

## **Rashi School students visit seniors at NewBridge on the Charles**

By Edward B. Colby  
Dec 17, 2009

It was a nasty and wet day outside, but inside the new health center at NewBridge on the Charles, students and seniors were singing “Zum Gali Gali,” “If I Had a Hammer,” and “You Are My Sunshine.”

“We’re so excited to be here,” said Rabbi Ellen Pildis of the Rashi School, whose students were in Dedham for their first big event with NewBridge residents. “We’re happy to be making this not-so-nice day a very nice day for all of us.”

The vision of an intergenerational campus is starting to become reality at NewBridge on the Charles, the \$485 million, 162-acre continuing care retirement community on Great Meadow Road that has opened in three stages since June. Rashi students and teachers will have a permanent presence on the campus starting next September, when they move into their new school, currently under construction.

With the 82,000-square-foot building, the kindergarten through eight grade Reform Jewish day school will finally have a home of its own, after more than two decades of being housed in various temporary locations, most recently in Newton.

“We’ve been working on this, literally, for years. And one of the biggest motivations for building this campus was the opportunity to put kids and elders together, and also the middle generations, because with the kids come their parents,” said Len Fishman, the CEO of Hebrew SeniorLife. “So you can have a life that’s more normal, which is our goal – not to have age-segregated communities, but places where all of the generations are mixing with some frequency.”

Fishman said Hebrew SeniorLife does have similar get-togethers on its Roslindale campus, but they are rare.

“Having the school on the campus really changes the equation, because it’s so much easier logistically to get the kids and the seniors together. And we’ve created spaces on the campus to encourage that happening,” he said, noting that the Rashi School will be on the same level as the lower floor of NewBridge’s community center, so kids can come over for ice cream or food from the kosher deli Nosh and informally interact with seniors.

There will also be programmed activities for learning or entertainment, as was the case Wednesday, Dec. 9, when about 190 Rashi students from kindergarten through fifth grade came to Dedham to sing, work on a quilt project and meet their soon-to-be neighbors.

In the health center, fourth- and fifth-graders brought gifts to bless the seniors’ new home. The students presented framed blessings that included drawings of hamsas – ancient

amulets that protect the home. Each blessing began with the formulation, “Bless this home and all who live within. May this home be...” Students finished the blessings, wishing NewBridge seniors homes that are “safe and filled with peace,” “a protective place,” and “blessed by God and all who respect God,” to give three examples.

“These are the first pieces of artwork that we have received from you guys, and we hope that we will get many more pieces of artwork,” said NewBridge Rabbi Karen Landy.

The seniors, in turn, wished the students health, happiness, and to “listen to your teacher.”

The ceremony also included a menorah lighting to celebrate Hanukkah, two days ahead of time.

Afterward, the kids went up to the seated seniors in pairs and presented five interesting things about themselves.

“This is a little weird, but I can swallow my tongue,” said a boy named Noah, showing Florence Rose, 84, how he does it.

Molly Wilson, 9, said her favorite sports are soccer and skiing – adding that her parents were going skiing over the weekend without her – and explained that she is from West Newton.

“I know School Street,” said Rose, who used to live in Newton.

Meantime, in a large room in the community center, second- and third-graders and seniors created colorful handprints that will be put together in quilts – with residents’ hands on the outside of the frame and kids’ on the inside, “like a hug,” said art teacher Erica Smiley.

“It’s going from the vision and a dream to reality, and it’s just enormously satisfying to see these communities come together,” said Matthew King, the head of the Rashi School.

“It took them, I don’t know, it’s probably an hour getting here and an hour getting back because they’re still in Newton,” Fishman concluded. “Once the Rashi School opens, it’s literally a two-minute walk.”



Lily Altman, left, and Lillie Pomper, center, fourth-graders from the Rashi School, meet and chat with Dr. Amy Katzew, a resident of NewBridge on the Charles.



Sophie Kowal, resident of NewBridge on the Charles, and Marlen Moyer, a Learning Specialist, sing holiday songs in light of Chanukah, with kids from the Rashi School.



Liora Goldberg and other fourth-graders from the Rashi School, hold up their creations for a joint quilt project with NewBridge on the Charles.