

Speaking a Universal Language

Presented by

Cathy Ritter
Vice President
Marketing & Communications
Friendship Senior Options

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Universal Language Defined

- A philosophy for speaking and writing in inclusive words that connect and appeal to everyone, allowing more people to relate to you, your community and your business.
- It avoids miscommunications and misunderstandings that arise when using industry-specific terms and acronyms.
- It does not offend, stereotype, alienate or exclude.

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The Vision

Envision an atmosphere that no longer creates and keeps alive stereotypes and negative views of the natural process of maturing

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Purpose

- To raise awareness within our profession -- employees, sales teams, managers, developers, architects and financiers about industry-biased and stereotypical words when talking about or with our customers, co-workers and Community Members.
- Certain words create mental pictures that keep negative images and opinions alive, and create emotional and communication barriers between customers, Community Members and ourselves.

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Why bother?



A case study of 'Friendship' from 2005 focus groups:

'If you're a senior, you better be part of a friendship community.'
Participant age 71-85

'It's like a herd mentality. I don't want to be any part of it.'
Participant age 62-70

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The 'I'm not ready yet' phenom

Yet, how often do we hear:
'I wish I'd done this
10 years ago.'

*What are we failing
to communicate?*



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Retirement redefined

Bank of Montreal study asked 5,300 financial decision-makers 45+ what retirement means:

- 63% The next stage of my life
- 58% The rest of my life
- 47% Time to pursue my dreams
- 45% MY years
- 45% A new beginning
- 36% My prime time
- 27% The giving years

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'A new language'



The study's conclusion:

Retirement is no longer about surrendering to a slower, more leisurely lifestyle; it's a new phase that requires new thinking and a new language

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The 'F' Word



Who wants to live in a 'facility'?

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Facility?



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Why Speak Universally?

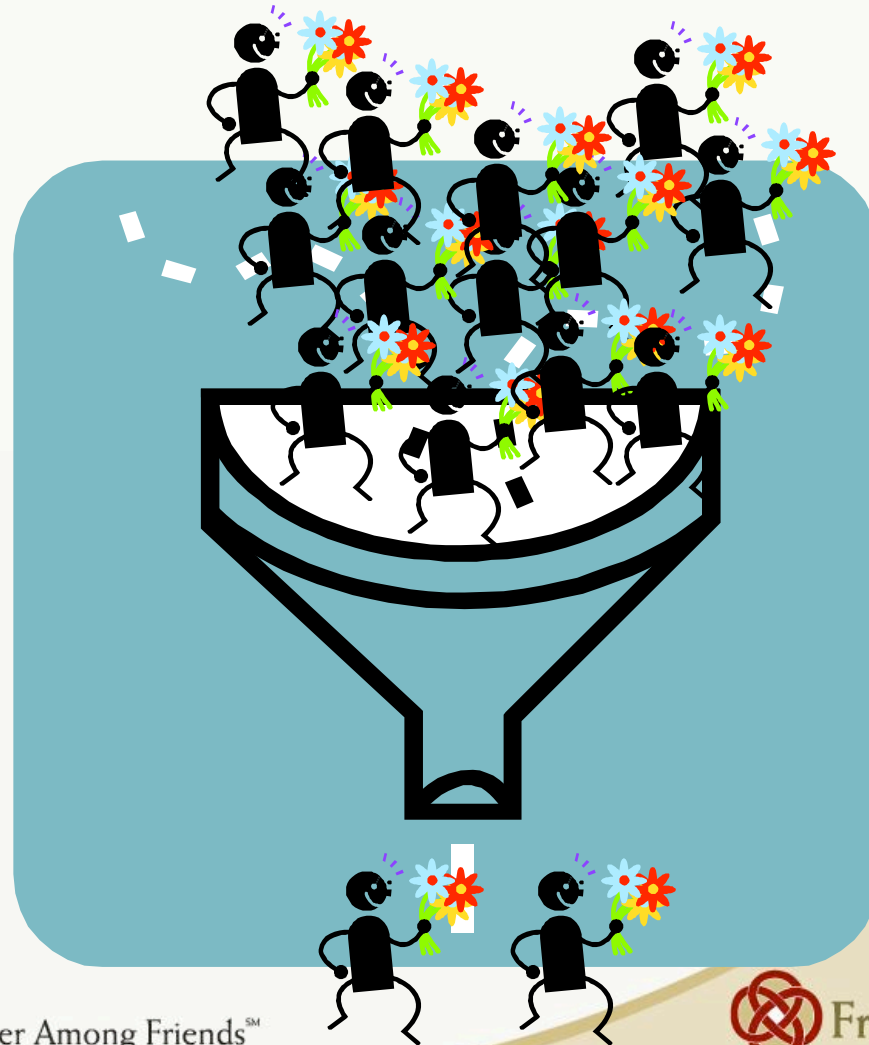
- Avoid miscommunication
- Encourage interest in our communities and clients
- Be legally and ethically proactive
 - Words may put you at risk legally
 - Independent Living
 - Active adults
- Avoid alienating customers/prospects, therefore helping to capture a larger share of the market

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Are You Constricting Your Pipeline?



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Choose Words Wisely

- **Words really make a difference**
 - Avoid negative first impressions
 - Avoid having that negative first impression *last*
 - Inclusive terms embrace; exclusive terms alienate
 - Each individual conjures up a unique mental picture upon hearing the spoken word

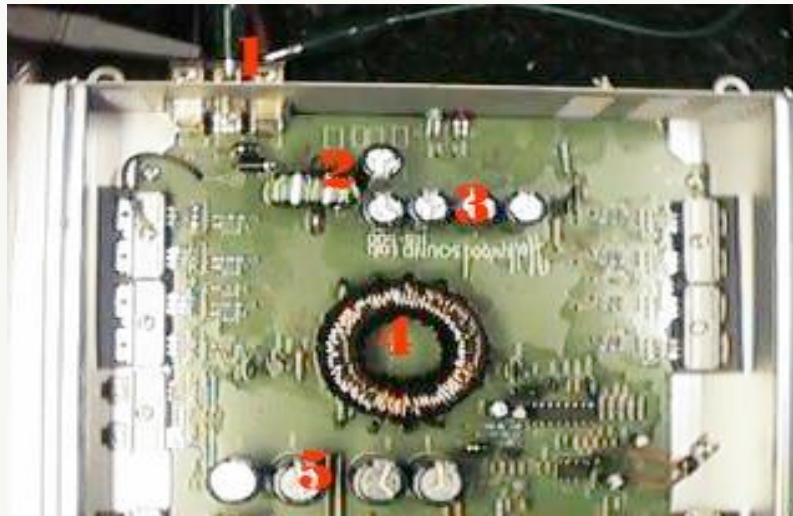
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What the Information Technologist Visualized...

Unit- *(n.) component, piece, element, part, item, entity*



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What the Maintenance Director Visualized...



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What the Nurse Visualized...

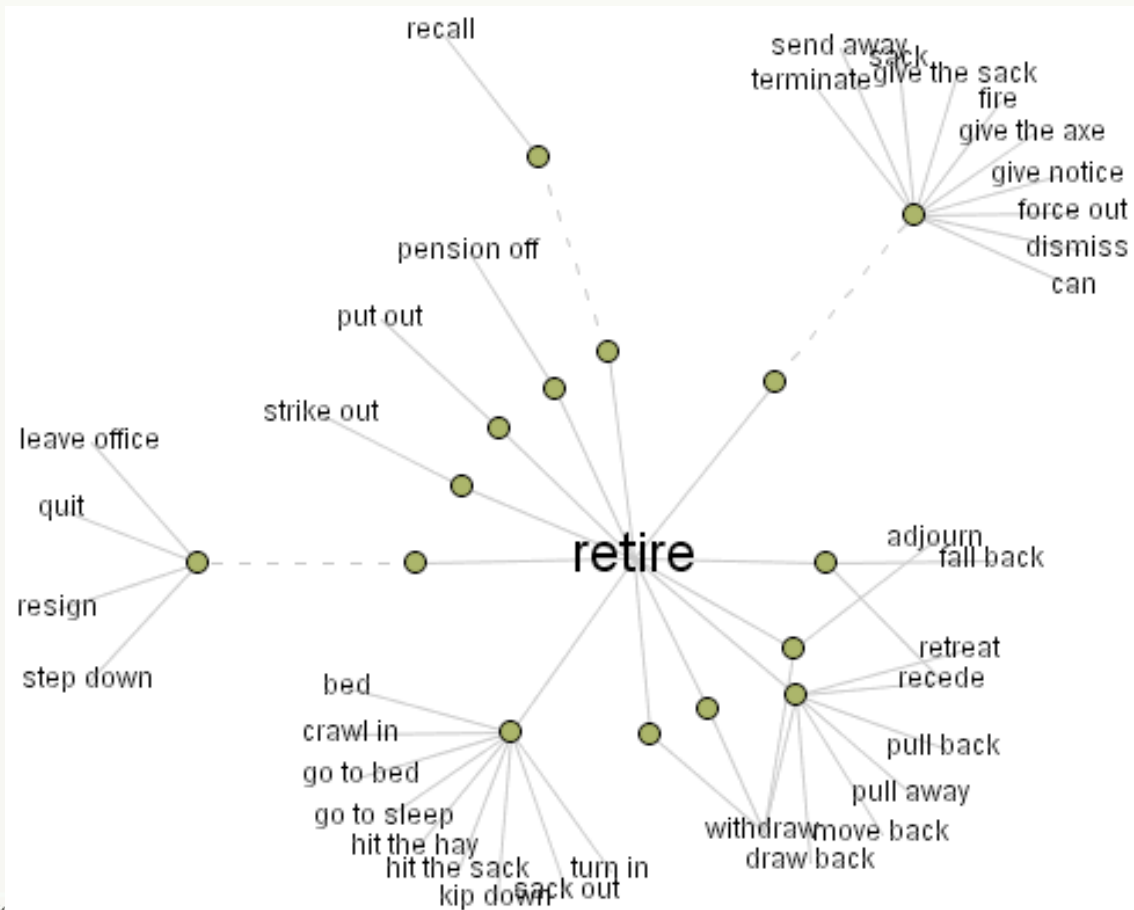


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www.visualthesaurus.com



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- “Welcome to our retirement facility. We have a locked ALF unit where elderly seniors with dementia have a MSF of only \$500 more than other patients. This ALU is staffed with extra CNAs, and an LPN. If your mother’s NAMI is at least 3K you can put her here.”

- “Welcome to our **retirement facility**. We have a **locked ALF unit** where **elderly seniors** with **dementia** have a **MSF** of only \$500 more than other **patients**. This **ALU** is staffed with extra **CNAs**, and an **LPN**. If your mother’s **NAMI** is at least **3K** you can **put her** here.”

Coming Clean

- 'Welcome to The Willows, a community where people who benefit from assistance with day-to-day tasks live while enjoying companionship, interaction and support. We offer various levels of service, with superior staffing. In addition, we have a secure neighborhood for those with memory loss. If this is what you are considering for your mother, I would be happy to share the financial arrangements.'

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What do we call them?

Mature adults?

Older adults?

People 62

and better?

Elders?

Seniors?



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Dirty Words vs. Universal Words

DIRTY WORDS

- **CCRC**
- **Retirement Community**
- **Facility**
- **Unit**
- **Socialization**
- **Depositor, buying unit**

UNIVERSAL WORDS

Community, NAME, campus

Community, NAME, campus

Community, NAME of the community

Residence, apartment home, cottage

Social opportunities

Charter Members, prospects

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Dirty Words vs. Universal Words

DIRTY WORDS

- **Room**
- **Bed**
- **Care**
- **Need**
- **Admission**
- **Discharge**

UNIVERSAL WORDS

- Residence, accommodation, suite**
- Suite, accommodation, residence**
- Service, amenity, attention**
- Desire, want, wish, expectation**
- Move-in, take residency**
- Move-out, depart, go home**

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Another Mental Picture

What do you visualize when you hear the word "bed"?



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We Owe It to Ourselves to Come Clean

- 'Welcome to our facility.'
- 'The front doors lock at 8 o'clock every night and there is an emergency call system in your room.'
- 'Most of our residents use the shuttle for doctor's appointments.'
- 'When you are sick you can have tray service.'
- 'There are activities here 7 days a week.'

No wonder prospects say, "I'm not ready yet!"

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Coming Clean

- 'Welcome to Friendship Village.'
- 'Our concierge is here daily for your convenience, and we have state-of-the-art systems in place for your safety and comfort.'
- 'Some of our residents take advantage of our campus vehicle for those times when they prefer not to drive, perhaps to go to the airport or to the theater.'
- 'Take-out service is available for those times when you prefer not to dine in the restaurant.'
- 'Friendship Village has a full-time Lifestyles Director who plans recreational, educational, cultural and social programs based on the interests and preferences of the people who live here.'

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Mental Picture

Welcome to Friendship Village!



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The Two-fold Test

- Does it make your organization sound 'institutional'?
- Does it show respect for those you serve?

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'Our Residents ...'

- Paternalistic language sometimes signals paternalistic behavior; emphasis on 'we' and 'our' instead of 'you' and 'yours'
- Are you caring for the people you serve? Or are you serving people you care about?

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AANOF

- Acronyms Are Not Our Friends
 - Misunderstanding
 - Lack of understanding

NBR

WU CDA

SNE

CCRC

RFP

BAN

WU

ADL

C of O

AL

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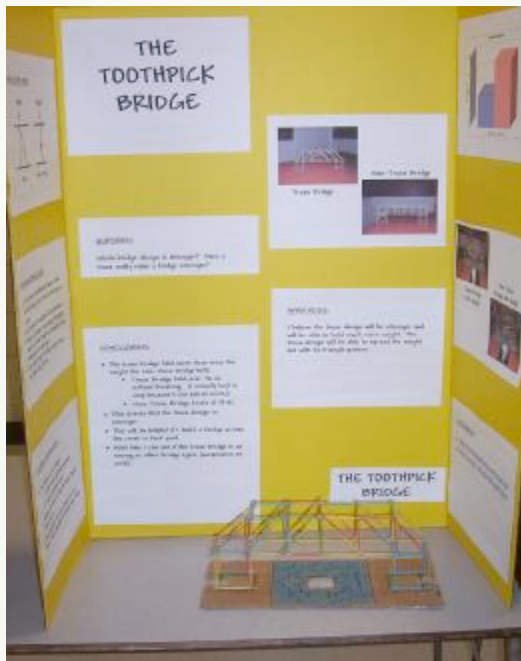
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Mental Picture Project

The projects?

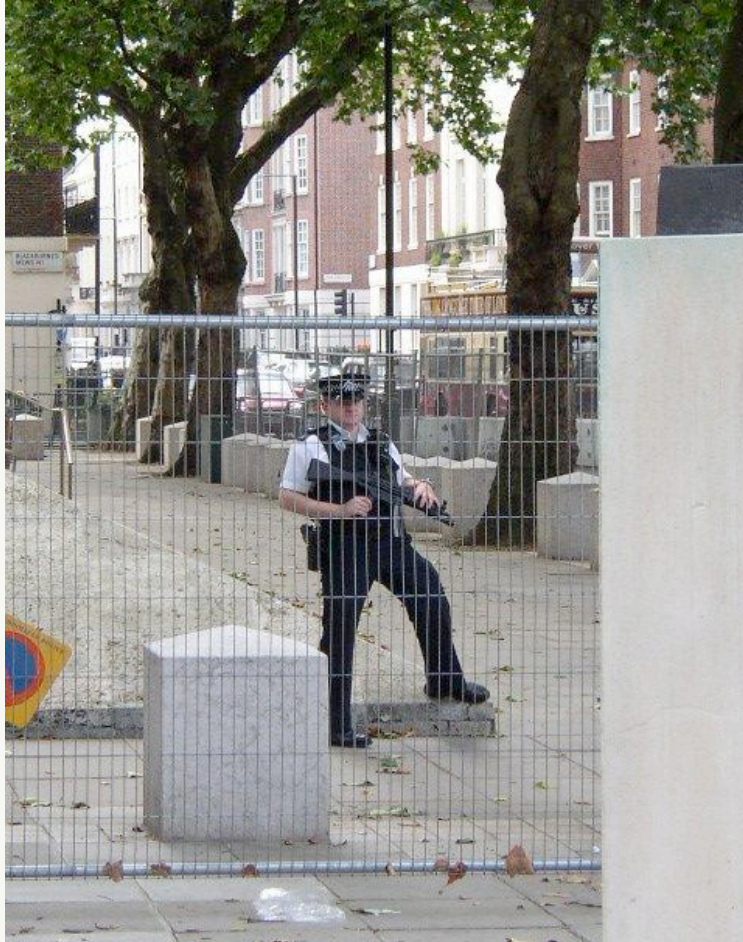


Science project?

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Another Mental Picture



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24-hour security?



Who is Accountable?

- We all are - it is an individual responsibility.
- Each community/company would benefit from their own encouraging team – a Universal Language Task Force of their own.
- The Sales Team should be the biggest proponent of the Universal Language Philosophy.

Where do we Clean Up our Act?

Anywhere we discuss our work, our customers, our jobs, our company, our community – including at work

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How Do We Clean Up our Act?

Speak in universal words and avoid acronyms:

- Phone calls/messages
- Water cooler conversations
- Public conversations
- Meetings
- Training

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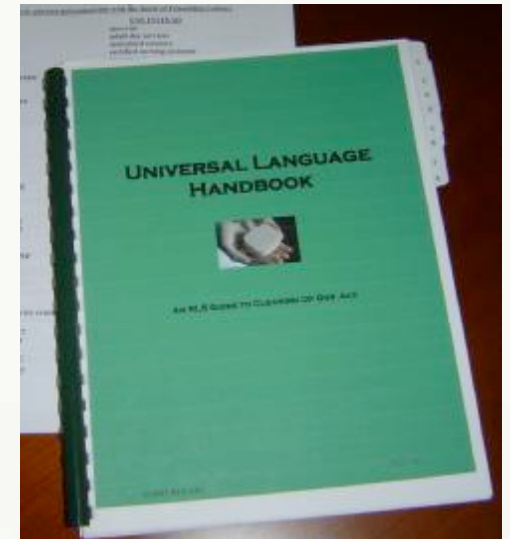
How Do We Clean Up our Act?

Use Universal Language in writing:

- Email
- Brochures
- Memos
- Website
- Advertisements
- Direct mail
- Agreements
- Letters
- Collateral
- Radio, TV spots
- Signage
- Requests for Proposals
- Presentations
- Training materials

Where to begin?

- Whose language do you embrace?
- Little industry guidance
 - RLS' Universal Language Handbook is a resource
- Learn from colleagues
- Take note of Fair Housing guidelines
- Examine your in-house jargon
- Talk to older adults



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Creating 'Villageeze'

- Convened a group of key players
- Addressed a two-part assignment:
 - Name the un-named areas of the community
 - Develop an agreed-upon list of preferred words

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The Naming Challenge



- Develop a naming convention for our 30-year-old community; alphabet pavilions, generically named rooms
- Name the new spaces in our latest expansion
- Create names for natural areas within our community

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Steps taken

- Created an inventory of every named space in our 60-acre community
- Reviewed all existing names
- As inspiration for new names:
 - Researched local history
 - Checked Web sites, other resources
 - Brainstormed
 - Talked with residents

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Vote for 1

- **Nature Theme**
 - Apple, Birch, Cedar, Dogwood, Elm, Forsythia, Ginkgo
- **Chicago Streets Theme**
 - Ashland, Belmont, Clark, Diversey, Elston, Fullerton, Grand



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'Villageeze'

Definition: Words or phrases compatible with the 'Spirit of Friendship' culture

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Good words, bad words

- Associates, not employees
- Memory support area, not dementia unit
- Nutritional, not dietetic
- Resident gardens, not garden plots
- Storage areas, not lockers
- Serve, not care
- Retirement living field, not senior living industry

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Who learns 'Villageeze'?

- All managers
- All associates
- Vendors
- Volunteers
- Board members
- Even residents



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Vocabulary violators

- Bowl set out during meetings
- 25 cents per infraction
- Every infraction benefits the Friendship Senior Service Foundation



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Where is it implemented?

- Marketing materials
- Web site
- Signage
- Presentations
- Meetings
- One-on-one communications



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Words are Powerful

'Why shouldn't we quarrel about a word? What is the good of words if they aren't important enough to quarrel over? Why do we choose one word over another if there isn't any difference between them?'

G.K. Chesterton

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Dependent

Admission

OLD

DIRTY WORDS

BED

Locked unit

diaper

them

US

Care

HELP!

BEAUTY SHOP

UNIT

FACILITY

ADL

Retire

Need

patient

SNF

Senior

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Speaking a Universal Language

Cathy Ritter
Vice President
Marketing Communications
Friendship Senior Options
Cathy.Ritter@FriendshipVillage.org

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