

## Social interaction a great housewarming

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BY DONNA ROLANDO

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Smiles and handshakes can do as much as a fresh coat of paint to make you want to stay in an apartment or condo.



PHOTOS BY NICK BRANDRETH/SPECIAL TO THE HERALD NEWS

**The great room at AVE by Korman Communities, an apartment community in Clifton.**

That's because smiles and handshakes are simple but powerful tools for meeting neighbors and making new friends in a community — we're less likely to want to move from our friends.

"It's always good to introduce yourself whether face to face or with a friendly note," said Tammy Kotula, spokeswoman for Apartments.com, about what works to break the ice in a new home.

"If you have a hard time approaching people, it's good to get in the habit of smiling more," she said.

At the same time, steer clear of things that irritate neighbors, especially noise. Even vacuuming at odd hours can be an irritant, she said. Check the lease for guidance on hours for parties and other noisemaking activities.



NICK BANDRETH / SPECIAL TO THE RECORD

**Other areas in the complex include a built-in movie theater.**

Becoming a regular at your apartment or condo gym is another way to get to know people, Kotula said.

"A lot of professionally managed buildings do meet-and-greets and happy hours, so definitely take advantage of these opportunities," she added. "You don't want to come across as too threatening," perhaps with an overly-eager attitude, she warned.

The friendship factor is something that the founders of AVE by Korman Communities took into account in designing the Clifton rental site, with features like a great room where residents can mingle, the in-house movie theater, or the cafe where hot drinks are served throughout the day.

"We have these great common spaces that encourage residents to come down and socialize outside their specific residences," said Lea Anne Welsh, president of AVE by Korman Communities. "We design our communities on creating space and amenities that residents can come and gather around," she said.

The fitness center is one of those gathering spots, bringing people together with common interests and for classes such as Pilates and yoga.

When it comes to working out, she said, "most people have routines, and just by the nature of people, they start chit-chatting."

It's also part of the job for AVE's team leaders to "promote social interaction" and bring people together over Scrabble, trivia games and other activities.

"We take an active approach in the process. We want people to feel at home," Welsh said.

Welsh said that everyday activities, like getting the mail or waiting for an elevator, also can be opportunities to get to know your neighbor.

At active adult communities such as K. Hovnanian's Four Seasons at Great Notch, clubhouses bring people together and are "one of the main reasons people choose that lifestyle," said spokesman Douglas Fenichel. The facilities, such as the swimming pool, fitness centers, card rooms, tennis courts and whatnot, create a place where people can go to do the things they like doing and meet others who enjoy the same pastimes. An activities director coordinates different clubs and events that also help residents to broaden their horizons and mingle, he added.

But residents can also take the initiative when it comes to meeting neighbors. At their Hoboken apartment, Ed Cunning, vice president of Park Lane Communications in New York City, hosted several small cocktail parties with his wife to get to know the neighbors. Now that they live in a Port Monmouth town house, he said, "We continue to mingle and meet our neighbors by hosting small get-togethers. We are certainly looking forward to taking advantage of the pool and exercise facilities to meet even more people during the summer."