Celebrating 25 Years of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation

Celebrating Passover with a Tribute to JHF Leadership

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wenty-five years ago, both practical and visionary thinking launched the Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) from its roots in the Pittsburgh Jewish community's Montefiore Hospital. On one hand, JHF was “a blank slate” — its mission still unfolding. On the other hand, there really is no such thing as a totally blank slate. Each of us benefits from and then transforms the dreams, visions, and hard work of others who came before and who share common goals.

Montefiore Hospital had for decades been sustained through the generosity of donors to the United Jewish Federation. The first Board of JHF included over twenty former Montefiore Hospital Trustees who became life trustees of the Foundation. They came from multi-generation families of volunteers in the community: Shapiras, Rudolphs, Halperns, Gumbergs, and so many more. It is no surprise that the first four chairs of JHF were selected from the ranks of past chairs of the Federation, who brought with them a commitment to the legacy of Montefiore.

As we celebrate Passover and the history that unfolded thousands of years ago, we want to feature our own leadership and to express our gratitude for their guidance and commitment.

JHF’s role within Pittsburgh’s Jewish community, but also the Foundation’s $35 million, multi-decade investment in the development of the Jewish Association on Aging. He serves on corporate and philanthropic boards throughout the Pittsburgh region, and is president of the David S. and Karen A. Shapira Foundation.

Charles Cohen, 2003-05

Charles Cohen is the co-founder, chairman, and director of Cohen & Grigsby, P.C. An expert in corporate law, he has been a visiting professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, as well as an adjunct professor at the Ave Maria School of Law. During his tenure as JHF chair, he encouraged and supported the Foundation to take on a leadership role in applying for and creating a new and lasting resource for the vulnerable in our community, the Squirrel Hill Health Center. Charles went on to be the first chair of that federally qualified health center, which has expanded significantly to meet growing demand.

Stephen Halpern, 2006-08

Steve Halpern is president of Woodland Management. In addition to his service as JHF board chair, Steve was a longstanding JHF trustee, following in the footsteps of his uncle, Bernard Halpern, a former Montefiore trustee and life trustee of JHF. Over nearly twenty years, Steve supported the growing influence of JHF on the national stage. He also serves as a trustee and immediate past chair of the JAA board, and the UPMC Board of Visitors.

These are just a few of those to whom JHF owes a debt of gratitude.

JHF Board Chairs 1991-Present

Alvin Rogal, 1991-93

As the founding chairman of JHF and a life trustee of Montefiore Hospital, Alvin Rogal possessed vision that shaped JHF’s mission and outlined a model of community collaboration and bold thinking. He built his father’s local insurance agency into the country’s eighth largest. Alvin was active in both the Jewish and general communities of Pittsburgh as a life trustee of Carnegie Mellon University, and an emeritus trustee of Robert Morris University.

Farrell Rubenstein, 2000-02

Farrell Rubenstein, CPA, recently retired from Deloitte, where he served as the national and international director of tax, as a member of the firm’s management committee.

Farrell has served on many civic boards, including that of UPMC, which designated him to personally negotiate the purchase of Montefiore Hospital, thereby creating JHF. Under Farrell’s leadership, JHF founded Health Careers Futures — a supporting organization of JHF dedicated to strengthening today’s workforce while preparing the workforce of tomorrow.

Lee Netzer, 1997-99

As chairman of the JHF board, Lee Netzer encouraged the Foundation to take on challenges and oversaw the establishment of the Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative (PRHI), a leader in making health care safer and more efficient both locally and nationally. Lee founded both the Federal Alloy and the Nicroloy Corporations. In addition to serving as chair of the Federation, he was an active member of American Jewish Committee’s Pittsburgh chapter.

David Shapira, 1994-96

David Shapira, executive chairman of the board of directors for Giant Eagle, Inc. was JHF’s second chair. He guided not only
Nancy Rackoff, 2015-Present

Nancy Rackoff is an attorney with Tener, Van Kirk, Wolf & Moore, P.C., focusing on estate planning, trusts, and corporate law. Nancy has been active for many years as a volunteer with the Federation's campaign, and as a Lion of Judah Endowment donor. In addition to serving as JHF's ninth board chair, Nancy has served as a trustee for numerous organizations in the community, including Forward Housing Corporation, The Pittsburgh Foundation, and Manchester Bidwell Corporation.

Other Selfless Volunteers

Debra L. Caplan, MPA

Debra Caplan served as the senior vice president of Allegheny General Hospital and West Penn Hospital until her recent retirement. She has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to the Foundation, chairing the Distribution Committee, serving on the Executive Committee as secretary of JHF, and serving on the board of Health Careers Futures. Debra has also held leadership positions on the boards of WQED, the Northside Leadership Conference, Tree of Life Synagogue, and the Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board.

David Ehrenwerth, JD

David Ehrenwerth is a partner in the international law firm of K&L Gates. He was a past president of the board of Montefiore Hospital at the time of the sale, and served as the attorney representing Montefiore.

An original trustee of the Foundation, David has been active for nearly JHF’s entire 25-year history. In addition to his current position as vice-chair at JHF, he has served the boards of Presbyterian University Hospital, the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the American Jewish Committee’s National Board of Governors, the Pennsylvania Economy League, and Neighborhood Legal Services Association. By presidential appointment, David served from 2010-2012 as associate commissioner of the United States Public Buildings Services, and regional administrator of the General Services Administration. He is a past recipient of the American Jewish Committee’s Human Relations Award.

Patricia Siger, 2009-11

Pat Siger has been actively involved as a volunteer and employee in the nonprofit arena for more than 25 years. Most recently, she has served as a consultant for United Way of Allegheny County. The first woman to chair JHF, Pat exuded passion about women’s health issues. Pat helped to bring Race for the Cure to Pittsburgh. That passion guided JHF to create the Working Hearts® initiative on women's heart health, an effort which she chaired. Following her tenure as JHF chair, Pat has continued her involvement as the current chair of the PRHI board.

Alan Guttman, 2012-14

Alan Guttman is the CEO of Guttman Family Group, a family-owned petroleum group from Belle Vernon. As chair of the JHF board, he ushered in an era of national recognition for the Foundation as it, and its operating arm, PRHI, undertook major federally-funded quality improvement projects. Mr. Guttman also served as the founding chair of the PRHI board, and chair of the Monongahela Valley Hospital board of directors.

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Richard “Dick” Simon

Dick Simon is the longest serving trustee of JHF and Montefiore Hospital, with over 60 years of combined service between the two organizations. An active member of Montefiore Hospital’s board for over 30 years, Dick joined JHF’s board as an original life trustee. He has provided guidance as a member of the Finance and Distribution Committees. He has also been a longtime supporter of the Ladies Hospital Aide Society, where his late wife Nancy had been a member and leader for decades. He is a national leader and past national president of Zeta Beta Tau, the world’s first Jewish fraternity.

Rick Rosen

Rick Rosen was first elected to the JHF board in 1995 and has served almost continuously since then as a trustee.

He has been a member of the Foundation’s Investment Committee for nearly two decades, serving as chair for much of that time. During Rick’s tenure, JHF developed and was guided by investment policies that enabled the Foundation’s endowment to reach $140 million. He also chaired the Finance and Audit Committee for many years and is a longtime Executive Committee member.

Rick has been the director of Cohen & Grigsby since 1989, focusing on financial and estate planning. He has served as chairman of the Professional Advisory Committee of the United Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, and also as a board member of UPMC Presbyterian and Shadyside Hospitals.

This monthly series, marking JHF’s 25th anniversary, gives us a chance to remember, take stock, express gratitude, and celebrate successes.

Learn more about JHF’s journey to better health and health care by ordering our 25th Anniversary ROOTS magazine (contact Carla Barricella at: barricella@jhf.org).