Day and the Friday before Labor Day. The ability to leave a day early for a trip or to simply spend an extra weekday with their families was so popular that the company plans to continue offering four-day weekends in conjunction with holidays that don’t necessarily land on a Monday.

► **Continued from Page 12**

“Now the apartment industry is potentially losing workers to other opportunities outside the industry that pay more.”

He said this is not a short-term problem – and will continue for years – but that property management companies that are doing best during these times are those that are being flexible and creative when it comes to hiring and retaining workers.

“In the past, our industry looked for people based on their experience, knowledge of our software systems, and those who were certified,” Rohr said. “That’s admirable during a fluid job market, but today, the market is taut. We should be looking for candidates with strong customer service skills who we can train. Unfortunately, trainers are in high demand. Many have been ‘YouTubed’ out of their positions because companies believe ‘they can learn anything’ on YouTube.”

He said that companies will benefit from partnering with trade schools and hiring those graduates in apprenticeship programs.

“It’s not smart to tell these students to get some experience and come back, because if a company is willing to invest in them through apprenticeships, those young workers will stick with that company,” he said.

Rohr said apprenticeship programs are easier to set up than most people think and can be done in 30 days.

“Sure, the larger companies can do this because they have deeper pockets, but smaller companies must invest in this, too,” he said. “They need to rethink how to allocate their capital. After all, your apartments are getting more wear-and-tear than ever today due to the work-from-home crowd and you need to take care of your residents so they don’t leave.”

He said that smart companies are hiring ahead

of their needs “and they need to ‘go heavy’ on this because know they will have turnover.”

Looking longer term, Rohr said companies must move on from the here and now and do workforce planning: Deciding what staff they will need and when as their companies grow. Additionally, they should evaluate their company culture.

“And you don’t create that just by adding ‘stuff and things’ such as cool office perks and benefits, but instead develop one that establishes trust,” he said. “It must include credible leaders who sincerely show that they have their workers’ best interests in mind. For some, the pandemic exposed their true colors. Companies facing cash-flow problems immediately laid off staff, but the companies that rode it out are faring much better today.”

Also, there must be a sense of “I belong here” among the employees, he said. “Is there camaraderie? Are they treated fairly? Do they feel ‘heard’ and are they respected?” he said.

A company’s employee value proposition must be strong, he said.

“Companies need to show why someone would want to work there,” Rohr said. “It needs to be branded and posted on the company website and echoed at every opportunity.”

Onboarding is another key factor in creating the right workplace, he said.

“New hires are most vulnerable to leave on their first day,” Rohr said. “You must have a stellar program or they could start looking right away. Most new candidates might have had three or four offers, and those companies will check in with the employee just to make sure they are happy once they start.”

“Companies must lay out the onboarding process to that employee on the first day, or even sooner. New hires should be given a ‘buddy’ who guides them through their onboarding.” **MF**

Calderone said although ResMan did not experience the pandemic-induced “Great Resignation” that some companies did, when they had to replace a few employees due to natural attrition, they decided to cast a wider net for talent, and were so pleased with the results that they intend to continue their “work from anywhere” plan, even though their physical offices are open again for anyone who wants to come into work. In another attempt to keep workers engaged with one another, the company holds monthly ResMunch events in which employees are randomly selected to “sit together” at virtual lunch tables so they can get to know their co-workers. They also use the Microsoft Teams software Yammer to encourage fun contests such as “Best Pet Halloween Costumes.”

“ResMan believes that people deserve to be respected and feel like they belong and feel taken care of,” Calderone said. “We want to invest not only in their professional development, but in them as people.” She said she believes that this philosophy will continue as long as the company does.

Compassionate Communication with Residents

ConAm invests in their residents by reaching out via regular emails and on social media, as well as by hosting fun virtual community events such as movie nights (with RedBox gift certificates and microwave popcorn), Quarantini happy hours (delivering small bottles of liquor and mixers to registered adult residents who tune in to hear a DJ spin a dance mix), and Star Wars days complete with delivery of toy lightsabers and much-needed items such as toilet paper.

Barandica enjoys planning these remote social events so much, and hearing how much the residents enjoy

them, that she anticipates they will continue even after the pandemic ends.

Resilience

Fiske was impressed with how quickly the industry adapted to the changes in the way businesses had to operate, practically overnight. Before the pandemic, iApartments would have to fly someone out to meet with a client or a prospect, or make do with a conference call, which made it difficult to showcase what the company does. But then, he said, “From one week to the next we stopped flying; everyone hopped on video calls.”

Barandica said while the COVID-19 pandemic did have a negative impact, it also forced the company to reflect hard on where they needed to change with the times. In the beginning, managers rolled up their sleeves and did lawn maintenance, and sister properties lent their associates when someone came down with COVID and needed to quarantine. After the first few months, when everyone was flying by the seat of their pants and just pitching in to do what had to be done, the focus became figuring out where the best resources were and how to provide the best customer service for residents and owners. This led them to reflect on the intention and purpose of the company and brought a complete rebranding with an emphasis on training for business continuity.

Mater summed it up, “The whole pandemic has been difficult on us all. We are doing the best we can with the resources we have. We are a close-knit organization; we stay positive, work hard, and work extremely well as a team.” These are definitely pandemic-related attributes worth carrying into the new normal. **MF**

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MEMBERS HIT 'THE HILL' AT THE 2022 LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE





BY CAMILA CAL

The 2022 FAA Legislative Conference brought more than 150 attendees together to advocate for the multifamily housing industry. This year's event was held at the DoubleTree by Hilton Tallahassee on February 1-2.

After a day of FAA governance meetings, attendees learned about FAA's legislative priorities at the legislative briefing. This year, priorities included permitting municipalities to offer affordable and workforce housing property tax discounts, clarifying fire radio system requirements, and codifying employee screening and key access best practices.

To best illustrate what a real meeting with a legislator would look like, three student actors – Kayla Banks, Brandy Melana Walker, and Benjamin Miller – performed skits demonstrating a conversation between members and a legislator. The actors portrayed the characters of Sen. Kim Payne-Slogan and FAA members Justin Thyme and Rita Lease, who were lobbying for FAA's legislative priorities. Members found the performance to be engaging and informative.

"The [actors] were fantastic! They enacted skits showing various ways to explain the Senate and House bills that impact the apartment industry," said Myka Staryk Monson, president of the South East Florida Apartment Association, regional manager at ZRS Management, and first-time attendee. "This prompted my group to spend extra time preparing and role-playing before our meetings. As a byproduct, we adopted more confidence and produced a more polished result."

Part of the event included an FAA Leadership Lyceum module, held on January 31, a day before the conference kicked off. During the Legislative Advocacy



Senate President Wilton Simpson was recognized as the 2021 FAA Legislator of the Year.



Capital City Apartment Association members met with Tracy Williamson from the office of Sen. Loranne Ausley (D-3).



Members of the Southwest Florida Apartment Association met with Jim Brown, legislative aide to House Majority Leader Michael Grant (R-75).



Members of the South East Florida Apartment Association met with Rep. Anthony Rodriguez (R-118).



Student actors Kayla Banks, Brandy Melana Walker, and Benjamin Miller performed scenes depicting what a conversation between FAA members and a legislator might be like.

Module, students learned about FAA government affairs, how ideas can turn into laws, the future of the Florida Legislature, the importance of FAA's Apartment Political Action Committee or APAC, and more.

"The most memorable part of the Leadership Lyceum program was reconnecting as leaders and continuing to learn no matter our age or years in the industry," said Melody Register, property manager and 2022 recipient of the Nan Cavarretta Memorial Scholarship.

"I have attended FAA events for many years; however, this was my very first FAA Legislative Conference. The overall experience was very organized, professional, and improved my knowledge of the laws and regulations that affect our industry," Register said. She is



Members of the Apartment Association of Greater Orlando met with Rep. Joy Goff-Marcil (D-30).



Members of the Space Coast Apartment Association met with Rep. Erin Grall (R-54).



Members of the Bay Area Apartment Association met with Rep. Sam Killebrew (R-41).

glad that she left the conference with a greater understanding of the importance of being educated regarding Florida statutes that can positively or negatively affect multifamily businesses and communities.

After the briefing, local affiliates caucused with their members to plan for their legislative appointments. Then a reception gave attendees the opportunity to network and to bid on items in the APAC silent auction, which raised more than \$4,000. The following day, members met at the Capitol to begin their lobbying, fully prepared with handouts and with tips they learned from the legislative briefing the day prior.

“The materials provided and the live legislative briefing proved to be the key to our success. My small group



Members of the Northwest Florida Apartment Association met with Rep. Michelle Salzman (R-1).



APAC investors who contributed at least \$1,000 were recognized at the legislative briefing.



Members of the North Central Florida Apartment Association met with Sen. Keith Perry (R-8).



Members of the First Coast Apartment Association met with Rep. Tracie Davis (D-13).



After the legislative briefing, FAA members mingled during a cocktail reception and bid on auction items to support APAC. The silent auction raised more than \$4,000.

was able to swiftly and competently move through the data points while sounding unrehearsed,” Monson said. She found the legislators and staffers to be very accommodating and interested, and she was thankful that her group felt ready for their meetings.

The conference was “an eye-opening experience. It’s both humbling and empowering to be a part of our legislative processes,” she said. “Nothing compares to the opportunity to hit ‘the Hill’ and lobby for our industry’s causes. It’s important to give back to an industry that has given me so much. Protecting our teams, our clients, and our residents is always top of mind.” **MF**



Life of an APAC Dollar

Since 1971, APAC has helped to elect pro-multifamily industry candidates from across Florida.



1. FAA Members Contribute to APAC

FAA members make personal and/or corporate contributions to APAC in several ways throughout the year. All contributions are pooled together to help elect or reelect local and state candidates who support the apartment industry.



2. The APAC BOD Budgets for Success



Each election cycle, the FAA government affairs team and the APAC Board of Directors (APAC BOD) prepare a budget to support candidates based on the industry's strategic goals and regardless of political party.

3. The APAC BOD Oversees the Contribution Approval Process

The APAC BOD meets at least three times a year and is responsible for election cycle budgeting, the candidate screening and endorsement process, and the approval of political contributions throughout the year as Florida's political landscape evolves.

Bipartisan campaign contributions are prioritized by the APAC BOD based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to:



a Candidates who serve or will serve as committee chairs or in leadership positions for both political parties in the Florida House and Senate.



b Candidates who have demonstrated a willingness to work collaboratively with the apartment industry or who have a voting record that aligns with the industry's positions on many issues.



c Strategic races or regions in the state where the FAA is making an effort to build stronger relationships with elected officials.

4. APAC Disburses Campaign or Political Committee Contributions

Upon approval from the APAC BOD, the FAA government affairs staff disburses APAC funds to local and state candidates from both political parties throughout the election cycle in accordance with the APAC budget and the industry's strategic objectives. This process typically involves an in-person meeting with the candidate to discuss the policy issues that matter most to the apartment industry.

A financially strong APAC ensures FAA and its local affiliates can continue to build strong relationships with candidates and elected officials at the local and state level. Ultimately, these relationships provide FAA members with a valuable seat at the table when public policy is being made locally or in the halls of the state Capitol in Tallahassee.



Visit FAAHQ.org/APACNOW to invest in APAC today.



ADD SOME SPARKLE TO YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA

BY CAMILA CAL

IN OUR CURRENT DIGITAL age, social media has quickly become one of the most important tools for businesses. This is true for the multifamily housing industry, too. At the 2021 FAA Annual Conference & Trade Show, attendees had the opportunity to learn all about the best ways to use social media during “The Sparkle Effect: Taking your Social Media to Beyoncé Levels” session.

Erica Nicole Eubanks, the moderator for the session, is the social media specialist at The Collier Companies, where her responsibilities include managing the organization’s brand on social media, overseeing the online growth and engagement of the portfolio, and teaching the latest trends in social media as they pertain to student and multifamily housing.

Eubanks gave an informing and entertaining presentation, encouraging attendees to use their social media platforms like Beyoncé would.

“Make each post your best post. Don’t post a picture of anyone who doesn’t look or feel like Beyoncé Knowles when you snap that photo,” she said. She

also recommended finding the platform that works best for each company or community and their audience because some apps, such as TikTok, are not for everyone. What is most important, she said, is going where your audience goes, building anticipation, and starting a conversation. Social media is about giving users an authentic experience.

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

It is also “a free form of communication advertising.” In the past, communities had to advertise in newspapers or on the radio, but now there’s a free tool that can showcase the commu-

nity to more people than ever.

“Now, all [prospects] have to do is pull out their phone, and they’re in your community,” she said. “It humanizes your [on-site team]. We want to make sure we’re showing off our teams, who we are, what we believe in, what our team believes in, and what our organization believes in. We want to make sure we put ourselves at the forefront of our social media pages and introduce ourselves. That’s what converts followers to residents.”

Eubanks provided tips on how to use social media as a resource. She suggests planning posts and content in advance by using three steps.

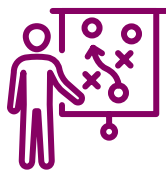
STEP ONE: IDENTIFY THE PRIMARY ENGAGER.



Who is the Beyoncé, or the most energized and creative person (or people) on your team? Assign them to create content and potentially be the face of your social media accounts. For example, instead of

posting a picture of a kitchen, they could record a video in the kitchen explaining why the appliances are so great. This person has to be someone comfortable and enthusiastic about being on camera and showing off their community.

STEP 2: PLAN AND CREATE CONTENT IN ADVANCE.



Because social media is a free advertisement tool, it's important to take advantage of it by carefully considering what content to share and when to share it. Eubanks asked attendees to think about what they would want to

post about. "Do you have team members you want to introduce? Maybe there's some new innovations happening or someone coming to the community that really interests your residents." Her tip is to set aside a specific day of the week to create content and then prepare a content calendar that details when to post each video or picture. With this method, it's easier for communities to plan in advance if there is a special event or holiday coming up.

STEP 3: SCHEDULE.



Once the content is created and planned, all that's left to do is schedule the posts. Eubanks suggested scheduling applications such as Hootsuite, Buffer, Planoly, or Later.

These apps make it easier to post on several different social media platforms with time in advance so that content creators can plan their weeks easily. Eubanks said the apps also allow teams to review how the overall post is going to look once it's posted, and make sure content looks polished and consistent.

Another helpful tip during the session was to be mindful of your community's demographic when creating content.

"Someone laying out by a pool at a student community with the Red Solo cup is not going to work as well in a family community. Instead of that maybe we have children playing in a pool or a mom with her baby in the pool. We want to think about the different angles and mind our demographic," she said. "We want to make sure we're showing them that this is going to be your life when you choose us. This is your pool. This is your clubhouse." Reposting residents' pictures is a good idea, too, because they are real examples of life in the community, and it's a way to keep residents engaged.

Eubanks also emphasizes that community-generated posts should only use images that reflect their company's branding. She said if an image wasn't created by the marketing department or a photo wasn't taken by the community's team, don't use it. It doesn't look professional to have different watermarks or differing brand colors on a community's page.

After the kickoff presentation, Eubanks sat down with Gray Lane, director of digital marketing for JMG Realty Inc., and Savannah Taylor, strategic marketing manager for RangeWater Real Estate. Both panelists provided advice on how to get long-time multifamily professionals to catch up with the trend of social media.

Lane highlighted that showing team members why it's important to use social media as an effective marketing tool can increase their willingness to use it.

"Constantly hammer on the return on investment, why it's important to humanize your brand, and why it's important to put yourself out there because that's where our renters are," Lane said.

Taylor mentioned that RangeWater Real Estate started a social media ambassador program. It allows on-site employees to apply to become ambassadors and then spend time auditing other communities' social media pages.

"As we've grown, that program has actually converted into our social media expert program. [On-site employees] actually create training videos that are offered as live videos to the whole company. ... It's a way that on-site team members can create this content for their colleagues. They really bought into that value of social media and the company as well," she said.

Attendee Edmond Washington, service manager with Daily Disposal Valet Waste, felt like he left the session with a new and improved understanding of social media and how to use it as a resource in the multifamily industry.

"It was a great session. I'm trying to be more social media savvy and this helped out a lot. I know it will help my business." **MF**



The Parker at Maitland Station: Mixing Modern with Tradition

BY CAMILA CAL

FOR NEARLY 80 YEARS, Parker Lumber Co. was a staple of the community in Maitland, earning the title as the oldest family-owned business in the city. In 2011, the Parker family closed the business and the Florida Department of Transportation purchased a piece of the property to use as a station for the SunRail, a commuter rail system in the Greater Orlando area. The remaining property was used to construct a new apartment community that would nod to the past while staying on track for the future: The Parker at Maitland Station.

“We are located in the heart of Maitland, and we always say it’s a commuter’s dream because we have easy access to all major roadways in Central Florida,

► Fast Facts:

- **Location:** Maitland
- **Number of units:** 293
- **Floor plans:** studio, one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments
- **Managed by:** RAM Partners
- **Apartment size:** ranges from 616-1,309 square feet

not to mention the SunRail,” said Fran Pucci, property manager at The Parker. The Maitland Station SunRail is just footsteps away from the community, offering commuters transportation to 16 different stations, from Poinciana to Debarry.



“Residents’ cars don’t even have to move,” Pucci said. “The SunRail can take them right to the center of Winter Park, downtown Orlando, and more. We have a lot of healthcare workers here and they often use the SunRail to get to work. They love that they don’t have to drive after working a 12-hour shift.”

The community itself is a five-story midrise with an attached and covered parking garage. The on-site team at The Parker said the design feels modern with industrial touches.

“We say industrial because the community that you see today has a lot of materials from the original structure. There are pieces that are built into our building from the Parker lumberyard,” Pucci said. “Anybody



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that's been local to Maitland for a while knows The Parker family and Parker Lumber, so it's really neat. There are some big metal beams from the original buildings that are a focal point located at the entrance and by the pool area."

Inside the units, The Parker at Maitland Station offers high-end touches such as stainless-steel French door refrigerators, floor-to-ceiling windows, 9- to 12-foot ceilings, double sink vanities, and electronic keyless entry. Residents can choose from two different cabinet tones – white shaker or neutral gray – to best match their personality. Select units include walk-in showers, wrap-around balconies, and full-size washers

and dryers. Henry Cochrane, assistant manager, and Jake Hall, leasing agent, said that whether you like cottage chic or something a little more modern, The Parker has you covered.

When it comes to the amenities around the community, The Parker's dog park is an immediate favorite. Pucci has been in the multifamily industry for more than two decades, and she thinks The Parker is the most pet-friendly community she's ever encountered, as well as her favorite. Residents bond over their pets, and the dog park is where a lot of friendships are made.

"Nicol Investment Company, managed by RAM Partners, bought the property in July 2019, and at that point the dog park was just a regular grassy area. We added turf in there and it just held up really nicely. It always looks so clean and it brings the community together," Pucci said. "This is how crazy we are about our pets: I have a jar of doggie treats on my desk and every day, the same dogs come in for a snack. They actually start leaning my way if they're in the main office."

The Parker has additional amenities, too, including a game room, a poolside lounge area with a fire pit, an outdoor summer kitchen with gas grills, a 24-hour fitness facility, a separate cross-training studio, and a cyber-café lounge area. The



community also offers a business center with a conference room area for residents.

"There are four areas that we call our workspaces and we have some opportunities to rent out the areas. It just kind of gives residents privacy to get out of the

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apartment and have an office without having to drive somewhere," Pucci said.

Events are also a big part of the community atmosphere at The Parker. Even during the COVID-19 lockdowns, the on-site team found that residents looked forward to trying different food trucks and spending time outside on the lawn during movie nights.

"We're really big about spoiling our residents with our monthly events such as happy hour, painting, bingo night, fall festivals, Super Bowl parties, or dog park parties. To show our support for our community we try to choose local businesses in Maitland for our events, whether it's some sweets from Maitland Chocolate Factory or 407 Gelatos, or delicious pizza

from New York Pizza. Our most recent events were Taco Tuesday catered by Jalapeños and a spa event where our residents received free facials from Smile Oasis," she said.

To Pucci, the history, residents, and on-site team are what make The Parker so special.

"Most of our team is the original team that took over this property, so we have a lot of people here that know the community very well." She said it was great to come into the community, meet the residents, ask where improvements could be made, and see residents' excitement when Nicol Investment and RAM Partners created the apartment community they were hoping for. RAM Partners' slogan is "built by passion, powered





by people,” words that Pucci feels are truly accurate for The Parker.

“When we changed the name to The Parker at Maitland Station, we would be out at Chamber events and people would walk up to us and say, ‘I know the Parker family, and they are just so excited that you brought the name back to the property. And they feel so honored.’ Finally, one day, one of their neighbors that we toured brought them in, and we got to actually meet them.

They told us the story of how they were driving down [U.S.] 17-92 and they looked at our building and saw their name. They couldn’t believe it and U-turned to look at it again! It was nice to meet them and just hear the history of the actual property,” Pucci said.

Above all, the sense of community at The Parker adds to its charm.

“The vibes at The Parker are amazing,” Pucci said. “Whether it’s a resident, maintenance, or office staff, you will always run into smiling faces here.” **MF**

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MARKET CONDITIONS

CAPITAL MARKET TRENDS, STATEWIDE (2019-2021)

TOTAL SALES VOLUME

\$14,809,163,523 2019**\$13,558,210,576** 2020**\$39,972,768,964** 2021

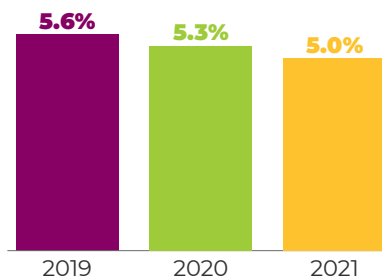
NUMBER OF PROPERTIES SOLD



AVERAGE SALES PRICE PER UNIT



AVERAGE CAP RATE



Source: Real Capital Analytics, National Apartment Association

CONSTRUCTION TRENDS, STATEWIDE (2019-2021)

UNITS UNDER CONSTRUCTION

77,097 2019**52,726** 2020**9,534** 2021

UNITS DELIVERED

37,179 2019**57,064** 2020**48,292** 2021

ABSORPTION

29,851 2019**47,812** 2020**88,265** 2021

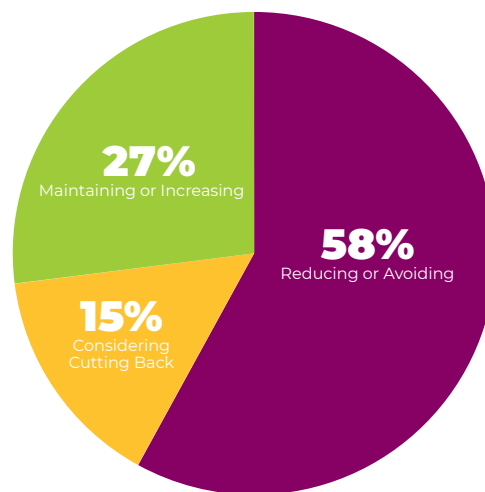
Source: CoStar Group, National Apartment Association

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: IMPACT OF RENT CONTROL ON INVESTMENT IN VARIOUS MARKETS ACROSS THE U.S.

Nearly

6 in 10

multifamily firms surveyed nationwide are limiting their investment in markets with rent control.



Source: National Multifamily Housing Council

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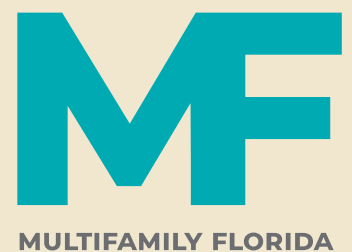
The recently redesigned *Multifamily Florida* magazine is distributed quarterly to all members. Reach all facets of the multifamily housing industry—apartment owners, management executives, developers, builders, investors, property managers, leasing consultants, maintenance personnel, suppliers, and related business professionals—throughout the state of Florida.

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