



B'nai B'rith  
Senior Housing  
Network

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# SENIORITY REPORT

## Inform

We want to do our best to stay in touch with you. Please remember to send pictures and updates on the events in your building!

## Sign Up

Reading the Seniority Report is a great way to stay informed on what we are doing here at CSS as well as having a pulse on aging in general. To sign up for this resource simply [Click Here](#)

## Contribute

Want to contribute to the next issue of Seniority Report? Email us your own story or suggestions at: [seniorservices@bnaibrith.org](mailto:seniorservices@bnaibrith.org)

## Follow Us



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B'nai B'rith Conference on Senior Housing (2014)

## CSS Trainings During the Pandemic and Looking to the Future

By Janel Doughten  
Associate Director, CSS

An important component of the support the B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services (CSS) provides to the housing network are three annual training conferences that ensure the buildings provide much more than just basic shelter needs for the residents. Although each conference includes training on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulations and good board governance, there is always an emphasis on quality-of-life issues for the residents. Each of our buildings provides personal interaction, services and life-enhancing activities to enable all residents to continue living independently in the apartment community for as long as possible, and the training sessions reflect that sensibility.

Although CSS has continued to hold these annual training conferences during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, all the conferences switched to a virtual format in 2020 and 2021.

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## CSS Trainings During the Pandemic and Looking to the Future

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Although holding training meetings virtually has some drawbacks, CSS staff has learned what works best for virtual meetings. It is not possible to just take an in-person meeting format and hold it in a virtual form. Still, it is essential to make the meetings interactive. Over time, the trainings have even included small breakout discussion sessions. Additionally, our in-person meetings last multiple days with sessions held over the course of a full day. Virtual trainings are best held in 3–4-hour daily time blocks; staring at a screen for a full day is not feasible to keep people engaged.

Another benefit has been that more staff and board members have participated in virtual meetings. Unfortunately, due to building budgets, not all staff and board members can attend in-person meetings. Holding meetings via Zoom has allowed additional staff to view the sessions with no additional cost to the building.

As CSS staff became more adept at holding the meetings virtually, CSS added another virtual training to be held annually. The first Annual Virtual B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Conference was held March 14-15, 2021. This meeting brings together on-site building staff, boards of directors and CSS staff to share best practices and learn from each other. Going forward, this training meeting will remain in a virtual format.

The B'nai B'rith Managers and Service Coordinators meeting was held June 8-10, 2021, with over 60 participants. This conference brings together on-site building staff to learn from experts in the senior housing field and our CSS staff. Topics included mental health, Fair Housing, updates from HUD and ways to keep residents socially engaged during the pandemic.

The Annual B'nai B'rith Conference on Senior Housing was held Oct. 17-19, 2021. Over 70 people attended the three-day meeting. This conference brings together the volunteer boards



B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Committee meeting (2014)

of directors and staff of the CSS Housing Network to learn from experts in the field and share best practices. A major focus of the conference centered on the impact of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic on the well-being of residents and staff. Non-pandemic topics included emergency preparedness, HUD updates and creating a welcoming community for residents.

Another major program that CSS benefits to the housing network is the Biennial B'nai B'rith Resident Leadership Retreat. Held at the B'nai B'rith Perlman Camp in Pennsylvania, the retreat is open to resident leaders in each B'nai B'rith building. The retreat is designed to cultivate participants' leadership abilities, so that they can then go back to their respective buildings and enhance the lives of their fellow residents by creating activities and being advocates and a voice in their communities.

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B'nai B'rith Leadership Retreat (2015)



Residents enjoy a camp-like experience at B'nai B'rith Perlman Camp



## A Note From The Chair

By Marvin Siflinger

Hello friends,

As we begin the new year, now is a good time reflect on our housing network's accomplishments over the past year. We experienced obstacles because of the pandemic, however, to the surprise of nobody, our housing network rose to the occasion. Whether it was coordinating resident vaccinations, creating socially distanced community programming or the myriad of other services our building staff and volunteers provided, you're all first rate.

At the Center for Senior Services (CSS), our virtual programming continued throughout the year. We held our Annual Housing Conference virtually in the fall and it was a huge success. Participants heard from a variety of presenters who addressed issues like updates from Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), social isolation, mental health, emergency preparedness, Adult Protective Services, and the role of the board of directors, staff and residents in our buildings. Everyone left the conference with valuable information that will benefit their communities.

Additionally, we have also begun preparing for this year's programming. As previously discussed, we will be hosting our second Annual B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Virtual Training for our building's staff and boards. We expect this year's training to focus on expanding technology usage among our residents, including ways to increase affordable access to WiFi connectivity. In addition, while we don't know when our next in-person meeting will be, we will continue to offer our training conference, meetings and Resident Leadership Retreat virtually.

As everyone knows, our work with our housing network doesn't stop with our programming; it extends to preserving our properties for the next generation of residents. We are presently working with buildings around the country to ensure the properties remain viable for years to come. CSS staff is always eager to help the best position our senior housing network for the future.

Lastly, our advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill continue in earnest. We are passionately advocating to Congress about the importance of programs like affordable housing and health care play in the life of older Americans. As always, if you have any issues in your buildings where your elected official can be helpful, don't hesitate to reach out to CSS.

Thanks again to everyone for their hard work and dedication.

All the best,  
Marvin

### **CSS Trainings During the Pandemic and Looking to the Future**

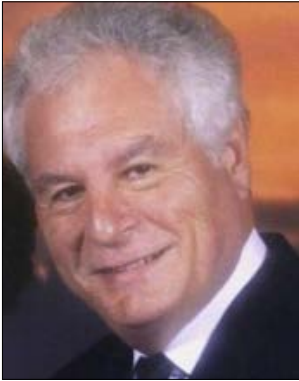
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Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was impossible to hold the retreat this year. Instead, CSS staff held virtual workshops for interested residents on topics such as "What is a Residents Association," "Guidance on How to Hold a Productive Meeting" and "Creating a Welcoming Community." We look forward to when the Resident Leadership Retreat will be held in person but plan to continue to hold virtual workshops to supplement and as a follow up to the in-person retreats in the future.

Although we look forward to holding in person meetings again, we will use the lessons learned during the pandemic on the value of virtual meetings and programming to enhance our support to the B'nai B'rith housing network. Stay tuned for more virtual programming in the future!

For more information on the Center for Senior Services and the services we provide to the Senior Housing Network, please check out the website: <https://www.bnaibrith.org/seniors.html>





## Seniority Report Column

*By Dennis Rice, Co-Chair B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Committee*

With the culmination of the B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services (CSS) 50th anniversary programmatic events, we must continue to look at ways to elevate the knowledge of our staff and board members and ensure the future of the housing program.

The B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Committee was created over 50 years ago to bring affordable senior housing to locations where B'nai B'rith members lived, to give back to their communities. CSS grew out of that effort to create a building network and support that network to maintain a standard of operations that has been successful for 50 years, and we hope for at least another 50 years! Taking time to reflect on the past can help assess the way forward for the future.

As part of the recent meeting of the Senior Housing Committee, a survey was sent to board members of the B'nai B'rith housing network to seek input on what direction the future of the program should take.

The question asked if being part of the CSS building network has been a benefit to the building board, staff and residents. The unanimous answer was yes. Some of the comments included: "Knowing what is happening at HUD and at other properties spark ideas for activities at our property."

As the co-chair of this committee, as well as president of the board at Deerfield Beach, Florida, these sessions afford all our board members the opportunity to participate and learn, not just the one or two who attend our in-person conferences, which are also very important to have during normal times.

The next question asked for suggestions for any other services the network can provide. Some suggestions included more training on what a board does and should do, including financial management. By expanding the participation on our Senior Housing Committee, we will get input from a broader range of our buildings and more clearly understand their individual needs.

This leads to the survey's final question, which asked about expanding the use of virtual meetings to bring the committee together for more than just training. Answers included using current technology to get back to the intended purpose of bringing the board members together to learn from each other, which can only strengthen the housing network, disseminating information and providing a forum for networking. Over 60% of the responders indicated that they would be interested in participating. They acknowledged that volunteer expertise is essential to the staff, and the more communication, the better.

In conclusion, when you are called upon to be a part of this expanded committee, please do so. We need your expertise and input to strengthen the B'nai B'rith Senior Housing program.

I look forward to working with many of you in the very near future.

## Thank You to the B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Network

Throughout the pandemic, the B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Network has been served by dedicated board members, facilities managers, service coordinators and housekeeping staff. Other staff include maintenance, receptionists, assistant managers and recert specialists in larger buildings. Everyone has worked tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of their residents. The pandemic has brought countless challenges. With each obstacle, our housing network has proven why they are second to none.

At a B'nai B'rith building, the residents are the priority, and everyone has proven that to be true. On our website it states, "The mission of B'nai B'rith Senior Housing is to provide seniors with quality, affordable housing in a secure, supportive community environment, without regard to religion, race or national origin to maximize their independent and dignified lifestyle." All of this could not happen without our senior housing network family. We can't say thank you enough for your hard work and excellence.

Thank you!

The Center for Senior Services



# ON THE HILL



by *Evan Carmen*  
*Legislative Director for*  
*Aging Policy*

## Congress Continues Capitol Hill Advocacy Work

The Center for Senior Services continues to meet virtually with members of Congress who represent our senior housing community. Our efforts have focused on FY22 and President Biden’s Build Back Better agenda. Regarding the Build Back Better agenda, we are advocating for robust funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development senior housing and for provisions that will make health care cheaper for Medicare recipients. While Build Back Better’s future remains unclear, we will continue to make the case for these critical provisions that would immeasurably help seniors.

Also, we are advocating for full FY22 funding for the Section 202 program so rental subsidies and service coordination can go on without interruption. Like previous years our efforts are done in concert with the American Association of Service Coordinators, a natural ally to our advocacy work. In December, Congress passed a short-term funding bill that expires Feb. 18. As always, we will keep our housing network updated as developments unfold.

We met with staff members from the following offices:

### Senate

Alex Padilla (D-Calif.)  
 Diane Feinstein (D-Calif.)  
 Chris Coons (D-Del.)  
 Chris Murphy (D-Conn.)  
 Rick Scott (R-Fla.)  
 Ben Cardin (D-Md.)  
 Richard Durbin (D-Ill.)  
 Patrick Toomey (R-Pa.)  
 Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.)

Ted Cruz (R-Tex.)  
 John Cornyn (R-Tex.)  
 Tom Carper (D-Del.)  
 Edward Markey (D-Mass.)  
 Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.)  
 Krysten Sinema (D-Ariz.)  
 Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.)  
 Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.)  
 Kristen Gillibrand (D-N.Y.)

### House

Jamie Raskin (D-Md.)  
 Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.)

## Rep. Tom Suozzi Addresses B’nai B’rith Leadership Forum

B’nai B’rith was pleased to welcome Rep. Suozzi (D-N.Y.) to address our 2021 Leadership Forum. Among the topics discussed was how the president’s Build Back Better agenda will impact older Americans regarding affordable housing and healthcare. In addition, Suozzi discussed legislation he introduced called the “Well-Being Insurance of Seniors to be at Home (WISH) Act,” designed to provide affordable long-term care insurance for seniors.

## B'nai B'rith Senior Housing at 50, and Beyond

By Mark D. Olshan

Associate Executive Vice President, B'nai B'rith International

Fifty years of B'nai B'rith senior housing! When you say it out loud, it's hard to believe we opened our first sponsored building a half-century ago in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Fast forward and we have sponsored an additional 37 buildings that provide about 5,000 seniors with affordable housing, making us the largest national Jewish sponsor of low-income, nonsectarian senior housing in the United States.

But our housing program is much more than a collection of buildings. Over the years, we have focused on creating a senior housing network family. We have organized annual training sessions for board members, management professionals, staff and service coordinators. Additionally, our weeklong Resident Leadership Retreat, held every other summer at the B'nai B'rith Perlman Camp in the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania, provides leadership training for the residents.

In celebration of our anniversary, we have produced programming highlighting our buildings' history by interviewing the very people who have and continue to provide affordable housing in the community. You may have noticed video interviews, social media and blog posts on our website highlighting our properties around the country.

<https://www.bnaibrith.org/50-years-of-senior-housing.html>

### Memorable Moments

This work has certainly brought back memories. I remember June 1, 1983, my first day at B'nai B'rith. The housing program had been operational for 10 years, but I was hired as the first full-time director. Rabbi Joel Myers, the program's associate executive vice president, and my immediate supervisor, showed me my office, where I found boxes full of files. Rabbi Myers said to me, "Mark, it's all yours. Have at it." Well, I jumped in

and created enduring memories.

I recall my first ribbon-cutting ceremony at Amos Towers in Scranton, Pennsylvania, giving a speech to mark the building's opening, and working with Burnis Cohen and Al Kulakoff on the application for our Mollie & Max Barnett Apartments in Fort Worth, Texas. This was the first building I supervised, from initial meetings with local volunteers and submitting the application for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding, to getting the funds, cutting a ribbon and opening the building to residents in 1986.

In 1987, I started the Resident Leadership Retreat to acknowledge members of the resident councils that were beginning to operate throughout the network. The goal was to provide them with guidance on strengthening their councils and offer them a vacation experience in an overnight camp setting. As time passed, my colleague, Janel Doughten, the associate director of B'nai B'rith's Center for Senior Services (CSS), expanded the retreat from three to seven days, providing significantly more programming.

More recently, in the 1990s and early 2000s, we received grants to build two Tucson, Arizona, projects—B'nai B'rith Covenant House and the Gerd & Inge Strauss B'nai B'rith Manor on Pantano. I was happy to be there when we put shovels in the ground.



L: Secretary Cisneros, R: Mark D. Olshan

While working closely with the B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Committee, I spent many hours in the housing industry working groups to strengthen and grow the senior housing programs. We worked on Capitol Hill with like-minded organizations, advocating for and eventually implementing the program for resident service coordinators. These are property staff members who connect residents with an array of available community services, thus allowing seniors to "age in place," precluding a premature move to a more institutional setting.

But given everything we accomplished, what makes our network truly special is the genuine partnership between B'nai B'rith CSS staff and local leadership.

### Looking Back, and Ahead

The past 50 years would not have been possible without volunteers in the

## B'nai B'rith Senior Housing at 50, and Beyond

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community. I look back to Abe Cramer, the first chairman of the Senior Housing Committee, and our visit with Phil Abrams, who was undersecretary at HUD. Over time, we continued strengthening our relationships at HUD, meeting with numerous housing secretaries like Samuel Pierce, Jack Kemp, Henry Cisneros and Andrew Cuomo.

Of equal importance to honoring the past is charting a path forward for the next 50 years, ensuring our sponsored buildings will remain open for the next generation of residents. Working with the local board at the Adelstein Family Project H.O.P.E. B'nai B'rith House in the Bronx, New York, we used tax credits to rehabilitate the property, providing a more modern living experience.

Currently, we are working with other sponsored buildings to achieve similar results, making sure the successes of the past 50 years remain permanent. In our current political climate, obtaining monies

for new construction can be difficult; consequently, we focus on preserving our properties for future generations.

But the future is focused not just on the bricks and mortar, but also on a continuing sense of family. We have used Zoom to foster a sense of community throughout the pandemic during our Annual Conference on Senior Housing, Managers and Service Coordinators Meeting and bi-weekly housing network check-ins. These forums provided an opportunity for our volunteers and building staff to hear from experts in the field and share best practices during the pandemic. In addition, in 2021, we launched the first virtual B'nai B'rith Senior Housing training. This will now be annual, conducted over Zoom, allowing maximum participation.

However, our training isn't just focused on volunteers and building staff. In August, we held a virtual Resident Leadership Workshop over two days in

place of our in-person bi-annual Resident Leadership Retreat. The purpose of the workshop was to introduce residents to the role the Resident Associations play in building a sense of community, leadership development, advocacy strategies and providing them with the opportunity to share best practices.

It has been a privilege to celebrate our senior housing's golden anniversary. Watching our portfolio grow from 10 to 38 properties, alongside our expanding programs, is a source of great pride. Most importantly, the B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Network is looking to the future, and I can proudly report the future looks bright.

*Mark D. Olshan, who holds a doctorate in psychology, is associate executive vice president B'nai B'rith International and director of the organization's Center for Senior Services.*

### RESIDENT EXTRAORDINAIRE

Larry McFarlin is a resident at B'nai B'rith Apartments in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Due to ongoing back issues, Larry had to retire early from the construction business, which caused him some financial difficulties, and he eventually became homeless. After applying at the B'nai B'rith Apartments, Larry got to know the property administrator, Bob Sipos. He credits Bob and the building with giving him the chance to rebuild his life. Larry likes to write and still likes to get in a few dance moves—he believes it helps him stay young in mind, body and spirit!

*Adapted from "They Decided to Share the Love" by Larry McFarlin*

Children of the Covenant. This was to me an unusual title, so I began to digest the meaning and came up with the Children of the Promises. Why? Solely because of the element that the people who established B'nai B'rith also extended love amid hatred. The inspiration was fed and bred out of a quest to combat racism and bigotry. I asked myself, "How do you get love out of hate?"

We can follow the example of the Founding Fathers of B'nai B'rith eventually establishing a safe harbor, a sanctuary for seniors, carefully guiding residents toward growth in a loving community. This receptive family that nurtures them as a newborn addition. Let us follow in the footsteps of the "Children of the Covenant," who decided to share the love to all, without hate or bigotry, no matter of their race, income status or where they come from. A paradise in our golden years, such is a B'nai B'rith building.

## WHAT HAS STAFF BEEN UP TO?

**Janel Doughten, Associate Director, CSS**, was invited to participate in the International Council on Active Aging's (ICAA) Annual two-day Think Tank held in early December 2021.

This year's subject was: Tackling the Staffing Crisis in Senior Living. The purpose of the think tank was to engage colleagues from across the senior housing industry in a rapid-design framework to develop innovative approaches for recruiting, developing and retaining qualified people in leadership and staff positions. Although ICAA will issue a formal report later, Janel was able to share the preliminary results with building staff during a December CSS Housing Network Staff Check-in.

The ICAA has led, connected and defined the active-aging industry since 2001. Founded in the belief that unifying the efforts of organizations focused on the health and wellness of older adults benefits both the people they reach and the organizations themselves, ICAA's vision is shared by over 10,000 organizations. ICAA's support of the active-aging industry includes industry research reports, program development, market development, education and research on healthy aging and wellness, strategy development, public relations campaigns and recognition programs. <https://www.icaa.cc/>

In November 2021, Janel also attended the 35th Annual Northern Virginia Dementia Care Consortium Caregiver's Conference. The three-day conference is designed for family caregivers and non-clinical professionals working with older adults to understand how to support those with dementia staying in their home as long as possible, including recognizing the early stages of dementia. Janel shared the information with the building staff at a November 2021 CSS Housing Network Check-in.

**Evan Carmen, Legislative Director for Aging Policy, CSS**, has taken classes on the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC). The LIHTC is a great vehicle to help recapitalize and modernize your building for the future. As always, CSS stands at the ready to help our senior housing community ensure our sponsored properties are ready to serve the next generation of residents.