





CELEBRATING A YEAR
OF IMPACT

3

**SPRING 2025** 



Our participating agencies

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ELDERPLAN / HOMEFIRST

HEALTH PLANS

INSTITUTE FOR INNOVATION

# Elderplan/HomeFirst: 40 Years of Caring for the Community in Innovative Ways



### **ALSO IN THIS ISSUE**

- MJHS Health System Elects New Board Chair Bradley Fluegel
- Thank You 2024 Donors
   Recognizing the donors who
   supported our excellent care!

When you celebrate a special anniversary in your life, do you take a moment to pause and reflect? That's what we're doing at Elderplan/HomeFirst as we mark 40 years of caring for at-risk members of our community.

As a not-for-profit health plan, that is a participating agency of MJHS Health System, Elderplan/HomeFirst shares the organization's same core values of compassion, dignity, and respect. Founded in 1985, Elderplan was one of the first Medicare Social HMO demonstration projects in the United States. Today, Elderplan offers affordable Medicare Advantage and long-term care plans to New Yorkers at every level of health.

# MJHS Isabella Center Celebrates 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary by Finding Even More Ways to Give Back



We couldn't be prouder that MJHS Isabella Center is celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary! And just as you'd expect, we're not skipping a beat in finding ways to honor the occasion by caring for, supporting, and guiding the community in some truly remarkable ways!

## Helping Vulnerable Older Adults "Beat the Heat"

During one of the hottest summers on record, MJHS Isabella Center opened a Heat Relief Station for at-risk older adults and their caregivers in the Washington Heights and Inwood communities.

Outfitted with air-conditioning, ice-cold water, and even therapeutic recreation activities, it was our honor to welcome up to 70 people at a time to stay cool!

This resource was especially important because so many of MJHS Isabella Center's neighbors do not have air-conditioning at home and need a place to cool down and hydrate during the hottest hours of the day.



### **Elected Officials Celebrate MJHS Isabella Center's Cool Community Initiative**

Station emerges as a vital lifeline, shielding our seniors from extreme heat with compassion and accessibility. This initiative not only saves lives but also underscores a commitment to the well-being of our most vulnerable, showcasing the strength of community and care in Washington Heights.

- Robert Jackson, New York State Senator

As summers get increasingly hotter, it's imperative that vulnerable New Yorkers have access to reliable places to cool off and avoid heat-related illness. I'm incredibly grateful to MJHS Isabella Center for opening this Heat Relief Station to Washington Heights' older adult community. — Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President





### **Backpack Giveaway for Neighborhood Kids**

Sometimes it takes a little extra help to get a fresh start, whether it's our patients receiving short-term rehabilitation, or elementary school students in the neighborhood starting the school year! While many people remember the giddy feelings of excitement about returning to school and reuniting with friends, it can also be a time of anxiety for students who don't have the supplies they need to succeed. To help close this gap, we proudly hosted the "School is Cool" Backpack Giveaway event for elementary school students from neighboring The Equity Project Charter School. Our staff handed out backpacks filled-to-the-brim with pencils, folders and notebooks. The kids were not just thrilled to receive colorful bags, but also the after school treats that we had lined up waiting for them!

# **Turkey Giveaway Makes for a Memorable Thanksgiving**

Thanksgiving may be in the rear-view mirror, but the memories of gathering with loved ones and enjoying delicious food will last a lifetime! We're very grateful that we were able to help make Thanksgiving more memorable by providing turkeys to many clients of our UMPSI Program (Upper Manhattan Partnership for Senior Independence), which helps older adults age safely at home. When clients arrived for pick-up at our MJHS Isabella Center, they were greeted with festive decorations, friendly smiles, and lots of interest in their Thanksgiving traditions and favorite recipes. Our staff even took the event on the road to deliver turkeys to Nido De Esperanza, an organization that serves families and children with the goal of disrupting the cycle of poverty.



### A Valentine's Day to Remember

You hear us talk about it a lot, but music and dancing are good medicine for your body and soul! That was certainly on display at a joint MJHS Isabella Center and ARC XVI Fort Washington Valentine's Day event. A capacity crowd of older adults from the community enjoyed a delicious meal before showing us their moves on the dance floor! A highlight of the 3-hour event, hosted at ARC XVI, was when we gave out goody bags filled with cozy gloves and hats. But the biggest round of applause came when it was announced that Isabella is celebrating 150 years of providing quality care. There was certainly lots of love in the room that day!





### **Renovation of Isabella House**

As part of our 150th anniversary year, we have also undertaken the renovation of Isabella House, a high-rise apartment building located on the campus of MJHS Isabella Center that provides independent living for adults aged 62 and older. Our



bright, spacious, and newly-remodeled studio and one-bedroom apartments are moderately priced, offer breathtaking skyline views, as well as many amenities, creating a comfortable and enriching living experience.



Continued from page 1

This includes Special Needs Plans for individuals who qualify for a nursing home level of care but still live at home, as well as plans for those living in nursing homes, or assisted- or independent-living communities. HomeFirst, which is also part of Elderplan, opened enrollment in 2001 and is one of the original managed long-term care plans in New York State. Elderplan/HomeFirst cares for beneficiaries across New York City, as well as Nassau, Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess, Orange, Sullivan, Ulster, and Monroe counties.

Join us as we look back at some of the past year's highlights and the innovative ways we're *Leading the Way to Great Care.* <sup>™</sup>

## Making it Easier for Members to Access Preventive Care

We don't have to tell you: life is busy! To help our members make preventive care one of the easiest items on their checklist to complete, Elderplan/HomeFirst partnered with Mount Sinai to bring a mobile mammography screening unit to a convenient location in the Washington Heights/Inwood community: our MJHS Isabella Center campus. This breast cancer screening initiative promoted early detection and improved health outcomes for our Elderplan members.

### **Newest Community Resources** on the Block

Earlier this year, Elderplan/HomeFirst opened two community offices that are convenient resources for members seeking support and information about their health plan coverage, how to access plan benefits, as well as offer opportunities to participate in health and wellness activities. The community offices also offer prospective beneficiaries valuable plan information and another way to enroll. As a mission-driven, not-for-profit health plan, committed to closing gaps in care for our members of all backgrounds, opening our very first community offices is the perfect next step in increasing our ability to support existing and potential beneficiaries!

## First-Ever Elderplan/HomeFirst Community Office in Washington Heights

With the cut of a ribbon, the doors officially opened on Elderplan/HomeFirst's first-ever community office in Washington Heights offering support in English and Spanish right in the heart of this vibrant community.



For over four decades, Elderplan/HomeFirst has been a cornerstone of care and compassion, uplifting older adults and individuals with disabilities with dignity and purpose. The opening of this new Washington Heights Community Office is more than a celebration—it is a testament to their unwavering commitment to accessibility, wellness, and empowering our neighbors. This office stands as a vital resource and a lifeline for the most vulnerable, ensuring every member of our community can thrive with the support they deserve.

- Robert Jackson, New York State Senator



Healthcare coverage can be confusing and daunting to navigate, so Elderplan's new community office will be an incredible resource for some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers. Removing barriers to staying healthy and accessing high-quality care is always a win.

- Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President



### New Flushing Elderplan/HomeFirst Community Office

Lion dance, check. Drummers, check. Good fortune, check. The grand opening celebration of our first community office in downtown Flushing took place during the lunar new year, so we made sure it kicked off with cultural traditions that captivated the crowd and passersby.

• Older adults or individuals living with disabilities face unique challenges when it comes to accessing quality healthcare, including language barriers, limited mobility, and unfamiliarity with complex health systems which can make it difficult to get the care and support they need. This is about more than convenience, it's about equity and making sure that older adults and individuals with disabilities have the same opportunities to live healthy, dignified lives. By establishing this community office right here in downtown Flushing, Elderplan/HomeFirst is helping to close critical healthcare gaps among some of our most vulnerable, at-risk residents. I know this new office will serve as a bridge to better health for so many in our community.

- Sandra Ung, NYC Councilmember

We were thrilled to receive these messages of support for our Elderplan/HomeFirst Community Offices from elected officials and are excited about the buzz they have created in the community!

Want to check out the community offices for yourself, or share this new resource with friends or family?

Come by Monday– Friday from 9:00 a.m.– 5:00 p.m. and by appointment on weekends. Meetings can be scheduled through **elderplan.org** or by calling (866) 360-1934.

Flushing 36-59 Main Street Washington Heights 564 West 181st Street

# DID YOU KNOW?

Elderplan/HomeFirst now has its own social media channels. Make sure to follow @Elderplan wherever you scroll, so you don't miss out on any of our exciting content!

# It's Always Awards Season at MJHS!

Just like the incredible displays of dedication and skill at the Olympics, show-stopping performances of The Tonys, and the high-stakes excitement of the U.S. Open, MJHS is always in the spotlight for excellence. Keep on reading to learn about our latest accolades that include earning gold and platinum.



What do you give an organization that demonstrates that it is quality-driven and focused on continuous improvement in patient care? The answer is a Gold Seal of Approval!



For nearly 15 years, MJHS has repeatedly earned accreditation from The Joint Commission, the nation's leading health care accreditation and standards-setting organization. Their recognition is

widely recognized as an endorsement of a health care organization's commitment to providing safe and quality patient care.

MJHS Hospice and MJHS Home Care both earned The Joint Commission Gold Seal of Approval again this year. Here are two additional facts that we're proud of: MJHS was the first home care agency in the country to earn the Gold Seal for our Heart Failure Disease Management Program; and MJHS was the first community-based palliative care organization in the nation to ever receive this Gold Seal of Approval.

Each accreditation was awarded based on an in-depth onsite review that included patient care documentation, infection prevention and control, procedures and policies, as well as patient visits. The Joint Commission's standards are developed in collaboration with health care professionals, providers, patients, and industry leaders. They're also informed by scientific literature and consensus from trusted authorities to help health care organizations measure, assess, and improve performance... making our standards pure gold, of course!

### **Celebrating Inclusivity and Excellence**



Many older LGBTQ+ individuals have faced social stigma, discrimination, isolation, and prejudice throughout their lives. This history can make seeking or accepting health care a daunting experience. Fortunately, MJHS has a long-standing

commitment to building trust and providing quality care with compassion, dignity and respect. SAGE, the country's largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ older adults, has repeatedly recognized our unwavering dedication to inclusivity.

For nine years in a row, MJHS Hospice has proudly achieved SAGECare's Platinum Credential – their top honor. This recognition reflects our extensive training in LGBTQ+ aging needs and includes ensuring we honor each person's gender expression and relationship status, when providing in person care as well as in electronic medical records. MJHS Home Care has also earned the Platinum Credential from SAGECare for the past three years.

### **Training Reaches New Heights**

"Excellence is an art won by training and habituation," said Aristotle, and MJHS Health System truly embodies this philosophy. Earlier this year, our dedication to continuous learning and professional



development earned us the prestigious Training APEX Award. This recognition also highlights our efforts to centralize and advance educational initiatives.

The Training APEX Awards ranks companies nationwide based on their demonstrated commitment to the growth and success of their employees, considering factors like program scope, alignment with business goals, financial investment in employee development, and more. In our first year of consideration, MJHS was ranked 51st on their list of top 100 companies out of almost 1,000 applications. What an accomplishment and what an honor!

### **Honoring Experience**



MJHS Health System is officially certified as an age-friendly employer. We received this certification from the Age Friendly Institute for our inclusive and supportive work environment for individuals aged

50 and above, based on an evaluation of best practices in key areas including recruitment, employment policies, practices, and programs.

"We're thrilled to be named an Age-Friendly Employer, said Nadine Ferguson, Chief Human Resources Officer of MJHS Health System. "As a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to deliver high-quality care to people of all backgrounds and life experiences, we also proudly recruit talented professionals from a demographic known for its knowledge, maturity, reliability, and productivity. This certification will help further differentiate us in a competitive health care job marketplace," Ferguson added.

### **A Passion for Compassion**

We're thrilled to be the inaugural winner of the Dr. Bernice Catherine Harper Trailblazer Award from the National Alliance for Care at Home (formerly National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization), which honors organizations that exemplify Dr. Harper's spirit of innovation and compassion, commitment to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, as well as passion for providing high-quality, culturally appropriate, person-centered services.

### **Dedicated to Veteran-Centered Care**



For the sixth consecutive year, MJHS Hospice has been named a Level 5 Partner (their top status) in the national We Honor Veterans program, originally launched by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

This prestigious recognition underscores our unwavering commitment to providing Veteran-centered care.

Day after day, we emphasize respectful inquiry, compassionate listening, trauma-informed care, and grateful acknowledgment of service. Our goal is to guide Veterans toward a more peaceful end-of-life care and ensure their families receive the support they need. We also mentor other hospices in our region, enhancing their Veteran-specific programs and services.

Level 5 is the highest category possible in this inspiring initiative that addresses the growing need for Veteran-centered care, especially as a larger generation of Korean, Vietnam and Gulf War Veterans require access to compassionate palliative and hospice care. It is such an honor to be repeatedly recognized at the highest level and we remain committed to providing exceptional care for our Veterans.

### **Commitment to Excellence**

Earlier this year, 74 health care professionals from hospital systems, long-term care facilities, home care organizations, independent practice associations and federally qualified health centers across the greater New York metropolitan region, were honored by the United Hospital Fund for their "extraordinary personal leadership to improve quality of care, patient safety, and patient experience." We're proud to say, this included four of our own:



Deirdre Downes, LCSW
Corporate Director,
Social Work and Supportive Care Programs
MJHS Isabella Center for
Rehabilitation and Nursing Care



**Eunice Ference**, PharmD *VP, Pharmacy Services* Elderplan/HomeFirst



Joyce Palmieri, MS, RN, CHPN, FPCN SVP, Clinical Services
MJHS Hospice and Palliative Care



Josie Vega, BSN, CAE, BLS-I, RN Education Coordinator MJHS Menorah Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing Care

That same month, **Amy Lee**, director of Medicaid and integrated products at Elderplan/HomeFirst, was included in the inaugural list of Asian Trailblazers by City & State, a new multimedia organization.



CONGRATULATIONS TO
ALL OF OUR HONOREES!

# Celebrating a Year of Impact

As we reflect on the past year, we are proud to share the incredible milestones the MJHS Foundation has achieved. Thanks to the dedication of our generous supporters and staff, we have raised funds to advance vital programs that directly impact our patients, residents, and their families, regardless of ability to pay.

To advance this effort, the MJHS
Foundation hosted four standout
fundraising events last year, all of which
underscored the mission of MJHS to
provide the highest level of care and
support to all members of our community.

### The MJHS Golf Classic



Our annual Golf Classic took place last June and was a resounding success. Over 250 people joined us for a day filled with golf, raffle prizes, mingling, and great food. We raised over \$850,000 for our programs and services, highlighting the significant impact made by our donors!

We look forward to swinging into summer with you at our 2025 Golf Classic on June 30 at Old Westbury Golf & Country Club — a larger 27-hole course that will allow us to host more guests and speed up play.

# In 2024, your dollars enabled us to have remarkable impact:

- Provided more than 1,898 music and therapy art sessions to patients in need
- Facilitated over 3,100 in-person, group, and phone bereavement support sessions
- Provided over 5,120 Home Health
   Aide Hours to families in need
- Provided trauma-informed care to over 280 Veterans and
   80 Holocaust survivors
- Offered inclusive care to 100 patients who identify as LGBTQ+
- Cared for over 750 hospice patients daily with expertise, compassion and dedication

### Wine Tasting



Last September, we held our 6th annual Wine Tasting fundraiser to benefit the Golden Family STAR Fund, which supports MJHS Hospice family caregivers by providing additional home health aide hours. Thanks to our generous sponsor, who is also a grateful family member, we tasted delicious Tuscan wine paired perfectly with Italian-inspired hors d'oeuvres. The evening featured a moving story from a family that benefited from additional home health aide hours when their father was cared for by our hospice program. Thanks to our community's support, we raised funds to provide 1,000 home health aide hours for families under our care.







### **Hospice Goes to Broadway**

Our signature event last November drew a record-breaking crowd to support Linda Rhodes, a grateful family member and advocate for the MJHS mission, with the 2024 Philanthropic Leadership Award-and to see the Tony Award-winning Broadway show

"Hell's Kitchen." The evening featured a dedication to our honoree, a heartfelt story from a family impacted by our music therapy program, and a moving dedication to our outgoing Board Chair–Danielle Rollman. The funds raised supported our hospice programs including: music therapy, pediatric hospice, and dementia care. Look out for details about this year's Hospice Goes to Broadway Event.



### The MJHS Employee Giving Campaign



Each year, MJHS employees come together to support the community we care for through the MJHS Employee Giving Campaign (EGC). Established over 30 years ago, the EGC allows MJHS staff to expand upon our history

of supporting essential programs that benefit patients, residents, and their families. In 2024, our colleagues united to raise over \$120,000 in support of pediatric hospice, dementia care, and other vital hospice programs.

# ADVANCING EDUCATION

In addition to event successes, we proudly expanded our commitment to clinical excellence by funding two educational programs for clinicians:

- The Palliative Care Fellowship, designed to equip health care professionals with the specialized skills to provide comprehensive support to patients with serious illnesses.
- A continuing education scholarship, which provides MJHS nurses and social workers with access to continuing education to enhance their skills and professional development.

By investing in education, we are ensuring that expert, compassionate care remains at the forefront of health care delivery. Both opportunities were made possible by the generous support of our grateful family donations.

# AHEAD

As we celebrate these accomplishments, we remain focused on our mission of providing expert clinical support, comfort, and guidance with dignity and respect for every patient, resident and family member who entrusts us with their care. Through intentional outreach, we continue to strengthen partnerships with community members of all backgrounds who support end-of-life care, ensuring that all families feel seen, supported, and cared for in their time of need. We are deeply grateful to our board members, donors, and staff for making these achievements possible.

Together, we are building a stronger, more compassionate community. If you are interested in learning more about MJHS Foundation, please visit us at **mjhsfoundation.org**.

Health Care Advisor and Educator Elected Chair

of MJHS Health System Board of Directors

At the start of 2025, Bradley (Brad) Fluegel began his term as Chair of the MJHS Health System board of directors.

He succeeds Danielle Rollmann, who served her full term and is now the immediate past Chair of the system's board.

Fluegel has significant health care, corporate vision, advisory, and joint venture leadership expertise. He is an advisor to health care organizations, entrepreneurs, and other participants in health care. Previously, he was SVP and Chief Health Care Commercial Market Development Officer for Walgreens. Before that, Fluegel was an executive at leading organizations, including Health Evolution Partners, Elevance, and Aetna.

Fluegel holds a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from the University of Washington and a master's in public policy from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

Fluegel also serves as a lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business.





### **2024 DONORS**

Thanks to our donors who contributed to our health system, foundation and participating agencies, we were able to further invest in our programs and services as well as expand our ability to provide high-quality, compassionate health care for more New Yorkers.

# To donate to MJHS Foundation, visit mjhsfoundation.org or scan the QR Code.

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Lisa and Lee Einbinder

The Sustainers Society recognizes and honors individuals who have committed to securing the future of MJHS' charitable work through planned gifts. For information on how to join, please email Chinwe Egonu, **cegonu@mjhs.org**.

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Every year, our dedicated employees donate funds to support the programs and services of MJHS. Thank you to our staff, who not only care for our community members but also go above and beyond by donating funds to ensure we can continue providing care to those in need.

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# **Upcoming Events**

Each year, MJHS Foundation hosts events to support the mission of MJHS Health System. Not only do these events help raise essential funds, they also provide an opportunity to get together, thank our supporters and show them first-hand the difference their involvement makes—while having a little fun.

### GOLF CLASSIC at Old Westbury Golf & Country Club on June 30

The Golf Classic is dedicated to raising funds for the underfunded programs and services of MJHS Health System.

### **WINE TASTING**

Our Wine Tasting event is dedicated to raising funds to support the Golden Family STAR program, which provides additional home health aide hours to families in need.

### **HOSPICE GOES TO BROADWAY**

Hospice Goes to Broadway is dedicated to raising awareness and funds for the end-of-life programs MJHS Hospice provides to those in need.

Dates will be announced on our website and @mjhs01. If you are interested in being part of one of our events, contact the Foundation at (212) 356-5300, email us at events@mjhsfoundation.org or visit mjhsfoundation.org/mjhs-events.