

## Leonard Florence Center for Living Adds 20 New Residents

by Seth Daniel • December 9, 2020

<http://chelsearecord.com/2020/12/09/leonard-florence-center-for-living-adds-20-new-residents>

When Barry Berman first began entertaining the idea of adding patients on ventilators to the Leonard Florence Center for Living – particularly those with ALS and other such illnesses – he recalled during a ribbon cutting ceremony last Thursday the first visit he made with a prospective resident.

Sitting on the bed with him, Berman shared that he looked around the room, realizing the man next to him couldn't leave and was immobile. The radiator was rusting, the floor tiles had buckled and the window seal had broken – creating a fog over the only window that would have allowed the man to experience outside.



**Stein Family Center for Well-Being Ribbon Cutting with LFCL Executive Director Mike McCarthy (far right), LFCL resident Steve Saling (middle) and LFCL Staff.**

"I sat there and I said to myself, 'We're in hell,'" said Berman at the outset of the ribbon cutting for the newly-opened Stein Family Center for Well-Being in the Admiral's Hill Facility. "I was so rattled by that visit and really I am still rattled to this day by what I saw. We made ours different. Now we've been caring for residents on vents for 10 years. The one thing these vent homes can offer – in addition to compassionate care and safety – is we can allow these individuals hope."

It was a very moving story for a ceremony that celebrated the addition of 20 new residents for the Stein Family Center, which enables ventilator-dependent residents to live as independently as possible in a “real” home, where they receive exceptional skilled nursing and compassionate care, and are treated with dignity and respect.

Operated by nonprofit Chelsea Jewish Lifecare, the Stein Family Center for Well-Being in the Leonard Florence Center is the only Green House ventilator program in the country. Offering state-of-the-art portable ventilators in a Green House model of care, specialized care residents have access to a completely new way of living. These multi-function ventilators are the first and only ones of their kind on the market. They provide a unified respiratory system that makes it easy to switch and customize therapies, creating a simple system to use and manage. Most importantly, these ventilators offer greater mobility, enhancing the quality of life for residents.

The extreme isolation typically affecting people on vents is eliminated at the Center. Instead, residents actively socialize and interact with other residents, staff, and visitors.

Beyond that, residents on vents have gone camping, attended Disney World and even produced a full, award-winning film using only eye movement technology.

The situation came about when the Commonwealth of Massachusetts reached out to Chelsea Jewish to see if they had any room for expansion, and if they could make it happen.

“The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has always had a great deal of respect for the work we do at the Leonard Florence Center for Living,” said Berman. “When they reached out to us, we were very happy to accommodate them and open up 20 beds for individuals living on ventilators.”

Berman explained that Bill Stein and his family were instrumental in creating the McDonald House – a home that treats New York residents with ALS in Chelsea. He has been a benefactor of that effort, and others, for years with only a gentleman’s agreement, Berman said. Though the Stein family did not ask for it, it was precisely why Berman said the new vent house had to carry their name.

“In this line of work, so many who give are quick to want to know where their name will be etched and what the size of the letters will be and how often it will be cleaned,” said Berman. “What made Bill happy and Sharon happy was to see the philanthropy in motion and see the lives changed by their gifts. That’s why we are naming this the Stein Family Center for Well-Being and that’s because we feel the residents will have a sense of well-being and there is no reason I could think of that’s better than that.”

Bill Stein spoke via Zoom at the online ceremony last Thursday and said they have enjoyed seeing the Leonard Florence go from a 10-bed pioneering treatment center to the pre-eminent skilled nursing care facility in the country.

“When you see the residents living a full and productive life despite the circumstances they face, it really puts it into perspective,” said Stein.

City Manager Tom Ambrosino joined in from his office via Zoom, and he said he was very happy to welcome the new residents in the Stein Family Center to Chelsea, where they will get great care.

“I want to welcome you to our vibrant and culturally diverse community, and I want to welcome you to a skilled-nursing facility that is like no other in America and where you will be able to live your life to the fullest,” he said.

The ceremony concluded with a countdown and an online ribbon cutting where a few were at the facility and everyone else watched.