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## NEWS RELEASE

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# **Tutera Introduces YOUNITE to Promote Personal, Individualized Care Inspired From Residents, Staff in Senior Living Communities Across the Country**

## **YOUNITE philosophy empowers Tutera communities in 13 states with autonomy to choose, plan and implement creative and personally meaningful change**

**KANSAS CITY, Mo. (May 5, 2015)** — Tutera Senior Living & Health Care (Tutera) has introduced its new YOUNITE initiative to challenge each of Tutera’s 47 facilities and communities across 13 states to ask, listen, create and implement innovative ways to respond to the individual needs and preferences of residents in ways that are most personally meaningful to them.

“In many cases there’s an underlying assumption among senior living management that they know what residents want and then develop programs with prescribed policies that are implemented with a top-down approach, said Randy Bloom, Ph.D., president and chief operating officer, who has been developing YOUNITE over the past three years and recently completed an 18-month educational rollout. “With YOUNITE, we’re taking a different approach to promote culture change that allows for choice and autonomy in meeting the changing needs and preferences of residents, families and staff across diverse regions and product lines.”

YOUNITE is already sparking dozens of new initiatives inspired by residents and staff in Tutera’s diverse communities — from a new physical therapy partnership with a local grocery store to a new communications system to help residents get better rest, a new motivational break room designed by staff, and a new approach to honoring the experience of loss and grief (details below).

### ***Guiding Philosophy Versus Program***

“We know one size does not fit all. Our challenge was to find a way to facilitate person-centered care to be specifically meaningful to residents and staff in each of Tutera’s communities,” Bloom said. “As an organization, we can’t presume to know what is personally meaningful and important to residents and staff in Statesboro, Georgia, or in DeKalb, Illinois, or even where we are headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri. The only way we can truly know and respond appropriately to their specific needs and preferences is to engage each community in the process.”

YOUNITE is based on the premise of Tutera’s “inspired by you” company tagline. “YOUNITE is not a program. It is a philosophy with a framework designed to depict who we are and how that is expressed as opposed to compliance with specific criteria or predetermined rules,” Bloom said. “We can only know what is most important by encouraging each community to ask questions to understand what residents, families and staff want on a community-by-community basis.”

To ensure alignment with the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission’s recommendation for “people and family centered care” as the first principle for guiding health care delivery, Tutera recognized the difficulty in creating an all-inclusive philosophy on a national level, particularly given the company’s diverse product offerings, from long-term care to assisted living, memory care and hospice. While Tutera recognizes that certain areas, such as infection control, require absolute

policies to ensure the health and safety of residents, the company developed YOUNITE with guidelines that empower each of Tuttera's communities to respond to the diverse, individual preferences of residents with creative initiative and innovation.

YOUNITE's only requirement is that each facility regularly meets with their residents and staff to identify what's most important to them and create a plan to achieve it. "YOUNITE centers on autonomy and choice, recognizing the simple fact that no one is more knowledgeable about the specific needs of each of Tuttera's residents across the country than those who live and work in the community," said Joe Tuttera, CEO of the Tuttera Group, parent company of Tuttera Senior Living & Health Care.

### ***YOU and UNITE***

The word YOUNITE represents Tuttera's intent to bring all facets together around "YOU" — the individual resident and primary motivation for Tuttera's person-centered care. "UNITE" refers to the interaction of critical factors (the staff, environment, surrounding community, etc.). Combining the terms "YOU" and "UNITE" represents the unification of the individual and the surroundings that impact overall wellbeing and satisfaction.

Bloom met personally with representatives from all disciplines, including administrators, CNAs, housekeepers and maintenance staff at many of Tuttera's 47 facilities and communities. "We wanted everyone to understand YOUNITE by hearing about it first-hand. Most communities invited third-party vendors for housekeeping, dietary and therapy to engage them in understanding the intent of the YOUNITE philosophy," Bloom said.

YOUNITE is an integrated, philosophical framework focused on five key areas:

- 1) **RESIDENT CHOICE** — This category refers to activities related to a resident's right to choose and to have those choices honored to the extent possible. Staff is encouraged to seek out creative ways in which residents' needs are individually met and existing "rules" and "schedules" are secondary to the wishes of residents.
- 2) **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT** — This category refers to all activities that create synergy between the senior living community and the local community within which the property is located. It seeks to place the senior living community in the larger context of the local community as a valuable contributor and vital component of the area.
- 3) **STAFF APPRECIATION** — This category refers to activities that seek to understand what motivates staff to exceed the expectations of customers and to reinforce those motivations for ongoing success. Identify ways community can help staff experience value for the important and difficult work they do every day.
- 4) **HOMELIKE ENVIRONMENT** — This category refers to activities that "de-institutionalize" the community while maintaining safety and resident comfort. Identify ways in which the facility/community can incorporate environmental adaptations to enhance the resident experience.
- 5) **DINING EXPERIENCE** — This category refers to policies and programs designed to enhance the overall dining experience and satisfaction for residents. Promotes approved Tuttera's dining standards but goes beyond these standards to identify specific resident wants and needs.

### **YOUNITE in Action**

YOUNITE is already inspiring creativity and innovation in Tuttera's diverse communities to identify and respond to the individual needs and preferences expressed by residents and staff. Following are five example success stories:

#### **1) RESIDENT CHOICE: *Residents Express Desire to Honor One Another* Fair Oaks Rehabilitation & Health Care Center (South Beloit, Illinois)**

An unexpected discovery was made when YOUNITE discussions were initiated at Tuttera's Fair Oaks Rehabilitation & Health Care Center in South Beloit, Illinois. While assuming they were doing what was in the best interest of residents (and what is a standard practice in senior living communities across the country), the staff learned residents didn't want to be shielded when a resident passed away.

"Residents told us death was a natural part of life and that they didn't want to be protected from it," said Sheila Story, administrator at Fair Oaks. "Not only did they want to know about a resident's death soon after it happened, they

wanted a way to witness and honor the deceased while they are escorted from the community.” Together, Fair Oaks residents and staff created a new ritual to line the hallways and stand together in reverence when representatives from a funeral home arrive.

“Residents also requested that we change the traditional practice of escorting a body through a side or back door. They told us that they wanted to leave the facility in the same dignified way they entered — through the front door.” For residents who prefer a private approach, Fair Oaks is careful to also honor their wishes.

## **2) COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: *Gearing Up For Going Home with HyVee* Bethany Rehabilitation & Health Care Center (DeKalb, Illinois)**

Residents completing weeks of intensive physical therapy at Bethany Rehabilitation & Health Care Center in DeKalb, Illinois, expressed their fears about returning home and navigating the real world. Through YOUNITE, residents and staff explored ways to address this concern. “We offer residents a safe and controlled setting to recover, but they told us that the real world loomed as a maze of uneven surfaces, crowds and unexpected obstacles. We wanted a way to build their confidence for a successful return home,” said Tony Valentino, administrator at Bethany.

Creative brainstorming led to a new community partnership with the nearby Hy-Vee grocery store. Two weeks prior to their return home, residents are accompanied to HyVee by a Bethany therapist to purchase items to make a healthy salad, sandwich or smoothie. HyVee’s dietician also meets with residents during their visit to discuss healthy meal planning. “Beyond building confidence, the experience encompasses multiple facets of occupational, speech and physical therapy, from making a grocery list to maneuvering a grocery cart through the aisles to returning to the community to use kitchen utensils to make their lunch or snack item,” Valentino said.

## **3) DINING EXPERIENCE: *Relaxed, Restaurant-Style Dining at Rosie’s* Rose Estates Assisted Living (Overland Park, Kansas)**

Tutera’s Rose Estates Assisted Living in Kansas City, Missouri, are responding to a highly personal choice that is making a tremendous difference to residents: what they eat and when. Through YOUNITE discussions with Rose Estate residents, family members and staff, the dining experience has evolved from a limited menu to an “always available” menu with items residents said they wanted daily, to “relaxed-style” dining with expanded dining room hours, to “restaurant-style” dining in the new “Rosie’s” restaurant featuring a menu of 30 cooked-to-order items, along with a new bar area and private dining space.

“We’ve learned from our residents just how important the dining experience is to a truly personal and comfortable home environment,” said Christy Brooks, executive director at Rose Estates. “Our dining changes were made with an intensive focus on asking and understanding the specific desires of our residents. For example, because we are a higher-level acuity assisted living community, our director of nursing interviewed each resident and their family members to find out what time they wanted to get up, take their meals, go to bed, take their shower, etc. Through YOUNITE, we want residents to understand this is their home and we want to fully understand and respond to their individual wishes.”

While the change involved operational shifts, Brooks said the evolution to Rosie’s restaurant was not about a remodel or cookie-cutter corporate directive. “Our new restaurant-style dining is about a person-centered culture change, not a program change, and we continue to ask and listen with the ability to make changes quickly,” Brooks said. “I can’t imagine returning to traditional dining after the overwhelming positive response we’ve had from residents and their families.”

## **4) HOMELIKE ENVIRONMENT: *Quiet and Comfort for Residents* Crystal Pines Rehabilitation & Health Care Center (Crystal Lake, Illinois)**

Residents at Crystal Pines Rehabilitation & Health Care Center in Crystal Lake, Illinois, are enjoying a quieter, more peaceful, healing environment thanks to YOUNITE discussions that revealed residents’ dislike of the overhead paging system. “Residents told us that our frequent paging of nurses and staff was interrupting their ability to get the quality rest they need. Overhead paging is certainly not something we have to hear in our own homes so we wanted to find a way to eliminate it from their home at Crystal Pines,” said Amrit Jacob, administrator for Crystal Pines. A nominal investment was made to equip staff with personal pagers, and according to Jacob, residents have offered

resoundingly positive responses in meetings and surveys about how this small change has made a world of positive difference.

**5) STAFF APPRECIATION: A Break Room that Truly Energizes  
Crystal Pines Rehabilitation & Health Care Center (Crystal Lake, Illinois)**

Crystal Pines also invested creative thinking into YOUNITE's "Staff Appreciation" category. "As part of YOUNITE, we wanted to know how to better support our staff. It became clear that the staff break room was in need of an update and didn't make them feel appreciated," Jacob said. "But to make the updates personally meaningful, we invited staff to select and design all upgrades, from wall colors to furnishings and décor. The result is beyond what we could have ever envisioned for them." The new staff break room features a large print of a tree with each staff member's thumbprint representing leaves on the branches. The staff also chose to paint this inspirational message on one wall: *To the world you may be one person, but to the one person, you may be the world.*

"We integrated staff appreciation as a primary YOUNITE category because we know that if our staff doesn't experience our organization as one that personally supports them, they can never provide the level of personal service to residents and families that we want. It is critical to the overall success of the YOUNITE philosophy," said Bloom. An updated break room was also completed for similar reasons at the company headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri.

***YOUNITE Successful Outcomes and Recognition***

YOUNITE is already inspiring positive change and winning awards. The overall success of YOUNITE is measured by each community's ability to create change consistent with the intent and spirit of person-centered care. Evidence of successful progress is identified in various ways, including customer satisfaction scores and narratives from resident and staff interviews. YOUNITE is intended to be self-motivating, however a primary source of recognition is the YOUNITE Achievement Plaque displayed prominently in each community. As a community achieves in a specific YOUNITE category, it is rewarded with a corresponding plaque piece. As a physical demonstration of their commitment, staff and residents are signing their names on large YOUNITE banners prominently positioned in each Tuttera community.

Tuttera is integrating YOUNITE throughout its diverse operational processes, from orientation to staff evaluations, both in its communities and in its corporate office. The objective is to ensure the YOUNITE philosophy is fundamentally embedded as a way of doing business. "This is not a one-time thing. YOUNITE has been specifically designed to guide who we are as we move forward to meet the changing needs of our customers," Bloom said.

The new YOUNITE logo, achievement plaque and educational materials have already earned national recognition for creativity. Developed for Tuttera Senior Living & Health Care by Kansas City-based Grapevine Designs, YOUNITE recently received a "Silver Pyramid" award in the category of Employee Incentive from the Promotional Products Association International. In the category of integrated campaigns, YOUNITE received a "Communicator Award" from the Academy of Interactive & Visual Arts, as well as the Brand Company's "Creative Project of the Year" award.

"Regardless of many positive outcomes, we expect will correlate to the success of YOUNITE, I am confident that YOUNITE is the right thing to do to support our philosophy of personalized care inspired by our residents, staff and communities. If we can't ever translate results into empirical data, we're willing to take that risk," Bloom said.

**About Tuttera Senior Living & Health Care**

Tuttera Senior Living & Health Care is a locally-owned diversified post-acute senior health care provider operating 47 senior living communities in 13 states throughout the United States. As one of the nation's premier senior care providers, Tuttera Senior Living & Health Care offers its residents independent living, assisted living, skilled nursing, post-surgery rehabilitation, memory care and home health and hospice care. In 1983, Dominic F. Tuttera MD founded Tuttera to provide compassionate patient care with the uncompromising values of integrity, accountability and commitment. Tuttera Senior Living & Health Care still embodies those values today. Tuttera is committed to making a positive difference in the lives of its residents and their families through senior living and health care experts who inspire and promote individuality and personal happiness. For more information, visit [www.Tuttera.com](http://www.Tuttera.com).

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