

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT WITH BEN KURLAND, LNHA

### RECIPIENT OF THE NJ CHAPTER NEW ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD

By Deborah A. Petersen, LNHA, MHA, NJCALA

**Writer's note:** *The New Administrator of the Year Award is given to an individual in recognition of his commitment to professionalism and excellence in long-term care administration and his potential for leadership in the College.*

- Q. Ben, what does receiving this award mean to you and how do you feel about receiving such an honor from your peers?
- A. *I would like to first and foremost thank my CEO, Mr. Sidney Greenberger, for nominating me for this prestigious award from such a prestigious organization. I am truly honored and humbled to receive this award. It is such an honor to be recognized by my peers for my achievements and accomplishments at my facility, AristaCare at Whiting and in the long-term care profession.*
- Q. Mayor Michael Fressola of Manchester Township had extraordinary praise for your leadership at your facility. The letter of recommendation that was read stated that the facility was rated the worst by the community and in the three years you have been Administrator it is now rated the best. What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?
- A. *The challenges were many. When we first took over the ownership and management of AristaCare at Whiting, formerly known as Twin Bridges, the census was extremely challenged, 102 residents out of 180 occupied the facility. The reputation was poor and the care the residents were receiving was substandard quality of care. We increased all staffing levels. We met with the staff to receive their buy-in on the goals of the facility and new ownership, and I'm pleased to say that the staff stepped up and the teamwork was remarkable. Mr. Greenberger spared no expense in personnel or on capital improvements. In fact, we just finished our \$3,000,000 renovation.*
- We added new programming in the facility, specifically a state-of-the-art cardiac short-term sub-acute program, "Cardiac Boot Camp," with a cardiac care R.N. who provides continuous telemetry monitoring. We provide the community with peritoneal dialysis, sub-acute services, and traditional long-term care. We also added a state-certified dementia program named Nostalgia Park. In our state-certified dementia program we have a Dementia Care Manager, Pamela Gormley, who manages the day-to-day operations of the facility, like an administrator. We provide different levels of activity programming based on the cognitive and sensory needs of our residents. We rolled out four different customer satisfaction surveys that are distributed to residents upon admission, after one week, after one month and upon discharge. We utilize Press Ganey for our discharge surveys. On the CMS website "Nursing Home Compare," our facility presently has a 4-star rating compared to a 1-star rating three years ago. We are now first choice in the community, have a waiting list, and are 100% occupied. We have achieved tremendous positive results through hard work, long hours, the right team, staff buy-in and prioritizing our goals. We have engaged the community by hosting monthly Health Screenings and over 20 educational outreaches per year. We have established an ad-hoc community board and advisory medical panel.*
- Q. AristaCare is a relatively new, young company. Can you tell us a little bit about your parent organization and how you joined them?
- A. *AristaCare Health Services currently owns & operates five AristaCare sub-acute rehab centers under the leadership of Sidney Greenberger, Chairman & CEO. In February of 2007 I accepted an AIT position at Twin Bridges and when the facility was sold, I was offered the administrator position from Mr. Greenberger.*
- Q. Prior to becoming an administrator, what line of work were you in?



What made you decide to become an administrator?

- A. *I was studying Judaic Studies at the Yeshiva and working part-time in real estate. I've always had a strong drive/passion for long-term care administration and geriatrics and decided to network and pursue opportunities within long-term care.*
- Q. How long have you been a member of the NJACHCA and who encouraged you to join? What do you like most about it and how do you think we can improve?
- A. *I have been a member of the NJACHCA for three years now. Mr. Sidney Greenberger, CEO of AristaCare encouraged me to join. I like the peer-to-peer interaction and the opportunity to lean on the collective experience of our administrators. I believe that members of the NJACHCA are a valuable resource for advisement and encouragement. I believe the NJACHCA can improve by establishing a best practices operational tool on its' website.*
- Q. What do you find most enjoyable about your job and the facility that you lead?
- A. *Being with people. I am a peoples person and enjoy the interaction with staff, residents, family members, and others.*
- Q. After a long day at the office how do you wind down? What personal interests or hobbies do you have?
- A. *I enjoy spending time with my wife, Naomi and our four children, twin girls Meira and Shani (age 6), Rena (age 3), and Jacob (20 months). If extra time finds its way into my busy schedule, I thoroughly enjoy playing basketball as well as reading.*

To learn more about AristaCare, go to [www.aristacare.com](http://www.aristacare.com)

