



**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



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Managers and Service Coordinators Meeting in Philadelphia

By Breana Clark

Here at B'nai B'rith, we are absolutely thrilled for the packed agenda we have ahead of us for the 2017 Managers and Service Coordinators meeting in Philadelphia, June 7-9. We hope this summer you, too, are planning to join us in a city full of history! Believe us when we say, this year's meeting will be one you do not want to miss. As you may have noticed, here at the Center for Senior Services, we've been hard at work advocating on behalf of residents. This has all been made possible by hiring our new Aging Director Evan Carmen. If you have not already had the opportunity to meet Evan by phone or email, you will not remain strangers for long. He has worked tirelessly, reigniting our advocacy amongst the coalitions B'nai B'rith belongs to and in the offices of each member of Congress with a B'nai B'rith building in his or her jurisdiction. What better way to talk about advancing advocacy efforts than in the birthplace of American Democracy! In addition to a congressional update, Evan will lead a session that will include everything from connecting to your representative's constituent services, to tips on effectively writing to one's representative or senator. We are excited to share the many ways you can further our efforts and amplify voices of your residents and needs of seniors across the country.

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A Note From the Chair

By *Seth Riklin*

I hope that your Passover was joyous and fun, and that this second edition of our Senior Housing Committee's Newsletter finds you in good health.

With President Trump's proposed "skinny budget" about reducing the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) budget and drastically changing Medicaid, our Committee is more important than ever. These programs allow our tenants to continue to live independently, with health care and dignity.

I want to let you know that since saying farewell to our colleague Rachel Goldberg, she continues her advocacy for senior issues. She recently accepted an exciting position with AARP. We wish her well. She will be missed.

However, we are fortunate to have a talented replacement in Evan Carmen. Evan is an attorney, and comes to us from the White House staff of President Barack Obama. Previously, he spent time working on Capitol Hill and has

the skill set to add new energy to our senior advocacy.

Evan has already been providing opportunities to make a difference in Washington, D.C. by keeping the Network up to speed with the inner-workings of the 115th Congress. This includes making us aware of the advocacy of Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), thanks to his "Dear Colleague" letters in the Senate. I hope we can continue to chime in with the senator's efforts. By speaking in a united voice, we can make a difference together.

I hope board members will plan to join us for our next quarterly call. As always, we plan to talk about things happening around our Network, and will address special topics, as requested. The shared wisdom of these calls continues to provide common solutions for issues that each of our buildings face at one time or another.

We appreciate your help and your ideas as we look for new ways to engage the Boards and Management of all our buildings in the Network. With your help, we will continue to gain momentum and make a difference in 2017.

Be well,
Seth

RESIDENT EXTRAORDINAIRE

Carmen Rodriguez of B'nai B'rith Apartments of Deerfield Beach

Information provided by: Lisa Bryan, assistant manager at B'nai B'rith Apartments of Deerfield Beach

"A great asset to our Resident Community of B'nai B'rith Apartments."

—Lisa Bryan

Born in Puerto Rico, Carmen moved to New York when she was just 6 years old. She grew up there before moving to Florida in 2005 and came to live at B'nai B'rith Apartments at Deerfield Beach in 2012. Since she arrived, she has done so many things for the building and staff and residents count themselves lucky.

If there's one thing that she can be counted on for, it's livening up the place! Her talents and humor never cease to amaze staff and fellow residents. She can create costumes, make scarecrows, grow an herb garden, sew, cook and so much more. Carmen runs the arts and crafts class on Monday where several residents love to go. She even teaches them doll making. She helps out with the Thursday art class,



run by Angie Arroyo, and participates in the afternoon dance and exercise classes. She always helps the residents and staff to come up with ideas and costumes--especially for the newly formed Tuesday dance crew that Lisa Bryan, the assistant manager, put together.

When asked how she learned to make all the things she creates, Carmen replied, "I have always had a passion to create things; when I was a child I would use mud to form things, make go-carts

and do all kinds of fun stuff." Further, she shared her propensity for drawing, "It was always in me—I would always doodle and then, when I got into junior high school, I started taking the art classes."

On top of the activities she runs and participates in, Carmen volunteers with the Resident Council to assist with various activities and is known for always supporting other residents. For instance, one of her fellow residents has been very sick and Carmen has been walking his dog, Layla, twice a day for a few months now. She started planting vegetables in the "Need to Feed Garden" that is located at the Youth Automotive school next door. Since then she has become the master gardener. As a result of her efforts, the building currently has eight residents planting vegetables and fruit trees in the community garden.

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ON THE HILL

By *Evan Carmen*



I want to get take this opportunity to say hello and tell everyone how excited I am about my new role at B'nai B'rith. Over the past month, I have had the chance to talk with many of you by phone and I am eager to continue to meet new people, and hear from everyone who is part of the network.

Network Managers/Service Coordinators Training June 7-9 in Philadelphia

As many of you know, in the month of June, B'nai B'rith will be having our managers/service coordinators training. We are hoping to provide valuable information to you on the best practices for contacting a representative's office for federal agency casework assistance. Congressional district offices can be a great asset when trying to get your residents' assistance with the federal government. In addition, we will be giving an update on important legislation in Congress that impacts the residents of your buildings.

B'nai B'rith advocates against Trump Administration Budget Cuts!

Given President Trump's proposed budget cuts to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) budget, we have teamed up

with the American Association of Service Coordinators (AASC) to do everything we can to advocate against this possible decrease in funding. We have met with staff members from Sens. Blunt (Missouri), Boozman (Arkansas) and Shelby's (Alabama) offices and Reps. McSally (Arizona) and Dent's (Pennsylvania) offices. B'nai B'rith has purposefully targeted members who are part of the Appropriations Subcommittees responsible for HUD's funding. We have emphasized to these offices how important affordable housing and the service coordinator programs are for low income seniors, and how vital it is for all rental subsidies to be fully funded. Our efforts on behalf of the residents of your buildings are ongoing, and we are very hopeful that we can meet with additional members' offices. In addition, we are excited to report that we have been working to try and schedule onsite visits by members of Congress or their staff. We believe

that onsite visits are the best way for representatives to see all the great things happening in your buildings.

B'nai B'rith was pleased to be mentioned in The New York Jewish Week expressing our disapproval regarding the proposed cuts to HUD in President Trump's "skinny budget." Lastly, as mentioned in our press release, we will continue to monitor and analyze President Trump's budget as more details are made available.

American Health Care Act Troubling for Seniors

B'nai B'rith was very vocal in expressing hesitancy towards the American Health Care Act (AHCA). On two separate occasions B'nai B'rith issued press releases regarding repealing the Affordable Care Act. We were very worried that the AHCA would cause the most vulnerable low-income seniors to lose health care coverage or see their premiums rise, and impact Medicare solvency. It was great to see our efforts noted by the Jewish Telegraph Agency in an article regarding Jewish advocacy for the elderly. While the AHCA future is uncertain at the moment, we will obviously continue to monitor additional health legislation as it develops.

Carmen Rodriguez of B'nai B'rith Apartments of Deerfield Beach

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The vegetables are regularly distributed to residents in the building.

In 2015, B'nai B'rith International staff had the pleasure of meeting Carmen when she was a participant at the Resident Leadership Retreat at B'nai B'rith Perlman Camp in

the Poconos. There, she feels she learned a lot and had the time of her life. At the talent show, she did a dance and clowned around, sharing her light heartedness with everyone in attendance. She even proved her innovative abilities by creating a

fishing rod with a safety pin. Before everyone knew it, she was helping other campers catch fish!

Staff at the apartments consider themselves blessed with her many talents and kind heart. There is no question, Carmen is one of a kind!

BUILDING HIGHLIGHT

B'nai B'rith Homecrest House

Via press release from B'nai B'rith Homecrest House

On Jan. 12, 14 delegates from the Department of Human Resources and Social Security from Shaanxi Province, China visited Homecrest House to gain more information about how a U.S. senior living community is run, and specifically a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) property such as Homecrest House. The delegation was greeted by Joe Podson, executive director. Visitors learned about HUD history, particularly regarding Section 202 and Section 8 programs. Mr. Podson explained the benefits of HUD Housing, Homecrest House and information about the Edwards Personal Care Building. Donna Tucker, associate executive director, provided the delegation with information about the Congregate Housing Services Program (CHSP) and provided a comprehensive tour. Princetta Jarry, marketing associate, provided information along with Lan Tran, the assistant property manager of Homecrest,



Chinese Delegation members were Directors in Human Resources, Health Care and Insurance, and Social Security within the Shaanxi Province. Those pictured: Ming Liu, Liping Tian, Gongchang Zhang, Jinhu Ru, Youzhi Qi, Erdong Xu, Yu Guo, Zhanping Zhang, Jianchun Zhang, Yuxia Chen, Gangxi Li, Yuming Lu, Xianghua Lu, and Qinxue Wang. Pictured representatives of B'nai B'rith Homecrest House included: Executive Director Joe Podson, Property Manager for the Edwards Building and Associate Executive Director, Donna Tucker, Asst. Property Manager, Lan Tran, and Marketing Associate, Princetta Jarry.

who translated for the group.

Mr. Hector Gao traveled with the delegates and was the translator for their group. The delegation met resident services director, Nancy Wolford, our resident services coordinator, Hewan Zena, and several of our Partners in Care including: Shirley Malcolm and Jane

Laughlin from the Jewish Social Service Agency (JSSA), LaShawna Epps from WISH (Wellness & Independence for Seniors at Home), Eliahu Beleck from Fox Rehabilitation and Nikki Ezeani, our Nurse Practitioner from Lomack Primary Care. Our partners introduced themselves

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Managers and Service Coordinators Meeting in Philadelphia

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In addition to advocacy, we have a robust schedule addressing Housing and Urban Development (HUD) updates and concerns from Randall J. Scheetz, a representative of HUD Multifamily Northeast Asset Management of the Baltimore Satellite office, Philadelphia Branch. You can expect a follow-up on the transition that has taken place at HUD, policy changes that have occurred with a new administration and secretary, an update on Project Rental Assistance Contract (PRAC) Renewals and Project Based Rental Assistance (PBRA), the Homeless Preference program, Management and Occupancy Review (MOR) inspections, and new guidelines for service coordinators. We will conduct

breakouts in which service coordinators and managers will have the chance to separately debrief and receive training on information provided by HUD, as well as an opportunity to gather and discuss barriers and successes with one another.

We are very pleased to have with us, featured speaker, Judith Chavis, executive vice president of -public policy at the American Association of Service Coordinators (AASC). Judi has had a major role in creating a service coordination manual made by and for service coordinators on behalf of HUD. We believe all attendees will enjoy the opportunity to hear from her and learn about all the great work she is advancing.

Other anticipated agenda topics

will include: how to support formerly homeless residents as they adapt to congregant, supportive housing, dealing with difficult residents and risk management for resident files.

As always, there will be an opportunity for the whole group to share programming that you have going on in your building. If there's a program that you would like to distribute to other attendees, let us know and we will be happy to accommodate.

If you have not already registered for the conference or booked your hotel, you can contact Janel Doughten (jdoughten@bnaibrith.org, 202-857-6581) for more information.

CSS Mission to Cuba March 2016

By Janel Doughten

Since 1995, B'nai B'rith has operated legal missions to Cuba under the auspices of the Cuban Jewish Relief Project. Through our partnership with the Maimonides lodge, we have initiated the Tzedakah Project, providing direct gifts in small amounts to assist 120 elderly Cuban Jews across the island. Additionally, past mission participants have also carried down thousands of pounds of religious material contributions to enhance the ability of the Jewish population in Cuba to practice their religion, as well as medicines and other necessities, while building personal friendships to last a lifetime.

Over time, elderly Cubans have become the main recipients of the Cuban Jewish Relief Project. In a country where the average government salary is equivalent to \$25-35 a month, for retirees, their pension is \$10 a month. Over-the-counter medicine, toiletries and even milk are in short supply in the country; Cuba still has government ration grocery stores. The only other options for Cubans to purchase food are on the black market or donated food. In Havana, very few people own cars. Most people walk or use very undependable public transportation. Only tourists can afford to take cabs. Outside of Havana, transportation can consist of horse drawn wagons. Mobility aids, such as walkers, canes, wheelchairs and adult diapers, are not available in Cuba or affordable by the average Cuban, keeping many seniors housebound.

Responding to the specific needs of Cuban seniors, in March 2016, the

Center for Senior Services sponsored a joint five-day B'nai B'rith Mission to Cuba, along with the B'nai B'rith Young Leadership Network. The mission participants brought supplies, including walkers, canes, toiletries, medication, clothes, dozens of packages of Depends, canned food, powdered milk and Emergency Evacuation Kits for the seniors.

During two of the days, the group split up, with the CSS group visiting two senior centers in Havana. The participants planned and implemented programming for the seniors as well as exchanging ideas with the volunteers that run the centers. At both the Creating Horizons Center and the Mitrani Senior Center, the group participated in group activities such as exercise, salsa dancing and singing. They learned English and Spanish words so everyone could get to know a little about each other. Both senior centers are funded through the Cuban Jewish Relief Project, and are a vital link in each community for the seniors. In Cuba, the only senior specific services, senior centers or meal programs for the elderly are provided by privately funded groups.

The rest of the trip gave participants time to explore Old Havana and



Mission participants and older adults at the Creating Horizons Center in Havana



TOP: Mission participants and older adults at the Mitrani Senior Center in Havana
BELOW: Vintage car at the Malecon in Havana



spend Shabbat with the Cuban Jewish community. The Cuban people are incredibly warm and welcoming, and were very excited when they found out we were Americans. As the CSS staff member that participated in the mission, it made me realize how much these missions make an impact in the day to day life of average Cubans. If you would like more information about the Cuban Jewish Relief Project or the B'nai B'rith Missions to Cuba, please visit the website at: www.bnaibrith.org/cuba-relief.html

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE SENIORITY REPORT: SUMMER 2017

- **Grants: How to Look For, Write, and Receive Funding for Your Residents**
- **Elderly Housing Coalition Building Tours**

Congressman Raskin Takes Tour of B'nai B'rith Homecrest House

By Evan Carmen

Congressman Jamie Raskin (D-Md.) recently took a tour of the B'nai B'rith Homecrest House, in Silver Spring, Md. In addition, the congressman answered questions from the residents of the buildings in a town hall-style format. B'nai B'rith's long history with Section 202 housing started in 1971 when we formed a partnership with HUD to sponsor housing for low-income seniors. The B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Network in the United States comprises 38 buildings and serves more than 8,000 people. B'nai B'rith International is the largest national Jewish sponsor of low-income housing for seniors in the country.

When the congressman arrived at Homecrest House, he was greeted by Homecrest House Board President Bruce Menditch; Vice President Michael Goldman and; Executive Director Joe Podson. Welcoming him from B'nai B'rith were B'nai B'rith International Associate Director of the Center for Senior Services Janel Doughten; Assistant Director for Aging Policy Evan Carmen; and Senior Program Associate Breana Clark. The parties talked with the congressman about the amenities and services that Homecrest House provides



LEFT: Homecrest House Board President, Bruce Menditch, and Congressman Raskin tour a resident's apartment



RIGHT: Congressman Raskin greets a Homecrest House resident

to its residents, B'nai B'rith's history with affordable housing and federal government funding for the rest of the 2017 fiscal year.

By touring the property, Congressman Raskin received a firsthand look at how important Section 202 affordable housing is for low-income seniors. He was introduced to members of the staff, and shown a resident's apartment and the various amenities in the building such as the dining and arts and crafts rooms. Walking through the property showed Congressman Raskin that Homecrest House is more than bricks and mortar; but a senior community that



Congressman Raskin greets a Homecrest House resident

allows older Americans to “age in place.”

After the tour, the congressman dazzled everyone in attendance by sitting behind the piano and demonstrating his musical talent. Then, during the town hall, Congressman Raskin took questions from the residents on a variety of topics ranging from basic senior issues to affordable housing to foreign policy. After the Q and A, he took time to meet personally with all those in attendance.

In the months ahead, we will be working hard to encourage additional representatives and senators to visit B'nai B'rith sponsored buildings across the country. As demonstrated by the congressman's onsite visit, inviting your member of Congress to visit affordable housing properties is a great way to advertise how integral these buildings are to low-income seniors being able to “age in place.”

WHAT'S GOING ON AT B'NAI B'RITH?

May

Older Americans Month

May 15, 2017

Elderly Housing Coalition building tour of Homecrest House for Hill staff

June 7-9, 2017

Managers & Service Coordinators meeting, Philadelphia, PA

June 27, 2017

Leading Age's Save 202 Rally & Day of Action

July 25, 2017

Senior Housing Network video conference call for Board Members

August 2-8, 2017

Resident Leadership Retreat, Perlman Camp, PA

For more information, please contact Janel Doughten at: jdoughten@bnaibrith.org

December 3-5

Annual Conference on Senior Housing, Delray Beach, FL

Cultural competency – Getting In Touch With Our Biases

By Susan Walker

Susan Walker has been the leasing agent and overseer of Resident Services for 4 years at St. Mary's Court. Her building is a Section 202 property located in Washington, D.C. in which Janel Doughten sits on the board. Prior to that, she worked in the Episcopal Church for 20 years. The following is a summary of a presentation Susan gave at the 2016 Managers and Service Coordinators meeting in Portland.

All of us like being competent in what we do. To be competent is to be capable, and even an expert. Competency shows others our knowledge, skills and experience. But, how culturally competent are we? Underlying our daily interactions with seniors are relationships and trust and connections that we build. This side of our work can reveal another competency.

Have you ever thought of yourself as culturally competent? The National Association of Social Workers defines cultural competency as the capacity to respectfully and effectively respond to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnicities and religious backgrounds. When we are culturally competent, our words and actions recognize, affirm and value the dignity and worth of each individual.

The seniors I work with come from over 25 countries. They speak different languages, have different socio-economic backgrounds and model a diversity of cultural norms.

How do we recognize those

differences between us and find common meaning in the cross-cultural settings of residential life? When we recognize our own biases, both conscious and unconscious, we can begin the work of becoming more culturally competent in our relationships and our work.

One way to begin is to remember the "Golden Rule" many of us were taught as children: "Treat others the way you want to be treated." This would be an effective rule if my culture and values were the measuring stick for everyone's expectations for how they want to be treated. However, the Golden Rule does not ask, "How does this person want to be treated, based on his/her culture or values?" And, do I even understand another person's culture well enough to know when I am being respectful, or not?

More useful is the "Platinum Rule:" "Treat others the way they want to be treated." This statement focuses on the needs of the other person, rather my own assumptions and what I think I know a person wishes.

By becoming more educated about and sensitive to cultures, we can listen to another person with acceptance. This is a gift to both listener and speaker. And, by becoming more self-aware of our assumptions, we can increase our respect of others, even when we don't fully understand their culture. Developing cultural competency is a life-long process of becoming aware of our biases and learning to appreciate the world of differences we all share.

B'nai B'rith Homecrest House

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and gave information about their care services to low-income elders. We would like to thank them for coming and hope to see them again soon!

B'nai B'rith Homecrest House is an interfaith, nonprofit senior residence located at 14508 Homecrest Road, Silver Spring, Md. 20906. Nestled amidst

10 acres of beautifully landscaped grounds with its own lake, the three buildings of Homecrest House provide 235 apartments for independent senior living, for adults with physical mobility challenges and 42 apartments for personal care services.

RESOURCES

Senior Planet: Rides on-demand for seniors without a smartphone

<http://bit.ly/2pmdbO0>

Fighting Fraud: U.S. Senate Aging Committee Identifies Top 10 Scams Targeting Our Nation's Seniors

Fraud Book: <http://bit.ly/2pmbUq7>

Hearing: <http://bit.ly/2pmev3u>

My Medicare Matters: A Guide to End-of-Life Discussions

<http://bit.ly/2pmmPKi>

Medicare Rights Center: Issue Briefs on Protecting & Strengthening Medicare

<http://bit.ly/2pm94ld>

National Low Income Housing Coalition: Tenant Talk

<http://bit.ly/2pmvu5S>

Medicaid: Providing Vital Health Care to Seniors

By Evan Carmen,
assistant aging director

<http://bit.ly/2pmkcy>

An Open Letter to HUD Secretary Ben Carson On Affordable Housing

By Breana Clark,
senior program associate

<http://bit.ly/2mQVtBc>