



**B'nai B'rith  
Senior Housing  
Network**

<b>A Note From The Chair</b> .....	2	<b>Resident Extraordinaire</b> .....	5
<b>Resources</b> .....	2	<b>2019 B'nai B'rith Resident Leadership Retreat</b> .....	6
<b>A Note From The Co-Chair</b> .....	3	<b>What Has Staff Been Up To?</b> ....	7
<b>2019 B'nai B'rith Connect Conference</b> .....	3	<b>What's Going On At B'nai B'rith?</b> .....	7
<b>On The Hill</b> .....	4		

# 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

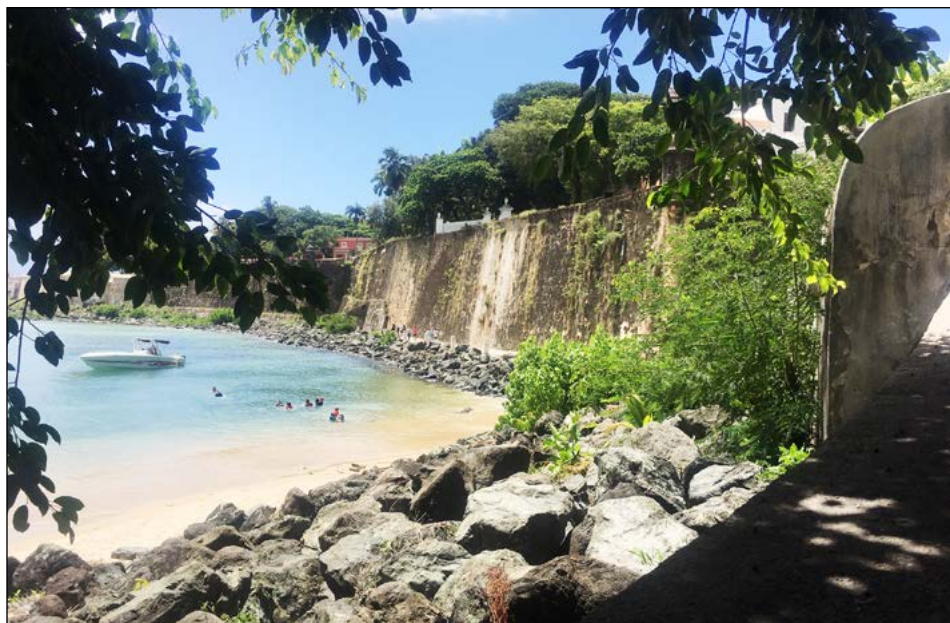


**B'NAI B'RITH  
INTERNATIONAL  
CENTER FOR SENIOR SERVICES**

1120 20th Street, NW, Suite 300 North,  
Washington, DC 20036

[WWW.BNAIBRITH.ORG](http://WWW.BNAIBRITH.ORG)

EDITOR: Gracie Cohen



## 2019 Managers and Service Coordinators Meeting

*By Janel Doughten*

This year, the B'nai B'rith Managers and Service Coordinators Training meeting will take place from May 14-16 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. This annual training meeting is for the on-site building staff, focusing on the issues that affect the day to day activities of staff and residents in our affordable housing buildings.

The meeting will kick off with a day of service in conjunction with some of the B'nai B'rith Disaster Relief partners that are still active in Puerto Rico, including José Andrés's charity, the World Central Kitchen. We will also be learning from our affordable senior housing colleagues in Puerto Rico how to prepare if a large-scale disaster were to happen in your community, including presentations from the Red Cross and staff from the largest hospital system in Puerto Rico.

Additionally, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is sending staff to participate in our panels. We will facilitate interactive discussions with

*continued on page 2*



## A Note From The Chair

By Marvin Siflinger

The 30th annual edition of the “State of the Nation’s Housing” prepared by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University describes the grim economic outlook facing the nation’s low-income elderly population as

follows: “More than 38 million U.S. households have housing cost burdens, leaving little income left to pay for food, healthcare and other basic necessities. As it is, federal housing assistance reaches only a fraction of the large and growing number of low-income households in need. Between the shortage of subsidized housing and the ongoing losses of low-cost rentals through market forces, low-income households have increasingly few housing options. At the same time, more than 65,000 baby boomers are turning 65 every day.”

In addition to the strong current “educational” efforts being undertaken by B’nai B’rith and several other elderly advocacy organizations covering a wide range of federal programs, the lessons for the B’nai B’rith housing advocacy community are essentially twofold:

1. Each of our local housing boards and staff should reinforce their efforts to ensure that the quality of their housing stock is at the highest level possible. In many cases, it would be helpful to initiate a capital needs

analysis to ensure that there will be sufficient funds available to cover future capital needs. In some cases, it may be necessary to re-finance your housing development to provide funding for rehabilitation purposes as well as helpful resident services programs. Mark Olshan and the B’nai B’rith International Washington staff are available to assist you in the planning and execution of such efforts. The record already includes a number of successful re-financing projects which have resulted in comprehensive rehabilitation and expansion of resident service programs.

2. In order to address the crises resulting from the severe shortage of affordable senior housing, B’nai B’rith Washington staff and volunteer board members are looking to partner with local B’nai B’rith housing folks to create more housing. Boston has already built an additional 64 units, with 57 more units starting construction in April 2019. Discussions with B’nai B’rith housing leaders are currently in process in Knoxville, Tennessee, and Seattle, Washington. Please follow up with Mark.

Recognizing the difficulties inherent with trying to expand our senior housing network, we would be remiss if we didn’t try as hard as we can to continue to move our program forward. The countless seniors who are in need of this housing deserve our continuing involvement.

## 2019 Managers and Service Coordinators Meeting

*continued from page 1*

professionals from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and experts in the affordable senior housing industry, as well.

Holding the meeting in Puerto Rico is a way for B’nai B’rith International to help continue the long-term recovery of the island, beyond assisting with disaster relief. As a bonus, the meeting gives us a chance to help our own senior housing building staffs develop their emergency preparedness if and when disaster strikes. Look for updates in the next Seniority Report!

## RESOURCES

### Grandparents and the Fight Against Climate Change

By Evan Carmen

<https://bit.ly/2I7ZQ8a>

### Paid Family Leave: It Impacts Seniors, Too!

By Evan Carmen

<https://bit.ly/2DsxSPI>

### Government Shutdowns and Seniors

By Evan Carmen

<https://bit.ly/2TCRh6X>

### 2018 B’nai B’rith International Center for Senior Services Year In Review

By Evan Carmen

<https://bit.ly/2R41Gfj>



## A Note from the Co-Chair

By Abbie Stone

Greetings!

It was so wonderful to come together in October in North Hollywood. We are grateful for and appreciative of the board members, dedicated staff and gracious

residents at B'nai B'rith Golden Years Apartments for hosting the 2018 Senior Housing Conference.

I want to take this time to thank the CSS D.C. staff on the amazing job they do in bringing us together and keeping us current on housing issues that impact our communities. You are much appreciated!

I also wish to congratulate Seth Riklin on his new appointment as chair of the Executive Board of Directors of B'nai B'rith International and welcome Dennis Rice, who will be serving with me as co-chair of the Senior Housing Committee. Dennis has been the vice president of the Board at Deerfield Beach Apartments for the past nine years and has

a longstanding role with B'nai B'rith, going back to 1970. He is a dedicated community volunteer and has been connected to a program feeding the homeless for over twenty years. We look forward to the experience and commitment Dennis brings to strengthen and enhance our housing program. Together, Dennis and I will work closely with the amazing staff at CSS, making affordable safe housing available to those in need.

There is more to look forward to, as well. Now, this is something very dear to my heart: the 2019 B'nai B'rith Resident Leadership Retreat! This year's retreat will be held Aug. 7-13, 2019 at B'nai B'rith Perlman Camp in the Poconos. "Camp" is one of the most empowering experiences we offer to our residents. The setting is beautiful, and there are opportunities to interact with residents from our many communities throughout the U.S. and Canada, as well as spend time with young campers from all over the world. If you have any questions about sending two residents from your community, please reach out to Janel, me or Gracie for more specific information.

## 2019 B'nai B'rith Connect Conference

By Scott Knapp, senior vice president and chair of B'nai B'rith's Young Leadership Network



Members of B'nai B'rith Connect pose outside of B'nai B'rith Apartments of Deerfield Beach.

In early February, over 25 "next generation leaders" ages 20-40 from all across the country joined together in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to unite and build for the future of B'nai B'rith. In addition to holding a leadership retreat packed full of meetings and guest speakers, they celebrated Shabbat with a sommelier, held a beach brunch party and watched the Super Bowl from a rooftop. However, their weekend became even more fulfilling when the group of young professionals stopped to serve breakfast to seniors at B'nai B'rith's Deerfield Beach affordable housing complex. This visit was the first time many of our next generation leaders had the opportunity to gain a concrete and hands-on appreciation for B'nai B'rith's senior housing operations. That experience



Residents and a B'nai B'rith Connect member introduce themselves at the Intergenerational Breakfast "meet and greet."

was indeed pivotal, as the Young Leadership Network's board, immediately after leaving the facility, vowed to hold more events and mitzvah projects involving B'nai B'rith's seniors in the future.

Our members and leaders understand that the meaning of *l'dor v'dor* should not be a one-way street. As a grandson of Holocaust survivors, I believe I owe a lot to the generation that persevered through global anti-Semitism and hatred. We must not only pass those lessons to our future generations, but also support our elders. Indeed, every time I meet with one of the tenants in a B'nai B'rith facility, I learn something new, and hear a great family story that should be celebrated and leave others inspired.





# ON THE HILL

By *Evan Carmen*



March was a busy month for the B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Network, with four members of Congress visiting our sponsored buildings. These visits demonstrated how important affordable housing is for seniors and the critical role federal programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid play in the lives of Older Americans. Check out photos on our website and Facebook to see some of these visits!

## **B'nai B'rith Advocates for Section 202 Funding From Congress!**

B'nai B'rith continues to work with the American Association of Service Coordinators (AASC) in advocating to Congress on behalf of low-income seniors. We have talked about the importance of affordable housing in relation to the fiscal year budgets, Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and government shutdowns. We met with staff members from the offices of Senators Jon Kyle (R-Arizona), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-New York), John Cornyn (R-Texas), Richard Shelby (R-Alabama), John Boozman (R-Arkansas), Krysten Sinema (D-Arizona), Kamala Harris (D-California), Tammy Duckworth (D-Illinois), Roy Blunt (R-Missouri), Dick Durbin (D-Illinois) and Dianne Feinstein (D-California), as well as Representatives Bruce Westerman (R-Arkansas), Eliot

Engel (D-New York), Lloyd Smucker (R-Pennsylvania), Donald Norcross (D-New Jersey), Susan Wild (D-Pennsylvania), Ayanna Pressley, (D-Massachusetts) and Susan Clark (D-Massachusetts). We also met with senior staff from the Senate Appropriations, Banking and Aging Committees and the House Appropriations and Financial Services Committees.

As the year continues, we look forward to scheduling more visits with congressional offices, especially incoming freshman. There is no time like the present to make new members of Congress aware of the B'nai B'rith housing community.

## **B'nai B'rith Meets with HUD Budget Director's Office**

B'nai B'rith is pleased to report that we met with the budget director at HUD. This meeting allowed us to explain the critical mission of the B'nai B'rith housing community. We championed additional funding for the Section 202 program and explained B'nai B'rith's long history with the program. In addition, we would like to thank everyone who provided feedback regarding how HUD can make the Section 202 program more efficient. We compiled everyone's feedback and provided the information to HUD. It's always great when B'nai B'rith can be an active contributor to dialogue with those at HUD.

## **B'nai B'rith Participates in Housing Finance Roundtable**

In February, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) asked B'nai B'rith to participate in an informal discussion with members of Congress regarding housing finance.

*continued on page 5*



(L-R) June Allison, Rosenthal Associates managing agent, Cong. Rothman (R-Wisc), Shelly Herman, property manager at B'nai B'rith Covenant house in Sheboygan, Wisc, and resident Evelyn Brazelton.

## On The Hill

*continued from page 4*

Mark Olshan, B'nai B'rith's associate executive vice president and director of the Center for Senior Services, spoke about our long history using the Section 202 program and how B'nai B'rith recently used the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program to recapitalize our sponsored building in the Bronx.

### B'nai B'rith and Section 202 Government Funding

We are happy to report that Congress passed a full-year appropriations bill through Sept. 30th. We believe this legislation should fully fund Section 202 rental subsidies and service coordinators for the rest of the fiscal year.

However, getting a fully funded appropriations bill certainly did not come without pain! As everyone is aware, the federal government shut down for 34 days this winter, which caused funding uncertainty for the Section 202 program. As always, B'nai B'rith closely monitored the situation, collaborating with industry colleagues,



Majority and minority staff from the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing & Urban Development listen to a panel of residents at Homecrest House in Silver Spring, Maryland. There, residents shared their positive experiences and community support living while living at Homecrest House. Joseph Podson, far right, regional director of Residential One, LLC, facilitates the panel discussion.

communicating with senior officials at HUD and advocating for low-income seniors through the media. It was good to see our efforts picked up by NBC News in an article entitled, 'There's no money': Shutdown freezes HUD funds for low-income senior citizens"

While we have turned the page on FY 2019, rest assured we are already ramping up for FY 2020. We continue to meet with congressional staff to emphasize the importance of the Section 202 program.

## RESIDENT EXTRAORDINAIRE

### Liam Flanagan: B'nai B'rith Covenant House

*By Gracie Cohen*

Liam Flanagan is far from a quiet, shy individual. A resident of B'nai B'rith Covenant House in Boston since October 2014, Liam has spearheaded several projects to empower residents and improve the community at large.

When asked how he initially came across B'nai B'rith Covenant House, Liam summed it up in one word: "serendipity." Due to his loss of vision, Liam decided to leave Detroit and move back to Boston to be closer to his family. Once back in Boston, his first apartment was not too far from Covenant House, and he would pass by the building on his walk to Whole Foods. By sheer coincidence, he had begun talking to the building's



Liam Flanagan above, resident extraordinaire, hula-hooping.

residents on his walks before he became aware of the appealing benefits Covenant House offers, including an on-site service coordinator, a fitness center and a community area on the first floor.

Not long after Liam moved into Covenant House, he noticed that there was no immediate crosswalk between the building and the plaza across the street. Residents would have to walk further down the road for a safe place to cross the street. With his vision loss came a heightened consciousness and sensitivity for disabilities or physical challenges others may face. Why should residents have to walk

*continued on page 6*

## 2019 B'nai B'rith Resident Leadership Retreat

By Janel Doughten



Resident leaders get to know each other in this ice-breaker game, in which campers catch the ball and answer a question written on one of the colored segments. Photographer: Ana Wolska-Lee, 2015.



Campers pose for their end of the week group shot. At the end of an intensive week, residents from throughout the US have formed strong relationships with each other. Photographer: Ana Wolska-Lee, 2015.

This year's B'nai B'rith Resident Leadership Retreat will take place from Aug. 7-13, 2019, at Perlman Camp in Pennsylvania. Held every other summer, the retreat brings together two resident leaders from each of the various resident councils/associations currently operating throughout the

B'nai B'rith housing network.

In intensive, day-long workshops, residents learn from one another how to make their own councils more effective and successful or to begin the process of starting a council. Another benefit is the long-lasting connections that residents forge so that they can help one another

with issues that may come up once they are back home.

Started in 1987, the retreat helps hone the leadership skills of participants. At the same time the retreat is going on, the regular Perlman sleep away camp is in session for children and teens,

*continued on page 7*

---

## Liam Flanagan: B'nai B'rith Covenant House

*continued from page 5*

inconveniently out of their way when there could be a simple solution?

This resident extraordinaire took action and organized a petition for a crosswalk that was even translated into Chinese and Russian, to accommodate the varied languages spoken by residents in the building. It gained enough signatures for the city to approve the proposed crosswalk. In a matter of 3-4 months, Liam not only saw a need for change, but facilitated an effective solution that benefited the entire community at Covenant House.

Liam's leadership style is to involve the residents as much as possible and maximize their input. But how does one go about this when fellow residents speak Mandarin, Cantonese and Russian as their first languages? Make sure the suggestion box is translated into their native languages, strategically place it in communal areas and use a fellow resident as an interpreter at several meetings, Liam explained.

Liam also felt a need to better communicate with Russian-

speaking residents. He did not want language to act as a barrier to his interactions, so Liam started a "Russian as a Second Language" class. Liam's intrinsic motivation to engage with residents certainly leads to many positive outcomes for the building's community spirit.

But he now faces a new challenge: connecting Russian and Cantonese speakers. Liam would like to see a stronger bridge between these two groups to strengthen the community as a whole.

A snapshot of Liam's other accomplishments includes increasing the number of recycling bins and improving accessibility to them in the mailroom, library and other areas of the building. Additionally, he worked to expand the communal space to include two community gardens. There, language isn't a barrier amongst residents.

It is evident Liam brings a wealth of community organizing experience to B'nai B'rith Covenant House and is sure to continue helping to maintain a positive and inclusive environment for all the residents of the building.



## WHAT HAS STAFF BEEN UP TO?

By Gracie Cohen



In February, Gracie Cohen started as the CSS program associate. She has always had a keen interest in working with adults and seniors. Prior to joining B'nai B'rith International, Gracie served in administrative roles in various nonprofits throughout the District of Columbia and Maryland. She previously taught English as a Second Language and citizenship classes to adults in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, through AmeriCorps and researched adult language and cognition as a post-baccalaureate at Portland State University. Gracie is originally from Montgomery Village, Maryland, and

is glad to return to the DC area after living in Seattle, Portland, Pittsburgh and, most recently, Kingston, Rhode Island. Outside of work, Gracie is an avid reader, movie-goer and occasional baker. She enjoys checking out the latest exhibits at the Hirshhorn and navigating DC's coffee scene, and she is eager to contribute to the team and community at large to help facilitate success for all.

Please contact Gracie at [GCohen@bnaibrith.org](mailto:GCohen@bnaibrith.org) and welcome her to the B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Community family.

### 2019 B'nai B'rith Resident Leadership Retreat

*continued from page 6*

presenting myriad opportunities for intergenerational programming. Both seniors and young campers are able to glean valuable insight and knowledge from each other through singing, dancing and other immersive activities.

CSS staff Janel Doughten, Evan Carmen and Gracie Cohen and B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Committee Co-Chair Abbie Stone plan and facilitate all of the sessions. Whether participating in the trivia night competition or the last evening's talent show, participants have fun while learning how to put on activities back home for the benefit of their buildings' residents. Make sure your building is represented at the retreat in August!

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

**May 14th - 16th**  
Management/Service Coordinator Meeting: San Juan, Puerto Rico

**August 7th - 13th**  
Resident Leadership Retreat:  
B'nai B'rith Perlman Camp,  
Poconos, Pennsylvania

**September 21st - 24th**  
Annual Conference on Senior Housing: Fort Worth, Texas