B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Network

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SENIORITY REPORT

Inform

We want to do our best to stay in touch with you. Please remember to send pictures and updates on the events in your building!

Sign Up

Reading the Seniority Report is a great way to stay informed on what we are doing here at CSS as well as having a pulse on aging in general. To sign up for this resource simply Click Here

Contribute

Want to contribute to the next issue of Seniority Report? Email us your own story or suggestions at: seniors@bnaibrith.org

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Training Overview 2023—Back to In-person Meetings

By Janel Doughten, Associate Director, Center for Senior Services



Since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, all the B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services (CSS) conferences have been held virtually, except for the recent Annual Managers and Service Coordinators training that was held in New Orleans this past June. Although there were fewer people in attendance compared to pre-pandemic numbers due to concerns about COVID, CSS staff were pleasantly surprised at how many people did attend the in-person meeting. It made us realize that we can move forward with a mix of in-person and virtual trainings in the future.

On that note, we are excited to announce that not only will the 2023 Annual Managers and Service Coordinators meeting be held in-person, but the Resident Leadership Retreat and Annual Conference on Senior Housing will also be held in-person this year.

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Training Overview 2023—Back to In-person Meetings

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As much as in-person meetings are beneficial, there are benefits to holding training virtually as well. One meeting will continue to be held virtually due to its popularity and the ability for more people to attend. The two-day training that has been held in March for the past two years will continue to be held virtually.

We are very pleased to announce that this year's Annual Conference on Senior Housing will take place in Tucson, Arizona in November 2023. The board of directors of both B'nai B'rith Covenant House I/II and the Gerd & Inge Strauss B'nai B'rith Manor on Pantano will serve as co-hosts. Join your colleagues for a fun, interesting and memorable time. Details to be announced soon, via email.

Although CSS staff have held virtual workshops for resident leaders in place of the Resident Leadership Retreat, the best parts of this program cannot be replicated virtually. Held at the B'nai B'rith Perlman Camp in Pennsylvania, the retreat is a once in a lifetime opportunity for the resident leaders in the CSS Housing Network. The retreat is designed to cultivate the leadership abilities of participants, so that they can then go back to their respective buildings and enhance the lives of their fellow residents by creating activities and being advocates and a voice in their communities.

What makes the retreat so special are the opportunities for the residents that attend to network with and learn from each other, and especially the fun of being at a summer camp and participating in intergenerational activities with the young campers. Many of the participants have never attended a camp, and even if they have in the past, it was 50-60 years ago. CSS staff are excited to bring this opportunity back to the CSS Housing Network!

We look forward to seeing the members of the Housing Network in 2023! Dates and details will be announced soon: https://www.bnaibrith.org/css-virtual-trainings/

Check out the CSS Sessions from the B'nai B'rith International Virtual 2022 Leadership Forum

Issues Impacting Older Adults, a conversation with Evan Carmen, Director of Aging Policy, CSS

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsCUWggwLdM&list=PLHYADkMLYuZOTz_ioqAZ_YAaTUUolcy8p&index=14

The Challenges and Realities of Aging, a panel discussion moderated by Janel Doughten, Associate Director, CSS

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KDhugD22LQ&list=PLHYADkMLYuZOTz_ioqAZ_YAaTUUolcy8p&index=15



A Note From The Chair

By Marvin Siflinger, Chair of Center for Senior Services

Hello friends,

As we are already in February, I want to share witheveryone about our upcoming programming for the new year. In the past few years, our meetings and trainings have moved online because of the pandemic. While the Managers and Services Coordinators Meeting was held in person last year, the Annual Conference on Senior Housing was conducted virtually. Our goal this year is for both events to be held in person. Please know that we did not make this decision lightly and will do our best to address any concerns people have.

These meetings provide a great forum for our board members, management professionals and staff to connect and network with each other. It's great seeing old friends and learning about the exciting things going on at other B'nai B'rith properties.

In addition, I am pleased to report that for the first time since 2019, we are planning on holding our Resident Leadership Retreat at Perlman Camp in Lake Como, Pennsylvania. While we have done resident programming virtually, nothing is better than when our resident leaders can spend time with one another and learn valuable skills they can bring back to their communities. The Resident Leadership Retreat, which began in 1987, immerses residents in intensive, daylong workshops covering the gamut of challenges resident leaders face. Topics include how to start a residents' council and create bylaws, address language and cultural barriers, communicate with management, publish a newsletter and more. Resident leaders are provided time throughout the program to bounce ideas off one another and problem-solve any issues they are encountering in their residents' associations or buildings.

We are pleased to announce that our programming born out of the pandemic, like our virtual Spring Training and bi-weekly Zoom calls, are here to stay. These virtual trainings have provided a wonderful platform for CSS to disseminate information to our network for the betterment of the buildings and for the residents we serve!

Lastly, to my fellow board members, I hope you took the survey regarding the Annual Conference on Senior Housing—we are always eager to get your thoughts and input regarding all matters.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone virtually at the Spring Training.

All the Best,
Marvin

B'nai B'rith International Center for Senior Services Calendar

March 25, 2023	Virtual B'nai B'rith Senior Housing Committee
March 26, 2023	Annual Housing Network Virtual Training
June 2023	Annual Managers and Service Coordinators Training Location TBD
August 2-8, 2023	Resident Leadership Retreat B'nai B'rith Perlman Camp, Lake Como, PA
November 2023	B'nai B'rith Conference on Senior Housing Location TBD

Check back for updates



A Note from the Co-Chair

Dennis Rice co-chair B'nai B'rith Senior Housing committee

B'nai B'rith begins its 180th year of service to the global Jewish community and all mankind.

In my 60 years, being involved with B'nai B'rith my short description of the organization's goal is simply a "dignity giver."

In its 180 years, B'nai B'rith has been involved in many projects to help people. It all began with taking care of widows and orphans in New York City. It went on to make sure all people were treated well and protected against anti-Semitism through its Anti-Defamation League.

The B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (BBYO) gave young people the opportunity to grow in their Jewish identity and strengthen themselves as young adults. Additionally, B'nai B'rith has responded and aided victims of various disasters around the world.

Finally, 50 years ago, B'nai B'rith began the Center for Senior Services, where it began building, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, affordable housing complexes across the United States. From New York to California, from Pennsylvania to Florida, these affordable housing projects allowed many individuals who otherwise would not have adequate living quarters to live in modern, well-kept apartments in a well-managed building.

Being the president of the board of one of the B'nai B'rith Senior housing facilities, as well as co-chair of the B'nai B'rith International Housing Committee, gives me a special perspective on senior housing. Our on-site staff—from the maintenance crew and janitors to our service coordinators, to our managers and assistant managers and our board of directors—work in tandem to create a well-oiled operation under the direction of a full-time on-site manager. Each complex has a professional management company that oversees the on-site manager and staff. This is coupled with the support of B'nai B'rith Center for Senior Services.

The center facilitates two conferences a year, one in person, one via Zoom for managers and board members. These sessions bring in experts to discuss a range of topics regarding senior housing concerns like new techniques in facilities management, programming, and what is happening in Congress as it relates to senior housing, Medicare and Social Security, to name a few.

Of course, the past two years have made for a special emphasis on the control of Covid. The interchange at in-person conferences is invaluable. An attendee can share similar experiences with others in similar positions. These conferences are created and facilitated by Mark Olshan, director for Senior Services, Janel Doughten, assistant director (the cog that makes everything run) and Evan Carmen, legislative director for Aging Policy.

I also want to thank the chair of the Center for Senior Services committee Marvin Siflinger and my co-chair Abbie Stone. It has been a pleasure being able to help our residents have a fulling life in beautiful surroundings and wonderful programs for them to participate in. After each visit I walk out with a huge smile on my face.

B'nai B'rith you are doing a huge Mitzvah.

ON THE HILL



by Evan Carmen
Legislative Director for Aging Policy

Congress Appropriates Additional Funding for HUD Senior Housing

Congress passed a bi-partisan federal funding bill that will provide financial resources to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) senior housing program. This bill appropriates more than $1 billion for the HUD senior housing program, which provides funding for rental subsidies, service coordination and 1,120 new affordable senior housing units. New housing units are needed. According to HUD, it "is only able to provide assisted housing to one in three seniors who qualify." In addition, funding for this program is critical as the demand increases every year.

CSS Meets with Congress

During the fall and winter CSS has continued our partnership with the American Association of Service Coordinators (AASC) to advocate to congressional offices for full funding for HUD senior housing in the FY23 budget. We champion rental subsidies, service coordination, internet expansion and more dollars for new senior housing construction.

We met with staff members from the following offces:

SENATE
Tom Carper (D–Del.)
John Cornyn (R-Texas)
Ted Cruz (R-Texas)
Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.)
Alex Padilla (D-Calif.)

HOUSE
Chrissy Houlahan (D-Pa.)
Jamie Raskin (D-Md.)
Sylvia Garcia (D-Texas)
Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.)
Bruce Westerman (R-Ark.)
Barry Moore (R-Ala.)

B'nai B'rith Advocacy Plans for 2023

As people may remember, before the pandemic B'nai B'rith invited members of Congress to visit our sponsored properties around the country. In the past legislators have enjoyed visiting B'nai B'rith affordable housing properties. These visits provide a great opportunity for lawmakers to visit a building in partnership with the federal government and learn more about senior issues. After the tour, legislators met with residents in a town hall-style format and discussed issues that impact seniors such as affordable housing, health care, income security, nutrition, etc.

The Center for Senior Services (CSS) will be reaching out to some B'nai B'rith buildings to see if they would be comfortable hosting a congressional visit. We are eager to get your thoughts and input regarding this matter, including safety issues surrounding the pandemic.

In addition, throughout the year we will be scheduling visits with new members of Congress that represent B'nai B'rith sponsored buildings. CSS is always eager to introduce ourselves to new congressional offices and establish relationships with the people that represent the residents of our sponsored buildings.

It's Been a Long Time Coming

By Evan Carmen (Originally Published September 22, 2022)

Sometimes things in Washington, D.C. move at a glacial pace. It can take years for Congress to pass legislation, and significant time after that for the law's provisions to be implemented, making the day when people feel the benefits of legislation, a momentous one. Consequently, the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) recent announcement that hearing aids will soon be available for purchase "over the counter" (OTC) is a cause for celebration.

The FDA's decision was made possible by the Over-the-Counter (OTC) Hearing Aid Act, which became law in 2017. That year I wrote a blog saying, "The purpose of this bill is to assist seniors with low-to-moderate hearing loss access hearing aids by making them available over the counter. If seniors are allowed to get hearing aids over the counter, it would eliminate the onerous requirement that people get a medical examination, or sign a waiver—by passing the examination prior to receiving a hearing aid." This legislation instructed the FDA to write regulations to make this a reality, thus expanding the market for hearing aids, with the hope it will drive down prices.

The administration projects this regulation could save consumers about $2,800. Affordability is critical because hearing aids are not covered by Medicare and currently cost around $5,000. In addition, according to Johns Hopkins Medicine, hearing aids, at times, only last five to six years. It's easy to see how expensive hearing devices can be for seniors, especially those on a fixed income. While the House of Representatives passed legislation expanding Medicare coverage to include hearing aids, unfortunately, the bill did not pass the Senate. However, despite the lack of Medicare expansion, this new FDA regulation should help make hearing aids more economical for some seniors, where previously costs made these devices out of reach.

This news is badly needed, as only about 20% of people who need hearing assistance actually use hearing aids. Also, hearing loss has been related with additional problems. According to Dr. Debara Tucci, director of the National Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, "Hearing loss is associated with dementia, increased risk of falling, reduced mobility, depression, social isolation, and anxiety." Furthermore, according to the Washington Post, in 2019, Social Science and Medicine reported that counties with the highest number of older adults lagged behind in audiologist accessibility compared to those counties that were younger, more urban and affluent.

President Joe Biden said in a statement regarding the FDA's news, "As early as mid-October, Americans will be able to purchase more affordable hearing aids over the counter at pharmacies and stores across the country. This action makes good on my commitment to lower costs for American families, delivering nearly $3,000 in savings to American families for a pair of hearing aids and giving people more choices to improve their health and wellbeing."

This win for older Americans has been a long time coming. In 2015, the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology proposed making available certain hearing aids over the counter, allowing people to avoid doctor visits and prescriptions. Fast forward, and the proposal is becoming a reality. Hopefully this will bring needed economic relief to older Americans who too often have to choose between life's necessities like food, health care and nutrition.

Annual Conference on Senior Housing September 2022

The Annual Conference on Senior Housing was held virtually for three days last September, with over 70 participants. The conference kicked off with a meeting of the Senior Housing Committee on Sept. 18. This meeting brings together members of the volunteer boards of directors and onsite staff of the CSS Housing Network to learn from experts in the field and to share best practices. The Senior Housing Committee met on Sunday to discuss issues such as board governance and strategic planning for the CSS Housing Network. The Committee is comprised of members of the volunteer boards of directors of each building.

Continuing Sept. 19 and 20, the boards of directors were joined by the on-site management staff and service coordinators of the CSS Housing Network. Topics included fundraising, emergency preparedness, tips and tricks on using social media and Newsletters, building security, and updates from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the National Adult Protective Services Association. Although not the major focus of the conference, most topics included some acknowledgment of the impact of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic on the well-being of residents and staff.

Holding the conferences in a virtual format during the pandemic ensured that the members of the CSS Housing Network still had the opportunity to learn from experts in the field and each other, and to continue to provide their residents with quality, affordable housing in a secure, supportive community environment.

Plans are already underway for the Annual Conference on Senior Housing to be held in-person in November 2023. Stay tuned for details soon!

RESIDENT EXTRAORDINAIRE

Andrew Stephen, Adelstein Family-Project H.O.P.E. B'nai B'rith House, Bronx, NY

Andrew Stephen has been a resident of the Adelstein Family-Project H.O.P.E. B'nai B'rith House located in the Bronx, New York, since January 2016 and is president of the newly formed Residents Association at the building. Andrew was born in Grenada in the West Indies to humble parents and migrated to the United States in 1984. He has two kids, each married and living their own lives. Although Andrew is a fan of all New York sports teams, there are a few sports he confesses that he is still trying to comprehend, so, he may not be a fan—yet!



When asked about what led him to take a leadership role in his building, Andrew indicated that as a young man growing up, he always accepted leadership positions, and credits that for having a successful career in the New York City Transit Authority, working his way up to field manager and eventually superintendent in his division. Additionally, he has been very active in the leadership of his church, Fordham United Methodist Men, having held positions as a lay speaker, trustee, treasurer, vice president and even president.

When some of the residents of Project H.O.P.E. decided they wanted to form a Residents Association, they turned to Andrew for help. He states that he has "a great relationship with people and was encouraged by the residents of Project H.O.P.E. to help organize the association." It was no surprise that after successfully getting the residents association off the ground, he was then elected as its president!

We wish Andrew and the residents at Project H.O.P.E. the best of luck with their new Residents Association!