

SILICON VALLEY / SAN JOSE

BusinessJournal

People On the Move

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Spotlight

Moldaw Family Residences, a Jewish community for seniors in Palo Alto, has named Marilyn Israel executive director to guide operations as the facility prepares to open this fall.

The community at 899 Charleston is the only Jewish-sponsored senior living community in the south Peninsula, Israel said, adding that "you don't have to be Jewish to live here."

Israel, who has 30 years of experience in senior housing, health care and human services, most recently was executive director of a life care community in Honolulu. She was also executive director of The Lodge at Balfour and Balfour Retirement Community in Colorado. The Moldaw community will consist of 193 apartment homes that are maintained by the company. Residents will also have access to the new Oshman Family Jewish Community Center, which will offer educational, cultural and wellness programming as well as meeting areas and fitness facilities.

"In my experience, communities always take on a life of their own, and I think the collaboration between Moldaw Family Residences and the OFJCC will help create a positive sense of community," Israel said. "I also think the community's unique design and partnership will allow us to tap into the energy and creativity of both residents and the wide variety of different generations who will also be utilizing the campus."

Israel said she was drawn to Moldaw by "the attraction of something so unique and the opportunity to create a community unlike any other."

She began her career as a visiting nurse.

"I saw people in their homes as I dealt mostly with aging clients," she said. "I was struck by how isolated they became."

She went on to work at nursing homes, then became a licensed nursing home administrator.

"I gravitated to the thought that there's more to life than being in a nursing home," she said. "I was attracted to a campus-style facility where people could age in a healthy way in the right place."

Easing transition

Israel said that when people think about moving into a facility such as Moldaw, there's often a great deal of trepidation.

"Many are leaving their homes of many years," she said. "They're fearful. They're choosing a new lifestyle. But I've seen time and time again that once they make that transition, they're so much happier. They're no longer isolated; transportation is provided, their nutrition usually improves as they can have a nice meal in social environment."

She said she's excited to be in on the launch of Moldaw: "It's challenging as well as exciting, like putting a puzzle together."

Israel and her husband have three daughters, two in Colorado and one in Kansas. Her husband, an attorney, still commutes to Hawaii as they prepare to sell their house.