

River Garden News



Inside Line	3
Jewish Life	4-5
Foundation Gala Recap	6-9
Community Programs	10
Volunteers	11
Life Enrichment1	2-13
The Auxiliary	14
Poetry & Puzzle	15
The Coves1	6-17
Care & Services	18
Encouragement for 2025	19



A beneficiary agency of the Jewish Federation and Foundation of Northeast Florida Published by River Garden Senior Services
11401 Old St. Augustine Road
Jacksonville, Florida 32258
(904) 260-1818
www.rivergarden.org

Our Mission

To provide a wide range of quality senior care services in residential, outpatient and community based settings.

To create a comfortable and dignified home for seniors, serving all in our care with excellence regardless of financial resources.

To serve people of all faiths, while maintaining an environment supportive of Jewish identity and informed by Jewish values.

To act as a valuable senior services resource for the entire community.

Front Cover Photo:

Barbara Demico (L) and Maria Gomez-Nino (R) have become good friends in our Adult Day Program (ADP).

Maria has worked in ADP for seventeen (17) years.

ADP provides a safe and secure environment for up to 24 clients each day, and provides much-needed caregiver respite.

If you'd like more information about ADP, please call (904) 288-7858.

If you have a resident story or feedback you'd like to share, please let us know. We also welcome opportunities to meet with senior groups in the community to discuss our programs & services.

Please contact Kari Bell.

kbell@rivergarden.org or (904) 288-7855

2024-2025 Boards and Officers

River Garden Senior Services

Janis Fleet, President Susan Cohen, Vice President Sandy Zimmerman, Vice President Marsha Pollock, Secretary Ed Grenadier, Treasurer

River Garden Hebrew Home

Randy Kammer, President
Debby Kaye, Vice President, Chair of Admissions
Bruce Horovitz, Vice President, Co-Chair of Admissions
Michael Paul, Vice President, Co-Chair of Admissions
Morrie Osterer, Vice President, Chair of House
Rachelle Gottlieb, Secretary
Cindy Demri, Treasurer

River Garden Auxiliary Officers

Ellen Rubens, President
Carol D'Onofrio, President Elect and Membership VP
Michelle Steinfeld, Fundraising VP
Shirley Bielski, Recording Secretary
Renee Weinstein, Social Secretary
Nancy Mizrahi, Treasurer

River Garden Foundation

Ken Jacobs, President Adam Frisch, Vice President Tom Harris, Vice President Jennifer Plotkin, Vice President Andrea Mail, Secretary Shari Shuman, Treasurer Sandy Zimmerman, Chairperson

The Coves at River Garden

Michael Price, President Malcolm Bloom, Vice President Shirley Bielski, Vice President Susan Cohen, Secretary Judy Paul, Treasurer

Forever A Blessing

Sheldon Gendzier, a man who helped shape River Garden for more than six decades, passed away peacefully in December 2024 at the age of 96. Sheldon will forever hold the status as a Honorary Trustee of River Garden, continuing his family legacy.

His father, Harry Gendzier, was an original founder of the River Garden Hebrew Home for the Aged in 1946. Harry, Sheldon and Sheldon's father-in-law, Sam Thier, all served as presidents of River Garden.



Pictured from his 95th birthday celebration at River Garden, Sheldon (far right) and some of his family pose in front of a River Garden photo from 1947 in which his father is featured. That makes five generations!



Inside Line

By Mauri Witten Mizrahi, Chief Executive Officer

Dear Friends, Welcome to 2025!

River Garden Senior Services is starting off the year strong as the #1 rated nursing home in Florida, with 100% occupancy at The Coves senior living apartments, and a growing Adult Day Program and Outpatient Therapy Program.

"A Mosaic Masterpiece" —the theme of the 2024 River Garden Foundation Gala—highlighted the many individuals who contribute to River Garden's success. Evan Yegelwel was honored for his leadership, vision and service as the first River Garden Foundation president. We are proud to share that the Gala raised \$248,486 thanks to our generous sponsors and committee. The Foundation had an incredible year of philanthropic support in 2024, and we look forward to sharing the highlights in our upcoming Annual Report.

The River Garden Senior Services board and staff leadership has completed a revised strategic plan designed to assure our sustainability, while allowing us to grow and enhance our 40-acre campus as the best senior living community and as an arena of Jewish life. We look forward to sharing our plans with the community in the upcoming months.

We are proud to share that on February 6, 2025, The Coves at River Garden celebrated its 30th anniversary. The Coves continues to serve our community with elegant, yet affordable senior housing.



In March, we will be welcoming Baptist Heath physician, Dr. Francisco Martinez-Wittinghan as our Medical Director and attending physician.

Mark your calendars and plan to attend River Garden's 79th Anniversary Day and annual meeting on March 23, 2025. Chairperson of the day is Hebrew Home Board member, Faye Mizrahi.

Excitement is also building for the River Garden Foundation 29th River Garden Classic chaired by Tom Harris and sponsored by Hardage-Giddens. I hope to see you at Deerwood Country Club on April 28, 2025.

In 2025, we hope you will join us in continuing to honor River Garden's legacy as we continue to create a future for generations to come.

I hope you enjoy this season's issue of the River Garden News. Our future is bright.

Prayer for Israel

We continue to pray for healing and strength for our Israeli brothers and sisters. We mourn the young, the old, men, women, and children who have lost their lives. We pray that those who remain in captivity will be returned safely to their families. We are grateful for everyone—including those beyond the Jewish community—who have stood at Israel's side in its great moment of need. May God protect the land of Israel and bless its people with peace.





Mauri Mizrahi (R) welcomes Dr. Francisco Martinez-Wittinghan (L), as the new medical director at River Garden beginning March 2025. Dr. Martinez-Wittinghan brings a well-rounded background to his work, with a Ph.D. from Stony Brook University, an M.D. from Universidad Del Rosario and a M.S. in Clinical Informatics from Johns Hopkins.



Nancy Davis
Director of Jewish Life
ndavis@rivergarden.org



The Jewish Life Department has been bustling with activity in recent weeks! We celebrated all the sights, sounds, and tastes of the Hanukkah season with help from the whole campus.

First we made delicious homemade donuts – sufganiyot in Hebrew – including a homemade chocolate dipping sauce. Not to be outdone, our CEO and COO, Mauri Mizrahi and Bobbie Jo Mentz, fried up their annual batch of potato latkes for everyone across our campus. Not a crumb was left over! Thank you to our dining services teams at River Garden and The Coves for their help in shredding pounds and pounds of potatoes!

Thanks to youth groups from The Jacksonville Jewish Center and Chabad St. Johns for collaborating on our annual Ugly Hanukkah Sweater Party. We took advantage of the beautiful weather to celebrate on our lakeside patio with a retelling of the Hanukkah story, games, delicious treats and prizes. A great time was had by all!

We loved working with our Life Enrichment team to pull out all the stops for a fun and festive Hanukkah party for the whole house. Bernie Katzman, wife Mindy and son Josh were on hand for our campus-wide Hanukkah party and brought down the house with traditional Hanukkah songs and selections from Fiddler on the Roof. We served sufganiyot to all in attendance and delivered dozens of the sweet holiday treat to every department on campus. Thank you to the River Garden Auxiliary for generously covering the cost of this holiday tradition! In addition to the musical show, residents enjoyed cookie decorating, playing dreidel games and painting ceramics.

Our Hanukkah season would not be complete without a visit from our little friends from The Laurie School at The Jacksonville Jewish Center, who performed a Hanukkah show with gusto, bringing so many smiles to our residents and members of The Coves.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the many guests from the community who helped us light the house menorah throughout the holiday, including Chabad Mandarin, Etz Chaim, the Jacksonville Jewish Center, Jeff and Robin Morris and family, the JCA, and Benjay Kempner and Rich Davis. Each of you brought meaning and joy to our Home!



'Torah with Laura' continues to meet every Friday, alternating between River Garden and The Coves. Led by our Jewish Life Coordinator, Laura Platzer, attendance is always high!

Last but not least, mazel tov to our service leader, Steve Meisel, on receiving the Jacksonville Jewish Center's Minyannaire of the Year award. In addition to his commitment to River Garden, Steve often leads daily prayer services at his home synagogue. His dedication to River Garden and the entire Jewish community is unmatched, and we are so excited that he received this recognition.





OSQUE DE LA COSQUE DE LA COSQUE







FOUNDATION GALA

The 32nd River Garden Foundation Gala took place on November 16, 2024, at the Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa. It was a night to remember, bringing together supporters, community leaders, and friends to celebrate the extraordinary work of River Garden. The Gala's theme, *A Mosaic Masterpiece*, highlighted the rich tapestry of people, moments, and memories that have shaped River Garden into the exceptional Home it is today.

A special highlight of the evening was the recognition of our honoree, Evan Yegelwel, the founding president of the River Garden Foundation. Evan's visionary leadership and commitment to philanthropy have profoundly shaped our organization's growth and secured its future. Adding to the evening's special ambiance, Sheri-Samuels, Executive Assistant at River Garden, showcased her incredible talent with a heartfelt and beautiful musical performance.

Thanks to the efforts of the Gala Committee and the incredible generosity of our sponsors, we raised \$248,486. These funds will go directly toward supporting the exceptional care and innovative programs that benefit all seniors we serve, regardless of financial resources.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who attended and supported this year's Gala. Your commitment ensures that River Garden remains a beacon of compassion and excellence for years to come.

Scan the QR code to see the Gala introductory video.



Check our website for details about the 33rd River Garden Foundation Gala www.rivergarden.org



THANK YOU, GALA SPONSORS

Diamond Benefactors

Setzer Family | Linda & David Stein | Terrell Hogan Yegelwel Law

Golden Benefactors

DuBow Family Foundation | Frisch Family

Royal Benefactors

Florida Blue | Hardage-Giddens Funeral Homes & Cemeteries | HUB International Florida | PRI Productions Selevan Family Foundation | Shari & David Shuman | Sysco Foods — Jacksonville | Arlene & Evan Yegelwel

Grand Benefactors

The Korman & Shelton Families | Judy H. Mizrahi | Mauri & Alan Mizrahi | Rachel & Dr. Craig Morgenthal Debbie & Jeff Parker and Stacie & Dr. Larry Wilf | Lauren Sloat | Lisa Sloat & Hank Klein

Benefactors

Berman Family Foundation | The Block Families | B&C Financial Advisors | Mary & Jeff Edwards
The Foundation of Community Hospice & Palliative Care | Phyllis & Dr. Lawrence Goldberg | Allison & Ken Jacobs/GrayRobinson, PA
Drs. Ilene & Jeffrey Levenson | Lauren & Matthew Lufrano and Anne & Dr. Robert Lufrano | Barbara Resnick
Dr. Chaim & Jeanine Rogozinski in honor of their mother, Ella Rogozinski | Diane & Dr. Mitchell Rothstein
Melissa & Dr. Douglas Storch | Regina & Dr. Richard Stromberg

Circle of Friends

Arthur Ainsberg | Debbie Banks & Dr. Garry Kitay | Baptist Health | Beth & Harvey Dikter | Janis & Bob Fleet
Judge Jerry Funk | Emily, Martin and Paul Glickstein | Vicki-lynne Gloger | Susan & Martin Goetz | Jaffe Group at Morgan Stanley
Jordan & Shirley Ansbacher Family Foundation, Inc. | Irene & James Jaffa | Bobbie Jo & Robert T. Mentz III | Monique & David Miller
The Millstone Family | MMI Dining Systems | The Northern Trust Company | Kathy & Morrie Osterer | Michelle & Mark Penson | R.B. Baker Holdings, Inc.
Marjie & Dr. Abraham Rogozinski | Judy & Stephen Silverman | Kimberly & Richard Sisisky | Betty & Dr. Michael Sorna | ThinkSpark | The Trager Family
Trane | Zimmerman Family Foundation — Elli & Charles, Chase & Morrie, Nancy & Seeman

Platinum Patrons

LaVerne & Andy Cantor | Merle Cherry | Sue Eaglstein | Kim Glasgal & Pete Levy | Diane & Nathan Goldman | Lisa & Michael Hayes
Edith & Bruce Horovitz | Ginny & Dr. Dennis Lafer | Andrea & Steven Mail | Marco Family Foundation | MSL CPAs & Advisors
Randi & Sam Rogozinski | Ellen & Alan Rosner | Steven Sherman & Sabrina Cusumano Sherman | The Shorstein Family
Randee & Martin Steinberg | Robin & Kingsley Tharpe | Vitsky Family

Gold Patrons

Eve Ackerman & Howard Rosenblatt | Karen Backilman | Suzie & Ben Becker | Patty & Dr. Guy Benrubi | Nicky & Brian Bialik
Shirley & Abe Bielski | Rachel & Colman Brodsky | Harriet & Ernie Brodsky | Gail & Gary Cantor | Susan & Norm Cohen
Cecilia & David Cristol | Hon. Brian & Tanya Davis | Michael De Santo | Carol D'Onofrio | Gloria Einstein
Susan & Dr. Ron Elinoff | Jane Rothschild & Dr. Stephen Entman | Dr. Adam Gitlin | Jackie & Stephen Goldman
Nancy & Mark Green | Margie & Aaron Holzer | Miriam & David Honig | Paula & Dr. Ken Horn | Sheila & Leo Jacobson
Randy Kammer & Jeff Wollitz | Rosely & Dr. Robert Kanner | Francine & Jim Kempner | Delores & Hon. Morton Kesler | Adria & Dr. Alan Krantz
Nancy & Richard Lantinberg | Joanne & James Lawson | Danielle & Dr. Alex Leder | Christina & Mark Levine
Deanna & Mike Lissner | Susan & Rabbi Jonathan Lubliner | Robin & Jeffery Morris | Northwestern Mutual — The Grippi-Baker Group
Donna & MG Orender | Donna & Elliott Palevsky | Cheryl & Jay Plotkin | Jennifer & Rick Plotkin | Marsha & Ron Pollock | Edrea & Dr. Steven Porter
Powernet | Michael Price | Dr. Deena & Jim Richman | Meryl & Dr. Harris Rittenberg | Dr. Emily & Erik Rostholder | Barbara & Eliot Safer
Carla & Nelson Sawyer | Barbara & Michael Schneider | Sandy & Dr. Rob Selwitz | Ellen & Dr. Barry Setzer | Drs. Sandy & Craig Shapiro
Vanessa & Arthur Solomon | Jill & Samuel Stromberg | George Strumlauf | Haley & Jason Trager | Truist | Dorothy Verstandig
Wolfson Family Foundation

THREE FUN WAYS TO SUPPORT RIVER GARDEN THIS SPRING

1

river garden classic APRIL 28, 2025

Honoring Jody Brandenburg, a cherished supporter whose legacy continues to inspire our mission.

REGISTER TODAY!

HTTPS://WWW.RIVERGARDEN.ORG/RIVER-GARDEN-FOUNDATION/GOLF-CLASSIC/



Q? CONTACT MICHELLE (904) 886-8431 MBRANLY@RIVERGARDEN.ORG

29TH ANNUAL

GAR

CLASSIC

WE PROUDLY WELCOME BACK TITLE SPONSOR

HARDAGE-GIDDENS

FUNERAL HOMES, CEMETERIES & CREMATIONS

Dignity.

S LIFE WELL CELEBRATED &

April 28, 2025

Deerwood Country Club

2

BIRDIES FOR CHARITY

BIRDIES S CHARITY



Birdies for Charity is a fundraising program offered by THE PLAYERS Championship. Before March, enter your donation and guess the number of birdies you think will be made at THE PLAYERS 2025. The closest guess will receive a chance to win \$10,000, and River Garden will also receive a gift from the program.

http://birdiesforcharity.playerschampionship.com/donation

Questions? CALL (904) 886-8431 EMAIL mbranly@rivergarden.org

3

ANNUAL AUXILIARY DRAWING

TOMBOLA

This is your chance to win \$2,000!
In connection with the upcoming 77th
Anniversary Day, the River Garden
Auxiliary will conduct its well-loved
TOMBOLA drawing.
Tickets are \$50/each or \$100/three.

TICKETS AVAILABLE ONLINE

https://rivergardenauxiliary.square.site/home

Questions? CALL Betty Abisch (904) 683-2222 or EMAIL Rachel Brodsky | chelbrod@gmail.com



We Are Here For You

River Garden Support Groups

With Dr. Sue Krall
Parker Chapel @ River Garden
11401 Old St. Augustine Road, Jacksonville, FL 32258

Are you looking for information and support? You are not alone. Join us at River Garden for an in-person support group where our goal is to provide emotional, educational and social support for family and friends.

Dementia Caregiver Support

Alzheimer's Association

2nd Wednesdays @ 3:30PM

Questions?

CALL (904) 288-7851 or EMAIL aabrown@rivergarden.org

General Caregiver Support

4th Wednesdays @ 3:30PM Questions? CALL (904) 288-7855 or EMAIL kbell@rivergarden.org



DETAILS

Dealing with Details

Planning brings peace of mind.

Panel Discussion
with CEO Mauri Mizrahi
Guests: Susanna Barton,
Eliot Safer and Tom Harris
Complimentary Lunch
February 19, 2025
11:30AM
Cohen Auditorium at River Garden

RSVP REQUESTED



Scan QR code for registration link or contact Kari Bell kbell@rivergarden.org (904) 288-7855

COMMUNITY PROGRAM - February 19



Mission-Minded Art Project

Carina Bautista, our Staff Development Coordinator, spearheaded a team building project that provided every department an opportunity to bond together and express creativity through an art piece. She provided each department a 16x20 blank canvas with one primary instruction:

Be creative and brainstorm with your team on how to express our River Garden mission and values using art supplies, random objects such as paper cutouts, pictures, fabrics, and more.

The results were impressive and inspirational.

Scan the QR code to see all of the art projects in video.

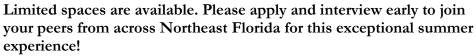


CALLING ALL RIVER GARDEN TEENS



Use the QR code to connect with us! You can also email Esther Yegelwel for more information.

River Garden Teens (RGT) is now accepting applications for our summer 2025 volunteer leadership program. Designed for students ages 13-17, RGT is an immersive service opportunity within our uniquely warm healthcare setting. Last summer, teens averaged approximately 80 volunteer hours each and shared experiences in nearly every department. They also enjoyed creative intergenerational projects, skill-building activities, guest speakers and more.





Esther Yegelwel eraffol@rivergarden.org

Thank You, Mitzvah Day Volunteers!

Mitzvah Day at River Garden Hebrew Home is a joyful annual tradition that brings together residents, visitors and community volunteers of all ages on December 25. The event is part of the greater Jewish community of Jacksonville's 'Mitzvah Day'. This program matches Jewish volunteers with essential service responsibilities city-wide to allow daily staff the opportunity to remain home with their loved ones.

This year, our celebration featured a New Year's Eve theme making it both universally festive and welcoming for all residents and their guests. Volunteer families of all ages worked alongside residents to create glittering 'Times Square Countdown' ice cream sundaes and assemble fruit skewer fireworks. Games and conversation over hot chocolate made everyone feel at home as well.



Mark your calendar for next year and join a relaxed afternoon of meaningful intergenerational fun!



Fun with Life Enrichment



(upper left) Staff, volunteers and residents enjoyed our first-ever, on-campus Alzheimer's Walk. (inset) We even had a surprise visit from Demi, the purple Remembrance Elephant.

(lower left) Dr. Edward Joseph enjoying Thanksgiving dinner. (inset) Pet Therapy volunteer, Bailey, dons a festive turkey costume.

(below) Residents are moving and grooving on a frigid January morning! Kim's Chair Dance is a favorite activity, warming up hearts and bringing out all the smiles!







Lewis Goldstein (L) and Silvia Heitman (R) enjoy the New Year's Eve party with entertainment by the Steve Chapman Trio.

Announcing River Garden Resident Council Officers for 2025

Standing: Ivan Peltz, Vice President and Ginette Mizrahi, Secretary Seated: Sharon Kesler, Treasurer and Dr. Edward Joseph, President



Minnie Schreiber Staff Leadership Award

Bernabe "Ben" Rayo

Ben was born and raised in Nicaragua where he served in the Nicaraguan Army before relocating to Miami, Florida. After a short period in Miami, Ben moved to Jacksonville which led him to River Garden. With 35 years of service, Ben currently serves as the Assistant Director of Facilities Management. He is married with two adult children who reside in New York. As one of ten children, Ben comes from a large family. When asked, Ben stated that his favorite pastimes are fishing and spending time with family. In fact, Ben recruited several family members to join River Garden in different departments within the Home.

He loves to stay busy, always looking for home projects to occupy his time. Even while working, Ben is rarely found in one spot for an extended period. When asked what would you tell the younger Ben Rayo, he replied, "This will be your career."



Previous supervisors from Ben's 35-year career revealed Ben's portrait.

Inset: Mauri & Bobbie Jo recognize Ben on a work anniversary.



Message from Ellen Rubens | River Garden Auxiliary President

What a privilege to support the River Garden community residents with their families through the fundraising projects and programming initiatives of the auxiliary. Membership dues, proceeds from gift shop sales, and donations generate funds that go directly back to the Home for holiday flowers, special refreshments, entertainment and other supplemental activities. While offering convenience and affordable merchandise for staff, residents and visitors, we recognize that most of the shop profits are generated by the staff. We thank them for their support.

We also thank the many volunteers like Evelyn Peck, Elaine Hodz, Nancy Mizrahi, Carol D'Onofrio and Betty Fastenberg, Judy Paul, and Barbara Safer among the many others, who devote countless hours week in and week out to make the auxiliary so successful. I also want to thank everyone who has taken part in, and supported activities sponsored by the River Garden Auxiliary these past several months. Whether you shopped in the gift shop and holiday boutique or attended the Opening and Donor luncheons, you have helped the River Garden Auxiliary in their mission.

Please show your continued support by taking part in Tombola, the Vintage Sale on Anniversary Day, RGA Shabbat and Game Day over the next few months.





Anthem

by Janet Demb, Member of The Coves

Early Sunday morning I walk beside a lake.

No robin is atwitter, No titmouse is awake. No woodpecker gives a rat-a-tat, No sparrow gives a chirp Does Cardinal lead a choir, And are all the birds in church?

The 15th of Shevat on the Jewish calendar—celebrated this year on Thursday, Feb. 13, 2025—is the day that marks the beginning of a "new year" for trees.

Commonly known as Tu B'Shevat, this day marks the season in which the earliest-blooming trees in the Land of Israel emerge from their winter sleep and begin a new fruit-bearing cycle. Residents will be celebrating Tu B'Shevat at River Garden with a 'Fruits of Israel' tasting that afternoon.

Trees and Birds

P M U Н W R Ι 5 Z В Ε F \circ D \subset F Ε E C w G Ι Д I Ρ L X К U \cup Ш F W Υ W K Д \circ X К 5 J \circ Ш В 0 G В Z J В O. В X Ν Υ W X \circ W O Ε 5 R Ι Н 0 Д Д L T W R. P Ι R 5 5 J R Z Д Д R E Н Ε Т Ι 0 L R. N \circ Ш Ε Д F K \subseteq \Box Ε Ε \subset Д В D R Ι В Ш В W G \subseteq P J \subset K Υ \mathbf{O} P Z K. W ⊂ Н Т Д D Z N L 5 Z F J В В E L Д O. Д N W \circ Ι M R M Ι M W Ι Ι D М М Z В L \sqcup G 5 L T P Д Д В E L \subset K Ш J Ε Ι P P М N R. J D N 0 Р O. N 5 M Ε Д D 0 W Д R K R N K Ι \circ Υ R Д D \subseteq Z T 5 W Д L L 0 W Ш R J E G Q. Д Ш Д R Ι Z \subseteq R Ε Ρ D К O. \circ T R Д Ш 5 Ε W Υ Q J Z Ι Z Ε Д F D Ρ Υ Q V E Н М Ι D Q Ε F Д K K Р Н X Ε Υ 5 M Н Ν W Υ

Birch
Blackbird
Bluejay
Bluebird
Cardinal
Crane

Crow
Duck
Eagle
Elm
Goose
Gull

Hawk Magnolia Maple Meadowlark Oak Osprey Owl Pine Quail Robin Sparrow Swallow Titmouse Willow Woodpecker

0



Last year's programs and life at The Coves were an absolute blast! From game nights to outings and everything in between, we made so many fun memories together. Here's to all the laughter, new friendships and good times – looking forward to even more in the year ahead!



As we celebrate the 30th Anniversary of The Coves, we reminisce with joy, laughter, and heartfelt memories. There are many amazing individuals who have made this place feel like home, and we are friends for life!



Love and Basketball: Howard & Laura Buss, Member Spotlight

by Natalie Halpern, Volunteer

Howard Buss grew up in Hillside Homes, a housing development in the Bronx. Reminiscing, he recalls that "It was like living in a small town within the big city of New York." Howard has had many wonderful experiences throughout his life: being a basketball star at The City College of New York, raising four children, enjoying nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, and being a clown. Howard has enjoyed these beautiful moments with the love of his life, Laura, his wife for nearly 70 years.

On and Off the Court

At 93, Howard has many fond memories of playing basketball on the playground. "It was such a big part of my life. I played in high school and then in college, and made lifelong friendships along the way."

When Howard became a CPA and started his accounting career in 1955, his college coach Dave Polansky was his very first client. Howard operated an accounting practice for decades, specializing in automobile dealerships and day camps.

Courting Laura

Laura grew up in Hillside Homes as well. Laura attended City College but after one year accepted a job as a secretary in Manhattan. She quickly moved up to become an Executive Secretary at an advertising agency.

Howard served in the Army as a private corporal in the finance corps. When a battalion leader in Fort Dix began forming a basketball team, Howard was asked to play.

In 1958, Howard returned home and he and Laura dated once again. After four dates, Howard proposed. The rest, as they say, "is history."

Renaissance Woman

The Buss' house is filled with some of their favorite art pieces that Laura has made. She used to sculpt, paint, and design stained glass. She was also a gourmet cook and a baker. The local Haagen Dazs store near their home in Great Neck purchased her chocolate chip cookies for their ice cream sandwiches. Laura spent some of her free time knitting, sewing, and doing needlepoint.

Laura learned how to juggle and tap dance. Athletically, she earned her scuba diving certification and has dived all around the world, taking underwater pictures. She was a tennis player and loved to ice skate and ski. For 10 years, Laura transcribed books into braille for sight impaired readers. Laura also takes after her mom who was a concert pianist. You can often hear her playing in our social room.

Clowning Around

When Howard retired, he and Laura moved to Jacksonville. Looking for something to do, they joined Gator Clowns. Howard was Hoops and Laura became Muffy. They both



became proficient in magic and joined the Jacksonville Magic Club. They spent their days performing magic for the children at Nemours Hospital.

Life Lessons

Looking back over nine decades, Howard holds onto memories of being a father and his basketball days. For Laura, it is her journey as a mother, and the experiences that manifested from her intellectual and adventurous curiosity.

From international family trips to giving back to the community, careers

on and off the court, the Busses are grateful for the fulfilling life and meaningful experiences they have shared together.

"Try to have a sense of humor about life. Be kind to everybody and be truthful. The most important thing is to be truthful," Howard says. Laura adds, "Don't sweat the small stuff and laugh. Laugh at yourself and laugh with others. There has always been a lot of humor in our family. We're always laughing."





rivergarden.org

REQUEST RIVER GARDEN

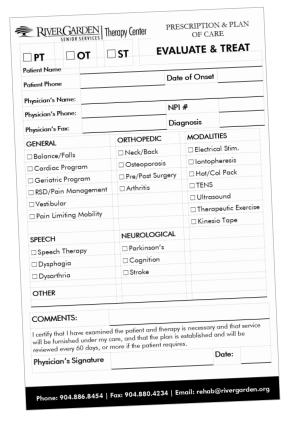
INPATIENT SHORT-TERM REHABILITATION

ADMISSIONS@RIVERGARDEN.ORG OR (904) 886-8420

If you have an upcoming procedure planned, contact our Admissions Office early to make your arrangements. If you are unable to plan ahead, here are a few guidelines:

- Your inpatient hospital stay must be at least three (3) consecutive nights to be eligible for coverage by Medicare or most insurance plans. Observation days do not count.
- Please advise your hospital care team that you specifically request River Garden for short-term rehab. Your case manager or social worker will then send us a referral. If we can meet your care needs, our Admissions team and the hospital will coordinate transition to River Garden.
- Medicare covers the cost of short-term rehab services for qualified beneficiaries
 who meet criteria for skilled nursing facility care. Medicare Advantage and other
 insurance plans provide varying coverage for short-term rehab. Our Admission
 Team will assist with verifying coverage for you.
- Once admitted to River Garden, the clinical team will work with you to determine the best discharge plan for you.





OUTPATIENT THERAPY

Outpatient therapy is a type of rehabilitation where patients receive treatment for various conditions without being admitted from the hospital. This form of rehab takes place by appointment during the week while continuing to live at home.

The process often includes physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy or other specialized treatments depending on one's needs. The therapist works with the client to improve mobility, strength, independence and overall quality of life through exercises, training and personalized care plans.

To start outpatient therapy, you generally need a prescription or referral from your doctor. Here's how you can get one:

- Visit Your Doctor: If you're experiencing issues that might benefit
 from rehabilitation, such as pain, limited mobility or difficulty
 performing everyday activities, schedule an appointment with your
 primary care doctor to discuss your symptoms and concerns.
- Get a Referral: If your doctor agrees that therapy could be helpful, he/she can provide a prescription or referral. This may include details about the type of therapy needed (e.g. physical therapy or occupational therapy) and any specific treatment goals.
- Contact River Garden: Once you have your prescription, you can contact the River Garden Therapy Center at (904) 880-4234 or rehab@rivergarden.org to schedule an appointment.

rivergarden.org

LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE IN 2025

Living your best life isn't about perfection; it's a journey and requires your making intentional choices that bring you closer to the life you desire. By practicing gratitude, seeking smart solutions, staying active and fostering social connections, you can experience more joy every day. Let's explore these concepts in more detail.

PRACTICING GRATITUDE

Gratitude is a powerful tool for fostering a positive outlook and improving mental health. Taking time each day to reflect on the things you are thankful for can shift your mindset from focusing on what you lack to appreciating what you have. Practicing gratitude has been linked to improved mood, reduced stress, and even better sleep quality.

There are many ways to practice gratitude. You could start a gratitude journal, where you write down three things you are grateful for each day. These could range from big blessings like good health or loving relationships, to small moments like a beautiful sunset or a kind gesture from a friend. Over time, you'll begin to notice more positive aspects of your life and become more attuned to the good around you.

FINDING SMART SOLUTIONS FOR STREAMLINING YOUR LIFE

Life is full of challenges, but the way you approach them can make a world of difference. Smart solutions involve finding efficient and effective ways to handle life's tasks and problems, which can ultimately reduce stress.

For example, you can use various digital tools or planners to keep track of appointments, tasks and deadlines. Ask others which tools they find most helpful. You can also simplify your environment. A tidy, organized space can lead to a clearer mind, reduced anxiety, and increase your focus. Whether it's decluttering your home, streamlining your wardrobe or simplifying your digital life, making your surroundings more efficient can help you live more intentionally and feel more at ease.

STAYING ON YOUR FEET: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH

One of the best ways to live your best life is to take care of your body. Staying physically active is essential for maintaining a healthy mind and body. Whether it's walking, yoga, dancing, swimming or strength training, moving your body is key to long-term vitality.

For those who are less mobile, it's important to find activities that feel enjoyable and manageable. You don't have to commit to long hours at the gym—small, consistent movements add up. Even a daily walk or a few minutes of stretching can have significant benefits for your physical well-being.

Additionally, staying on your feet doesn't just mean exercising; it's also about maintaining your balance and agility as you age. Practices like balance exercises and core strengthening can help prevent falls and improve coordination, allowing you to remain active and independent longer.

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

Human beings are inherently social creatures. Building and nurturing strong connections with others is vital for emotional well-being and personal fulfillment.

Spending time with friends and family, or engaging in community activities, can provide a sense of purpose and belonging. You don't have to have a wide circle of friends to enjoy the benefits of social interaction—what matters is the quality of the connections you make. Regular conversations, shared experiences and mutual support create bonds that help lift you through life's challenges.



River Garden Senior Services 11401 Old St. Augustine Road Jacksonville, Florida 32258 (904) 260-1818 www.rivergarden.org



LIKE US ON FACEBOOK | SEND US A STORY | PROVIDE 5-STAR REVIEW ON GOOGLE

