

THE OLIVE PRESS

BY RHODA GOLDMAN PLAZA

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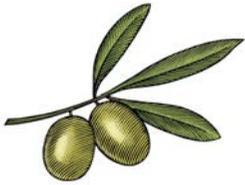
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Portrait Project Self-image and Narrative



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Preface to Upcoming Photo
Sessions and The Jean Henry
School of Art Portrait Show



I'm sure some of Picasso's subjects were horrified by his portraits of them. But, on the other hand, they may have known that he was striking out into new artistic expression and knew that no one would know who the actual subject was. Probably Picasso's models did not

expect to see their preconcieved self-image. But, that was ok; Picasso was the artist.

The artists of the Jean Henry School of Art share with Picasso the idea that portrait painting is in the hand of the artist. Only renown portrait painters, Charles Peale, Rembrandt Peale, or Winslow Homer could create paintings that looked like the real model.

Only in rare cases do painted portraits reflect one's self-image, and people are disappointed not to see "themselves". In reality painted portraits are translations.

Photography, on the other hand, at least at RGP, tends to be more documentary—the photograph will accurately portray the subject.

And even then, the subject may like only five of the fifty photos...

But for family members, photographs are important. I can't count the times that family members have requested photgraphs of family members so they have a record of their parent while they were living at RGP. In fact, we have done big family portraits, portraits with friends, portraits of residents pretending to be others....

Let's minimize the limitations of self-image and become creative subjects.... à la Picasso.

**Note: There will be no July Olive Press.
We are all taking a break.**

Photography, Jokes, and Self image

Photography portrait sessions in preparation for the Portrait Show will begin the first week in June. After five (or so) years of doing this, you would think that the “photography crew” has polished our process.. But...

Our “photography crew” reminds me of an old Israeli joke: Why do two policeman patrol together? One can read, the other can write. So how does this relate? Our “crew”, Corey and I, work together to try to make the photo session fun, and to relax our subject with jokes. But we have only one joke and only Corey remembers it. So, Corey tells the joke and I take the photos. A real team.

Jokes, we have found, especially if they are bad, are great relaxers. People come to photography sessions rather stiffly, as if there were only one face which they would

like to show, and it is serious. (see left). But jokes break down the barriers of seriousness. They introduce an element of the absurdity of human lives and open the doors for conversation, sharing, and



connection. They also allow people to see things differently, including themselves.

Self-image is often perceived by the one who develops it as being monolithic. But in fact, it varies with place and time, with age and health, with friends and strangers. People come to the photo session with a self-image they think is appropriate—a subject in front of a camera. But Civil War type photography—stiff and unsmiling—has progressed, thanks to technology.

Jokes allow other images to shine forth, opens up possibilities. Jokes introduce liminality—a place for alternatives to appear.

Portrait photo sessions begin on June 7th. Portrait photos will be provided to residents and photos will be given to students from the Jean Henry School of Art—with residents’ permission—to paint from. The Portrait Show will be held in November.



Not only for the subject, but for the photographer too. Often, I will begin a photo session without having met the person beforehand and have no idea of how best to approach him/her. So, we begin with a joke (I won’t tell it here since we have only one.)... and see what happens. And I as the photographer have to make sure that I am seeing them, not as who I am, but hopefully, as who they are. The joke is as important to them as it is to me; it gives us a second to re-frame, to re-sort ourselves into a different relationship.

Next to listening to good jokes, I love taking portraits. I love the elements of surprise, of creativity, or luck, of the opportunity to make known that which was hidden. I am amazed that photos turn out so much better than I expected. I am not a photographer, or rather I hesitate to make that my only persona. So, I prefer to think of myself as someone who takes photos, does not tell jokes, and works as a team member.

I hope that residents will participate in the upcoming photo shoots and use this opportunity to have fun, to create and re-create a self-image, to do things differently, with friends to create scenes. The shoots start in June and continue for about three weeks. Please sign up with Sabrina.

katheryn allen-katz
executive assistant



Corey Weiner,
Director of Food and Beverage

The Cook

Leaving the kitchen after twenty-five years was a huge identity loss. I started my profession when chefs were going from low-class fringe-elements to superheroes and celebrities. Everyone wanted to be one; I just wanted to earn a living. I always said, “little old lady chefs just aren’t pretty (I have issues around pretty too, just talk to my psychiatrist). After years in the profession, I have realized that being a chef wasn’t ever that pretty, even for a young women. When I started, there were no women in the industry. The first time I stuck my head in a 500 degree oven to pull out a pan, my mascara sealed my eyes shut and my necklace was so hot that I was branded. The chef didn’t know what to do with me. Where would I change? Where would I go to the bathroom!

There is nothing more pleasant than working twelve-plus hour days and thirteen-day work weeks and being called in on your one and only day off. I would leave work, take off my chef’s clothes, leave them at the foot of the bed and climb right back into them in the morning. I swore like a sailor and learned a lot about being tough and in control— a self-image I hadn’t quite imagined.

I couldn’t cook at home since there was no dishwasher around to gather pots and pans and clean up after me. For goodness sake, I would have to wash up after myself! Friends and family always wanted me to cook for them, and then complained about the mess. Holidays were spent at work, so that the only friends I could keep were at work (a rough crowd)!

Going out to eat brought no relief to being “in the food business”. I was constantly assessing everything, the food, the décor, the service. I turned over plates to check the brand, assessed the weight of them and thought about workman’s comp and carpal tunnel.

Also, cooking is hard, heavy work; it is an incredibly tough, high-pressure, loud and dangerous job. You have to be able to juggle and multi-task a million things at once—it’s crazy. You have to be fast. You have to love the adrenaline rush. You have to face off angry chefs with knives, fire, cauldrons of boiling liquids, and recently paroled criminals. The most common former address of most cooks is prison, whose most common recreational habits were drinking and drugs. These are some of the little-known features of being a chef, before the celebrity chef PR blitz made kitchen life seem more like the ballet.

Despite my self-image as being indestructible, my body gave out and I stopped being able to lift the fifty-pound sacks. I remember my last day in the kitchen, trying to handle some dough, which I could barely move. Finally realizing that my self-image as a chef and ability to do the job had come to an end, I tossed it in the trash and promoted myself to Food and Beverage Director.

I took physical labor out of my workday, but the other stuff was still there—the stress and fast paced multitasking. Instead of fighting with angry cooks and crazy servers, I now go into battle with residents and guests.

The glamour of being a chef was gone, I became a lowly manager. *Feh!*... and artist.... and walker.... and smart Alec... as I really contain multitudes.....



Elizabeth Wyma-Hughes
Director of Resident Services

A Fresh Start

There are many stresses that come with moving into a community. One that isn't always apparent through the haze of moving boxes and bubble wrap, is the task of getting introduced to the larger community.

During orientation, Dorie and I do interviews with residents and write up a brief bio about our new resident to share with the community so they can be welcomed more readily. This is sometimes a little daunting for our new residents, so we start with a conversation. We get some basic biographical information, but also try to gauge interests and identify programs and people that might be of interest to the new resident. These bios are provided to any resident who wants one and are a wonderful tool to introduce new residents to the larger community (though they can always opt out if they wish).

These bios are an opportunity to help break the ice and often pave the way for other residents to reach out to new folks and forge new relationships. Sometimes small details like hometowns and *almae matres* reveal unexpected connections with other residents. Knowing that you enjoy painting may prompt a neighbor to invite a new resident to an art class.

All of our residents have been “newbies” and know how intimidating it can feel to come into a group of unknown people. Sometimes new residents connect quickly with other newer folks, feeling a sense of companionship with their fellow newbie, while others fall into the fold with more established residents who can show them the RGP ropes.

Opening up from COVID restrictions is kind of a new-resident experience. Things have changed during the past year. New residents have arrived. And we are not the same people we were a year ago.

Now, as folks start emerging from shelter in place, residents new and old are taking the opportunity to get to know neighbors and reconnect with others that they have not seen as much over the past year. This period of reintroduction creates a more equitable situation, allowing everyone to “start fresh” together. It is an opportunity to present ourselves as we wish to be seen—whether that be making an effort to introduce oneself to other people enjoying the sunshine on the patio, chatting while waiting for a concert to start, or sharing the experience of RGP outings with fellow residents. There is an entire community to get to know and more options to explore it.

June Birthdays

Merritt Buxbaum	3
Dorothy Buxbaum	3
Ken Leahy	3
Tsuneko Hellerstein	9
Elizabeth Cormier	12
Beth Heisler	12
Jean Schulman	12
Noel Kirshenbaum	14
Hannah Cohen	18
Maureen Rittenberg	21
Vera Gertler	23
Alan Smith	30

Making Things Behind Closed Doors

by Jeanne Halpern, Resident

I began interviewing residents toward the end of May to learn what they'd been doing during our thirteen months avoiding Covid. To clarify, I mean the months we lived largely behind closed doors – with our trays, our Channel 994 and our growing dependence on Amazon.com. Did they continue to develop their special skills or talents? Try out creative, new ideas? Feel stymied, at least for a while? Here, I'll focus on three resident stories—about art, music, and photography under the shadow of Covid. In the future, I'll interview others about their memories of this unique stretch of time.

Carol John



Seal Rocks, by Carol John

As I entered Apartment 323 and walked toward the picture-filled living room, Carol mentioned that I was passing, on my right, her art studio: “Squeezed in against that wall,” she said “are my computer, printer, drafting table, easel, and floating storage chest of art supplies.” But I was so intent on looking ahead toward Carol, I didn’t grasp the import of this statement until we talked.

How did her commitment to art begin? “I always did it,” she said, mentioning art classes in middle school, “little things on my own,” and, along with high school in New York City, Saturday classes at the Parsons School of Design. There, as she completed her first year, she was offered a scholarship for her second. “This was a totally new experience, figure drawing with models, very challenging.”

Through the years—from Syracuse University, where she received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, to Berkeley for her M.A., through her marriage to physicist Walter John, motherhood, and her career in graphic design—Carol has always found or made time for art: sketches, pastels, pencils, watercolors, oils, acrylics, and digital. “Since Covid,” she said, “my passion for artwork saved me from the distressing problems so many of us felt.”

Since moving into RGP, where she created a studio where most of us would have seen only a long, white wall, Carol has produced several folios of art, and neither her wheel chair nor Covid has deterred her. On trips to the beach with her daughter, she created hundreds of ocean prints, and on the recent RGP outing to the Windmill in Golden Gate Park, she sketched and painted the tulip gardens. Carol has nothing but praise for the RGP staff for supporting her creativity in so many ways – making it easier to use her computer, among them. She also praised the many fellow residents who attended our 2019 Resident Art Show and made her feel appreciated as an artist with words as simple as, “I like your painting so much.”

Merritt and Dorothy Buxbaum

In the late 1940s at USC in Los Angeles, some musicians formed what they called a Rehearsal Orchestra, where they could meet and play music together, presumably to keep practicing until they found the jobs of their dreams. One evening, a handsome young clarinetist named Merritt asked a lovely young cellist named Dorothy if she needed a ride home. “I sure do,” she said. Thus began the literal and musical marriage of Merritt and Dorothy Buxbaum.

In 1950, Merritt auditioned with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, was hired and continued playing clarinet there for the next forty-three years. When he and Dorothy moved into RGP in 2020 to be close to their son



and daughter-in-law, he brought his incomparable collection of orchestral CDs—from the LA Phil., of course, but also from around the world. Before, during and since our Covid ordeal, he has listened to these CDs at least a few hours every afternoon.

Dorothy chose a different musical journey. She taught music in the LA schools for four decades, with cello as her avocation. Over the years, their home hosted string duets, trios, quartets and octets. It's no wonder, then, that when the Buxbaums moved into RGP, they chose a two-bedroom apartment: one for themselves, the second for everything about their music. Dorothy, planning to continue the pleasure of string duets, trios and especially quartets, packed enough chairs, music stands, sheet music and books to accommodate four players comfortably. From the time they moved in during our Covid shut-down, Dorothy practiced every day on her gleaming cello, but because of Covid restrictions, she practiced alone.

Now that Covid rules are loosening up, she's slowed down on her practicing and may be losing heart for finding others who play the violin and other stringed instruments to join her. We brainstormed a little: Does anyone at RGP play? Or at nearby retirement communities like The Sequoias? Are there out-reach opportunities via the San Francisco Symphony or Opera Orchestras? If anyone has any ideas, please call Elizabeth at 415-345-5085 and let her know.

Maury Edelstein

Walk into Maury Edelstein's living room and you KNOW you're in San Francisco. On his walls you find stunning photos of Chinatown, North Beach, and people all over Downtown. But that doesn't begin to reveal the secret life of this erstwhile independent insurance broker. You really have to go through the three books featuring his photos to see the City as he sees it – through its people.

Maury didn't start taking pictures until his children were growing up in the 1950s. As the kids grew older, he grew interested in photo opps on the streets. He walked a lot and noticed sites, not because they were beautiful or well-known but often because of the juxtaposition of two things

you'd be surprised to see together. For example, the largest photo in his living room shows an old Chinese woman sitting on a red, four-legged stool just below a huge sign reading LIVE EROTIC ACTS. His subjects were people who were naturally in what he considered a perfect pose. It might be amusing, ironic, outright comical, serious or sad. The central requirement: that it be natural. And for that, he needed a special kind of camera, a camera that didn't let people know he was snapping their picture. What he needed was a side-view camera.



And he found one: a small German spy camera called Minox. It had two lenses. Lens one, in the center front, pointed straight ahead toward a site he had no intention of photographing, and lens two pointed to the side, where his real shot was. In the 1960s and after, he took hundreds of these photos, and they've been displayed in many shows at various places around town including the Chinese Cultural Center, Cafe Bianco, Temple Emanu-El. When I asked if he ever had trouble because the people in the photos saw themselves and objected, he said, 'No, times were different back then.'

When I asked Maury if he were still taking pictures, he said he didn't like his current camera—too large—but he plans to buy another one soon. To my main question in this column, did the Covid scare have any effect on his creativity, on what he was doing now, he answered, "Not really, I stopped taking street pictures a while back. But my last book was printed in December 2020, in the middle of Covid."

—✕—✕—✕—✕—✕—✕—✕—

So what, finally, have we learned from these interviews about the effects of our Covid months on people who make things like paintings or music or photographs? It seems that, by and large, the Covid scare did not fundamentally impact their talents or skills—only, perhaps, their output. As for me, I was invited, during Covid, to write these columns, a new creative pursuit I've enjoyed so much. Here I sit, doing what I like best, writing—with you in mind.

Drawings by Amalia Shedro

Employee of the Month— Hung Duong, Maintenance Assistant



Hung, recently promoted to Maintenance Assistant, says that he looks forward to the opportunity to learn new skills. Originally hired as a custodian, Hung performed his job so enthusiastically and well that he was promoted to maintenance.

“I was very impressed with him,” Samson Legesse said, “when Hung came to the interview. He is a “can do” type of person; he will get things done. More than that, he is a quick learner and likes to learn new things.”

When Hung and his parents came to the USA in 1992, he attended City College for a short time and then went to work. He worked as a chef in a Japanese restaurant in Japantown for twenty-three years. He moved onto City Cabinet Makers where he was employed for ten years constructing and painting cabinets. Being the youngest of nine children, Hung was responsible for caring for his parents; and he took two years off work to take care of his elderly parents, both in their 90’s. When they passed away, he applied for a position at RGP.

“Everyone is nice here and I am happy to work here. I especially like working with the residents since they remind me of my own parents. I like to say ‘hi’ to them and remember my own parents.

“I like to concentrate on one job at a time,” Hung explained, and I like to finish it before going onto another job. If you give me a job to do, I like to finish it.”

Film Screening: *No. 4 Street of Our Lady*



Judy Maltz, producer
No. 4 Street of Our Lady

Thanks to RGP resident Amalia Shedro, the film *Number 4 Street of Our Lady* was screened at RGP. Judy Maltz producer of the film and wife of Amit Schejter, Amalia’s relative graciously agreed to come to RGP to show the film and speak with residents.

Number 4 Street of Our Lady showed the destruction of Sokal’s Jewish population during World War II, the actions of Francisca Halamajowa who saved three Jewish families, and the experiences of the survivors, their descendants and the descendants of the rescuers upon their return to Sokal. The diary of Moshe Maltz, Judy’s grandfather, which chronicled the events of 1939-1945, served as the basis of the film. When he passed away, Judy’s family had the diary translated from Yiddish to English and published as a book.

In making the documentary, Judy researched archival documents, contacted and interviewed past and current residents, and filmed the trip the survivors took to Sokal, Ukraine to revisit the home where they had been hidden during the War. The film portrays the survivors’ memories of their experience and memories of Francisca Halamajowa, who hid them in her house for nearly two years while pretending to be a Nazi sympathizer.

The film raises more questions than it answers: Why did Francisca Halamajowa, a Polish-Catholic woman, save her neighbors? Would we have done the same? What prompted her neighbors to keep quiet when so many were anti-Semitic? What are people willing to do to ensure the survival of the group? These and many other questions are raised but remain unanswered. The film invites us to look deeper to understand the heroic decision that Francisca Halamajowa took to protect fifteen of the Jews of her town. In fact, she saved half of those who survived.

Resident of the Month—Bick Simpson



As a court psychologist in Cambridge MA, and in Miami, FL, Bick has worked with angry people and recognize the toll that anger takes on their lives.

Anger is a defense—a sign that the person has not come to terms with their circumstances: parents’ anger at their children who can’t succeed at school, workers whose jobs are not satisfying, and many people’s health-related wounds that will not heal.

Bick has found that if people can talk about what they are angry about, talk to others in the same situation, the anger is reduced. Most of the time, fear hides behind the anger, but this is difficult to reach unless the person is willing to talk about the anger first.

In Eastern Europe, Bick worked with refugees from Estonia, Hungary, and Ukraine, all very angry with their lives under Soviet rule. This experience helps her understand the current situation in the US, the possibilities of a cultural-civil war. It helps her understand her adopted grandchildren who cannot understand why they have been abandoned to a white culture.

She had hoped for a career in the Foreign Service and attended Smith and Wellesley, planning for a junior-year-abroad in Government Studies in Geneva, Switzerland after post graduate studies at Brandeis. Bick completed a degree at Brandeis University in cognitive psychology and Special Education. She has worked with children all of her professional career; Save-the-Children was a wonderful way to end her career.

She has learned not to take judgments based on first impressions since one never knows what is going on in peoples’ lives. She recommends to stay as open as possible to listen. This is not easy to do with the conspiracy theorists and the reality deniers. You cannot change the world, but you can make a persons’ life easier whether that person is an adopted child, an undocumented migrant workers, or a jailed drug user.

Bick is an avid gardener, loves puzzles, reads profusely, and likes talking politics. She also loves to walk and plays bridge.



Health Notes

Adrienne Fair, MSN, RN,
Assistant Executive Director

Reflecting on Your Health Journey

To make it to an advanced age, especially to the status of “oldest old”, you must be mentally and physically very resilient. “Oldest old”, by the way is an actual medical term for anyone aged 85 and older. Each unique individual has arrived at this current point in time along their own, varied, challenging path. When we reflect on our lives’ narratives, we of course think of our families, career, travels, education, and social lives. It is interesting, also, to think of the narrative of our health journey.

It is amazing how much our bodies adapt and change over the years—and how many challenges they can overcome. Each person’s story is different. My own body has endured cesarean childbirth, a fractured lumbar spine, acid reflux, asthma, trigger finger, and various other aches, pains, bruises, fractures, and lacerations. What types of challenges has your body faced? What was your strategy for coping with these challenges? How did your mental outlook change with each new physical challenge?

Narrative Medicine ¹ is a perspective on healthcare in which primary providers take the time to really listen to their patients’ stories and understand their point of view. It is through this mutual understanding that a successful plan of care can be developed. There are seven C’s of narrative medicine and I think they are interesting to consider – whether you are talking to your doctor or reflecting on your own life’s healthcare journey. These are paraphrased from John Launer’s Narrative Based Primary Care²:

- Conversations: Express your story in your own words and explore connections, differences, and new possibilities.
- Curiosity: Take a genuine interest in your health story.

- Context: This includes family, work, community, spirituality, beliefs, values, time constraints, and expectations.
- Complexity: When something changes, a ripple effect is created—there is an interconnectedness of things.
- Challenge: It is important to challenge oneself to consider new ideas and alternate explanations, and to contemplate change.
- Caution: It is necessary to have an awareness of one’s limitations.
- Care: Care requires being nonjudgmental – nothing can be achieved without genuine care.

Through understanding how we have arrived at the current moment, health-wise, we are better equipped to make positive health changes. We can also better adapt to our body’s current limitations, whatever those may be. Some of the questions a healthcare provider might ask to facilitate a narrative health conversation (or that you may ask yourself) include... Is there something that you are worried about? Has this ever happened before? What does this mean for you? What do you think might be causing this? What needs to happen for the situation to change? If the situation did change, what would happen then? What will happen if nothing changes?¹

I seem to have written an article that is mostly composed of questions. I hope that you have some food for thought—and that you each take the time to appreciate your own, fascinating, unique health journey. Let’s take a moment of gratitude for our amazing bodies that have carried us thus far in life.

- (1) Zaharias G. What is narrative-based medicine? Narrative-based medicine 1. *Can Fam Physician*. 2018;64(3):176-180.
- (2) Launer J. Narrative-based primary care. A practical guide. Abington, UK: Radcliffe Medical Press; 2002.



Candiece Milford,
Managing Director of Marketing

Changing One's Self-image

One's self-image is like a beautiful many-faceted crystal—as you reflect on it, you see what you believe about yourself, what you feel others think of about you, what you would like to or allow yourself to be or become. Self-image is much deeper than what you see reflected in the mirror, although that vision can certainly affect one's self-image. We build it over a lifetime, it continues to change as we do and, as such, it's something over which we have some influence.

During 2020, we all had more time than we wanted to ponder this and many other issues including how to cope with imposed isolation. This probably brought up issues we may not have wanted to confront, such as our vulnerability, or recalling how we survived past challenges, coping in the worst of times. Now that we are on the other side of all those restrictions and the world “opening up”, we have an opportunity to turn a page in our lives and to update and change our self-image.

Expect some resistance—it's called being mortal. Why fix what isn't broken? Why change if it works? It's comforting even if it doesn't reflect your current reality. Yes, there are those who tell me that when they fall down their stairs, then they'll be ready to move (yes, really). Yet,

the people who are literally clambering to become residents at Rhoda Goldman Plaza (RGP) confide in me that, while not all want to leave their homes, there are aspects of their lives of which they are deeply weary and most of all, miss interacting with real, live people.

This is why communing with like-minded and age-related peers is beckoning people to RGP like I've never seen in my sixteen-year career in retirement housing. We are physically wired to be social beings and opportunities abound at RGP to interact and

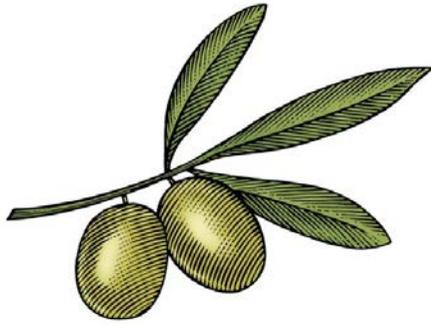
stretch our known boundaries.

I've noted, for example, new people in the painting class and book club and hear rumors that a new resident pianist in our community may bless us with her gift.

Changing one's self-image is never easy and sometimes we must go to great effort to do things

differently. If your self-image does not align with your new reality however, it's time to pick up that crystal, study it in all its possibilities and perhaps do just that—change. It is a decision life imposes on us many times in our lives and sometimes it's time to put away the self-perceptions that just don't work anymore and try on new behaviors, peek over the cliff and enjoy a new view and new life.





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*Founded by Jewish Family and Children's
Services and Mount Zion Health Fund*

RHODA GOLDMAN PLAZA

The appeal of Rhoda Goldman Plaza is undeniable. Older adults and their families prefer our unsurpassed assisted living and memory care community enriched by culture and tradition.

Residents enjoy superb, “made-from-scratch” cuisine that is always well reviewed by our most vocal critics; our residents! While our dining selections please the appetite, accommodations showcase spacious, private apartments designed to maximize space and comfort. In fact, we’re re-defining your life as Living Well With Assistance—we believe our community is every bit as good as a five-star hotel. And, professionally trained, courteous staff promotes your health and well-being with choices of activity programs both on and off-site.

Our Terrace Memory program provides specialized memory care to residents through therapeutic activities that enhance physical, mental, and emotional health. Both privacy and companionship are afforded on our self-contained Terrace.

Living Well With Assistance is more than a promise, but a way of life for our like-minded residents and staff who share the vision of our upscale community.

Visit Rhoda Goldman Plaza today by calling 415.345.5072.

Founded by Jewish Family and Children's Services and Mt. Zion Health Fund in 2000, Rhoda Goldman Plaza (RGP) was established as a non-profit assisted living facility to provide a better and more secure life for older adults.