



CENTER FOR INNOVATION AND WELLBEING

PARO Case Study



Robotic seal engages residents in memory care.

PARO, the robot baby harp seal, squeaks, wiggles and coos but most importantly engages many residents diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. Numerous studies, including one most recently published in the [Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease](#), have demonstrated its behavioral, emotional and social impact on older adults, as well as its important value as a caregiving tool.

Following pilot testing at [Sunny View Retirement Community](#) by the Front Porch Center for Innovation and Wellbeing (FPCIW), PARO is now widely used at Summer House memory care neighborhoods at [Front Porch retirement communities](#).

PARO employs a 32-bit CPU and sensors that recognize touch, light, sound, temperature and position. It responds by wiggling, squeaking and moving its body and blinking its eyes. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has also designated it as a “Class II medical device,” the same designation as a wheelchair.

Staff use PARO as a tool to help promote social interaction, reduce stress, anxiety and self-isolation and to increase resident engagement.

During the initial five-month pilot at Sunny View, one of the pilot’s findings revealed that when caregivers brought Paro out to help residents who experienced bouts of anxiety or wandering, it reduced the need for anxiety medications by 30 percent.

In a 2015 six-month study, FPCIW produced a report based on 920 tracking surveys from Front Porch life enrichment and care staff across the six Summer House memory care neighborhoods. Community staff and resident feedback about PARO have been overwhelmingly positive. The PARO robot devices are shown to have ...

- Produced calming effects for residents, in 73% of wandering and 59% of anxious behaviors
- Helped increase social behavior by 97% among isolated adults
- Helped 153 out of 193 residents (79%) stay alert from initially sleepy behavior, resulting in improved moods, socialization, and appetite
- Helped residents to avoid psychotropic medications in 61% of cases when medications were considered

With such positive results from the pilot and the follow-up study, Front Porch's four philanthropic partners, [FACT Foundation](#), [Pacific Homes Foundation](#), [California Lutheran Homes](#) and [Sunny View Foundation](#) were enthusiastic about funding the purchase of a Paro for the Summer House memory care neighborhoods at [Walnut Village](#), [Claremont Manor](#), [Fredericka Manor](#), [Vista del Monte](#), [Wesley Palms](#), [Villa Gardens](#), [Sunny View](#) and other Front Porch community memory care programs.

[Watch a video about PARO.](#)

Read the CIW's [Final Report](#) about PARO.

About the Front Porch Center for Innovation and Wellbeing

The Front Porch Center for Innovation and Wellbeing is part of Front Porch®, one of Southern California's largest not-for-profit providers of retirement living communities and affordable housing. The Front Porch Center for Innovation and Wellbeing strives to harness technology solutions that support and enhance wellbeing in older adults. The Front Porch Center's core initiatives focus on how technology can: assist in maintaining brain health; enhance social connectedness; promote engagement and growth; empower control over health and wellness; prevent emergencies or serious events; and increase resources and support for formal and informal caregivers. The Front Porch Center for Innovation and Wellbeing is a signature program of Front Porch's Humanly Possible® commitment to doing everything humanly possible to creatively meet the needs of those we serve today and in the future. The Front Porch Center is the winner of the Bronze Award for the Dignity category in the 2015 McKnight's Technology Awards and the Aging 2.0 Pilot Pioneers 2015 Innovation Award. More information can be found at www.fpciw.org.

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