Ann's Choice Resident Joins the Digital Revolution

Harry Beam uses technology for photography, social media, staying connected, and more!

By Petra Shaw, Patch Contributor

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Ann’s Choice Resident Harry Beam gets ready to take a digital photograph on campus. (Petra Shaw)
Walk anywhere on the Ann's Choice campus, and you're likely to see Harry Beam taking pictures. His iPhone is always ready to capture flowers in bloom, residents at play, or a special event.

"It started as a retirement hobby," says Harry. "I ran around with a little Canon camera, then I got an iPhone, and it grew from there. Whenever I see a good shot, I pull out my phone and click."

Harry gets lots of good shots at Ann's Choice, a developed and managed Erickson Living senior living community in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The 103-acre scenic campus features walking paths, gardens, and lots of indoor and outdoor amenities. He says, "When we moved here in 2016, I couldn't believe how beautiful it was. It inspires me to keep taking pictures."

His talent behind the lens has made him the community's go-to photographer and a social media ambassador. His pictures often appear in Erickson Living's monthly newspaper, The Tribune, Ann's Choice Facebook page, and on the Ann's Choice website.

Chelsea Rounds, CTV Coordinator at Ann's Choice, posts resident photos to the site, and says that Harry is her top contributor. "Every morning Harry sends me an email loaded with photos. They could be of an event or a close-up of a flower. They're always beautiful."

To share the full scope of Harry's work, Chelsea created the "Grab Bag of Harry Beam Photos" on the site. "He's an amazing man," says Chelsea. "I can't wait to see what he'll send next."

From Print to Digital
Harry was always the family documentarian, shooting rolls of film on vacation. After each trip he'd create a huge album. As he was finishing the 10th volume, he discovered the ease and simplicity of digital photography.

Now, Harry uploads and stores all of his photos on his computer. He uses Picasa, Google's photo-editing and organizing software, which lets him add captions and special effects. "I love to play with it," he says. "If I like something, I build on it with the next picture."

**Staying in Touch through Social Media**

Keeping track of Harry's large family is like managing a small corporation. He and his wife, Rosemary, have four children, 12 grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. Everyone uses Facebook and Instagram to send invitations, news, and photos. "My kids and grandkids are so busy. This is a fast, easy way to see what they're up to and to share what we're doing," he says.

One of Harry's favorite apps is **MyErickson**, created exclusively for residents of Erickson Living communities. The app lists daily activities, menus, resident information, and much more. "Every time an activity is starting, my phone beeps," he says. "I rely on it to keep me informed."

According to Hans Keller, Erickson Living's Chief Information Officer, "The response to the MyErickson app has been tremendous. The number of residents enrolled doubled from last year, and we expect to reach 75 percent enrollment next year. By year's end we will integrate Alexa into MyErickson, enabling residents to ask for the information they need."

**Seniors Want Digital Access**
Harry admits that he doesn't always understand "what's under the hood" of the devices and software he uses. "If I want to know how something works, I call my grandkids," he says with a smile. But he is among the growing number of seniors who actively use technology on a daily basis.

Among Americans age 65+, **66 percent perform a range of activities online**, from banking to shopping to staying connected. The number of seniors who go online at least once daily has **skyrocketed to 75 percent**, and 58 percent say technology has positively impacted their lives.

Keller and his team recognize that digital access is vital when seniors look for a place to live in retirement. "Erickson Living is committed to enhancing residents' digital lives, whether they're just starting or are long-time tech users," he says. "We've emerged as a leader, and we plan to keep adding services."

**Committed to On-Campus Service and Support**

Erickson Living offers high-speed WIFI and tech support to residents on all its campuses. Says Keller, "The wireless connectivity enables residents to use smart appliances and devices, voice-activated assistants, and more. They can enjoy social media, research topics, and be entertained. We're making it easy for them to be as engaged online as they wish."

Additionally, Erickson's internal IT pros are available via email or phone at no charge; they can provide in-home support for a nominal fee. According to Keller, "The Erickson Resident Computer Services desk handles about 140,000 contacts a year. They help fix problems and serve as digital ambassadors to all the things we're doing online for residents."

As further proof of the company's leadership, Keller points to *Computerworld magazine*, which has named Erickson Living one of the "Best
Places to Work in Information Technology" for the past nine years. In 2019 the company ranked number 14 among companies with more than 5,000 employees.

Says Keller, "Technology is not stratified by age. Our residents have embraced devices, apps, and websites that enable them to perform daily tasks, stay connected, and explore new worlds. Erickson Living will continue to provide our residents with exciting new tools and fast connectivity, so they can use technology in ways that work best for them."

Christopher Donati, Executive Director of Ann's Choice, couldn't agree more. "Having excellent technology resources on campus is an essential part of our residents' vibrant and engaged lifestyle."

Ann's Choice is a not-for-profit organization, developed and managed by Erickson Living®. The community is governed by its own board of directors affiliated with National Senior Campuses, who provide independent financial and operational oversight of the community.

About Ann's Choice: Ann's Choice, one of 20 continuing care retirement communities developed and managed by Erickson Living®, is situated on a scenic 103-acre campus in Warminster, Pennsylvania. The not-for-profit community of more than 1,900 residents and 1,000 employees is governed by its own board of directors, affiliated with National Senior Campuses, who provide independent financial and operational oversight of the community. Additional information about Ann's Choice can be found at AnnsChoiceCommunity.com.

Written by Dorrie Anshel