United Hebrew of New Rochelle
THE HARRY AND JEANETTE WEINBERG CAMPUS

A CENTURY TO CELEBRATE 1919-2019
Imagine if our first residents could magically return for a visit. They would marvel at our facility’s private rooms with their own bathroom. What a luxury!

And, dinner in a dining room with flowers and upholstered chairs? That might seem unbelievable. Some things they would find strange. They would wonder why ladies wore trousers and men didn’t wear suits. They would see rooms with televisions and family photos in color as well as people using cell phones and ear buds. So many changes to absorb!

Most of all, our visitors would be amazed to see that their modest wood-frame house had been replaced by an entire campus of care, offering services they could not have fathomed in their day.

Still, we suspect these time travelers would recognize one thing: our welcoming smiles, warmth, and readiness to help.

From the very beginning, United Hebrew has treated residents as if they were cherished family members. We’ve worked hard to maintain our culture of compassionate care, where everyone—residents and staff—are treated with kindness and respect. It is unthinkable that a staff member might walk past a resident without looking that person in the eye, saying a few kind words, and smiling.
Some say it is quite a feat to motivate our 800-member staff to give 100 percent every day. But our actions speak for themselves, and louder than words. Staff know we stand behind them and give them what they need to provide exemplary care. We believe that is the main reason United Hebrew has one of the lowest staff turnover rates in New York State.

Even as we’ve grown, we’ve successfully maintained our culture. Whereas we once operated merely as a rest home, we now manage seven lines of business: an award-winning assisted-living facility, a top-rated nursing and rehabilitation center, a memory care community dedicated to Alzheimer’s and dementia care, and two independent senior housing apartment buildings. We also offer two types of home health services to keep people safe and secure in their own homes, if that’s where they prefer to be. We now support 1,000 seniors either on our campus or in the community.

Our next century will bring even more growth and change, but our passion and concern for people will remain the same. We will be staying ahead of the curve in providing the best support for our seniors and allowing them the dignity to age in a familiar place. United Hebrew will always remain recognizable to any visitor from the past.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

James Staudt, Board Chair
Rita C. Mabli, President & CEO
In 1919, before there was Social Security and pensions became prevalent, countless older people spent their last years in urban poorhouses. The elderly—once the most respected members of their families—were now seen as a financial burden that urban working-class families could not afford. The aged were sent to almshouses for the homeless, where they lived in poor conditions, sleeping alongside orphans, the mentally ill, incapacitated adults, and other societal outcasts.

In this environment, the United Krakauer Charity and Aid Society, an organization that helped immigrants acclimate to America, felt obligated to rescue Jewish seniors from the almshouses. The Society founded the United Home for Aged Hebrews in New Rochelle.

Occupying a large two-story frame house on three park-like acres on Pelham Road, the home became a bucolic sanctuary for elderly men and women without means. The Home’s staff became their family. One hundred years later, United Hebrew is still treating residents like family. Now completely nondenominational, United Hebrew remains on Pelham Road, but the site has grown from three to 7.5 acres. Instead of a single frame house, United Hebrew operates a skilled-nursing and rehabilitation center, assisted-living facility, a memory-care community, senior housing apartments, and home health services. Whereas the organization housed a handful of men and women when it opened, it now proudly supports 1,000 people on its campus and in the community.

Yet, some things remain the same. United Hebrew enables its residents to retain their dignity, continues to respect them for their accomplishments and wisdom, and provides experiences and opportunities that add purpose to their lives. Residents continue to be treated like cherished family members. And that will be true one hundred years from now as well.
1919 The Idea Takes Root

Members of the United Krakauer Charity & Aid Society gathered at New York’s Pennsylvania Hotel on June 5, 1919 to discuss a proposed Home for the Aged. Solomon J. Manne, the society’s president, explained how the idea of creating a home “germinated in his mind and developed into the concrete result that has now been obtained,” according to the minutes. Committees were arranged to file for incorporation and select a name.

By the time Manne hosted a board meeting in his Upper West Side home on October 8, 1919, a name had been chosen: United Home for Aged Hebrews. The board discussed “a parcel of property known as 115 Pelham Road or new number 391 Pelham Road.” The minutes read, “The property is situated in the City of New Rochelle and covers about three acres of land. The building on it is a massive structure originally erected for private use.... It is... surrounded by trees and shrubbery insuring perfect privacy.” The purchase price: $55,000.

The site’s “easy access of New York” was important. In 1919, the location was described as “one hour and 15 minutes away from 116th Street by subway and car.”

By December 27, 1919, the New York State Board of Charities had approved the formation of the United Home for Aged Hebrews of New Rochelle. Manne became its first president; his inspired idea was taking shape.
1920s United Hebrew Opens

“The weather was ideal and a large crowd journeyed to New Rochelle to witness the ceremonies” when the home was dedicated on Sunday afternoon, May 16, 1920, reported The American Hebrew in its May 21, 1920 edition. Visitors “… were treated to the spectacle of the wonderful building and grounds. They saw the beautifully shaded lawn in front of the building and were conducted through the garden where the old men and women will be able to walk and breathe the fresh air.”

In 1921, the house on Pelham Road welcomed its first residents. The precise number has been lost, but separate sources put it as either 6 or 13. By 1929, there were 51 men and women residents who slept in separate dormitories.

“Through the benefits received by them in the Home, the general condition of the inmates improved, their spirit was quickened, and new zest was added to their lives,” according to board minutes recorded in 1929.

But soon more room was necessary.

A resident registry for Aaron Abramowitz, a retired butcher.
The Great Depression slowed the expansion of many charitable organizations, but United Hebrew was the fortunate exception. The late Adolph C. Arber had generously bequeathed sufficient funds to build a $35,000 addition to the frame house on Pelham Road. The large extension was fire proof and connected to all floors in the original structure. United Hebrew housed 65 residents when the structure was dedicated by Alexander Pfeiffer, President of United Hebrew, on May 14, 1934. With the new red-brick addition, there was room for 50 more.

Unmarried residents continued to sleep in dormitories in the new building (although there were 10 private rooms for married couples). One novel accommodation was added: a large “smoking lounge for men.” Yes, smoking was allowed, and men relished their cigars as supplied by the Ladies’ Auxiliary, which had insisted it be the sole and exclusive cigar supplier back in 1928.

In 1936, it cost 34 cents a day to feed each person, equal to $6.18 in today’s dollars. The Home operated on a fiscally conservative budget because, as from its earliest days, the institution relied solely on voluntary contributions from donors to cover all expenses. Residents were poor; they were not required to pay for anything. All their needs were provided for them: shelter, clothing, food, amenities, and medical care.

Thankfully, the nation took a historic step to reduce poverty among seniors when the Social Security Act of 1935 became law. Retired workers began to receive monthly benefits in 1940. But there was one significant restriction: the benefit was not granted to the aged who lived in public institutions, which were primarily almshouses. This created a greater demand for private facilities, including United Hebrew.
1940s The Rhythm of Daily Life

By 1941, United Hebrew had 76 residents. It continued to distinguish itself from other homes for the aged with its cleanliness, advanced care, and communal feeling. According to board minutes recorded at the May 27, 1941 meeting, “Miss Mulcahy, State Division Inspector of Homes, and Miss Anne Miller, Field Inspector, praised our home as being unique among old age institutions, and that similar expressions of commendation were received from Mrs. Dreadner of the Welfare Board of Westchester County and Mr. Ebbett, the Commissioner of Welfare of the City of Yonkers.”

In 1949, the home offered 80 residents a comfortable rhythm of daily life. Breakfast at 8 am, lunch at noon, dinner at 5 pm, and afternoon tea served at 3 pm. Men dressed in suits and ties; women in skirts or dresses, even while weaving baskets, painting cigarette boxes, sewing, knitting, or crocheting—activities that were part of the Home’s occupational therapy program. When residents fell ill, they could go to the clinic and stay overnight in the 12-bed infirmary. United Hebrew retained a resident physician and nursing staff, offering care at all times.

But United Hebrew saw room to improve its facilities. It soon took a bold step forward.

*Occupational therapy, such as crocheting, was a part of daily life.*
1950s The First Private Rooms Ever for the Aged

In 1954, United Hebrew broke ground on a modern $1.5 million building to replace its existing home. When the Saul and Ada Gutner Pavilion opened in 1957, it was hailed as “an entirely new concept in living for the elderly in need and the first major departure from the institutional atmosphere of the traditional old age home.”

The building incorporated the newest architectural concepts with modern social thought. The T-shaped building had a unique saw-tooth design that—for the first time in any home for the aged—allowed each resident a completely private living-bedroom with double exposure. It also had a building-wide public address system. One of its important functions was to announce stock market results at the end of each trading day.

By the beginning of November 1958, United Hebrew had 102 beds, 96 residents—26 male and 69 female—and seven pending applications.

“A departure from the traditional old age home.”
1960s  Expanding Again

The nation was in the middle of a huge increase in the number of seniors. The elderly population increased more rapidly from 1950 to 1980 than the U.S. population as a whole. (The number of people 65 years or older would double from 12.4 million in 1950, or 8.1 percent of the population, to 24.9 million in 1980, or 9.9 percent of the population.)

In 1965, United Hebrew increased its capacity by 50 percent, by adding a $750,000 three-story wing to the Gutner Pavilion. The structure was further enhanced with air conditioning, new laboratory and x-ray rooms, and an upgraded hospital unit with glassed-in rooms and oxygen and vacuum suction available at each bed.

“We had the luxury of a lab, x-ray rooms, oxygen and suction, plus a medical director, three on-site physicians, and registered nurses,” explained Patricia McCormack, RN, who spent 50 years in nursing at United Hebrew. “While other places had to send their residents to the hospital for services, we were able to keep them here.” For residents, it was comforting to receive care from physicians and nurses who knew them.

*President Saul Kramer (second from right) helps break ground for the new wing.*
Living at United Hebrew promoted good health, and residents enjoyed life to the fullest. There were boat rides on the Long Island Sound. Students from the College of New Rochelle were frequent visitors. Photographs show that residents loved dinner parties and celebrating holidays: New Year’s Eve, Hanukkah, and many more. The Home’s Westchester Ladies Auxiliary organized such events.

One little known fact: United Hebrew played a small role in the popular culture that boomed in the Sixties. Art Garfunkel recorded the “Voices of Old Friends” interlude on Simon and Garfunkel’s 1968 album “Bookends” at United Hebrew.

During the 1960s, United Hebrew saw a growing need to provide round-the-clock nursing care for members of the community. Federal laws had been amended in the 1950s to promote the growth of skilled-nursing facilities. Direct payments to healthcare providers were now allowed, and the government made available funds to help construct nonprofit nursing facilities. It also introduced the requirement that states license skilled-nursing facilities.

At the same time, many of United Hebrew’s residents were aging and needed more medical care. Once again, United Hebrew’s board moved to meet the need.
1970s Adding Skilled Nursing

In 1972, United Hebrew obtained a mortgage from the New York State Medical Care Facilities Finance Agency to construct the Lola and Saul Kramer Pavilion, a $5.25 million four-story skilled-nursing facility that connected to Gutner, which received an upgrade too. The 150-bed residence was completely renovated. With the new building, United Hebrew had 270 beds.

The pavilion was named for Saul Kramer, a former board chair, and his wife Lola for their support of United Hebrew for many years. At the time of the building’s dedication in 1976, Kramer said, “The things I dreamed about are now happening. Some of our residents have never lived better...never had better care.”

Sadly, what Kramer said was true. The majority of residents were Europeans who suffered atrocities in concentration camps during World War II. Nurses saw the tattooed numbers on their arms daily. “They were so grateful for our care,” said Joann Dewe-Mathews, RN, a United Hebrew nurse for over 40 years, about the residents. “They moved to United Hebrew for the rest of their lives, and we became their family.”

Once again, federal law allowed United Hebrew to fulfill a community need. As part of the 1974 Housing and Community Development Act that created “Section 8” housing for low-income people, the federal government instituted a cost-effective alternative to institutional housing for seniors. Plans were set in motion for new affordable housing for seniors on United Hebrew’s campus.
1980s United Home Becomes United Hebrew

When United Hebrew opened the nine-story “Soundview Apartments” also known as the Low-Savin Residence on its campus in 1980, it was one of the first in the nation to offer Section 8 housing for seniors. The House and Urban Development (HUD)-sponsored high-rise building’s 135 spacious apartments, including 16 specifically outfitted for individuals with physical disabilities, quickly filled up. Designed for independent seniors, the residence offered a maintenance-free place to call home for low-income seniors.

In 1981, Medicaid began to pay for home-based and community services, which led to United Hebrew’s Long-Term Home Health Care Program, known as the Lombardi Program. Launched in 1983, the program helped keep seniors safe and secure in their own homes with support from United Hebrew. Within four years, the program was caring for 75.

Dementia care began to emerge as a need in the 1980s. In 1984, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Alzheimer’s Association issued the first diagnostic criteria and guidelines for Alzheimer’s Disease. United Hebrew began planning a specialized unit to care for Alzheimer’s and memory-impaired
patients, becoming one of the first skilled-nursing facilities to do so. The result was the development of the Intensive Therapeutic Care Neighborhood in the nursing home, a secure unit where residents could receive the most appropriate care.

With so much enhanced care, as well as medical progress, more United Hebrew residents were living longer. During the decade, the campus had 14 residents who were 100 years old or above! United Hebrew recognized them with membership in the “Century Club.” Honoring its Centenarians is a tradition United Hebrew continues today.

Clearly, the campus had evolved to be much more than a “home” for the aged. In 1988, the board chose a new name to reflect a growing array of services: The United Hebrew Geriatric Center.

Low-Savin Apartments, before its recent facelift.

Continuing to Meet Needs

In the 1990s, there were 31.2 million seniors in the United States, and the numbers were growing. By 2000, the number would reach 35 million, or a 12 percent increase. The United Hebrew Board of Directors wanted to know if the organization was prepared to meet the diverse needs of this population.

As a result, the Board developed a strategic plan in 1997 that would lead to much of United Hebrew’s growth in the new millennium. In the meantime, United Hebrew continued to do what it does best: treating residents like family and fostering social engagement. Two couples married after meeting each other in the nursing home, including a woman in her 80s who had never married before. The staff made a fuss, even tying wedding bells to her bed.

With so much love in the air, the staff organized a Valentine’s Day wedding vow renewal. Married couples in the Home, as well as some staff members, reaffirmed their commitment to each other, followed by a festive celebration with a wedding cake, flowers, and a Champagne toast!

The staff arranged other special events. Residents loved one in particular: The staff staged a performance of the song “Leader of the Pack.” They even replicated the sound of a motorcycle on the recording when a youthful security guard rode in on a motorcycle as the song ended.
Residents took pleasure in so many things, such as a new fountain and garden on the campus, a gift from the Westchester Ladies’ Auxiliary in 1991. Meanwhile, the organizational leaders added a new service, AZOR Licensed Home Health Care in 1996. Trained certified home health aides and personal care aides were available to help seniors in the community with showering, dressing, laundry, food preparation, and housekeeping. Seniors could sign up for just a few hours a day to around-the-clock help.

In the 1990s, more seniors began to move into assisted living facilities, which maximized their residents’ independence while relieving them of daily household tasks. Lower Westchester County did not have such a facility. That would soon change, thanks to United Hebrew’s strategic plan.
2000s 21st Century Eldercare

In 2003, United Hebrew opened “Willow Towers Assisted Living”—The Beverly and Alfred J. Green Pavilion, a vibrant community with 126 apartments offering social support as well as personal care when needed.

Willow Towers was unlike most assisted living facilities. United Hebrew wanted to ensure that residents could remain there even as they aged and required more intense support. The facility obtained enhanced licensure with dual certifications from New York State—the first assisted residence in Westchester County to do so. This allows Willow Towers to operate as an Assisted Living Residence; an Enhanced Assisted Living Residence for people with extra health needs; and a Special Needs Assisted Living Residence for persons living with dementia in the 30-bed “Phoenix Neighborhood.” Loved ones can happily live at Willows Towers for a very long time.

In the event someone required skilled-nursing care, United Hebrew wanted it to be the best. Thirty years after opening the Kramer skilled-nursing Pavilion, in 2006, United Hebrew broke ground on the Lucile and Joseph Skalet Pavilion, a state-of-the-art 143,000-square-foot nursing and rehabilitation center.

Opened in 2009, the new skilled-nursing building offered all private rooms and was filled with homelike amenities. Resident rooms were arranged in clusters called “neighborhoods” to create stronger social connections. Neighborhoods consisted of small clusters of residents who could serendipitously meet up in the neighborhood’s living room and eat together in their own dining room. Together, Kramer and Skalet had the capacity to support 296 residents.
In 2007, United Hebrew partnered with the nationally renowned Burke Rehabilitation Hospital to provide short-term rehabilitation care on its campus. For United Hebrew, that meant it could offer residents the very best in rehabilitative services. For Burke, it meant offering patients ongoing rehabilitation that wasn’t available at the hospital.

In 2009, the organization’s name changed once more. United Hebrew Geriatric Center became simply United Hebrew of New Rochelle. The name reflected the essence of the organization’s comprehensive services: united for its residents, caregivers, and their families. Also that year, the campus was officially named The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Campus, named for The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, which had endowed the organization with a very generous gift.
Rising to the Challenge of Dementia Care

In 2016, United Hebrew opened Willow Gardens Memory Care, a two-story, 51-bed facility and Westchester’s first nonprofit residence devoted exclusively to people affected by Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. Hailed as a modern model of memory care, Willow Gardens was designed to ease frustration and create feelings of comfort and home among residents living with memory impairment. Colors and artwork were chosen to awaken senses, evoke memories, and help residents identify their surroundings. Similar care was taken in developing activities and training staff. With the number of people in the Hudson Valley living with Alzheimer’s expected to increase to 50,000 by 2025 from 40,000-plus today, this comprehensive approach is truly needed.

United Hebrew also opened Meadow Lane Apartments in 2016. Meadow Lane added 32 low-income senior apartments to the campus. Residents live independently and can participate in the Telehealth Intervention Program for Seniors (TIPS). TIPS allows nurses to monitor their vital signs remotely. (The program is also available at the Soundview apartments.)

With Meadow Lane, United Hebrew has 167 affordable senior housing apartments on campus. Sadly, there remain 300 more people on United Hebrew’s waiting list for affordable independent senior housing. More needs to be done.
2019 Celebrating Our Centennial

This year, United Hebrew is marking its centennial with a year of special events. But even as it celebrates its rich history, United Hebrew continues to look forward. Medical advances and better care will make it possible for more of us to live longer. United Hebrew will continue to help its residents live the best possible lives in the best possible health, now and in the future.

In its second century, United Hebrew remains “united for you.”
There may be more than one path to reach age 100, but the individuals at United Hebrew who have passed that milestone have a few key things in common: they remain close to their families; they cultivate passions, hobbies, and interests; they have a strong social network; and they maintain their independence as much as possible.

Living on the United Hebrew campus certainly helps. With its wide array of social, cultural, and recreational activities, opportunities to develop friendships, and excellent medical care, it is no surprise that there are 10 centenarians who are still living life to the fullest! In fact, there have been so many centenarians over the years that United Hebrew has a long-standing tradition to honor them with an annual luncheon. They have led amazing lives, some of which are chronicled here.
UNITED HEBREW’S CENTENARIANS HONOR ROLL 2019

ANNE ADLER, 102
LUCILLE FULLERTON, 101
EVELYN LEVINE, 100
SHIRLEY MEYERS, 103
MARY MIGNONA, 102
SYLVIA SABAT, 101
EDITH SOLOMON, 102
ETHEL TRABERMAN, 101
At 103, Shirley Meyers still walks every day, gets her hair done weekly, plays poker, and immerses herself in the many social activities going on at United Hebrew’s Willow Towers. One could never mistake her as a wallflower.

Born in the Bronx on October 15, 1914, Meyers [née Keppler] grew up in New Rochelle with her sisters, Muriel and Naomi. Thick as thieves, the siblings were known as the “Three Keppler Girls.” In keeping with the high spirits of the Roaring Twenties, the girls made people laugh wherever they went.

But Meyers had a serious side, too. She was first in her confirmation class at Temple Israel of New Rochelle. After her New Rochelle High School graduation in 1933, she went on to attend art school. But soon she met Howard Meyers of White Plains. They were so smitten by each other that they eloped in 1934.

The happy couple not only lived together, they worked together. They started a wholesale men’s gift business, H.C. Meyers Company, whose products were carried in most of the major department stores and popular catalogues. The couple had two children, and the marriage lasted for 52 years.

After her husband’s death in 1986, Meyers moved to Boca Raton, Florida, where she was an avid golfer, bridge enthusiast, and world traveler. As she grew older, she decided to move back to New Rochelle to be near her family. There is some speculation that her real motivation was to be near her beloved NY Giants. Recently, she received a plaque from the Giants organization in recognition of her status as a 50-year-ticket holder.

Meyers offers three pieces of advice for those who want to emulate her long and healthy life: “Have the will to do things for yourself; be independent, and have a positive outlook.” Who could argue with that?
Edith Solomon was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1917 and grew up in McKees Rocks, a suburb of the Steel City. Her father Abraham Zeligson was a tailor who also owned a small general store. Her mother Esther Zeligson worked in the store and was a homemaker. Despite this humble beginning, Solomon worked hard in school so she could attend college. In her time, going to college was remarkable, not just because of her gender, but because only one out of 20 adults actually attended college. Solomon was graduated from Duquesne University and became a gifted teacher. In time, she rose to become an elementary school principal.

Solomon also was a wife and mother. She loved to explain how she met her husband Jack. During one of her spring breaks, the future Mrs. Solomon traveled to Miami Beach and stayed at the National Hotel, where she caught the eye of a very handsome lifeguard. You guessed it—his name was Jack. Sparks flew, and before long, they married and settled in the Pelham Parkway area of The Bronx.

Her children describe Solomon as a “magnificent mother” and say she set a “wonderful example” of what it means to be there for someone when needed. Solomon has always been very social. Now a resident of Willow Gardens Memory Care, she still loves Broadway musicals, concerts, and just about any form of entertainment.

This centenarian credits her longevity to having a strong network of friends and family. Her advice for younger people looking to live a long life?

*“Listen to your parents. Then teach your children!”*
For a woman who has been given Last Rites three times, Lucille Fullerton is very much alive. Had she been born 30, 40, or even 50 years later, she might have become a literary or educational leader, as she was considered “scary smart.” But she has always been content with her life path: a school board secretary, a mother of three, a grandmother of six, and a great-grandmother of six.

Born in Cohoes, New York, Fullerton grew up in New Rochelle, where she skipped three grades and graduated from New Rochelle High School at age 14. Too young to go to college, she attended the Katherine Gibbs School to learn secretarial skills. When she turned 16, she enrolled in the College of New Rochelle, earning a degree in English.

“She read two or three books a week, played piano by ear, and could type and talk at the same time without making a mistake,” explains her daughter Lucille Anne (Lu-Anne) Misner. Fullerton worked at the New Rochelle Board of Education until she was in her eighties, and after retiring, she took an accounting job at a friend’s business. Until recently, she would chant the ABCs in French to her little great-grandson.
Fullerton married Jack Fullerton, whom she met in high school. A maintenance engineer, he and his wife loved music, dancing, and bridge. They were inseparable until he died at the age of 59. In later years, she enjoyed the company of a close male friend, but never remarried.

As for those Last Rites, Fullerton was hospitalized for a month with severe diverticulitis, though only in her fifties. The prognosis was dire, but she fought and recovered. Then at 70, she was struck by meningitis, becoming so sick that she gave up her job. Thankfully, she regained her health. As soon as she was well enough, she asked to have her old job back.

In later years, Fullerton lived with her daughter, Lu-Anne. After a serious fall four years ago, she moved to United Hebrew’s nursing home where she continues to appreciate music and the warmth of the staff. Her favorite time of all, however, is when her loving family members come to visit.
THE IMPORTANCE OF FEELING CONNECTED
As important as United Hebrew’s excellent physical care is, so is our emotional support for the elderly. The relationships they develop with staff, which treats them like family, and with other residents give them a real zest for life!

We see that the daily social interaction and abundance of activities we offer add meaning and purpose to residents’ lives. They look forward to every new day!

Conversely, loneliness can contribute to physical and mental ailments, say researchers, who also point out that those with greater social connections
have a 50 percent reduced risk of an early death. The elderly are particularly vulnerable to loneliness because they may live alone after losing a spouse, or might have fewer friends and colleagues. If they suffer from physical infirmities, it could be harder for them to leave home.

Therefore, it is more important than ever to engage with other people as one ages. United Hebrew surrounds our residents with a compassionate and caring community. We help people to connect with one another and to the world around them through classes, movie screenings, trips, and lively discussions about current events.
We also nurture loving family relationships with residents. We specifically design activities that residents and their families can do together, creating shared experiences, which feed interesting opportunities for conversation.

No matter what age or stage of life you’re in, it’s important to connect with people who support and engage you. At United Hebrew, we believe that making the effort to stay connected makes a person happier.

It’s wonderful to know it may help you live longer and better, too.
Less than a week after having total knee replacement surgery, Elvira Mezzaucella suddenly couldn’t catch her breath. She called to a nurse from her room at United Hebrew’s skilled nursing and rehabilitation facility, and collapsed. Her breathing stopped. The staff immediately sprang into action and resuscitated her.

“I wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for the heroic and well-trained staff that came to my rescue. Those angels saved my life!” Ms. Mezzaucella says, describing her ordeal. It turned out she had suffered from a post-surgical blood clot in her lungs, known as a pulmonary embolism. She returned to the hospital for urgent care, and ten days later returned to United Hebrew’s short-term rehabilitation unit.

“From the moment I returned to when I moved back home, I felt like a VIP, like Queen Elizabeth,” says Mezzaucella, who is 72. “The staff, the nurses, the service; it was all so incredible. I was treated like family.”

Once she returned to United Hebrew, she began a rigorous physical and occupational therapy schedule with the Burke Rehabilitation-trained therapists, who motivated her to push herself. Now, she says she is in better shape than she was before her surgery, and is managing on her own at home, with the support of her two grown sons.

Looking back on her time at United Hebrew, Mezzaucella says, “The dedicated staff—from the nurses, aides, physical therapists, and others—were all exceptional. They attended to my needs in such a caring and compassionate way. They always found time to comfort me and reassure me during my most fragile moments.”
By 2 pm most Monday afternoons, the lecture room at Willow Towers Assisted Living is filled to capacity, with over 50 people gathered to hear the latest lecture by Albert Fields, Ph.D., a former professor at Westchester Community College. He provides the kind of fascinating information in his course, “The Golden Age of Radio,” that just packs people in. The talks are scheduled to run for just an hour, but discussion often spills over, as his “students” (fellow residents at Willow Towers) linger to speak to the professor.

“It’s a very intelligent group of people,” says Fields, who taught history at Westchester Community College for 12 years, and before that, was a history teacher at New Rochelle Academy Country Day School for 20 years.

“At Willow Towers, we have former entrepreneurs, Harvard-trained lawyers, engineers, and many more truly interesting people. Lunchtime here is like eating at the faculty lounge!” Fields chuckles.
“I made sure to show up every Tuesday, when Dominic Chianese was entertaining,” says Marilyn Glick, whose mother Ceilia Rubin lived at United Hebrew from 1987 to 1997. “He was so good. He sang songs from the 1930s and 1940s, the songs that the residents knew. My mother couldn’t talk or walk, but I could see her mouth the words.”

She explains: “Do you know who Dominic Chianese is? He was on ‘The Sopranos.’ He played Uncle Junior.”

AN UNANNOUNCED VISIT

“The home was 10 years of my life,” explains Glick. “I knew she was getting wonderful care here.”

Glick was impressed by how much the nurses cared. One evening, business brought her to New Rochelle, so she dropped in on her mother at about 9 or 10 at night. She grew frightened when she saw two nurses on either side of her mother.

“Each one was holding one of my mother’s hands, smoothing her, helping her fall asleep,” Glick says. “Mother was very agitated, and they were trying to calm her down so that she would sleep. It made me feel so good to see that.”

Years later, Glick attended a building dedication on campus and ran into those nurses. “I hugged them and thanked them, and we all cried. I feel so thankful for these human beings.”
Stephanie Bostaph brings Tinsley, her three-legged furry friend, to United Hebrew each month to the delight of residents.

That’s right, a three-legged dog. This sweet and beautiful animal lost her leg because she was thrown from a car by an abusive owner.

But today, three-year-old Tinsley is a happy pet. When she was five-months-old, she was rescued by Bostaph. Tinsley’s charming nature led Bostaph to train her as a pet therapy dog.

Tinsley loves her monthly visit to United Hebrew, and the feeling is mutual! Residents pet, hold, and talk to the white American Eskimo mix. “Their eyes light up!” says Bostaph, who was raised by her single mother and grandparents, and feels a strong connection to older adults. “It really makes me happy to volunteer here.”

Even after Tinsley departs, she leaves residents in a happy mood. United Hebrew resident Dorothy DiNapoli says Tinsley makes her feel peaceful. “I feel a sense of calm when Tinsley visits,” she says. “She always seems to know when something is bothering me, and she makes me feel better.”
The taste and smell of food can have powerful meaning for seniors. Cooking and eating trigger memories, strengthen connections with others, and provide cognitive and physical stimulation. And that’s a recipe for another enriching activity on the United Hebrew campus.

At the skilled-nursing home, culinary sessions are led by Udo Schneider, Chef and Director of Food and Nutrition Services, and Carrie Deppong, Director of Recreation. Residents prep, assist in cooking, and enjoy a communal meal, followed by dessert.

“Once the smells and sounds of cooking fill the air, everyone comes alive,” says Deppong. “It’s just magical!”

Executive Chef David Shakin leads cooking activities at Willow Towers Assisted Living. Residents knead dough for scones, operate the pasta-making machine, and prepare holiday desserts. Cooking sparks conversation about family recipes from the past, the best meals they ever had, and favorite people to cook for.

“Food brings people together; it sparks memories and starts conversations,” says Shakin, who trained at the Culinary Institute of America. “It helps our seniors reminisce about their past, and it stimulates their senses.”

Food is connected with intense emotions and feelings of love, enjoyment, family, and holidays. Says Deppong: “Cooking offers another opportunity for our residents to connect to those parts of themselves.”
Friday is TIPS day for Pam Leichtweis, who lives independently at United Hebrew’s Low-Savin/Soundview Apartments. TIPS stands for Telehealth Intervention Programs for Seniors, a program of Westchester Public-Private Partnership Aging Services.

Each week, Leichtweis comes down from her apartment to see a student nurse from nearby Pace University. She sits as the student nurse checks her blood pressure, blood-oxygen level, pulse, and weight. She waits while her vital signs data are transmitted to nurses at Vital Care TeleHealth Services in White Plains.

For two years, these check-ups were pretty routine. Until one day when they weren’t.

“I came down for the vitals, and my whole body was swollen and I couldn’t understand why,” Leichtweis says. “They took my vitals and said, ‘You have to call the doctor; your blood pressure is very low.’”

Leichtweis’ doctor told her to call 911. At the emergency room, she was told she had an irregular heartbeat. She was admitted to the hospital and prescribed medication, which she continues to take. “IF TIPS didn’t tell me what to do, I probably would have been gone,” she says.

The program is a convenient and efficient way for nurses to regularly monitor a resident’s vital signs without the resident having to leave the apartment building. Both Soundview and Meadow Lanes Apartments offer free TIPS monitoring to residents.
In 1954, when Gimbel’s Department Store opened in the Cross County Shopping Plaza, Adeline Gassman was one of the first women to join the store’s sales force. She earned all of $1.45 per hour, plus commission, selling home furnishings. While many of her peers were homemakers, 32-year-old “Addie” thrived as a working woman.

Yet over the course of her 30+ year, full-time career, she also raised her daughter Jan; bowled in a league with her husband Maurice; led her daughter’s Girl Scout troop; sang and danced in “Fiddler on the Roof” and other theatrical productions staged at her synagogue; played Mah Jongg weekly; and hosted most of her family’s special celebrations and holiday gatherings. After she retired, she and Maurice continued many of their social activities and traveled extensively.

Overwhelming? Not according to Gassman, who is now 96.

“Staying busy, having fun—that’s the secret to a long life,” she says. “As long as I’m busy, I’m happy.”

Gassman, who has lived at United Hebrew nursing home for the past five years, continues to relish her busy days. She enjoys the facility’s arts and crafts and dance movement classes. She also attends the nursing home’s music therapy sessions and especially enjoys songs from the Big Band era. She makes sure to participate in United Hebrew’s field trips, such as a recent jaunt to Empire City Casino, where she played the slot machines. “I’m not much of a gambler, but I like the action!” she says.
Doris Evey lived in three other assisted living facilities before she moved to Willow Gardens, which her daughter, Loretta Calandruccio, says was “the best move we ever made. I can sleep at night because I know that somebody is watching over her, and that’s comforting as a family member.”

Willow Gardens is specifically designed to care for people such as Evey, who is experiencing dementia. Staff have the skills to connect with residents whose memory is impaired.

“What I like best about Willow Gardens is the aides,” explains Calandruccio. “The aides speak to my mom and they speak to all the other residents with dignity and caring. It’s in the tone of their voice. I keep telling them they’re going straight to heaven because of the care, the genuine care that they give to the people here, including my mom.”
“My mom’s 88 years old. I’m an only child, so I’ve been responsible for taking care of her and seeing that everything works well with her,” says Joyce Tisi-Scelsa, of her mother Marie Tisi. That meant Tisi-Scelsa had to put her own life on hold until her mom finally moved to Willow Gardens.

“For the first time in a few years, we actually went away on a summer vacation because I felt that she was in a place where I knew she’d be cared for 24/7,” Tisi-Scelsa says.

Tisi-Scelsa’s mother had received around-the-clock care at home too, but, “it wasn’t working out so well,” says the daughter. The home aides “just didn’t understand how to treat her dementia, or how to placate her, how to calm her down or engage her at all. So [Willow Gardens] was a life-saver for her and for us.”

The daughter says the staff and activity at Willow Gardens has made a difference. “The staff is very compassionate, very caring, and very understanding about what’s going on with these elderly people who have dementia. They understand when they repeat things; they understand if they get grouchy; they understand if they get a little cantankerous. They’re really trained to guide them through the day and support them.”

Her mother also connects to Willow Gardens’ wide variety of activities. “I think she’s engaged. She’s constantly being entertained and is stimulated by many activities,” Tisi-Scelsa adds. “Everybody who comes to visit her says she’s doing much better than she was doing at home. They are really amazed.”
Patricia McCormack, born and raised in County Roscommon in Ireland, had met Holocaust survivors while training as a nurse in England, but they never spoke about their experiences. It was only when McCormack took a nursing job at United Hebrew, where almost all of her patients were survivors of the atrocities, that she began to learn what they’d been through. That was in 1964.

“I heard their stories, I heard their sadness,” says McCormack, who felt a kinship with her charges as fellow immigrants. “I helped wipe away their tears. It was an unbelievable experience.”

She recalls Paul, a women’s clothing designer who had survived the Holocaust. He liked to carry his clothing labels in his shirt pocket. He hung a painting of a clown on his wall, perhaps to remind himself to laugh. Many years later, McCormack saw the very same painting in a room, and told the resident she recognized it. The resident laughed and she said, “You cared for my father.”

McCormack stayed for 50 years. Her longevity enabled her to care for a second generation of patients. At the time that McCormack retired in 2015, she was vice president of nursing. McCormack still visits the facility three times a week.
Mertel Thomas, a physical therapy aide in the rehabilitation department and 50-year-employee at United Hebrew, was invited to speak at United Hebrew’s Centennial Year kick-off ceremony. She brought with her the suitcase she used when she emigrated to the United States from Jamaica.

“It is a great honor to celebrate the 100th birthday of United Hebrew. I started working at this facility in 1969. I came to this country with this very small suitcase after leaving my homeland and found a home here among many wonderful, caring and loving people.

“United Hebrew was always a five-star facility because of the love and care given to its residents. I am profoundly grateful that I was able to contribute in a small way to this wonderful establishment that I received so much from.”
Larry Rosenthal, a six-year resident of Willow Towers, leads the Pledge of Allegiance at Willow Towers’ annual Flag Day celebration, widely attended by residents, staff, and local officials. A veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces, he was 22 years old when he sat in the nose of a B-17 aircraft, serving as the navigator for the 10-man team aboard the plane dubbed the “Flying Fortress” during World War II.

“I sat behind the bombardier with maps and instruments to guide our flight. We flew wing tip to wing tip; I could see the acne on the face of the pilot in the plane flying next to us,” recalls Rosenthal. “It was harrowing. We had a job to do.”

He also witnessed German bombers flooding the skies over London, and watched the city ignite in flames during the Blitz, an intense period of bombing that continued for nearly three months. After the war ended, Rosenthal’s crew was part of a relief effort that provided humanitarian aid in the Netherlands, dropping food and supplies on runways in Amsterdam.

Now 95, Rosenthal says he is filled with pride because he is a member of “The Greatest Generation” contingent of veterans at Willow Towers—nearly 30 are in residence. “I’m extremely fortunate. It’s great to share stories with my fellow veterans. They, and all of the residents here in this community, are so warm and friendly.”
Television personality Regis Philbin shared this remembrance in 2010 about his Uncle Willie, who resided at United Hebrew from 2009 until his death two years later.

“I have a personal note to share with you. I have only two senior members of my family left, and I’d like to tell you about them. They are my father’s sister Peggy, and her husband Willie, my last Aunt and Uncle.

“We go way back to my early days growing up in the Bronx. Now, of course, the years have gone by and taken their toll on all of us. Uncle Willie is 92. He’s still a smiling Irishman despite his health problems. He’s confined to a wheelchair now and needs rehabilitative care.

“My Aunt Peggy found a new home for him, close enough to their apartment so she can spend every day with him. I’ve been there a few times. It’s United Hebrew in New Rochelle.

“I’ve met the people who take care of the residents and I am truly impressed. They are professional, sensitive, give the residents a sense of dignity and security and give their families a peace of mind. All I can tell you is that everything I’ve witnessed at United Hebrew in New Rochelle convinced me that Uncle Willie is in the right place.”
After their mother, Rose Santoiemma, passed away in 2011, her children sent United Hebrew this warm letter of thanks:

“How does a person begin to say thank you?

“For the last eight years, our mother Rose was in the caring arms of United Hebrew. We have never known a more dedicated, courteous, and hardworking staff. The nursing skills bestowed upon Mom were more than anyone could ever hope to imagine or experience.

“Not only was she in a safe and nurturing environment, she was genuinely loved by the staff. During those eight years, Mom’s caretakers were not just employees, they became family.

“When we visited Mom, we were greeted by name, and were always treated with kindness and compassion. All of our concerns were addressed with the utmost respect and consideration. Often we were hugged and reassured that Mom was in ‘good hands.’ Many times we were offered tea and tissues, kind words and prayers. These are the memories we will always hold close to our hearts.

“Our mother left us this year and we will miss her. Our comfort lies in the belief that her life ended peacefully and in the best possible place. We will never forget how hard the staff worked to make our mother’s last days comfortable and meaningful. We will always be grateful and will never forget how blessed we were to have United Hebrew in our lives.”
It’s all about community.

It’s a great big beautiful world out there, and United Hebrew and its residents are thrilled to be a part of it!
United Hebrew + New Rochelle

United Hebrew is very much a part of the New Rochelle community, and there are a thousand reasons why. Nurturing connections with the world beyond the United Hebrew campus certainly adds joy and vibrancy to the lives of United Hebrew’s 1,000 residents and patients!

This is especially true of the organization’s ties to the City of New Rochelle, where so many residents were born and raised. Many of their family members live in the city or someplace nearby, which makes it easier to visit more often and drop in at any time. When groups of visitors from the city volunteer their time at United Hebrew, residents are familiar with the organizations they represent.

After 100 years, United Hebrew has become a pillar of the community. It is greatly respected for its achievements, its compassion, and the excellence of its care. The organization has deep ties and an open door to the city’s schools, colleges, religious and civic institutions, veterans’ groups, the police and fire departments, and many more. As one of the city’s large employers, it helps support the New Rochelle economy.
Celebrating the Centennial Together

The bond between the campus and community was clearly evident at United Hebrew’s “Forever Young” Centennial Celebration kick-off on January 30, 2019.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer came with a special proclamation to say “Thank-you from a grateful County.” He said, “When you have a need, whether for your parents, or for yourselves, it’s a comfort to know there’s an institution like this, that has a level of skill, a level of caring that is unmatched.”

Then there was New Rochelle Mayor Noam Bramson, who gave United Hebrew President & CEO Rita C. Mabli a key to the city in recognition of her leadership and the organization’s contributions to the City of New Rochelle. “Countless people had their lives extended by the extraordinary care here,” Bramson said. “Compassion, caring, and love are upheld at United Hebrew every day. At 100, you’re just hitting your stride!”

It was clear that United Hebrew is a beloved member of the community, and loves the community right back. This mutual admiration pays dividends directly to residents in the form of relationships, respect, activities, and a chance to contribute to the wider community via their Community Service Club.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer, United Hebrew President/CEO Rita Mabli, and James Staudt, United Hebrew board chair
Giving Back

Both the institution and its residents are ardent supporters of people in the community. Residents, family members, and staff help feed the city’s homeless; write post cards to seniors affected by natural disasters, and fashion blankets and activity books for mothers and children at a local women’s shelter. United Hebrew sponsors the popular Mighty Mouse balloon that floats high above New Rochelle’s Thanksgiving Day parade. And that’s just a smattering of United Hebrew’s contributions.

From Generation to Generation

So many groups of young people love to visit the campus for intergenerational activities. Children from Sounds Good Westchester visit weekly for a music program enjoyed by young and old alike. Students of all ages from New Rochelle’s public and private schools share their passions with our residents: they’ve taught Spanish and technology skills; played bingo and poker; created arts and crafts projects; facilitated book discussions; led prayer services; sang; roused residents with cheerleading; played instruments; and danced their way into residents’ hearts.
Fun with Families

United Hebrew continually hosts events for residents and their families to enjoy together. Everyone has a blast at the annual Grandparents’ Day party, where staff wear costumes and organize games for the grandchildren. Families are also invited for annual Labor Day Barbecues, holidays, and Hawaiian Luau festivities.

What’s more, families love to have fun with Serene, a charming dog who tags along to work with her human, Deborah King, the recreation director at Willow Towers. Serene, a certified Good Dog Foundation pet therapy dog, is a very good dog indeed! She is adored by residents and visiting families.

International Visitors

The Friends of Israeli Scouts bring their Tzofin Friendship Caravan annually to entertain and mingle with residents. They sing, dance, and tell stories about their lives in Israel. Singing in Yiddish as well as in English and Hebrew, the young caravan members bring back warm memories for some residents.

Exchange students from China have volunteered their time to play bingo with seniors, assist residents in getting to different events, and perhaps most important of all, listen as residents tell them the stories of their lifetimes.

When students from La Rochelle Business School in France wanted to learn more about how geriatric services are provided in the U.S., they came to United Hebrew. Residents had a chance to learn about the 25 MBA students, too.
An Open Invitation to the Campus

With many veterans among its residents, United Hebrew hosts numerous patriotic events on campus. The New Rochelle United Veterans Memorial and Patriotic Association, local officials, and community members come to campus to participate in Flag Day, September 11, and Veterans Day ceremonies. Audiences love special performances by The Manhattan Dolls and America’s Sweethearts.

The New Rochelle Police and Fire Departments and County Health Departments partner with United Hebrew to run emergency preparedness drills for our campus. They have helped us respond to a mock plane crash and a “bomb” on campus as well as a mock emergency oil spill. For United Hebrew and our partners, it is a chance to practice disaster response protocols. Resident safety is a high priority.

In addition, our Lazarus Art Gallery provides an enriching experience for all who visit our campus. It is designed to spark the imagination, lift the spirit, and bring the community together. This year, we unveiled a new exhibition, “United for You,” highlighting our extraordinary residents and their families, and the staff who care for them.
Learning Opportunities

Patrick Hardiman, a World War II enthusiast, has engaged the veterans on campus (over 30!) several times. The assistant professor at Iona College has lectured on the events in the first quarter of 1943 and the Battle for the Atlantic. Separately, Hardiman served as host and moderator when noted historian Elihu Rose came to speak about American Jewish soldiers in World War II.

Priceless Volunteers

Residential life is greatly enhanced by the near daily presence of community volunteers. Visitors help by making beautiful activity mats for residents with Alzheimer’s Disease. Volunteers spend time with residents, talking, singing, playing cards or board games. Or just listening. Their presence brightens the day!

Then there are the volunteers who work behind the scenes, assisting with Medical Records; facilitating events; maintaining the dietary databases; and assisting recreation department staff with parties and activities. United Hebrew is grateful for them all!
There’s an old expression, “It takes a village.” So, when it comes to ensuring the vitality of an institution, community support is key.

For a century now, such steadfast support has enabled United Hebrew to thrive. From generous benefactors and committed volunteers, to board members, businesses, and local organizations, United Hebrew has been surrounded by those who care deeply about us. Such champions are the unsung heroes who have helped to sustain us and fulfill our nonprofit mission, which is to value and care for seniors, treating them and their families with respect and kindness, and anticipating their every need.
Serving Those Less Fortunate

From the very beginning, our first president, Solomon J. Manne, acknowledged the invaluable contributions of what was then the Home’s donors and benefactors. Expressing his heartfelt thanks to the community at our fourth annual “theater party” fundraiser, he noted it was an occasion “to give vent to our feelings of gratitude to the members and friends of this institution, who have made its existence possible, and with whose continuing support, its existence is assured...on behalf of the many old men and women who are your beneficiaries, that it is their constant hope and prayer that you may live long and that you may always have the ability, as you indeed have the desire, to do good for your less fortunate brother and sister.”

In United Hebrew’s early years, the Ladies Auxiliary both volunteered and raised money to support the residence. Their goals were to donate “time to visit guests in the Home and bring cheer and comfort, supply clothing and necessities for personal care and comfort, equipment for the maintenance of the Home, attend to all repairs to the interior of the Home, and furnish a gardener to keep the grounds in good condition.” In 1935, they produced a cookbook with ads to support United Hebrew. In the following decades, until the Auxiliary ceased to exist in the late 1990s, proceeds from their activities helped to enhance our residents’ high quality of life.

United Hebrew’s 20th Anniversary dinner gala (below).<br>ladies Auxiliary Cookbook (right).
Caring People at the Heart of It All

Fortunately, selfless individuals willing to support our residents have never been in short supply. Alexander Pfeiffer, president of United Hebrew in 1941, observed this while marking the passing of George Schustek, a generous donor (who helped to furnish the Home’s Ladies Solarium, among other projects) and hard-working volunteer behind-the-scenes.

“No other personality had so endeared himself to the hearts and affections of his colleagues and friends. He was our most generous contributor and a most ardent, self-sacrificing worker...one whose every fiber stirred for the service of his fellow man,” Pfeiffer noted.

United Hebrew’s history is filled with stories of people who stepped forward to make meaningful gifts, from providing comfort and basic care items, to funds for new equipment and modern facilities. Some of their names may be familiar because they played a role in building our campus into what it is today.

Take, for instance, Malcolm Lazarus, a long-time board member, officer, and donor, who enabled us to open the Lazarus Gallery at United Hebrew for both residents and the public. The gallery has presented several exhibitions a year to engage visitors, spark memories and bring the community together. Or Michael Rozen, board member, officer, and donor, whose generous gifts over the years have supported many projects and allowed us to open the much-used Rozen Generations Room.

“We’re doing something that is worthwhile. You get a great deal of satisfaction knowing that you are helping people have a great quality of life in their later years, so they can enjoy life as much as possible.”

—Malcolm Lazarus, Treasurer, Former Chair, Board of Directors

“The way of providing health care has changed tremendously, and we have moved with the times. It’s not easily done. But we have a wonderful board, extraordinary people, and we try to keep abreast of all that’s important in the world of caregiving.”

—Michael Rozen, Senior Chair and Former Chair, Board of Directors
All in the Family

Some supporters have found their work with United Hebrew so important that they have made it a family affair, involving multiple generations in sustaining the organization. One such person was Max Low. An Austrian immigrant who arrived in the United States at age 20, Low founded the Industrial Process Corporation and established Savin Business Machines with his son-in-law, Robert Savin.

Low was introduced to United Hebrew by his friend, Harold Glietsman, then the Home’s president. Low went on to serve United Hebrew in several capacities, including as president and chairman of the board of directors. His wife Evylynne and their children, Frieda and Robert Low and Barbara and Bob Savin, all became involved. United Hebrew’s first affordable senior apartment building, the Low-Savin Residence, opened in 1980 and is named for their family commitment.

The Duberstein family’s involvement began with Wolfe Duberstein, who served as board treasurer in the 1950s. His brother-in-law, George Friedland served as board president in the 1970s. Wolfe’s son, Donald Duberstein, has held the positions of vice-president, president, and chairman. He’s an active board member today.

“I’m involved with United Hebrew because it is rewarding, important work. The staff and the volunteers make our work as board members easy. We listen to their ideas and do our best in to help make those ideas a reality.”

—Donald J. Duberstein, Former Chair, Board of Directors
Donors Help Transform the Campus

A Russian immigrant who prospered by importing silk and as a wholesaler of synthetic yarn, Saul Gutner with his wife Ada provided a major gift in 1954 to construct a new nursing home at United Hebrew. The Gutner Pavilion replaced the original house on Pelham Road. Gutner also served for several years as a trustee on the board of directors.

Lola and Saul Kramer actively supported United Hebrew for over 30 years. He served as board president and chairman, she as director of what was known as the Westchester Ladies Auxiliary. Renowned for their philanthropic activities, the couple enabled the opening of the Lola and Saul Kramer Pavilion in 1976, which more than doubled United Hebrew’s capacity to care for the elderly.

Gifts from the Green Family—Beverly Green and her late husband, Alfred J. Green—included underwriting the refurbishment of the rehabilitation suite at the nursing home, and the brand new and vibrant assisted living community, Willow Towers. A major gift from Lucile and Joseph Skalet helped fund both the construction of a new atrium at Willow Towers and United Hebrew’s new nursing and rehabilitation center in 2009. All of these leadership gifts had a transformative effect in shaping United Hebrew’s campus and future.
Besides large gifts, there are the “in-kind” donations. The renowned pop artist Charles Fazzino donated vibrant works of his art to United Hebrew’s Kramer and Skalet Pavilions when they first opened. He was motivated by the loss of his father to Alzheimer’s Disease. “I’m very sensitive to issues involving the care and dignity of the elderly,” he said. “It is my hope that the artwork will brighten the residents’ days.”

Without the countless people who donated their time, effort, and funds to its work—only a fraction of the total are mentioned here—United Hebrew could not have reached its centennial milestone. We tip our hats to their creativity, vision, and leadership that have served as the foundation of our success.

United Hebrew is recognized as an exemplary geriatric service provider. And according to board members, staff, and financial supporters, most of the credit goes to Rita C. Mabli. CEO since 1994 and president since 2007, she is the longest-serving head of the organization, and the most beloved.

“Rita Mabli turned out to be a real star in developing and directing the home. She’s there day to day and she inspires so many people. The organization’s success is attributable to her leadership, involvement, and organizational skills.”

—Peter A. Tomback, Vice President, Board of Directors
Current board president, James Staudt, recalls his first visit to United Hebrew in 2007. He observed the receptionist having a pleasant conversation with a smiling resident, who was sitting close by in her wheelchair. Staudt walked down the hall and saw a maintenance worker briefly stop cleaning to have a conversation with a resident on her daily walk. “As I passed by, I heard some of their conversation. It was kind, pleasant, and unrushed. Each time I returned [to United Hebrew], I saw this play out again and again, with others on United Hebrew’s staff. I thought to myself, ‘This is quite a place.’ I believe it this culture of kindness, cultivated by Rita Mabli, that is responsible for what United Hebrew has grown to be over the last 100 years.”

In Mabli’s case, it was a sorrowful childhood experience that shaped her thinking. She was 12 when she lost her dad after a prolonged illness. She never forgot how kind the doctors and nurses were to him and the family and was moved by the grace of the caregivers she met. Her family was most grateful. When she was tasked with leading United Hebrew, she vowed to create a similar culture of kindness and caring, starting at the top, with her own benevolent and respectful treatment of staff.

As big as her heart was, Mabli also had a keen mind. Holding an MBA from Iona College in organizational behavior, she initially joined United Hebrew to set up its first-ever HR department. She proved herself by recruiting an exceptional staff for United Hebrew’s new skilled-nursing facility and acquired a nursing home administrator’s license so she could do even more.

She did, in fact, do much more. Mabli is the architect of United Hebrew’s expansion into geriatric services and care. She built award-winning assisted living, memory care, home care, and independent living facilities. She rebranded the organization as a vibrant campus of comprehensive care to support seniors through all the stages of aging. She was named president in 2007.

But perhaps her most important accomplishment is her rapport with the staff and residents. She has made it her mission to bring out the best in everyone. She says: “I must thank our wonderful board and the staff of United Hebrew. It is because of their dedication, strength, and encouragement that we have achieved so much.”

Many people ask her what makes United Hebrew special. “I believe that it is the simple acts of kindness and caring that set us apart. These may seem like small things, but they mean a lot to the individuals in our care.”

With Mabli at the helm, families can trust their loved ones to United Hebrew’s care. Mabli entrusted her mother to its care. Her mother lived happily on the campus until her death in 1991.
AN AWARD-WINNING CULTURE

Mabli’s exceptional service to Westchester’s seniors and to United Hebrew has spanned the last 40 years. She has cultivated an outstanding campus culture, resulting in United Hebrew’s leadership position in the industry. Under her leadership, the organization has been recognized for superior standards of care.

United Hebrew has been consistently named among “The Best Nursing Homes” by U.S. News and World Report. It earned the five-star rating by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for seven consecutive years and placed in the top tier of New York State’s nursing home rankings. In its first year of recognizing top-performing short-term rehabilitation facilities, U.S. News rated United Hebrew as “high-performing,” the highest possible rating.

United Hebrew is designated as one of the top 825 extended care facilities out of over 15,000 in the nation by The Women’s Choice Award. The American College of Healthcare Administrators selected United Hebrew for its Eli Pick Leadership Award—earned by fewer than nine percent of facilities nationwide—in 2016, 2017, and 2018. In addition, United Hebrew’s home health care division received 4.5 stars out of five from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid, a rating far superior to many similar organizations in the nation.
HERE’S TO OUR NEXT CENTURY!

Just as someone from the year 1919 would be astonished by today’s United Hebrew campus, it’s hard to imagine what it could be like in 2119. But no matter what services are offered, or how they are delivered, we’re certain United Hebrew will be providing the right comprehensive and compassionate care.

Even far into the future, United Hebrew will continue to be United for You!

So, what might the future bring? To start with, many more seniors. The U.S. Census predicts that by 2030, one out of five people will be 65 and older. For the first time in the history of the U.S., there will be more seniors—78 million—than the 76.7 million children and adolescents under the age of 18. The gap will continue to grow. By 2060, there will be 94.7 million seniors compared to 79.8 individuals under 18.

What’s more, people will live much longer. The Stanford Center on Longevity predicts that half of the babies born in America today will live to be 100. Among the reasons is access to better and more advanced health care over a lifetime.
If we continue to define “seniors” as anyone 65 years or older—and there are many who predict that will change as longevity increases—then seniors would receive geriatric services for fully one-third of their lifespans. Unless, of course, people are healthier and “younger” longer, in which case they might be considered “geriatric” at 85 instead of 65. Providers such as United Hebrew might intervene early, before assistance is needed, to help people remain physically fit and mentally sharp for as long as possible.

As they age, seniors with the most severe medical changes are likely to continue living in a facility where they can be supported around-the-clock by skilled-nursing services. It probably won’t resemble skilled-nursing facilities today.

Bright, vibrant architecture might stimulate the senses; new materials and technology might keep residents from slipping or falling. Genomic and personal medicine might cure many of the diseases that plague us today. Perhaps, residents will be able to self-monitor in real-time through permanent yet unnoticeable sensors on the arm, leg, or chest. Vital signs, glucose and hydration, might be transmitted to the nanorobot station and transmitted into medical records via telepathy. Nurses would be alerted if something’s not right and take immediate action.

In 100 years, surely there will be robots to facilitate social events to create a sense of community. Surely there will be robots like Rosie of “The Jetsons” lending a hand in the nursing home. They could handle routine tasks, such as cleaning and fetching supplies, thus freeing up staff to interact as much as possible with residents. There could be robotic social companions, programmed to roam from pod to pod to engage with residents. A “Jimmy Fallon”-type robot could tell jokes; a “Mariah Carey”-type one would sing with residents (and display the lyrics on its “stomach”), and an “Oprah”-like robot would be ready to listen sympathetically.
Assisted Living with Friends

As the evidence mounts that the lack of social connection and interests can harm the health of someone who is aging, assisted living facilities, with fleets of self-driving vehicles to transport aging seniors to family events, might become even more popular. More facilities will follow the Willow Towers model, in which stepped-up care is available so one can age in place, provided the “place” has all the right scientific, medical, and social attributes. One cannot imagine today exactly what the model will look like, but certainly these advances will keep people healthier, as well as more physically active and alert, longer.

As homes will be fully “in the cloud”—or 100 years from now, on “cloud nine”—more senior care would take place in the home. And someone’s home might look a lot different. More homes would be wired for instantaneous communication and have environmental-friendly appliances and plumbing. (Very) smart refrigerators and ovens could let adult children know what mom or dad is eating or cooking. And if mom or dad is eating the wrong foods, perhaps that smart refrigerator would talk back. Already, there are eating utensils that self-adjust to remain level, so food does not spill, thereby allowing people with tremors or advanced arthritis to feed themselves. One day someone may design a pair of trousers that would help balance seniors as they walk. “Siri”-like artificial intelligence assistants would answer questions and make sure all is well.

Lastly, today’s nascent trend in which groups of seniors live together in a shared home, à la “Golden Girls,” may grow. Providers such as United Hebrew could possibly be the ones to build such homes and provide certified residential assistants to support them all.

We believe that eldercare will only get better and that more seniors will enjoy healthy, purposeful, and emotionally satisfying lives. We intend to be there to make it happen. If people will really live longer, we will help them make it a life well lived.

Beam me up, Scotty!
United Hebrew
IN NEW ROCHELLE SINCE 1919

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