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Leonard Florence Center residents and staff join Lizzo on the set of Saturday Night Live

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Special to the Journal

Steve Saling and Patrick O'Brien had one of their lifelong dreams come to fruition on Saturday, April 12. As part of the Leonard Florence Center for Living's Outward Bound program, the two ALS residents traveled to New York City with staff and Chelsea Jewish Lifecare CEO Barry Berman to attend the taping of Saturday Night Live (SNL), the iconic late-night live sketch comedy variety show on NBC that is currently celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Both Steve and Patrick are huge fans of SNL. Although tickets are almost impossible to get, Barry Berman arranged for Steve and Patrick, both of whom are on ventilators, to attend the April 12th episode. Nighttime Emmy Award winner Jon Hamm was the guest host, and the incredibly talented Lizzo served as the musical guest. Critics have said it was the best show of the season.

Patrick, who himself is an award-winning filmmaker and DJ, concurred that being at SNL, and especially meeting Lizzo, was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. "Hearing Lizzo say 'I love you, Patrick' was totally amazing," said Patrick. He added, "Lizzo is a truly beautiful person."

"The SNL team was so welcoming and gracious," said Barry Berman. "To see the looks on Steve and Patrick's faces brought us so much joy. It truly was a memorable night for all."

Bringing residents on ventilators to an out-of-state event is no small feat - it requires an extraordinary level of coordination, expertise, and care. From dedicated respiratory therapists who ensure each resident's breathing support is continuously monitored, to a registered nurse who provides critical medical oversight throughout the journey, every detail matters. A specially equipped vehicle and trained



Lizzo and Patrick O'Brien

driver are essential for safe and comfortable transport, offering the necessary environment and stability they need.

Steve Saling concurred that it was a night to remember. "Wow, SNL was an experience of a lifetime. We were treated like VIPs and got a meet and greet with Lizzo before the show," said Steve. "It was super cool to see how they put together the show. Good times."

Many Leonard Florence Center staff members made it possible for Steve and Patrick to attend the show. Recreational Programming Director Jimmy Honohan drove the organization's van, accompanied by staff members Shelly Scarpa, Amalia Almeida, Paula McKay, Darly Charles, and Ruth Gonzales. This incredible effort simply wouldn't be possible without the generous support of our donors. Their contributions make these meaningful experiences a reality.

As the country's first urban model Green House® skilled nursing facility, the Leonard Florence Center for Living, operated by nonprofit Chelsea Jewish Lifecare, provides a level of independence not typically found in other skilled nursing facilities. The Stein Family Center for Well-Being, the only Green House® ventilator program in the country, opened within the Center in 2020. Currently, the Leonard Florence Center takes care of more individuals living with ALS than any place else in the world.



Steve Saling and Lizzo

To learn more about the Leonard Florence Center for Living or how the Outward Bound Program is making incredible life experiences possible for residents, please visit www.chelseajewish.org.

Chelsea Jewish Lifecare is redefining senior care and re-envisioning what life should be like for those living with disabling conditions. The eldercare community includes a wide array of skilled and short-term rehab residences, ALS, MS, and ventilator dependent specialized care residences, traditional and specialized assisted living options, memory care, independent living, adult day health, and homecare and hospice agencies that deliver customized and compassionate care.