

SSAFE Newsletter

Senior Stewards Acting for the Environment

A Member-Supported Organization



In This Issue

Goats! Goats? Do they really work?



Earth Day #56 Is Coming!

Old favorites; fresh ideas—let's build on our past successes.

Reaching Zero Waste

Refill it, fix it, reuse it.

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SSAFE newsletters can always be found at SSAFE.org/newsletter



The Pathway to Net Zero provides a way forward for senior living communities.

How to Set Your Community on the Pathway to Net Zero

By George Alexander, Kendal at Longwood

SSAFE is proud to announce that an important new tool is now available on its website—the Pathway to Net Zero. If we want to leave a livable environment to our children and grandchildren, we will have to stop releasing greenhouse gases (GHGs) into the atmosphere. Every organization (including all senior living communities) will need to get to “net zero”—which means emitting no greenhouse gases. That’s a tall order, and it’s hard to know where to start.

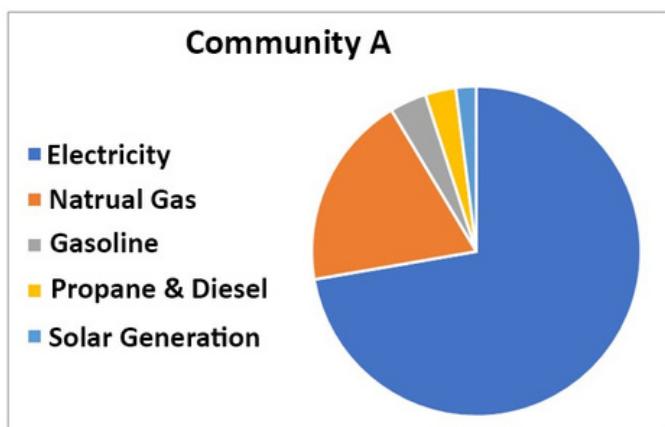
SSAFE’s Pathway to Net Zero can help with that. It is a trove of information that has been

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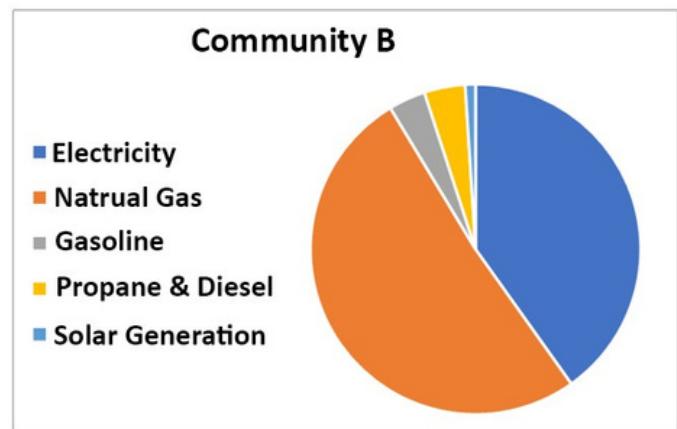
Pathway (cont'd)

compiled specifically to help SSAFE communities (and other senior living facilities) figure out how they can reach net zero—step by step, customized to fit their respective needs. The result of five years of work,* it is the only internet resource that is specifically designed to help senior living communities eliminate greenhouse gas emissions.

If your community is just getting started with this process, you may want to consider how to determine your community's carbon footprint. That is an essential early step for two reasons: the first time it is calculated, it highlights the community's main sources of GHG emissions; and if recalculated every few years, it can show how much progress is being made. A basic spreadsheet or an online tool like Portfolio Manager can produce a carbon footprint, or the work can be done by professionals as part of an energy/GHG audit. For a sense of its value, consider two hypothetical senior living communities. **Community A** already gets a lot of its heat from heat pumps, so its use of natural gas is lower but its use of electricity is much greater. Its carbon footprint is dominated by the fossil fuels used by the generating plants that supply electricity to the local grid in its area.



Community B is just beginning its journey to net zero and is heated primarily by natural gas. The majority of its carbon footprint is due to the natural gas it burns for heating.



Looking at their widely differing carbon footprints, it is clear that different strategies would be appropriate.

Community A might decide to prioritize installing solar panels or purchasing renewable electricity from a solar or wind farm, while Community B might decide to focus on electrifying its heating by using heat pumps. This illustrates how knowing your carbon footprint can help you set priorities.

The SSAFE Pathway to Net Zero is a continually evolving resource that will expand and improve as new ideas and experiences are shared. This first version of the guide includes six sections:

- **Introduction.** Background on net zero and creating a pathway.
- **Measuring and auditing.** How to calculate your carbon footprint and get an energy/GHG audit.
- **Support and Planning.** Building resident engagement, partnerships, and a sustainability plan.

cont'd p.3

Pathway (cont'd)

- **Emission Reduction Opportunities.** Steps to cut fossil fuel use and improve efficiency.
- **Beyond Energy.** Other actions such as transportation, waste, food choices, and landscaping.
- **Resources and Tools.** Glossary, references, and supporting materials.

Your community will probably not need to deal with every topic covered in the Pathway, so you'll want to skip around and focus on just the relevant documents. All the documents that make up the Pathway are linked together and are fully searchable, so you won't have too much trouble finding what you need.

While energy, electrification, and renewable power form the backbone of any net zero plan, progress also depends on many smaller, practical steps. Senior living communities can make meaningful gains through improvements in transportation, waste and wastewater management, sustainable purchasing, food choices, landscaping, and thoughtful use of market tools like RECs. These actions may seem modest in scale, but together they strengthen a culture of sustainability, engage residents and staff, and build momentum for larger, long-term goals.

You can find the Pathway to Net Zero at www.SSAFE.org/pathway

**Several SSAFE members from a variety of chapters did yeoman work in assembling the pieces into a workable web framework. Without these contributions, the Pathway would be just a shadow of what it is today.*

Was COP30 Fruitful?

By Barclay Ward, Kendal at Hanover



More than 90 state delegations met in November in Belém, Brazil, to conclude a forward-looking document pledging greater efforts to control climate change, but two perennial issues remain unresolved: a commitment to move past fossil fuels, and a commitment to adequately fund relief to developing countries. Petroleum-producing states made sure that there was no forward motion on moving past fossil fuels. And governmental will is still lacking to make good on a commitment made several years ago to compensate developing countries for damage already caused by climate change.

The United States administration did not participate in COP30, but several governors of U.S. states, mayors of key cities, and other legislative officials did attend. Among them was Gavin Newsom, governor of California—a state known for its clean energy progress. Governor Newsom met with world leaders and stressed that the commitment to improving the climate is an economic effort as much as it is a political one.

With great effort the delegates were able to hammer out a final document, inconclusive though it was. It is hoped that COP31, which will be held in 2026 in Antalya, Turkey, will be more productive.

COLLINGTON TURNS OVER A NEW LEAF: COMMUNITY-WIDE COMPOSTING

By Dorothy Yuan, Collington, a Kendal Affiliate

Greenhouse gases are natural byproducts of the decomposition of organic material in landfills. Composed of roughly half methane and half carbon dioxide, it is the methane that has the greatest ability to trap heat and contribute to global warming. Although a few facilities have installed mechanisms to trap methane, the easiest way we consumers can help to reduce global warming is by reducing our contribution of food waste to landfills.

For a number of years, volunteers at Collington have tirelessly constructed and overseen a successful operation to compost organic waste produced by residents, yielding sufficient byproduct to enrich many of our gardens. However, the amount that can be collected from residents is only a small fraction of that generated by food preparation in the Collington kitchen and from unconsumed waste from the dining hall. For more than three years, residents have requested the Climate Action Subcommittee to include plans to initiate composting of kitchen waste by a commercial company that can handle larger volumes of waste, as well as have greater degradation capability. However, this aim has been put on the back burner because of the significant cost it would add to the Collington operating budget.

Fortunately, earlier this year, a resident managed to convince a potential donor to make a monetary contribution to kick-start the project. A proposal submitted to the Collington Foundation generated sufficient interest for them to persuade

the administration to look into the feasibility of the project. After months of surveying and negotiation with various local commercial composting companies, an affordable plan was achieved with very little addition to the ongoing Collington operating budget. This plan will be financed for at least five years.

After preliminary visits by the selected company, Compost Crew, to train Collington team members for all required procedures, compost bins were installed in the central kitchen for staff use, and in various central locations throughout the campus and in the dining rooms for resident use.



Sous Chef James Madison adds food scraps to a new compost bin.

When all was ready, a community-wide “compost kickoff party” announced the plan to the Collington community. A representative of the company gave a detailed description of all the food waste

cont'd p.5

Composting (cont'd)

that can be placed into collection bins, as well as, importantly, all materials that should *not* be included.



A composting celebration! L to R: SSAFE chair and resident Joel Brody; CFO Courtney Cochran; Residents Robin Martin and Dorothy Yuan; Horticulturist Megan Bryant; Residents Judy Bowles and Joyce Koch; Dining Director Stephanie Tolson.

The contents of the bins are collected by the company twice a week and are weighed and tabulated after each collection. Compost Crew reported that during the month of September 2025, waste collected from Collington amounted to a total of 17,140 pounds. Furthermore, they were pleased with the compliance of the users in that very little non-compostable material was added to the collection bins. The resulting product from our food waste is a rich soil additive which is sold to local farmers and gardeners, substantially decreasing their use of synthetic fertilizers. Therefore, not only does our effort reduce Collington's contribution to the landfill, it also decreases the amount of fossil fuel used to manufacture fertilizers. Collington is proud to join the brigade of composters caring for our environment at SSAFE.



SSAFE: A Gateway to Sharing Best Practices

By Larry Daloz, Hanover

One of SSAFE's central goals is to help each campus reduce its greenhouse gas emissions as quickly and efficiently as possible. This happens best when residents and administrators work together to share their sustainability knowledge openly across the growing SSAFE network.

In late October, SSAFE convened a Zoom conversation among the CEOs of four of our campuses—Collington, Piper Shores, Kendal-Crosslands, and RoseVilla—asking each to describe the primary sustainability initiatives they are currently prioritizing, what challenges they face, and what they see as they look ahead. The results were striking. From ecologically planned landscapes to all-electric fleets to geothermal heating to net-zero buildings, these leaders are drawing a bead on a green future.

At the same time, they agreed that their toughest challenges are finding the money and setting priorities. It will take some creative financing, more powerful collaborations, and a commitment to building with minimal impact and in harmony with nature. Said one: "Push hard on us...when we know our residents are pushing on us, we are aligned, and it gives us confidence to continue to move forward."

The video is available now on www.SSAFE.org. We urge you to watch!

BRAINSTORMING FOR A BRIGHTER EARTH DAY

By Michelle Goodwin, Executive Director

At SSAFE, every day feels like Earth Day! Still, Earth Day—often celebrated all month long—is the perfect opportunity to remind residents, staff, and administrators that caring for the environment is how we live our values.

Each year, SSAFE kicks off the season with our Earth Day Brainstorming Sessions, open to all members who are planning or helping with events in their communities. In 2026, we'll host two sessions (SSAFE members, watch your email for invites):

January 28, 2026 at 1 PM ET / 10 AM PT
March 11, 2026 at 1 PM ET / 10 AM PT

Meeting early in the year gives planners time to share ideas, explore creative projects, and learn from one another. These sessions are always lively, inspiring, and full of great takeaways to bring back to your community. Listed below are some best practices from the 2025 sessions.

Planning and Marketing Tips

- Book rooms and reserve display space.
- Request newsletter or website articles early.
- Confirm permissions and budget.
- Check for senior or nonprofit discounts when making purchases.
- Use “Save the Date” notices if details are still being finalized.
- Form committees in January or February, delegating tasks and breaking the work into small, manageable steps.
- Host a flyer or poster assembly party to make preparation more enjoyable.

What Works:

- Hands-on activities
- Connecting to nature
- Good visibility and high-traffic areas
- Large signage and bright colors
- Food and samples
- Enlisting “someone who knows everyone” to draw interest
- Collaboration between groups, such as local town and residents, or residents and administration
- Direct action, such as joining a campus committee, joining SSAFE, or signing a petition

What to Avoid:

- Negativity and overwhelming people with bad news
- Lots of text in small print

The most effective Earth Week activities almost always include hands-on participation or a lighthearted “game” format, such as friendly contests or simple “test your knowledge” interactions. Consider going all-out this April by creating activities that invite curiosity!



Hands-on items that promote discussion are best.

For more information visit SSAFE.org/earth-day.

WE CAN'T RECYCLE OUR WAY OUT OF THIS

By Ruth Crawford, Cartmel

Reduce. Reuse. Recycle. We're all familiar with the mantra. So why do we focus so much on recycling? The Earth Week 2026 theme is "Planet vs. Plastics," a large part of which involves reducing our use of plastics to begin with. And not just plastics—it involves all items that we consume. This Earth Week, let's take a look at "reduce" and "reuse."

SSAFE chapters are already making great strides on the zero waste front. Most already have zero waste elements in place, such as community gardens, resale shops, and wood shops for repairs. These activities align with the highest priorities in the "reduce and reuse" levels of the hierarchy, well above recycling. As reported by resident Ann Taves, the activities at Pilgrim Place perhaps best exemplify the zero waste mindset. At their annual Pilgrim Place Festival, books, furniture, clothes, housewares, and other used items are sold (reused!), with the proceeds benefiting their Resident Health and Support Fund.

Refilleries

Wouldn't it be nice if we could just refill our own containers with detergent, shampoo, cleaning products, etc. whenever needed to avoid repeat purchases of fluids in plastic containers? When Mama and Hapa's Zero Waste Shop opened about 1.5 miles away from RoseVilla, their Green Team sponsored a field trip to the refillery in a campus van. According to Jean Lofy, the event had a good turnout, demonstrating the power that encouraging residents to adopt a zero

waste mindset can have. Learn more at <https://tinyurl.com/mamahapa>. Similarly, Barbara Klie from Piper Shores knows of some residents who use GoGo Refill, which is about 8 miles away.



At SHIFT, a refillery in Narberth, PA, you can fill your own containers and pay by the ounce.

Repair Cafes

Founded in Amsterdam in 2009 by Martine Postma, the repair cafe movement has grown to more than 2,500 facilities worldwide, with about 223 in the United States. Mostly based in churches and held periodically throughout the year, repair cafes encourage people to have their broken items fixed rather than letting them end up in the landfill. The intent is to counter the throwaway mentality while coaching participants how to repair items themselves next time. The Downingtown Repair Cafe near Kendal-Crosslands Communities meets 6 times a year. In November 2025, it drew 74 people with 106 items for volunteer coaches to fix or mend. Founder Bob Berkowitz says they were able to fix 77% of what was brought in that month. Fortunately, there appears to be no end to what people bring

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Zero Waste (cont'd)

in—bikes, lamps, jewelry, chairs, clothing, computers—if you can carry it in, they will try to fix it. And it's all free.



Jiahui Tan, a Youth Volunteer at the Downingtown Repair Cafe, applies her sewing skills.

Bulk Dispensers

Another way to avoid wasteful containers is to buy things like cereals, nuts, rice, and other grains from bulk dispensers in grocery stores or coops, where you put a bag under a container of rice, for example, press down on the lever, and take as much as you need, usually paying by the ounce.

These are just some of the ways chapters can support the zero waste concept. We'll never get rid of all the waste, but diverting 90% of our waste from landfills or incinerators is a good goal. So why not make Earth Week 2026 all about reuse?



A customer peruses the many grocery products available on a fill-your-own basis.

Climate Change Song

By Ted Burrowes, Kendal at Lexington

Surely the climate's a-chang'in'
Ted Burrowes Judy Harrison & Ted Burrowes

Gm Dm Gm B+ A+ Dm C A

Come ga-ther round peo-ple I've some - thing to say.

SSAFE member Ted Burrowes has been quietly developing a climate-themed song over the past several months. He recently shared an update and invited SSAFE to help spread the word. Working with a musician in Lexington, Ted has created an original tune with refined and expanded lyrics.

The song and a downloadable MP4 recording are now available at ClimateChangeMusic.org, where anyone can listen, share, and contribute new verses.

Ted also wrote a verse especially for SSAFE, which he encourages us to enjoy and pass along. A few lines are shared below:

Be active fellow seniors, though pathways are not clear.

There is much that is at risk that we love and hold dear.

We are green, we are gray, and not goin' away.

Our sharing is the key to effective synergy.

IS GOATSCAPING SUSTAINABLE?

By Neal Burdick, Wake Robin

“Skilled practitioners needed for on-site work. Shifts are round-the-clock with no days off. Must be team player, willing to work closely with colleagues, and sure-footed. Food allowance on site: all you can eat.”

That's the fictitious Help Wanted ad Paul Ugalde of the marketing department at Wake Robin came up with.

“It's a dream job for the herd of rent-a-goats munching their way through the vegetation on Wake Robin's hillsides,” Ugalde wrote in an internal employee newsletter. “They are tasked with abating poison ivy and other invasives that lie in their path. Their world is one huge salad bar.”

The herd, rented from a nearby farm, was controlled by a portable electric fence, partly to keep them away from desirable vegetation and out of the sun. Frankie, the easily distracted border collie, arrived twice to help herd the goats to new sites. Each goat wore a GPS tracker. Besides eating almost perpetually, they made compost and aerated the ground. “Our human grounds crew scattered wildflower seeds, taking advantage of all those hooves pushing them into the earth, improving germination,” Ugalde adds.

On top of that, the cost was half that of human-controlled lawn equipment, and four-legged lawn care reduced erosion caused by large machines on hillsides.



Goats clear unwanted weeds and brush from a hillside at Wake Robin.

And there was this bonus: entertainment. The mellow and friendly herbivores “created motivational destinations for folks working on gait/walking programs, and balance practice on the varied terrain adjacent to the goat enclosures,” says Alexis Mittelstadt, Wake Robin's rehabilitation services manager. “We saw people outside who we hadn't seen before, smiling,” notes Allie Buys, grounds crew member. “It was heartwarming.”

“The goatscapers of Wake Robin were such a hit and so productive that this will be an annual part of our maintenance,” Ugalde wrote. “In 2026 we will add some lambs. They have a higher skill set and will also notch up the ‘cute factor.’”

Wake Robin Director of Environmental Services (ES) Leslie Parker confirms future plans: “Animals are better than herbicides

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Goats (cont'd)



Allie Buys of the Wake Robin grounds crew proudly shows off their amusing crew of munching mowers.

or brush-hogging. There's less cost, more fun." ES Property Manager Mark Anair comments, "We were frankly surprised it went so well, so we will add more areas next year."

"So far, there's no downside," Parker states.

Is that true? Is goatscaping really sustainable? Enso Village has also rented goats to control vegetation and provides a different perspective.

"In 2025 we had goats, sheep, and one emu to drive away predatory birds," says Jeff Perrone, an Enso resident and member of its Earth Care Team. "I oppose bringing them back, because goats are browsers, not grazers like sheep. They destroy young trees and shrubs, and even climb into mature trees to eat leaves. Oaks sprouting from acorns would certainly disappear down their gullets. They defoliated trees and shrubs that had formed a dense riparian corridor along a

waterway, destroying habitat for birds and small animals."

Rahima Warren, a fellow Enso Earth Care Team member, counters that "Unlike traditional mowing, grazing improves soil health, increases plant diversity," and shares two benefits with Wake Robin: erosion prevention and removal of invasive species.

Warren also echoes Wake Robin's entertainment value. "The gamboling kids and lambs were especially popular," she says. "Certain folks were sad because the animals were working so we could not interact with them." Some Enso residents agreed that animals "fill an unconscious need, perhaps from our ancestors who lived so much more closely with animals than we do," says Warren. "They helped us be more tuned in to the cycles of nature."

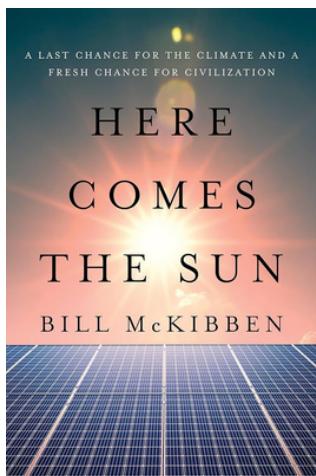
On the other hand, Warren agrees with Perrone's assessment of problems. "I was particularly disappointed that they consumed a wildflower area," she says. A state conservation official has suggested a more restricted work zone, a shorter span than last year's four weeks, fewer goats, and protection of native species.

There you have it, the pros and cons. When it comes to sustainable vegetation management, are goats the Greatest Of All Time? That jury is still out.

Full disclosure: The writer is a resident of Wake Robin and was among those who enjoyed being entertained by its four-legged lawnmowers.

THE SUN IS PLENTIFUL, FREE, AND WORTHY OF CELEBRATION

By George Kriebel, Lathrop North



Here Comes the Sun by Bill McKibben covers a broad sweep of human history, from the discovery of fire to current times. Now, almost 300 years into the industrial revolution, we recognize the pollution that results from burning things to produce power. Instead, we have solar, an energy source that can power our lives sustainably.

Since the sun shines everywhere and cannot be hoarded, it is less profitable than fossil fuels—hence the dilemma. The main holdup is political, with the petrochemical industry providing the funding behind many politicians. This important book underscores the need to move from the “fuel from hell” to the “fuel from the heavens.”

See the sidebar for key facts from the book. And once you’ve read this book, try Chuck Collins’ *Burned by Billionaires* and Christine Webb’s *The Arrogant Ape*. And don’t forget the treasure trove of recommended books and films you can find on SSAFE.org!

Bill McKibben is arguably the most prolific and widely read major climate writer on the planet. *Here Comes the Sun*, timed to appear with the recent international “Sun-Day,” is intensely focused on the promise of solar and wind energy.

Think it’s too expensive? “*Sun and wind are far more efficient than fossil fuels because they produce work, not heat...and are far cheaper.*”

But will it work for cold climates? “*About 12% of homes in Arizona have solar panels on the roof, compared with 16% in northern Vermont.*”

But how can poor countries convert to solar? “*In six months, working without government assistance, Pakistan installed the equivalent of 30% of the nation’s electric grid.*”

Afraid it can’t happen in time? “*By 2032, solar and wind will have outstripped all the world’s hydro-dams, gas, and coal.*”

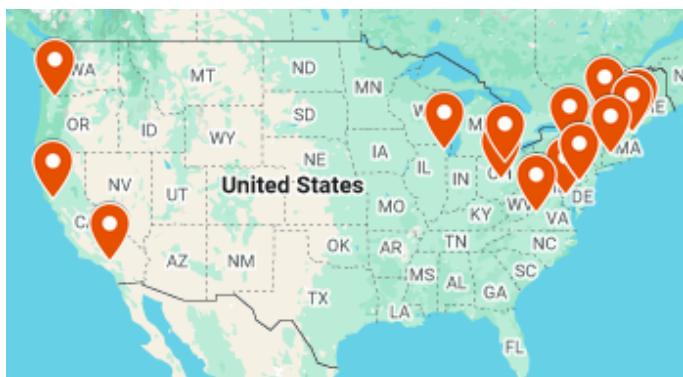
For years, dirty fuels and nuclear were touted as necessary “bridge fuels” to the future. No more. Let us celebrate: *Here comes the sun!*



Wrapping Up

SSAFE Across the U.S.

- The Admiral at the Lakes, Chicago, IL
- Collington, Mitchellville, MD
- Kendal-Crosslands Communities (Crosslands, Cartmel, Coniston), Kennett Square, PA
- Enso Village, Healdsburg, CA
- Kendal at Hanover, Hanover, NH
- Kendal at Ithaca, Ithaca, NY
- Lathrop East, Easthampton, MA
- Lathrop North, Northampton, MA
- Kendal at Lexington, Lexington, VA
- Kendal at Longwood, Kennett Square, PA
- Kendal at Oberlin, Oberlin, OH
- Otterbein Granville, Granville, OH
- Pilgrim Place, Claremont, CA
- Piper Shores, Scarborough, ME
- RiverWoods Durham, Durham, NH
- Seabury, Bloomfield, CT
- RoseVilla, Portland, OR
- Wake Robin, Shelburne, VT



SSAFE Newsletter

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SSAFE supports efforts such as guiding senior living campuses to net zero emissions, climate advocacy, and climate education. Senior Stewards Acting for the Environment (SSAFE) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. EIN: 87-1229514.

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Connect directly with other SSAFE members through "ASK SSAFE," our new email discussion Listserv. Post your questions, share success stories, and gain inspiration from peers across senior living communities nationwide.

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