

# JEWISH CHRONICLE

A Tradition Since 1920



Anna Levina (left) and Anna Kapitannikova study English grammar at the Central Learning Center.

## Rush to citizenship

### Russian immigrants facing loss of benefits

By Jacqueline Ross  
Staff Writer

Ask a crowded bus full of elderly Russian Jewish immigrants "Who here wants to be a citizen?" and you will hear shouts of "We all want!"

It's not just a warm feeling for their new homeland that motivates these folks to board a sweltering school bus at 7:45 a.m. four days a week and ride one hour each way to attend citizenship class.

It's the impending loss of their government benefits under the provisions of the nation's welfare reform law. As the law currently stands, immigrants who have lived in the United States for more than five years without becoming citizens will lose government benefits on Oct. 1. By becoming citizens, they hope keep the benefits for which other poor and elderly Americans are still eligible: Supplemental Security Income (SSI), food stamps and Medicaid.

"It's very important for old people, this citizenship," said Anatolio Levin, a 73-year-old native of Smolensk, Russia. "You have citizenship — you have SSI. You not have — you killed," he said, drawing his finger across his throat. "It is out in the street."

Things may not be that dramatic. After all, Levin was a professional actor back in Russia. But those who are unable to become citizens do face an uncertain future.

There have been reports that Congress, in next year's budget agreement, will restore benefits to disabled legal immigrants and eliminate a "Catch-22" in the citizenship application process. But



Photos by Jacqueline Ross

Russian immigrants climb back on the bus for home after a morning of English and citizenship classes. A new law effective Oct. 1 will take benefits away from non-citizens who have lived in the U.S. for more than five years.

those policies were still being worked out earlier this week.

So the local Jewish community is bracing itself to help the 50 or so Jewish legal immigrants who face the loss of government benefits this year. (See sidebar)

#### A helping hand

Meanwhile, the Jewish Federation, through its affiliate Jewish Family & Children Services, has tried to give those facing the cutoff a hand in obtaining citizenship. It pays for the bus that shuttles between the Santa Fe Towers in downtown Over-

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## Shalom sale off

### Board backs out amid concerns over buyer

By Rick Hellman  
Managing Editor

The sale of Shalom Geriatric Center and Shalom Plaza to an affiliate of Pennsylvania-based IHN-New Health Management Systems Inc. has been called off.

Shalom officials said they backed out of the deal after another area facility operated by New Health, The Phoenix Rehabilitation and Nursing Center in Olathe, Kan., was fined and closed its doors after state regulators found deficiencies in patient care.

"Shalom won't be sold strictly to the highest bidder," said Shalom board president Michael Klein. "We want to make sure any potential buyer has the management skills to run it the way we want it run. ... We've always said we have that responsibility to the community, to the residents and their families and to employees."

Officials at New Health could not be reached for comment before press time this week.

Klein said Shalom has already "been approached with other offers ... It's not a question of if Shalom will be sold, it's a question of when."

And he said Shalom's plans to build a new facility in Johnson County, Kan., would be largely unaffected by the failure to consummate the deal for the Missouri properties with New Health.

"By the time we need the funds, they should be available," Klein said. "I think an opening in Johnson County toward the end of 1999 is still reasonable."

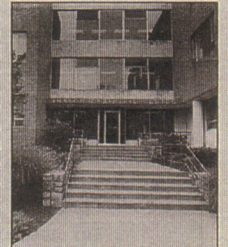
#### Incomplete pass

A \$6 million deal between Shalom and New Health Management Systems was first announced in October 1996. At that time, the parties announced, New Health was to become manager of the Shalom properties, while titles would be held by Heritage Housing Development, a Los Angeles-based not-for-profit corporation.

Shalom was to become the second in a Midwestern group of facilities operated by New Health, along with The Phoenix. New Health operates facilities with a total of 5,000 beds across the country. The new operators were to keep the Shalom name during a transitional period and to maintain the facilities' Jewish ambience.

Back in October, the parties said they hoped to

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The Shalom Geriatric Center facility on Holmes Road in South Kansas City.