

# Benchmark Appoints COO, CFO; Milestone Retirement Names COO

By **Tim Regan** | February 16, 2021

Benchmark Senior Living and Milestone Retirement Communities announced a flurry of executive personnel changes Tuesday, resulting in C-suite changes for both companies.

Waltham, Massachusetts-based Benchmark has named Jerry Liang to the role of executive vice president and CFO and John Hartmayer to the role of executive vice president and COO. Liang's hiring is effective immediately, while Hartmayer is slated to come aboard on March 8.

Benchmark also promoted Chief Marketing Officer Heather Frahm to serve in the concurrent role of executive vice president.

As COO, Hartmayer will manage community operations, including resident care, programming, culinary and legal matters. He previously worked as senior vice president of operations for Louisville, Kentucky-based Atria Senior Living's east division.

Liang most recently worked as senior vice president of investments and development at McLean-based Sunrise Senior Living. In his new position with Benchmark, he is tasked with overseeing development, asset management, capital structuring, investor relations, accounting, treasury and risk management.

Current Benchmark CFO Sarah Laffey is moving to a part-time consulting role with the company and will oversee investments for its continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs). Benchmark currently manages four CCRCs in its 63-property portfolio.

The personnel moves will aid Benchmark's current growth and operations strategy, the company noted in a press release. The company recently acquired an ownership stake in the largest CCRC in Connecticut and assumed operations of the campus. Benchmark also recently touted the formation of a coronavirus advisory council made up of medical and public health experts.

"I am confident that our executive team and our dedicated community associates will not only help us continue to provide superior services to our residents, but also help us expand Benchmark's presence in the region," Benchmark Founder CEO and Chairman Tom Grape said in a press release on the hirings.

Benchmark didn't immediately elaborate on the announcements when reached by Senior Housing News Tuesday afternoon.

Meanwhile, Milestone Retirement also announced Tuesday it had promoted Caryl Ridgeway to the role of COO, and Rosalyn Watson to the role of Chief Clinical Officer.

The Vancouver, Washington-based company announced the personnel moves on Tuesday. Milestone has more than 35 communities in 10 states across the United States.

As COO, Ridgeway is positioned to help the operator build its teams while growing occupancy and revenue. Specifically, she is tasked with working with ownership groups on new development projects and helping with the recruitment and training of associates at Milestone's newly built communities.

Ridgeway first came aboard in 2018 as the organization's vice president of operations. She has helped guide Milestone's pandemic response since then, including through a visitation program called the Compassionate Care Visit Program under which residents and their families can share a social visit while wearing full personal protective equipment (PPE).

Outside of the senior living industry, she has also worked in accounting, small business bakery ownership, as an IT analyst, and as an emergency medical technician who served on the Red Cross Disaster Relief Team during the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995.

As Chief Clinical Officer, Watson will work with the operator's regional and community teams to support clinical operations and compliance. Her first priorities include creating a training platform for clinical leaders, implementing a plan to transition to new electronic health record systems and providing professional development opportunities for unlicensed caregivers.

She joined Milestone in 2016, and was most recently executive vice president of clinical and compliance. Before that, her titles have included chief wellness officer, owner, vice president of clinical resource and national director of resident care.

"We are honored to promote Caryl and Rosalyn into their new roles and welcome them as owners," said Milestone CEO Paul Dendy in a press release. "Both of these outstanding women bring a passion for serving seniors, extensive industry knowledge, and a desire and energy to do an outstanding job."

Milestone currently has several communities in various stages of development and construction, with opening dates scheduled for mid-2021 through 2023, according to a representative for the company.