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**INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED HEARTHSTONE INSTITUTE MERGES
ADVISORY DIVISION INTO NASHVILLE'S ABE'S GARDEN COMMUNITY**

The Mission-Aligned Union Will Improve the Development and Sharing of Senior Care Best-Practice Resources to People Living with Dementia, Their Caregivers and Other Senior Living Providers Across the Globe

Nashville, Tenn. —About one in nine people in the United States age 65 and over has Alzheimer's dementia¹. That number is expected to continuously climb as the Baby Boomers age. With a mission of improving the quality of life for seniors including the increasing population living with dementia and their caregivers, two internationally recognized leaders in dementia care joined forces. On September 2, 2022, the Education and Advisory Division of world-renowned memory care and engagement consultancy [Hearthstone Institute](#) merged into Nashville-based nonprofit organization [Abe's Garden Community](#), forming an additional specialized offering named **Hearthstone Institute at Abe's Garden (HIAG)**.

Now HIAG can make industry-wide advancements by training other senior living providers on brain health and memory support best practices, while also offering valuable caregiving education and engagement tools to families living their dementia journey.

"This merger will ultimately provide care and best practice resources to thousands of people living with dementia," said Michael D. Shmerling, Founder and Board Chair of Abe's Garden Community, a senior living community that was named a "groundbreaker" in dementia

design in the *World Alzheimer Report 2020*. “Our community has seen how Hearthstone’s training can improve the quality of life for those living with memory loss and all seniors. We believe now is the time to share this with others and bring hope to those in need.”

Abe’s Garden Community began implementing the Hearthstone Institute’s evidence-based engagement approach *I’m Still Here*® when it opened its doors to memory support residents in 2015, and has since incorporated it across all service lines, including independent and assisted living. The *I’m Still Here*® approach recognizes that exercise, socialization and cognitive stimulation are critical for achieving optimal levels of brain health and functionality throughout a person’s lifetime. Abe’s Garden Community has been certified as an *I’m Still Here*® *Center of Excellence* since 2015 and has been involved in several studies to help determine best practices in dementia care, engagement and design.

The nonprofit organization is named after Abram C. “Abe” Shmerling, MD, who lived with Alzheimer’s disease for 11 years after his 1995 diagnosis. His family started the senior living community in his honor. “With this merger, our commitment and desire to help others will continue to impact lives the way my father, Abe, would have wanted it to,” said Judy Shmerling Given, Abe’s Garden Community Senior Director, Campus Development.

For more than 25 years the Hearthstone Institute has researched, trained, and provided best-practice education for memory care communities. The approach was developed by Dr. John Zeisel, PhD. Currently, there are over 30 certified *I’m Still Here*® *Centers of Excellence* nationally and the organization has a strong presence abroad. This merger will enable Abe’s Garden Community and the Hearthstone Institute to reach more people with their unique methodology and create even more programs and techniques that will improve the lives of those with memory challenges.

“Hearthstone has been partnering with the Abe’s Garden Community team for over six years to embed and expand the *I’m Still Here*® approach into their program,” says Sharon Johnson, Senior Director of the Hearthstone Institute. “I am excited to begin this next chapter to fulfill our shared mission of creating a meaningful, purposeful life for people living with cognitive challenges around the world.”

This mission-aligned union means Abe’s Garden Community and the Hearthstone Institute will positively impact more people around the globe by establishing new evidence-

based programs and approaches to care and engagement and making these readily accessible to families and senior living professionals. Communities can now contact Abe's Garden Community to receive training on Hearthstone Institute's approaches and programming and become certified to create opportunities for true staff engagement and increased quality of life for seniors and those living with memory challenges.

"This merger is the perfect opportunity to celebrate how far we've come to help those on the dementia journey," said Shmerling. "This is also the chance to look forward and recognize the impact our two organizations can make in changing the lives of those diagnosed with dementia and their caregivers for years to come."

About Abe's Garden Community

Abe's Garden Community, located at 115 Woodmont Boulevard in Nashville, TN, provides independent living, assisted living and memory support, and offers in-home care and community-based programming to residents and seniors living off campus. The 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization's mission is to establish a replicable model for senior life that is focused on brain health, wellness and purposeful living. Abe's Garden Community is focused on improving the quality of life for older adults and provides all those they serve with person-directed care and enhanced programming. More information about Abe's Garden Community is available by calling **615.997.3030** or by visiting abesgarden.org.

About the Hearthstone Institute

The Hearthstone Institute offers comprehensive, transformational, evidence-based dementia education to the senior care industry. The educational experiences focus on sustainable, non-pharmacological approaches to meet the needs and address the challenges of people living with all types and stages of memory loss.

Backed by over 25 years of research and field testing, each customizable training is powered by the innovative *I'm Still Here*® approach. This unique philosophy creates opportunities for true engagement and increased quality of life for persons living with dementia and their care partners.

Partner organizations that complete the full training program are awarded a certification attesting to their distinction as an *I'm Still Here*® *Center of Excellence* which remains in force as long as training principles and practices are maintained, as evidenced by successful completion of an annual recertification visit.

¹ <https://www.alz.org/media/Documents/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf#page=21>