

# THE OLIVE PRESS

BY RHODA GOLDMAN PLAZA

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## Celebrating Legendary Civic Leadership



**A**t Rhoda Goldman Plaza, civic engagement isn't just an idea—it's at the heart of our community. Founded by individuals dedicated to the greater good, RGP continues to be a place where leadership and compassion flourish. Many of our residents have championed important causes and supported philanthropy throughout their lives. This shared commitment to making the world a better place is a point of pride for us at RGP.

Two women embody this spirit of civic courage: Dr. Anita Friedman and Rhoda Haas Goldman. Their legacies reflect the values that guide everything we do at RGP.

**Rhoda Haas Goldman: A Force for Philanthropy and Advocacy.** Rhoda Haas Goldman (ז'ל), a descendant of Levi Strauss, was a quiet but powerful force for change. She and her husband, Richard, founded the Goldman Fund, contributing millions to civic causes and establishing the Goldman Environmental Prize, often referred to as the “Green Nobel.” Rhoda supported organizations such as the San Francisco Symphony and Mount Zion Health System and co-founded the Reach to Recovery program for breast cancer patients.

Rhoda passed away in 1996, but her legacy is deeply intertwined with the creation of RGP, which stands as a testament to her generosity.

**Dr. Anita Friedman: A Visionary for**

**Community and Family.** Dr. Anita Friedman, the visionary behind Rhoda Goldman Plaza's founding, currently leads Jewish Family and Children's Services (JFCS)—one of the nation's oldest and largest family service organizations, which RGP is proud to be a division of. Her influence extends locally and globally, from serving as President of the Koret Foundation to co-chairing the Governor's Council for Holocaust and Genocide Education. Anita's leadership has shaped countless lives and continues to inspire our community's commitment to a better future for all.

Watch Anita share the inspiring vision that RGP was founded on and how it continues the Jewish tradition of taking care of our community: click on the video at [rgplaza.jfcs.org/about](http://rgplaza.jfcs.org/about)

**A Community of Changemakers.** Rhoda and Anita worked together decades ago to create what is now the warm and welcoming community of RGP that we are all so proud of. The legacy of these two community leaders continues in the spirit of all of us at RGP to this day.

**Photo left to right: Rhoda Goldman and Dr. Anita Friedman  
Front Cover: San Francisco, City Hall**



Allison Rodman  
*Director of Sales & Marketing*

## Betty Brassington

From a young age, Betty understood the significance of having the right to choose. Growing up in rural Maine, she vividly recalls an event in grade school where a classmate suffered abuse by a family member, leading to a young pregnancy. Seeing how the community failed, deeply affected her, sparking a lifelong commitment to advocating for human rights, especially the right to choose.

As she built her own family in Chico, California, Betty became involved in her community's transportation commission, advocating for new roads to provide her small town with better highway access to the greater Bay Area.

During this period California's John Birch Society, a far-right extremist group, rose to its prominence in the 1960's and also spurred Betty's political involvement. Motivated to make a difference in her local government, she became active on the City Council of Chico. With very hard work and dedication she was able to break barriers, becoming the second woman to be vice Mayor of Chico.

Betty's engagement in local government helped her build strong relationships. Encouraged by these connections, she transitioned to work at the state level for the Democratic Party, first as treasurer and later as elected State Chair. During her four-year tenure as State Chair, Betty forged lasting connections that strengthened the Democratic Party's influence. Her advice to the younger generation is clear: "align yourself with pro-choice advocates, save your money, learn from your political parties, get involved, and most importantly, *VOTE*."



Danielle Bennett  
*Office Manager*

## Jewish Tradition of Compassion and Community

Civic engagement within the Jewish community is deeply rooted in values of justice, compassion, and responsibility. From early immigrant settlements to today's diverse diaspora, Jews have actively worked to foster positive societal change. Guided by principles such as tikkun olam—repairing the world—and chesed—loving-kindness—this engagement empowers communities to champion social justice, equity, and mutual support across diverse populations.

The history of Jewish Family and Children's Services (JFCS) exemplifies these values. Founded in the mid-19th century to support a wave of Jewish immigrants, JFCS initially provided housing, food, and employment assistance, helping newcomers build stable lives in America. This early commitment to community uplift embodied the Jewish commitment to care for others, setting the foundation for JFCS's role as a civic leader.

Today, JFCS continues this legacy of compassionate service through its divisions, including Rhoda Goldman Plaza (RGP), which upholds these traditions in the care and engagement of its residents. At RGP, residents are encouraged to stay involved in civic life through programs driven by their own interests and passions, from welcoming new community members to participating in volunteer initiatives. By fostering an environment of mutual support and inclusion, RGP honors the history of Jewish civic engagement, empowering residents to actively contribute to a compassionate and vibrant community for all.



Miki Lamm, MSW  
*Associate Director, Seniors at Home*

## Small Acts, Big Impact: Rethinking Civic Engagement

*“Civic Engagement?—I’m too old for that!—I don’t have the energy anymore—What power or influence could I possibly have?”*

**N**ot so fast! This term can be intimidating, if you think of it only on the grand scale of involving one’s self in the affairs of the city or county or country.... But it can also mean how we conduct ourselves within the community in which we live; like right here at Rhoda Goldman Plaza. It could mean participating in the resident’s council, but it could also mean simply how we relate to others when attending activities or events, or even in the dining room! Do we greet others? Do we welcome them to our table? Do we invite them to sit by us? You yourself know what a difference it makes when you feel seen, greeted, accepted by others in the community.

Attending to others can lift our own day, taking us out of our own worries and concerns. And there’s a tremendous benefit: You notice you have something very precious to give.

Each person is made in the image of God, so we can practice seeing God by looking deeply into each other’s eyes. What do you see?

**Art image above by, Rabbi Me’irah Iliinsky.**



Rabbi Me’irah Iliinsky  
*Rabbi of Rhoda Goldman Plaza*

## From Voting to Community Service at RGP

**W**ithin the scope of the programming department, my goal is to provide residential opportunities for civic engagement. More often than not people associate civic engagement with voting and thus, The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan grassroots organization working to protect and expand voting, came to RGP on October 23rd. They provided information regarding both local and state ballot measures. In addition, several videos from the SF Department of Elections have been shown on the RGP TV Channel 1981 to provide education for residents about consolidated general elections and ranked choice voting.

But civic engagement is much more than voting and political involvement. Civic engagement by definition is the process of working to make a difference in one’s community and address public issues. On November 4th, RGP residents will join the Shupin Social Club for an intergenerational sing-along with the Jewish Folk Chorus. The Shupin Social Club is part of the JFCS Shupin Community for neurodiverse young adults. On December 4th residents will have the opportunity, in coordination with JFCS Volunteer Services, to decorate and assemble bags that will be delivered to families facing financial hardship, people with disabilities and indigent seniors during the Hanukkah season.

**Photo above: Resident, Judith and Josh, a JFCS Volunteer.**



Emma Davis, LMFT  
*Director of Programming*

# ACTIVITIES



Alice with daughter at Happy Hour



#SFWalk2EndAlz

RGP staff at Walk to End Alzheimer's



Judith pinch potting at weekly ceramics class



Paulette (left) welcomes new resident, Joan



Lydia and Isabel share a hug



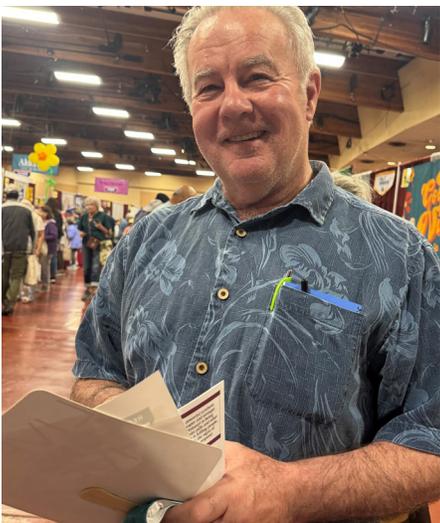
Residents gather at RGP Evacuation Drill



Steve and Ruth at RGP Happy Hour



Jane enjoying a picnic and poetry outing



Jim at the Marin Senior Fair



Ellie at the Marin Senior Fair



Jeanne at Portraiture Project Event



Residents get a visit from Alta Plaza preschoolers on Halloween



Baldo keeping pumpkins tidy at RGP



Pumpkin contest WINNER!

Little trick-or-treaters, at RGP



Pumpkins decorated by residents



Sylvia at flower arranging workshop



RGP staff in costume for Halloween Happy Hour at RGP



Natalie at flower arranging workshop



## Your Vote is Your Voice

**A**t RGP, many of our residents have spent their lives with civic engagement as a top priority. Through marching, campaigning, and voting for decades, they take their civic duty seriously. With that in mind, we work to make sure folks are able to cast their ballots with as much ease as possible.

Ahead of each election, Resident Services staff work with residents to check voter registration status and register all interested voters here at their RGP address. All registered voters receive vote by mail ballots which can be completed and placed in the outgoing mail, dropped at the official ballot box in front of the Western Addition Public Library (across the street), or cast on election day (**November 5th!**) at the Western Addition Public Library polling place from 7am-8pm.

If residents need assistance reading any ballot information or marking their ballot, Resident Services staff can help. Please note that staff cannot provide any guidance on how to vote and will keep your voting choices private.

As I wrote this article, a resident dropped by to let me know her ballot came in and how glad she was to vote in this important election. I hope the enthusiasm our residents show for civic engagement is as inspiring to the larger community as it is to me!



Elizabeth Wyma-Hughes  
*Director of Resident Services*

## Breaking Bread: The Power of Dinner Time at RGP

**F**or many residents here at RGP, dinner time represents more than just a meal—it becomes a meaningful part of their day; a time for connection, storytelling, and engaging with others. For older adults, especially those who live alone or have limited mobility, the simple act of gathering with others to share a meal, provides a sense of belonging and helps combat feelings of loneliness and isolation.

For some residents, it becomes the highlight of their day—a moment to laugh, reminisce about the past, and create new memories while reconnecting with people they may not otherwise interact with.

It is also an opportunity to meet new people in the community and develop relationships that can lead to ongoing friendships or support systems.

Dinner time provides a valuable opportunity for residents to engage in discussions about issues impacting the community and society at large. As they gather for a meal, it becomes a chance to explore civic matters, discuss local events, and express concerns about the future.

These meaningful gatherings offer moments of deep engagement—socially, emotionally, and mentally. It can be a time of joy, connection, and purpose, bringing them closer to others and giving them a space to express themselves fully.



Residents get ready to enjoy a meal together at RGP



Roberto Pellegrino  
*Food and Beverage Director*

## Keeping Connection

“What are visiting times?” Or “Will family be able to visit?” Are questions often asked as the decision is being made to move into a senior living community. At Rhoda Goldman, helping families and their loved ones keep connection is a priority since family and friend connections can be just as important to physical and mental health as exercise and healthy eating.

Recently I worked with two family members who found their special way to volunteer and find their own way to keep connection by being in the community and having purpose while hanging out with the residents. Their volunteering has deepened their bond with RGP residents and staff. A mitzvah.

Karen Strauss, a former San Franciscan librarian, has taken on the task of straightening up our 5 libraries. She had noticed that too many of our books needed to be renewed and were disheveled on the shelves. Book by book, Karen has created order and renewed books that needed a piece of tape or a new cover. Thank you Karen for your sunny smile and dusting the dust jackets.

Dennis Hudson, had retired after 38 years as Head of Electric Department of the SF Ballet. Today he visits often his RGP family member. I was so grateful for his expertise in the hanging of the recent art show for the RGP Art Gallery. Dennis brought his creativity, precision and leveler to the job. Well done Dennis!

**Photos from top to bottom: Karen Strauss and Dennis Hudson**



Allison Rodman  
*Director of Sales & Marketing*

## Good Deeds—Good Health

RGP is such an engaged community. Each day I see residents sharing advice, kind words and support. It is important to note that kindness benefits both the giver and the receiver. A 2020 meta-analysis by the American Psychological Association showed that prosocial people (helpers) experience increased wellbeing, in particular eudaimonic wellbeing, the happiness achieved when finding meaning and purpose (1).

Civic engagement is good for you! Volunteering helps people feel more socially connected, thus warding off loneliness and depression. Older adults who volunteer have reduced risk of mortality and higher physical activity (2).

RGP and other JFCS staff recently participated in the Walk to End Alzheimer's, raising donations for the cause. I'm also excited for the developing collaborations with JFCS outreach programs (as mentioned by Emma). You may not know this, but when I go out to meet prospective residents, I do my best to help them find the support they need to maintain their best quality of life, often with referrals to JFCS services (even if they are not a good fit for RGP).

On personal note, I am traveling to Havana, Cuba in early November. In collaboration with the Jewish Cuba Connection, I'm bringing medications and supplies to the Mitrani Senior Center at the Centro Sephardi Synagogue. I am thrilled to be able to support the Senior Center, and of course to learn more about Cuban life, music, and history during my trip. I hope to share photos with you when I return.

1. Hui et al. (2020). Rewards of kindness? A meta-analysis of the link between prosociality and well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, 146(12). 2. Kim et al. (2020). Volunteering and subsequent health and well-being in older adults: An outcome-wide longitudinal approach. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 59(2).



Adrienne Fair, MSN, RN  
*Director of Health Services*



**Wish them a Happy Birthday!**



**Lydia, 104**



**Sylvia, 101**

**November Birthday's**

**Residents**

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 3 Eva K.        | 20 Sylvia K.  |
| 3 Eva M.        | 20 Maurice E. |
| 8 Jim P.        | 21 Will L.    |
| 9 Lydia S.      | 27 Paula T.   |
| 14 Marjorie G.. |               |

**Staff**

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1 Thy P.        | 18 Chunjin H.   |
| 2 David M.      | 19 Evelyn L.    |
| 5 Luis S.       | 22 Jerry C.     |
| 6 Chialuka A.   | 25 Venus D.     |
| 6 Aylen A.      | 26 Dorie W.     |
| 11 Fong C.      | 27 Yun Yao      |
| 12 Paul W.      | 28 Ming Feng H. |
| 13 Christian M. | 29 Siu Mei C.   |
| 13 Nancy T.     | 30 Marlyn A.    |
| 14 Patsy R.     |                 |

**Employee of the Month**

**Jorge Madrid, Caregiver**

In the world of healthcare, where daily tasks are countless and schedules are tight, Jorge Madrid stands as a reminder that true civic engagement can happen



in the smallest yet most meaningful ways. Through consistent acts of kindness and a genuine commitment to others, Jorge has become an unassuming hero at RGP.

One defining moment captures Jorge's spirit. While working on the busy floor of Memory Care, Jorge passed by, a resident watching a movie alone. Seeing him, she asked a simple favor: "Can you please hold my hand while I watch the movie?" Without a second thought, Jorge put aside his duties to sit with her, offering comfort in a way that was both personal and profoundly kind. "Jorge treats residents like they're his own family," remarked a coworker. "He's patient, kind, and always has a smile. RGP is lucky to have him!"

In these small, everyday acts, Jorge demonstrates the core of service to others that strengthens the community, builds trust, and provides support where it's needed most. His actions highlight that we don't need grand gestures to make an impact—sometimes, it's about holding someone's hand, offering a smile, or lending a patient ear.

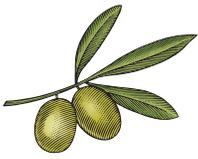
His coworkers describe him as someone who is "always helping staff, never complaining about his job or duties." This kind of attitude fosters a workplace culture rooted in mutual support and unity, a testament to the ripple effect that acts of kindness can have.

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A DIVISION OF JEWISH FAMILY  
AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

RCFE #385600125



RHODA  
GOLDMAN  
PLAZA

175

YEARS

Jewish  
Family and  
Children's  
Services



See You at The Plaza!

Bagel Brunch, Tour and Concert  
A monthly munch & meet time with residents

Sunday Dec, 22 | 11:30 am - 2:00 pm  
Performance by, Mark Levy – “Oy Chanukah”  
RSVP: [AllisonR@rgplaza.org](mailto:AllisonR@rgplaza.org)

*\*November Brunch sold out\**