01:05 - 04:04
Lucas McCurdy
Bridge the Gap three two. Welcome to Bridge the Gap Podcast, a senior living podcast with Josh and Lucas. An awesome day here in Nashville, Tennessee. Having a great time here at the spring Nick conference. We got two young professionals on the program today, Michael and Michael, welcome to the show.

Michael & Michael
Thanks for having us on, guys. Really appreciate it.

Lucas McCurdy
Yeah, yeah, it was great to meet you. So one of the things it's great about the NIC organization is that they do foster young professionals. And they they really have a pathway for people to come and attend the conferences. And it's it's a great opportunity for Bridge the Gap we've had on students in the past. Lena is one that I remember who's a rock star. So we'll start with you, Michael. How did you hear about the opportunity here at NIC to come and enjoy the conference?

Michael Giavacco
So I this opportunity came across my dashboard through my school, my real estate department at Notre Dame. So being a real estate minor at Notre Dame, they forwarded me an email and they were like, you know, we think this would be a great fit for you.

I'm an incoming instrument. Welltower in the New York office this summer. So I guess them being a sponsor, that was definitely a reason for them sending me the email. But then also being somebody who's interested in senior living, somebody who's interested in real estate, they thought I was a strong applicant to put forth. And so I submitted my application.

And I'm here today, and I'm very happy and grateful for the opportunity to be here. And it's been amazing meeting people throughout the day. And I'm excited to continue on with the conference over today and tomorrow.

Lucas McCurdy
Well, good. We'll dive into that. Michael, how about you tell us your story.

Michael Pittenger
So I'm from Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and I go to UWEC, and my major is healthcare administration. And we have a NAB accredited program where when we graduate, we will become administrators. And we heard about this conference through our professors who are very involved nationally and all sorts of stuff. And they just talked about learning about the financial background and how and this is very important and all sorts of aspects and long term care. So and we have a bunch of partners through our program that are here to. So they've been super helpful with, you know, getting to meet people, know people and making those connections.

Josh Crisp
That's really awesome. And you know, I'm encouraged, Lucas, that younger professionals, students are hearing about our industry, hearing about this great event. I'm curious for you guys, obviously, health care administration, at some point, you made a choice to pursue that. You're in real estate.

And obviously congratulations on the Welltowers program. When was it in your life or, you know, the search for college or even before that, was senior living ever even heard of? Did you know anything about it, or was it not until you essentially pursued the opportunity here with the NIC event that senior living became on your radar?

Michael Pittenger
I'm from Rochester, Minnesota, which the name itself you probably wouldn't recognize, but everyone knows Mayo Clinic.

04:04 - 07:25
Michael Pittenger
So that's kind of the hub of Mayo Clinic. And growing up, I only knew acute care. Just because that's kind of what we have there. And I didn't know long term care was such a big deal until I got to University of Wisconsin. Oh, Clare, where I was originally a nursing student and then wanted to pivot into more long term care because I loved taking residence and just kind of the growing population.

They call it the silver tsunami. Super fascinating on, you know, we're going to have so many people to take care of. So that's why I pivoted towards health care administration. And part of the net conference was learning more about in depth. And as students, I think we learn better in the field, which is is a compromise than sitting in a classroom. So this is part of why I came to NIC.

Josh Crisp
Oh, I love that.

Michael Giavacco
My story is a little bit different. I came in to Notre Dame as a finance major and really wasn't sure what I wanted to do. And quickly into my freshman year, I learned that real estate is where I want it to be. And so kind of stepping forth into like going into my sophomore and junior year, just as like contacts and connections I made on campus, really just with upperclassmen who were just like real estate students and just who lived in my building.

Some of them are getting involved in senior housing, actually. One of them is currently at Weld Tower right now, and he was like a mentor for me, somebody who I looked up to, and just having a bunch of conversations with him really inspired me to be like to look into senior housing as a potential career path. And I think looking at where the market's going, like just the demographics and just baby boomers and where that population is going, I saw it as a really strong opportunity.

And so when the application came out, it was something I couldn't pass up on. And I also looked at other senior housing firms as well, really just looking at everything out there, because I love where the industry is going. And what brings me to NIC today is just continuing to learn about that and really decide, like, where do I want to be a part of this industry? Because I know it's going to be growing and I know it's going somewhere. So I really want to get a better grasp of that so I can prepare for the future.

Josh Crisp
So is this day two of NIC for you guys. Okay, so takeaways or something interesting, some nugget of information that you've learned or a conversation that you've had that you thought that's going to stick with me. That's something I'm going to carry with me. Anything interesting stand out?

Michael Giavacco
I actually have a really interesting conversation yesterday. It was with one of the scholars who's a grad student. He's at SMU currently getting his master's, and it was with another woman. She was a single operator. I forget exactly where she was based out of, but she was having a conversation.

It was the three of us, and the conversation was, if you would have built an ideal senior living community, what would it be? And I think it was super interesting looking from the perspective of, I mean, I was more so somebody sitting in on the conversation compared to somebody who was potentially looking at getting involved in the business to somebody who has the experience.

And she was listening out, you know, I would have 32 assisted living, no more than 18 memory care. I'll try to have 2 or 3 different buildings. Like what kind of amenities do I want? You know, I want to chapel in my, my building. You know, maybe I don't need multiple pools, things like that. I thought it was super interesting because, I mean, I was literally just watching, like, somebody who was looking to get into the industry, learn from someone with a lot of experience and who went through a lot of ups and downs.

And I like that was really like what I think the most valuable thing about this conference is it's the networking, the connections and those types of learning that you experience. And for me, that was super insightful. I mean, that's information I could take with me, but also gives me like kind of an idea of the kind of conversations I need to have with people to really get the most out of my time here.

07:25 - 11:05
Unknown
Oh, I love that. What about you?

Micahel Pittenger
Meeting all these different types of funders? You know, everyone has a different colored badge on here and kind of their role in the long term care community. And you can't run a facility by yourself. You know, it takes a team of people. It takes a sometimes you would call it a community of, you know, partners, whether they're, you know, staffing or, you know, helping you kind of figure out the financial situation.

So one of the biggest things is making those connections and building a community around care, because to take care of these people, it takes, you know, a village.

Josh Crisp
Absolutely. Well, speaking of village, I thought it was also insightful and encouraging. While you guys are here to learn, I think obviously you have a lot of value to bring, right? And I think bright young minds, new ideas, new perspectives. I thought it was really interesting that you have been looking at other models, like in other countries and things like that. What are some of the things that you've been looking at and studying?

Michael Pittenger
In Norway? I believe is where it first originated. They had a memory care village is what it's called. So essentially it's taking these dementia patients or residents and putting them in this village of where they have their own apartment house, and there's a grocery store, there's a restaurant, you know, there's a social outing area, but basically simulating what their life used to be like before they kind of took a turn for the downfall with their minds.

And so because like, one of the biggest problems with working with these older adults, that they're with their mind going is that they want what they used to have, or it's uncomfortable to be sitting in a room, you know, that is a new facility, new place, and, you know, not home like so, with them giving the autonomy to go shop or go out to eat just for fun, I feel like it's a lot better for those residents, and I think we'll be taking better care.

I don't know what that looks like in the United States yet, just because of the way the payer system would work. So that's one of the other big things that I've kind of asked around here and figured that out, like, how would that work? And I think it would be beneficial for dementia patients and, you know, memory care going forward.

Josh Crisp
That's awesome. I love that you're digging in and looking at all these models. So personal goals for you guys. Obviously you're at an awesome part of your life a lot in front of you. Have you started forming like some near term goals of what you hope to accomplish?

Michael Giavacco
My number one goal is just to learn as much as I can and really grow as a professional.

Being somebody who's about to enter the industry, I see this amazing and incredible opportunity at where I'm at, and I kind of have everything in front of me. I think that's just the most important thing is to just take advantage of every opportunity, like, put yourself out there. Don't be afraid to put your foot forward. Whether it's like someone stepping on this podcast or just putting your hand up, you know when someone's asking for someone to do something, like just taking advantage of every opportunity and really growing, I think I'll get the most out of those experiences. I think that'll put me in the best position going forward.

Michael Pittenger
I think making an impact. That's ultimately my big goal in life and in my professional career that, you know, we live so short on this world and, you know, there's only so many good years that you can put into, you know, the workforce. So making an impact and kind of, you know, setting people up for the future as well. So kind of passing down would be my ultimate goal. So not measurable, but obviously just trying to make some sort of change in the world.

Josh Crisp
Yeah. Well I think it's I do think it's measurable. I'm excited to to watch that, to follow you. Lucas I'm encouraged, man, when you get the opportunity to sit down with young professionals that are learning and that want to make a change in the world, I think it's something that's really wholesome and exciting for us.

11:05 - 14:47
Lucas McCurdy
That's right. And so as we round out the conversation, you know, one of our partners on the podcast is Nick map. It's the data in the industry. Have you guys had any exposure to kind of those data services specifically with NIC map MAP?

Michael Giavacco
I looked at it a little bit, but really not much.

Lucas McCurdy
Sure, sure. Yeah, that's totally understandable. And it's great to have this conversation to introduce you to them. And so one of the things about that is that, that you certainly are aware of is the demographic boom in the industry. And NIC MAP is part of, you know, tracking that. And it's very interesting to have y'all's perspectives on. And when you look at your school and your peers, maybe not in your class, because obviously they're aware of senior housing to are more and more people your age starting to understand that long term care, health care, senior housing is a career path. And given especially the demand that is, you know, here.

Michael Pittenger
I would say no, I genuinely don't think that there's a lot of people that do know about that. And part of my job at part of my program is trying to get an outreach. And I've been going to high schools talking with them on, you know, this is what our program is.

This is what we do. Long term care is a huge industry. So I just don't think a lot of growing up kids know about it. It's not as regulated. So I think getting the word out there that this is, you know, there's so many opportunities to do, you know, finance, accounting and, you know, be an administrator. But people just don't know about it because it's not one of the, you know, basic professions that people offer talk about when growing up. So I think if we got it out there that it was a option or that this is more normalized thing, then we could grow our, you know, care team, but who knows how much.

Josh Crisp
Oh yeah, I totally agree. I mean, 1 in 5 over by 2030 is going to be over age 65, I think was the stat I saw. That alone. Even if you don't say senior living aging services, no matter what product or service, what form of real estate, you're going to be touching an aging population. And our industry is right on the tip of that, which is exciting.

Lucas McCurdy
You want to weigh in on that as well?

Michael Giovacco
I agree with most of Michael said. I actually would say that I've started to notice a little bit more of just my peers and my friends at school who are working, not maybe specifically at like real estate, senior housing, but in healthcare in general.

So I would say maybe it's just the group of friends that I have, but I have seen more people trending towards healthcare and it becoming more popular. But I would agree with Michael said I would second that a lot. I think it's a career that especially like maybe because like when I was younger, like this graphics chip wasn't happening yet, but I think a lot of it was just that it's just isn't something that's introduced.

It's not like the most like stereotypical career path, I would say, which I mean, I'm very happy to be in senior housing. I'd love to be here, but I think exposing more people to that as a school would be super beneficial just like second ago, Michael said.

Lucas McCurdy
That's great, great feedback and really encouraging for our audience and our listeners about the industry. We've got to have good people. That's the bond that kind of connects this industry and makes it so great is the great people in this industry. And we need new, new people, new professionals, young professionals coming out of university and coming into this space. So gentlemen, thank you so much for your time today. We really appreciate your stories and thank you for having us.

Michael Giovacco
Thank you so much for having us on here. We really appreciate it.

Lucas McCurdy

Absolutely. And so to our listeners, this is a great way to continue the conversation. You can go to BTG voice download this content and so much more. And thanks for listening to another great episode. Bridge the gap.