

**THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME—  
UNLESS IT'S STERLING HOSPITALITY ASSISTED LIVING**

By Margie Pensak

Reuven and Naomi Miller have many stories to tell about the extraordinary care their parents received at Sterling Hospitality. Actually, Mr. Miller's mother is their third parent to live there, preceded by Mrs. Miller's parents, who were both longtime residents. "I was very pleased with the care that my parents got in the past, and that my mother-in-law is now receiving," says Mrs. Miller. "She moved in as a diabetic, and the Sterling staff was able to control her diet so she is now off her diabetes medication."

98-year-old Bella Goldschmidt is Sterling Hospitality's most senior resident, living at Sterling for the past 13 years. The German-born resident, who doesn't look a day over seventy, is still quite independent with her sharp mind. The only thing Bella needs help with is walking. Not having to deal with steps is a relief for her. Living in close proximity to her only daughter is an added plus.

Like Bella, Yitzhak Meister is still independent, although he cannot get around as well as he used to. The tall, strong looking gentleman has enjoyed living at Sterling Hospitality for the last three years. In his home away from home, he has made new friends, with whom he enjoys socializing and playing cards.

One of his newfound friends is fellow resident, Leah Kushner. She is a chipper 90-year-old who loves to bring Sterling visitors on a guided tour of her original artwork, which graces the walls of her home away from home. Above her bed, in her more than spacious, immaculate, and freshly painted bedroom, hangs her pride and joy—a charcoal portrait. "This place is the greatest! I owned an apartment on Slade Avenue, and about one year ago my grandson told me he didn't like the idea of my living alone," recalls Mrs. Kushner. "I could bless him to this day! The food is excellent, and everything is beautiful: there are nice, bright, sunny rooms, and it's clean like a pin. If you know of any elderly people, I would highly recommend it." She enjoys the visits of her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, many of whom live in Baltimore.

Sterling Hospitality Assisted Living, located at 7015 Park Heights Avenue, is owned and personally operated by Evelyn Shnier, R.N., and Menachem Taragin, LCSW-C, who entered into a partnership, combining their talents in operating the facility. They pride themselves on their small population, which allows them to personalize their incomparable care, paying attention to all the details.

Mrs. Shnier has been operating kosher assisted living homes since 1996. Dissatisfied with hospital nursing, she was inspired to open her first facility in a small, homey setting located in a quiet residential neighborhood, much like the one her Alzheimer's-stricken grandmother thrived in.

The Sterling staff understands that it is hard to watch your parent, whom you most likely looked up to your whole life for strength and encouragement, grow older and more dependent on others. Suddenly, you may be faced with the difficult decision of how best to care for your parents, in a role reversal as their caretakers. It is not uncommon to feel guilt when considering taking them out of their homes and placing them in a facility.

"Helping your parents find an assisted living home is not contrary to the Torah principal of 'kibud av v'aim'—honoring your parents," stresses Mrs. Shnier. In fact, she feels, those who need assistance with activities of daily living can often lead fuller lives in a senior-oriented facility than they would at home, where they may be more limited in their activities and social interactions. And, with regular monitoring of their physical and emotional conditions, diet, socialization, and sleep patterns, a resident's physical well-being may improve in a facility. Sterling Hospitality promotes its residents' independence and freedom of decision-making as much as possible.

The generational furniture gracing the pristine hardwood floors, the floral curtains and matching wallpaper borders, the ceiling fans, the paintings, needlepoints, and Judaica, the fish tank, the piano, even the tables for two, all give Sterling more of a cozy bed-and-breakfast look than the look of a skilled nursing facility. Perhaps, that is why a Sterling resident's transition from the home environment to his or her new surroundings is likely to be easier.

At Sterling Hospitality you can find residents interacting while eating homemade meals together (meals are cooked from scratch). The living rooms are decorated with bookshelves filled with popular books, wide-screen TVs, DVD's, and sound systems for the residents' entertainment pleasure.

Sterling's handpicked staff, above-and-beyond caring caregivers, are Certified Nursing Assistants trained in CPR, first aid and dementia care. Lena Johnson has worked at Sterling for almost eleven years. "I worked in a hospital for 14-1/2 years," said Ms. Johnson. "I see it as a plus to be working in a small facility; you can spread yourself—your time and love—around easier. There's time to hold their hands and give a hug."

Elizabeth Smith has worked as a nurse's aide at Sterling for close to five years. Prior to that she worked in nursing homes for thirteen years. Because of her deep interest in her residents, she seems to know everything about everyone. In fact, she treats them as she would her own family members—caring for them with unconditional love.

Karen Johnson worked in the health care industry for ten years before joining the staff. She prefers its more homey, comfortable and laid back ambiance, to the previous facilities she worked in as a nurse's aide. "I find that to be very important for seniors with medical problems," believes Ms. Johnson. "One-on-one care and attention is important when working with seniors. There's time for me to interact with the residents. I prefer a smaller setting."

Customized activities are another advantage of a smaller facility. Pinchas Shnier, Malka Zweig and Shifra Lansky are the Activity Coordinators at Sterling Hospitality Assisted Living. Their warmth and concern for each and every resident is evident. In addition to exercising, their list of activities includes: dominoes, puzzles, arts and crafts, music, Jeopardy, and Blurt—in which residents' memories are jarred in answering questions that benefit their cognitive function. Residents have opened up with one another and the staff during these activities, in some cases, as never before, creating a true bonding experience.

In addition to volunteer musicians, Sterling hosts a group of Bais Yaakov girls on Shabbos. The residents love to hear about the latest in school and the simchas in town.

Kudos for Sterling Hospitality Assisted Living comes from the medial community as well. Tikva Dixler, P.A. pays house calls to many of the Sterling residents. "Over the past 5 years, I have been visiting Sterling Assisted Living," says Mrs. Dixler. "I'm very impressed with its very dedicated staff. The caretakers, who have been there for years and years, treat the residents with dignity. One of the staff members, I remember, was very meticulous about putting makeup on one of the residents to make sure she looked nice."

"I walk in unannounced at any time," says Mrs. Dixler, "It is always peaceful, quiet, calm, and happy. The medical care they provide is always on the mark. As a nurse, Evelyn knows what is going on with each resident, and which meds they are on. Knowing them as well as she does, she is able to pick up on the fact that they are getting sick, even though they themselves might not know they are."

Baltimore psychiatrist, Dr. Robert Lehman, saw first hand how Sterling is set apart from the rest. He was treating a patient, a Sterling resident, who was having a host of medical

problems and had been hospitalized for several weeks. By the time she returned to Sterling, she was almost in a comatose state. Sterling staff telephoned Dr. Lehman immediately and impressed upon him that their resident would not survive if she remained on the medications she was put on in the hospital. She was not very mobile, and she was not eating or drinking, Dr. Lehman recalls. Within a few days, Dr. Lehman's patient came back to life. Within a couple of weeks, he saw that his patient was functioning very well. Sterling was able to nurse her back to health, without the medications.

"Because the residents feel like they are part of a family, the environment of Sterling Assisted Living is conducive to general health and emotional well being," believes Dr. Julian Jakobovits, a Baltimore internist/gastroenterologist who treats a number of Sterling residents. "This is contrary to the environment in many larger institutions, where you are just a number."

Dr. Robert Menachem Cooper, a Baltimore internist-geriatrician, who also treats Sterling residents, could not agree more with Dr. Lehman's assessment of Sterling Hospitality's fine care. "Sterling Assisted Living is focused on caring for every detail of the residents' needs with compassion," feels Dr. Cooper. "Evelyn Shnier and Menachem Taragin have, themselves, placed the calls to me regarding ill residents, and often accompanied them to my office. Their close involvement is what gives "Sterling" that personal touch. When I greet them in my waiting room, I get the feeling that they are not just there as professionals, they are there as they would be for their own family member."