

# \$83M investment brings enhanced living at Jewish Senior Life

By **VELVET SPICER**

Vera Altman exercises three times a week. She plays bingo, goes out to lunch and loves playing the game Rummikub with neighbors. She nibbles on snacks while watching movies with others and enjoys a shared vegetable and flower garden in the spring and summer.

Altman is 98, and she does all of this, and more, from her home on the Jewish Senior Life campus.

It's part of a new way of looking at senior housing that is more personalized. And it is having great results thus far.

"I thought I was in heaven," Altman said of the first time she laid eyes on her new room in one of the three newly built Green House homes. "It's large and I have my own bathroom. And it's just lovely there."

Jewish Senior Life opened the three cottages—each of which has three floors, or homes—in October 2017. The nine floors house more than 100 individuals total, many of whom came from rooms at the Jewish Home's Farash Tower on the same Winton Road property.

"I think it's just wonderful to see everybody happy and smiling over there," Altman's daughter, Diana Stein said. "They love being able to go out in the back yard. The dining room accommodates about 12 so they eat dinner together every night."

Altman's quarters were admittedly a little tighter at the Jewish Home, where she shared a room and bathroom facilities with another resident.

But all of that has changed as part of an \$83 million upgrade and renovation project that began soon after the Farash Tower residents moved into the Green House homes. The massive undertaking was completed this summer.

"The Jewish Home was built in 1985," said Mike King, president and CEO of Jewish Senior Life. "Like many other nursing homes of the time, it was built as kind of a medical model where you had long hallways and very few common spaces, semi-private rooms, maybe some private rooms. And we really blew it up."

Indeed they did. Nowhere on the sprawling Brighton campus will you find a semi-private room. And two-thirds of the rooms have private bathrooms. Each floor of the Jewish Home has its own kitchen, where staff can more conveniently fix residents' meals.

"Now we have these beautiful sitting areas with fireplaces and dens for our families and our residents to kibitz and hang out together. We have these beautiful dining spaces where we do a lot of the cooking up on the floors now," King explained. "All private rooms, the whole place. And this is what's important, if you know anything about nursing homes, to have in your private room your own shower is a big deal."

The idea for the renovations came some seven years ago when the Jewish Home board of directors and management team began discussing a different way to care for their nursing home residents.

"We had done some really cool things with our independent living, some community-based services. And then we started looking at what organizations were doing around the country," King recalled. "What we found is that many organizations were learning that smaller spaces create intimacy. It creates a different environment for the residents and for the staff."

They landed on the Green House Project, founded by geriatrician William Thomas in 2003. The idea is to convert nursing home living into a home setting. It is a

way of deinstitutionalizing senior living.

The \$83 million project was funded by a combination of philanthropy and bank financing.

"I feel very lucky that we had a board that was willing to make that kind of commitment to our community to make this kind of investment," King said. "We have a very forward looking board and a very forward looking management team."

Once the Green House homes opened, construction crews were able to get started on Farash Tower, which underwent nearly two years of gutting and renovations. Walls were removed and put up to enable each room to be private. Each floor got its own therapy gym so that residents and acute therapy patients could rehab on their own floor.

With 88 beds, the Jewish Home is the largest post-acute, or short-term rehab, in Monroe County, King noted. Short-term rehab is located on the second and third floors of Farash Tower.



outsourcing medical staff. It is costly, but worth it, King said.

And as part of its staff training and availability of next-generation technology for a higher level of care, the Jewish Home acquired a simulated Susie, an advanced, wireless and tetherless patient simulator that can help staff practice real-life health problems on a human-like simulator.

Susie "breathes," talks, blinks her eyes, has a pulse and can perform certain bodily functions. Susie might ask if the person approaching is a doctor or yell at someone for hurting her. Nurses can practice dozens of procedures on the sim, unlike its predecessor, Resuscitation Annie.

Susie resides in the Jewish Home's newly renovated Learning and Innovation Center, which also features classroom space and the latest technologies for continued learning and education. A virtual reality system helps with sensitivity training.

One of the programs features Alfred, who has macular degeneration and hearing loss. Another virtual patient has Alzheimer's disease. Yet another is in an end-of-life situation and a funeral is shown. Each program is six minutes long and features post-assessment material.

One addition to Jewish Home's bag of tricks is its new Readiness Suite, the first of its kind in Rochester. The suite is a fully functioning apartment that has a full kitchen, laundry room, bedroom and more.

Patients in rehab are able to use the room with speech, occupational or physical therapists to prepare for daily tasks they will perform when they return home. Full meals can be cooked and residents can practice getting in and out of bed.

"It's important because it helps to make sure we have a clear picture of how they'll do when they get home, and for the family to have a clear picture," said Maria Fitzpatrick, director of inpatient rehabilitation. "This gives us a clear idea of how successful they'll be at home and what else we can work on."

And if the patient will be receiving home care, having the Readiness Suite helps Jewish Home advise the home care agency of any potential issues in order to diminish the possibility of hospital re-admissions, Fitzpatrick added. The room features several different types of flooring for practicing walking or using a wheelchair or walker.

The Jewish Home also has a car that patients can practice getting in and out of both inside and outside the building.

Farash Tower features a renovated wellness center that previously was a therapy room.

"A lot of our residents, when they're done with therapy they want to continue to exercise," Fitzpatrick said. "There's always a good reason to exercise, not only for the strengthening but also for the social part of it."

The wellness center, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, also is available to employees at no charge. More than 100 staffers have signed up for it.

As part of the renovations, the Jewish Home updated its Goldberg Center, which hosts a number of events, prayer services and community meetings. And the organization has remodeled its hair and nail salon in Farash Tower to look more like an upscale salon in the community.

Since the renovations began, the Jewish Home has seen a drop in turnover, and employee engagement is up, particularly among Green House staff.

"I anticipate the same effect (at Farash Tower); we'll see lower turnover and increased engagement," King said. "I'd like to think at the end of the day that hopefully what we're doing is going to inspire other nursing homes to want to do something the same or similar."

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Provided photo  
 A rehab patient receives attention at Jewish Senior Life.

"We learned from talking to the hospitals that clinical expertise is really important, so we created functional service lines," he said, explaining that the organization has created service lines in its mySuccess Transitional Care Unit for several health issues including strokes and cardiopulmonary problems, as well as diabetes. "So that people that have those conditions in the hospital know if they come to the Jewish Home that our team has received the specialized training associated with it."

The Jewish Home has four physicians and five nurse practitioners on staff, bucking a national trend of



Provided photo  
 A Green House building at left and a private room at right.



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