



A Whole New Dimension of Culture Change

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Justin Weber is a 2011 LeadingAge Leadership Academy Fellow and we invited him to blog about his journey to Boston, MA with the LeadingAge Academy.



(<http://futureofaging.aahsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/images.jpg>) On the plane from San Diego to Boston for our second [Leading Age Leadership Academy](#) (<http://www.aahsa.org/leadershipaahsa.aspx>) experience I was anxious for my first trip to a [Green House model](#) (<http://www.ncbdc.org/default.aspx?id=148>) skilled nursing community. My organization, [St. Paul's Senior Homes & Services](#) (<http://www.stpaulseniors.org/>) has invested significant time and money into culture change at our own skilled nursing community and the changes we've made have been noticeably positive for residents, staff and families. What we saw at the Chelsea Jewish's [Leonard Florence Center for Living](#) (<http://www.leonardflorencecenter.org/lfcl/index.html>) showed me a whole new dimension of culture change.

On our first day together, we had the privilege of meeting with Chelsea Jewish Foundation Executive Director Barry Berman, whose passion for the project and his organization as a whole was clearly evident. He explained the challenges, as well as the importance of the project to his organization's mission and himself personally. According to Barry, it took diligence, impeccable timing, a bit of luck and dogged determination to overcome the various roadblocks that emerged. He made it clear that "where there is a will there's a way."

The Leonard Florence Center is truly inspirational. The building itself is beautiful, the staff warm, and the residents we met touched all of us. The community is housed in an urban high-rise building and is divided into ten resident homes. Upon entering the houses there is a spacious living room with bookcases and a fireplace. Nearby is an open kitchen area with the smell of lunch cooking and an expansive dining area with a table that looks like it could seat the entire household for a "family dinner."

The beauty of the houses was made even more powerful by experiencing the residence designed for people suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and multiple sclerosis (MS). Through generous donations and partnerships, including local students at [MIT](#) (<http://mit150.mit.edu/infinite-history>), the technology incorporated into the houses provides an incredible level of independence for each resident.

One resident in particular, Steve, through a computer monitor the size of an iPad, guided my small group tour. He could do everything from call the elevator to the lobby, to, open and close his blinds with the assistance of technology. His private room was filled with pictures of his son as well as Steve hiking, vacationing and sky diving. The room had a personal warmth that none of us had ever felt in a skilled nursing community. His sense of humor and sharp wit clearly illustrated his comfort and enjoyment of life.