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EDITOR'S INTRO

Returned from a holiday abroad....

Leaving the country inevitably leads me to reflect on the purpose in life. Why? Because at home, for me, the familiar routines and social pressures obfuscate this question. But when daily patterns are disrupted, when I have to navigate foreign lands and wonder why life for others is different, the question of purpose in life knocks on my door. To be honest, I have not figured it out. But travel forces me back to the question of what am I here for (?).

For some, the answer is clear. In places where drought, hunger, war, famine, or floods prevail, survival is paramount. In totalitarian countries, sometimes, it's safer not to think. In strongly ideological societies, national duty provides the answer. In America, for many people, making money, or owning a home, running a business are quite acceptable purposes in life.

Initially, I thought purpose in life was a grandiose mission—a superhero saving the planet. Some people do that: a local man has dedicated his life to saving the ecosystem of the San Bruno mountains. But purpose may be much more personal. One of RGP's staff mentioned that she has a calling for helping elders with dementia. Perhaps a "calling" is "life's purpose" in another guise.

While people may not think daily about one's purpose in life, during the High Holy Days Jews take stock of the past year, reflect, resolve to make amends and do more *Tikkun Olam*. In Judaism, *Tikkun Olam*—repairing the world—"through acts of justice and kindness, or equally through ritual observance," (Wikipedia) offers comprehensive purpose in life.

How do purpose in life and *Tikkun Olam*, relate to each other? The commonality are the reflection process and practical performance of positive deeds. Finding one's purpose is a continuous reflective process. It is never done. There is no consensus on the purpose of life and this edition provides no answers....

Katheryn Allen-Katz

RESIDENT OF THE MONTH—DON WIEPERT

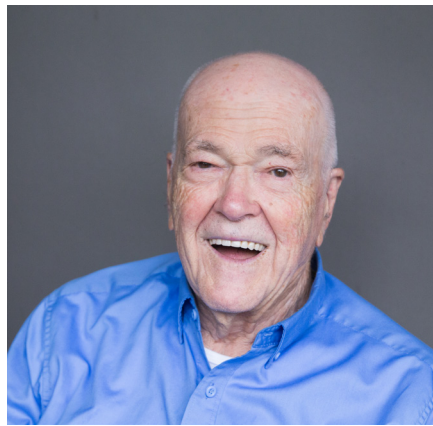
The Coincidences of Life

When asked to write about purpose in life, I think never have had one. After ninety-five years, it is still a mystery about why I have lived as I have. There are threads linking experience: coincidences of time, innate character, privilege, opportunity, health and ancestry which conspire to give us choices on how we might live. So here are some idiosyncrasies of my life and how I found my path.

Coincidence 1. I was born in 1928, in Brooklyn, into the privilege of a middle class white Protestant family, a somewhat sickly child. A voracious reader, I ate up newspaper stories about racial conflicts, labor disputes, the lives of Depression folk, and lots of adventure books. My best and bookish friend, Myron, was Jewish; I witnessed his being bullied in elementary school, and saw the general anti-Semitism of the times. My folks were kind, but it was stressful to be caught between their anti-Semitism and racist attitudes: I dared not challenge them. Social awareness came from befriending Jewish kids in a young Communist youth group in high school. My Jewish friends were politically savvy, culturally and intellectually challenging, and fun.

Coincidence 2: In 1946, after I completed high school, I joined the army; seven months later, I landed in Heidelberg, Germany, and served for a year. It was an amazing and overwhelming experience. Personal contact with Germans was proscribed, but I had some contact with those few orphaned young German Jews who had survived the war and lived in a hostel supported by the American Jewish community. I still remember the magnitude of the war's destruction, the living conditions of the German people, especially the children, and the contradictions of war; they resonate for me today.

Coincidence 3. In 1948, I entered NYU on the GI bill; a friend told me about part-time work with good pay as a counselor in after-school programs for "slum children." One job I remember very well was working with children from homes of



extremely poor Puerto Rican families in one of the most dangerous parts of the city. One night, on the very border between Puerto Rican/Harlem and the affluent East Side of Manhattan, I realized that the right path for me with my privileged life, (even as a poor student), would be to continue to work with people.

I graduated with a major in religion, became a full-time

YMCA Youth Director, and received a PhD in counseling. I was at Brooklyn College for twenty-five years, as a counselor, administrator, teacher, and retired as a full professor at sixty-four in 1992. During those years, I had some haphazard experiences with Zen yoga. I also took up running marathons.

I was married for thirty-five years to my wife Rita. We had a rich life and two lovely boys. Rita was Jewish and I really enjoyed my life with her family. Tragedy struck with the death of my son Adam, by cancer, at age twenty-four. With this loss and the passage of time, Rita and I drifted apart. In 1993, I decided to come out as a gay man; we separated and later divorced. I stayed in contact with her until she died at seventy-seven.

Coincidence 4. About that time, my long dormant spiritual longings and interest in Zen and yoga revived. I lived for nineteen months at the Kripalu Yoga center in Massachusetts and left as a yoga teacher. I moved to San Francisco and spent five months at the SF Zen Center.

I have been blessed in thirty years after retirement to have led yoga classes with seniors and taught yoga and meditation the SF county jail; I volunteered in hospice and facilitated support groups for older gay men.

Last December, it became clear that I needed to be in an assisted living facility. My spiritual advisor, who knows me well, said that RGP is the only and best place for me. And so it is. Here, in addition to practical help, there exists the presence of a subtle web of compassion. Here, I and all of us, are cared for in the journey of living with uncertainty, chance, and impermanence.

By Don Wiepert

PURPOSE IN LIFE

JANE CUTLER

Does life have a purpose? Or, more to the point, does my life—does *your* life—have a purpose? And if it does, how can you figure out what it is, and how you can live your life in terms of it?

To ask, what is the purpose of life?" is a different question from, "Does my life have a purpose?" The first question implies an overarching purpose, given to human beings by a deity or by some universal force. Perhaps by G-d.

But the second question, "Does my own life have a purpose, and if it does, what is it?" doesn't require a belief in something all-powerful and beyond human beings. It's a question that each of us can answer for ourselves. And, of course, it's mutable. It can change as we go along, growing and changing because of age and experience.

Still, it can be a difficult question to answer.

Luckily for Jews, we are assigned purposeful lives by Torah and by the Bible, as well as many overlapping ancient teachings. We are given this information and its related imperative to act: the imperative is called *Tikkun Olam*; the meaning is direct: the world is broken. It is the responsibility of each individual to do what she or he can to fix it. The work of repairing the world will not be accomplished in your lifetime, we Jews are told. Nevertheless, you are expected to participate in the unfinished work and to move it forward.

Of what does this work consist, this repairing of the world? We are told, for example, in Deuteronomy, "Justice, justice shall you pursue!" That gives us a clear direction in which to move. The subtext is, believer or not, you must pursue justice. And what is defined as just? Fairness, upholding the rights and easing the plight of the oppressed, the destitute, the disabled; seeking economic and social equality and equality of opportunity for all; healing rather than destroying our home, the Earth. Meaning may not extend beyond our human context, nevertheless, says Judaism's subtext, you—each of you— while you live, have responsibilities.

Of course, this is not reflected only in Jewish thought. But as a Jew, this is the philosophy I am familiar with.

Also age does not excuse us from our work. To find out what you, personally, can do to advance the causes of fairness and justice, you can, for example, get in touch with Elders for a Sound Democracy (just google "elders for a sound democracy") to see where and how you might advance the cause of social and political justice by using the skills you've accumulated during your long lifetime. This group is national, composed of Jews and non-Jews, Democrats and Republicans. It meets online once a month. And it welcomes all who want to participate

The question, I guess, is—and has always been—as the poet Mary Oliver famously asked: "What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

"The purpose of life is living."

NATALIE DANDEKAR:

My purpose is to learn, to honor, and respect each sector of the universe.

The Cell

By Joshua Z. Rappoport

Should all the billions of fast and slow burns
cease to burn
No heart could beat
No plant could grow upward defying gravity
No amoeba could swim
No sensation could spread along a nerve
No thought could flash in the human brain

We are finding out that the mechanistic approach onto the rest of the world is incorrect. The rest of the world deserves as much respect as we are able to give it.

PURPOSE IN LIFE

HAL AND DOROTHY AUERBACH

What is the purpose of life?

To ask this question is to presume that life has a “purpose” and that we can know what that purpose is. The traditional Jewish answer has been that God has told us that our purpose is to follow his commandments, and, to continue to study the Torah and its interpretations by sages and scholars to better understand what those commandments require of us. As to why that is so, it is because God told us so, and in doing so we can work with God to help perfect the world.

In modern times, many find difficulty in believing in a personal God so involved in our individual lives. Philosophers have rephrased the question to: “How should I live my life?” There may be as many answers as there are people. Except for a hopefully very small number of sociopaths, we all want “to do the right thing” and believe that all people should be free to live life however they wish, so long as they do no harm to others. Of course, our interpretation of what that means in any given instance is colored by our own perceived needs and fears.

Perhaps those ancient doctors were right: “First of all, do no harm!” Add to that: “Do not unto another what you would not have another do to you.” Then figure out what gives you satisfaction or pleasure and go for it as much as you can. That may not be the meaning of life, but it will give meaning to yours.

“The purpose of life is making good kugel.”

For a bookkeeper the purpose in life is to make the debits and credits balance.

JOHN DELLAR AND LAUREN DELLAR

LAUREN

If we are not doing one thing every day to help a person’s life or we have not given other people the opportunity to help us, then we may be missing out on our opportunities to pursue purpose in life. It’s not a banner we wear, it’s an attitude.

Tikkun Olam means in practical terms giving back to the community through volunteering. Lauren: I got that sense and urgency from both my dad and mom, but not my grandparents. Although I have a capacity for business, I chose to facilitate *Tikkun Olam*, to become professionally involved in philanthropy in the role of one who provides oversight. I am not motivated by money; I feel my life purpose in helping someone else. When I went to Israel thirty years ago, I went to have a one-year experience. Today, after thirty years of living in Israel, I feel like I have made a difference in my role as a grant writer and facilitator, to pass legislation, to answer the unattended needs of women, to legitimize alternative education. My role is behind the scenes. And what I do indirectly does make a difference in the lives of people who otherwise would not have been served.

JOHN

I never thought about my purpose in life in a focused way. When I was starting out, my goal was to have a good marriage, to have children, to raise children, and to be a provider for my family. My goals changed when I started my own business. As a company we participated in the AIDS Walk, we made donations to worthy causes in the name of the company. If I had had more time when I was raising my family and growing a business, I would have volunteered more. As soon as I was able to free myself from my business, bit by bit, I volunteered, I spent more of my time volunteering in a variety of roles through various organizations.

I know I must have told you about my grandmother who lived in Kentucky and who acted as a midwife to African American women who had no access to healthcare. I also found out that when my grandfather came to America, he went to the Ohio Valley where he had family and where he participated in freeing slaves through the underground railroad. A purpose in life is in my DNA. Oh, yes, and my grandmother’s first cousin was a great inspiration to me—she was fundraising until literally the day she passed away.

RABBI ME'IRAH: ON ROSH HASHANAH

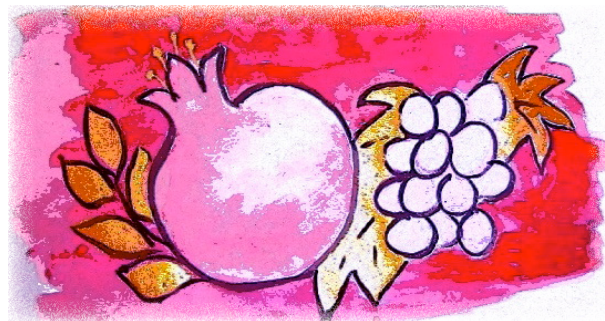
Our Days of Awe, Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur are really one holiday. Rosh HaShanah, the New Year, gives us a time to celebrate the Birth of the World, new beginnings, fresh starts. Then a mere ten days later, on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, we rehearse facing our deaths. We are so fortunate to be stimulated to think about this every year! When it's all over, what has been the meaning of our lives?

But there, you see, is our very human dilemma. We wonder and ask the questions "Why" And "How?" And "What is the meaning this life?" But our minds are unable to definitively answer those questions. The best we can do is to say "There was a big bang, and all the Universe...all the stars in the never-ending expanse exploded forth from nothing; and on this one planet, this fantastic event happened: LIFE emerged from a single cell, it eventually found its way into each one of us." (Doesn't that sound like a fairy tale?)

Many years ago, I heard Rabbi Arthur Green, a theologian, say that he thought "G-d (or we could say, the Creative Power of the Universe) was trying to evolve a mind that would understand G-d's mind, and that we are, at this time, far from it."

Nevertheless, for us humans, not being able to more thoroughly know the "whys and the hows" is anxiety provoking. It makes for unpredictability, and we do not like unpredictability. We don't feel safe from harm, or know what to do next when we cannot predict 'what will happen.' How do we deal with this problem of not knowing why we are here, and what we are supposed to be doing? We make safety structures through stories, or paradigms, I like to call them. These paradigms fill in the gaps in the whys and hows that so urgently bother us. The paradigms are not arbitrary, however they are based on values and wisdom gathered from millenia of human experience about what makes for a functional society, for peace, for calm, and satisfaction.

I cannot answer why or how life came into the universe, or why or how there IS a universe, but our tradition tells us that meaning in life comes from the firm understanding of the following things: that you were



created by whatever miracle created the very universe! Know that you are one-of-a-kind, and have special qualities, and can offer a unique contribution to the world. And no contribution is too small. Respect each person who, you must understand, also, came from that same Source. Find a way to offer your presence, your talent, your listening ear, your greeting and acknowledgment of another. Don't engage in gossip, but make peace between yourself and others. It's OK to make limits that honor yourself and protect you from harmful behavior. Above all, be as fair and kind as you possibly can.

Our Torah, or "Teaching," is understood as a loving gift to us, a life-guide, instructing us on what makes for societal peace and for a sense of satisfaction and meaning when looking back on one's life.



ROSH HASHANAH SCHEDULE

Friday	Sept 15 th	3:30 pm	Erev Rosh HaShanah Service
Saturday	Sept 16 th	10:00 am	Rosh HaShanah Service
Sunday	Sept 24 th	3:30 pm	Kol Nidre Service
Monday	Sept 25 th	10:00 am	Yom Kippur Morning Service and Reading of Yizkor

*Services will be led by Mark Levy.

- All services will be held in the Olive Room.
- There will be no activities on Saturday Sept 16th and Monday Sept 25th due to the Holidays.
- Residents may submit names to be included in the RGP Yizkor book. A memo will be distributed in the beginning of September with instructions on how to submit names.



*Wishing RGP Residents and Families
Happy Rosh HaShanah*

Dear RGP Residents, Families, and Friends,

The RGP café is a hub for resident and guest activity each day—a great place to socialize while enjoying coffee, snacks, or a light meal together. As we have expanded our café menu, please note that we will be returning to our pre-COVID policy of charging for café items starting September 1, 2023.

As before, residents who eat their primary meal in the café will not be charged. Residents who eat meals in the dining room or receive a room-service tray, however, will be charged for subsequent café items. Please note that there is no charge for coffee, tea, bottled water, or soft-serve ice cream. A price list will be posted in the café for chargeable items.

Family members, friends, and guests who order items from the café may pay with a credit card (cash is not accepted). If charging to an apartment, a resident must arrange this directly with the café. Caregivers who request café food for residents must present a resident-signed order.

Any questions or concerns can be directed to Roberto Pellegrino, Director of Dining Services, or to Polly Yu, Dining Manager.

Thank you so much for your attention – and I look forward to seeing you in the café!

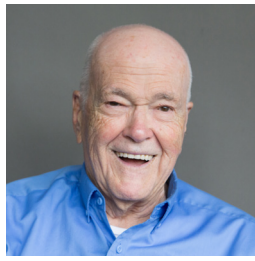
Sincerely yours,

Ira Kurtz, Executive Director

New Resident Council Officers



President:
Mary Swope



Vice-President:
Don Wiepert



Secretary:
Len Sperry



Treasurer:
Rose Hiede



Member-at-large:
Fred Wozniak

September Birthdays

Phylis Demchick	5
Raisa Bykhovsky	18
Margaret Chicoine	23
Jane Cutler	24
Josephine Staub	29
Betty Brassington	30

DINING

Walking into a restaurant—one I haven't visited before—I automatically look around, see how the tables are set, feel the ambiance, look over the menu, observe how the staff responds, taste the food, and watch how it is served. Is there atmosphere, personality, warmth? Good food? How is the service? I think about what can be improved—a change of decor, better trained staff, fresher ingredients. I weigh possibilities of how to make the place warm and inviting, a place where people will feel welcome and receive outstanding food. Even after working in dining services for thirty years, I still enjoy the challenge of thinking through an entire operation and how to improve it.

I suppose that from a professional perspective, creating a warm and inviting dining atmosphere with outstanding cuisine is my purpose in life. From a personal perspective, my purpose in life is to provide for my family—what they deserve and need—the best way I can. That was my father's purpose, and probably my grandfather's as well. I come from a family-centered culture—we do what we have to do for others.

When I was young, I bumbled around, not sure what I wanted to do. I come from a family of great cooks—my mother and grandmother. Meals were always more than food on a plate, they were an event, a focal point of the day when family members gathered to share stories. Still undecided in my early twenties, I found myself working in restaurants at night and thinking, "I can improve this place." So I studied culinary arts and hotel and restaurant management and began a career in hospitality and food service. When you ask what my purpose in life is, I might reply, "to create a warm and inviting atmosphere with great food where people feel included and welcomed".... creating what I feel is life at its best, one dining room at a time.

It is important to me that people enjoy their meals with others, where people feel included and enjoy friendships. That is the meaning of what I do. My purpose in life reflects the practical expression—the what and how. How I do that is a series of many decisions I've made in the past and make every day. My professional purpose in life is connected to my personal purpose.

My place is in the kitchen, the center of operation, where good food is created. Of course, as a department, we all need to work together, to pull together, to be a team. Part of my job is creating that team. I am in the process of creating a positive forward-thinking culture of staff and residents, meaning that we look to the future rather than the past, we are open to new ideas and way of doing things, of exploring, of being flexible.

Making things better? We have begun changing the decor in the dining room, hanging new art. Another innovation is a "call for recipes" via the Dining Committee. Residents will be asked to submit their favorite recipes. We will chose a few to try out and have a blind tasting. Also we are planning to offer two entrées soon. Purpose in life? Happy residents!



Roberto Pellegrino
Director of Food Services

TSITSI HELMAN, EXECUTIVE CHEF

Explaining her professional philosophy, Tsitsi Helman, RGP's new Executive Chef, stated, "Food brings people together. I grew up in Johannesburg, South Africa, and I, with the people who lived in our area, were like an extended family. Everyone knew each other; we celebrated together, we mourned together. Meals were an essential aspect of these events and were cooked by the women of the community who came together to cook. My mother, grandmother and neighbor women and I cooked for people we loved—each person and the community. You remember the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child"?; Our community was very much like that. So you understand that what I said about food bringing people together is much more than a nice idea; I have experienced it, I grew up with this; food creates friendships, new friends, good friends and strengthens the community.

When I was young, growing up helping my mother cook, I did not consider cooking as a profession. But when I was older, I traveled from South Africa to Egypt, hitchhiking, taking trains, and busses. During this journey through the continent of Africa, I discovered the wide variety of foods that were completely new to me—Indian, Swahili, Italian, French, Lebanese, other Middle Eastern dishes, as well as the many African foods which varied from country to country. The wealth of culinary expression inspired me to cook professionally. When I came to California, I enrolled in the California Culinary Academy and received a degree with honors in Culinary Arts.

"The people I look up to, the people who have inspired me, my grandmother, my mother, the women of Zimbabwe (once



known as Rhodesia) were my role models. They knew that food plays a fundamental role in preserving and strengthening their family's and community's life. They also knew how to get things done even during difficult times.

Julia Child also inspired me. She was a humble and accessible person who struggled as a woman for recognition and equality at a time when women were supposed to be

housewives. She faced criticism and condescension from male colleagues and the media. She worked hard, succeeded against the odds; her passion for food and desire to share it with others informed her life. I admired her as she stood her ground and flourished in spite of prejudice and cultural barriers. I read her book while I was in culinary school where I faced the same attitudes from male classmates and teachers.

Since graduating, I have worked in restaurants, as a private chef for a Silicon Valley billionaire and later for a Hollywood actress. I worked for Twitter, and more recently have been employed in an upscale San Francisco senior living establishment.

When I think about purpose in life, I think about my family and where I was born. In my culture, family is more important than material goods. Taking care of each other is our purpose in life; this is our everyday task. Very practical, very rooted in our daily life. Even those of us who go overseas, we send money home, we keep connected, we do not lose our purpose in life because we are not in South Africa or Zimbabwe.

As for what I hope to bring to RGP, "the sky is the limit. There is nothing I won't try. If it's not great the first time, I will work until I get it right!" Tsitsi said. I have learned to prepare a wide diversity of foods in addition to the American food we offer. Please let us know through the suggestion box what kind of dishes you want or want to try.

PROGRAMMING

What is the purpose of life? What gives us purpose in life? Two very different questions which people often confuse. I can't speak for anyone else, but I have absolutely no clue what the purpose of life is. However, I do know some of the things that give me a greater purpose in life.

I find meaning in the small moments with others. For example, the other day a resident on Memory Care was having a tough day so I asked if I could give her a hug. Her face lit up and she started to giggle. That two-minute interaction stuck with me for the rest of the day. I felt good seeing how good it made her feel from such a simple act that cost me nothing but a few moments of time. Small moments like these add up to bigger moments; inviting a resident to an activity they've never tried before and then having them tell me afterward that they were so glad they came. Or helping a resident make a necklace for her granddaughter in jewelry making. All of these moments culminate into something greater.

People often ask how I ended up in this field and while it is somewhat of a complicated answer, my most rudimentary desire is to help people. More specifically, I ended up working with older adults because of a desire to help people have the best possible end to their life. Whether we like it or not, we all are going to die eventually. So why shouldn't we live our best life all the way until our last day!

I had always thought I wanted to work with kids, but that plan changed when I was in college. My grandmother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in my early years of college. I watched the challenges it posed and the pain it caused for both her and my family. A few months before she died, my grandmother attended

my senior college play. The play ends with the main character feeling lost and hopeless. After the final curtain, I came out to find my grandmother quietly crying in the front row. She just looked at me and said, "That was so sad. Thank god it's over". It was one of those moments where I felt she was speaking not only of the play but in many ways describing the end of her life. A few years later when I started my internship in graduate school at a Memory Care facility and I saw the impact I could make on a daily basis, I felt like I had found my niche and I was brought back to those words my grandmother said. I can bring light, and joy, and happiness to others in situations similar to my grandmother. I can help give someone the best possible end to their life.

I also find meaning in working here where so many staff have the same goal of helping others. Communication and teamwork define the culture at Rhoda Goldman. To create a place where people can thrive in their last years, we all have to collaborate.

If you would like to receive an electronic copy of the monthly activity calendar and outing sign-ups, please email Emma at emmad@rgplaza.org to be added to the email list!



Emma Davis
Director of Programming and Counseling

HEALTH NOTES

With a new year upon us, it is time to reflect and take stock of our lives. When the editor said the topic of this Olive Press was: “What is your purpose in life?”, I’ll have to admit I felt very daunted. I suppose a lot of one’s purpose in life is tied to their profession, but it does not necessarily have to be this way. When I ask myself, “Why this profession,?” a little voice in my head asks me back, “Well, why not?”

My undergraduate degree was a standard BA with majors in French and English and I was not considering health care at that time (despite coming from a family who works in the medical field). I enjoyed traveling and took on various jobs in different countries. I eventually landed in San Francisco with my French surfer boyfriend (now husband). We loved SF and started our own restaurant called L’Amour dans le Four which we ran for the duration of our five-year lease.

When our building was sold, our lease was not renewed, and I decided that I did not want to continue to work in restaurants. I really enjoyed the service industry—especially the teamwork of running a restaurant and cultivating moments of happiness for guests. I wanted to continue supporting the emotional and physical wellbeing of others—without relying necessarily on food and wine. With the goal of gaining practical, useful skills, I looked to my inspirational grandfather who was a family physician.

Pursuing my master’s degree in nursing was a great decision in my life and I have so appreciated my nursing experiences over the last decade. Many of my classmates went on to work in hospitals and acute care, while I worked in more residential settings with older adults. At first, I felt like I was missing out on the high-tech world of the ER and ICU, but the more I work at RGP and teach students at SFSU, the more I truly appreciate the bigger picture of healthcare.

Healthcare is more complicated (and more interesting) than following a set of instructions from your doctor or taking a certain regime of medications. It is in many ways more challenging as a nurse, to support individuals’ health and well-being, while respecting their autonomy, than it is to follow a to-do list. Patients can manage chronic health conditions and really take charge of their own health with the right information and support. Older adults, in my opinion, are the super-heroes of health and resiliency. I absolutely love getting to know all the residents, families, and staff—as well as facilitating individualized care assistance to residents and eventually hospice care at the end of life.

At the end of the day, what makes our lives worth living? I see so much joy and inspiration each day at RGP—family visits, fun activities, celebrations, spirituality, and emotional support of each other. Each of us is more multidimensional than just our healthcare status, or our profession. By the way, I really appreciate Emma Davis for bringing a group of RGP residents to my circus theatrical production *The Secret Garden* at The Children’s Creativity Museum last month. One of my other “dimensions” is as a circus performer. This multi-generational production meant a lot to me—what a joy to share some of my humor and circus skills with RGP residents. I’m not sure if this article fully explains my purpose in life—but I hope it does express my immense gratitude to the RGP community for the opportunity to support you, and your kindness and support of me in return.



Adrienne Fair, MSN, RN,
Assistant Executive Director

MARKETING

Mark Twain always delights me in the way he crafts his thoughts. Thus, I went straight to him to find what he may have written about purpose. He did, of course, stating that “The two most important days in life are the day you were born and the day you find out why.”

Some people just seem to know their purpose at an early age while others take years, even a lifetime, to find it. Purpose sometimes reveals itself quietly as you pursue a passion.

I also found this quote by John Gardner that beautifully illuminates how one constructs a purposeful life. “Meaning is not something you stumble across, like the answer to a riddle or the prize in a treasure hunt. Meaning is something you build into your life. You build it out of your own past, out of your affections and loyalties, out of the experience of humankind as it is passed on to you, out of your own talent and understanding, out of things you believe in, out of the things and people you love, out of the values for which you are willing to sacrifice something. The ingredients are there. You are the only one who can put them together into that unique pattern that will be your life. Let it be a life that has dignity and meaning for you. If it does, then the particular balance of success or failure is of less account.”

This month’s topic also caused me to reflect on what a ninety-three year-old woman shared during an interview. She heartbreakingly said, “I don’t feel useful anymore.” Her children were far away, she hadn’t found a means to share her elder wisdom or experience, and she felt very isolated. Simply serving as a mentor for young people, including her own grandchildren, sharing what she had

learned in this life, would have expanded into a purposeful life that would enrich her own. Discovering your purpose requires self-examination but is not difficult if one is willing to invest in oneself.

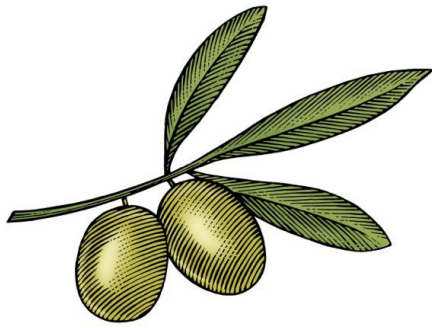
Every day I meet people in my work who do have interests that evolve into a purpose through volunteering—from helping to make meals for the homeless to being a docent in a museum. Whatever is selected reflects one’s personal value system that gives depth to one’s days . . . and feels good. As it is said, in giving one receives. It is also a good reminder that just because you change your residence that you don’t have to change everything in your life. I know of many people at Rhoda Goldman Plaza who carry on the good work they had been doing for decades. Opportunities abound for volunteering that can bring purpose to anyone’s life.

Once one becomes a resident, there are many volunteering opportunities that can give new purpose in one’s life. There are committees (programming, food) and clubs (creative writing, book, gardening). If one doesn’t exist for your passion, you can create one!

Finally, having and pursuing a passion that turns into a purpose is also healthful. As the wise writer Charles Dickens wrote, “The best way to lengthen out our days is to walk steadily and with a purpose.” While some of us may not be able to walk steadily, at least we can find purpose!



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*Founded by Jewish Family and Children's
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