



Celebrating 25 Years of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation

The Legacy of Montefiore Hospital



Montefiore Hospital, Centre Avenue in the Hill District, 1908

Before it was a building, Montefiore Hospital existed. In 1898, 17 Jewish women formed what would become the Ladies' Hospital Aid Society. As volunteers, they began visiting the sick, delivering kosher food, and supporting a public health nurse for Pittsburgh's Jewish immigrants. They also started fundraising to build a hospital for Jewish patients and doctors, both of whom were turned away from other hospitals.

In 1908, Montefiore Hospital opened in the Hill District – the name a fitting tribute to Sir Moses Montefiore, who had devoted his life to helping poor, sick, and oppressed Jews across the globe. For half a century, the hospital welcomed patients and medical staff from all backgrounds.

Montefiore enacted one of the region's earliest public health agendas. It set up milk stations in the Hill District to ensure that children were getting adequate nutrition; and was one of the first local hospitals where African American physicians and nurses received training.

25 years later, JHF has contributed \$60 million in grants to Pittsburgh's Jewish community.

Over time, Montefiore evolved into a major hospital. By the 1970s, however, Jewish doctors were able to practice everywhere, and Jewish patients sought care throughout the region. The hospital could no longer fill its beds. When, like many

other Jewish hospitals at the time, it began to experience financial trouble, Pittsburgh's Jewish community took stock of Montefiore's legacy and began to plan a new future.

In 1990, negotiations to sell the hospital to the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center resulted in the transfer of \$75 million to form an endowment that created the Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF).

Twenty-five years later, JHF has contributed \$135 million in grants aimed at achieving this goal – leveraging an additional \$5 for every dollar committed of its endowment. \$60 million of these grants have gone specifically to support the health of Pittsburgh's Jewish community.



Montefiore Hospital Nursing School graduation class of 1910



JHF President and CEO Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD (right), and Pat Siger, current board chair of the Pittsburgh Regional Health initiative and past JHF board chair, tour the Montefiore Historical Corridor at Montefiore Hospital.

Community leaders understood that they had a rare opportunity to create an institution with as much impact and aspiration as Montefiore Hospital. As founding JHF President and Chief Executive Officer Karen Feinstein, PhD, recalls it, "We wanted to honor the hospital by creating a new organization under Jewish auspices that would greatly improve lives, as well as the delivery and outcomes of health care."

Over the next year, 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).

Next Month: The Healthy Jewish Community Project (1993-1995)



(L-R): Thomas Detre, MD, David Ehrenwerth, Farrell Rubenstein, and Stanley Gumberg all played critical roles in the sale of Montefiore Hospital and the creation of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation.