



Models, from left, Bobbi Weinstein, Anthony Strollo, Harriet Pepine, Celina Kohn, Maureen Collins and Joseph Barreca live at Gurwin Jewish-Fay J. Lindner Residences in Commack.

The fresh faces of 2025

Calendar models share some advice that could help make this a better year

BY ARLENE GROSS
Special to Newsday

Choose to be happy” is Norman Finkelstein’s mantra.

Finkelstein, with a joyful smile, graces the cover

of Gurwin Jewish-Fay J. Lindner Residences’ 2025 calendar.

A World War II veteran and former insurance broker, Finkelstein, 98, believes that happiness is connected to better health.

“I tell everyone — just be happy,” Finkelstein said for the January page of the calendar. For 13 years, Gurwin’s “L’dor

v’dor (“From generation to generation” in Hebrew) calendar has spotlighted a dozen or so residents of the 210-apartment assisted-living facility in Commack. The calendar includes professionally shot photos, biographical information and some advice for the next generation.

Gurwin staffers interviewed the residents and in the process discovered a lot about

their lives, said Stuart Almer, president and chief executive of Gurwin Healthcare System.

“And what’s important to us is to learn their history, maybe what they’ve contributed, and oftentimes it might be hardship that they experienced,” Almer said. “We learn a lot through the interview about them, and they’re very comfortable in our sharing that, and it’s something that we can

celebrate what they’ve accomplished in their lives.”

FOR FAMILY, FRIENDS AND MORE

In addition to helping forge closer bonds between residents and staff, the Gurwin calendar is celebrated beyond the Commack facility and sent out to family members or

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Celina Kohn, center, who lives at Gurwin Jewish-Fay J. Lindner Residences in Commack, walked the red carpet in December to unveil Gurwin's 2025 calendar.

GURWIN HEALTHCARE

A year's worth of wisdom

CALENDAR from E13

anyone that the participants request.

"Somebody wanted, I think, 40 calendars sent," said Dennine Cook, Gurwin's chief communications officer, adding that the calendar is also used as a marketing piece throughout the year. "We print 2,500, and we do also offer them to our short-term residents in our rehab in case they're looking for a way to kind of orient themselves and keep their days straight."

In addition to the interviews, before the photo shoot, Gurwin also arranges hair and makeup sessions for the participants.

The images are as important as the advice, Cook said.

"These pictures are them

At first, I didn't think I wanted to [be a calendar model]. I didn't know what it entailed, but it was a lot of fun."

— Harriet Pepine, 96

now, looking fabulous," she said.

Part of the project entails a special "calendar reveal" event where the facility presents the models walking a red carpet, with relatives in attendance. During the festivities, an emcee calls each model to the podium one at a time as their calendar page is displayed on a projection screen for the first time, a video on the making of

the calendar is played and models get the full celebrity treatment signing their calendar pages.

Recently, several of the 2025 calendar subjects gathered in the café at the assisted living residence to talk about themselves, their words of wisdom and their unique outlooks on life.

Here is what they had to say:

MAUREEN COLLINS, 88

Throughout her life, two words have guided Maureen Collins: "Have faith."

"Have faith in God. Have faith in my fellow man. There's good in everybody," said Collins, who's been at Gurwin for a year and is the face of April 2025.

After serving for two decades as a nun at the Sisters

of St. Dominic of Amityville, Collins left to take care of her elderly mother and then became a lay teacher in a Catholic school.

"I lived pretty much the same life as I did before I left the order," Collins said.

Though she said most people are good and decent, Collins acknowledges she knows one woman who isn't terribly nice.

"But she has good in her," Collins said. "And every now and then when her arthritis is not bothering her — or whatever it is — it shows. And I think that's the sparkle of almighty God in each human being that He created. Sometimes you have to dig deep, but it's there."



ANTHONY STROLLO, 88

“Be there for family” are Anthony Strollo’s words of wisdom for the May page. Strollo, who lived in West Islip before coming to Gurwin in February, knows the importance of family on multiple levels, having purchased a Dodge dealership franchise in Riverhead with the financial support of his parents. It became a successful business, with him at the helm for 45 years, until 2021.

And, he said, as a kid, of “52 Sundays a year, 48 of them we would spend in my grandparents’ house.” He added that he visited his mother’s family the other four Sundays. “In those days,” he said, “you didn’t get an invite to visit somebody’s house. You just went to the bakery, bought a piece of cake, got in the car and you went.”

Strollo, who passed along the virtue of supporting family to his three children, noted that out of his parents’ children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, 10 of them have college degrees.

“That’s pretty good for two people who had to leave school at 14 to go to work,” said Strollo of his folks, who were young adults during the Great Depression.

CELINA KOHN, 93

“Be kind” is Holocaust survivor Celina Kohn’s dictum for the July 2025 page.

As a child in Poland, Kohn was hidden on a farm during World War II and never forgot the kindness of the woman who saved her life at great risk to herself and her children.

“People were kind to me at the time when my life was in danger,” said Kohn, who formerly lived in Fairlawn, New Jersey, and worked part time at Macy’s.

Kohn was hidden in a cottage on the farm for close to two years, when she was 11 and 12.

“Her conscience didn’t allow her to get rid of me, although her life was just as much in danger as mine,” said Kohn of her savior. “She also taught me the Christian religion, just in case if I should be discovered, I should be just like a Christian. I wore a cross, just in case.”

Kohn recalls being hungry all the time.

“She was very poor,” Kohn said. “There was nobody to work the fields. So, she shared what little bit she had with her

children and me. She was one of a kind.”

BOBBI WEINSTEIN, 82

“Look for the silver lining” is Bobbi Weinstein’s motto for November 2025, and it’s one she lives up to every day.

For Weinstein, life is filled with optimism and opportunities.

“When one door closes, another one always opens,” she said.

Weinstein worked as a public school teacher until she had children. After becoming active at her East Northport temple, she was offered the opportunity to teach religious school.

She and her husband, Gabe, moved to Gurwin in February 2024, after he became sick. He passed away several months later.

At Gurwin, she became secretary of the residents’ council and met Joel Karpp, who serves as its president. The two are dating.

Though she’s been at her new home less than a year, Weinstein has become enmeshed in the Gurwin community, playing volleyball and dominoes, among other activities; running a Thursday get-together where residents play cards and games; and a friendship circle on Mondays.

Weinstein spreads her words of positivity to everyone who moves in.

“If you’re going to come here and sit in your apartment and feel sorry for yourself, nothing’s going to happen,” said Weinstein, adding that she encourages people to hang out in the lobby where they can meet other people.

JOSEPH BARRECA, 76

“Smile” is the succinct advice from Joseph Barreca, who lived in Howard Beach, Queens, and worked for the former New York Telephone Co.

“I’m very active here,” said Barreca, who excels at salsa dancing. “I’ve been involved in dancing over here. I dance with everybody.”

Though he has Parkinson’s, dementia and other debilitating illnesses, Barreca maintains a positive attitude.

“I put in my mind: I’m here to stay. I’m not going to cry,” said Barreca, adding, “I love people. I love helping people. People come here, I introduce myself to them.”



Joseph Barreca looks at his March calendar page image at the unveiling ceremony in December.

Maureen Collins signs her 2025 calendar page (April) at the unveiling. Gurwin prints 2,500 copies of the calendar.

HARRIET PEPINE, 96

A former elementary school teacher and college business office supervisor, Harriet Pepine moved to Gurwin five years ago from her Hauppauge home, and made her calendar debut as Ms. September 2025.

“At first, I didn’t think I wanted to do it. I didn’t know what it entailed, but it was a lot of fun,” said Pepine.

Pepine’s message in the calendar comes directly from a lesson she learned while working as a twenty-something: “Treat others as you want to be treated.”

She recalled leveling harsh criticism at a fellow employee that made her co-worker feel terrible.

“I was very young, and I really didn’t know how to speak to people,” said Pepine. “I was a perfectionist, and

what I saw was not perfect, and I just said it like it was. And there are different ways to say things.”

After that, Pepine supervised many others and said she never spoke so critically to any of them.

“I learned how to deal with people after one lesson,” said Pepine, adding, “When they worked for me, they worked with me.”

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