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NEW TRENDS IN HEALTHCARE FACILITY DESIGN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN RESIDENTS' LIVES

Tobin+Parnes Design Enterprises Joins Forces with Hebrew Home for the Aged at Riverdale to Propel Healthcare to the Next Level

New York, NY (December 20, 2001) -- Tobin+Parnes Design Enterprises announced today that several of its highly innovative design projects undertaken for the Hebrew Home for the Aged at Riverdale are near completion. These design projects were implemented to improve the quality of life at all levels for the residents. From simple changes, such as providing a color contrast where corridor walls end and flooring begins (to keep unsteady walkers or those with failing eyesight from losing their bearings), to plans for a new game room prototype with interactive games, tabletop bowling and slot machines, Tobin+Parnes and Hebrew Home for the Aged administrators are on the cutting-edge of a new trend that will change the connotation of long-term healthcare.

Says Carol Tobin, principal at Tobin+Parnes, "There has been a movement among healthcare facilities in general, and at the Hebrew Home for the Aged (HHA) at Riverdale in particular, to transform what were traditionally hospital-like settings into environments that enhance the quality of life for the residents they provide for. We kept this in mind when we sat down with the administrators at HHA to evaluate their goals and concerns for creating enriched environments that would be appropriate for their residents. Many design options were discussed and explained. The project has been a labor of love; since it has been ongoing for the past two years, we have had the opportunity to observe the reaction to our efforts, and it is extremely gratifying to know that lives are being improved by the work we are doing."

Tobin+Parnes' first project was to bring nature indoors. Accordingly, they created an "interior" park on a dementia care floor of the HHA. This park begins with a vivid 9 X 38 foot full-color customized photographic mural of Central Park along one wall. The "real" plants, trees, granite block wall, fishpond and fountain up against the mural appear to be extensions of it. Light fixtures that have been covered with cloud formation transparencies further enhance the setting by creating an interior skyscape. Circular benches surrounding columns resembling trees provide residents with a cheerful, beautiful and functional place to sit while they chat with staff or guests. An antique pushcart serves as the foundation for a birdcage full of singing and cooing birds.

To further their efforts to bring the outside in, one of the resident floor designs includes a scaled down replica of Main Street, Anywhere, U.S.A., replete with awnings, window boxes and "windows" behind which are old color-tinted photos of the lower east side of NYC. There is even a sweet shop. Other projects at Hebrew Home for the Aged include a Social Lounge (which features an additional fountain), a Hospice Center for family respite and counseling (a soothing environment featuring residential seating and muted colors and lighting) a Game Room (replete with tabletop bowling, interactive TV computer games -- such as "Wheel of Fortune" -- slot machines that pay off in tokens, large scale tic tac toe, chess, checkers, etc.) and a resident Dining Room. Additionally, in their effort to ensure that employees are aware of the value the HHA administration places on them, special design features (cheerful, bright, colorful components and lots of natural light) were brought into a new Employee Cafeteria and Servery as well.

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Adds Tobin, "The average life expectancy went up 30 years this past century. That's remarkable. But it leaves us without a precedent for maintaining quality of life for the future aging population. Appropriate design implementation will be crucial for the healthcare industry in the next several years. It will be one of many components that facilities can provide to ensure that living to be elderly continues to be something people look forward to."

Several components of the Hebrew Home for the Aged project are subtle and unlikely to be observed by the untrained eye. Yet they are crucial to the goal of optimizing the residents' environment. For instance, the tables in the art studio were designed so that wheelchairs can easily slip beneath them without scraping the knuckles or knees of those who are steering them. Likewise, separation of corridors into "areas" (through the use of light, color, pilasters, etc.) gives residents a sense of neighborhood, so they know where they are, in what would otherwise be a long institutional hall with no distinguishing features. The Hebrew Home for the Aged has its own curator, and artwork -- hung in groupings according to style or artist -- which also helps residents to identify their location.

Tobin+Parnes Design Enterprises is a full-service architectural and interior design firm dedicated to providing outstanding design solutions for a broad range of clients on an a highly individualized basis. Tobin+Parnes works with top researchers, contractors and consultants from all over the country to stay on the cutting edge of construction, building and material developments. Examples of properties that have benefited from Tobin+Parnes' design solutions include Floris of London, Lancôme, Paul Taylor Dance Company, Episode International, The Riese Organization and more. Tobin+Parnes has also restored numerous Landmark buildings throughout New York, including the famed Paramount Building in Times Square.

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