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Gurwin's Calendar Girls - and Guys - Share Wisdom

Assisted living facility residents celebrated as pin-up stars in 2013 calendar

By Jacqueline Birzonjbirzon@longislandernews.com

The Gurwin Jewish Nursing and Rehabilitation Center celebrated wisdom by turning the spotlight on 13 residents, ages 82-101, by featuring them as calendar models.

The seniors were honored during a Dec. 11 reception at Book Revue, where students from Harborfields High School gave a musical performance and residents read excerpts from the calendar shoot.

The Commack-based facility hired a professional photographer and makeup artist to conduct a photo shoot highlighting 13 residents who were asked to pose for the calendar, and share one piece of advice for younger generations.

The shoot came about as the result of a brainstorm between Cheryl Silberman, community outreach liaison for Gurwin Jewish Fay J. Lindner Residences, Gurwin Public Relations Director Dennine Cook, and Staci Rosenberg-Simons, director of marketing for Gurwin Jewish Fay J. Lindner Residences.

Silberman said every Gurwin resident has a story, and the calendar shoot was a way for the facility to honor the residents.

"My office is also someone's home, and I've heard many stories from residents about their families and political views...all seasoned by life experiences. The idea really arose from a desire to share their wisdom," Silberman said.

David Robinson, 87, said his number one piece of advice is to smile. Having served in the Navy during World War II,

Robinson was forced to cope with a number of difficult and unforeseen hardships. During those times, Robinson said he was inspired by a simple quote that hung above his bunk, which read "the man worthwhile is the man with a smile." The veteran has carried that lesson with him throughout his life, and said he is better off for it.

Gene Schwarz, 89, was one of more than 10,000 children taken from their homes in Austria, Germany and Poland and sent to orphanages in England during World War II. Despite her subjection to intolerable cruelty, Schwarz's advice to younger generations is to always be kind.

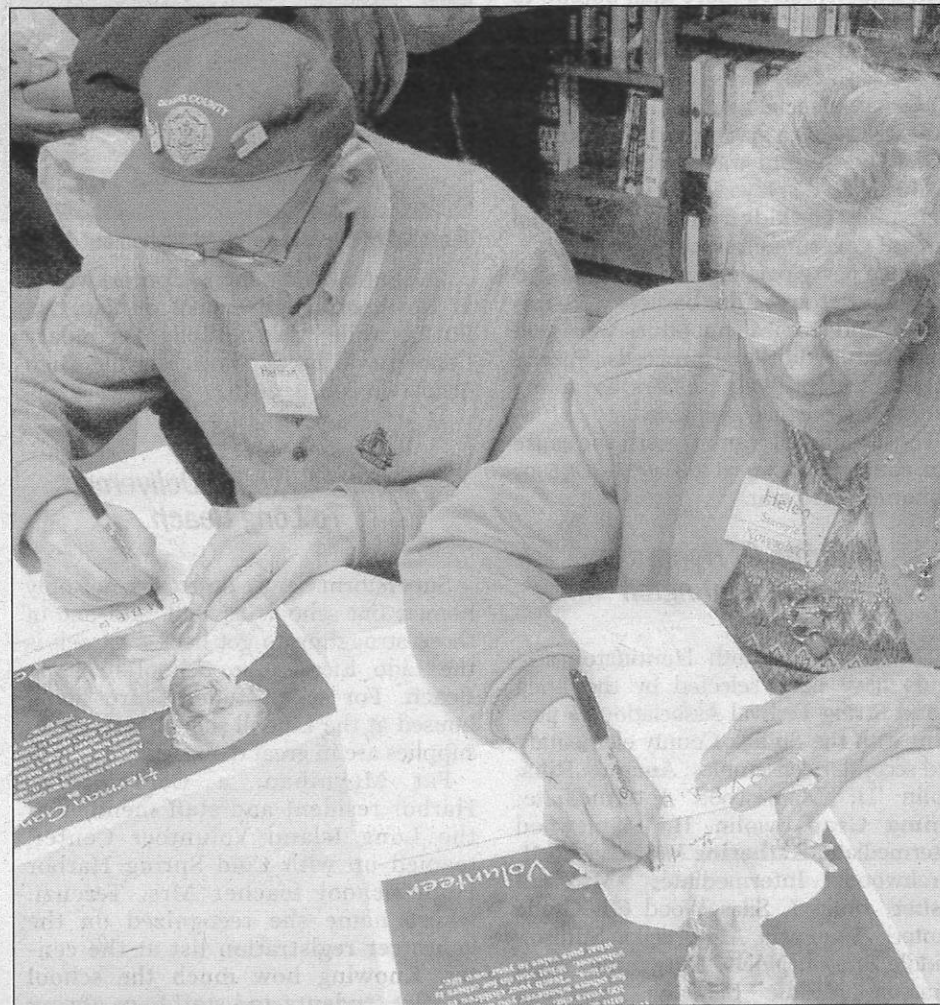
"It was very difficult. I lost my whole family. If not for the generosity of the people who cared for us, I too would have perished," Schwarz said. "Be kind, even to those you don't know. Kindness and generosity are everyone's responsibility."

Shirley Leos, 90, is a practicing psychologist who continues to aid her long-time patients over the phone. Shirley's advice to younger generations is to listen.

"There is so much these days to distract one from actually hearing what others are saying," she said. "Listen before you speak. Really hear."

And David and Dorothy Stopsky, 84 and 82, who have been married more for more than 59 years, urged young people to value love.

"People today think that marriage should always be easy. As soon as it gets difficult, many just get divorced. True love isn't always easy. Every day, remember why you got married. Remember why you fell in love," he said.



Long-Islander photo/Jacqueline Birzon

Herman Gancz and Helen Stemple autograph copies of the Gurwin From Generation to Generation "L'Dor v'dor" calendar. Gancz's advice is to "be confident," while Stemple says to "volunteer."