

## Malcolm P. Slatko: A spirit for life

The community lost a favorite son last week – a man whose singular mission was to provide the highest caliber and loving Jewish Home for Houston's frail elderly and disabled.

Malcolm P. Slatko died unexpectedly on Feb. 17. He leaves behind a remarkable legacy at Seven Acres Jewish Senior Care Services, a Home filled with light, where its residents are celebrated for lives lived, and where they continue to be vital members of the community.

For 40 years, Slatko has been the Home's guiding light. Regarded as being ever approachable, he was considered a national expert in health care policy, education and fund development. He referred to the Home as "a place where those in need live in safety, dignity and respect, regardless of their financial status, in keeping with our Jewish traditions and values."

How many of us have driven past Seven Acres, knowing that loved ones were being cared for by an experienced and compassionate staff? That Slatko was responsible for the health and well-being of our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends?

How many of us have volunteered or served on the staff or board of Seven Acres, learning from him, aligning our own moral compasses with his?

How many of us, as children, visited and engaged with residents at Seven Acres? Or, taken our own children to the Home to do the same? *L'dor v'dor*: Slatko championed the value of intergenerational connectivity.

How many of us have worshipped in the chapel or attended celebrations in the Seven Acres auditorium? Community was the catalyst in Slatko's formula for bringing life and light into the Home.

How many of us have spent time with a loved one or friend in Seven Acres or chose Seven Acres for its skilled nursing facilities while we recovered from an injury? Or, thought to ourselves: If the day comes when I no longer can care for myself, Seven Acres will be my Home.

Slatko was prescient in understanding and recognizing the community's needs.

If you've ever been inside Seven Acres, you likely spoke to Slatko, to ask a question, to voice a complaint, to get help. Hurrying down a hallway, he never hesitated to stop and listen. Then, take action.

Slatko, small in stature, was a giant of a man, known far and wide for his selfless and remarkable kind of leadership. He would be the first one to tell a resident's family member that the Home "is not perfect." Yet, he was practical. In addressing a family member's concern, he would assemble the appropriate staff members and, together, they would come up with a solution.

He was a pillar of positivity with a special sense of humor, which he shared with residents and their families at particularly difficult times in their lives. He would tell residents' family members he wasn't doing any more for them than he would do for someone else. Yet, he made them all feel special. He promised a room with a view and good kosher food. That was Malcolm Slatko, and he made good on his promises.

While at the helm, Slatko steered Seven Acres to an esteemed status in the elder-care industry. However, he was known for attributing the Home's success to its staff and board. He would refer to a favorite expression: "If I have been able to see slightly above the crowd, it is because I have been able to stand on the shoulders of giants," who, he would add, "ensure that this great institution continues."

In 2019, Slatko received LeadingAge Texas' highest award, the Award of Honor. George Linial, LeadingAge CEO, spoke of Slatko at that time: "His great leadership, commitment of decades of service, and his dedication to quality care and services to residents have certainly enhanced our field and our association. ...

"Today's nursing home resident is far sicker and frailer than they were years ago," Linial said. "... They need the type of intensive care that a nursing home like Seven Acres provides. Our concern is, will nursing homes be open if we, the taxpayers, through our legislators, do not fund them?"

Slatko urged Houstonians to contact their Texas legislators to voice support for increasing the daily rate for nursing home Medicaid, particularly because Texas is among the lowest Medicaid-reimbursed states in the nation. Even so, during Slatko's tenure, the Home physically grew in size and number of residents; The Medallion added a continuum of care; and skilled nursing facilities were enhanced. Moreover, Seven Acres recovered multiple times from hurricanes and continues to serve as the model in an industry deeply affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Malcolm Slatko poured himself – his heart and his spirit – into the care of every resident at Seven Acres. For his selfless devotion to the community's elderly and frail, the Jewish Herald-Voice says, "Thank you."

Slatko leaves behind his adoring wife, Leslie; their grown children, Chaim and Lauren; other family members; a staff and board; and a grateful community.

His transformative leadership, care and resiliency are imprinted across generations of the community and, indeed, the field of elder care, as a whole.

*Zichrono l'vracha*, may his memory be for a blessing. And, may our community carry forward Malcolm Slatko's legacy by continuing to support our Jewish Home. May it go from strength to strength. □