



Each year, thousands of older people fall at home. All too often, falls can be devastating, resulting in fractures, reduced functioning, premature nursing home admissions and even death. Even when no serious injury occurs, the fear of falling again can affect an elderly person's mobility and lifestyle. Hip fractures are particularly worrisome. Only one-half of the victims of a hip fracture can live independently after the injury and one-fourth die within a year from resulting complications. Falling is certainly nothing to be taken lightly, yet the hazards that cause them are easy to overlook.

The good news is that with proper risk prevention, many falls can be avoided. That is why Bonnie Sekeres, Executive Director of the Jewish Seniors Agency's Shalom Apartments, teamed up with Dr. Patricia Burke, DNSc., RN, Professor of Nursing at the University of Rhode Island, to reduce the incidence of falls among Rhode Island's elderly. With 153 apartments housing 165 people ages 62-94 years old, Shalom is the perfect site to create a prototype assessment and fall prevention program.

Burke and Sekeres have developed a risk assessment tool and are in the process of evaluating every apartment

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THE CONSEQUENCES ARE STAGGERING

and resident at Shalom. Funds for the project came from a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging grant received by the JSA with the assistance of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island.

What are some of the risks they are looking for? Poor lighting, showers without non-skid mats; general clutter, slippery or loose footwear, and defective canes and walkers are just some of the culprits.

A person's physical state can also contribute to falls. Medications can cause dizziness, and weak leg muscles, which are common among the sedentary elderly, lead to poor balance and difficulty walking. Vision loss can also increase the risk of falls among old people. Bifocals, in particular, can reduce the capacity

to perceive obstacles on the ground when walking or climbing stairs.

Some of the funds from the \$50,000 grant have been used to purchase night lights for every Shalom resident. "Many people have night lights, but not the kind that go on automatically when it gets dark," says Sekeres. "It's a very simple, inexpensive improvement that has enormous potential to prevent falls," she said. The grant also enabled Shalom to set up an exercise room and purchase an easy to use NuStep exercise machine designed to improve overall flexibility, leg strength, gait and cardio-vascular fitness. As residents learn the importance of maintaining strong legs, the NuStep



machine and other equipment are beginning to get quite a workout! A weekly Tai Chi session is planned to help residents improve gait and balance. Shalom is also collaborating with URI College of Pharmacy students who will evaluate residents' medications to identify harmful drug combinations and medications that could cause dizziness. Sekeres is a member of the Rhode Island Long



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NEWS BRIEFS

Comprehensive Adult Day Care Award

The RI Department of Elderly Affairs has selected the JSA's Comprehensive Adult Day Center (CADC) to receive its first Best Practices Award which recognizes excellence in adult day center programming. The CADC was selected for its Dysphasia and Dental Hygiene programs. Roberta Sinapi, Director of the CADC, explained the program at a meeting of all adult day center directors, nurses and case managers held in late January.

To Life Campaign

The To Life Campaign is moving ahead with a very strong committee co-chaired by Ellis Waldman and Jim Galkin. Campaign funds will establish a \$3 million endowment to provide financial assistance for Tamarisk residents, and \$1 million will be applied to the JSA's endowment to help fund its core programs. "Our first objective was to have 100% participation by the JSA Board and we are within a few phone calls of reaching that goal," reports Galkin. This show of support sets the pace and the passion for the next campaign phase which is soliciting the rest of the community.

Veteran's Benefit Program at Tamarisk

Tamarisk is now participating in the Veteran's Program, which provides financial assistance for eligible individuals to reside in assisted living residences. Please call Beverly Levitt Narciso at 401-732-0037 for more information.

Join the Women's Association

The JSA Women's Association plays an important role in reaching out to our Jewish elderly and raising funds to support JSA programs. The Association is looking for women of all ages to be part of this active organization that dates back to the earliest days of the Jewish Home for the Aged. Members participate in activities that are of special interest to them and may volunteer as little or as much time as they wish. Activities include visiting nursing home residents, delivering gifts during holidays, and knitting beautiful children's sweaters, afghans and other items that they sell through their "shop" at Tamarisk. Please call Sylvia Brown at 401-944-8398 for further information.

Profile of the Tamarisk Community

The Phyllis Siperstein Tamarisk Assisted Living Residence is living up to its vision of being a wonderful, stimulating place to live. It has brought together people who share a common heritage, yet have many different backgrounds and interests. The eight couples, 48 women and 25 men who currently live at Tamarisk come from nine different states, including Arizona and California. Within Rhode Island, residents have come to Tamarisk from Providence, Pawtucket, Cranston, East Greenwich, Narragansett and Warwick, drawn to our community for the special environment, services and amenities we offer. Although the population is predominantly Jewish, we welcome people of other faiths and currently have eleven non-Jewish people living with us.

Every day there are opportunities for personal enrichment, as residents share stories of their lives, travels and careers. Among our residents are former nurses, physicians, lawyers, professors, salesmen, manufacturers, an administrative assistant, a graphic artist, and many women who were homemakers and community volunteers.

The word is out. The Tamarisk vision has become reality. We are approaching 100% occupancy and may soon require waiting lists for certain types of apartments. **Come visit and see what all the talk is about!**



Reaching out, touching lives, and preserving traditions

MESSAGE FROM PATRICIA COHEN
JSA President

The year 2004 has been one of rewarding accomplishments and



numerous challenges met through hard work, creativity and the unselfish dedication of our Board, volunteers and staff:

- The Comprehensive Adult Day Center continued to develop outstanding programs that focus on the abilities rather than the disabilities of participants. (See News Briefs.) The staff is continuously being trained in special areas such as dementia and post-stroke rehabilitation to optimize the quality of the care we provide. Our Support Groups reach out to caregivers, helping them to understand and interact with their loved ones in positive, less stressful ways.

- The JERI Outreach staff continued to expand their skills by participating in a Chaplaincy Training Program and grief counseling classes. The CHAVER program is now being expanded to nursing home staffs. (See story below.)
- The JSA's Shalom Apartments received a Federal grant to create a risk assessment and falls prevention program for senior housing residents. The model program will be featured at the National Conference of the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging. (See cover story.)
- Tamarisk continues to provide a Jewish environment for residents and to offer a variety of programs that enable residents to learn new skills, participate in many educational and entertainment programs and enjoy opportunities for informal socialization. The JSA's Support Foundation is being funded through the To Life Campaign, and soon we

will begin to award rent subsidies to qualified individuals.

- The JSA, Jewish Family Service and the Jewish Federation of RI are working to strengthen communications and collaborations in order to provide better, coordinated services to Jewish elders and their families.

As you can see, we have had a productive year, and 2005 will be even busier as we begin to implement the strategic plan adopted by the Board during 2004. **We hope that you will join us as we continue to reach out, touch lives and preserve traditions.**

Nursing Home Staffs Receive CHAVER Training

Since 2001, the JSA has been training volunteers to respond to the physical, mental and spiritual needs of the people they visit in nursing homes. This CHAVER program (Caring Helpers and Visitors Empower Residents) is now being offered free of charge to nursing home staffs. The goal is to enhance professional caregivers' ability to communicate with, understand and enhance the lives of the residents they care for every day.

Susan Adler, who teaches the course with JERI Outreach Program staff member Ethan Adler, stresses that this isn't a course in Judaism or religion in general. It's a secular approach to developing listening and communications skills, dealing with end-of-life issues and grief, and learning how to become spiritually friendly care-giving. "Inspirational, creative care giving is one way to describe it," Susan says. Certified Nursing Assistants and nurses who have taken the course tell Susan they are often

frustrated because they don't have enough time to just sit and talk with the people they are caring for. They wish they could get to know each person on a deeper level.



Susan and Ethan teach course participants how to use every task – washing a resident's hair, serving a meal, administering meds – as a "precious jewel of time" that should

be used to bring happiness and comfort through reassuring words, a gentle touch, or a simple act of kindness. A wonderful side benefit of the program is that the training helps the caregivers deal more effectively with their own emotions and the stresses of their jobs.

If you have a loved one in a nursing home, why not suggest that the staff find out more about the CHAVER Program for Nursing Homes. Every nursing home in the state received a program announcement; however more details are available by calling Susan Adler at 401-621-5374 or emailing jeriofri@aol.com.

InfoQuest:

A different kind of helpline

When the phone rings in her office, Susan Adler, JERI Outreach Program Director, never knows what might be



asked of her. It could be an out-of-town relative looking for local services for an elderly loved one; a husband desperate for advice on how to care for

his wife whose dementia is progressing; or someone with a simple request, such as a list of good rehabilitation facilities or where to rent a wheelchair. Susan has many answers in her head or at her fingertips. When she doesn't have the requested information, she and her staff do the research and quickly get back to the caller – often within minutes or a few hours.

When people call InfoQuest, they don't fall into a "phone labyrinth" where they are bounced from person to person, never getting the information they need. InfoQuest is personal, caring and thorough. How surprised callers are when Susan follows up a few days later to make sure their problem has been resolved or their needs met!

"It's caring, compassion, and just being available to listen that makes our information service different," says Susan. And InfoQuest isn't just for seniors or Jewish people. It is for anyone living anywhere who needs information, advice, guidance or support. InfoQuest should be the first call you make when you, a family member or friend needs help. We urge you to post the InfoQuest phone number in your address book and give Susan a call whenever you have a question.

InfoQuest: 401-351-2185 or toll-free: 888-593-2293

Words of Gratitude

"My friend Peter died last year and his wife Anne, now 93 years old, was left to face life alone. She is hard of hearing and needed help and understanding. I want to thank Susan Adler and the InfoQuest and JERI staff for their help and kindness to her. I was particularly impressed with the gentle and caring manner in which Anne was received." John E. O'Hara, Narragansett.

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Term Care Coordinating Council's Falls Prevention Task Force. As the only senior housing member on the Council, the Shalom Apartments Fall Prevention Program will likely become the prototype for senior housing as well as for home care agencies throughout the state. Sekeres and Burke are hopeful that their U.S. Health and Human Services grant will be extended and increased next year.

Dr. Burke, who is a gerontology clinical nurse with a special interest in falls prevention, recommends that every home or apartment where seniors reside be evaluated for risk factors to prevent the devastation of a fall. Here are some hazards and easy fixes that Burke covers in a Falls Prevention Training Manual she prepared for the RI Long-Term Care Coordinating Council and RI Association of Facilities and Services for the Aging:

Around the house:

- Remove clutter and electrical cords that create tripping hazards.
- Clear a path from bed to bath.
- Add grab rails and non-slip mats in showers and tubs.
- Install hand rails on both sides of a stairway.
- Improve the accessibility of the telephone and mailbox.
- Make sure a phone is reachable from the floor if a person falls and can't get up.
- Repair or remove unstable furniture.
- Improve lighting inside and outside the house.
- Get rid of throw rugs or secure them with two-sided tape.

Other hazards to look for:

- Are light switches accessible before entering a room?
- Do pets rest under foot?
- Are cabinets or doors difficult to open?
- Are frequently used items too high in closets and on shelves?
- Is furniture difficult to get into and out of?

Encourage the elderly to make these personal changes:

- Avoid liquids near bedtime to reduce nighttime trips to the bathroom.
- Stand up slowly to avoid lightheadedness.

- Avoid using chairs as step stools.
- Wear shoes with no more than a one inch heel.
- Avoid slippers and other soft shoes that do not provide good support.
- Do leg strengthening exercises regularly.



- Be aware that some medications may cause dizziness and lightheadedness.
- Have vision checked annually.

While all these tips may seem like common sense, few families take the time to assess and reduce risks until after a fall has occurred. Take a look around your house and make changes today!

Generations



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