



# FRIENDS OF THE RUSSIAN BILINGUAL SERVICES PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

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Русская  
Программа  
HSL

## Promoting Elders' Emotional Health and Well-Being

One of the most commonly asked questions is about activities we offer to our patients. This should come as no surprise since in residential care, activities are central to our patients' well-being. They create a stimulating environment, encourage socialization, increase patients' energy, improve their mood and reduce depressive symptoms.

We are proud that at HRC we offer a full spectrum of group activities, workshops, and events tailored to our patients' preferences and interests. It is all about giving patients a choice. Our patient population is very diverse in terms of physical and cognitive abilities, and we make every effort to support all functional levels appropriately.

Recently, we had an art show featuring works by our patient artists from the Russian program. The exhibition contained beautiful original paintings, as well as replicas based on the work of famous artists. This event illustrated how, at any age, creativity helps people to overcome health challenges and discover new meaning in life. Many people came to support our patients and congratulate them on presenting their art work during the show. It was an amazing event, filled with engagement and laughter. It provided an great opportunity for staff and patients to come together and discuss beautiful art.

We discovered that we have many talented artists at HSL! A few paintings were chosen to be exhibited on various units in Roslindale. A Rosh Hashanah-related painting was chosen as an outgoing greeting card to Friends of the Program. It is events and activities like that make our patients feel very special and accomplished, brightens their day and makes them happy.



## OUR FEATURED STAFF: **Kseniya Sheedy**



Kseniya was born in St Petersburg, Russia and moved to the US in 1994. She enjoys spending time with her 2.5-year-old daughter Nicole and being outdoors, especially on the beach. Kseniya is very close with her grandmother and is respectful of elders. Kseniya likes making arts and crafts. She is very involved with the Patient Engagement Program at Hebrew Rehabilitation Center.

Kseniya admits that she always wanted to work with seniors. Her career began on the English-speaking unit at HRC but she later joined the Russian Program. Kseniya says, "I believe that the creation of the Russian Program at HRC is the greatest and truly unique thing. I am very proud to be a part of HRC." Kseniya has been with the organization for nine years and works as a Senior Nursing Assistant.

Kseniya feels that one can learn so much from seniors. Their life stories are amazing. Kseniya is very empathetic toward seniors. She says, "I always try to take care of patients like I would care for my own grandparents. Even patients with dementia feel the kindness. Also, it's not so much about the language but how we treat each other. Families say that I have a gift of caring and being patient. I have to say that it comes from a genuine place, from my soul."

As for the future plans, Kseniya is hoping to go back to school and pursue either a nursing or a social work degree. "However, no matter what I do, I want to stay with elderly population", Kseniya says.

## OUR FEATURED PATIENT: **Nelli Zolotova**

Nelli Zolotova, a native of Moscow, was born in 1931. Her family lived in a communal apartment with nine other families. There was only one bathroom and one kitchen for everyone to share. One of Nelli's childhood joys was going to the circus. She loved watching performances, especially the ones with animals.

In 1941 when the war began, Nelli was 10 years old. Life was very challenging. When the Nazis came close to Moscow, Nelli's family was evacuated to the Ural Mountains region, the city of Troitsk. Nelli recalls that there was a shortage of food and that the main source of information about the war was letters from family members who were in the front.

In the post-war era, life returned to normal. Nelli graduated from Moscow State University with a degree in journalism. She got married and had two wonderful children: Dmitry and Anna.

Years later, Nelli left Russia for the US with her son's family. In the beginning, she experienced difficulty adjusting, especially given that she was uprooted at such a late stage in life. Yet, being an optimist, Nelli did not fall into depression, and kept herself busy by taking classes at Bunker Hill Community College. Painting became her newly discovered passion.

When Nelli came to live at Hebrew Rehabilitation Center, she became an active member of various groups, such as poetry and drawing clubs. Nelli's special appreciation goes to Polina, who is her art instructor. She also encouraged other patients to participate in these activities. Nelli is multitalented and her works have recently been displayed at an art show at HRC. One of her best pieces is a reproduction of Van Gogh's Haystacks in Provence. Besides activities, Nelli's biggest joy is seeing her grandchildren and great-



grandchildren when they come for a visit. She hopes that they keep up their Russian language skills and one day will read Tolstoy in the original.

## OUR FEATURED FAMILY MEMBERS: **Alla & Svetlana**



**Alla:** I often come to HRC to visit my husband Leonid, a patient in the Russian Program, where I help him as well as other seniors. For example, I pick up trays after lunch. I also help our Life Enhancement Coordinator transport patients outside and accompany them to activities. If patients ask for a cup of water or juice, I bring it to them with the nurse's permission. I also enjoy and support various groups and activities on our floor, such as Songs We Love and Poetry Club. It's very rewarding to see patients happy and cheerful. It also feels great to make a difference in their lives, no matter how small or big the impact is. It improves our loved ones' quality of life and makes them feel valued, respected and cared for.

**Svetlana:** I enjoy helping staff and seniors at HRC. At breakfast time, I make tea and coffee for everyone. It feels gratifying to be able to help in any way I can. Everyone on the unit is trying to do something useful. I also assist staff with transporting patients to activities. One of the activities I am passionate about is playing table games and trivia. They are fun and always bring a smile to a patient's face. In general, I believe that volunteering helps make new friends, connect with the community, learn new skills, and, most importantly, it provides a sense of purpose. I feel happy when I am useful and can make a difference in someone's life.

## OUR NEWS:

### Expressive Therapy Department Supports Patients With Higher Cognitive Abilities



There are a number of patients in the Bilingual Russian program who developed significant frailty but have vibrant minds and intact cognition. These patients need enjoyable and stimulating environment and benefit from supportive programming to maintain their cognitive abilities and emotional health. The Expressive Therapy Department has recognized this need and is now offering such patients **Bibliotherapy** and **Open Art Studio** activities. Bibliotherapy is funded exclusively by Friends and Supporters of the Russian program. Some patients are attending both activities to maximize the therapeutic

effect; everyone benefits from the opportunity to express themselves in a meaningful way. These activities are extremely popular and the attendance is high, despite the significant health limitations of some participants.

**Bibliotherapy** is an adapted therapeutic form of a “Book Club” where a trained counsellor chooses themes and characters for discussion, addressing patients’ deepest thoughts and allowing them to share their own ideas and emotions. For instance, reading poems triggers patients’ personal memories and feelings and helps in coping with the loss of their loved ones. The participants enjoy



exchanging their ideas and preferences and also get an opportunity to validate their peers’ life experiences. This form of therapy is proven by research to be highly effective in alleviating depressive symptoms and improving the older adult’s positive connection with the environment.

**The Open Art Studio** is offered to patients who can function in a more independent fashion and are able to work on individual art projects with minimum assistance. Patients are offered a variety of choices: from creating original paintings to replicating works of famous artists. The Open Art Studio is especially popular among Russian-speaking patients with or without any prior art skills. The opportunity to work alongside like-minded friends is especially attractive to them.

Both Bibliotherapy and Open Art Studio programs are positively affecting our patients’ well-being, and their quality of life.

## SUPPORT US FINANCIALLY - HELP IMPROVE OUR PATIENTS’ LIVES

- Make a gift to the Annual Fund
- Give a gift in honor of a special caregiver
- Donate in memory of a loved one
- Give to help us honor special occasions like birthday & holidays
  - Give online (make a quick, secure online donation).
  - Mail a check
  - Contact us for leadership opportunities
  - Double your gifts through Matching Gifts

***“Bibliotherapy is funded exclusively by Friends and Supporters of the Russian Program. Thank you to all who gave us a head start.”***

Alexandra

**Thank you for your generosity!**

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## Roslindale Campus Revitalization

As many of you already know, there is an effort underway to revitalize the Roslindale campus. This is a historic moment for Hebrew SeniorLife and one we should celebrate; it is the result of years of planning with the goal to reshape the campus over the coming decade into a modern center of geriatric care, research and teaching.



Renovation of the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of Berenson Allen West has already been completed and serves as an example of our vision for the future of the long-term chronic care hospital (LTCH) floors on the Roslindale campus. Eventually, all LTCH floors will have an increased number of private rooms, en suite baths, spacious common areas for social activities, and household kitchens that enhance the dining experience.

It is important for families and friends of the Russian Program to know that in addition to modernizing and updating the building and improving the living environment for patients, there is a deep philosophical concept behind the revitalization plans, which borrows from groundbreaking national efforts to improve the culture in long-term chronic care settings. This concept is built on Pioneer Network, Green House, and Eden Alternative Models where the main goal is to give patients more choices and make them feel at home by creating physical environments that feel familiar.

The Berenson Allen renovation is an example of positive change, better meeting the needs of our loved ones. Any person regardless of how frail he or she is, appreciates having a flexible schedule, participating in meal preparation and planning meaningful individual activities, as well as having privacy when family and friends visit. We are proud to say that our wonderful staff goes above and beyond to meet our patients' wishes on a daily basis but we always strive for more at HRC and work to incorporate best practices in our care.



Positive changes are welcome. The new model reflected in this renovation is the result of a collaborative effort with participation from patients, families, and staff. The new floor layout truly encourage social activity; the new furnishings and décor color scheme provide comfort and feel more personable. A special effort was made to design windows in such a way that they are low enough to provide visibility and open views for people in wheelchairs.

If you want a tour of the new model household, please contact Alexandra. Please consider becoming a Friend and Supporter for the Russian Program. We will be establishing a separate fund to bring more personal culturally appropriate touches to the new household and will need your support to do so. Stay tuned for lively fundraisers that will include cultural and social events as we support this groundbreaking project.

