

## MJHS Celebrates Springtime Holidays



Honoring the traditions of the diverse communities we serve, MJHS' centers for rehabilitation and nursing recently hosted a variety of events to celebrate Passover and Easter.

### Symbolic Meaning

The springtime holidays began with the Seder, or traditional holiday dinner, held at MJGC, Shorefront and Menorah on the first nights of Passover, March 29 and 30. Helping residents celebrate the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt, a Seder uses specific foods for symbolic meaning in retelling the story.

Services at the three facilities featured traditional "Seder plates," which contained:

- Charoset—a mixture of apples, nuts and wine
- Baytzah—hardboiled egg
- Zeraa—shank bone or neck of poultry
- Karpas—a vegetable such as parsley or potato
- Maror—bitter herbs, such as horseradish root

### Drawing a Crowd

MJGC offered services every day of Passover, sometimes drawing more than 150 residents and visitors from the community.

"Passover is a focal point of Jewish identity," said Rabbi Aaron Wajfeld, Director of Pastoral Care at MJGC. "It is in the tradition of the holiday that people gather and celebrate together."

Participation was also strong at Shorefront, where a third Seder dinner had to be added to accommodate everyone.

"Passover has great meaning to many of our residents, so these services are a way for them to honor tradition while spending time with their friends and families," said Rabbi Baruch Gubnitsky, Shorefront's Director of Pastoral Care, who led the Seder and other Passover services.

At Menorah, more than 200 residents and dozens of their family members participated in the Seder meals with services led by Rabbi Samuel Fischler.

"It is set up beautifully and the staff is so accommodating," said Menorah resident Rhoda Nussbaum, who shared a table with three generations of family, including her daughter Marlene November and granddaughter, Michelle November. "They gave us our own table and made sure my granddaughter got a vegetarian plate."

### Accommodating Everyone

MJHS is known for its inclusiveness, and the Seder services are no exception.

More than a month before Passover, staff began reaching out to family members. Flyers and signs were prominently displayed, encouraging family members to make reservations to enjoy the Seder with their loved ones. Residents of all backgrounds were welcome, including non-Jewish residents merely curious about Passover traditions.

### Kosher for Passover

Because Passover prohibits the use of chametz—anything made from wheat, rye, barley, oats or spelt that has not been thoroughly cooked within 18 minutes of coming into contact with water—kitchens must undergo an intensive koshering process before preparing foods for Passover. Many who observe Passover also avoid rice, corn, peanuts and beans during the holiday, so all traces of such items must be removed from kitchens.

During Passover, a separate set of dishes, utensils and cookware are used. Some kitchens also have special range tops, microwave ovens and other equipment designated for Passover use only. When this is not possible, certain items can be koshered with large blow torches and boiling water. This process is performed by certified inspectors under the supervision of Rabbi Avrohom Friedlander, Kashruth Certifier.

Passover begins on the 15th day of the month of Nissan on the Jewish calendar. On the 2010 Gregorian calendar, Passover lasted from March 29 to April 6.

#### **Easter and Paschal**

While the Passover celebration continued, other residents celebrated Easter on Sunday, April 4.

Musician Jamal Risbrook entertained MJGC residents, who also enjoyed Easter services on the premises.

Shorefront residents made a field trip to Our Lady of Solace Church for Easter Mass, where they were given a special welcome by Father Patrick J. West from the pulpit. Later in the day, the group enjoyed live xylophone music in Shorefront's recreation area.

Music was also a part of the festivities at Menorah, where an Easter banjo concert was held. Three days later, Father Walter A. Mitchell visited the premises to conduct Paschal services and stayed to enjoy with residents the holiday lunch of chicken, veal, fresh fruit and stuffed mushrooms.

Throughout the year, no matter what holidays we celebrate or traditions we follow, MJHS staff are united in providing the best care possible for our residents, patients and clients, as well as honoring the diversity that makes us so unique.

