

CAI Northern Ohio Chapter

Quarterly Newsletter

IN THIS ISSUE

50 Years and Counting:
CAI Celebrates Golden
Anniversary

4 Tips for Recruiting New
Board Members

Aging in Place Brings New
Association Management
Challenges



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

This year Community Associations Institute (CAI) celebrates its Golden Anniversary of 50 years providing education, resources, and advocacy to the community association industry. Today, CAI has nearly 44,000 members and 64 chapters worldwide.

It is a privilege for me to be involved with CAI both on a national and local level and I am excited to serve as the Northern Ohio President this year. I have been an attorney practicing in community association law for 17 years and currently also serve on CAI's Government and Public Affairs Committee, the Complaint Committee of the CMCA Professional Conduct Enforcement Committee, and the CAMICB Board of Commissioners.

Our Northern Ohio chapter's mission is to inspire professionalism, effective leadership, and responsible citizenship so these ideals are reflected in our communities and create preferred places to call home. And, with the support of great membership and business partners involved in CAI, I have no doubt that our Northern Ohio chapter will continue to grow and thrive in the coming year. By focusing on our vision to keep associations and business partners informed of important industry issues and trends through our many educational programs we have a full calendar of events planned for this year. Please join us on Friday, April 14th as we kick off an educational year with a program entitled *Cybersecurity Training - Security and Culture*.

M. Katherine Bushey, Esq., President
Northern Ohio Chapter
Community Associations Institute



CAI Northern Ohio Chapter

50 Years and Counting: CAI Celebrates Golden Anniversary

By Tom Skiba

Reprinted from *Ungated: Community Associations Institute Blog*, January 2023

Not every organization gets to celebrate 50 years. Those that do drive transformation, integrate new technology, ignite passion, and instill pride. Whether you've been with us since the early days or you're a new member, you know that CAI is the collective place for community association information, education, and resources.

Founded in 1973, CAI was organized through the joint efforts of the Urban Land Institute, Association of Homebuilders, the U.S. League of Savings and Loan Associations, the Veterans Administration, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 23 builder/developers, and several leading community association professionals.

Thanks to our countless dedicated, selfless, and inspired member leaders, 50 years later, CAI is the international center for community association best practices, learning, and advocacy. We're proud of our international impact too. With nearly 44,000 members and 64 chapters worldwide, including Canada, the Middle East, and South Africa, and relationships with housing leaders in Australia, the United Kingdom, and a number of other countries, our members inspire professionalism, effective leadership, and responsible citizenship, ideals that are reflected in these communities that are preferred places to call home.

CAI provides information, education, and resources to the homeowner volunteers who govern communities and the professionals who support them. CAI members include association board members and other homeowner leaders, community managers, association management firms, and other professionals who provide products and services to associations. CAI serves community associations and homeowners by:

- Advancing excellence through seminars, workshops, conferences, and education programs, most of which lead to professional designations for community managers and other industry professionals.
- Publishing the largest collection of resources available on community association management and governance, including website content, books, guides, *Common Ground* magazine, and specialized newsletters.
- Advocating on behalf of common interest communities and industry professionals before legislatures, regulatory bodies, and the courts.
- Conducting research and serving as an international clearinghouse for information, innovations, and best practices in community association development, governance, and management.

CAI Northern Ohio Chapter

We have long believed that homeowners and condominium associations should strive to exceed the expectations of their residents. Our mission remains true today. We work toward this goal by identifying and meeting the evolving needs of the professionals and volunteers who serve associations, by being a trusted forum for the collaborative exchange of knowledge and information, and by helping our members learn, achieve, and excel. Throughout the years, our members have helped CAI create a special place to connect, learn, and grow—making each and every member feel welcome.

Cheers to you and to CAI! Your creativity, collaboration, and commitment supports CAI as the international center for community associations. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow, we are Committed to Community.



4 Tips for Recruiting New Board Members

Reprinted from *Community Association Management Insider*, July 2019

Board recruitment is a challenge many community associations face, and, for some, the problem is only getting worse. Long-standing board members are aging out or simply want to step back, but no one seems willing to fill their shoes.

“It’s an especially huge issue in smaller associations, where a group of dedicated people serve for a long time and want to take a break, but no one else wants to step in,” says Paul Gruzca, director of education and client engagement for CWD Group, Inc., an association management company in the Pacific Northwest.

Effective board recruitment requires an ongoing proactive strategy by the current board and the management company. Here are some best practices worth incorporating in your strategy:

1) Start small and work your way up. Asking someone who hasn’t volunteered in the community in any capacity is unlikely to reap dividends. The smarter approach is to nurture an owner’s volunteerism.

Andrea Drennen, CMCA and managing partner with Frontage Marketing Group in Clearwater, Fla., suggests starting by getting owners on board for “microcommitments,” such as a beautification project or playground cleanup. “You can hold one-day events where people sign in, and now you have a list of people who are invested in making the community a better place.”

The next step? Try to get these people involved in committee work. “Committee service is a gateway,” Gruzca says. “They get a taste for what it’s like running the business of the association. Some of my best board members started out in committee roles.”

And don’t forget to publicly recognize all of your volunteers’ contributions. Appreciation will go a long way toward keeping them motivated.

2) Target the ask. Posting a notice on the association website or running an ad in the newsletter seeking board volunteers isn’t going to cut it, Drennen says: “You’re not going to get droves of people beating down your door offering to give up personal time to serve.

“You need to make your ask personal and targeted. Stroke their egos a little bit so they feel they’re filling a need and not just an empty seat.”

This requires getting to know the owners and their strengths and passions. Depending on the size of the community, you might need to conduct a short survey of skills and interests.

Look for more than just CPAs and attorneys. Who has experience with construction, gardening, graphic design, or event planning? “If people have a skillset that meshes well with the needs of the community, I always try to tap them,” Gruzca says.

CAI Northern Ohio Chapter

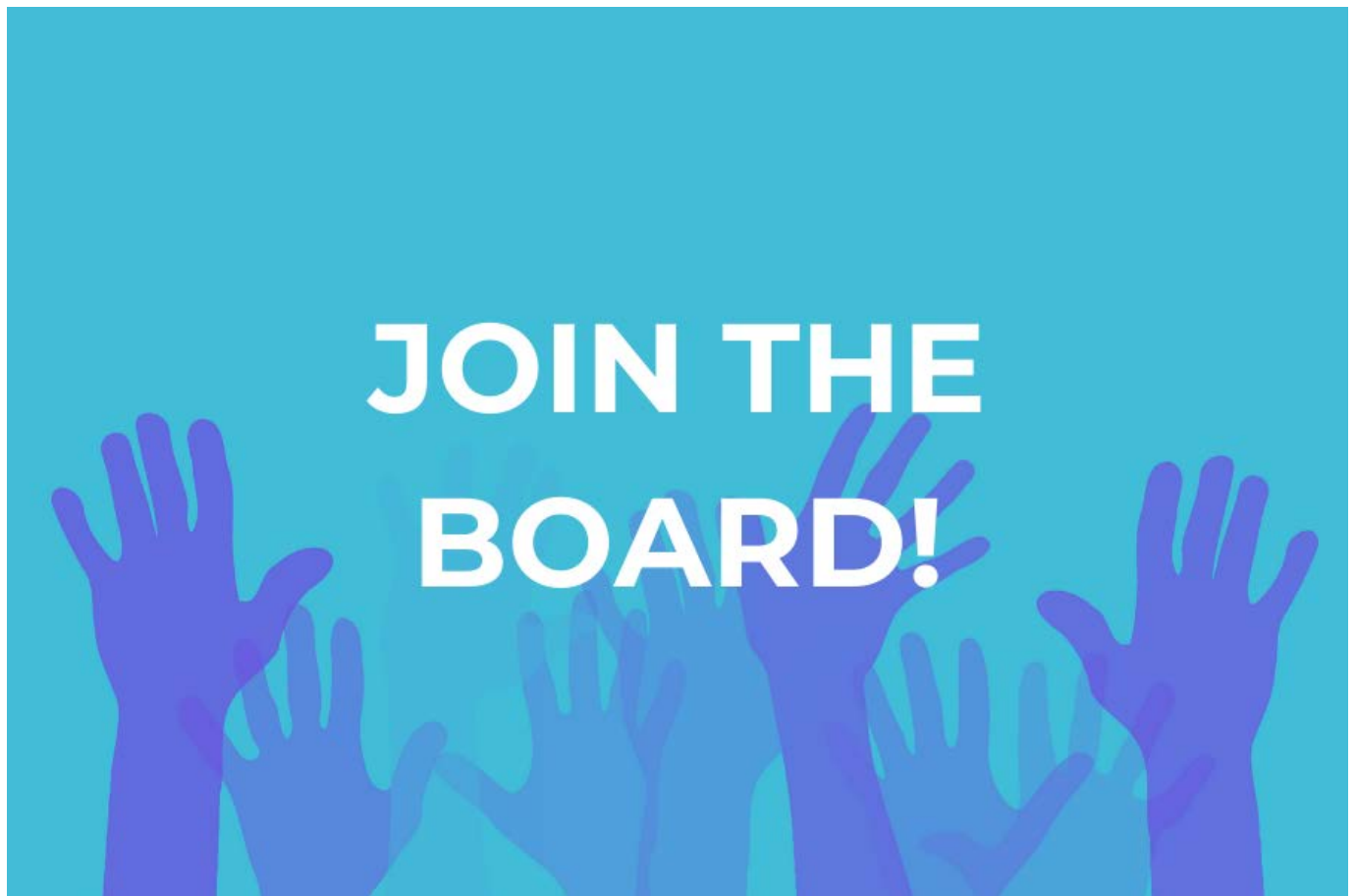
3) Train current board members to seek their replacements. Make it part of their jobs to recruit replacements as their terms are expiring. “Once you get your feet firmly planted,” Grucza tells new board members, “you need to start looking for your successor because, otherwise, you’re going to become a career board member.” He encourages them to start scouting around early.

Provide some guidance on what they should look for in a board candidate — you don’t want well-intentioned board members to recruit replacements who would be a bad fit. Give them tips on how to suss out fellow owners’ interests and abilities, as well as how to talk up the rewards of board service.

4) Convert the complainers. “A lot of people are wary about complainers in the community,” Drennen says, “but that’s someone who cares. If they’re showing up at every open meeting and complaining about sign colors or holiday decorations or fees, that means they care.”

Grucza agrees: “Sometimes the complainers just don’t know about the processes behind things. You can turn them into supporters and matriculate them up to the board.”

Remember that board recruitment isn’t a one-off activity. Managers and the board must stay constantly on the lookout for potential members, while also taking the necessary steps to maintain the interest and dedication of non-board volunteers.



Aging in Place Brings New Association Management Challenges

Reprinted from *Community Association Management Insider*, March 2023

Many community associations today have Baby Boomer owners who are opting to stay in their homes, rather than move out to senior communities, nursing homes, or family homes. Managers and boards need to recognize and prepare for the impact this is going to have on their communities.

Property Adjustments

For starters, it can be difficult in general for older residents to get around. But an association's common areas can be adjusted to make it easier and safer for your older owners.

Paul Gruzca, principal with PDG and Associates, consultants for the association management industry, suggests reaching out to owners to better assess their needs before making such changes, though.

"I would first take a voluntary and confidential survey to gain a perspective on the owners' conditions," he says. "Are they experiencing difficulties? Have things changed in their lives so they need new things to be ambulatory? What's difficult for them in the building, and what kind of workaround are they using, if any? Then you can develop a plan for the common areas.

"Some modifications are relatively easy, like lighting, flooring surfaces, and assist rails in hallways. Access, doorways, ramps — those are going to get more expensive, if even possible."

That last bit regarding feasibility is important. Gruzca says many buildings are so old that they were built well before any legal requirements regarding issues like accessibility applied. This can make it impossible for even proactive boards to take desired action.

"One client was asked by an owner to provide an alternate access ramp at the front door," Gruzca says. He estimates that 70 percent of the owners were original owners dating back to the 1960s and are now in their 70s.

"The board thought it was reasonable and wanted to do it. They hired engineers and other professionals, but no matter how they looked at it, there was no conceivable way to do with this property because of its original design and features."

The only option, Gruzca says, ended up being a driveway ramp down to the parking garage, four levels down. "They brightened up the concrete and put on visual markings so anyone in a wheelchair could go down that way to an elevator to get up to their units."

Of course, feasibility isn't the only hurdle — there's also cost. "Nothing comes cheaply, and it's more expensive to retrofit than doing it when a building is fresh and new," Gruzca says. "Going back and trying to make it work can be incredibly expensive. And younger people in these buildings don't want to pay for it because they won't use it."

To get around such resistance, Gruzca says he spends a lot of time talking with owners about financing options. "We see if they have resources they can tap instead of burdening the association with a loan — we give a little pushback to get folks to be responsible.

CAI Northern Ohio Chapter



“We also have the discussion with owners that, if the majority of them vote to go ahead with a project and a special assessment, there could be the possibility that some of their neighbors might have to sell.”

Beyond Mobility

Older residents’ illness and mental health issues can put managers in tough spots, too.

“We’ve had issues where no one has seen an owner for a while, and their units have attracted vermin or pipes have burst in there and leaked into other units,” says Kevin Hirzel, managing member of Hirzel Law, PLC, a Michigan-based firm that works with numerous community associations.

“You don’t want to be nosy, but you want to have some type of network or program in place where people check in on each other.”

Grucza endorses this idea. “Many aging-in-place properties have established floor captain roles to go check on owners on a regular basis. Their roles have evolved into also being the go-to-person if there’s an emergency. That person can find the right person or might have the necessary resources themselves.”

Hirzel warns managers and boards against conducting actual welfare checks, though. “You can’t go snooping into units when you haven’t seen someone in a while, or a bunch of newspapers or mail is stacking up,” he says. “You typically can call Adult Protective Services. That’s a better option than going beyond knocking on the door to try to investigate.”

These scenarios where an owner seems to vanish provide a strong example of why boards and managers should collect family contact information from older owners who are willing to share the information. These contacts also might prove helpful when aging owners fall behind on their assessments.

“Older people can start to lose track of their finances,” Hirzel says. “The manager should follow up before turning it over to collections.” If you can’t reach the owner, you might turn to the contact.

“I wouldn’t contact their emergency person directly about collections,” Hirzel says, “but maybe check to see if there’s a plan in place to make sure everything is functioning for the person or the unit.

“Try to be flexible. You don’t want someone facing foreclosure because they’re not checking their mail or paying bills.”

Aging Boards

Boards composed largely or entirely of senior owners also can present an issue for managers.

“You have board members who have been on the board for, in one case I know of, 27 years,” Grucza says. “Forgetfulness, dementia, rage, general anger, and obstinance are all factors that can create challenges for managers. These board members just become implacable. I ran a series of workshops with older boards, and they were a handful, I can tell you.

“You have to take a different tack. You have to warm them up to policies, processes, and changes to get them to see where they are, where they were, and where they want to go. It’s all in the delivery.”

CAI Northern Ohio Chapter



Fostering Connections

Finally, there's a very simple way managers and boards can help their aging owners — providing opportunities for them to connect with their neighbors.

“One thing I see is that people find themselves more alone, and the camaraderie with their neighbors becomes more important than ever,” Gruzca says. “You want to keep the community alive with events and a social activities person who brings people together for cards or luncheons or whatever.”

Hirzel says these opportunities are particularly critical in communities with multiple generations. “It's important to have social events where people get together and understand everyone's different circumstances. The lack of that is one reason for the heightened tensions you read about in associations. It's much different if you actually know your neighbor.”

