

# THE OLIVE PRESS

BY RHODA GOLDMAN PLAZA

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# The Olive Press May Theme “Is Nature Healing?”

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## How Nature Helps Us Heal, Abridged

By Leif Hass | Published in Greater Good Magazine October 21, 2021

Luminaries like Charles Darwin, Henry David Thoreau, Virginia Woolf, and Albert Einstein have written eloquently about the benefits of taking in the natural world. Frederick Law Olmsted, the 19th century architect of many great American parks, captured the experience well:

Nature employs the mind without fatigue and yet enlivens it. Tranquilizes it and enlivens it. And thus, through the influences of the mind over body, gives the effect of refreshing rest and reinvigoration to the whole system.

It took almost 150 years, but science has verified that statement almost word for word, including by researchers associated with the Greater Good Science Center. While much of the research has been done in the U.S., Japan is where the science has been most readily embraced. Starting with research on blood pressure and stress hormone levels in the early 2000s, there is now a medical specialty in forest bathing—an activity in which more than a quarter of Japanese partake. After three days with two hours of forest bathing, markers of immune health showed improvement that lasted a week. And, of course, almost all the people said they just felt better, too!

The biophilia theory suggested that since we evolved in nature, our senses and body rhythms are best suited for that environment. According to biologist E. O. Wilson, there is an “innate emotional affiliation with other living organisms” that makes us calm and comfortable in nature. The sounds, smells, sights are our evolutionary “happy place” where we can rest and rejuvenate. We are deeply tied to a world from where we have strayed. Despite the comforts and safety of the modern world, there is a price to pay for urban living.

Other scientists espouse something called the attention restoration theory. Rachel Kaplan at the University of Michigan says “soft fascination” with the beauty and mystery of the natural world draws us in. Nature, she says, is “enticing but not demanding.” Neuroscience research by her student Stephen Kaplan shows that looking at nature pictures let the hard-working executive function parts of the brain recover, compared to looking at urban landscapes.

That’s the feeling we get from encountering something vast and wondrous, that challenges our comprehension. In an awed state, our jaw drops and we get goosebumps. But more than that, we have the same physiological effects we see in forest bathing, where heart rate and blood pressure drop. Beyond the physiological, there are prosocial effects to awe: less concern for self, increased generosity, and more cooperation. This might be why research suggests there is less violence when trees are incorporated into low-income housing developments.

Researchers from Finland suggest that five hours a month is the minimum to have lasting effects (though you should leave the technology behind, or at least keep it in your pocket). It doesn’t have to be the forest; water, even urban parks, can be healing, too. A walk with a friend outside is a Greater Good “three-fer”: exercise, friendship, and nature all at once.

Allison Rodman  
Director of Sales & Marketing



Comments welcome  
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## A Medicinal Bouquet

Who doesn't love flowers? They are so uplifting and pretty. Aside from being visually appealing, there are many different flowers used in medicine. I thought it would be fun to put together a bouquet of medical flowers. These flowers are used to make some potent medications that are widely used in healthcare.

**Madagascar periwinkle (Catharanthus roseus).** Alkaloids from this plant are used in the treatment of high blood pressure, leukemia, Hodgkin's disease, and lymphomas.

**Echinacea (Echinacea purpurea)** is used to fight the common cold. **Chamomile (Matricaria chamomilla)** is said to relieve upset stomach, nausea and vomiting. Some cancer patients use chamomile as a mouth rinse to alleviate the pain of mouth sores.

**Foxglove (Digitalis lanata)** is used to make digitalis medications (AKA Digoxin) which make the heart pump more forcefully and steadily in the treatment of heart failure.



**Quinine (Cinchona officinalis)** has been used for over 350 years in the treatment of malaria.

**Poppies (Papaver somniferum)** are used in a wide array of opiate pain medications—such as Vicodin, Fentanyl, and Norco.

**Senna (Senna alexandrina).** A major side effect of opiates is constipation, which brings me to the final flower. Who knew those little brown laxatives came from such a cheerful yellow flower?

*WebMD (2025). Diet and supplement guide. Webmd.com*  
*US National Library of Medicine (2025). Drugs and supplements. Medline.gov*



Adrienne Fair, MSN, RN  
 Director of Health Services

## Is Nature Healing? Psychology says Yes!

As the Director of Life Enrichment, I am informed by therapeutic principles of many modalities when designing the activities, including ecotherapy.

Examples of this are our gardening program on Memory Care and outings to various open green spaces in the Bay Area. More recently, through Miki Lamm, I connected with Jonathan Tannenbaum who will be facilitating Birding Walks in Golden Gate Park as an outing starting in June.



Incorporating nature into your life has a much bigger impact than one might realize, particularly on mental health. Ecotherapy, also known as nature therapy or green therapy, which was developed by Theodore Roszak, is based on the belief that people are connected to and impacted by the natural environment.

Ecotherapy can take many different forms including nature-based meditation and mindfulness, horticultural therapy, animal-assisted therapy, and wilderness based work. One study showed that following a task designed to induce mental fatigue, participants who spent 40 minutes on a nature preserve reported less anger and more positive emotions than those participants who read a magazine or listened to music following the task. So is nature healing? The short answer is yes!



Emma Davis, LMFT  
 Director of Life Enrichment

## The Peace of Wild Things

By Wendell Berry

*From the Selected Poems of WB - 1999*

When despair for the world grows  
and I wake in the night  
at the least sound  
in fear of what my life  
and my children's lives might be

I go and lie down where the  
wood drake rests in his beauty  
on the water, and the great heron feeds

I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with  
forethought of grief

I come into the presence of still water  
and I feel above me the  
day-blind stars waiting with their light.

For a time I rest  
in the grace of the world,  
and am free.



Peggy O'Brien  
Resident Services

## Arrangement of Happiness

I have the great privilege to create floral arrangements in the common spaces for RGP. As I put each stem into its vase, I know I am bringing the natural world to everyone in the building. I think of my residents who do not get out as often.



Weekly, I go to the SF Flower Mart where I can buy large branches that look so wonderful in our tall spaces like our first-floor atrium and the dining room. Art and nature delight the senses.

Another aspect of my flower choices is using seasonal flowers that may have grown in their grandmother's gardens like snowballs, roses, forsythia, lilacs, grape hyacinth. I like to think that they evoke childhood memories of playing in the garden.

What I give in special labor comes back via genuine compliments from the residents. We have a mutual gratitude moment. They tell me that the beauty of the flowers uplifts their spirits and transforms their mood. Nature healing happens daily at RGP.

*I go to nature to be soothed and  
healed, and to have my senses put in  
tune once more*

*-John Burroughs*



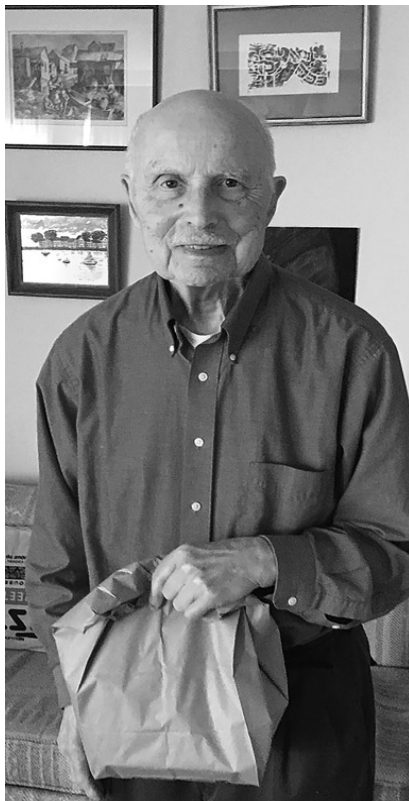
Allison Rodman  
Director of Sales & Marketing

## Remembering Sam Thal, MD, z"l

**S**am Thal, MD, devoted his life to caring for others and the city he loved. He treated patients at the Veterans Administration and taught at UCSF. An aficionado of history and the arts, Sam was deeply involved in the Jewish community.

Understanding the impact of meals prepared and delivered with love on the well-being of homebound seniors, Sam established a Named Endowment Fund at JFCS to provide lasting support for Kosher Meals on Wheels, which brings meals from the RGP kitchen to seniors citywide. He also included a bequest in his estate plans.

As Sam grew older, he trusted in the senior services he long supported. He said, "I created a fund supporting Kosher Meals on Wheels, never realizing that I would become a recipient of such a wonderful program. We are blessed to have JFCS taking care of our community."



*As JFCS celebrates 175 years of service, we remember visionary supporters whose legacies of caring continue to strengthen our community. For information about creating a legacy, please call Barbara Farber at 415-449-3858 or visit [www.jfcs.org/bequests](http://www.jfcs.org/bequests).*

## Rita Semel



**R**ita Semel was born and raised in New York City and graduated from Barnard College. During World War II, Rita settled in San Francisco while her husband Max was stationed overseas. She found a job as a "copy boy" at the San Francisco Chronicle, running errands and handling smaller assignments. A highlight of her career was covering the signing of the United Nations charter in San Francisco, June 1945.

In 1946, she became associate editor of the Jewish Community Bulletin (J. Weekly's predecessor) and served on the committee that organized the San Francisco Conference on Religion and Race where she served as coordinator for 25 years.

In 1990, Rita co-founded the San Francisco Interfaith Council which developed many programs and initiatives to benefit San Franciscans of all faiths.

Rita loves reading, lectures, and playing Scrabble. She is a proud centenarian and is still very social, with a wide network of friends who take her out the ballet once a week and to her synagogue on Friday evenings.



## RESIDENTS



Mary decorating Pesach bags



Joan and Evelyn decorating Pesach bags



Marilyn and Connie enjoying their kosher wine at Pesach



Nadine finding the afikomen



Mark Levy leading the Pesach Seder



Kathy and John at Pesach





Ellie and Patty celebrating the Purim



Anita wearing a menorah hat for Purim



Aubrey enjoying Purim



Ceramics class with Lydia



Priscilla enjoying her ice cream



Carolyn and Max have arrived!



Birthday bash with Joan and Barbara



## Yom Ha'atzmaut: Israeli Independence Day



"A Sabbath for the Lord": by Rabbi Me'irah

**I**t is the yearning for every minority people to have independence, liberation; to conduct their own culture and have their own power over themselves. Every minority bears slights, and often downright abuse from the majority under which they live.

Jews are well schooled in the challenges of being a minority over the millennia; but there is an even greater challenge. When independence is finally attained, when security and power are within our own hands, how will we treat the minorities we find within OUR, now, majority?

How can we not perpetrate our intergenerational trauma onto others? To succeed in this, either in America, or in Israel, would constitute an incredible victory for humankind.



Rabbi Me'irah Iliinsky  
Rabbi of Rhoda Goldman Plaza

## Healing Through Dining

**H**ealing through dining is the practice of using food and its experiences to nourish not just the body but also the mind, spirit, and soul. It is an approach that emphasizes the power of food in promoting physical health and mental clarity. In many cultures, sharing a meal is an act of connection and care, offering both nourishment and comfort as well as socialization in connecting with people you consider family.

Eating mindfully, with gratitude, can transform a simple meal into a practice of healing. Foods rich in nutrients such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains contribute to physical vitality. At the same time, meals prepared with love and intention can provide emotional sustenance.

Healing through dining also includes conscious eating practices; slowing down, savoring each bite, and appreciating the food allows flavors, textures, and colors to really shine.

Here at Rhoda Goldman Plaza, we take pride in making your dining experience a memorable one. This approach not only supports physical health but also cultivates a deep sense of balance and harmony in life.



Roberto Pellegrino  
Food and Beverage Director





## Wish them a Happy Birthday!

### May Birthdays

#### *Residents*

1 Joseph Y.	20 Mark G.
4 Sandra R.	23 Morris S.
5 Mina M.	23. Kathleen F.
6 Brenda B.	25 Kay O.
8 Sheelagh F.	31 Mike B.
13 Lenore L.	31 Patricia F.
18 Rose H.	31 Judith R.
20 Mary S.	

#### *Staff*

1 Sau Chum K	12 Allison R
5 Trinh T	18 Mary Louise P
5 Shuang Jie Y	19 Man Van T
8 Firewoini W	29 Gina N
9 Baldomero J	31 Marites D

*“Live in the sunshine,  
Swim the sea,  
Drink the wild air.”*

*-Ralph Waldo Emerson*

## Christine Mago, Med Tech and Caregiver

Christine Mago has worked at RGP for five years as both a Med Tech and Caregiver. She is originally from the Ilocos region of the Philippines and moved to the US in 2011 as a teenager.

She completed her Medical Assistant certification at SFSU Extension. If you have ever met Christine, you will remember her kind, joyful laugh—and her smile that lights up the room.

Her hobbies include running, hiking, and camping with her family. Christine loves working with older adults and she lived many years with her Grandmother who is now 102 years old.

We are incredibly grateful for all of Christine’s attentive care—and amazing joyful sense of humor.



Adrienne Fair, MSN, RN  
Director of Health Services

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A DIVISION OF JEWISH FAMILY  
AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES  
RCFE #385600125

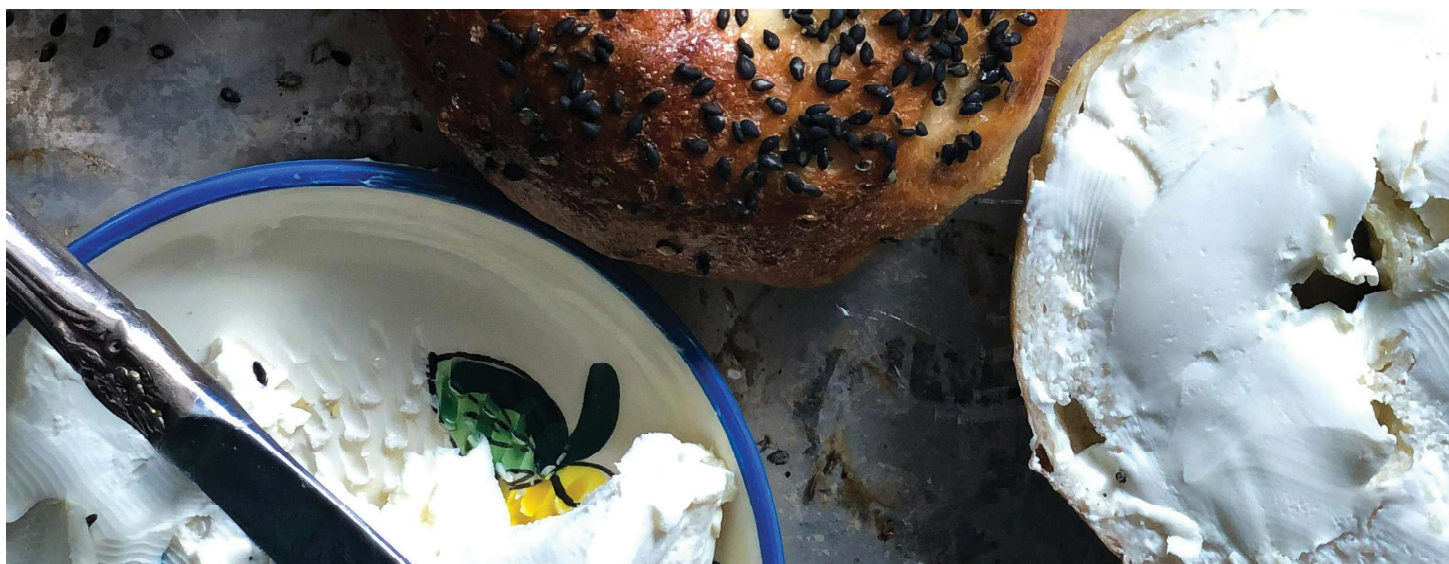


RHODA  
GOLDMAN  
PLAZA

175

YEARS

Jewish  
Family and  
Children's  
Services



## See You At The Plaza!

You are invited to a Bagel Brunch, Tour and Concert  
A monthly munch & meet time with residents to experience life at Rhoda Goldman Plaza

Sunday May 25th, 2025 | 11:30 am - 3:00pm

Performance by Swing Shift Trio

Seating is Limited

RSVP: AllisonR@rgplaza.org