

## ”Towards Sustainable Elderly Care”

### – Successful EAHSA 2010 Conference in Stockholm

The number of senior citizens in Europe is increasing at a breathtaking pace. Creating elderly care that is able to function in the future is a burgeoning challenge. The EAHSA “Towards Sustainable Elderly Care” conference in Stockholm last spring – arranged in association with Micasa Fastigheter – determined that new, innovative solutions are necessary for success. Excellent speakers and well-organized events provided two inspiring days of knowledge sharing.

The lobby at the Marriott Hotel in the centre of Stockholm is bathed in light. The European Association of Homes and Services for the Ageing (EAHSA) is holding its third conference and 155 delegates from 15 European countries have gathered here. Among them are representatives from every imaginable branch of elder care – carers, professional organizations, aids and appliances retailers, property companies, and more. The participants are curious and keen to learn; the atmosphere is friendly. It is obvious that elder care leads to commitment – the industry wants to advance.

The big question within elder care throughout Europe is how an increasing number of the elderly are to be cared for in the context of increasingly limited resources and challenging economic times.

Freek Lapré, EAHSA Chairman, thinks we must be revolutionary and think beyond our normal boundaries



*Just over 150 people gathered for the opening addresses.*



*The conference in Stockholm was the third in Europe.*



*Serge de Kerf and Anders Nordstrand in conversation with Stockholm City Lord Mayor, Bo Bladholm.*



*Freek Lapré, EAHSA Chairman, together with board members Serge de Kerf, Sodexo, conference organizer Anders Nordstrand, Micasa Fastigheter MD, and Jean-Christophe Vanderhagen, Belgian Confederation of Construction.*



*Opening keynote speaker, Professor Ernst Gehmacher.*



*The conference was held at the newly built Marriott Hotel at Fridhemsplan.*



*There were lively discussions throughout the conference.*



*Reception at Stockholm City Hall.*

▶ in order to find new, creative solutions.

“If we continue to think along traditional lines we risk fixating on cutting costs, which will not benefit the elderly. New, innovative ideas can help us find the right way ahead for the elderly in the future. We must rid ourselves of our old habits.”

So how might things advance in concrete terms? It is about making more intense and innovative use of technology to provide care and self-care and to make life easier for the elderly. The elderly must be able to better look after

themselves and live at home to a greater extent than today. Aids, appliances and technological solutions, such as personalized care giving via computers, will play major roles. It is also crucial that consideration be given to the opinions of the elderly when various products are being designed in order for the latter to be of use.

Pro-active efforts are also important. The prevention of illness and accidents, which involve major healthcare costs when they occur, can provide great benefits. A Norwegian study has shown

that 15 weeks of daily tai chi for the elderly significantly reduces falling accidents. One year’s strength training reduces falling accidents by 33 percent.

Delegates mingle and conversations are held in English, Dutch, French and Spanish as well as in Swedish. Ewa Samuelsson, Chairman of the Board at Micasa Fastigheter and a Stockholm city councillor, likes to see the senior boom in a positive light. She feels that today’s senior citizens have a great deal to offer society.

“Brain capacity reaches its zenith ▶

▶ between 55 and 65 years old. Most 65 to 80 year olds feel they are living life the same way as when they were younger, so taking advantage of their knowhow and experience can provide great benefits to society.”

Ewa Samuelsson points out that we should not look on the elderly as a homogenous group, but rather approach each individual in a respectful, sensitive manner. She sees moving toward individualized solutions as a trend throughout elder care.

The importance of social contacts is significant, as loneliness leads to illness and depression. Close and familiar relations, staying active, doing things in company and getting visits from someone who cares are a recipe for a sense of participation and community. When people get to do what they really want we will achieve a sustainable society and sustainable elder care.

Micasa Fastigheter showed how it is working to introduce social companionship to senior living during a morning field trip to some of its residences. Delegates were met by tenants playing violins and the guided tour was led by a resident who held the commentary in English. One Dutch delegate observed:

“The field trips were outstanding, unforgettable. It’s usually a manager who does the guiding, but though it’s really unusual for a tenant to do it, it’s obvious when you think about it. Who better to let us know how things work than one of the tenants?”

The conference was characterized by a commitment to, and enthusiasm for, the future. Freek Lapré is satisfied. He is confident the conference has contributed to long-term sustainable elder care.

“The speakers were excellent. They introduced interesting subjects and creative solutions were presented. This is all positive and promising. And what’s more, the organization – buses, field trips, reception and logistics – worked well. The fact that everything went like clockwork meant a lot for the conference. Thursday evening’s conclusion with the reception at Stockholm City Hall was also a success.”

He notes that there is a great deal of enthusiasm and knowhow in the industry. Now it is a matter of maintaining the high level of energy that was so noticeable at the conference and taking advantage of it to lead developments in the right direction. ■



*The colonnade at Stockholm City Hall.*



*Lunch time.*



*Delegates admire the view from Stockholm City Hall.*



*Tore J Larsson, prof. Royal Institute of Technology, program manager for the entire conference, flanked by delegates.*



*Ewa Nordstrand, Vice Mayor of Stockholm and Chariman of Micasa Fastigheter, greets delegates.*



*Coffee break.*



*Conference delegates return from the senior living field trip.*