

At the top, reaching higher: Long-term care leaders embrace opportunity of post-COVID inflection point



KIMBERLY MARSELAS
@KIMMARSELAS

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Pinnacle Awards roundtable participants included, front row, left to right: Carl Tabor, president of Avamere; Lynne Katzmann, CEO and founder of Juniper Communities; and Ben Unkle, CEO and president of Westminster-Canterbury on Chesapeake Bay. Top row, left to right: Chris Belford, CEO of Sinceris Senior Living; James M. Berkman, executive editor of McKnight's Long-Term Care News; Daniel Reingold, CEO and President of RiverSpring Living; and Gary Nipper, director of business development for HealthDirect Pharmacy Services. Photo credit: Tori Soper

CHICAGO — Some of the sector's most distinguished leaders last week told *McKnight's* they are embracing a current "inflection point" in long-term care as an opportunity to boldly reimagine what's next.

Shifting attitudes about staff, innovative ways to engage prospective residents and grow demand for services, and reinvesting in outdated facilities are among their top priorities.

But as these providers anticipate a post-COVID reckoning and growing baby boomer needs, they also said it would be critical for them to think outside the box. They encouraged state and federal regulators to do the same.

The speakers, all of whom participated in a roundtable held as part of the inaugural *McKnight's* Pinnacle Awards, demonstrated an eagerness to embrace and move forward on everything from flexible workforce policies to the adoption of technology that would create efficiencies across the care continuum.

In an engaging 45-minute conversation, *McKnight's Long-Term Care News* Executive Editor James M. Berklan asked [Pinnacle honorees](#) representing skilled nursing, life plan, memory care and senior living organizations to address the question: "With the pandemic noise fading, what should successful operators focus on next (besides staffing improvements)?"

Carl Tabor, president of Avamere Living, with 32 skilled nursing facilities in Oregon and Washington:

"My biggest need, particularly in the Northwest right now, is some stability in funding. Oregon and Washington have had some good rates but we're at risk right now with losing our COVID add-on and our low-wage earner add-on," he said. "We're pretty actively involved in the legislative process and at the grassroots level... I think there needs to be some national reform effort that looks at Medicaid and some funding. There's a lot of push right now for minimum staffing ratios. All for it. But first you've got to fix the funding, and I think that needs to come from the national level."

Daniel Reingold, CEO and President of RiverSpring Living in the Bronx, NY, a 32-acre campus serving seniors through skilled nursing, assisted living, affordable housing and social service programs:

"We're going to need a lot of capital. We have aging buildings that baby boomers don't want to live in, and we have to spend billions of dollars not to just retrofit but really gut them," said Reingold. "The baby boomers blew up every system that we had growing up, but we didn't get to this one and it's kind of time."

"Capital is a big piece," he added. "It's really about opportunities to buy different kinds of buildings, different kinds of real estate and repurpose and reposition it. It's not putting new blinds up on a nursing home, that's for sure."

Lynne Katzmann, CEO and founder of [Juniper Communities](#), which operates 28 senior living, assisted living and memory care communities with some skilled nursing services:

"I think we're at an inflection point in our industry as a whole. Helping our team members make a shift in their mindset is critically important. You asked about solutions ... how do you get that done? Change management and training leaders in change management."

Ben Unkle, CEO and president of Westminster-Canterbury on Chesapeake Bay, which has a life plan community and senior rental community in Virginia:

"The biggest change we can manage is automation and greater efficiency and use of all this technology. A bunch of technology is pigeonholed to various functions around integrated health models of life plan communities or home care," Unkle said, noting that staff often don't know all the capabilities — or get bogged down by having to use too many systems.

"We can do better even in accounting, in getting the bang for our buck from software and the interoperability that has to come. It's been promised for a long time, but we're just going to have to take the bull by the horns and do that."

Chris Belford, CEO of Sinceri Senior Living, formerly JVA, which serves 5,000 residents in 24 states:

"Growth is going to be something I think the entire industry is going to have to experience. Where there's consolidation, there's probably going to be some more mergers and acquisitions coming on with the pressure on financing, margins, compression and things like that," he said.

“We’re going to start to see that. We just need to be set and be able to (seize) on it. That’s going to be a need for us in the next year, year and half.”

More coverage of the hot topics that emerged during the Pinnacle Awards roundtable will be appearing soon. The event was made possible by support from HealthDirect.



For Daniel Reingold, social work and caring for the aging is practically in his DNA. His mother was a clinical services administrator at Manhattan’s Altro Health and Rehabilitation Services. His father was executive vice president of the Hebrew Home for the Aged in the Riverdale section of the Bronx.

Since 1990, Reingold has led the same community his father did but with his own innovative influence.

As president and CEO of RiverSpring Living, Reingold has transformed what had been just long-term care offered by the Hebrew Home at Riverdale into a 32-acre campus serving 18,000 people a day. Included now under the organization’s umbrella are independent and assisted living, skilled nursing, memory care, rehabilitation services and home care.

He’s also introduced progressive care delivery, including treating aging adults like the adults they are by creating the first sexual expression policy in the nation. He also co-founded the Weinberg Center for Elder Justice, the nation’s first on-site elder abuse shelter that offers short-term shelter and high-intensity legal, therapeutic and medical support.

In addition, he founded the Healthcare Offers Permanent Employment (HOPE) program for high school students, and he has reduced prescription medication intake by Hebrew Home residents by providing access to medical cannabis.

Reingold’s passion for his work – both contagious and heartfelt – has been the driver for numerous positive changes. As a visionary advocate for the aging, he also has testified before the Senate Special Committee on Aging and attended the 2015 White House Conference on Aging.

Daniel Reingold

President and CEO,
RiverSpring Living

Reingold was awarded LeadingAge’s Award of Honor, its highest distinction, in 2018. His father, Jacob Reingold, won the same award in 1975.

He serves on the boards of directors of the Continuing Care Leadership Coalition, the Greater New York Hospital Association and the Association of Jewish Aging Services.

He received a bachelor’s degree from Hobart College, a master’s degree from Columbia University and a law degree from Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law of Yeshiva University.