

Federation Approves Jewish Senior Services Campaign to Rebuild State-of-the-Art Facility

by Rita Shelley

for Jewish Senior Services

A capital campaign, approved by the Jewish Federation of Omaha (JFO) at its Feb. 1 meeting, launches a new era in senior care for the Jewish community.

“We can now go immediately to our community to explain why Omaha needs a rebuilt facility for Jewish seniors,” said Joanie Bernstein, President of Jewish Senior Services (JSS).

New Plan Adds Dementia Unit

A pressing need is for a special care unit designed for residents at all levels of dementia. Bernstein and Mike Silverman, JSS Executive Director, cited research that proves the progression of these diseases can be slowed in a properly designed environment. The proposed new wing would include private rooms and secure, shaded outdoor areas with appropriate walkways.

Current Home Built on ‘Hospital Model’

According to Silverman, the Rose Blumkin Jewish Home was designed on a hospital model, which was state-of-the-art at the time. For example, the long hallways create great distances for residents to walk to meals or activities. The hallways also increase the time for the entire nursing department to reach residents and to respond to their needs, Silverman said.

Need for Privacy

“In addition,” he continued, “we want to provide our residents with rooms with more privacy, individual windows and accessible, up-to-date, less institutional and more home-like bathrooms.”



Joanie Bernstein, President of Jewish Senior Services, and Mike Silverman, JSS Executive Director, have announced the launch of the fundraising campaign to rebuild the Home for Jewish seniors.

Re-hab Unit to Expand

Other features of the re-building include enhanced short-term care areas for post-hospital recovery, expanded rehabilitation services for residents and community members.

JCC Gallery to Extend into Home

The proposed facility also will feature a more accessible, direct passage between the Jewish Community Center and the Home, making it easier to visit both. This will contribute to additional interagency programming on the Federation campus. Improved locations of entrances, parking and restrooms for volunteers and visitors are planned.

continued on next page

Federation Approves Campaign

continued from previous page

Steering Committee Excited

Bernstein assembled a steering committee with co-chairmen Bob Lepp, JFO Vice-president and a past JSS President, and Bob Belgrade, a JSS Vice-president. Community leaders Howard Kooper and Harlan Noddle, along with Silverman and Bernstein, complete the committee.

“The steering committee’s mandate is to continue the level of excellence our community has always demanded and supported,” Bernstein said. “The facility will be forward-looking and second-to-none in design.”

Kooper concurs. “For almost a century we have been taking care of our Jewish seniors in our community,” Kooper said. “Now, 23 years after the Blumkin Home opened, it’s a privilege for me to be involved in carrying on the tradition of our predecessors—to once again provide a state-of-the-art facility for our Jewish seniors and continue the same high standards of care and security.”

According to Noddle, “We have a wonderful facility now. However, we all recognize its physical limitations. We want—and need—a Home that will take us a long time into the future, so we’re obviously very excited to see this next phase of the project being launched.”

Steering Committee co-chairmen Lepp and Belgrade share this enthusiasm for what the future holds.

“It was a pleasure to serve on the steering committee and be a part of this process,” Lepp said. “While it was hard work and it took some time to reach finality, we tried to come up with a modern and exciting design that would best meet the needs of our Jewish seniors and our community.

“And, I believe we have succeeded,” he added. “In this new facility, our seniors will be able to receive the highest quality of care in the very finest surroundings. It certainly will be a Home of which we all can be proud.”

Belgrade added that the hard work that already has gone into preparing for the upcoming capital campaign seems well worth it.

“I am excited to see this significant upgrade planned for senior care in our community. The new Home will have the welcoming feel of a comfortable residence,” Belgrade said. “The residents will be proud to visit with family and guests in beautiful common areas.

“It’s wonderful to see our campus serving everyone from infants to seniors,” he continued. “The enhanced connectivity from the Home to the rest of the campus facilities will provide the ability for everyone of all ages to interact.”

“It’s very exciting to see our community’s support of a project of this magnitude,” said Zoe Riekes, JFO President. “I personally want to commend the board of Jewish Senior Services and the members of its Steering Committee for their hard work and extensive research.”

“We ask every member of our community to join us in our endeavor to make this dream a reality,” Bernstein said.

Future Jewish Press articles will describe additional innovations of the proposed new facility.