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Howard County was established in 1851, but didn't gain national attention until the 1960s when the Rouse Company purchased 14,000 acres from county landowners to establish the planned community of Columbia.

James Rouse, the company's founder, envisioned the new community as a place where neighbors would mingle on cul-de-sacs and at group mailboxes, and run into each other at the village center. Columbia would not identify itself as a suburb of Baltimore or even Washington in that people would not have to commute to jobs, schools, shopping and medical services. When Columbia opened in 1967, the city was designed to offer all these things. At the same time, its residents would feel connected to one another regardless of race, religion or income.

As a result of this philosophy, individual religious congregations were encouraged to establish themselves in interfaith centers, common worship facilities owned and jointly operated by a variety of religious congregations working collaboratively.

Many of Columbia's first residents were attracted to the city for idealistic reasons. They espoused Rouse's philosophy, wanting to live in a new community where they could shape its future. For many, though, the choice was purely practical. When David and Ruth Naftaly, who both grew up in the Washington suburbs, got married in 1973, they could only afford to live in an apartment in Montgomery County. In Howard County, though, they could afford a house. They opted for the house.

Compared to the established Jewish communities in Baltimore and Washington, DC, the Howard County Jewish community in the early 70s was practically invisible. "It did not have the Jewish focus we were used to in Washington," recalls David. "For the longest time," says Ruth, "we didn't even know a Jewish Federation existed."

But both David and Ruth had been raised to participate in the Jewish community. Ruth's parents demonstrated honest, Jewish values and always gave to tzedakah. Today at age 87 and 95, they still give to their synagogue in Silver Spring. David's parents didn't have a lot of money, but always worked on behalf of the Jewish community. So David and Ruth started getting involved. They saw the Baltimore Jewish community as a model and threw themselves into causes like the Associated, Israel Bonds, Temple Isaiah and AIPAC. Later they worked on behalf of the Jewish Federation of Howard County as well, giving generously of their time and through their philanthropy.

Others stepped up as well, and on June 3rd, they will be honored at *The Event*, a special celebration of the Jewish Federation of Howard County to recognize those who worked tirelessly and in countless ways; from donating their time, to providing leadership of Jewish organizations, to providing financial support, all to establish a strong Jewish presence in Howard County. These individuals include:

- Phyllis and Bernard Nash
- Michelle and Jerry Levine
- Amy and Kenneth Goodman
- Fran and John Bowman
- Lois and Dennis Gleicher
- Brenda and Alan Fishbein
- Nancy and Ed Kutler
- Jackie and Roger Norden

David and Ruth Naftaly are stepping in once again, serving as honorary chairs of *The Event*. “All of these people are the Jewish faces of Howard County,” explains Ruth. “They began the circle, and now the circle is getting larger.”

Today, Columbia is less like James Rouse’s original vision, and more like a typical U.S. suburb. Although the city’s villages remain intact, people live in increasingly large homes and drive to the common mailbox instead of gathering there. Similarly, as the population has grown and religious congregations have become more established, individual faith communities have gained importance and congregants have demanded their own houses of worship. Three Jewish congregations in particular, Temple Isaiah, Beth Shalom, and Ahavas Israel have built their own buildings on outparcels or outside the Columbia-city limits.

Columbia has grown to 260,000 residents, with approximately 23,000 Jewish individuals, and has been named by *Money* magazine as one of America’s best places to live. In March, Howard County was named one of the wealthiest counties in the country. Columbia has grown up. It is no longer the stepchild of Baltimore or Washington. It is a strong Jewish community in its own right, finally able to take responsibility for its own. Though there are many affluent Jews here, there are also Jewish people in Howard County who are poor, who have addictions, and who are frail and unable to take care of themselves. In addition, over the past eighteen months, many Jews and non-Jews alike have lost their jobs. It is the mission of the Federation to be a place for all of the Jewish people of Howard County, a place to come together as one.

The Jewish community is stepping up to help. When Harry and Deborah Adler conceived of the Knesset Club only a few years ago, they hoped to get a few dozen couples to participate. Today, over 200 couples take part in the group, giving \$100 a month or more to support the Federation and its important work. Who would have expected that remarkable growth?

It is because of the original leaders, those individuals being honored at *The Event*, that we have such a strong Jewish foundation in such a young community. “Everyone has worked so hard,” says Ruth. “Here’s hoping that our Federation goes from strength to strength.”

To become an event sponsor or to reserve your place at The Event, please call the Federation office at 410-730-4976, ext. 104 or visit online at www.JewishHowardCounty.org.