

Pinecrest

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Palace residents embrace Yiddish for anti-aging and keeping their heritage

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When instructor Chany Stolik comes into the classroom at The Palace Coral Gables, her students typically say “a gutn morgn” instead of “Good Morning.”

They are practicing Yiddish, the hugely popular class offered at The Palace Coral Gables, an active retirement community in Coral Gables. While the community offers 32 different classes every month, there are devoted students attending Stolik’s class, coined “Kvell and Kvetch” or in English translated “Beaming with Pride and Complaining.”

Each week, she themes the class around a holiday, season or current event and selects 10 key words to incorporate the theme.

“We’ll chit chat in casual conversation and then learn a song using the words,” she said. “We’ll discuss the historical background of the song and its message.”

Saying the Yiddish words seems to take people back in time. The words evoke memories. Often someone will say the word, pause and then say, “I remember my mother or grandmother saying that.”

“Yiddish ties them to their families, their youth and Jewish heritage,” said Stolik. “Many students recall that when Yiddish was spoken when they were children, it was a secret language that the grandparents would use to talk with the adults.”

While for many years it seemed Yiddish was a dying language, there are efforts to keep it alive. It is a wonderful source of expressions. Jewish scriptwriters for TV and movies have introduced many Yiddish words into popular culture. Yiddish makes its way into HBO’s “Curb Your Enthusiasm” and the award-winning “Mrs. Maisel” on Amazon.



Chany Stolik (standing) facilitates Yiddish class at The Palace Coral Gables.

There’s an International Association of Yiddish Clubs and universities offer courses along with online classes and websites.

For seniors, research is indicating that learning languages exercises the brain, regardless of age. A number of recent studies suggest that learning a foreign language can slow the inevitable age-related cognitive decline or perhaps even delay the onset of dementia.

In her class, combining the language with music gives both the left and right sides of the brain a workout.

Stolik finds the Yiddish class offers more: “It’s very powerful in connecting people with their pasts. Speaking Yiddish connects people with their Jewish heritage.”

She loves teaching the seniors because she finds she learns as much from them.

She learned Yiddish as a child growing up in Brooklyn and was close to her grandparents.

“My grandfather would only speak Yiddish to us so learning Yiddish was the only way we could communicate with him,” she explained.

Stolik is the Co-Director of the Chabad in Coral Gables with her husband.

At The Palace, classes offered are included in the monthly rental at no additional charge. The community also has a partnership with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute of The University of Miami for lecture series. Educational classes, crafting, and fitness classes are available each day.

To learn more call 305-445-7444 or visit <www.PalaceCoralGables.com>.