



PLANNING  
GUIDE



*Shining*  
THROUGH  
— THE —  
YEARS

NATIONAL ASSISTED LIVING WEEK®  
SEPTEMBER 13-19, 2026

## ABOUT NATIONAL ASSISTED LIVING WEEK®

Established in 1995 by the National Center for Assisted Living (NCAL), National Assisted Living Week® (NALW) provides a unique opportunity for residents, their loved ones, staff, volunteers, and local communities to recognize the role of assisted living in caring for America's seniors and individuals with disabilities. The annual observance encourages assisted living communities around the country to offer a variety of events and activities to celebrate the individuals they serve, as well as to help educate members of the public about this important part of the long term care continuum.

**NCAL is grateful to have the support of this year's NALW sponsor, Joint Commission.**



This year's NALW theme - **Shining Through the Years** - honors the lives and stories of residents, as well as the important role of caregivers and staff in helping them continue to shine. It celebrates the unique journeys, stories, and contributions of residents while honoring the dedicated caregivers and staff. It's a wonderful opportunity to recognize the importance of assisted living and the essential role it plays in the long term care continuum.

Assisted living communities around the country are encouraged to host a variety of events that celebrate residents, staff, and volunteers. Use this planning guide as an inspiration for creating memorable experiences and meaningful connections during NALW.

## DECORATIONS & GIFTS

Visit [NALW.org](https://www.nalw.org) for a wide range of **Shining Through the Years** themed gifts and decorations to elevate all your NALW events and activities.



# PLANNING IDEAS

## KICK THE WEEK OFF BY CELEBRATING GRANDPARENTS' DAY

NALW begins on Grandparents' Day, providing a natural opportunity to celebrate family connections and resident stories. Invite residents' family members, as well as staff and their family members to join in.

- Host a meal or party focused on a specific decade with time-relevant food, decorations, and music. For example, host a 50s day with a "carhop" luncheon that includes hamburgers, french fries, and ice cream sundaes. Have the staff dress as carhops and serve the food while listening to 1950s music. Or keep it simple and enjoy a root beer float social!
- Ask residents, staff, and guests to share stories and important milestones during that time in their lives. Encourage them to share photos and other memorabilia that help tell the story.

## LET YOUR STARS SHINE

- Host a gala in the community to recognize the shining stars. Set up a red carpet-style event and recognize residents and staff with a personalized award highlighting something special about them. Awards can include best storyteller, community builder, lifetime learner, kindness champion, and family hero. Display photos and accomplishments on a **Wall of Stars**.
- Put on a talent show. Invite residents and staff to sing, read poetry, tell stories and jokes, showcase collections – and much more. Invite family members to join in on the fun!



## LOOKING FOR MORE GREAT IDEAS?

Check out **The Big Book of Resident Activities** with over 100 resident activities!



## SHARE YOUR STORIES

Be sure to showcase the unique and wonderful ways your staff, volunteers, residents, and families are celebrating **Shining Through the Years**. Share your stories, photos, videos, and other content with AHCA/NCAL's publication *Provider Magazine* at [storiesofcare@ahca.org](mailto:storiesofcare@ahca.org).



## SHOWCASE HISTORY

- Decorate various areas of your community according to different decades. Invite residents to share memories from those times. Play music from each decade and include different aspects such as memorabilia and clothing displays.
- Create a living history by highlighting residents' life journeys. Design and decorate poster boards featuring childhood photos, work and careers, military service, and family milestones. This is a wonderful opportunity to invite families and local schools to learn more about the remarkable lives and experiences of residents.

## GET CREATIVE

- Get them singing! Ask residents to share their favorite songs and those that bring back fun memories. Host a karaoke night or a sing-along for staff, residents, and family members to enjoy together. Don't forget the refreshments!
- Create an exhibit of works from staff and residents including paintings, quilts, photographs, and crafts, and host a reception with family members. This is a great way to showcase their talents and share cherished memories.



## MORE IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- Create a **Wisdom Wall** or a **Legacy Tree** in a visible area within the community. Have residents answer questions such as “What advice would you give future generations?” and “What makes you shine?” Post the responses on the wall. You can also include values, favorite sayings, and family traditions.
- Host a **book club** for residents to share their favorites. Let each participant pick a book that means something to them. Allow each one to talk about the book and the significance to them.
- Set up a special **classic movie night** with films from residents' favorite eras. Make it even more fun by offering popcorn and movie-themed snacks for all to enjoy.
- Create a **community time capsule**. Encourage residents to contribute letters, photos, future predictions, advice, and other memories. Seal the capsule and display it for the community. Be sure to determine when it can be opened in the future!

# MEDIA TIPS

Connect with the public by reaching out to your local press outlets to spread the word about NALW. You can promote your unique NALW events or highlight innovative services or programs you offer. Be sure to check out the **Promotional Toolkit** on the **NALW webpage**, as well, for template materials that include social media posts, a sample proclamation, sample letter to the editor, template press release, and a sample media invite.

## NEWS RELEASES

News releases are used to alert the local media of significant events, issues, services, programs, awards, and other events. Send the release to your local news editors and reporters, especially those who specifically cover your issues. If you plan to invite the press before the event occurs, send a media advisory or a personal invite at least one week before the event or desired coverage. Be sure to follow up a couple of days before to see if they can attend.

## MEDIA KITS

A media kit about your assisted living community serves as a quick reference or “background” for the local reporters who cover your community during NALW. Elements of the kit can include information about your assisted living community, the services you offer, its role in the larger community, and a schedule of your NALW activities. Remember to include the contact information for your assisted living community’s spokesperson or marketing representative.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITORS/OP-ED PIECES

These short articles allow for greater control over the content of your message, as they can be authored by a designated representative of the community (e.g., executive director). Share the many ways in which your assisted living community plans to celebrate NALW with your local newspaper and magazine editors. Also consider encouraging an active resident or their loved one to write a letter to the editor about their experience.

## PROCLAMATIONS

Proclamations are a great mechanism to have your local elected officials visit your community. Invite your governor, mayor, or local elected officials to issue a proclamation (offer a sample) in honor of NALW. You can invite them to visit the community and kick off the week on Sunday, Grandparents’ Day.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Share your NALW events and activities on your assisted living community’s website and/or social media channels. Upload photos and videos\* of unique events or highlight resident stories. Use the hashtag **#NALW** on channels like Facebook and X to contribute to the national conversation. Follow NALW on Facebook to see what your colleagues around the country are doing.

## KEEP IN MIND

While technologies such as smartphones and social media platforms have allowed providers, as well as residents themselves, to enhance quality of life, they have also unfortunately proven to be a set of tools used by offenders to violate the privacy and dignity of vulnerable residents. To help prevent these actions, assisted living communities must remain vigilant and ensure policies and procedures are in place. Make sure your center and company are following these **best practices** from AHCA/NCAL.

**\*Note:** Your residents’ privacy should take priority over publicizing NALW activities. **Only post pictures and videos of residents who have signed your community’s image authorization form.**