

New Home Will Help Residents Feel More “at Home”

by Rita Shelley
JSS Publicity Coordinator

The nursing home of the future will have highly trained staff and meaningful activities for Residents. It will be a pleasant place for families to stay involved with their aging loved ones. Volunteers will bring variety and vibrancy to daily life. Even four-legged friends will be welcome and part of Residents’ “family.”

Thus, by most definitions, the Rose Blumkin Jewish Home of the present already is the “nursing home of the future.”

But the present Home was built in a time that medical needs received almost exclusive priority in the design of extended care facilities. Today’s seniors and their families still want medical needs to be met, but they want more emphasis on the needs of the whole person. According to Mike Silverman, Executive Director of the Rose Blumkin Jewish Home and Jewish Senior Services, superior staff and the strong emphasis that the Jewish community places on caring for its seniors allows the Home to provide high quality care in spite of physical limitations of the facility. But a capital campaign is under way to raise funds needed to bring the building up with the times, and to prepare for the future.

Plans for a new Home include a separate, distinct unit for short-term stays and rehabilitation. Another unit will be dedicated to the unique needs of individuals with early- and mid-stage dementia, including Alzheimer’s disease. A third unit will serve people who need extended periods of skilled nursing care. This will allow a major departure from the current room design that can interfere with Residents’ privacy and independence.

“Expectations of Residents and families have changed in the last 20 years,” Silverman said. “They are demanding more privacy and more control over their lives than we are able to provide in our current setting.”

Residents want rooms with closets and drawers they can get to easily so they can keep track of and care for their own possessions as much as possible. They want countertops and storage in their bathrooms like they are used to



Eddie Otchere, center, a certified nurses’ aide at the Rose Blumkin Jewish Home, and Shelley Cash, director of nursing, are among staff members who provide the superior care for residents such as Harvey Thornby, left, that help the Home maintain its reputation as a quality facility.

having at home. They want better lighting and modern phone service. Some want room to set up a computer. They want to maneuver their wheelchairs without bumping into a roommate’s bed. Even if they can’t get outside, they want spaces with natural light in which to read or visit with their friends and family.

“All of these details wouldn’t matter so much for a few days at a time, but if you’re moving somewhere to live, you want to feel like you live there. The institutional design of the current facility interferes with the level of control over our lives that we all want to have, and that we want for our parents and grandparents as well,” Silverman said.

continued on next page

continued from previous page

In addition to issues of personal comfort, the current setting can make it difficult to provide care. Rooms were designed with the assumption that most Residents would be walking on their own, not using wheelchairs. But today, as more seniors stay in their homes and assisted living longer, many are in wheelchairs during their subsequent stays in extended care. Also, modern wheelchairs are more customized and some are quite large. Maneuvering them is difficult in the current setting. Some residents also need more than one person to help them in and out of bed, but that assumption wasn't built into the current design, either.

“A facility that takes current and future needs of extended care Residents into consideration will be an important asset to our community,” Silverman said. “Fortunately, society's attitudes toward aging are changing for

the better. The Omaha Jewish Community's commitment to our Home will ensure that we can meet the changing demands that accompany changing attitudes.”



Erin Byrne, a registered nurse at the Blumkin Home, takes a resident's blood pressure.