

The Clare & Jerry Rotenberg Institute on Aging extends Jewish Senior Life's outreach to seniors of all faiths

■ ANDREA DECKERT

WHEN CLARE ROTENBERG got involved with Jewish Senior Life, she was impressed by the services the agency provided; and driven to do what she could to support its mission.

"I couldn't believe all that they were doing; all the programs they provided," said Clare Rotenberg, a retired kindergarten teacher. "As long as they were doing what they do, I felt a responsibility to help elderly people like us."

Her husband, Jerry Rotenberg — a retired certified public accountant — agreed. He, too, was impressed with the breadth of services JSL provided.

"This is an asset to the community," he said of JSL. "We wanted others to know about it."

So, the Rotenbergs took steps to do just that.

With the support of a generous donation from the couple, JSL has launched a new initiative — The Clare & Jerry Rotenberg Institute on Aging — which will encompass several aspects to assist seniors and caregivers with experiences associated with aging and to expand JSL's outreach into the community.

The Rotenbergs said their goal for the institute is to address healthy aging and meaningful life, not only for residents who live on campus, but also to serve older adults and their families in the greater Rochester area by establishing JSL as the place to go for support, guidance, insights and practical approaches on aging.

Michael King, JSL's president and CEO, noted that the over-65-years-old population in Monroe County



Stephanie Mayor, a student in the nurse aid training program, poses for a portrait wearing a virtual reality headset used in the embodied lab at Jewish Senior Life in Rochester on Monday, April 18, 2022. The lab allows students and community members to experience the perspectives of people living with Alzheimer's Disease, Parkinson's Disease, as long as other conditions. (Photo by Lauren Petracca)



Clare and Jerry Rotenberg



Michael King

is among the fastest growing and the organization wanted to see how it could best support this age group, from providing educational seminars to wellness clinics and more.

Jewish Senior Life – which serves people of all faiths and ethnic backgrounds – offers all levels of care on a single campus, from independent living to skilled nursing care, along with a variety of programs and services for people living outside its campus.

The newly formed institute helps the agency meet its goal of helping older adults thrive and be successful, he said.

“The Clare & Jerry Rotenberg Institute on Aging at JSL will serve as the hub for knowledge and innovation on all aspects of aging – physical, social, emotional and spiritual,” King said. “We are extremely grateful



Stephanie Mayor, a student in the nurse aid training program at Jewish Senior Life, checks the vitals on a dummy on Monday, April 18, 2022. The manikin is part of a patient care simulator used for healthcare education and training. (Photo by Lauren Petracca)



Jewish Senior Life Vice President of Staff Development and Quality Management Christine Van Vessem sets up Chyenne Washington, a student in the nurse aid training program, with a virtual reality headset in the embodied lab on Monday, April 18, 2022. The virtual reality allowed Washington to experience the perspective of someone with Parkinson's Disease. (Photo by Lauren Petracca)

for the Rotenbergs' continued support of our community and our residents.”

Jewish Senior Life recently named Courtney Porray as the director of the Rotenberg Institute on Aging.

Porray, who is also director of clinical nutrition, said the agency is now in the planning stages for the institute, looking at how programs that are in place on-site could be replicated at other venues within the community.

The expansion into the community could incorporate events at area senior centers, farmer's markets, local festivals and venues of other collaborators.

Programs will be held on-site, too.

Most on-campus offerings through the institute will be held in JSL's Learning Center, which currently provides technologies such as embodied labs, which are immersive virtual reality learning experiences that imitate different effects of aging.

The center also has a patient care simulator designed to replicate a variety of care scenarios to build skills and confidence for professional and personal caregivers.

It's important for younger people to understand what aging is.

—CLARE ROTENBERG



Chyenne Washington, a student in the nurse aid training program at Jewish Senior Life, uses virtual reality in the embodied lab to experience the perspective of someone with Parkinson's Disease on Monday, April 18, 2022. (Photo by Lauren Petracca)



Yazmin Lopez, a student in the nurse aid training program at Jewish Senior Life, uses virtual reality in the embodied lab to experience the perspective of someone with Parkinson's Disease on Monday, April 18, 2022. (Photo by Lauren Petracca)

Clare Rotenberg – who is serving on the institute's steering committee – noted such education and support for caregivers is essential.

"It's important for younger people to understand what aging is," she said.

This isn't the first time the Rotenbergs have made donations to JSL to enhance the agency's offerings and support its vision.

In 2021, The Clare and Jerry Rotenberg Nursing Scholarship Fund was created to allow qualified Jewish Home employees to attend a state Department of Education-approved school to become a licensed practical nurse, with all expenses paid.

In 2015, The Clare and Jerry Rotenberg Center of Excellence for Palliative Care launched and focuses on improving the overall quality of life of an individual facing serious illness.

Daniel Mendelson, M.D., vice president of medical services and chief medical officer at JSL, said Rochester has a proven record of accomplishments in geriatrics and JSL has a history of finding new and innovative ways to support the community-at-large.

The new institute can enhance that expertise by offering a range of services and programs to meet a variety of needs throughout the community, he explained.

"Aging means different things to different people," Mendelson said. "This is an exciting opportunity."