



AMO of the Year: United Plus Property Management

Jeff Arnold, chief operating officer of United Plus Property Management (UPPM), LLC, the management arm of the United Group of Companies based in Troy, New York, reports that their status as an AMO is critical to attracting developers, lenders and asset managers. "It's one of our No. 1 arrows in the quiver when we're out looking for business," he says.

And business is good. UPPM has about 3,000 employees managing more than 300 units of active adult (age 55+) properties, 2,500 student housing beds, 2,500 multifamily units and half a million square feet of commercial space in



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Massachusetts, New York, Maryland, Georgia, Florida and Colorado. The active adult space is a strong focus for UPPM. With the huge number of baby boomers looking for convenient and carefree retirement living, the company is thriving. In addition to the nuts and bolts of property management, the Senior Umbrella Network (SUN®) programming touches on wellness and lifestyle topics for residents. It includes healthy living, financial planning, education and entertainment.

"As more developers try to enter this space, they're having trouble qualifying property managers" who specialize in active adult living to satisfy lender requirements, reports Arnold. "The SUN program is unique and sets us apart right away. That, along with the AMO accreditation, gives us a little more horsepower."

And while the SUN program is a corporate cornerstone, other notable efforts bubble up from local managers and their teams. "We encourage property managers to organize outreach and speak to stakeholders in their communities," Arnold says. In one such case, managers for student housing at Hudson Valley Community College were able to make special arrangements for the football team to use student housing when they arrived for practice before the term's official start. It wasn't just a matter of unlocking doors, though. UPPM held special events to welcome the athletes—and provided free gear.

"We give our team the training and the tools, and they go out and put that into place. We collaborate with the home office and the site teams to make good things happen," says Arnold.

Some of that training is acquired through United University, a program for UPPM's site teams, including office staff, property managers, assistant property managers, leasing agents and community managers for student housing sites. Created in 2016 and following a college-like format, participants take classes at their own speed and receive an "associate's degree" upon completion. "Once they have their associate degree," says Arnold, "they can get their IREM ARM [Accredited Residential Manager]. When they complete their "bachelor's degree," they can



COO Jeff Arnold leads a 2019 economic forecast panel discussion at an IREM New York Capital Region chapter luncheon.



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—Greg Eves, UPPM marketing and PR specialist

start working toward their CPM designation. So, we integrate IREM learning into our United University."

Besides fulfilling a company leadership development goal, the United University serves to help combat attrition. UPPM incentivizes participants in the program: Those who participate in the United University program, then remain with the company for a year after receiving their associate's degree, receive a monetary bonus. "This new generation has a hunger for development, so we give them this platform," says Arnold. "And the participants love it. It's something that people don't see at other companies." He also notes that past participants of the program, once they have their bachelor's degree, are automatically invited to interview for any open positions.

The exchange of new ideas and opportunities has extended to the wider world of IREM. "I've had a

couple of different companies call and ask how to put an education program together," Arnold says. "That's what I like about IREM; we all learn from one another."

UPPM's training extends to social media as well. Greg Eves, marketing and PR specialist for UPPM, works with managers in all of the company's properties to execute a social media strategy. Since each of the 30 properties has its own Instagram, Facebook and Twitter accounts, UPPM instituted a set of social media guidelines known as Socially F.I.T. "The guidelines help managers be aware of their online reputation," says Eves. "We also encourage each account to get new reviews on fresh content as soon as possible, from new tenants or residents, and make sure that each property is showcasing its amenities in original, organic programming every week."



United Group CEO Michael J. Uccellini, CPM, speaks to IREM members at a local chapter meeting.