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United Hebrew of New Rochelle Partners with New Rochelle Police Department to Stage Suspicious-Package Drill and Test Disaster Preparedness Plans

*Drill in response to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) rules for healthcare providers to better coordinate their disaster response plans with local emergency personnel*

(New Rochelle, NY, May 30, 2018)........A bomb-sniffing dog is not something you expect to see at a skilled nursing facility. Fortunately, his presence today at United Hebrew of New Rochelle was only a drill. Staged by United Hebrew in partnership with the New Rochelle Police Department (NRPD), the “Code Orange” emergency drill put the nursing home’s disaster preparation plans to the test, while providing an opportunity for the NRPD’s Critical Incident Team and K9 Bomb Detection Unit to rehearse their own emergency response to the incident.

“United Hebrew is well-prepared for the unique circumstances involved in protecting elderly residents who may have limited mobility and difficulty understanding what is happening,” said Rita Mabli, United Hebrew’s CEO. The exercise was designed to test staff response to the “emergency” situation and to facilitate coordination between the facility, local, and county emergency resources in the case of such a disaster.

The mock scenario and drill were planned to meet rules set by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS), which mandate that healthcare providers must be prepared to handle all kinds of emergency situations.

The New Rochelle Police Department descended upon the facility at 10:30 a.m. today after being called upon to investigate a suspicious package in the first floor lobby. Upon arrival, police were informed by nursing home staff about a backpack left in the lobby by a disgruntled employee who made threats before leaving the facility. The K9 unit performed a perimeter and article search, while a partial evacuation of the area took place. The police team determined there was no immediate threat.
“Our staff responded swiftly, and our local police department worked efficiently to defuse the situation,” says Rita Mabli, president and CEO of United Hebrew. “We’re all pleased by the results of the drill, which ensures we are well prepared to reinforce the safety of the residents in our care.”

The Critical Incident Unit that responded to the mock threat included six police officers and Valor, a German Shepherd K9 explosive bomb detection dog with seven years of experience. The unit is one of three critical emergency services units at the NRPD, ensuring the department is always ready to respond to high-intensity situations, according to Salerno.

Sergeant Joe Salerno, team leader in the Critical Incident Unit, New Rochelle Police Department noted: “This drill worked because it not only helped one of our partners in the community, it benefits our department as well,” said. “It’s a great proactive training exercise for us to do together and better prepares us for the future. Residents are reassured that United Hebrew has the proper measures in the place to handle any type of emergency.”

This was not the first time United Hebrew practiced a coordinated response to an emergency situation according to Mabli. Her staff has also rehearsed what to do in an active shooter situation, how to handle a plane crashing into the building, and how to contain a chemical spill. United Hebrew also provides regular in-service training for its staff on situations particular to the care of an aging population, such as the wandering of residents diagnosed with Alzheimer’s or dementia.

After Hurricane Sandy, United Hebrew upgraded its disaster plans in order to ensure care is delivered without interruption to the 1,000 seniors the organization serves through its home health division and across the entire eldercare campus, which includes the nursing home, assisted living, and Alzheimer’s and dementia care. In addition to the emergency policies and procedures in place, the organization stocks plentiful supplies, and has five backup generators and a backup call system.

According to CMS, the rules apply to 17 different types of healthcare providers, including hospitals and long-term care facilities. Providers must adhere to four best practice standards: developing an emergency plan, creating a communications plan, having a training program and developing appropriate policies and procedures. United Hebrew is well-prepared to meet the mandate, according to Mabli.

“We’re ready. Advance planning is essential to caring for our seniors,” said Mabli. “Our residents’ healthcare needs don’t stop when disaster strikes, so time we spend anticipating and preparing for emergencies is time well spent. We do everything we can to protect our ‘family,’ and that is how we think of our residents.”

About United Hebrew
United Hebrew of New Rochelle is a vibrant not-for-profit, non-sectarian, multi-service campus of comprehensive care nestled on 7.5 acres. United Hebrew has been serving the Westchester metropolitan area since 1919, and today, works with more than 1,000 clients daily. Services include: **Long-Term Skilled Nursing; Burke Rehabilitation at United Hebrew; Willow Towers Assisted Living (The Beverly and Alfred J. Green Pavilion), Memory Care at Willow Gardens, The Phoenix Neighborhood and Griffen Program at Willow Towers, and Nightingale Neighborhood at United Hebrew; Independent Senior Housing (Low-Savin Soundview and Meadow Lane Senior Apartments); Health at Home (AZOR Licensed Home Health Care and a Certified Home Health Agency); and Private Geriatric Care Management Services (Raven Care Advocates).** For more information, call (914) 632-2804 or visit [www.uhgc.org](http://www.uhgc.org).