

## Lester housing community marks 10 years in Whippany

### 'Decade of Excellence' at county's first glatt kosher senior facility

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One day after America marked a decade since the 9/11 attacks, area Jews marked another 10th anniversary with a celebration of life and tradition.

Monday's ceremony celebrated 10 years since the doors opened at the Lester Senior Housing Community on the Aidekman Jewish Community Campus in Whippany. Some 200 seniors currently reside at the Judy and Josh Weston Assisted Living Residence and the Margaret and Martin Heller Independent Living Apartments, the first senior housing complex in Morris County to serve glatt kosher food.



Jay Murnick of Short Hills, president of the Jewish Community Housing Corporation, which runs the community, opened the ceremony, called "A Decade of Excellence."

"By the time the ground breaking took place in 1999, we were on the way to a momentous occasion," he said, addressing those gathered in the facility's atrium.

Rabbi Henschel Polansky of the Joint Chaplaincy Committee of MetroWest delivered an invocation to the crowd of Lester residents, township officials, and Jewish community benefactors.

"We have to be strong for each other. That is what this organization, Lester Housing, is all about," he said.

"This building represents the embodiment of our collective dreams," said Janice Shofel, a past JCHC board president. "There is an energy and excitement as we celebrate our heritage together."

Harold Colton-Max, JCHC's chief executive officer, noted changes that had been made to the facility, including an upgraded beauty salon, renovated dining rooms, expanded activities and trips, and a new bus.

“What has really changed is what you cannot see; namely, that the residents have transformed this building,” he said. “Hundreds of senior citizens have called Lester ‘home,’ sharing simhas and helping one another through difficult times.... Our residents and our staff have made this more than just a place to age — a true home for residents of Hanover Township and the MetroWest area.”

Max Kleinman, executive vice president of United Jewish Communities of MetroWest NJ, noted that the ceremony followed the 10th anniversary of 9/11.

The two commemorations contrasted “a day in which humankind was exhibited in its most barbaric form” with a celebration of “the best that we can do,” said Kleinman. “Our Bible teaches us in the fifth commandment to honor thy father and mother. Certainly with the great facilities, great staff, and great amenities at Lester Housing we are honoring the fifth commandment.”



Seated in the first three rows were 26 women and two men who have lived at the facility since its doors opened.

Resident Council president Helen Heller spoke on behalf of the seniors at the Weston Assisted Living Residence.

“I am very comfortable. I know I am in a safe, secure facility with people of similar backgrounds and rituals,” she said.

Then Heller joined with Mildred Feldstein, president of the Heller Independent Living Apartments Tenants’ Association, to read out the names, interests, and hobbies of the facility’s charter residents.