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BY RHODA GOLDMAN PLAZA

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Newish Year Ahead



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Hope for 2021

It's hard for me to write something original, wildly optimistic, or creative about New Year. A culturally determined event unrelated to stars, sun, or moon, it feels artificial. However, we do look forward to it, as if it were a force of its own to inject change into an already tired system.

However, anthropomorphizing the abstract year, making it responsible for positive change is our mistake. We could instead acknowledge that people engineer change and cheer the innovators. In our communal trying-not-to-get COVID-life, I am grateful to everyone who have gotten us thus far. If we focus on the people who have lead positive change, instituted successful safety protocols, invented new and better ways to fight the pandemic, developed vaccines, and even those who did not do so well, but learned from their mistakes, then I do have hope for the new year. I believe there will be changes in the situations, events, conditions that made 2020 such a dreadful year and hope that we will do better because of what we now know.

Reasons for confidence? I know that RGP staff has learned what it takes to prevent COVID and what to do if it manifests in the community. Staff have instituted stricter-than-required protocols for COVID prevention. Staff have creatively tried out new processes to assist residents and develop activities to reduce isolation. In conversations with fellow staff members about our learning during the past ten months (!), we realized how experienced we have become as an organization to prevent COVID. The collaborative functioning of experienced staff in health care, housekeeping, activities, dining, in fact, all of the departments, has created a formidable organization. Although RGP is an island of sorts, it is affected by what goes on in the city, state, and country. So, I'm not entirely sanguine about the future. But with the creativity and collaboration among staff, I do have hope that the year—already upon us—will be better. As the joke goes—we now have 2020 hindsight.

Resident of the Month—Amalia Shedro

I think what kept me going in spite of COVID is my family and “my family of friends”—people who are very close—even though everyone is living far apart and in different countries. It is these wonderful people who are part of who I am, and we help and support each other. My “family” reflects who I am—first Jewish, then Argentinian (Hispanic-Latinx), then USA American. I have been able to persevere because of my deep connections with my family despite so much moving, traveling, and new things in my life.

I was born in Argentina as was my husband Hector; we lived in Buenos Aires. We met at a JCC camp as teenagers and dated for a few years before getting married. My mother was born in Argentina but my father came from Russia emigrating at the time of the Russian Revolution. Hector’s family came from Poland. The Jewish community in Buenos Aires was quite large, about 250,000 people. I attended a Jewish School. I studied at the University of Architecture; Hector went to Medical School specializing in cardiology. The economic situation was not good, so in 1962 he accepted a research fellowship in this country to complete his training.

Hector got a job in Pittsburgh working at the Miners Clinic in New Kensington. When the clinic closed, he went to private practice and many of his patients followed him. Before my first daughter was born, I had several different jobs where I learned English. Afterwards my job was volunteering at my kids’ schools, in hospitals, clinics, and in the ICU as an interpreter. When our kids reached school age we joined the local Conservative synagogue where I became the vice president and made very close friendships.

Hector and I had a wonderful life attending art shows, movies, theater, and the symphony. We hiked and traveled a lot, visiting many countries all over the world. We traveled to Argentina most years. After my husband retired we were able to take longer trips and visit our daughters and grandchildren and their families more. We became “snowbirds”, spending the winter months in Florida.



Coming to RGP a year ago was very sad for me. Hector had passed away two years prior, and I very reluctantly decided to relocate to San Francisco to be near my daughter Denise and closer to Michelle, who lives in Denver. It was very difficult to leave Pittsburgh, a city where I had lived happily for many years. I came to a new place and was facing life without my husband and friends. “Strange faces, new places.”

When I first moved to RGP Denise came to see me almost every day, and my sister and niece visited from Argentina. I saw Michelle twice in the first 2 months I was here. But when COVID appeared I could not see my family. During the lock-down we were all isolated. But I got to know my neighbor Jeanne and we have developed a wonderful friendship. We help each other. She is my life saver.

So, I do not worry too much about the prospect of “new”; I will be alright. In these past couple of years, I have learned to accept the bad times and things that I wouldn’t have accepted earlier in life, and I have learned that “new” can be also positive.



Corey Weiner,
Director of Food and Beverage

What's new? Nothing I hope...

What are the trends predicted for the restaurant industry in 2021? Let's see, there are many predictions, each worse than kale and chia seeds. Can they really be true?

Chickpeas will be the new "it" food, although last year's prediction of cauliflower as the new kale didn't quite happen. True there is cauliflower rice, pasta, and pizza, but kale, quinoa, and chia still hang on, much to my dismay. Chickpea flour is trendy and it is used as an egg substitute. Pass me the vegan breakfast sausage, will you? Kombucha is the new orange juice and cocktail mixer.



Drones are the new milk man. No more flippant comments about mis-attributed parentage conceptions; it just won't fly with drones. ;-) That was a pun in case you missed it, or it went over your head.... ;-)

Carob is back, quite a blast from the past—carob has been around for about 4,000 years in the Mediterranean, in fact the food of choice for desert hermits..... until hippies and macro-neurotics ruined its reputation.

Super-foods, fermented foods, and probiotics will be "hotter" than ever. Cell-based proteins and alternative foods will be all the rage, along with technology. 3-D printed food is taking hold and vertical farms are the new dining décor, making farm to table a short trip. We already have an oven that is smarter than us and requires tech support! Surely I'll get tangled in the 3-D printer and then fall into the muddy truffle shelf.

The transition from meat is increasing in velocity. The Impossible Burger, a vegan burger that "bleeds" beet juice now accounts for one-third of burger sales around the world. Not so healthy and not so cheap. More insects

will be consumed, but not by us. What's really coming is farmed insects for animal feed, thank god, not for RGP...yet. Insects are not Kosher anyway, although one grass hopper is excepted, accepted, and kosher.*

COVID, as we all can testify, has changed our lives, and our diets too. With more people working from home, breakfast is getting its long overdue attention every day, not just as brunch, and not just eggs. Breakfast pizza has become an option; Whole Foods carries it. Pick up a six-pack of beer and your day will be much more pleasant. Kelly can we have that? Kelly's astute opinion is that beer does not pair well with Cheerios.

Predictions include that there will be less sugar and alcohol in our food and drink—this also saddens me. Sadder for seniors is the rising trend for spicier foods, even in desserts. How about a Dark Chocolate Bonbon with Sichuan Pepper Ganache? We will also be eating more stems and peels and other plant parts that would (should?) have gone to compost. This change in vegetable and fruit use mimics the snout-to-tail concept in modern kitchens; now, really more like peel-to-pit. For those of you who are worried about waste, in 2021, we will have you covered.

Well, there you go, eat your stems, drink your kombucha, and have yourself a printed snack, which Resident Services with their wealth of technical expertise can help you with.

*for a dissenting rabbinical opinion see <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21847517#:~:text=Locust%20is%20the%20only%20insect,the%20white%202D%20can%20be%20eaten.>



Candiece Milford,
Managing Director of Marketing

Moving Ahead: Yes, We're Open For Business

Typically at this time of year, the phone is abuzz with inquiries about moving into RGP that were put off due to holidays and COVID. While there are certainly need-driven calls, there are also many calls from people who weathered a stormy 2020 in their homes and realize the value of a community to support them. Who wouldn't, for example, want their personal grocery shopping done twice a week and delivered to their apartments? No risk of exposure, no stairs to climb up and down, just that coveted strawberry Haagen Daas on its way to your frig without lifting a finger!

Questions about COVID and move ins abound so I want to offer you a strategy that we are implementing if you think you want to move in within the next six months. Keep in mind that moving in these days requires extra work our staff bears due to COVID protocols, so we are pacing move-ins farther apart than usual. However, the Physician's Report which is part of the application process, is valid for six months so we are encouraging people who think they want to move in within six months to select an apartment that is available and start the application process.

Interestingly, while our Wait List people are planners and often project months to years in advance of their move in, many have opted to stay in place until they get the vaccination. This means that for the first time in almost three years, we have a few very nice apartments available (alcoves and a couple of one bedrooms) that people who aren't on the Wait List are getting. If you are interested in these types of apartments, perhaps we should talk about your readiness and consider starting the application.

Consider, too, that as a residential community for "chronologically gifted" people (I love this term which indicate older people), we are in the First Tier to get the vaccine and expect to hear very soon from the Department of Public Health when to expect it. People living in the larger Bay Area, even though equally "gifted" will get it during Tier Two which means later. Another reason to have that chat!

However, don't expect a quick move-in because the process of vacating apartments, preparing for a new resident, and all the COVID protocols are slowing things down. For example, right now if you are ready to move in, we probably wouldn't schedule it until mid-February.

You can perceive that our usual efficient process has become complex and bound by State, City, Department of Public Health and Department of Social Services COVID protocols which can change weekly. It has been a real juggling act, so bear with us as we learn that craft! And let's talk and plan together as this may be an opportunity you don't want to miss.

New for 2021



Remodelled Memory Care Activity Room
Photo courtesy of Emma Davis



Third Floor Outdoor Terrace



Gym Renovations

- Remodelled Activity Room in Memory Care
- Automatic door openers and renovation for common restrooms on all floors
- Air purifiers in the elevators
- Landscaping, new awnings and improved seating on the third floor terrace
- New lighting in the library and dining room
- Updated gym—new equipment, lighting, TVs, and new window
- New lighting in all hallways



New Program at RGP! Library on Wheels

SF Library on Wheels Mobile Outreach Program will deliver and pick up books every second Monday of the month. Residents need to have their own library card and can request books via email, or by telephone. If residents would like assistance contact Emma, Director of Activities or Activities staff. Residents will need to turn in books the day prior to delivery. Emma can be contacted at emmad@rgplaza.org or 415.345.5098

January Birthdays

Robert Harris	4
Freda Reider	10
Ria Aki	12
Jeanne Halpern	14
Shari Jacobs	21
Bill Newmeyer	22
Ruth Ellen Jacobson	22
Barry Adler	23
Patricia Williams	23

Houseplant Hospital—The Doctor Is In

Houseplants are lovely; they brighten our surroundings, provide color and life to a room. They enhance life and are good for your health—they absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen.

Often houseplants arrive as flowering gifts, but in a few months, they yellow, droop, or sometimes grow recklessly. It is not uncommon for plants to go into a state of shock when coming to a new environment. Sometimes the plant does well and sometimes it does not quite fit in; introducing a new plant seems to be a hit or miss type of event. Many times, when a plant does not thrive in spite of all efforts, the plant is re-gifted to other residents who try to nurture the plant in their environment. Now there is another avenue for the inexperienced or perplexed houseplant owner—RGP’s houseplant doctor.

RGP resident Carl Kerwick has graciously grown into the official role of houseplant consultant. The inheritor of the patio kitchen herbs, guardian of the new native plant garden, and organizer of gardening club plants, Carl has already advised, planted, and re-potted for residents and staff.

“I notice that plants, especially orchids, are often over-watered,” Carl said. “Understanding the optimum amount of water is important. It is advisable to under-water than to over-water them. I recommend that the orchids and houseplants be allowed to dry out completely before watering them. It’s especially important to put orchids in containers that drain and have good airflow, so the roots do not rot. Also, plants need to be fed, have soil refreshed, get proper amounts of sunlight, and live in a fairly constant temperature. This good advice plus potting soil and special orchid bark help plants return to health.

Look for our Houseplant Hospital on the spring calendar.



The consultation



The examination



The treatment

Employee of the Month—Tracy Brown

Tracy Brown has almost worked at RGP for fifteen years. The “almost” reflects the wall separating JFCS’s front desk where Tracy worked as Lead Receptionist for fourteen years. Now she sits at RGP’s Front Desk where she has worked for nearly a year. We are thrilled to say that she unequivocally works at RGP.

Tracy, a San Francisco native grew up in the Richmond District on 27th Ave. She attended Cabrillo, Presidio Middle School, and Washington High School and spent most of her working life in the City.

“I value a job through the people I come in contact with,” Tracy said, and I really enjoyed the people I came in contact with at JFCS. A few months after I started working there, I met Holocaust survivors; it was my job to coordinate their transportation to Café by the Bay every Thursday. Their stories touched my soul, and it broke my heart to hear what they had endured and also inspired me that they are nevertheless so kind-hearted and full of life. Then, I met RGP residents too who are Holocaust survivors and other residents who used JFCS services.

Working at RGP is like a dream come true. Two weeks after I saw the posting, I applied, and was offered the job on the spot. I enjoy this job since every day is different; no two days are the same. The residents and I—we connect from the kindness of our hearts and I am happy that I can help them.

At RGP, I’m working with residents, staff, delivery people, nursing, dining services, vendors in a much more fast-paced environment and I thrive

Multi-tasking, is what I do best. I like being the first person that people see when they come in the front door and I really feel gratified when people exclaim ‘Thank God! Tracy is at the Front Desk!’



One of the reasons I love working at RGP is that it really does feel like family. Honestly. I feel we have a place where we can share ideas and values, where people don’t judge each other. People have said I have an old soul and I think that’s what allows me to connect with each person in a unique way. It’s hard to explain, but I feel that “things click here” in the way people help each other and the way things are done. What makes RGP unique is the people, the staff and administration. I’ve been so grateful

for the support administration gave to employees during COVID earlier this year. I think the support really makes employees feel valued and taken care of. The gift cards, employee appreciation, commuter benefits—all the things Ira did for staff—really show administration is looking out for staff and makes employees feel part of a family.

I love to dance; I studied ballet for a while when I was young. I imagine sometimes that we, all of us at RGP, are in a dance, of diverse people, where people connect with each other in various ways, there is an openness and welcoming that connects everybody...”



Elizabeth Wyma-Hughes
Director of Resident Services

Things Worth Hanging Onto

It is safe to say that we are all eagerly looking forward to what 2021 will bring us. The prospect of visits with loved ones (that don't require parkas and outdoor heaters), sharing meals with friends (not at opposite ends of a 6-foot table), and seeing the smiles of our fellows (unencumbered by masks) has been the hope guiding us through a difficult year. Like many of you, I am ready to put much of 2020 behind me. But I would like to mention some of the things that are worth hanging onto that were prioritized in the past ten months.

The sense of community that makes RGP such a special place to live and work has flourished this past year. It has been deeply heartening to see residents support each other in many ways—from offering to pick up neighbors' mail, being the friendly face that welcomes a new neighbor to the floor, to participating in Zoom Residents Council meetings (and sometimes getting a bit off topic because it's such a welcome opportunity to see each other all together). Family members have made an effort to reach out to the friends and neighbors of their loved one, sending cards and making calls to the residents who they have gotten to know in their visits, and keeping the larger community connected.

Prior to COVID, people met face-to-face and picked up the news. Often, loved ones would read the Residents Council meeting minutes when picking up mail for their parent, drop by the office on their way in to ask questions, or get the latest gossip while sharing a meal in the dining room. Due to COVID, we have had to change our means of communication to emails, zoom, and supervised family visits. While none

of these are as gratifying as face-to-face interactions, we have made email updates an important means of informing families and friends about life at RGP and further opened lines of communication between RGP and loved ones.

Some of the most apprehensive residents have risen to the challenge of utilizing technology to stay active and connected over these many months. I recall incredulous looks when first explaining Zoom to several of our residents. They quickly understood the power of Zoom to communicate with families. Not only could residents see their loved ones, but they could also connect with folks across the country and throughout the world. Loved ones that would only be able to visit once a year were now able to visit weekly, often with multiple people calling in. Once residents grew more comfortable with the platform, it was easy to transition exercise, discussion groups, and committee meetings to this format. Many of the residents who were so unsure of themselves and their tech capabilities this time last year are now using these platforms outside of the RGP context, managing virtual doctor's appointments, streaming Fromm lectures, and virtually attending performances without any staff assistance.

In 2020 our experience at RGP was a microcosm of the larger world. We quickly recognized the importance of community and the value of our interactions that we previously might have taken for granted. Family members prioritized keeping updated with news from RGP so they could support their loved one. Residents adapted to a digital landscape. I hope that we continue to have such a high level of engagement from our residents and their loved ones moving forward and are stronger as a community due to the bonds built this difficult year.

All The Things We Do Not Use

By Jeanne Halpern, Resident

When my neighbor Freda walked into my kitchen carrying a plant that had suddenly grown a tangle of visible white roots, she cried, “Help! I need something to put this into!” My reason told me I had no plant pots to offer her. But my imagination sent me to the third drawer under the kitchen counter, the drawer with a lovely, hand-made ceramic bowl, perfect for keeping risotto hot – or possibly, I thought, for saving



Freda’s plant. “How about this,” I asked, but Freda didn’t hear me. Staring at my beautiful bowl, she said, “Are you having a dinner party? Can I come?” And, in our weird circle of miscommunication, we both burst out laughing. Once Freda left, I gazed down at that bowl – and the Teflon pan next to it. Why, on earth, had I brought these things to RGP?

The next day, I decided to walk through my apartment – drawer by drawer, shelf by shelf, box by box – and take an inventory of all the things I hadn’t touched more than twice in the thirteen months I’d lived here. Although I’d known RGP served three meals a day, I’d packed, wrapped, sent, unwrapped and unpacked hundreds of things, and not just for the kitchen. I couldn’t help wondering: Are other residents also surrounded by things they never use? And if so, why do we hold onto them?



The first few people I asked, my fifth-floor neighbors, agreed. Amalia showed me her million carefully folded silk scarves, in more colors than a rainbow.

Herbert offered me the microwave he’d never used and I took it, but I didn’t take his toaster.



Then I phoned other residents. Did they, too, suffer from this feeling of too-much-ness?

My first few calls, to Book Club pals, weren’t especially encouraging. Jo, with whom I take walks, had relied on friends, family and her realtor to simplify her move. All she remembers is hurrying through her condo, putting yellow post-its on the things she wanted to move—and she’s been content with what she brought. Anything that might need pruning? “Maybe some books and files, but they’re hard. The books—I don’t want to let them go without a second look. But the files...,” she sighed. I totally understood. There are only two things to do with files: hide them or burn them.

When I called Ruth Ellen, she, too, sounded happy with what she’d shipped across the country, but since she’d heard San Francisco got pretty cold, she’d brought some brand-new winter clothes with her. “I’ve never worn any of them, not even my new velvet pants!” But she has no intention of getting rid of any of them. “Still waiting,” she said, “for a cold enough day.”

Bill, with whom I take walks and talk about books, gave me a quick answer when I phoned him to ask about things he rarely used: “My television. I can’t stand it more than every few days.” But once I explained I meant things he rarely if ever used and would be happy to get

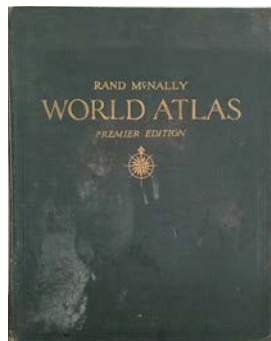


rid of, he explored his closet, phone in hand, and reported: “I have a lot of fresh shirts hanging here,” and then he counted: “twenty long-sleeved with collars, five short-sleeved with collars, nine polo shirts.

Different colors. They’re nice shirts. Oh, and here are two sport coats, wool. About half of this,” he concluded, “is waiting for Goodwill.”

Next, I talked with Len, whom I know from the Residents Board. When I explained the topic of my call, “All the Things We Do Not Use,” he immediately described a large piece of wooden furniture where he kept hundreds of music CDs. “I don’t really use it any more,” he said, “because I get most of the music on U Tube.” “So why do you keep it,” I asked. “Just in case,” he said, “what I want is not on U Tube.” And does Len also, I wondered, feel connections to his music CDs that I feel for mine: memories of choosing them, reading their liner notes, getting to know them?

When I talked with Steffi, a Book Club friend whom I see often, she mentioned two things she could easily get rid of: the four wine glasses she’s still never used and the pictures she doesn’t have enough room for on her walls. Then we talked about possessions several other residents had also mentioned: big, cumbersome books like atlases, dictionaries (English, German, French), and Shakespeare. Would she get rid of them?



“Probably not,” she said. “Even if I use them only three or four times a year, with help, I feel better if I have them.” This I certainly understood. Despite the Internet, I’ve never been able to leave behind my eight-pound,

1975 New Columbia Encyclopedia. In fact, most of my interviewees had trouble parting with books—and photographs and paintings—or what Steffi called, “the things you want around you for comfort.”

Carl, whom I depend on for help with my Patio garden, mentioned three classes of things he doesn’t actually use. First, a neatly folded stack of clothes awaiting transfer to Goodwill. Second, some of the items in his off-site storage unit, the future of which is undetermined. And finally, two things he treasures, rather than “uses,” that

he won’t be getting rid of any time soon—his collection of Matchbox Cars and his old Lionel Train set. When Carl mentioned Lionel, I pictured my two young sons with their father in that world of touch, sight, sound and excitement that Lionel had brought to our lives.

I saved my last interview for Paula and Alan, the couple I’d met at my first dinner at RGP, Thanksgiving 2019. By the time I phoned them, my concept of “things we do not use” was changing. And Paula certainly helped crystallize that change when she told me she didn’t actually “use” some bowls, her spice cabinet, and I think she said a clock. “I keep them,” she continued, “for the pleasure they give me – their beauty, the memories.” “And what do you do with things you no longer use or want,” I asked. “Give them away,” she said. “I might walk down the hall carrying a plant and ask someone I see, ‘Would you like this plant?’ But I’m happy with the things we have.”



Once I’d finished these interviews, I began to understand why I’d kept switching the title of this column back and forth between “Things We Do Not Use” and “Things We Do Not Need.” I’d decided on “Use” because I found it unbelievable that I’d brought a bowl and a pan that I’d never use to RGP, where I wouldn’t even have a stove. Or could it be I needed them? I was leaving a life where I’d loved cooking risotto for friends, especially in my big Teflon pan – perhaps as Len had enjoyed listening to his own CDs, or as Steffi had liked opening her atlas to see exactly where she’d lived in London years ago. I guess many of us hold on to things connected with special times in our lives. We like, or need, to have them close-by for the comfort they offer. And, chances are, you do, too.



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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.

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