

2019 Winners – LeadingAge - Robert Wood Johnson Health Equity Award

Michael Klein and Gabriel Sanders were chosen as the winners of the highly competitive 2019 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) – LeadingAge Health Equity Award. This award recognizes individuals who successfully implement a systems change approach to reduce health disparities regarding access to quality care, education, employment, income, community environment, housing, or public safety.

Klein and Sanders were selected for successfully decreasing social isolation and increasing mental stimulation in older adults with Kavod on the Road and Kavod in the City. Kavod on the Road engages 900+ older adults in the greater Denver area with social-emotional, educational and informational programs at partnering synagogues and other community agencies. Kavod in the City provides programs centered on health, wellness and cultural diversity to 150 low-income seniors living in three specific senior sites with the Denver Housing Authority; this component is funded by the NextFifty Initiative. Klein is Kavod's President/CEO and Sanders serves as the Outreach Coordinator.

"It is very humbling to receive this award," said Klein. "Our approach in helping older adults living on our Kavod campus is the same we extend into the community to those living on their own or with the Denver Housing Authority."

"Older adults are often marginalized or overlooked in our society," said Sanders. "We are glad to provide services for this population to increase health outcomes and decrease obvious discrepancies."



Posing for the camera at the Walk for Israel.

Specifically, the RWJF-LeadingAge Award distinguishes individuals who work hard to successfully ensure that older adults, no matter their location or their socioeconomic background, have equal access to services, supports, and opportunities that will help them lead healthy lives and achieve overall well-being. The Awards for Health Equity are part of RWJF's efforts to build a national Culture of Health that improves lives and reduces health disparities by improving public safety, employment, housing and education systems.

Klein and Sanders have been invited to the LeadingAge conference in San Diego to accept their award in October; each will receive a \$1,500 prize that will be donated back to the organization. Klein, as Kavod's President and CEO, will also be flown to the RWJF headquarters in New Jersey in December to meet the funders, share ideas with other Culture of Health award winners and collaborate on health improvement efforts.