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BY RHODA GOLDMAN PLAZA

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Festivals of Light by Our Resident Max Robinowitz

When asked to write about the theme "Sharing the Light" I had many illuminated thoughts. What was it like to be a caveman living in a dark cave? How did the early cave artists bring light into the darkness to paint the various animals on the cave walls? Did cavemen already use fire to light up the night to celebrate special events in their illiterate lives?

How did various cultures around the world create their special celebrations to light up the darkness of night? Compare Diwali to the pre-Christian yule log and bringing an evergreen tree into your home. Compare the Jewish festival of lights to Christmas lights. Compare the religious practices of lighting candles to celebrate and remember dead loved ones. Even the Chinese invention of fireworks has become a special events activity around the world. In 1980 I spent a week in Sweden for a medical meeting. My trip coincided with the winter solstice, December 14th, the day with the shortest daylight. I was invited to a Santa Lucia celebration at my host's house. Several young teenaged girls were dressed in party dresses and wore crowns festooned with lighted candles which lit up the night.

Shining a light on the subject is an easy metaphor for looking for the facts. Somewhere in many TV police procedurals there is a scene with a policeman holding a flashlight, or torch if he's British, searching in the darkness for a perpetrator. Without light and sight, there can be no eyewitness. There can be no illumination. The Washington Post motto is "democracy dies in darkness". Let's hope they can continue providing light at this fraught time.



In the lay press, there are many articles reporting on the disruption of day-to-day life by the loss of daylight savings time with the shorter hours of daylight with the end of summer. Even before daylight savings time, Robert Louis Stevenson's poem observed that "in winter I get up at night and dress by morning candlelight. In summer quite the other way. I have to go to bed by day". We humans are greatly affected by the manifestations of the cosmos. In the 1970s, papers began to appear in the medical literature defining seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. This is the condition where patients may have an exacerbation of depression symptoms as the days get shorter towards winter. Patients are advised to sit in front of a strong lamp to provide the equivalent of exposure to sunlight to compensate for what wintertime takes away. My mother suffered from depression and dreaded the dark days of winter. It's no wonder that Swedes have a national celebration on the summer solstice, the longest day of June 14th; Midsummer's Day, the return of springtime sunlight after their dark winter days.

So. Don't sit in the gloom. As the proverb says, "it is better to light a single candle than to curse the darkness". Light up the lights, strike up the band, pass around the aromatic goodies to eat, dance with joy and merriment.

Hanukkah Celebration of Light

Hanukkah is a celebration of light that brings warmth, hope, and spiritual clarity during the darkest days of the year. The light of the menorah symbolizes the triumph of resilience over despair, recalling the miracle in which a small amount of sacred oil burned for eight days—far longer than expected.

Each candle we kindle adds to this growing radiance, reminding us that even a small spark of goodness can illuminate a vast darkness. The glow of the menorah also represents the enduring strength of Jewish identity, faith, and perseverance. As families gather to light the candles, the soft flicker encourages reflection, gratitude, and connection across generations.

Hanukkah's light is not only physical but deeply symbolic: it inspires us to bring more kindness, justice, and understanding into the world. In sharing this light, we reaffirm a timeless message—that hope endures, and that light will always push back the dark.



Sam Faye
Community Director

Herlinda Cancino



Herlinda Cancino was born in Mexico but has lived since an early age in the United States. Her parents moved the family to the US primarily to provide their children with excellent educational opportunities. Herlinda earned a degree in Linguistics and taught at the graduate level at Stanford University, San Francisco State University, and Harvard University.

She has lived a life of travel and exploring different cultures, and has a special interest in Egypt, where her brother lives part-time. She finds the land and people of Egypt fascinating and beautiful. Before moving to RGP, she enjoyed the café life and bookstores of North Beach. Her current interests include meeting people and participating in art-related activities at Rhoda Goldman. She goes on many outings and attends many of the activities, especially the weekly flower arranging class. Herlinda has a large extended family here in San Francisco and internationally.

My Kids by Resident Bonnie Shaikun

My grandchildren are the light of my life—a crew of seven boys and three girls, aged eighteen to thirty-three. A lucky ten.

Ashton, my eldest, lives in Phoenix. We connect weekly for an hour and I see him roughly every three to four months.

The twins, Zach and Justin, are here in San Francisco. Sunday dinners at Rhoda Goldman are a treasured ritual with them.

Abigail's busy with her stage management career in Baltimore. I've proudly watched her blossom into a talented woman from afar. Her brother David visits often, a true joy. We share a bond over our beloved Baltimore Ravens, and I eagerly await his February visit.

The rest of the clan—three boys and two girls—call Kentucky home. Jesse, Paul, and Elizabeth are in school in Lexington. Molly and Andrew are bound for the University of Kentucky in the fall.

They've all made the journey to see me, and I trust they'll return. I love them profoundly and miss their presence, especially around Chanukah. They genuinely light up my life.



My Shining Light, Paulette Aroesty, Abridged article

Wandering Twos' roll into St. Louis for
Holocaust victim's mission



The St. Louis chapter of the Jewish Motorcycle Alliance, the “Wandering Twos” arrived July 9th at the St. Louis Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum, in their quest to raise awareness and support for Holocaust museums. They were part of “The North American Holocaust Museum Tour” which stopped at 21 Holocaust museums. On each leg of the journey, a local chapter of the alliance rode to the next stop to pass the baton.

Members of the Wandering Twos wanted the ride to be a meaningful one, according to one of its founders, Steve Aroesty. “As Jewish bikers, we love to get together and ride our motorcycles. We love to stop and eat and have a good time together, but we also have a higher purpose. We all agreed on the need to honor the Holocaust victims and to educate people about the tragedy of the Holocaust so the lessons are not forgotten.”

"Poinsettias or dreidels?" by Resident Bob Demchick

Twas just before Hanukkah,
With Christmas near too.
Now which do I honor
As an American Jew?

Was it Christmas or Hanukkah,
However it's spelled?
In my head just pure panic
Continually swelled.

It's the holiday season
And all through the house
My mind was just wondering
With no help from my spouse.

Poinsettias or dreidels
How do I choose?
If it isn't just right
The whole season I'd lose.

Then I looked out the window
And saw for myself
Climbing out of his truck
Was a holiday elf.

With no chimney in sight
He came through the door.
Since no stockings were hung
Gifts sat on the floor.

He flowed round the room
As if dancing the hora.
And the last thing he did
Was to light the menorah.

Then he twinkled on out
And he called with delight,
"If you just think it through
It will all come out right."

So just as I was ready to quit
A light in my head suddenly lit.
Really not forced at all to be choosing.
It isn't a matter of winning or losing.

We have been given a marvelous scheme.
The Savior or Allah or Elohim,
The thought of one G-d
Made my head and heart gleam.

So now, all-in-all, it just seems so right
That we have such a beautiful sight,
Just enjoy each Hanukkah night.
And then every Christmas delight

Whether Kwanzaa or Christmas
Ramadan or Hanukkah,
It seems just so right
To end here by saying "Shana Tova!"



Brightening up the Terrace

In this Chanukah season, I am especially grateful for our recent upgrades to the 4th floor. The entrance area has a new LiquidView digital window, showing a high resolution 24-hour cycle video feed as if it were a real window. Our most popular view is of the Sausalito harbor. Residents like to watch the ripples on the surface of the water and note the sea lions swimming by. What was once a dim waiting area, is now much brighter, with a relaxing view. Thank you to Miki Lamm MSW, Seniors at Home Director, for making this installation possible. New Memory Care Coordinator Erwin Garcia has been boosting social life on the Terrace – with dual programs, high tea on the weekends, and continued attention to each resident’s unique interests and personal history. Erwin invites managers to read with residents every Tuesday (a very fun program). Toby Moore is another new face in Memory Care: RGP’s Resident Clown. Toby is an award-winning clown, actor, director, filmmaker, and current Artistic Director of Thrillride Mechanics theatre troupe. Toby brings joy and energy to the Terrace. Their 2020 original production, *The Supers*, extolled “everyday superheroes finding sameness over difference, humor over despair, love over hate” proclaiming: “love is the last great technology.”

We are so happy to have so much new light on the 4th floor!



Adrienne Fair, MSN, RN
Director of Health Services



“Ain ha or meir eleh b’toch ha choshech”

“Light cannot illumine other than in the midst of darkness”

The quote is seared into my memory. I saw it painted on boards surrounding a coffee shop I used to frequent that had been destroyed by a suicide bomber the night before. I heard the blast from my Jerusalem apartment.

I can’t help but think about that phrase every Hanukkah, when we are in the midst of the darkest time of the year. We take a week to increase light by one more candle each night. The message is clear: during dark brightest, and we will not be defeated by disaster, but will be resilient!

Hanukkah is not mentioned in the Torah, but rather an historic holiday from the year 165 BCE commemorating a rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem, the central gathering place of worship. It had become desecrated by the then current ruling force of Antiochus IV, who wanted the Judeans to worship Greek Gods. Guerrilla warfare of the Judean Maccabees surprisingly defeated these Greek influenced Seleucids, and the Judeans reclaimed and sanctified the Temple.

The nightly lighting of the Hanukkah candles is an endearing ritual teaching us to be persistent in our task: to increase the light cast forth light in our given corner of the world, and together, we can illuminate The community around us more brightly, and even the whole world!



Rabbi Me'irah Iliinsky
Community Rabbi, Rhoda Goldman Plaza



Happy Hanukkah

December Shining Lights

Dec. 7th 10:30am Portraiture Project Exhibition

Dec. 8th 10:30am SF Symphony string Holiday quartet

Dec. 14th 2pm Lauren Mayer and Scott Grinthal
Latkes and Shnatkes Hannukah Cabaret!

Chanukah 14th to 22nd

Dec. 14th 4pm First Night Community Candle Lighting

Dec 15-21 4pm Candle Lighting each night

Dec. 18th 2pm Hannukah Musical History Concert
Mark Levy

Dec. 21st 3 pm RGP Hanukkah Showcase Spectacular
The Mazeltunes and More!

Dec. 22nd 11am SF Ballet Nutcracker Lecture and
Dance Performance.



RESIDENT OUTINGS



Botanical Gardens

Left to Right: Jane G., Eileen S. Herlinda C. Paula T., Peter M., Priscilla S.



Skywheel Ferris Wheel

Left to Right: David C., Alice Y., Jane G., Jim P., Eileen S., Peter M., Marc S., Jane G.,
Eileen S., Jim P. WenHao S., Jane G.



Waterbar

Left to Right: Paula T., Mel and Marsha K., Jason A., Joanne C.,
Judith L., Tim C., Herlinda C., Toni B., Jane G., Mel and Marsha K., Judth L.
Tim C. Herlinda C., Toni B., Jane G., Jason A., Joanne C.

RESIDENT EVENTS



RGP Halloween Party



The 10:5 Rule



I believe that even the simplest acts can help to brighten someone's day. As I walk around our community, I purposefully practice the "10:5 Rule" rule.

Anytime you find yourself within 10 feet of someone, you smile and make eye contact and when you are within 5 feet of someone, you greet them with a friendly hello.

The custom slows me down and emotionally connects me to the residents, my co-workers. When I see the person's eyes light up, I am shaken out of any stress or worry that is on my mind. It is a win-win for both of us, as we hurriedly move through our day together.

Such interchanges are baked into any good, assisted living community. Too many seniors are isolated and lonely, having lost a spouse or a circle of friends due to age. It is uplifting to live in a home like RGP where every day many people say hello, say your name, and ask how you are doing. The small acts of being seen and treated kindly can nourish a person as much as food and sunshine, creating a sense of safety and tribe.

I challenge you to do "Random Acts of Kindness Day" like the 10:5. Lift someone up with a "hello how are you?", brighten their day!



Allison Rodman
Director of Sales & Marketing

Jen Roitman, Rabbinical Intern

A bright light at RGP has been Jen Roitman, our Rabbinic Intern from ALEPH Rabbinical School. She can meet with you if you would like individual spiritual support or attend a class taught by Jen.

Jen has been studying to be a rabbi for five years at Aleph, following work as an End-of-Life Doula and Executive Director of Chochmat HaLev, a Jewish Renewal Congregation in Berkley. She lives in the East Bay with her one dog and often raises puppies for the Guide Dogs of the Blind.



Ask Geoffrey to make an appointment.



Community Director Sam says
"Donate to the JFCS Food Bank!"



Residents

8 Rennie L.	17 Paula S.
9 Betty S.	19 Connie M.
9 Kim W.	29 David M.
16 Lydia WM.	31 John B.
16 Shufen, C.	

Staff

1 Hubai L.	14 Derrick N.
2 Mer, A.	18 Calvin N.
2 Nguyen T.	19 Jose RG.
5 Donnabelle D.	22 Liza M.
6 Isabel E.	26 Cuong D.
6 Judith S.	



Honor a Birthday

Celebrate the birthday of a friend or loved one with a gift in their honor to RGP! With a tribute gift. JFCS will send a card with your greeting by email or postal mail.

*To make a gift online, donate.jfcs.org/rgp
Or gift envelopes at the RGP Front Desk.*



The Olive Press

A theme focused monthly newsletter for RGP.

Contributions from RGP staff, residents, and guests.

Production Team; Managing Editor, Allison Rodman

Copy Editor, Charlie Karam.

Comments are welcome. allisonr@rgplaza.org

Shuang Jie (Jennifer) Yang, Line Cook

Shuang Jie (Jennifer) Yang has been a dedicated cook at Rhoda Goldman Plaza for 15 years and known in the kitchen for being careful and consistent with every meal she makes. Jennifer is dedicated to the craft of cooking, so much so that she considers it a hobby when she goes home.

Executive Chef Tsitsi comments that Jennifer plays a key role in daily kitchen operations. She is always punctual, dedicated, and reliable. She contributes significantly during breakfast and lunch services. Jennifer is resourceful when it comes to overcoming language barriers and seeks help from others to translate recipes accurately. She's always ready to help with any extracurricular catering. Since working here for a long time Jennifer plays a key role in the daily kitchen operations. She is always on time to begin breakfast very early in the morning often on her own. She is dedicated and reliable.

Jennifer thanks Executive Chef, Tsitsi for continuing to guide her skills as she learns new tricks to the trade.



2180 Post Street 415.345.5060
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A DIVISION OF JEWISH FAMILY
AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES
RCFE #385600125



RHODA
GOLDMAN
PLAZA



Please join us at 2180 Post Street, San Francisco.

ARTIST RECEPTION

Sunday, January 11, 2:00 – 4:00pm
Food and beverages will be served

ARTIST TALK

Wednesday, February 11, at 2:00pm

ARTIST STATEMENT

Barbara Brundage, international award-winning photographer, has lived in Santa Cruz for the past forty years. Originally from New York, she earned an MFA degree from Pratt Institute. Her photography has been exhibited across the country and in Rome, London, and Athens.

The Submerged Series features flowers shot underwater in an aquarium, with paints and inks added to the water. The tank is the canvas, the flower the subject and the paint determines the composition. This results in ethereal, magical images, both real and unreal at the same time.

FOR MORE INFO

Call Allison 415.345.5072 or E-mail AllisonR@rgplaza.org

RGP ART GALLERY

Established in 2019, specializing in San Francisco Bay Area artists, founded to enliven resident life.



Barbara Brundage
Submerged Garden

January 11 to March 26, 2026

"Sunny Ranunculus"; medium photography; 16" x 20"