



LifeTimes

Teens Bring a Little Sweetness to Campus

The pandemic brought special challenges to two age groups: the young—whose schooling and related socialization were interrupted—and older adults, isolated because of the impact the disease could have on them.

A number of local young people, however, have reached across the age divide, creating connections that have quickly become meaningful for both groups. Among them are three whose efforts have touched the lives of Charles E. Smith Life Communities (CESLC) residents: 14-year-old twins Lauren and Bryan Berman and 17-year-old Eli West.



Lauren and Bryan Berman

“We started what we call the Golden Years Birthday Brigade because of the quarantine,” Lauren Berman explains. After having volunteered with other organizations, the twins felt older adults were being overlooked, particularly during the pandemic. They hit upon the idea of creating packages for Revitz House residents celebrating birthdays. The youths purchase or solicit products and treats for the gift bags and then deliver them to the independent living community for distribution to residents with birthdays that month.

“They bring between 25 and 30 bags in a typical month,” says Cathy Tricquet, Revitz House Life and Leisure manager. The gifts add “something special” to the traditional cupcake and balloons, she adds, bringing “a lot of happiness to residents.”

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FIRST PERSON

Elul is the Jewish month before the fanfare of the high holidays begins. It is a special time as well because there are very few practices as we prepare for the holidays. Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, a great 18th century Chasidic master, taught that Elul is when The King is in the field. On Rosh Hashannah and the other high holidays God is waiting on God's throne for us to come, but during Elul we can feel God where we work, where we vacation, even where we watch television.



Rabbi Daniel Braune-Friedman

For those of us who live, work, volunteer and visit at CESLC, we can feel this all the time. Our residences are filled with the most important people in our community. They are foundational to who we are.

They also are one of the reasons the high holidays represent my favorite time at CESLC, Rosh Hashannah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret. As senior rabbi, I am involved with our many services, classes and special social gatherings. In addition, our associates help to provide more than 60 holiday programs each year. These moments create varying ways for our residents to connect with one another, their families and the wider community.

But why do we hold all these programs? Spiritually, the high holidays are a time to evaluate our actions, based on our own beliefs. For some, that means apologizing to friends, for others, it means examining our connection to God. There are so many ways to reach those goals, and even more goals to consider. Perhaps this is why so many customs have evolved over the years. We have special blessings we make on food; we throw breadcrumbs into the lake; some even avoid eating certain kinds of nuts as they bring bad luck.

Now that we are open to more visitors, families and volunteers, I invite you to reconnect with us and gain a heightened awareness of who our residents are and who we are, feeling God in this workplace and residence.

May this year bring you more knowledge of your past, present and future, and may you have a joyous New Year, Shannah Tovah!

LifeTimes is published quarterly by Hebrew Home of Greater Washington, Inc., dba Charles E. Smith Life Communities. Hebrew Home is a registered charity in Maryland and Virginia. A copy of our financial statement is available from the Maryland Secretary of State or the Virginia State Office of Consumer Affairs.

Contact us: info@ceslc.org | www.smithlifecommunities.org

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Ring House Residents Find a Literary Space

“You need a place to put your writing,” says Ring House resident Blu Berman. That place is *Around the Ring*, a resident-produced quarterly publication. “The magazine is the perfect outlet. You can write about anything; for example, we went bowling and I wrote about it. It is so much fun.”



Ring House magazine staff: (Front left to right) Shelly Weisman, Elesa Kassoff, Charlotte “Blu” Berman, Eleanor Grunberg, Lita Kerin. (Back left to right) Ruth Birnbaum, Shirley Kahan, Goldie Cohen.

The publication, written by and for Ring House residents, includes articles, poetry and opinion pieces among other content.

Shirley Kahan, *Around the Ring*’s editor-and-chief, says the magazine brings a sense of connection to residents. “When I moved here, I realized that we were missing an outlet for residents to share their news and what is important to them,” says Kahan, who has been living at Ring House for six years. “I worked with the activities lead at the time, presented a plan and recruited residents to work on the publication. I felt we needed more comradery and this project is something that builds community.”

Around the Ring has received grants from The Harold and Shirley Robinson H²YP Youth Philanthropy Program and the Past Presidents Club of the Women’s Auxiliary to cover part of the expenses to print the publication. Gabe Pinkney, Ring House’s Lifestyle and Leisure manager, supports residents’ efforts in writing and editing the publication. Kahan’s son, Dan Sandhaus, volunteers his time to design the layout.

“Ring House residents are very proud of the *Around the Ring* magazine. It gives contributors something to work on consistently and look forward to, it provides opportunities for teamwork, sharing and learning,” says Pinkney. “Residents who may not always be as engaged have found a new sense of purpose and rejuvenation by being a part of the magazine. It is also a great way for us to learn things about each other that we may not have known before.” ■

Teens Bring Sweetness to Campus *continued from Page 1*

The twins' requests for support resulted in receipt of more than 10,000 skin-care products from dermatology offices and companies; they have paired those with items such as tea bags and candy to fill the birthday bags.

The Bermans' project is not small scale. Although they have used their own funds—"I used money from my bar mitzvah" to help at the beginning, says Bryan Berman—they have turned to grant-writing to expand their efforts, seeking both local and national support for the effort. "We did research online to find grants," Lauren adds; they recently received a \$1,000 community micro-grant from a national nonprofit organization.

With that expansion, they estimate the birthday brigade will reach 1,500 residents of senior and congregate housing in the Maryland, Virginia and Washington areas annually.

WHEN PHILANTHROPY IS A PIECE OF CAKE

Baking allows Eli West to express himself and his creativity. It also allows him, he says, to make a difference in the lives of residents. For several years, the self-taught baker has been making donations to the Harold and Shirley Robinson H²YP Youth Philanthropy Program from proceeds of his baking enterprise: powderedsugarbakery.com.



Eli West (left) and one of his baking creations (right).

Baking represents a "blank canvas for me," the student says. "I've always been interested in baking. When I was young, I would watch my older sisters and their friends bake." Although he wasn't allowed to help at that age, the activity provided motivation. "I kept practicing and experimenting and eventually made a really good cake." Baked items for friends led to a sale and word-of-mouth recommendations. His business was on its way.

His artistic and complex creations now include haute couture, cookie, princess and drip cakes along with cupcakes and pastries, many displayed on his own website.

Eli's support of CESLC continues a family tradition. Both of his parents, Eric and Natalie West, have held lay leadership roles; Natalie, Chair-Elect of the CESLC Board of Governors, is Co-Chair of the 2022 Guardian Campaign. Eli's grandfather, Ron West, was president in 1996 and family members have lived at the senior living community. ■

Faith-Based Communities Critical to Renewal in Post-Pandemic World

Leadership in the post-pandemic world and the use of mindfulness to manage stress among healthcare professionals were the focus of keynote speakers at CESLC's recent Sara and Samuel J. Lessans Healthcare Symposium, "Older Adults Living in a Post-Pandemic World: A New Normal." The symposium is made possible by Drs. Ellen and Stuart Lessans in memory of his parents, Sara and Samuel J. Lessans.



Serena Jain



From left to right: Dr. Elisa Gil-Pires, Dr. James Wright and Brenda L. Rice.

During the morning session, James Wright, M.D., medical director of Westminster Canterbury Richmond discussed how faith-based senior communities must lead the charge into the post-pandemic world in long-term care.

"What if COVID-19 was just the beginning?" he pondered. "Two years ago, we would not have dreamed" of the world caregivers face today. Faith-based communities' mission "to care for each person as if they are an image of God" positions them as crucial motivators for change, said Wright, who noted that renewal can occur through Medicaid reform, staffing mandates, enhanced wages, infection control and government-funded demonstration projects, particularly around "small-home" facilities.

Serena Jain began the afternoon session by presenting findings on the power of mindfulness as a tool to reduce symptoms of burnout, stress and anxiety among healthcare professionals. "Mindfulness practice is another way to deal with stress," said Jain, a mindfulness teacher and health and wellbeing coach. "It offers you tools you can use to help calm down and reset your nervous system; that way you can make more skillful choices in how you respond."

In-person participants experienced an interactive presentation that included mindfulness exercises. The session ended with a call for thriving and not just surviving in the post-pandemic world. ■

IRA Distributions Address Charitable Need, Tax Dilemma

Ken Becker faced a dilemma—a good dilemma.

The longtime lay leader of CESLC was reaching the age at which he was required by law to take distributions from a retirement account, but the funds involved were pre-tax and so withdrawals would increase his tax burden.

He calls the solution—an IRA charitable distribution—a “wonderful confluence of incentives.” Notwithstanding recent market volatility, he explains, a donor can make contributions each year to 501(c)(3) organizations such as CESLC, while simultaneously eliminating taxation of the distribution because it represents a charitable donation.

“Of course, a most important benefit,” Becker adds, “is the ability to support charitable efforts, such as CESLC’s Guardian Campaign.”

The IRA involved had been rolled over from a retirement plan at a prior employer. Qualified charitable distributions allow individuals 72 and older (70½ for those who reached that age before Jan. 1, 2020) to fulfill minimum distributions requirements without tax consequences, up to a maximum of \$100,000 per individual, or \$200,000 for a couple. The transfers, which can be made from traditional or inherited IRAs or certain inactive employee retirement plans, occur directly between the IRA and the charitable organization.

Becker’s financial donations are just one way he supports CESLC. He serves on the Board of Governors and chairs its Strategic Planning Committee, roles that call on his expertise in housing and real estate. His career involved him in the development of moderate and lower-income housing and, later in his tenure, early efforts around creation of senior independent living and assisted living communities.

As a result, a colleague recruited him to governance service at CESLC in 2014; that role expanded to his current oversight of the strategic planning committee. Planning, he says, “is critical to ensure the services we offer match need in the marketplace while simultaneously remaining true to our mission.” He appreciates CESLC’s “very strong and talented staff and support for lay leadership.”

Becker’s actions follow family tradition. “My parents, Miriam and Arthur Becker, were supporters of Hebrew Home of Greater Washington for many years.” In addition to his volunteer roles with CESLC, Becker has been a longtime leader of the Montgomery College Foundation, including years of service as board chair for that organization. ■



Ken Becker

*For more information about IRA rollover gifts contact
Lisa Friedman at 301-770-8328.*

A Virtual Toast to Our Donors

Keeping with pandemic safety precautions while simultaneously adopting a trend in dining—home-delivery—CESLC’s 2022 donor recognition event offered participants a course in wine-pairings – right in their homes.

The event was held virtually to maintain safety protocols and featured professional sommelier, Erik Segelbaum. CESLC delivered samples of four Israeli wines and paired hors d’oeuvres to the homes of the nearly 130 donors who participated. The event recognizes donors who gave more than \$500 the prior year.

Segelbaum, a 2020 Wine Enthusiast 40 under 40 Tastemaster and a Food & Wine Magazine 2019 Sommelier of the Year, was event presenter. The founder of SOMLYAY, a Washington D.C.-area hospitality consulting company, he has served as corporate beverage director for Starr Restaurants, overseeing wine for the group’s nearly 40 restaurants. In addition, he is a wine-related journalist and educator who has held educational sessions at the Smithsonian Institution.

“It was a very enjoyable event,” says Madeline D’Alessio, a longtime CESLC donor as well as a family member. “In fact, it was the best Zoom event in which I’ve attended. The speaker was engaging, had a clear connection to Judaism and even interacted” with event participants.

The event even prompted D’Alessio to replicate one aspect for her daughter’s wedding. “The speaker sent a WineDisc with his information on it to everyone,” she notes, “a wonderful item that inspired us to create similar customized discs for guests at our daughter’s wedding!” ■



Erik Segelbaum guided the wine tasting event featuring Israeli wine selections.

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Revitz House
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Hirsh Health Center
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Ring House
301-816-5012



Clockwise from top left: Seder dinner settings at HHGW; Rabbi James Michaels and Ring House residents participate in Seder; Hazzan Sabrina Sojourner leads the Seder service at Revitz House; Residents and guests enjoy Passover dinner.

Returning to Connection with Passover Celebrations

CESLC residences hosted in-person Seders this year, opening their doors to a limited number of guests to celebrate the holiday with their loved ones. Residences held Seders on the first and second nights of Passover.

“It was great to continue to carry on the tradition,” says Ring House resident Elessa Kassoff. “Rabbi Michaels did a nice job. I had a good time. The food was quite good!” The Ring House Seder was led by Rabbi James Michaels, former director of Pastoral Care at CESLC.

“It was so amazing to finally be in person and to have people’s families join us,” says Hazzan Sabrina Sojourner, one of CESLC’s community chaplains, who led the communal Seder at Revitz House. “We also had many new people joining us for the first time.”

According to Sojourner, Passover had a stronger significance for her this year. “The Hebrew name for Egypt is Mitzrayim and is also translated as the narrow place. Each of us has been in a personal narrow place. Each of us has been in a state of narrowness during these past 24 plus months of the pandemic. As things open up, people are excited, yet some feel not ready. In many ways, singing our way through our historic spiritual journey reminds us that we’ve been here before and that the best way to move forward is by joining others and walking hand-in-hand.” ■

Annual Meeting Emphasizes Connections to Larger Community



From left to right: Board Chair Jeffrey S. Puretz, Incoming Chair of the Board and Guardian Campaign Co-Chair Natalie S. West, former U.S. Ambassador Marc Ginsberg and President/CEO Bruce J. Lederman.

CESLC's 112th Annual Meeting was held this spring in person after two years of virtual gatherings because of the pandemic.

Board members and leadership discussed the prior year's performance and strategies to address industry-wide challenges. The meeting also offered the opportunity to examine larger issues in the community. "We have a very strong relationship between our organization and the greater community that we serve. Community involvement is part of our DNA," said CESLC's Board of Governors Chair Jeffrey S. Puretz.

The group was honored to welcome former U.S. Ambassador Marc Ginsberg, president of The Coalition for a Safer Web, as guest speaker. Ginsberg touched on what he called his "vocation, avocation and spiritual calling" to counter anti-Semitic and anti-Israel cyber extremism. He said social media-sourced anti-Semitism must be challenged, debased, degraded and destroyed to preserve democracy. ■

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Guardian Campaign Co-Chairs: We See Results in Resident Smiles

Natalie West and Arthur Dykes are co-chairs of the 2022 Guardian Campaign, which provides essential funds for CESLC's innovative programs. The LifeTimes team reached out to learn more about these lay leaders and their commitment to the campaign.

LT: What does accepting this role mean to you?

NW: I took on this role with my co-chair to inspire current and new lay leaders to be part of this fundraising effort. Over 25 years ago, I became involved with the organization through the Women's Auxiliary of the Hebrew Home, instrumental in raising funds. My family members have lived here and been involved here; I have an enduring sense of responsibility to support CESLC philanthropically.

LT: Why is the Guardian Campaign so important?

AD: Because of challenging economic and regulatory issues, the need is as great as ever to preserve the high quality of services provided. Campaign funds are a differentiator as they provide programs not reimbursed by Medicare or Medicaid and therefore play a critical role in the quality of life for residents. We see tangible results in the smiles of residents.

LT: What campaign impact have you personally witnessed?

NW: I recently attended the magnificent Defiant Requiem Concert at Strathmore Arts Center and was thrilled to see the CESLC bus waiting on the curb for residents who attended the concert. And that is just one example. The campaign is crucial to supporting expenses you cannot see but that are critical to the everyday lives of residents. It is impossible to operate one of the biggest non-profit organizations in our state without community support.

LT: What message do you want to convey to donors, particularly in light of this being the Guardian Campaign's 64th year?

AD: We cannot rest on our laurels. Although we have been around for over 110 years, the needs of the organization are tremendous and ever-changing. Our message is that CESLC provides residents a sense of community and that each contribution makes that community spirit happen. CESLC is one of the best-run organizations I have been involved with during my 45-year CPA career. You can rest assured your contributions are used efficiently and in the best interests of the residents. ■

AUGUST 16 | 1 p.m. | Via ZOOM

ElderSAFE™: Creative Aging

Instead of viewing aging through the lens of deficit and decline, those in the creative aging field are working to reframe the conversation to see aging as a time of expression, growth, and potential. Join ElderSAFE Center for this interactive webinar on creativity and aging.



Speakers:

- Maura O'Malley, Co-Founder and CEO, Lifetime Arts
- Nathan Majoros, Deputy Director for Programming & Operations, Lifetime Arts
- Amy Castine, Lead Educator, See Me at the Smithsonian, Access Smithsonian
- Samantha Handler, Community Outreach Coordinator, Access Smithsonian

SEPTEMBER 14 | 6:30 p.m. | Woodmont Country Club

Diversity in Sports Networking Event

CESLC kicks off the Fall sports season with a community-networking event Diversity in Sports. Join the community for a thrilling in-person evening with local experts in professional sports, management and media who will discuss their experiences, viewpoints and the ever changing challenges and accomplishments in the industry.



Speakers:

- Christine Brennan, author, speaker, award-winning national sports columnist for USA Today, and commentator for ABC News, CNN, PBS NewsHour and NPR
- Monica Dixon, Chief Administrative Officer and President of External Affairs for Monumental Sports and Entertainment
- Brian Mitchell, co-host the radio show BMitch and Finlay on WJFK-FM
- Julie Donaldson, Senior Vice President of Media and Content for the Washington Commanders
- Glenn Consor, National Basketball Association and NCAA basketball analyst, Washington Wizards analyst to NBA and NCAA
- Bram Weinstein, play by play broadcaster for the Washington Commanders



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