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Amanda Lurey

July 22, 2025 by Amanda Lurey

Harriett and Ralph Kaplan Estates Assisted Living hosted a high tea birthday party celebration for its six assisted living residents who range in age from 101-111 last Thursday afternoon. Four were able to attend. From left, Alice Wallack (102), Kay Morocco (104), Marie Cassidy (104) and Jennie Ruggerio (101). (Amanda Lurey)

Peabody celebrates its centenarians

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PEABODY – Over 50 people attended Harriett and Ralph Kaplan Estates Assisted Living's high tea birthday party celebration for its six assisted living residents who range in age from 101-111 last Thursday afternoon.

The six centenarians are Florence Fournier (100), Jennie Ruggerio (101), Alice Wallack (102), Marie Cassidy (104), Kay Morocco (105) and Rose Regis (111) – although Fournier and Regis were unable to attend the party.

Barbara Lee, director of resident life, announced during the party that she was thinking of “what it was like in 1925 as opposed to 2025.

“These ladies have seen 18 United States presidents come and go,” Lee began, as attendees listened and nodded along as they reminisced on their lives. “They’ve seen a change from the ice box to having a refrigerator in their home. They’ve seen radio to black-and-white TV to color TV. They’ve seen phones where you have to call the operator – I’m sure a lot of you remember that – to the phones on the wall, to cell phones with tiny computers in them. These ladies have seen it all, and that’s amazing.”

The party had tiny cucumber sandwiches, baked good towers, tea, and, of course, live music. Alan LaBella kept the energy high and the guests cheesing as he danced around the room, egging on those in attendance to sing and dance along with him to tunes like Frank Sinatra’s “New York, New York” and the well-known and well-loved “Yankee Doodle Dandy.”

Morocco, who will turn 105 on Aug. 10, still goes ballroom dancing every week at the Peabody Senior Center, wearing high heels. She said she’s been “blessed with good feet” and has been dancing since she was 5 years old. Morocco also insists on using the stairs at the assisted living facility instead of taking the elevator so she can “keep fit for ballroom dancing.”

Residents are warm, vibrant, personable, candid and aware of the world today. Each senior lives independently in their own apartment and participates in the daily recreational and social activities on the campus.

Harriett and Ralph Kaplan Estates Assisted Living is part of Chelsea Jewish Lifecare. The nonprofit is redefining senior care and re-envisioning what life should be like for those living with disabling conditions. The eldercare community includes a wide array of skilled and short-term rehab residences, ALS, MS and ventilator dependent specialized care residences, traditional and specialized assisted living options, memory care, independent living, adult day health and homecare, and hospice agencies that deliver customized and compassionate care.