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Small Homes, Big Impact: CFI Conference Aligns with WHO's Global Call for Social Connection

Movement Works to Combat Senior Loneliness through Community-Focused Design

St. Louis, MO — July 31, 2025 —As global recognition of loneliness intensifies following a landmark World Health Organization (WHO) report identifying loneliness as a public health crisis, the Center for Innovation (CFI) is convening leaders from across the country to showcase bold, evidence-based solutions. At the 2025 CFI Conference, held August 11-14 in St. Louis, senior care innovators will explore how small home models, including the nationally recognized Green House Project, are working to reduce social disconnection through intentional design and urban innovation.

The conference will explore how innovative, human-centered housing models, such as small homes, cohousing clusters, and shared neighborhood amenities, can help rebuild the social fabric in cities and suburbs alike. EverTrue Laclede Groves, in Webster Groves, MO, is an example of a traditional long-term care environment that has been converted into individual households and apartments, reimagining what it means to live and age with dignity, connection, and purpose.

"This report is a clarion call, but it's not news to those of us in the small home movement," said Susan Ryan, CEO of CFI. "For nearly two decades, we've seen how intentional environments—homes designed to foster community and purpose—can transform lives. The WHO findings validate what we've long known: connection is a cornerstone of health."

According to the WHO report, loneliness and social isolation is on the rise, with one in six people globally experiencing loneliness, which contributes to over 871,000 premature deaths annually and significantly impacts both mental and physical well-being.

Dr. Kelly Tremblay, who is an advisor to the WHO and to CFI, says, "The WHO found strong social connections can lead to better health and longer life, and that's what the small home movement is showing as well," said Tremblay. "I'm heartened to see the serious attention being given to the health impacts of loneliness and isolation and to be part of meaningful, local efforts to foster real connection."

Tim Dolan, who started Dolan Memory Care Homes over 30 years ago, explained, “People thrive in homes, not institutions. That’s why every one of our 17 memory care homes is intentionally designed to feel like a real home—with open kitchens, shared meals at a single table, and safe access to the outdoors. When people feel at ease, they connect more easily, and that sense of connection is essential to their well-being.”

About Center for Innovation

The Center for Innovation (CFI) is a global nonprofit organization dedicated to transforming aging services through person-directed practices, community connection, and culture change. As the parent organization of The Green House Project and Pioneer Network, CFI brings together two leading voices in eldercare reform to create empowering, person-directed services and support for all older adults. For more information, visit: [CFI2025.org](https://www.cfi2025.org).

Learn more about the WHO’s report on social connection here:

<https://www.who.int/news/item/30-06-2025-social-connection-linked-to-improved-health-and-reduced-risk-of-early-death>

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Photo Caption:

Small home designs foster joy, connection, and purpose—key themes of the 2025 CFI Conference on combating senior loneliness.