

# SAGE USA 2011

## Beginning of a SAGE Adventure | August 2011

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STUDYING & ADVANCING GLOBAL ELDERCARE

I would like to share an exciting few months that I have just experienced commencing on the 2nd May.

As an employee of UnitingCare Ageing NSW & ACT I was nominated for the inaugural Carol Penning memorial inspired leadership award and was very fortunate to win. This was a very humbling and honored experience as Carol was my mentor and started my journey on the road of person centred care for those people living with dementia.

The award prize was quite a substantial amount of money to further my studies. This created a problem! - what, when, where and how would I devote my time and award money in a way that would best afford me further insight into the contemporized models of elder care and building design, a passion of mine which has been extenuated by my recent studies at Victoria University in the Masters of Health Science Aged Services.

A friend of mine suggested that the IAHSa conference would be a good choice as it gathers leaders in the field from across the globe and she would be attending as representative of the Aged Care Channel. I gave it some thought and googled to find what this IAHSa was all about. Having no luck in finding this conference, mainly because I had the spelling wrong, but fortunately I stumbled across SAGE tours and the wonderful adventure began.

This has been the fastest moving rewarding, educational, networking association that I have ever come in contact with. Judy Martin SAGE program leader, from email address JM GlobalConnect "appropriately named" is like a conductor of an orchestra and can in one conversation work out how and who to connect you with like minded people from all around the globe.

I signed up for the 2011 SAGE tour to Philadelphia and Washington and, guess what? it culminates in a fully organized IAHSa conference program in Washington - my goal was reached. The prospect of meeting leaders in the fields of design and programs for our ageing population is almost mouth watering.

The SAGE tour to East Coast USA will visit a number of Aged care and Retirement Living facilities in the Philadelphia region providing delegates with the opportunity to gain valuable insights in the delivery of care and services from key professionals. Study tour site visits are selected to highlight innovative programs, use of new technology, and advanced design features, and will include visits to institutional and community based settings offering the full continuum of care. I believe there are tours also going to Boston and to Chicago and New York at the same time. That's a whole contingent in America as part of SAGE representing Australia.

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The excitement didn't end with this discovery, Judy in her knowing way suggested I contact an industry colleague of hers based in the USA. She had met this colleague through previous SAGE tours to San Francisco. Dr Nader Shabahangi is CEO and Founder of Agesong a very progressive organization for elderly in San Francisco. So in the momentum Judy had set with in a 24hr period I had received an email from Nader inviting me, not only to stop and see their facilities, but to stay for 4 days and partake in an intern program to fully understand their strategies for helping people with memory loss. I could not believe my luck.

Naomi from Flight Centre (the SAGE designated travel agent) organized everything from hotels, transport to and from Australia and to San Francisco then on to connect with the SAGE group in Philadelphia, all within the budget of the grant I had received for my award. To top off the excitement I met Professor Steven Sabat at the Alzheimer's conference in Brisbane.

Steven just happens to teach at Georgetown University Washington DC and has invited me to catch up with him and tour Georgetown UNI with him. This is the oldest Catholic and Jesuit University in America established in 1789 and will be an additional highlight of my SAGE experience.

In closing, on embarking on this adventure I had no idea of where I was going and was unclear of how to best use my opportunity to advance my knowledge in a global way. Judy from SAGE has opened up my vision and connection to the world, she has also now connected me with leaders of aged care in London but that is for my next trip.

It's signing off now until my return from the SAGE adventure when I can tell you all how it went. If its anything like it has started, from my first contact with Judy, it is going to be amazing.....

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