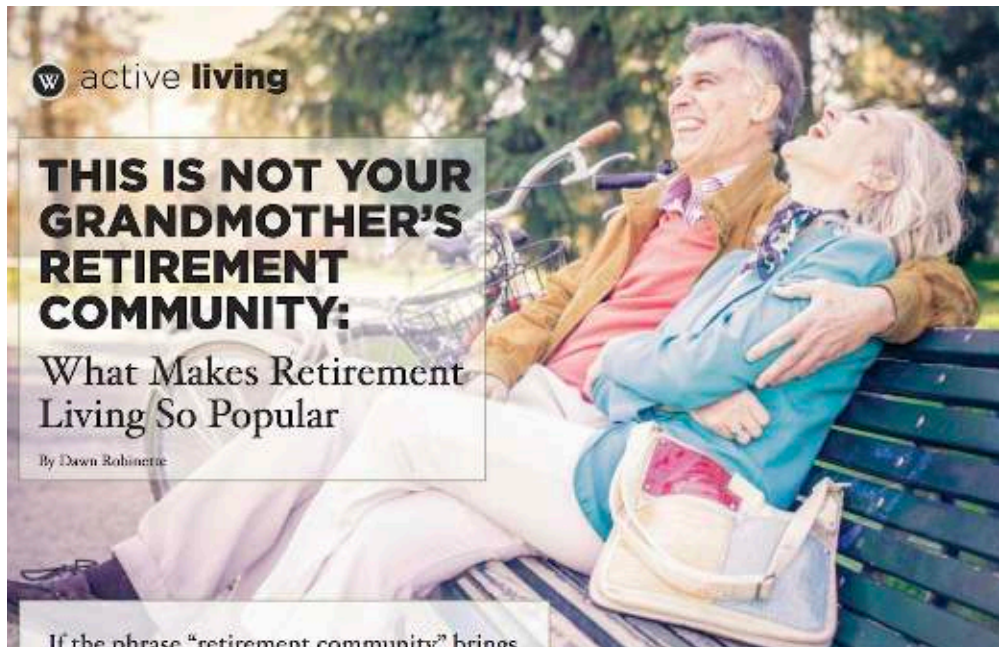


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## THIS IS NOT YOUR GRANDMOTHER'S RETIREMENT COMMUNITY:

### What Makes Retirement Living So Popular

By Dawn Robinson

If the phrase “retirement community” brings boring, or old, to mind, you haven't checked out today's retirement living options. From golf, fitness centers, swimming pools and walking trails to bocce ball, yoga and tennis courts, today's retirement communities are anything but boring. Or old.

“This place is too cool for anyone younger than us,” jokes Gwen Butler, a resident of Kissing Tree, a new community in San Marcos custom-made to be “baby-boomer-centric” by Brookfield Residential. Built on 1,300 acres, the community is the first of its kind in San Marcos and Butler is proud to be one of the first residents.

“Fifty-five is not old age,” explains Butler, who actually won't be 54 until later this year, but lives in the 55 and up community thanks to her husband, Scott, who is 55. “And it's not a retirement community. About a third of us are still working,” she notes.

Age limitations are one of the things that many people don't understand about retirement communities. For instance, children are allowed to live in the communities as long as they are 19 or older. And grandchildren are welcome to visit up to 60 days a year, which means that they can enjoy all of the amenities in the community as well. “Our kids learned to play bocce ball and pickle ball when they were visiting,” explains Butler. The children also

played on the community's 18-hole putting course designed for the younger set. “With all of the activities they can do, it's like a resort.”

Before Kissing Tree, the Butlers were living in what they thought was their forever home. Once their children moved out, they realized it wasn't ideal. Especially when they considered the upkeep ahead of them. After spending four hours one weekend trying to kill fire ants in their yard, and \$5,000 to trim trees off of their roof, they wondered if downsizing made sense. “We had too much room in the house and too much work in the home,” she explains.

They toured Kissing Tree and fell in love. Even though the community hadn't begun construction, the plans and amenities sealed it for them. The community includes indoor and outdoor amenities, fitness centers, pools, the Kissing Tree Golf Course and miles of scenic hike and bike trails. “It has all of these opportunities to be outdoors and active, without having to maintain those spaces ourselves,” Butler explains. “It's energizing.”

Mark Lane, a resident of Del Webb's Sun City retirement community in Georgetown, echoes Butler. He and his wife, Tammy, moved to Sun City from East Texas last year. “The houses are great, but it's more than that. We didn't move here for the house. We moved here for the amenities.”

Like the Butlers, the Lanes decided that while they liked their house, the upkeep was more than what they wanted in a forever home. With five acres, a small vineyard, a pool, a barn and a shop, maintaining their house took a lot of time.



"I'd spend all of my time mowing or weedeating, cleaning the pool — all of that," explains Lane. "Moving into the retirement community, I don't have any of that. I downsized the amount of work I was doing every weekend. I now spend my time doing what I want to do instead of what I have to do."

And the community's amenities provide more than enough options to fill anyone's time. Del Webb's new San Antonio community, Hill Country Retreat, features resort-style amenities including a Biergarten, show kitchen, indoor/outdoor bar, 15 miles of scenic hiking trails, 18-hole golf course, 18-hole putting course, golf clubhouse and restaurant, state-of-the-art fitness center, tennis courts, pickleball courts, bocce ball courts and horseshoe pits. Hundreds of acres are reserved for parks, trails and green space.

Classes, clubs, outings and social options also abound at most retirement communities, giving residents the opportunity to connect with others and explore hobbies. "A senior living environment allows you to become yourself again," notes Butler. "You can investigate new interests and reconnect with old ones. You remember how much fun it was to play outside, or to paint, or have a girlfriends' lunch. It's fun making connections with new people."

For Lane, the community gives his wife the fitness options she loves with a new convenience thrown in. "The community is custom-made for that. She can go right out the front door to safely jog, or just walk to the fitness center to work out with her personal trainer."

While Lane is not yet retired, the clubs and activities are something he's looking forward to. "You can try everything from Bridge to Poker, billiards ... a woodshop with computerized tools," he explains. "There are stained glass classes, photography, pottery, oil painting — just about anything you can think of, there's a class or a group." Lane's community even has both a competitive and a co-ed softball team.

But the communities are also filled with beautiful houses — homes that active seniors can enjoy as their forever homes. Butler extols their beauty. "When I come home every day, I feel like I'm on vacation. I walk into this house with amazing Hill Country views and huge windows that let the outside in."

Butler's advice to others thinking of moving to a retirement community? "Don't wait! These communities are designed for you to be active. You want to have time to build connections and rediscover who you are," she explains.

If you think that retirement community living could be for you, you can check it out first hand through programs like Del Webb's day pass or overnight pass options, designed to give an insider's look at what retirement communities are like. But be warned: based on Butler's and Lane's experiences, you may never want to leave.



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