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Unidine Unveils Comprehensive Memory Care Nutrition Program

Fresh Bites(SM) Leverages Science and Culinary Arts to Mitigate Alzheimer's Progression



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BOSTON, Nov. 3, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- [Unidine management services company](#), has announced the roll-out of Fresh Bites, a comprehensive nutrition program designed for senior living communities serving memory care patients. Unidine's fresh food culinary approach provides the company with a unique opportunity to deliver nutritionally dense bite-sized meals to reduce weight loss associated with the rapid progression of dementia diseases.

"We heard from our senior living clients that weight loss and the inability to eat independently was often a catalyst for dementia disease progression. So we began working on a solution that would increase nutritional intake and provide a more dignified approach to dining for memory care patients," explained Richard B. Schenkel, Unidine CEO and founder.

After 18 months of research and testing, Unidine's Fresh Bites program delivers a multi-pronged solution that encompasses specific ingredients, intricate recipe assembly, visual menus and specialized staff training. Unidine chefs have embraced the goal of transforming virtually any standard menu item into finger food that can be eaten easily without the need for utensils, since many memory care patients lose motor skills and often wander during mealtimes.

Using ingredients such as rice paper, polenta, potato cups and cucumber slices to create vessels and wraps, Unidine has created an extensive, tested recipe collection for mealtimes and snacks. The chefs have fine-tuned specific sizes and shapes that are not too small to pick up or too large to handle in one bite. The temperature controls ensure that foods are cool enough to hold but still warm. Unidine teams eliminated dry fillings since they often fall apart, and boiled vegetables which can be too slippery.

"Before Fresh Bites, menu choices for memory care were often limited to sandwiches and chicken fingers or facilities would cut up regular menu item foods. We found that miniature versions of foods are more stable and our clients have told us that the variety in our menu cycles changes the whole experience," Schenkel said. He added that some clients have had good results by offering Fresh Bites from the nurses' station versus the dining room for those who struggle to remain seated.

A critical component of Fresh Bites menu development has been the infusion of specific ingredients that have shown promise in improving cognitive function. Ingredients such as the spice turmeric, broccoli, cabbage, green tea, blueberries and dark chocolate are woven into recipes based on current research.

Research at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center of Aging at Tufts University is focusing on the link between nutrition and neurodegenerative diseases. Dennis Steindler, Ph.D. and director of the aging lab at Tufts, believes changing diet and nutrition may be able to limit inflammation of brain tissue and prevent or even reverse degenerative diseases.

Unidine's memory care dining program development began as a collaboration with Integrace-Copper Ridge, a Unidine client and model residential community in Sykesville, Maryland that has been dedicated to the treatment and support of those with Alzheimer's and related dementias for over 20 years. Over time additional Unidine clients have infused nutrition-focused programming, often adding a dedicated dining service team member to their memory care unit. Unidine has responded with commitments to on-site training of kitchen and support staff, as well as certification of numerous dietitians as Certified Dementia Practitioners.

Schenkel said his team is also working with clients on visual menus, enticing aromas, brightly colored

serving plates and techniques to help maintain the natural reflex of self-feeding. "We know we can leverage the science of nutrition and our culinary talent so memory care patients can dine with dignity and have an enhanced quality of life," he said.

Unidine will rollout Fresh Bites to its existing senior living clients and new partners beginning in early 2016. For more information, contact USLG@unidine.com.

About Unidine Corporation

With operations in over 200 facilities, Unidine Corporation is a leading provider of food and dining management services for clients throughout the United States. Founded in 2001, Unidine's success is derived from consistent execution in four key areas: exclusive focus on food and dining management services; a commitment to scratch cooking with fresh, seasonal, responsibly sourced ingredients; exceptional customer service and a corporate culture enlivened by each team member's passion for culinary and service excellence. For more information, please visit unidine.com.

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