

ETTA INAUGURATES NEW HEADQUARTERS

April 26, 2018

By Jewish Home LA

Etta Inaugurates New Headquarters

Tova Abady

ETTA held a grand opening for their new home in North Hollywood on Rosh Chodesh Iyar. Staff, clients, dignitaries, and community leaders attended the event.

Shaina Barnett introduced Dr. Michael Held, Founder and Executive Director of ETTA Los Angeles. He told the audience that ETTA is now in its 25th year of operation here. For most of that time, its small, cramped offices were scattered in four locations across the area. Everything changed this March. A new landlord, Mr. George W. Schaeffer, provided ETTA with a new, comfortable space that will enable a high degree of collaboration. Dr. Held likened the success of ETTA to relay runners, each person passing the baton to the next in perfect teamwork.

The ETTA team, numbering 200 employees, are working together to assemble funds for "The Village," a state-of-the-art residential housing project, where ETTA clients can live and have all their needs met in one community. The announcement for The Village was made at last year's gala, and so far, five million dollars has been raised. Twenty million dollars more is needed.



Dr. Held called several individuals to the stage. Shlomo Meyers, with the help of ETTA, is embarking on a new career as a public speaker on behalf of people with disabilities. Jacob Katz was a member of the very first ETTA program in 1993 and has graciously spread the word about ETTA. Manijeh Nehorai presides over the largest program in the city for Iranian American outreach. Beginning in 1994, Mrs. Nehorai has worked tirelessly, building a board and pouring her heart and soul into helping families.

Former board president, Dr. Irving Lebovics, was recognized for facilitating the partnership between ETTA and Ohel Children and Family Services located in New York. Ohel is the largest social service agency of its type with 500 individuals in residential care. Both the ETTA and Ohel boards decided on a merger in 2012, which has proved very beneficial. CEO of Ohel, David Mandel, flew in from New York and was on hand for the building dedication.

State Senator Robert M. Hertzberg and Los Angeles City Controller Ron Galperin pledged their support for ETTA and will work hard at finding any possible resources to help.

Next, Dr. Held pointed out a neon sign in the room reading "George's Place." The cafeteria at ETTA's new facility was added by Mr. Schaeffer so his employees wouldn't have to waste half their lunch hour driving somewhere in the city. Dr. Held said it is clear that everything George does is out of warmth and kindness. Also expressing gratitude to Mr. Schaeffer and his wife Irina were board members ETTA Co-Chairman Jaime Sohachsky, ETTA President Mr. Kambiz Babaoff, and Daniel Schwartz, a special young man who is part of the ETTA Community and has a long-standing friendship with Mr. Schaeffer.

Daniel introduced Mr. Schaeffer, who said, "I can't even express the feeling I have that this building will be a center point for helping so many families." He thanked ETTA for allowing him to be a tiny part of that.

Mr. Schaeffer related in an interview earlier that he believed ETTA coming to him through the Jewish grapevine was *bashert*. He told the story of how he put *mezuzahs* on all the doors of his facility. When he decided to sell the building, a lawyer pointed at them and said, "What are those?" Mr. Schaeffer told him if it was an issue, he didn't need his business or the sale. It was never brought up again.

"I am not very religious," said Mr. Schaeffer, "but I believe strongly in my Judaism and Jewish values." One Jewish value Mr. Schaeffer humbly espouses is *chesed*. He has quietly supported many organizations in Israel for years and now is very happy to partner with ETTA.

Jeff Remer, a fundraiser for ETTA, said, "One thing the community can do is become more aware of what ETTA does and what ETTA means to the community. When someone has a child that has special needs and they get to a certain age – 18 years or older – a lot of the support systems that are intact fall off. ETTA steps up and fills that void for their rest of their lives, because when parents are aging and if they have a concern about who is going to take care of their child. It's still their child whether they are 30 or 50. ETTA provides a myriad of services depending on the level each adult child."

Mr. Remer suggested that the audience save the date for two events coming up, the Friends of ETTA Iranian-American Division Gala ETTA on October 18th and the ETTA Gala on November 28th.



ETTA

INDEPENDENCE. INCLUSION. GROWTH.