

## A Jewish Hospice Helps Ease the Way

By Steve Lipman

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Ellen Schapiro Kahn died of cancer in Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center on a Shabbat morning last June, two days before she was to enter the Calvary Hospital Hospice in the Bronx. She was 75, ill for only five weeks, hospitalized for only three.

Active until the end, a marathon runner, Kahn had worked as founder of a medical recruitment company and maintained the religious practices she had learned as a child in Frankfurt, Germany.

Sloan-Kettering had run out of treatment options. The Calvary hospice, known for its considerate treatment of Jewish residents, including kosher food and Jewish chaplains, was a natural option.

"She knew they had a great reputation," said Kahn's artist son, Tobi, who had taken care of his mother in his Manhattan apartment for the first week after she became ill.

But, he said, as an observant Jew, she would have preferred to spend her remaining days in a residential hospice under Jewish auspices had one existed.

In June, New York had no Jewish residential hospice.

On Tuesday, all that will change.

### The First Jewish Hospice Residence

The Mollie and Jack Zicklin Jewish Hospice Residence, with 16 apartment-style rooms on the 12th floor of the Atria Riverdale assisted living building on Henry Hudson Parkway in the Bronx, will be dedicated in a ceremony with a ribbon cutting, speeches and a tour of the renovated area. Residents will move in over the next few weeks.

While the Brooklyn-based Jewish Hospice of Greater New York offers infirm Jews with end-of-life illnesses an extensive network of services, including home care and short-term hospital care in the Maimonides Medical Center, the Zicklin hospice calls itself "the first and only New York State-certified residential hospice under Jewish auspices in the greater New York area."

UJA-Federation has been involved in every step of the planning and development process. The hospice residence will be run by Continuum Hospice Care, a division of Continuum Health Partners.

The Zicklin Jewish Hospice Residence is the latest sign of the Jewish community's emerging engagement with the needs of the acutely and terminally ill.

### Conferences Teaches End-of-Life Caring

The Shira Ruskey Center of the Jewish Board of Children and Family Services, and The Jewish Healing and Hospital Alliance, an initiative of UJA-Federation, last week sponsored an all-day conference, "Caring in the Face of Serious Illness and Loss: Commitment, Compassion, Community," at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. The conference featured keynote speeches by experts on illness and spirituality, and workshop sessions on such topics as "Communication at End-of-Life" and "Living With Loss Through a Jewish Lens."

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Learn more about the [Jewish Healing and Hospice Alliance](#), an initiative of UJA-Federation

- John Ruskay  
Executive Vice President  
UJA-Federation

The alliance's three regional care centers — the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services in Manhattan, F.E.G.S. Health and Human Services System on Long Island, and Westchester Jewish Community Services — offer access to health services, practical assistance to the infirm and their families, and pastoral care.

"People who are coping with serious illness can find themselves overwhelmed and isolated at a time when they need the most help," said Paul Kronish, chair of UJA-Federation's task force on end-of-life care and a participant in last week's conference.

In another sign, the National Institute for Jewish Hospice will sponsor a training conference on March 17 at the Clinton Inn in Tenafly, N.J.

The institute already offers a 24-hour contact line, (800) 446-4448; literature, available on its [Web site](#); training and accreditation.

"Due to the unprecedented response to accredit hospice ... we've had to make an adjustment in the program," the institute website states. "We are no longer able to train on-site."

Hospice programs seeking re-accreditation and new hospices are eligible to participate in next month's conference.

### **Residential Hospice "Open to Everyone"**

The long-term care provided by the Zicklin Residence will offer the feeling of home to those who cannot stay at home and do not qualify to remain in a hospital.

"Generally, the hospice programs in hospitals are only for emergencies," said Shirley Lamm, NIJH executive director.

"Most Jewish people want to die at home. They don't want to go to a hospital," she said.

Though geared to the Jewish community, the new hospice is "open to everyone," said Carolyn Cassin, president of Continuum Hospice Care, which operates the facility.

Like most hospices, which offer palliative care and spiritual counseling to those who cannot be helped by medical treatments, the Jewish hospice will accept residents who have diagnoses of about six months or less to live.

"If you live a year" or more, Cassin said, "we're happy to have you."

Each apartment has space for residents' relatives to stay overnight.

"There are no visiting hours," Cassin said. "It's their residence.

"This is a place where people can go to live — we don't think about dying," she said, adding that the hospice will offer such activities as art, music and painting, as well as support groups for family members.

"Hospice is a place and a concept that celebrates the time we have left," Cassin said. "People who come to hospice live longer than those patients who don't come to hospice."

Among the unique Jewish features at the Zicklin Residence are kosher food, a Shabbat elevator in the building, a small Jewish chapel, Jewish art in every room and a mezuzah on every doorpost designed by Tobi Kahn.

Operating procedures were recommended by the facility's rabbinical committee.

"People want to be surrounded at the end of life by the things that are most familiar to them," Cassin said.

### **The Growing Need for End-of-Life Care**

As the American population ages and many people develop terminal illnesses, hospice care — usually delivered at home — has become a popular alternative to the often impersonal settings of hospitals or nursing homes.

"Hospice is growing exponentially," with some 950,000 Americans in a hospice program, Cassin said.

A residential hospice is for those who have no loved ones nearby to care for them or whose needs are beyond the capability of friends or family.

John S. Ruskay, said he cited the need for an "end-of-life hospice initiative" when he became the executive vice president and CEO of UJA-Federation five years ago.

Ruskay said he, like many of the hospice's supporters, became "sensitized" to the need for a Jewish hospice for personal reasons. His wife, Shira, an attorney who later trained as a social worker and specialized in hospice work, was diagnosed with cancer. She died in 1999.

"Running a hospice at home is very, very, very difficult," Ruskay said. "Providing care at home is an enormous undertaking for the family. The residential hospice will be an enormous resource for them."

Residential hospices under the auspices of secular and religious organizations have been established in the United States during the last generation. A small number of Jewish residential hospices are operating in the U.S., but there is no central directory.

"Our agenda has been full" with domestic and overseas needs, Ruskay said of UJA-Federation's entry into the hospice field in recent years.

Kronish calls the residential hospice "a significant need of the Jewish community. The Jewish community is aging disproportionately to the rest of the [general] community, living longer with chronic illnesses."

### **A Spiritual Gift to the Jewish Community**

UJA-Federation spent three years planning the hospice, including focus groups with the Orthodox and Russian emigre communities, Kronish said.

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**- Paul Kronish  
Chair of UJA-Federation's  
End-of-Life Task Force**

"The entire environment of the facility is Jewish," he said. "The main concern is that it should not have that 'institutional' look."

Kronish and Alan Cohen, director of planning and program development for UJA-Federation's Caring Commission, helped coordinate fund raising for the hospice's endowment — the total so far is \$5.1 million. That will provide scholarship aid for residents unable to pay from their own savings or Medicaid payments.

UJA-Federation plans to evaluate the need for an expansion of its hospice program, Kronish said.

The new hospice is named for the parents of philanthropists Larry and Carol Zicklin, and Eli Peligal and Rita

Zicklin Peligal, couples who were the primary contributors to the hospice's endowment fund.

Mollie Zicklin, mother of Larry and Rita, died in 2002 at 94 after spending a few months in a hospice program.

"I became sensitized when my mother needed this help," said Larry Zicklin, a past president of UJA-Federation. "It resonated well with Rita and me."

### **A Visual Kaddish**

Last week the furniture was moved into the hospice and Kahn hung his artworks on the walls. His mother's name does not appear in the space, but her spirit is everywhere, he said.

Kahn, whose artwork took a spiritual turn with his "Avoda: Objects of the Spirit" traveling exhibit of ritual items a few years ago, approached UJA-Federation when he read about the hospice last year.

He created the objects for the hospice — including a Torah ark, a Ner Tamid, tzedaka box and Shabbat candlesticks — "at reduced remuneration" as a memorial for his mother. The works in the hospice comprise one of 11 projects he is doing this year in her memory, symbolic of the 11 months of mourning for a deceased parent.

"This is my form of saying Kaddish," said Kahn, who also recites the traditional mourner's prayer daily at a synagogue near his Upper West Side home. "It is a visual Kaddish."

Funds for the artwork came from the Sunny and Abe Rosenberg Foundation.

Kahn's sister, Felice Kahn Zisken, a poet, is writing poems this year in honor of their mother, he said.

"My goal is that when people have a loss, they do something creative in memory of their parents, something good from something very difficult," Kahn said.

Kahn created a pair of paintings on handmade paper for each room — framed sky-and-water paintings and framed images of flowers. The museum-quality frames were donated by a colleague, Jenny Watkins of PSG Frameworks in Boston.

"I want this to be a Kiddush Hashem for my mother," a sanctification of her name, said Kahn, who turned a room in his apartment into a "meditation space" during his mother's brief stay there.

"My mother loved art. She loved flowers," he said. "She would have loved to have a place like this."

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