

Jewish Family Services To Honor Larry and Dale Polsky at Live Laugh Give 2025

By Julie Loftis, JFS Marketing Specialist

Live Laugh Give 2025 co-chairs, Blair Goldsmith and Kevin Levine, are excited to announce this year's honorees. "This year, we are thrilled to recognize Larry and Dale Polsky for their many years of contributing to the Jewish and greater Charlotte community."

Dale's connection to Jewish Family Services (JFS) began as a teenager when JFS Cleveland assisted her in securing a summer job. This early experience laid the groundwork for her lifelong advocacy and support, where she served on the JFS Charlotte Board of Directors from 2005 to 2007 and took on the role of Secretary in her final year. Together, Larry and Dale have contributed to specific needs as they arise. "Larry and Dale are true advocates for the work of JFS. Whether it has been supporting keeping seniors safe in the community, mental health for our youth, or providing Thanksgiving dinner for families in need, the Polskys have always been there meeting the needs of our community," said Howard Olshansky, JFS executive director.

Larry recently retired as a senior advisor and a member of the board of directors of The Leon Levine Foundation. His numerous volunteer leadership positions include serving as a trustee at Queens University of Charlotte, as a commission-



Larry and Dale Polsky

er at Atrium Health (formerly Carolinas Healthcare System), as a trustee and board chair at Discovery Place, board chair and trustee at the Echo Foundation, a trustee at the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center, and a trustee at the Levine Museum of the New South. Larry was instrumental in re-energizing the participation of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in Charlotte. He was involved in the creation of the Congressional Club and actively participated in this organization, which raises money to support elected officials who back the U.S.-Israel relationship.

Dale has also made a significant impact on the community.

of Judah campaign, and chair of women's philanthropy. Dale was the recipient of Federation's Kipnis-Wilson/Friedland Award, which honors extraordinary women who have set a high standard for philanthropy and volunteerism. Additionally, Dale served on Temple Beth El's Ways and Means committee as well as its grand reopening committee, which planned a weekend of activities to showcase the newly expanded building. Dale also had a significant impact on Charlotte's cultural community, serving as chair of the board of advisors of Charlotte Concerts and vice president of education, where she led efforts to expand and enhance their education programs. She was honorary chair of Charlotte Concerts' inaugural "A Musical Showcase" and received the Dr. George A. Stegner Award for Exceptional Contribu-

tions to Charlotte Concerts.

Together, in 2017, Larry and Dale chaired the annual Levine Jewish Community Center (LJCC) Kids Triathlon, where a record amount of funds was raised to benefit programs at the Levine Children's Hospital and the Adaptive Sports and Adventures Program. Subsequently, they were co-chairs for the Learning Society at Queens, named Volunteers of the Year by the LJCC, and honored by Temple Beth El with the Blumenthal Lifetime Achievement Award.

Larry and Dale have been married for 55 years and are the proud parents of Anne Brackis (Jonathan) and Jonathan Polsky (Joanna Lindenbaum) and four grandchildren, Dylan and Halle Brackis and Penina and Yael

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Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte Announces Kara Culp as 2025 Annual Campaign Chair

By Jessica Goldfarb, JFGC Communications Specialist

Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte (JFGC) is thrilled to announce Kara Culp as the campaign chair for the 2025 Annual Campaign, themed "As One." As a dedicated leader and inspiring voice within our Jewish community, Kara brings passion and experience to a role essential to strengthening the greater Charlotte Jewish community and the Jewish people at large.

Kara has been involved with Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte since moving here in 2018 with her husband, Brandon. Her contributions include leading vital events and initiatives such as co-chairing Women's Philanthropy and Super Sunday, as well as serving as chair of the Pomegranate Society. She previously worked as Federation's engagement coordinator and vice president of development for the



Kara Culp

Charlotte Jewish Preschool. She is currently serving on the Federation Board as vice president - financial resource development.

Reflecting on her role, Kara writes, "Why did I say 'yes' to becoming Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte's campaign chair? Well, JFGC has a way of making an impact on every corner of Charlotte's Jewish com-

munity — and my life is no exception! From my kids' early and elementary education to finding friends who feel like family, to growing my leadership skills through the Bernstein Leadership Group, this community has given us so much. I'm honored to invest in an organization that touches every part of Jewish life here. I'm ready to follow in the footsteps of the incredible leaders before me, to build on their success, and to amplify JFGC's influence on our Charlotte Jewish community and beyond."

JFGC's Annual Campaign raises funds to support vital programs and services that sustain and enhance Jewish life, locally and globally. This year's theme, "As One," exemplifies the unity of Jewish people worldwide and our shared commitment to making a difference. As one, we support. As one, we empower.

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Editor's Corner

Keeping History Alive



Shira Firestone, Managing Editor CJN

It was August 1985, and I sat in the front row of my first college class: History 101. The professor walked in: Mariano Diaz Miranda. On the board, he wrote his name (just like in the movies) and then “1492.” He turned to the class and asked if anyone knew what had happened that year. Various voices called out, “Columbus sailed the ocean blue ...” He gave us a feigned confused look, a rehearsed tilt of the head, then responded gleefully, “Oh yes ... that happened too. But I was referring to the year the Moors were expelled from Spain.” For the first time, someone challenged my narrow view of the world. And for the first time, I knew what I wanted to do — study history. I declared my major that very semester.

I remember my father's reaction clearly. “History? What on earth are you going to do with

a history degree?” (And here I thought he'd be relieved I hadn't pursued my initial instinct for a theater degree!) But I didn't have an answer for him. What *does* one do with a history major? I hadn't thought of it as a path to a career. I just loved history. I loved learning for the sake of learning and studying simply to satisfy my curiosity. That was the best answer I could give him at the time.

So, what *did* I do with my history degree? If you'd asked me even a few weeks ago, I might have sheepishly said “Not much.”

Fast forward to a few weeks ago:

A Charlotte Jewish News (CJN) reader stopped by my office. He's lived in Charlotte all his life and shared stories as we opened the drawers where I keep every issue of the CJN, dating back to its very first issue in 1979. He opened old papers, calling out names and recalling certain events. He knew people and stories I'd never heard of, as I'm relatively new to Charlotte. As Charlotte's population booms, there are many newcomers like me who have never known a Charlotte without Shalom Park or the many vibrant institutions that shape our community today. But looking back through old issues of the Charlotte Jewish News brought those years back

to life for my visitor, and gave me a glimpse into historical Jewish Charlotte as well.

In a timely coincidence, on my way home that evening, I listened to a story on National Public Radio (NPR) about the Wilmington Coup of 1898 (sometimes called the Wilmington Massacre of 1898), an event unknown to even most North Carolinians. The filmmakers of a newly released documentary, “American Coup: Wilmington 1898,” spoke about the role that newspapers of the day played — not only as an important part of their research, but also as principal characters in the white supremacist coup and the massacre that took place. Here is how the events unfolded:

In the 1890s, Wilmington, North Carolina, was a prosperous multiracial city with a majority Black population. Black residents held skilled labor jobs, owned businesses, and even held public office. Alex Manly, editor of Wilmington's Black newspaper, “The Daily Record,” became a prominent figure when, in August 1898, he published an editorial rebutting claims that lynching was necessary to protect white women from Black men. Manly argued that these relationships were often consensual and that white men had long assaulted Black women without consequences. The editorial infuriated white supremacists throughout the South.

As tensions grew, white leaders falsely spread rumors that the Black community was arming itself, when in reality, it was white mobs preparing for violence. On Election Day, November 8, 1898, armed white men prevented Black men from voting, seizing control of the state legislature through intimidation, voter suppression, and fraud. Just days later, they demanded that local Black leaders resign their posi-



Wilmington, N.C. race riot, 1898: the wrecked “Record” building and group of vigilantes. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog

tions, forcing many — including Manly — to flee for their lives.

On November 10, vigilantes rode through Wilmington looking for Alex Manly to lynch him, but he had already escaped. A growing mob burned the offices of “The Daily Record,” then posed for a photo in front of the ruins. Several dozen Black men were shot and killed (an accurate number will never be known), and Black women and children were terrorized, running into a nearby swamp and cemetery for refuge.

“The Daily Record” was central to both the events of the Wilmington Coup and our understanding of that era. It was not only a target of violence but also a critical source of insight for researchers today. Despite the destruction of its offices, the fragments that remain, along with any copies or reprints of its articles, provide an important insight into the social dynamics and the vibrant community that once existed in Wilmington. “The Daily Record” documented the successes and aspirations of Black residents, providing historians with evidence of a thriving multiracial society that was deliberately dismantled.

In contrast, white-owned newspapers like the “News & Observer” in Raleigh actively fueled tensions. Josephus Dan-

iels, the editor, used his platform to spread racial fear and support white supremacist agendas, which contributed to the success of the coup. By comparing these records — “The Daily Record's” voice of advocacy and resilience, and the “News & Observer's” incendiary role — researchers can see the significant impact the media had in shaping public sentiment and events. These surviving pieces are invaluable in helping us understand both the events that led to the coup and the lives of those affected.

“The Daily Record's” bold editorial voice and its tragic destruction are symbolic of both the resilience and the vulnerability of the Black community during this period. It was, in many ways, a newspaper not unlike ours — one that represented a minority community, capturing its challenges, victories, and moments of connection.

For four-and-a-half years, I've been the managing editor of the CJN, taking seriously my responsibility to keep this vital communication vehicle alive for our community. My focus has often been on the present — to inform, educate, and engage readers today. But when that reader came into my office, and we opened the first drawer on the left, pulling out the yellowed pages of the earliest issues, we spoke about Ann Langman and Rita Mond, the very first editors. I had never stopped to wonder if Ann and Rita imagined we'd be reading what they started almost half a century later.

Here I am today, at the helm of crafting each issue — with a newfound awareness that my work is not just about the present. It's about our future — and our past — helping future Jews of Charlotte understand their roots. None of us like to think of ourselves as someone else's history, but time moves on. One day, 50 years from now, I will be Charlotte's Ann Langman and Rita Mond, and these archives will be where people look to understand what our community was like in the 2020s. This realization brings a new sense of responsibility to the work I do.

If my father were to ask me today what I had done with my history degree, I would tell him, proudly, that I became the managing editor of a community newspaper — one that helps preserve the history of an entire community.

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Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte

Introducing the iCenter for Israel Education and Engagement

By Jessica Goldfarb, JFGC Communications Specialist

Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte is proud to introduce the iCenter for Israel Education and Engagement (iCenter), a new initiative that will be a cornerstone for enhancing our community's connection to Israel. Through a variety of innovative programs, cultural exchanges, and educational resources, the iCenter initiative will foster a deeper sense of Jewish identity, bringing Israel's rich history and vibrant modern culture closer to home for the greater Charlotte Jewish community.



A young girl taking part in Israel-centric crafts at the Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration.

This initiative is made possible by the Sue Worrel Israel Center Endowment Fund, honoring nearly two decades of leadership by Federation's past CEO, Sue Worrel. Sue led Federation with dedication, helping to cultivate strong connections with Israel through various programs. The Sue Worrel Israel Center Endowment Fund ensures her legacy

will continue by funding iCenter programming, which reflects her long-standing commitment to Israel education and engagement.

Rather than a physical space, the iCenter will serve as a central resource for numerous opportunities, catering to our community's diverse interests in Israel. It will build on existing Federation programs, such as artists in resi-

dence, Partnership2Gether, Yom HaZikaron observances, Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations, and teen trips to Israel. It will also introduce new programs like professional development for educators, family workshops, Hebrew language learning (Ulpan), and expanded cultural offerings in literature, film, and cooking.

By deepening the commu-

nity's engagement with Israel, the iCenter initiative reinforces shared values, cultural heritage, and the importance of Israel in the fabric of Jewish identity. Israel, for Jews worldwide, represents a sense of belonging — a place rooted in shared history, language, and solidarity. Programming will be integral in creating meaningful ways for the Charlotte Jewish community to explore these connections and strengthen their understanding of Israel's profound contributions to global culture, science, and innovation.

The creation of the iCenter initiative comes at a crucial time when strengthening bonds with Israel is more important than ever. Through engaging programming, it will provide

meaningful opportunities for discussion and celebration of Israel, fostering thoughtful conversations about its significance within the Jewish world. Federation's continued investment will ensure that this initiative becomes a vibrant and enduring part of the Charlotte Jewish community. By working closely with local synagogues, schools, and global partners, the iCenter will offer unparalleled resources to deepen ties between Israel, Jewish identity, and our local greater Charlotte Jewish community.

The iCenter for Israel Education and Engagement honors Sue Worrel's legacy and represents a future-facing commitment to Israel and Jewish identity from our Federation and our entire community.

Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte's Women's Philanthropy Fall Kickoff Event

By Jessica Goldfarb, JFGC Communications Specialist

Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte's Women's Philanthropy recently launched its programming year with a morning focused on connection and community engagement. The "Inspiring Women Leaders" event welcomed new and long-standing participants, bringing together over 100 women eager to connect, learn, and be inspired by some of the community's most influential leaders. Attendees enjoyed a lively brunch, shared stories, and learned about the remarkable work Women's Philanthropy supports locally and globally.



From left to right: Lisa Levinson, Bobbi Bernstein, Sandra Levine, and Emily Zimmern at the Inspiring Women Leaders panel discussion

The event began with a warm welcome from Judy August, Rachel Reifkind, and Karen Spiegler, who outlined the mission of Women's Philanthropy and highlighted the impact of women's collective contributions to the Jewish community. Renowned community leaders Bobbi Bernstein, Sandra Levine, and Emily Zimmern then took the stage for a panel discussion with Lisa Levinson as moderator. The panel shared their personal journeys, discussed their reasoning for founding Women's Philanthropy, and spoke passionately about their commitment to our community. They were especially inspired by the number of young Jewish women in the audience, who they called on to

represent the next generation of Women's Philanthropy leaders.

Women's Philanthropy is dedicated to creating a lasting impact, founded on the Jewish values of tzedakah (charity) and tikkun olam (repairing the world). With donations from women philanthropists comprising more than a third of the Federation's Annual Campaign, they are actively strengthening the future of the Jewish community in greater Charlotte and beyond. Through events like this, Women's Philanthropy provides meaningful avenues for all women to celebrate their Jewish identity and take active roles in addressing issues important to Jewish women today.

There are many ways to get involved with Women's Philanthropy. Upcoming events for high-level giving members include the sold-out International

Lion of Judah Conference in January, during which Emily Zimmern will be honored with the prestigious Kipnis-Wilson/Friedland Award, and the Lion of Judah-Pomegranate Society Luncheon in February. Keep an eye out for even more upcoming events in 2025!

Women's Philanthropy is honored to bring together women who are dedicated to philanthropy and thrive on the strength of their community connections. The Inspiring Women Leaders event perfectly embodied this mission, as each attendee left feeling more connected, engaged, and ready to make an impact.



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Center for Jewish Education Celebrates Jewish Authorship with Jewish Book Month Events

By Jessica Goldfarb, JFGC Communications Specialist

This year, Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte's Center for Education, in collaboration with PJ Library, proudly presents two events in honor of Jewish Book Month, a yearly tradition of honoring Jewish literature, authors, and stories that hold special meaning for Jewish communities worldwide. Originating in the 1920s as a one-week celebration, Jewish Book Month has since expanded to a month-long event with a spotlight on Jewish authorship and storytelling.

Each event is tailored to engage a different age group in the community. The first, "A Morning with Miri," took place on Nov. 10 and provided an engaging morning for children and families. Renowned Israeli author and illustrator Miri Leshem-Pelly read her book, "A Feather, A Pebble, A Shell," sharing her love for Israel's natural beauty. Afterward, she led a hands-on art workshop where children crafted Israel's national bird, the Hoopoe, using oil pastels and colored paper.

The second event, "Book



Lee Yaron

Talk: An Evening with Lee Yaron," will take place on Dec. 5, from 7 p.m -8:30 p.m. inviting adults to join a profound discussion with Israeli author and investigative journalist Lee Yaron. Yaron's book, "10/7: 100 Human Stories," offers a poignant exploration of the October 7 massacre, commemorating lives lost and sharing stories from communities along Israel's border with Gaza.

Known for her work with Haaretz as a seasoned journalist, Yaron uses her voice to document deeply human narratives, highlighting resilience, tragedy,

and community. "10/7: Human Stories" captures the narratives of diverse groups affected by the October 7 massacre; from the voices of first responders and Nova Festival survivors to Israeli Arabs, pregnant women, and Ukrainian refugees, the book profiles individuals from every site of the attack, illustrating the fullness of their lives, not just their final moments. Limited copies of her book will be available for sale in advance at the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library and at the event, giving attendees a chance to own this powerful

account of recent history. The evening is free to attend, but registration is required.

Jewish Book Month is an opportunity for the community to connect with stories that speak to Jewish identity, heritage, and experience. From children's joyful creation of colorful artwork inspired by Israel's landscapes to adults delving into significant contemporary narra-

tives, the month exemplifies the transformative power of Jewish literature across generations. For more details about the Dec. 5 event or to register, please visit www.jewishcharlotte.org.



Kara Culp

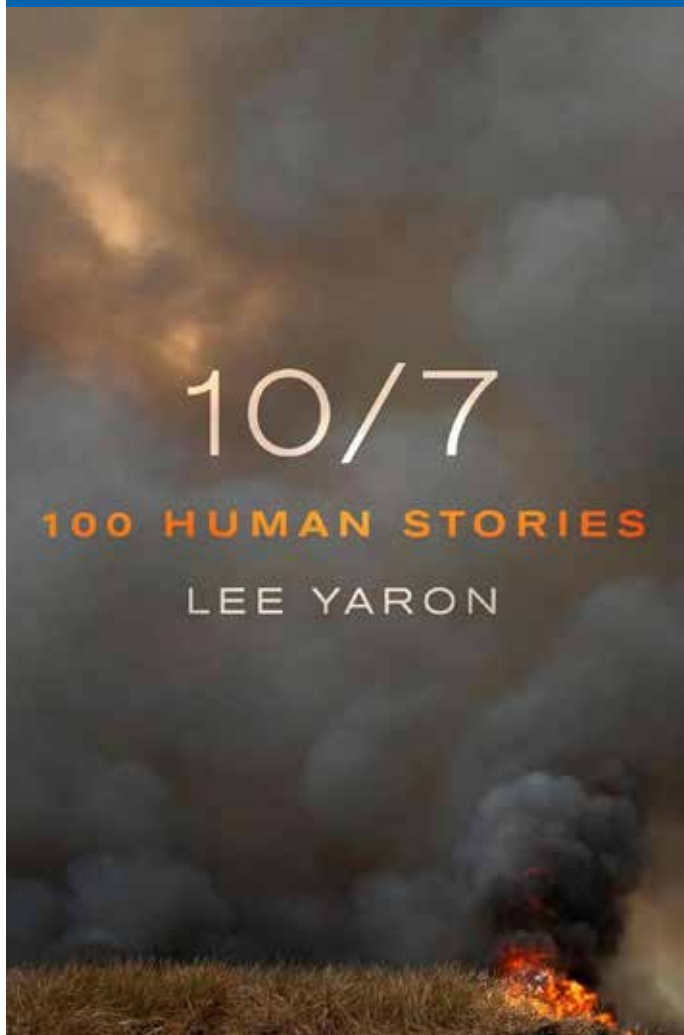
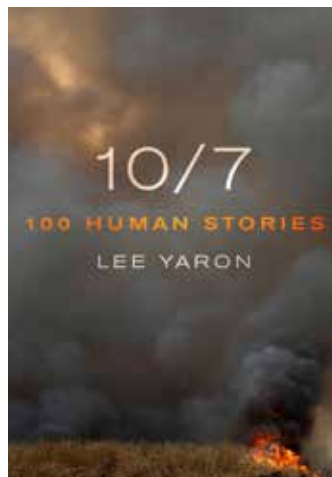
(Continued from front page)

As one, we are the collective force that keeps Jewish life thriving, not just in times of crisis, but every single day. The campaign encourages everyone in the community to unite, recognizing that each contribution, no matter the size, amplifies our impact and enriches Jewish life in greater Charlotte, Israel, and worldwide.

Funds raised through the 2025 Annual Campaign sustain Federation-led programs that serve the entire community, as well as support our local and global partner agencies. Through a blend of educational and community-build-

ing initiatives, JFGC aims to reinforce the community's foundation while addressing emerging challenges and seizing new opportunities.

This year, Federation invites all members of the community to join in the spirit of "As One," reinforcing the message that every dollar and every donor plays a vital role in shaping a resilient, dynamic Jewish future. You can make your 2025 Annual Campaign Pledge today by visiting online at www.jewishcharlotte.org.



Book Talk: An Evening with Lee Yaron

Thursday, December 5
7-8:30 PM in the Sam Lerner Center for Cultural Arts
at Shalom Park

Books will be for sale in advance in the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library as well as at the event.

Event is free, but registration is required.

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Jewish Federation
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Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte

Sue's Bookshelf



By Sue Littauer

It seems like December is the month to review the highs and lows of the last year. As far as the Center for Jewish Education Book Club goes, it's definitely been a year of "highs." Each of the 11 books we read were home runs, and four of our meetings were joined over Zoom by the authors themselves! We started the year by welcoming back A.J. Sidransky to discuss his book "Incident at San Miguel," an intriguing historical fiction novel about the Cuban Revolution and the enduring love of a family with opposing political views. A.J. Sidransky's previous novels, beginning with "The Interpreter," are well-written

page-turners.

Our second guest author was Laurie Frankel, whose novel "Family Family" lived up to the high expectations of readers of her previous novel, "This Is How It Always Is." Laurie Frankel was an absolute delight, answering our questions and providing insight into her writing style and process. She shared information about her favorite books and authors, which we will follow up on in 2025. One thing you should know about Laurie Frankel is that she loves to make and eat soup!

In October, we were joined by Ayelet Gundar-Goshen, Israeli author of "Waking Lions," "The Liar," and "The Wolf Hunt." Ms. Gundar-Goshen is a brilliant novelist whose multi-layered books rank among the best I have read. She walked us through the book's themes and what inspired her to write this contemporary, thought-provoking novel, which provided much discussion following her talk.

As I'm sure you must realize, my articles are written about five weeks before publication. Therefore, while we were joined by established artist and debut author Matthew Daub, whose novel "Leaving Eastern Park-



Zibby Owens

way" was our November selection, the meeting took place after this writing. It is interesting, though, that Mr. Daub contacted me on Facebook after he saw a comment I posted about our November selection. He volunteered to join us over Zoom, and we set it up. I was very taken with the book, summed up by Amazon as "Brooklyn's Hasidic community of Lubavitchers is turned upside down when family tragedy strikes and everyday life changes forever in the life of (talented handball player teen)

Zev Altshul."

All of the books mentioned thus far are available in hardback and Kindle versions at the Center for Jewish Education's Levine-Sklut Judaic Library and Blumenthal Educator's Resource Center.

We will begin the 2025 Book Club schedule on Wednesday, Jan. 8, at 10:30 a.m. We will be joined over Zoom by author Zibby Owens, who will lead our discussion of her book "Blank: A Novel." Rather than joining on Zoom from our home computers, we will gather together at the library. If you are unable to join us physically, please contact me at sueb.littauer@jewishcharlotte.org, and I will send you the link.

If you'd like to become a member of the Center for Jewish Education Book Club, please stop by the library to register, or contact me. It is open to all members of the Jewish community.



Live Laugh Give

(Continued from front page)

Polsky. Larry and Dale shared, "We're proud to support an organization that helps Jewish people in need and grateful for the leadership provided by Howard Olshansky and his very capable team."

The event will feature Elon Gold, a comedian, actor, and writer. His one-hour Netflix stand-up special, "Elon Gold: Chosen & Taken," received wide acclaim from audiences and peers alike and is now streaming on Amazon Prime. He has made 10 appearances on "The Tonight Show" and also performed on "The Late Late Show with James Corden." His routines have gone viral and are shared by millions around the world. Gold starred in FOX's "Stacked" and developed and starred in the NBC series "In-Laws." His guest star credits include "Crashing," "Frasier," "Chappelle's Show," and "Chelsea Lately," among others. He was also a writer and performer on ABC's "The Dana Carvey Show." Most recently, Gold was on HBO's "Curb Your Enthusiasm" and will appear in the upcoming Kal Penn feature "Trust Me, I'm a Doctor." Gold's 30-minute stand-up special, "Sets in the City: Elon Gold's Favorite People," is available on YouTube, and he is currently on a theater tour preparing his next comedy special.

All proceeds of Live Laugh Give 2025 will benefit JFS' programs and services, including therapy, parenting support, financial and food assistance, domestic violence resources, senior engagement, case management,



Elon Gold

and Holocaust survivor, family, and caregiver support services. With expertise, compassion, and an emphasis on maintaining dignity, the JFS staff is dedicated to working with clients to develop individualized plans to help those in need when they need it the most.

Save the date for Live Laugh Give comedy night on Sunday, June 8, 2025, for "A night of laughter, a lifetime of healing." For sponsorship opportunities and ways to honor Larry and Dale Polsky, please contact Susan Meyer at (704) 364-6594 or Susan.Meyer@jfscharlotte.org. To learn more about Jewish Family Services of Greater Charlotte, visit jfscharlotte.org, email info@jfscharlotte.org, or call (704) 364-6594.



FEDERATION IMPACT: BENEFICIARY AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES

As a means of bettering our greater Charlotte Jewish community, Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte allocates donation funds to local Jewish organizations who embody Jewish values and overall better our community. In recognition of their work, we at Federation wish to bring attention to these organizations and the good that they do.

Jewish Family Services (JFS) stands as a vital resource for families in the greater Charlotte area, aligning closely with the mission of Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte to build a stronger, healthier community. Dedicated to providing compassionate support, JFS offers essential programs addressing emotional health, education, senior engagement, and crisis response. By delivering confidential, high-quality counseling, JFS provides a safe, inclusive space where individuals and families from all backgrounds can navigate life's challenges with professional guidance.

JFS has been dedicated to building a stronger, healthier Charlotte. By offering confidential counseling services, JFS meets the mental health needs of the community with a commitment to inclusivity, providing a safe space where individuals, groups, and families can access high-quality, confidential support to navi-

gate life's challenges. JFS also enriches lives through community programs and education. From workshops to support services, these programs equip community members with the skills and connections needed to thrive. The organization's efforts extend to senior engagement, where JFS is dedicated to maintaining the dignity and independence of senior adults.

In times of crisis, JFS is a lifeline for those in need. Recently, when families from Western North Carolina were displaced by Hurricane Helene, JFS stepped in to provide critical assistance, helping these individuals overcome obstacles and regain stability. As CEO Howard Olshansky shares, "Jewish Family Services of Greater Charlotte has been serving our community for more than 40 years. With the support of our community, JFS is providing critical services to members of our community. We are committed to raising awareness around so-

cial issues impacting our community as well as celebrating Jewish culture and traditions. JFS is truly appreciative of the partnership with Federation."

In addition to these programs, JFS operates a community food pantry, offering food and support to those experiencing food insecurity.

Through all of its initiatives, JFS shows a commitment to engage, connect, and heal, embodying the Jewish values of community and tikkun olam, or repairing the world. JFS remains a cornerstone of support in our community, fostering strength, compassion, and resilience for all who seek its guidance.



Rock Legend Geddy Lee to Speak at Greenspon Center's Holocaust Remembrance Event

By Mary Eshet

The Stan Greenspon Holocaust and Social Justice Education Center will host rock legend Geddy Lee for a community commemoration of International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Best known as the lead vocalist and bassist of the iconic rock band Rush, Lee, born Gershon Eliezer Weinrib, brings a deeply personal perspective to this remembrance: his parents, Mary and Morris Weinrib, were Holocaust survivors who endured Auschwitz, and he is the descendent of many others who did not survive. In his memoir, "My Effin' Life," Lee shares how his parents' experiences shaped his life and music, and he honors their legacy by sharing their stories.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day is observed each year on Jan. 27, the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp in 1945, which represented the largest and most infamous Nazi extermination site for systematic genocide during the Holocaust. The day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2005 to honor the six million



Jan. 27 commemorates the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz

Jews and millions of others who were killed during the Holocaust. The day aims to raise awareness about the Holocaust, honor its victims, and promote education about the dangers of hatred, bigotry, and intolerance. It serves as a reminder of the importance of safeguarding human rights and preventing future atrocities.

This year's event marks the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The goal of this commemoration is to foster awareness and education about the Holocaust, reminding us that the Holocaust was not just a Jewish tragedy but a profound loss for humanity. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of our

shared history and the importance of solidarity in the face of injustice. Through our commemorative event, we reaffirm our collective responsibility to remember the past and actively promote a future free from hatred and violence.

Observances worldwide often include memorial services, educational programs, discussions, and events to promote reflection and remembrance. As its signature annual Holocaust commemorative event, the Greenspon Center hosts a community commemoration, reinforcing its mission to educate, advocate, and inspire action towards a more just and equitable society. Recent commemorations have included hosting the internationally acclaimed "Seeing Auschwitz" exhibit in Charlotte for its North American debut and bringing Dr. Stephen Smith to Charlotte to share his work to preserve the stories of Holocaust survivors

through hologram technology.

"We live in a time when Holocaust denial and distortion are ubiquitous; commemorating this day reinforces the historical truth of the events that transpired," said Judy LaPietra, director of the Greenspon Center. "Given his reach and devoted fan base, Geddy Lee will share a connection to this history and reach a demographic that might not otherwise be informed about the Holocaust." Through our commemorative event, we reaffirm our collective responsibility to remember the past and actively promote a future free from hatred and violence.

Date and time TBD. For more information about sponsorship or advertising, contact Judy LaPietra at Lapietra@Queens.edu.



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JResponse Brings Levine Jewish Community Center's Support to Asheville

By Shira Firestone

The devastation left by Hurricane Helene in Asheville has been hard to comprehend. With record-breaking flooding, destroyed homes, and countless lives disrupted, the city and surrounding areas face a long journey to recovery. The Asheville Jewish Community Center (JCC), a central space for families and community activities, was forced to close after the storm, facing power outages and severe water supply disruptions. Yet, despite these challenges, the Asheville JCC staff quickly began helping the community, even creating a "Fill for Flushing" program to provide water for residents and shelters in desperate need.

But even while giving so much, the Asheville JCC was itself in need of help. That's where JResponse came in.

The JResponse program, established by the Jewish Community Center Association of North America, trains and mobilizes JCC professionals to provide relief to other JCCs and their communities in times of crisis. The goal is simple but profound: to stand together in the face of disasters, whether natural or man-made, and help ease the burdens faced by communities in distress. In Asheville, JResponse teams from across North Carolina helped the JCC reopen and restore some semblance of normalcy for families returning to a world forever changed by the storm.

As part of the response, a JResponse team of eight staff from Charlotte's Levine Jewish Community Center (LJCC) deployed to offer help wherever it was needed — whether greeting families, covering classrooms, or assisting with grounds cleanup.

For Anne Douglas Miller, development and special events coordinator, being part of the JResponse team was an experience she described as both humbling and deeply fulfilling. "Our goal was to do whatever was needed to help the Asheville JCC reopen and support the families returning there," she explained. "The level of appreciation from the Asheville staff and community was palpable — they welcomed us not just as helpers, but as family."

During her time in Asheville, Miller shared moments of profound connection. She recounted working side-by-side with a local resident who, despite language barriers, joined in the efforts to clean up the grounds. "We couldn't speak the same language, but it didn't matter — we both understood we were there to help each other. He just took the chainsaw from me and got to work," she shared with a smile.



Katelyn Graves and Patty Torcellini cleaning the grounds

"That day, in the midst of such destruction, I truly felt that we were all in it together."

Asheville JCC's facility and security director, Joseph Nunan, gave the Charlotte team a tour of his city, one he's called home for over 25 years. They passed through the demolished Arts District, an empty lot that used to be a Starbucks, and street after street bearing signs of the storm's fury. At one point, the team stopped on a bridge overlooking the remnants of the flood. Joseph pointed to where the water had once reached.

The JResponse team brought something special with them: hand-crafted ceramic calaniot, or red anemones, created by Charlotte's BBYO youth. The calaniot, Israel's national flower, are symbolic of resilience and beauty in adversity, blooming in the winter despite harsh conditions. These vibrant red flowers carry a particular poignancy in the Jewish community, and in this case, they represented both hope and remembrance. They were placed around the Asheville JCC grounds, a reminder that even amid hardship, life and



An Asheville neighbor joins in the cleanup

was so meaningful to be able to create the calaniot and see them placed in communities within our region," shared Lindsay Pfeffer, North Carolina Council president from BBYO Chapter Chai Chaverim BBG. "Coming together as a BBYO community with all four chapters to do a project like this was the best decision we could've made for the anniversary of such a tragedy."

The placement of these hand-crafted calaniot at the Asheville JCC brought the two communities closer, turning a simple flower into a powerful symbol of unity and hope. The Asheville JCC staff and members embraced this gesture as an emblem of solidarity from their Charlotte neighbors, reinforcing that they are not alone in their journey to rebuild and recover.

Annie Keith, LJCC CEO shared, "We were so honored to be able to send our staff to Asheville as part of JResponse. As part of a larger JCC Movement, we are reminded of the Jewish value *kehila* (community). We are committed to serve one an-

other through our Jewish Community Center network through our JCC Association."

Caleb Seidler, LJCC's family and community life coordinator added, "It's been an honor to work with the JResponse team here in Asheville, a city that has felt like a second home to me. When I saw the devastation from Hurricane Helene, I felt a moral imperative — as both a Jew and a citizen — to help repair our community."

Through their shared efforts in Asheville, JCC staff along with JResponse teams from other North Carolina JCCs, underscored the strength of the connections that bind Jewish communities together. Whether through organized initiatives like JResponse or the personal commitment of those who sent monetary and in-kind donations, JCCs and their members stand ready to support each other.



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Religious Life

Illuminating Together: A Public Celebration of Jewish Strength This Chanukah

By Rabbi Levi Cohen

This year's Chanukah celebration at Symphony Park is more than just a holiday festival; it stands as a resolute response to rising antisemitism and serves as a powerful reminder of our resilience. By gathering in a public space, we convey a clear message: Charlotte's Jewish community will not be silenced, intimidated, or hidden away. This year, we are reclaiming Chanukah's message for all to see, fulfilling the timeless directive of Pirsumei Nisa — publicizing the miracle.

Chanukah is fundamentally a battle for the Jewish soul. The Syrian-Greek empire did not initially seek to destroy the Jewish people physically; instead, they sought to outlaw Jewish practice, the study of Torah, and the observance of mitzvot, attempting to erase Jewish identity from within. Observing Shabbat, studying Torah, and celebrating holidays were forbidden, driving Jewish life underground. Yet, courageous Jews refused to abandon their heritage, continuing to practice in secret. The conflict ultimately became physical when Jews, led by the Maccabees, openly defied the empire, resulting in a miraculous military victory and the rededication of the Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple). The miracle of the oil — one day's worth lasting eight — became a symbol of enduring faith in the face of spiritual oppression.

Today, the message of Chanukah resonates more deeply than ever. With antisemitism on the rise, the need for public expressions of Jewish pride and unity has never been more urgent. Just as our ancestors resisted efforts



Rabbi Binyomin Weiss and Rabbi Yossi Groner lighting the Chanukah menorah

to erase their heritage, we gather to demonstrate that Jewish life, identity, and values endure. Lighting the menorah publicly is our response to those who wish to see us hide; it is our way of affirming that we remain proud and unbowed.

From our "humble beginnings" of indoor menorah lightings at SouthPark Mall, Chabad of Charlotte has sought to shine a spotlight on Chanukah — the more visible, the better. With a towering scissor-lift menorah in 2020 and a mega concert featuring the hit Jewish band "8th Day" in 2021, the crowds truly began to grow. In 2022, our Chanukah event at Symphony Park capti-

vated nearly a thousand attendees, inspiring joy and solidarity with every candle lit. Last year, we continued this tradition with an uplifting concert featuring Nissim Black, whose powerful story of resilience resonated deeply with our community. This year, we're returning to Symphony Park, creating an open and inviting space to share the miracles of Chanukah and celebrate our collective strength.

On December 25th, shortly before evening, Symphony Park will come alive with the warmth and light of Chanukah. Attendees can look forward to fresh latkes and donuts, live entertainment, and activities for all ages, mak-

ing this an unforgettable celebration. Join us for this special celebration and stand with us as we proclaim our pride and unity. This Chanukah, we shine a light not only on our menorah but on the enduring strength of our community.

Chanukah is a time for families to celebrate at home with their own menorahs, kindling lights that symbolize hope and faith; however, it is also an opportunity to share this joy with the world through large public menorah lightings, car menorahs, and community gatherings. Lighting the menorah publicly reflects our response to those who wish to see us hide; it affirms our pride and resilience. (Importantly, every

Jewish person should have access to a menorah to fulfill this cherished mitzvah. If you or someone you know needs assistance obtaining one, please reach out to Chabad; we are here to help ensure that everyone can participate in the joy and light of Chanukah.)

Learn more about Chabad's Chanukah events at www.Chabadnc.org/Chanukah



Chabad of Lake Norman's 5th Annual Menorah Lighting at Birkdale Village



Chabad of Lake Norman's Annual Menorah Lighting at Birkdale Village

Chabad of Lake Norman warmly invites the Lake Norman and Charlotte communities to join its annual Menorah Lighting at Birkdale Village on Sunday, Dec. 29 at 5:30 p.m. This joyous gathering will feature a giant menorah lighting, live music, crafts, and of course, Chanukah latkes and donuts.

Check out our website for more Chanukah events including a Home Depot Chanukah Workshop and a Women's Chocolate Chanukah Night.

Chabadlakenorman.com



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Religious Life

SPICE Food Drive: Serving Together

By Ed Sucherman

Temple Beth El's SPICE (Special Programs of Interest and Concern for Elders) has been enriching the lives of Jewish adults 55+ since 2006, providing meaningful ways to connect, learn, and give back. This December, SPICE invites you to join them for an impactful Chanukah season event: their annual food drive supporting the Jewish Family Services (JFS) Food Pantry. This beloved tradition has become an essential event on SPICE's calendar, offering our community a simple yet powerful way to make a difference.

The food drive will take place on Wednesday, Dec. 4, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. at Temple Beth El (TBE). Volunteers will be stationed at the building's portico to assist with drop-offs directly from your car. Non-perishable kosher items are especially needed, and financial donations are also welcome in the form of checks to JFS or gift cards to Walmart or Aldi. Your contributions help ensure that local families have food during the holiday season and beyond.

Following the food drive, at 11 a.m., SPICE members and guests

are invited to join us for "L'dor V'dor: Exploring Jewish Genealogy," where TBE's own Rabbi Beth Nichols will share insights on "The Religious Rebels in My Ancestry." Certified genealogist Rhoda Miller, Ed.D., will join the discussion, offering guidance on uncovering your own family's roots. This engaging session is just one of the many programs SPICE has planned for its fall and winter programming.

Looking ahead, SPICE will feature a special program on Jan. 15, with Cantor Danielle Rodnizki, who will lead a discussion on "Fiddler on the Roof" and its impact, while Stefan Pienkny will explore the legacy of artist Marc Chagall. These gatherings, alongside cultural outings and community service projects, create endless opportunities for SPICE members to grow, connect, and make a difference in the community. We welcome you to join us. To learn more about SPICE or register for upcoming events, visit templebethel.org/SPICE or call (704) 366-1948.

Temple Beth El's Hurricane and Hunger Relief Response

By Madeline White

Every High Holiday season, LIBERTY, our Temple Beth El teen youth group, steps up to lead our congregation and community in tikkun olam, or repairing the world. This year, as Hurricane Helene ravaged parts of Western North Carolina, LIBERTY transformed its annual High Holiday Hunger Relief Project into a disaster relief and hunger relief drive. Beginning at Rosh HaShanah and running through Simchat Torah, the project became a powerful expression of our community's dedication to helping those in need.

Guided by the values of tzedakah (justice) and tikkun olam, LIBERTY channeled the teachings of the High Holidays into meaningful action, reminding us all of our sacred responsibility to care for those in need. LIBERTY president, Jocelyn Siegel, shared a powerful message during Erev Rosh HaShanah services, calling us to action. "Millions of people were left without basic needs



Hurricane Helene left many without basic needs

such as water, electricity, or even a place to live," she said. "As a community, LIBERTY is hoping to raise \$12,000 to support organizations that provide relief to towns struck by disaster and those doing this important work." This year's project supports both immediate disaster relief and long-term food security, with donations directed to Second Harvest

Food Bank, Jewish Family Services, Nechama: Jewish Response to Hunger, Asheville's Congregation Beth HaTephila, and the Asheville Jewish Community Center.

Together, our Temple Beth El community has raised over \$30,000 so far, deepening our commitment to care for our local community and extending our support to those impacted by the hurricane. On behalf of Temple Beth El and LIBERTY, we extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who supported this year's project. Your generosity has transformed this season of reflection into one of action. Through this, we fulfill our sacred responsibility to cultivate connected, meaningful Jewish living and create real change in our world.







Happy Chanukah

Celebrate the season with Temple Beth El

For event details and schedule visit

templebethel.org






Religious Life

Together We Rise: Temple Israel's Annual Fundraiser — An Evening of Community, Music, and Legacy

By Samantha Fultz, TI Director of Membership & Engagement

Temple Israel warmly invites you to join us on Dec. 15 for an unforgettable night at our sixth annual fundraiser, Together We Rise. This year's event will be our most inspiring yet — a celebration of community, resilience, and shared purpose. Enjoy captivating musical performances, the prestigious Shofar Award presentation to Lynne and Morey Sheffer, and the opportunity to help shape a bright future for Temple Israel as we uplift and serve those around us. Let's rise together and make this evening one to remember!

Rising in Support of Temple Israel's Mission

Together We Rise is more than just a concert — it's an opportunity for our community to unite in support of Temple Israel's mission to preserve and promote Jewish values, culture, and connection. Now, more than ever, Temple Israel's role in keeping the flame of Judaism alive is essential. Proceeds from this event will allow us to expand our educational and cultural programming, enrich community services, and ensure Temple Israel remains a place where every individual and family feels a deep connection to their Jewish heritage. These services and programs are testaments to our resilience, history, and commitment to a vibrant Jewish future.

Event Details and Schedule

The event begins at 5:30 p.m. with a special donor reception featuring wine, beer, and hors d'oeuvres. Doors open to the public at 6:15 p.m., with an interactive art installation and additional refreshments offered before everyone gathers in the sanctuary. The program includes a lively paddle raise, an inspirational Shofar Award presentation, and exceptional musical performances by Cantor Magda Fishman and Temple Israel's own Cantor Shira Lissek. Tickets and sponsorship opportunities are available at [templeisraelnc.org/form/2024fundraiser](https://www.templeisraelnc.org/form/2024fundraiser)

Honoring Lynne and Morey Sheffer with the Shofar Award

This year, Temple Israel will proudly honor Lynne and Morey Sheffer with the Shofar Award, recognizing their exceptional legacy and unwavering dedication to both Temple Israel and the greater Jewish community. Lynne, a Charlotte native from one of Shalom Park's founding families, and her husband Morey have a lifelong bond that has enriched the congregation. Known for their warmth and hospitality, the Sheffers have contribut-



Cantor Shira Lissek

ed significantly to the Temple's mission, from board presidency, volunteering as Gabbais, establishing Temple Israel's partnership with Huntingtowne Farms Elementary, and much more. Their kindness and commitment to Jewish values have left an indelible mark on our community. Please join us in honoring these wonderful mensches!

Musical Performances by Cantor Magda Fishman and Cantor Shira Lissek

The evening promises a spectacular program. Internationally acclaimed Cantor Magda Fishman, known for her powerful stage presence and a blend of traditional and contemporary Jewish music, will be joining Cantor Shira Lissek to fill the sanctuary with inspiring music. Originally from Israel, Cantor Fishman has performed globally, captivating audiences with her renditions of Israeli folk songs, jazz, musical theater, and original compositions. Her unique talents and impressive background as a soloist and trumpet player with the Israeli Army Orchestra add an unforgettable element to this year's celebration.

Cantor Shira Lissek, Temple Israel's beloved cantor since 2018, has brought immense meaning and warmth to our congregation. With a master's degree in voice from the Manhattan School of Music and a rich family legacy of Jewish leadership, Cantor Lissek inspires through her musical talent and dedication. This year marks her sixth performance in our annual concert, a role that has become a cherished tradition for both her and the Temple Israel community.

Fundraising Initiatives for a Vibrant Jewish Future

Support Temple Israel's mission by joining us for Together We Rise! Your contributions are essential to ensuring Temple Israel remains a source of strength



Cantor Magda Fishman,

and connection for generations to come. This year, we're hon-

ored to feature a very moving call to heart and paddle raise led by the Temple Israel leadership team and Josh and Adina Loewensteiner. Each paddle raised and every contribution made will directly help us expand our religious educational programs, cultural offerings, and community outreach, paving the way for a vibrant Jewish future. We invite you to explore our ticket and sponsorship options by visiting <https://www.templeisraelnc.org/form/2024fundraiser>, and be part of this powerful evening dedicated to our shared mission and enduring legacy.

Heartfelt Thanks to Our Sponsors

A heartfelt thank you to our generous sponsors and supporters, whose contributions make

this event possible. We're grateful to all those who share Temple Israel's commitment to nurturing a vibrant Jewish community.

We look forward to seeing you at the fundraiser for an unforgettable evening of music, recognition, and meaningful impact. For more information, visit <https://www.templeisraelnc.org/form/2024fundraiser> or contact us directly at (704) 944-6785.



Temple Kol Ami Dedicates Second Sefer Torah

By Shari Baum

Simchat Torah is a time of joyous celebration as we conclude the reading of the Torah and begin anew from the Book of Genesis. At Temple Kol Ami of Fort Mill, we celebrated this holiday by dancing with our sacred scripture and listening to Cantor Mary Thomas chant the parashot in Hebrew and English. Additionally, we marked the occasion with a special dedication of our second Torah.

When Temple Kol Ami was founded about 15 years ago, we were fortunate to receive a Torah from a congregation in Niagara Falls, NY, that was unfortunately closing. We were happy to bring new life to this sacred text in our growing community. About five years ago, we decided we needed a second Torah. Jonathan Shaw, one of Temple Kol Ami's founding members, contacted an organization in Miami that rehomes Torahs from Eastern Europe. With the support of a grant from Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, we were able to obtain our second Torah. Due to the COVID pandemic, however, the dedication was delayed. This past Simchat Torah, on the anniversary of the brutal murders in Israel, we felt it was time to officially consecrate our new Sefer Torah and bring light and joy into the world.

"Having a second Torah is a testament to the growth of Temple Kol Ami," remarked Shaw. "We were pleased to be able once again to continue the story



Scott Abrams, TKA congregant, holds Torah during consecration ceremony

of a Torah from another community." Cantor Thomas blessed the new scroll and the congregation as we began our journey with our proverbial Tree of Life.

If you live in York County or the South Charlotte/Ballantyne area, Temple Kol Ami may be the place for you. We are a warm and inclusive Reform congregation comprising Jews from diverse backgrounds. We generally hold Shabbat services on the first and third Fridays of each month; however, the schedule occasionally changes, so it's always best

to check our calendar at www.templekolamisc.org. We're pleased that Cantor Thomas will lead us in prayer more regularly in the coming year. She will next be with us on Dec. 20. Wishing all a very Happy and Healthy secular New Year! We hope to see you at Temple Kol Ami in 2025.



Temple Israel's 6th Annual Fundraiser

Together We Rise

Save the Date!

December 15th, 2024

Join us for an uplifting evening of philanthropy! Enjoy a selection of heavy hors d'oeuvres and meaningful performances by Cantor Shira Lissek and special guest, Israeli Cantor Magda Fishman. Don't miss our exciting paddle raise, where your generosity will make a lasting impact!

In recognition of their lifetime dedication to Temple Israel, we are honored to present Lynne and Morey Sheffer with the Shofar Award.

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Foundation for the Charlotte Jewish Community Donor Advised Funds: A Tool To Simplify Your Giving

What is a Donor Advised Fund?

You may have heard the term donor advised fund, or DAF, and wondered if it's the right choice to help you reach your charitable goals. At the Foundation for the Charlotte Jewish Community (FCJC), we use this tool to help philanthropists like you make giving decisions every day.

A DAF is a charitable giving fund — often referred to as a philanthropic checking account — and is managed through a sponsoring organization such as a community foundation or a charitable affiliate of a financial institution. A gift made to establish a DAF or to an existing DAF is typically tax deductible because the sponsoring organization is a public charity.

The assets in a DAF can be invested, grow tax-free, and are available for distribution over time to your favorite charities. DAFs provide a centralized vehicle for charitable giving and simplify record-keeping enabling you to direct all your charitable gifts to your DAF.

Why Consider a Donor Advised Fund?

For anyone looking to simplify their giving while maximizing its impact, a donor advised fund (DAF) offers several unique benefits:

- **Tax Deductibility:** Contributions to a DAF are typically tax-deductible in the year you make them and can be a tax-planning tool to lower your taxable income.

- **Simplified Record-Keeping:** All contributions are managed in a single account, which can simplify your charitable giving.

- **Flexible Giving:** You can make distributions from the DAF to your favorite charities whenever it's convenient, whether immediately or over many years.

- **Growth Potential:** DAF assets can be invested in various funds, allowing the potential for growth over time, which can mean more for charity down the line.

- **Legacy Planning:** You can involve family members in succession planning, ensuring that your philanthropy reflects shared values and creates a lasting legacy.

Why a Donor Advised Fund with FCJC?

Choosing to open a DAF with the Foundation for the Charlotte Jewish Community (FCJC) provides distinct advantages, connecting your philanthropy with Jewish values and community impact:

- **Personalized Philanthropy:** FCJC helps you personalize your philanthropy by aligning your giving with your interests and Jewish values.

- **Leveraged Resources:** As a supporting organization of Foundation For The Carolinas, we leverage the vast resources of the nation's fifth-largest community foundation to assist you with your charitable giving.

- **Growth Opportunities:** Assets in your FCJC donor advised fund can be invested for potential growth in one of six unique investment pools, increasing the amount available for future grants

- **Collaborative Partner:** An FCJC DAF connects you with our mission to build community and inspire philanthropy, and supports causes that strengthen Jewish life, religion, and culture in the Charlotte region and beyond.

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Our donor advised fund is a convenient and flexible tool to assist us with our charitable giving. We have such confidence in the FCJC team that we moved our fund from a commercial provider.

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- **Philanthropic Advisor:** We collaborate with your legal, tax, and financial advisors to create a lasting legacy for you and your family!

To learn more about donor advised funds and how FCJC can help meet your philanthropic goals, please contact Phil Warshauer at 704-973-4544 or pwarshauer@charlottejewishfoundation.org.



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To learn more contact Sam Bernstein at sam.bernstein@jewishcharlotte.org



A FCJC PROGRAM

Life Near Israel's Northern Border

By Omri Avidar, Tour Guide from Kfar Vradim, Israel

On October 7, 2023, our lives were turned upside down. Like all of Israel, we were horrified by Hamas' attack on communities near Gaza. But very soon, our concern shifted northward, toward the Lebanese border near our home. What if Hezbollah attacked us there as well? On Oct. 8, Hezbollah began firing on northern villages, leading to the evacuation of over 60,000 people to hotels across the country.

Since then, life here in Kfar Vradim — a wonderful community in the heart of the Galilee, just five miles from the Lebanese border — has not been the same. Though my town has not been evacuated, life is far from normal, especially after the war intensified in September 2024. Here's what it feels like to live in northern Israel during this challenging time.

After several tense weeks in October 2023, Northern Israel became a landscape of intense military presence, and day-to-day life came to a halt. Unlike the places that were evacuated, within a few weeks, we and the rest of the second-line villages began returning to a sense of routine. Schools and kindergartens reopened, and the supermarket and cafés welcomed people back. Some returned to work, and for brief moments, things almost felt normal. Yet, each day, we faced relentless attacks. Anti-tank missiles, rockets, drones—each erupted with deafening blasts. Iron Dome interceptors roared as they intercepted incoming threats, and Air Force planes streaked across the sky day and night, creating a constant soundtrack of war. Sirens blared, sending us sprinting to shelters. Many were called up for reserve duty, leaving their homes and jobs behind. Meanwhile, our community rallied, organizing

to support soldiers and the Army with food, equipment, temporary lodging, and ongoing aid. We all became glued to news and alert apps, our lives now tethered to each new update.

The concern for the hostages weighs heavily on us, especially for Romi Gonen—a resident of our town who lives just a few houses away, a close friend of our family, and now a hostage. Every Friday, we join a solidarity walk to honor the hostages and call for their safe return. Many families we know personally have suffered during this war, facing either casualties or injuries. There isn't a single home untouched by the pain of October 7. As of now, 101 hostages remain captive in Gaza.

The economic impact on people here has been severe. Many northern businesses, especially those closer to the border, are struggling to survive. Tourism has come to a virtual standstill, with hotels, bed and breakfasts, and restaurants largely out of operation for the past year. As a tour guide, I've been hit hard. For several months, I had no tours at all. In spring 2024, mainly due to American visitors showing solidarity and volunteering, I organized and led successful group tours to the Gaza envelope, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv. But since then, I've only guided a few Israeli groups, working at about 15 percent of my usual level.

I immediately joined the emergency response team in my community and was later officially called up for reserve duty. For over 300 days now, I've been enlisted — training, guarding, spending long hours in the war room, always ready and in uniform. This has allowed me to scrape by financially. With almost no work, I've started to prepare for the future, for the time the situation will allow to re-start tourism. For this, I'm



Omri Avidar

focusing on bringing Americans to Israel to show support, provide strength, and bear witness to our incredibly challenging situation.

In towns closer to the border, the situation is more dire for those evacuated. The danger in these areas is constant. My cousin from Misgav Am, for example, is part of the emergency response team there. He evacuated his family to safety, but he stayed behind, alone. At night, he has to slip into his house in total darkness, careful not to turn on any lights to avoid drawing fire. Hundreds of homes across the Galilee have been hit, and many residents have abandoned hope of returning, starting new lives in central Israel. Fires and rocket impacts have scarred nature reserves and the once-beautiful hills and valleys of Northern Israel. The infrastructure in many settlements has also been

severely damaged, and it will be a long time before restoration is complete.

The intense conflict in Lebanon since late September 2024 has been crucial and necessary from the perspective of northern residents. For years, we were aware of Hezbollah's "Plan to Conquer the Galilee" and their preparations for it. The Israel Defense Force's (IDF's) entry into Lebanon and the subsequent discovery of tunnels and extensive equipment have highlighted the severity and immediacy of this threat that could have resulted in another and maybe more horrifying October 7. This war is essential for our safety; we have no choice but to prevail. We are relieved that the IDF has finally prioritized this issue.

This year, on Yom Kippur, our conservative community held prayers not in our syna-

gogue but in a school, a safer location. Few people came, but it was uplifting nonetheless. I arrived in uniform and armed, both a worshipper and a guard. At the end of the Ne'ilah prayer, we blessed the children and sang "Oseh Shalom" and "Hatikvah" with profound intention. As our prayers for peace filled the room, the sounds of war filled the air outside — explosions, interceptions, helicopters, and missiles. I thought to myself that a people strong enough to pray for peace and observe its sacred traditions even when war rages outside are destined to endure and, one day, to achieve peace, no matter how long it may take.

Until then, we hold onto hope for brighter days when Northern Israel can once again be a place of peace, beauty, and resilience.

Omri Avidar is a licensed tour guide and resident of Kfar Vradim. He has loved traveling the trails of Israel since he was a child. Omri is a fourth-generation resident of Israel, and inherited his love of Israel and the land from his ancestors. In 2013, after years in a senior high-tech position, Omri decided to turn his passion into a reality, and ever since, he delightfully shares the beauty of Israel, its sites, and its people with those who tour with him. For information on upcoming tours, contact Omri at www.omri-travel.co.il.



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Women's News

Hadassah Supports Camp Judaea Hurricane Recovery Efforts

By Aileen Greenberg-Kriner
 "While our hearts are in Eretz Yisrael, we continue to assess the damage sustained at our little bit of Israel in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains," began Lori Zeligman, director of Camp Judaea in Hendersonville, North Carolina., in a post to the camp community following Hurricane Helene.

As in so much of the region, there was heavy flooding and considerable damage at Camp Judaea, with buildings submerged under many feet of water. Despite the devastation, Zeligman's message was one of hope, love, confidence, and resilience, as she added, "Our team is hard at work planning for an amazing Summer 2025, our 66th year, which promises to be full of joy and laughter. So, while the physical damage is significant, we are resilient and committed, and we will come out stronger together."

Founded in 1909, Young Judaea was made up of multiple Zionist clubs from around the country. Young Judaea's goals were to advance the cause of Zionism, promote Jewish culture and ideals, and support the mental, moral, and physical development of Jewish youth.

Hadassah began its official relationship with Young Judaea in 1936. At its national convention, Hadassah approved an annual subsidy to Young Judaea of

\$2500 (25% of Young Judaea's operating budget at the time), and passed a resolution urging Hadassah chapters to help Young Judaea succeed. In 1967, Hadassah became the sole supporter of Young Judaea, shepherding its growth as the largest Zionist youth movement in the U.S. In 2011, Hadassah voted to help Young Judaea become an independent organization, and in 2012, Young Judaea became a "103-year-old start-up." Hadassah continued its commitment to provide funding for scholarships and special programs.

Many Hadassah members attended Young Judaea camps or sent their children to experience the youth summer camps, Camp Tel Yehuda for high-school-age kids, summer programs in Israel, or the gap-year Year Course program. Today, Hadassah members still proudly raise funds for Young Judaea through local grassroots programs and activities.

For Karen Fattersak, our local chapter board secretary, Young Judaea was life-changing. Karen's mother gifted her a Hadassah Lifetime Membership for her bat mitzvah. As a teenager, Karen attended Tel Yehuda, where she met her husband, Bill, and other lifelong friends. She then attended Year Course in 1977-78, during which she lived in Israel and earned college credit.



Camp Judaea year-round staff with one of more than 100 trees that fell at camp. Left to right: Ilana Schlam, assistant director, Gayle Kaplan, camp administrator, Erik Pauwels, facilities manager, Francine Safdeye, camper experience director, Jeremy Serkin, development officer, Lori Zeligman, director, Joseph Zeuner, director of program and strategy

Roz Cooper, Charlotte Hadassah Chapter past-president, talks about how three of her now-adult children spent their summers at Camp Judaea in Hendersonville, North Carolina. "They made lifelong friends," she said. Camp Judaea meant so much to her family that Roz represented the Hadassah Southern Seaboard region on the Board of Young Judaea for five years in the early 2000s.

While the relationship between Hadassah and Camp Judaea has changed over the years, the commitment to Camp Judaea and its mission has not. The Charlotte Metro chapter is spearheading Hadassah's fundraising effort to help restore Camp Judaea by hosting a Chanukah Lat-

ke Luncheon on Sunday, Dec. 22 from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Share how you celebrate the holiday by bringing your favorite type of latke, creative toppings, sfganiyot, or special candy. There is no cost to attend but donations will be accepted to benefit Camp Judaea in Hendersonville. Register at hadassahcltevents.org. You can also send a check designated for Camp Judaea to Hadassah Charlotte Metro, 5007 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28226. To make other payment arrangements, email Hadassah-CLT@gmail.com or call (980) 553-1880.

Things To Do

It's time to "get cracking" and order your official 2025 *National Mah Jongg League* (NMJL) card. It is a big fundraiser for our chapter. Last year, we received more than \$3,200 from NMJL which we sent to Hadassah Medical Organization in Israel. You can order cards for multiple people, and you do not have to be a Hadassah member to purchase your card through Hadassah. Order on our website or use the

order form on this page.

Sign up now for the 2025-26 *Hadassah Charlotte Metro Area Jewish Community Directory*. Proceeds go toward funding a pediatric emergency bay at Hadassah's Mt. Scopus Hospital. There is no charge to include your personal listing. You can purchase a printed or online directory or advertise your business. Even if you were listed in previous directories, you must sign up again. Visit our website for more info.

Relax and unwind at *Hadassah Wine & Schmooze* on Tuesday, Dec. 3 at 7 p.m. at Vintner Wine Market in the Arboretum Shopping Center.

Short Story Discussion Group meets on Zoom on Dec. 13 at 11:45 a.m. to talk about "The List of Plagues" by Audrey Ferber in "Frankly Feminist: Short Stories by Jewish Women."

Join *Hadassah BookTalk* on Tuesday, Dec. 17 at 7 p.m. on Zoom to discuss "Leaving Eastern Parkway" by Matthew Daub.

The next Hadassah CLT Metro Board meeting is Monday, Dec. 16 at 7 p.m. in person at the Levine JCC.

Helpful Info

Interested in membership? Contact Laurie Sheinhaus at the phone number or email below or attend one of our events.

Our website, www.hadassah-cltevents.org, has details and links for our events. If you have questions or need additional information, email Hadassah-CLT@gmail.com or call our general phone number, (980) 553-1880. Follow us on Facebook (Hadassah CLT Metro) and Instagram (Hadassah Charlotte Metro).



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Type Charlotte Metro in Chapter Name box & choose "Southern Seaboard" for Region.
- **By mail. Send form below and check to:**
Hadassah Charlotte Metro, 5007 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28226
Contact Merril Schenkel at 980-553-1880 or hadassahclt@gmail.com with questions.
Make checks payable to Hadassah, and put Charlotte Metro Mah Jongg in the memo.

Please include the number of cards in your order
 \$14 standard print card \$15 large print card

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Street Address _____

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Hadassah Chapter Hadassah Charlotte Metro Region Southern Seaboard

If you are ordering card(s) that need to be mailed to other addresses, please include each name and address on a separate piece of paper.

By submitting this form, I hereby grant Hadassah permission to share my personal information (including my name, street address and any other information included above) with the National Mah Jongg League.



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Growing Up with Support: JFS's Comprehensive Approach to Youth Mental Health

By Rachel Green, MSW, LCSW,
JFS Director of Programs and Services

Many of us have witnessed the joyful energy of our community's youngest members, whether it's the sound of laughter from toddlers exploring the world around them, the excitement of elementary schoolers heading off to play, or the lively conversations among teens gathering to share the latest news. In spaces across our Jewish community, we're lucky to see children and teens connecting, learning, and growing. Yet beneath the laughter and joyful shouts, there's an important reality: even the youngest among us can encounter challenges that feel quite big.

In recent years, the importance of mental health awareness has surged, underscoring the need for early intervention, especially for our youngest community members. Childhood is a critical time for emotional and cognitive development, and addressing mental health needs during these formative years can set the stage for a lifetime of well-being. Childhood mental health conditions affect many children and families. In 2018-2019, 1 in 7 children ages 3 to 17 (13%) had a current diagnosed mental or behavioral health condition (cdc.org).

Early mental health services can help identify issues such as anxiety, depression, or behavioral disorders before they escalate, allowing for timely support. Anxiety, behavioral disorders, and depression are the most commonly diagnosed mental health conditions in children, with anxiety being the most prevalent: 10% of children ages 3 to 17 had diagnosed anxiety in 2021-2022, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Though these statis-



tics could seem daunting, Jewish Family Services (JFS) employs a collaborative approach to address this challenge.

For the youngest children, for whom early intervention is essential in the first few years of development, JFS therapists and clinical staff have partnered with teachers and leadership at Charlotte Jewish Preschool (CJP) and Jewish Preschool on Sardis (JPS) staff to provide early intervention and training about youth development and mental health. This collaboration is proving to be an effective strategy in promoting positive outcomes for children.

Preschools are uniquely positioned to serve as the frontline for identifying children and families who may need additional support. Teachers and staff have close, daily interactions with children and can observe behavioral changes or struggles. By fostering a strong partnership between educators, parents, and mental health professionals, JFS is working to create an integrated support system in the Jewish community.

JFS therapists have provided trainings on childhood social-emotional development, play therapy, and early childhood

mental health interventions to preschool staff. JFS therapists offer classroom observations and teacher coaching to provide extra support. We have also presented to parents about JFS counseling services and offer trainings including parenting children with anxiety, helping children cope with stressful times, and parenting workshops. JFS has worked with leadership from both CJP and JPS to create streamlined referral processes to ensure that families who need play therapy, family therapy, or other support can receive those services at JFS.

JFS recognizes the importance of addressing the mental health needs of children and teens across all ages in our community. According to Mental Health America, 20% of youth ages 12 to 17 reported experiencing at least one major depressive episode in the past year. To help address this crisis locally, JFS received a grant from the Jewish Federations of North America and the Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies to implement the Be Well Initiative, supporting the mental health needs of teens and their parents. As part of this program, JFS has facilitated the Shalom Park Resiliency Roundtable, a collaboration among youth-serving Jewish agencies and community members.

The Resiliency Roundtable has already completed several key projects, including a local needs assessment to identify the mental health needs of teens and young adults. Based on the study's results, the group developed a community mental health plan for youth. The teens who responded to the needs assessment surveys sent two clear messages: they want to support each other, and technology is central to their lives. They shared that they see technology and the internet as valuable tools—and JFS listened.

With additional funding through the Be Well initiative, JFS will introduce an innovative program to Charlotte: Teen Talk. The Teen Talk app, available in all app stores and free for users ages 13 to 19, provides anonymous, peer-based support to

teens directly on their phones. Recognizing that teens often seek peer support, Teen Talk offers comprehensive training to teen advisors who provide guidance and encouragement through the aJFS and the Resiliency Roundtable are excited to announce that in early 2025, JFS will be hosting a training session for 25 local teens to be trained by Teen Talk to become teen advisors on the app and teen mental health advocates in our community. According to Teen Talk, "We train teens in high school to support their peers on the app, creating a safe and supportive online community where teens

can vent, share, and get support from other teens who know what they are going through. When a teen hears 'I've been there too' from someone their own age, it can be transformative; they are no longer in it alone."

If you know of a teen in grades 9-11 who may be interested in becoming a Teen Talk Advisor or if you are interested in learning more about any of these programs, please contact JFS at (704) 364-6594 or email info@jfscharlotte.org.



Jewish Family Services Volunteers & Donors September 2024

Volunteers: Jessica Alfandary, Marcia Arnholt, Mike Arnholt, Daniel Benjamin, Andrew Bernstein, Steff Cohen, Jonathan Collman, Andrea Cronson, Julie Dermack, Joni Deutsch, Sheryl Effren, Jamie Fram, Rachel Friedman, Robert Friedman, Meredith Gartner, Marty Goldfarb, Richard Goldsmith, Jennifer Golynsky, Gail Halverson, Rebecca Hockfield, Tara and Liat Hubara, Dawn Hubbs, Bob Jacobson, Etti Krause, Jennifer Koss, Stephanie Kreitman, Marcia Lampert, Eric Lerner, Kevin Levine, Lisa Levinson, Adina Loewensteiner, Matt Luftglass, Susie Meier, Frada Mozenter, Wendy Petricoff, Barbara Rein, Nina Rose, Hilary Rosenbaum, Marilyn Schuster, Louis Sinkoe, Teresa Singer, Stuart Singer, Celia Solomon, Harry Sparks, Lisa Somerson, Lorin Stiefel, Steve Teich, Gail Vogel, Nancy Wielunski, Amanda Zaidman

Hadassah Meal Preps: Geneva Boxer, June Hirschmann, Paul Hirschmann, Judy Kaufmann, Penny Krieger, Aileen Greenberg-Kriner, Judy Nascimento, Yvette Jacobson

Food Drives: Charlotte Jewish Preschool Yom Kippur food drive, JCC Youth Soccer and NFL flag football league, Temple Israel High Holiday food drive

Shalom Green: Thanks to all Shalom Green volunteers for providing fresh produce to our pantry clients.

Food Pantry Donations: Thank you to our generous community for continuing to donate to the food pantry. We continue to collect donations every other Wednesday at the portico entrance to the Blumenthal Center for Jewish Education Building on Shalom Park.

Jewish Family Services Tributes October 2024

For a speedy recovery of
Stuart Greenspon
Stanley Greenspon
Gwen Neiman Levy
Stanley Greenspon
Mina Sue Pearlman
Stanley Greenspon

Happy birthday
Jerry Levin
Joel and Paulette Cohen
Paul and Lynn Edelstein
Stanley Greenspon
Anita Shapiro
Paul and Lynn Edelstein

In honor of
Russ Greenfield
Cheryl Comisar

In memory of
Evelyn Allen
The Richman Family
Phyllis Levy Doobrow
Beverly Stern Donnelly &
Ira Stern
Bea Gibbs
Lisa Shporer

(In memory of cont.)
Devon Hughes
Francine Poznansky
Joseph Kodsi
Stanley Greenspon
Lenore "Lee" Marx
David and Rebecca Burack
B&G Lieberman Co. Employees
Gary and Toni Faulkenberry
Shelton and Ellen Goldstein
Stanley Greenspon
M.E. Hessberg
The Levy Family
Richard and Susan Minges
Mark and Teri Moffett
Paul and Gwen Orland
Betty Rosenbaum
George and Lois Schneider
Jack Poznansky
Francine Poznansky
Larry Segal
Shelton and Ellen Goldstein
Stanley Greenspon
Fred Shporer
Lisa Shporer
Rosemary Zulman
Paul and Lynn Edelstein
Adrian and Andrea Mesoznik

Jewish Family SERVICES

Emergency Numbers

Suicide Crisis Lifeline: 988

Greater Charlotte Hopeline: (980) 771-HOPE (4673)
Crisis line for parenting, DV, and sexual assault

Mobile Crisis: (704) 566-3410
24-hour behavioral health

Jewish Family Services
(704) 364-6594 or info@jfscharlotte.org

Around the Table: Jews from the Former Soviet Union Celebrate 35 Years in the U.S.



Editor's Note: This is the first of a two part series. The second part will be published in the January, 2025 CJN.

By Charlotte Rouchouze

When I was about 12 years old, in 1989, a local Jewish organization assigned my family a Russian family emigrating from the Soviet Union. I recall the signs posted in and around Jewish institutions and synagogues that read "Save Soviet Jewry" although I understood very little about what that meant at the time. I knew that my parents were doing their part by helping them find jobs, giving them furniture and clothes we could spare, and generally trying to

make them feel welcome in the U.S. We ended up becoming friends with them, and in fact still keep in touch to this day. (Shoutout to Svetlana, Milana and Alina Koptsiovsky!) At the beginning, I recall them seeming overwhelmed and vulnerable. In spite of having advanced degrees in Russia, they barely spoke English, lacked basic resources, and understood little about American suburban culture of the 1990s. It was the first time I had seen up close what it meant to sacrifice your own status and secure ground so that your children could live a better life in America. It didn't occur to me at the time that many in my own family had come from the same place with the same dream, only during entirely different waves of Jewish emigration.

In fact, the "Free Soviet Jewry" movement went back to the 1960s, at the height of what some activists have referred to as the Soviet policy of "cultural genocide" of the Jewish people. After the catastrophic destruction of Jewish life under Stalin and Hitler, the post-war Soviet era ushered in a period of austerity and tight communist control. In addition to the general



Soviet Jews Freedom Rally, 1987 (CC)

repression experienced by all Soviets, Jews were systematically discriminated against in workplaces, schools and universities, in food ticket distribution, and in virtually every possible way. They experienced frequent verbal and at times physical abuse for being Jewish, and at the same time were denied any right to Jewish collective expression. Some requested exit visas, although this was a highly risky move that often led to job loss, social isolation, and even jailing, in the case of some "refuseniks" as they were called. A movement

(largely by American Jews) to save these Jews and regrant them onto the Jewish people simmered over the course of the '70s and '80s with the famous slogan "Let My People Go." It was Mikhail Gorbachev who decided to lift longstanding bans on Jewish activity as part of his social reforms known as Glasnost. He hoped this would lead to greater contentment among Soviet Jews and suppress their desire to leave.

But when, in 1989, he finally also gave in to pressure to look the other way as Soviet Jews

left under a complicated loophole of "re-patriation" to their homeland in Israel, the government was dismayed to find that most did. The truth is that most Jews had their eyes on the US, not Israel, although all said and done, well over half of Soviet Jews did end up going to Israel in the years just before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. For many, Israel was considered a less desirable option, both for economic reasons- Israel's economy sputtered through much of the 70s and 80s- and due to fear of military conscription, which for Russian Jews triggered traumatic memories of Jewish sons being kidnapped into lifelong army service, a common tactic of various Russian governments.

Nonetheless, Jewish organizations, including the Sochnut (the Israeli ministry that manages Aliyah), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (now HIAS), Jewish Federations, and Jewish Family Services, were crucial parts of the movement to help Soviet Jews leave and resettle elsewhere, providing them with transportation, stipends, legal assistance and more. Of course,

(Continued on page 19)

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Happy Chanukah from your Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte Team.



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Jewish Federation
of Greater Charlotte

Around the Table

(Continued from page 17)

no one could have predicted that a mere year and a half after people had liquidated entire life savings to be used as bribes, obtained invitations from false Israeli relatives, and burned all roads back to the home country, that the Soviet Union would fall. When they arrived in the U.S., Chanukah was often a first Jewish cultural experience of Russian Jews. One friend Olga Klibanov recalls going to the Arboretum Shopping Center to see the Chanukah candle lighting and could not get over how open all of this was. How could one

display Jewishness so publicly? This was a first step toward the Jews of the Soviet Union integrating in various ways into the Jewish community of today.

It is now 35 years later, and in Charlotte, many Russian Jews are celebrating their 35-year anniversary in this country. In next month's issue, I will tell you about some of the members of this community and their personal immigration stories. For now, I leave you with a Belarussian latke recipe that comes from my friend Dr. Margaret Lozovatsky, a recipe which is reminiscent of

the ones Margaret's grandmother made. She emphasized that dill is an essential element in the cooking of the region and shouldn't be left out here. She also does not add onion, but I have gone with the original recipe and used it.

Charlotte Rouchouze, PhD is a local French teacher, food blogger, and beaded jewelry designer. Her blog about food traditions from around the world can be found at www.thechildrenstable.com. Contact her at charlotte.rouchouze@yahoo.com.



Belarussian Draniki (latkes)

- 3 russet potatoes
- ½ onion shredded
- ¼ cup all purpose flour
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp pepper
- Oil for frying
- Sour cream
- Dill

Peel the potatoes and grate, either by hand or in a food processor and place in a large bowl. Cover with water and allow to soak for several minutes. Next remove the shredded potato, squeez-

ing out the water as much as possible and transfer to paper towels. Wrap and dry as well as possible. Allow the water in the bowl to settle and then pour off the water, retaining the starch at the bottom of the bowl. Put the dried potato shreds, shredded onion, flour, salt, pepper, and egg in the bowl and stir to combine. Heat a layer of oil on a heavy frying pan. Add about ¼ cup of batter at a time and allow to fry until golden brown. Flip and brown on the other side. Top the pancakes with sour cream and chopped dill.



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Bal Tashchit and Beyond: Growth Through Gardening

By Billie Anderson

Bobbie Mabe, a horticultural therapist at HopeWay, sat down with us to discuss her Growth Through Gardening program at Shalom Park. Bobbie holds a master's degree in professional counseling and is certified through the Horticultural Therapy Institute. She has also served as the garden coordinator of the Shalom Park Community Garden since 2015, using her experience to educate gardeners of all ages.

Billie Anderson: What is Growth Through Gardening (GTG)?

Bobbie Mabe: Growth Through Gardening (GTG) is my company that offers personalized horticultural therapy programming to nourish the

mind, body, and spirit of each client. We design every garden and experience based on unique goals, believing that everyone benefits from interacting with nature. Horticultural therapy can meet goals ranging from clinical to personal. Whether you are part of a corporation seeking a unique team-building workshop, a therapeutic practice looking to expand client offerings, or an individual pursuing personal growth, we're here to guide you.

Our program was created from my background in professional counseling and my development of horticultural therapy programs. Initially, I saw the benefits of horticultural therapy in a clinical setting, however developing programs for schools, camps, families, and individuals



Bobbi giving an educational session in the Shalom Park Community Garden

has shown that the human need for nature is universal.

BA: What did the first season of GTG look like at Camp Mindy?

BM: GTG first offered services to Camp Mindy campers at the Levine Jewish Community Center (LJCC) in the summer of 2016, serving children between the ages of 5 and 12. Many campers also attended the Charlotte Jewish Preschool, Charlotte Jewish Day School, Temple Beth El, and Temple Israel, allowing us to watch them grow over time.

During our first season, we offered unique gardening activities and educational sessions, including harvesting produce to deliver to Jewish Family Services, learning how to plant seeds, making bird feeders to support local wildlife, and engaging in fun activities about irrigation and other gardening systems.

BA: What are some of your favorite GTG memories?

BM: Some of my favorite

memories involve watching campers explore, tap into their sense of wonder, and thrive. In one group, a child who struggled with social situations found that digging for worms was calming. Eventually, his whole group joined in, allowing him to socialize in a comfortable way. It was amazing to see nature as a connecting force. I've also enjoyed watching campers climb our large fig trees over the years. With limbs close to the ground, it's a safe yet thrilling activity for the campers.

BA: What are some of the sweetest things kids have said about gardening?

BM: The kids' enthusiasm for gardening is heartwarming! Some campers eagerly tell me about their home gardens, especially their tomatoes—they love tomatoes! And those who feel the need to show me an insect or a blooming flower are so endearing. I feel immense pride when a former preschooler returns to camp with a strong gar-

dening foundation and pride in their skills.

BA: Why do you think the GTG program is important to Jewish youth and our community?

BM: As a horticultural therapist, I believe nature offers opportunities for improved health. Whether addressing mental health, social or emotional skills, pride, or reducing stress, engagement in nature is powerful. With our increasing reliance on technology, children spend less time outdoors. Our horticultural programming gives campers time to explore, think critically, exercise, and connect with nature and peers. They learn skills for growing their own food and understand the importance of contributing to society by harvesting and donating to Jewish Family Services.

BA: How can people support the GTG program?

BM: Donations to the Shalom Green fund at the Foundation of Shalom Park directly support Shalom Green's ability to hire GTG as the part-time garden coordinator for the Shalom Park Community Garden each year. GTG supports planting and harvesting, manages maintenance and crop rotation, and is the hub for horticultural education and volunteer activities across the park. Each summer, GTG also hosts Camp Mindy campers for gardening sessions.

If you're interested in volunteering with or donating to Shalom Green, please visit shalomgreenCLT.org or email us at info@shalomgreenCLT.org. Connect with us on Facebook at Shalom Green: Shalom Park Environmental Initiative and on Instagram @shalomgreen_CLT.

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Eli Beard Brings Her Israeli National Team Experience to the Carolina Ascent

By Steve Goldberg

Charlotte is becoming the American home for Israeli national soccer team players. Two of the three Israelis in Major League Soccer — Liel Abada and Idan Tokloanti — joined Charlotte FC this season. Now add Elianna “Eli” Beard, who came to Charlotte this summer to join the Carolina Ascent, a USL Super League team.

The Super League is a new first-division level women’s circuit, on the same level as the 11-year-old National Women’s Soccer League (NWSL), which includes the North Carolina Courage who play in Cary.

What differentiates Beard from Abada and Tokloanti is that she was born and raised in Portland, Oregon. She grew up in a Conservative Jewish household, attending the Portland Jewish Academy (PJA). She went to high school at St. Mary’s, and moved on to play college ball at Marquette University from 2014 to 2017.

Before her senior year, Eli took a birthright trip to Israel, “where I continued to strengthen my Jewish identity that I formed through my years at PJA.” She had been to Israel previously on a bat mitzvah trip with her family.

Her third visit to the Holy Land would be as a professional soccer player. She hadn’t planned on playing after college, intending to return to Portland, and possibly get into coaching, “because I loved the game and I didn’t want to get away from it.”

But then she connected with an agent through a friend. That led to an offer to play in Kazakhstan, where she joined the dominant team, BIK Kazygurt. She quickly learned that playing in college and competing as a professional are not the same things.

“It was tough. A little bit of culture shock. Very intense training, a high-level team that was made up of players from all over the world, Nigeria, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia, America, all over, so kind of being on a team blended like that was tough. But it was a really amazing experience to be able to play (in the UEFA) Women’s Champions League right away.”

“Playing Barcelona was one of the highlights of my career so far,” she told TribalSoccer.com, “especially beating them when we hosted them, but definitely a cool experience playing against their top players.”

She had a short contract there, but her opportunities were just beginning. “I got a call from an Israeli coach, and he said, I want you to come on over after you finish in Kazakhstan and play here, and eventually you can get your citizenship and play on the national team. So I was super excited about that opportunity.”



Eli Beard (Photo provided by Carolina Ascent FC)

Her next stop was Maccabi Holon, a women’s team established in 1999 that had great success in the early 2000s. That’s where Beard made an even greater commitment, making Aliyah with the goal of competing for the Israeli National team. But Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) has strict rules about that. Even with gaining citizenship through the Right of Return, without having a parent or grandparent who was born in Israel, it would take five years before she could do that.

So she stayed, moving to Women’s Football Club (WFC) Ramat Hasharon for a season, taking a short contract with Ungmennafélag Grindavíkur in Iceland, before returning to join FC Kiryat Gat, where she played from October of 2021 until returning to the United States to join the Ascent.

Of her time in Israel, Beard said, “I just loved my experience. Love the culture over there. I just feel at home.” Her on-field experience was also fruitful. Kiryat won three league titles. During the 2021-2022 season, Beard scored the game-winning goal in the Israeli National Cup final and helped her side win its third championship of the year, the Athena Cup.

She says the level of play in Israel is improving. “They do attract a lot of good players, a lot of good individual talent,” she said to TribalSoccer.com. “Each team can have up to five foreigners. A lot of teams will get some Jewish-Americans that will come over and get their citizenship, so that technically we could have more if they are citizens.”

“That’s what I count as —I’m a foreign player but not really (due to her dual citizenship). I think there is still a drop-off; you will have a team with nine solid players and a few younger ones ... That is the next step, being able to field teams that are a strong eleven and have that bench as well. But the level has gone up over the years. A

lot of players come over, play, and come back to the States and play or go to other leagues. I still don’t think it has the respect it deserves.”

Representing Israel

There is something special about wearing a national team jersey that is just different from anything else. After five years, Beard finally got to experience that, making her debut for Israel in the UEFA League of Nations Tournament, and then playing in qualifiers for the Euro League B tournament. Because of the conflict in Gaza, Israel’s men’s and women’s teams have had to play home matches in Hungary. She now has seven caps (the number of times a player has played in an official international match

for their country) for Israel. While several national team players are currently playing collegiately in the U.S. at schools including Creighton, Santa Clara, and Butler, Beard is the only one on a professional American team. Most play in Israel though several compete in Germany, Austria, and Spain.

Finally getting her chance to play for Israel also gave her freedom to play elsewhere, and the

advent of the Super League was perfect timing.

“I connected with Eli’s agent during our initial roster build and was discussing the profile of the kind of player, and person, we wanted to recruit,” said Ascent head coach Philip Poole. “I told him I wanted a player who could bring high levels of professional experience, and also possess the potential to develop her game to new heights. He delivered.”



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Education and Youth

Celebrating Connections: Friendship Circle's Birthday Circle

By Nick Perez

Friendship Circle's Birthday Circle is more than just a party — it's a joyous event that brings together children and teens with special needs and abilities, their families, and friends in a warm, inclusive environment. Each month, the program celebrates the birthdays of every child and teen whose birthday falls in that month, giving those with birthdays a moment to shine. Donning crowns and surrounded by love, birthday celebrants become the center of attention and the reason for celebration.

The monthly gathering is not only about marking birthdays — it's an essential pillar of Friendship Circle's mission to foster a friendship-filled, inclusive community. Beyond the fun, the celebration reinforces core values of acceptance, connection, and support. Friendship Circle's commitment to these values shines through each celebration, creating meaningful connections among all participants.

Held at Friendship Circle's venue at Chabad of Charlotte,

celebrations are filled with signed cards, cake, games, and personalized touches, making each child feel valued and appreciated. Occasional themed Birthday Circles, such as Birthday Circle in the Sukkah during Sukkot, bring an added sense of festivity, offering an interactive experience like shaking the lulav and etrog.

Birthday Circle's power to foster a true sense of belonging is why it's cherished by all involved. Many of the children don't have large networks of friends, so this may be their only birthday party. By highlighting each child's special day, the program helps boost their confidence and self-esteem and reinforces a sense of community support. Birthday Circle continuously underscores the impact of Friendship Circle's mission to create a welcoming, inclusive community for children with special needs and abilities.

Friendship Circle is a beneficiary agency of Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte. To learn more, visit FriendshipCircleNC.org.



Birthday Circle participants celebrating at "Birthday Circle in the Sukkah."



Post-game picture from Birthday Circle's Inclusive Flag Football program.



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Education and Youth

Charlotte Jewish Day School Independent Study Projects Lead Students to Tech, Green Initiatives, and More

In the last few weeks, CJDS students in grades 6, 7, and 8 have launched independent study projects during their advisory sessions, diving into hands-on learning experiences that build essential skills. They've set up a podcast room where they create podcasts and videos, sharing their findings on topics like plate tectonics, including the use of a green screen to bring their earthquake and tectonic plate movement reports to life. Meanwhile, the new CJDS weather station provides students with a unique opportunity to collect, analyze,

and monitor local weather data, fostering scientific literacy and critical thinking skills in meteorology, climate science, and environmental studies. You can use the QR code to see the latest weather data that students are collecting.

Beyond these digital projects, students have built wind turbines, constructed earthquake-resistant structures, set up a hydroponic garden, and implemented a composting program—all preparing CJDS graduates for a successful transition to high school.



Levi Vorst taking care of the hydroponic garden



Isaac Duller and Julia Culp working on a weather report in front of the green screen



Damien Rouchouze, Charles Kutsak and Ryan Maltz holding the indoor portion of the weather station.



Scan the QR code to see the latest weather data that students are collecting.

The CJDS Middle School provides a strong educational environment for students in grades 6-8, preparing them for high school with critical thinking and analytical skills, with a backdrop of Jewish studies. To find out more about CJDS contact gosborne@cjdschool.org or 704-366-4558.



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Education and Youth

Looking For a Preschool, But Finding Family at Jewish Preschool on Sardis

By Hiley Davis & Ruby Pascal

In recent years, research has highlighted the essential role of preschools and daycares in modern family life. Preschools help children develop crucial emotional skills and introduce foundational concepts like numbers and letters, preparing them for elementary school and beyond. For many families, full-time daycare is also necessary. Given the importance of preschool and the demand for quality childcare, choosing the right preschool for your child is essential.

“When we moved from New York, Lou was fifteen months old,” Jodi Seader explained. Moving is a difficult challenge, but the addition of a baby made it even more challenging. Amid settling into a new state and home, the Seaders also had to find daycare for Lou. “We reached out to several preschools, but Jewish Preschool on Sardis (JPS) stood out. Everyone was so responsive and welcoming, and Devorah gave us multiple tours. It was clear that JPS was a community, not just a place to watch your child. They made the transition so much easier.” Lou is now a

JPS alum, and his younger sister, Goldie, attends Ms. Ellen’s toddler class at JPS.

JPS aims to be more than just a place where children are cared for while parents work — it strives to create a community that fosters growth, learning, and friendships. Every day, the teachers and staff work to provide a positive environment for children to learn and play, and the smiles on the children’s faces show how much it’s worth the effort!

It’s not just our staff who make our school special — our families play an incredible role in building our community. The Seaders are a great example of an involved family with parents who regularly volunteer with our Parent Teacher Organization. This year, Jodi serves as the Book Club chair and even hosted last month’s meeting. She and Brad often volunteer, helping with event setup and cleanup, wrapping donor gifts, and serving as room parents over the years. Our school community is truly remarkable, and we are grateful to be the home of the JPS family.



Seader family at the playground ribbon cutting ceremony



Lou enjoys playing with his friends outside



Goldie and her teacher Hiley



Goldie loving the new playground!



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Happy Chanukah! As someone who reads lots of children's books, I thought I had read most of the Chanukah books out there. But recently, I stumbled upon a book I wasn't familiar with and absolutely loved both the story and the message it conveys. "The Ninth Night of Hanukkah" by Erica S. Perl tells the story of Max and Rachel as they celebrate Chanukah in their family's new apartment. Unfortunately, their box of Chanukah items has gone missing in the move. Luckily, their new non-Jewish neighbors are happy to help with stand-in items for each night. (Think birthday candles and chocolate chips instead of gelt.) Despite missing their usual Chanukah items, Max and Rachel enjoy celebrating with what their neighbors share. Inspired by the shamash candle (the "helper" candle) and all the assistance their neighbors provided, Max and Rachel decide to create a ninth night of Chanukah. They call it "Shamash Night" as a way to say thank you to everyone who helped them celebrate.

I love the idea of inviting your neighbors over to share in an "extra" night of Chanukah. Shamash Night is a wonderful opportunity for you and your children to teach your neighbors a bit about the holiday. Maybe a neighbor even wants to share something about the holiday they celebrate or a tradition they have. I have several neighbors who celebrate Diwali, and I would love to learn more about it. Or maybe your family could celebrate Shamash Night by writing and delivering thank-you letters to community helpers like firefighters, police officers, teachers, or postal workers.

In the chaos of the holiday season, when it feels like we are all spinning like dreidels, it's nice to pause and appreciate the people around us.

Shalom and Happy Chanukah! – Miss Sara



Silly Stories

My favorite part of Chanukah is _____ latkes. Our family loves to experiment with different flavors. We make _____, and even _____ ones. My friends all say that our latkes are _____.

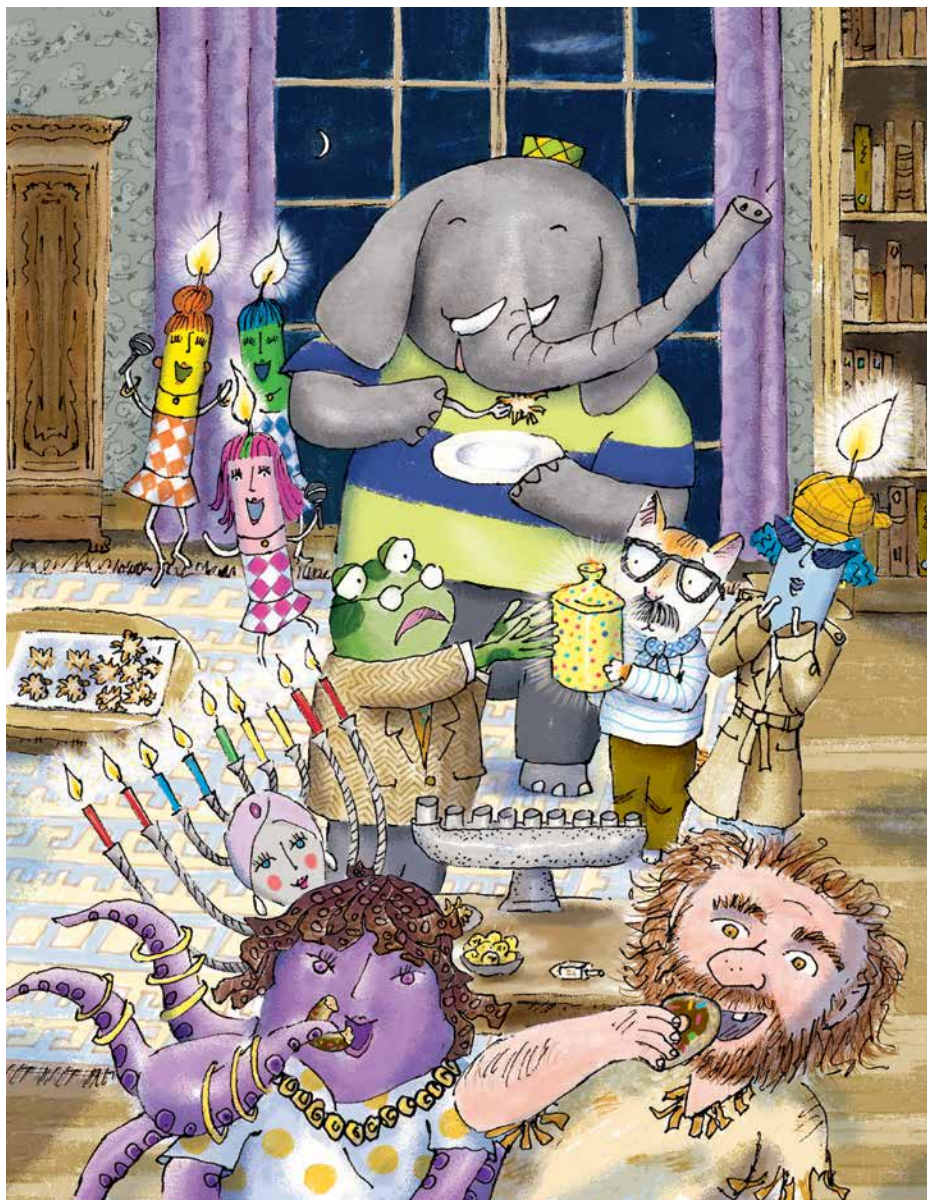
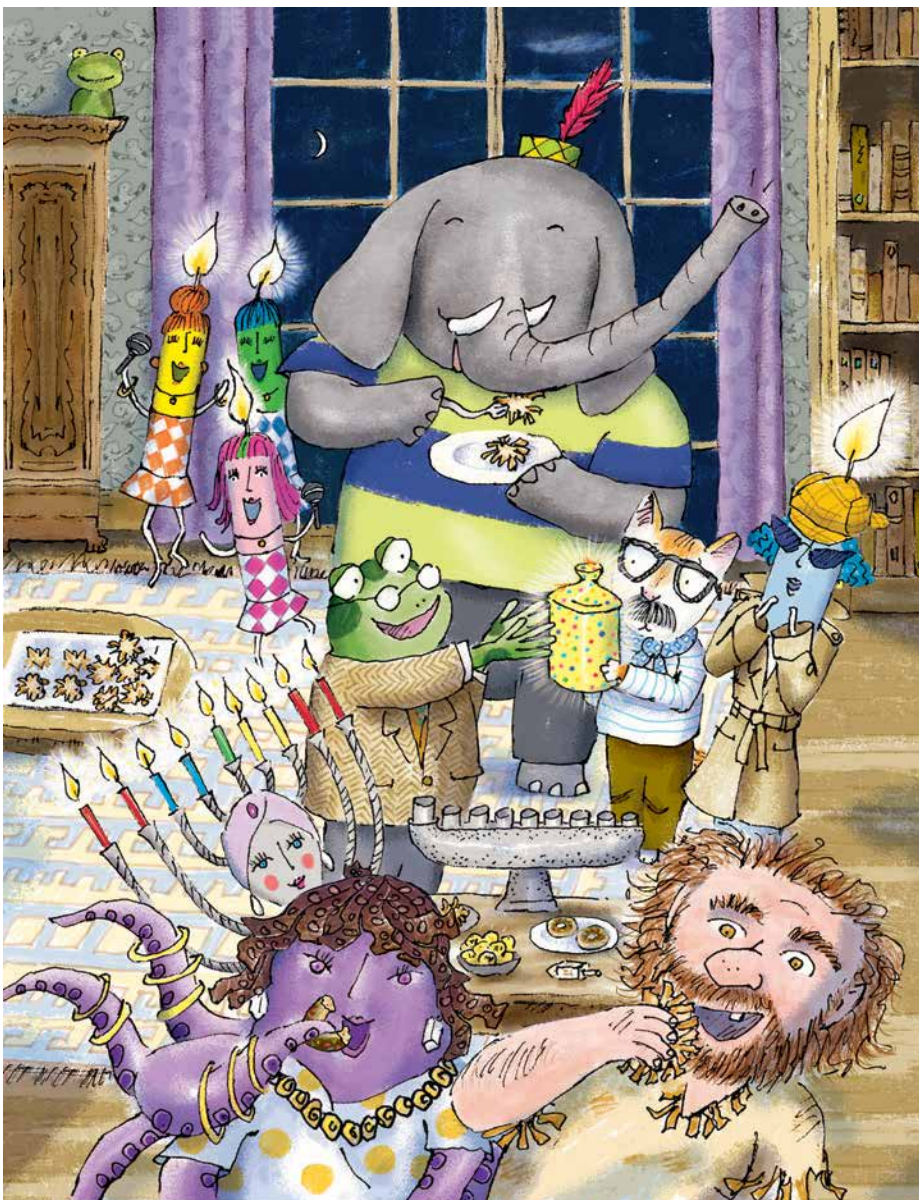
My _____ always brings _____ fried ice cream. I seriously don't know how they make that!

This year, I'm going to make _____ stuffed with _____. It will be _____. _____ is going to fall off the _____ after trying them.

After dinner, we always share the story of the _____. Then we light the _____ and sing _____. It's a _____ evening for everyone!

Silly Stories and Spot the Differences used with permission of

Spot the 8 Differences



The Chanukah Merch Market Has Exploded. But Are Jews Feeling More Represented?

(JTA) — It was early November when Nicholas Wymer-Santiago walked into his local Target in Austin, Texas, and realized it was beginning to feel a lot like Chanukah.

Instead of an endcap with a limited array of Chanukah basics, as he had seen in past years, there stretched out a whole aisle of holiday products: pillows; dreidel-shaped pet toys; window decals; menorahs in the shape of lions, corgis and whales; and so much more. Even the \$5-and-under impulse-buys section filled with seasonal products had a supply of Chanukah goods, including a Star of David-shaped bowl and a set of dishes labeled “sour cream” and “applesauce.”

“In a good way, it was overwhelming at first, because there’s so much and I kind of want to buy it all,” Wymer-Santiago recalled feeling as he stood in the holiday section, looking up at a large photograph of a Chanukah celebration alongside others showcasing Christmas.

The higher education administrator at the University of Texas decided to limit himself, at first taking home just a tea towel and a matching mug printed with a

Chanukah motif.

“And then I came back twice, maybe three times and each time I bought more and more items that I know I probably don’t need,” he said. “I think I’ve just had so much excitement about the novelty of it all, and having the ability to purchase these items, many of which I’ve never seen before.”

Wymer-Santiago is hardly alone in loading his cart with Chanukah merchandise. Across the United States, big-box stores appear to be stocking more Chanukah products than ever — and while off-color items such as Chanukah gnomes and “Oy to the World” dish towels have raised eyebrows, the real story might be that American retailers have decked their shelves with menorahs, tableware and other items that are appropriate, affordable and often downright tasteful.

For many American Jews, the result is a sense of inclusion at a time of unease — although some are wrestling with what it means to have access to a fast-fashion form of Judaica.

“It is very exciting to go into Target or Michaels or a Walmart



Target’s array of Chanukah mugs represent just a small swath of the national retailer’s 2022 Chanukah collection. (Philissa Cramer)

and to see Chanukah merchandise,” said Ariel Stein, an influencer who shares crafting and holiday content for Jewish families on Instagram, where she has more than 20,000 followers.

“The feeling is almost like pride and like we’re being seen and represented,” Stein added. “In a sea of Christmas ... it feels really great, even if it’s a much smaller representation, that the Jewish holiday is there also and the Jewish community is being acknowledged and represented.”

The idea that retailers have stocked up on Chanukah goods to make Jews feel represented is tempting, but it’s probably not the only reason for a shift in the market, according to Russell Winer, deputy chair of the marketing department at New York University’s Stern School of Business. He said that while an endcap — the small set of shelves at the end of an aisle — might sometimes be given over for symbolic purposes, the devotion of an entire aisle at the

busiest time of the year is purely a business decision.

“These stores are very sophisticated in what they put in them,” Winer said. “They’re not going to put stuff on the shelves, especially at the holidays, if they don’t think they’re going to sell.”

There are signs that the Chanukah market might be much wider than the proportion of Americans who identify as Jewish, 2.5%, would suggest. Numerator, a respected consumer trends polling firm, found in a survey of 11,000 consumers conducted in January 2022 that 14% of respondents said they were “definitely” or “probably” celebrating Chanukah this year, compared to 96% for Christmas. More than half of the Chanukah celebrants said they expected to spend more than \$50 on the holiday — suggesting that retailers can expect hundreds of millions of dollars in Chanukah spending this year.

Part of that marketplace is the growing number of families in which Chanukah is celebrated alongside other holidays, usually Christmas. Most American

(Continued on page 27)

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Chanukah Merch

(Continued from page 26)



Nicholas Wymer-Santiago takes a selfie showing off his menorah collection, mostly acquired at his local Target in Austin, Texas. (Courtesy of Wymer-Santiago)

Jews who have married in the last decade have done so to people who are not Jewish, according to the 2020 Pew study of American Jews; most of them say they are raising their children exclusively or partly as Jews. They may want to have products that allow Chanukah to share the stage equitably with the other celebrations in their family.

"I'm not terribly surprised from a cultural standpoint that there's more merchandise," said Winer, who is Jewish. He said he and his wife had purchased Chanukah stockings for their grandchildren, who are being raised in two faith traditions. (Evangelical Christians and Messianics, those who adopt Jewish practices while believing in the divinity of Jesus, also represent an emerging market for Jewish ritual objects.)

Stein offered another theory to explain the uptick in interest in Chanukah products: the fact that social media and Zoom meetings have made home lives more transparent than ever.

"The communal sharing of lives, whether you're an influencer or even my friends on Facebook showing what their display is this year or taking a picture of a recipe they were really proud of, making latkes from scratch — there's just more visibility than there has been in the past," she said. "And that's probably a factor."

Whatever the reasons, shoppers are noticing. Like Stein and countless other Jewish influencers, Rabbi Yael Buechler, a devoted observer of Jewish consumer trends, has offered tours of Chanukah merchandise to her social media followers. Wearing Chanukah pajamas that she designed and sells, Buechler has posted 15 videos to TikTok showcasing the Chanukah collections of national retailers and assigns each store a "yay" or "nay" based on several metrics, including whether items display accurate Hebrew or appear to be generic blue-and-white items being passed off as made for the holiday. The videos, which have been viewed hundreds of

thousands of times, have given her a broad view of what's available to the Chanukah consumer.

"I see a lot more products this year than any other year," said Buechler, who works at a Jewish school outside New York City. "I see a lot of new prints. I see more creativity in the market. I see more humor in the market."

Like Wymer-Santiago, Buechler said Target, which has 2,000 locations across the United States, stood out as offering the widest array of products and the lowest proportion of "fails," or products that miss the mark religiously, culturally or aesthetically.

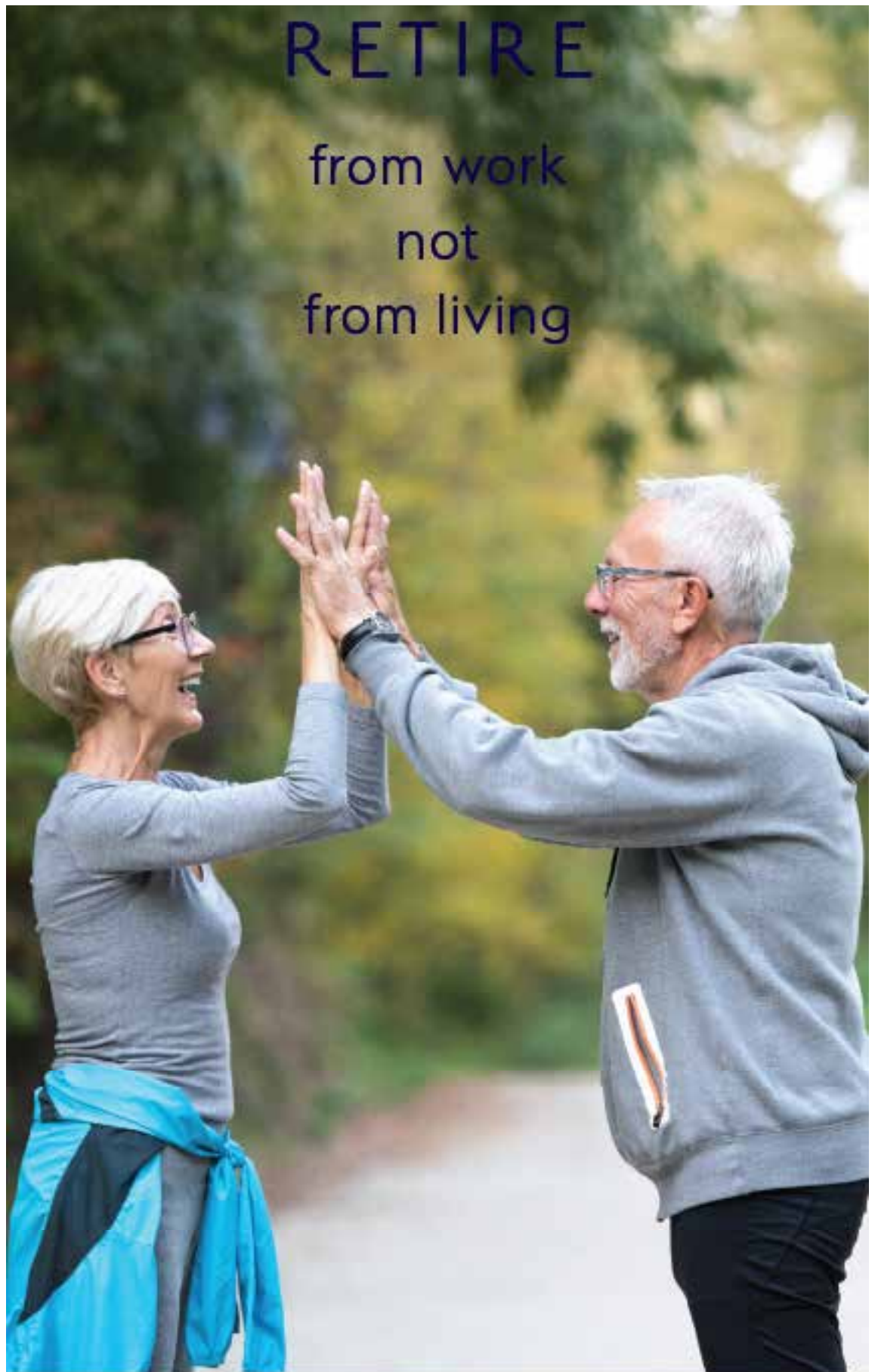
"They have really stepped it up," Buechler said. "Target also carries the Nickelodeon 'Rugrats' Chanukah sweatshirts that are just brilliant. ... I would definitely say they get the biggest 'yay' for this year."

Target, which has a track record of using inclusive imagery in its advertisements and in-store promotions, declined to answer questions about its offerings, including how much bigger its Chanukah collection is this year than in the past and how widely the products for Jewish buyers have been distributed. But a spokesperson said the feeling Wymer-Santiago and Stein described after visiting their local stores is exactly what the company is trying to cultivate.

"Target is committed to creating an inclusive guest experience in which all guests feel represented," the spokesperson wrote in an email. The spokesperson noted that Target's Chanukah assortment "was developed in collaboration with Jewish team members and input from our Jewish employee resource group" and crosses several of the retailer's in-house brands.

One of those lines, Opalhouse by Jungalow, was created by a Jewish artist, Justina Blakeney. Last year, Blakeney's first Chanukah collection included plates and pillows, as well as a gold menorah shaped like a dove. This

(Continued on page 28)



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Chanukah Merch

(Continued from page 27)

year, Blakeney added new pillow designs and a clay menorah.

“If I could go back in time and tell elementary-school-aged Justina (or ‘Tina’ as I was called back then) that I would have a chance to design a Chanukah collection for Target, I would have lost my mind,” she wrote

in an October blog post revealing the collection.

Chanukah goods have always been widely available through Jewish merchandisers and at synagogue bazaars — but those products have been available only to people who already engaged in Jewish communities.

Amazon and other online retailers have increased access, but only for people who are hunting for Chanukah supplies. A Chanukah aisle at Target, in contrast, reaches the many Jews who may not already have robust holiday traditions.

Stein, who said she particularly regretted not snapping up a marble dreidel sculpture that quickly sold out at Target, said she saw only benefits in promoting major retailers’ Chanukah offerings, even if doing so has made her something of an unpaid advertiser at times.

“Right now, especially with the rise of antisemitism, if there are ways that we can spur Jewish joy — and for me, that’s by sharing and inspiring people with different kinds of Chanukah merch and home decor and jewelry — I think that’s great,” she said.

Not everyone is thrilled by the shift in the marketplace. The sweeping Chanukah displays are drawing criticism from those who have long lamented that the American primacy of Christmas has caused Jews to focus too much on a minor holiday, while leaving holidays with more religious significance

relatively uncelebrated.

“I think: What would it feel like to see a giant Shavuot display?” Wymer-Santiago said.

The fast-fashion aspect of the big-box retailers’ offerings, many of which are imported from China, also raises concerns about whether easy access to trendy Judaica comes at environmental and cultural costs.

“How about we don’t extract fossil fuels to make crap that no one needs and that makes Jewish communities less distinctive?” asked Dan Friedman, a writer and longtime climate activist, though he emphasized that systemic change, rather than tweaks to purchasing decisions by Jewish consumers, is needed to avert climate catastrophe.

For Buechler and others, the benefits of a mass-market Chanukah merchandise boom outweigh any possible drawbacks.

Wymer-Santiago plans to celebrate the holiday with his family in Ohio, meaning that he will be leaving behind much of this

year’s Target haul in his Austin apartment: the device that makes dreidel-shaped waffles, the window decals that advertise the holiday to passersby, the giant dreidel-shaped jar that he has filled with, well, dreidels. He said he planned to make room in his suitcase for at least one item: a \$5 menorah that reminds him of his dog.

Wymer-Santiago said a piece of him worried that Target was taking advantage of his excitement about Jewish representation, the way it has been criticized for doing around LGBTQ Pride celebrations, to sell him stuff he doesn’t need.

“Every time I buy something from Target in general, but definitely for Chanukah, I think about this,” he said. “But then I think: This thing is so cute. And I just need it.”



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8 Chanukah Traditions From Around the World

By Abby Seitz

Many of the most well-known Chanukah traditions are universal. Whether you're in Argentina or Zimbabwe, Jews will mark the eight-day festival by lighting a menorah, eating fried foods and recounting the victorious story of the Maccabees and the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem.

But Jews around the world have also developed Chanukah customs that are unique to their local community. For example, while jelly-filled donuts (sufganiyot) are a mainstay among Ashkenazi Jews, Hanukkah in southern India is celebrated by making gulab jamnun, a milk-based ball of dough that is deep fried and then drenched in sugar syrup. The sweet treat is also consumed by non-Jewish Indians during other celebrations like Diwali.

Indian Jews enjoying gulab jamnun is far from the only example of a distinct tradition that a community has developed in the Diaspora. Here are eight more customs that go beyond playing dreidel or giving Chanukah gelt.

1. Hanging the Menorah On the Wall

Most Ashkenazi Jews place a menorah in the window in order to publicize the miracle of Chanukah. In Morocco, Algeria and other North African communities, it is customary to hang the menorah on a hook in the doorway, beside the mezuzah. Putting the menorah near the mezuzah was thought to enhance the protection already offered by the mezuzah. If you look at menorahs made in North Africa, you will notice that many have a ring at the top, as well as a flat metal backing, so that the menorah could be safely hung.

2. Constructing a Menorah from Potatoes

Jews in Romania, as well as Austria and other central European communities, would scrape out potatoes, filling each potato space with oil and a wick to serve as the menorah. Rather than putting all eight out at once, each day they would add another potato. While the origin of this custom is unclear, it likely came about due to economic struggles.

3. Lighting an Extra Shamash

The Jewish community of Aleppo, which comprised mostly Sephardic Jews who had escaped the Inquisition, lit an extra shamash (helper candle) on each night of Chanukah. Several explanations exist — some say that the second shamash was meant to honor G-d and acknowledge the divine intervention that brought them to safety. Others say the custom was a nod toward the non-Jews of Aleppo, who welcomed them as refugees.

4. Glass Boxes On Display

Before mass immigration and the establishment of the State of Israel in the 20th century, Jews lived in Jerusalem for centuries and followed the ruling that the menorah's lights needed to be placed outside the home for all to see. This decree originates in the Talmud.

However, Jerusalem winters are often wet and windy, so the community began crafting aquarium-like glass boxes to protect their flames. Inside, Jerusalem Jews put small cups of olive oil and lit a wick to correspond with each night. Some of Jerusalem's oldest homes even

have a shelf carved out of the home's exterior walls to place the glass boxes in.

Today, many Israeli Jews have adopted this practice, although some will simply place a hanukkiyah with candles inside the box, rather than using oil.

5. Chag HaBanut: A Celebration of Women

Jewish communities in Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Morocco, Greece and Yemen celebrate another holiday during Chanukah, known in Judeo-Arabic as Eid Al Bnat or Chag HaBanut in Hebrew, both of which translate to the Festival of the Daughters.

Observed on Rosh Chodesh Tevet (which falls on the sixth night of Chanukah), the girls and women of the community refrain from work and gather to recall Jewish heroines, particularly Judith, the Jewish woman who lived during the time of the Maccabees and helped prevent the impending siege of Jerusalem by decapitating the invading Assyrian general.

Chag HaBanut festivities vary from community to community,

(Continued on page 30)



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Chanukah Traditions

(Continued from page 29)

but often include eating sweets and fried treats, dancing, visiting the synagogue to kiss the Torah scrolls and singing well into the night. Girls approaching bat mitzvah age, as well as women who were engaged, were also publicly celebrated during Chag HaBanut.

6. Neighborhood Wine Tastings

The region of Avignon, located in southern France, is renowned for its wineries. During the Saturday night that falls during Chanukah, after Shabbat ended, the Jews of Avignon open a new bottle of local wine in their homes and make a toast. Then, each family travels around their neighborhood to taste the wines chosen by their neighbors and to toast to the miracle of Chanukah.

7. No Melachot Near the Menorah

It is a longstanding practice among North African and Middle Eastern Jewish communities, as well as Haredi Ashkenazi Jews, that as long as the menorah is lit, women refrain from doing melachot, the types

of work that are forbidden on Shabbat and holidays. While Chanukah is not a holiday that requires Jews to refrain from labor, this custom can be traced back to laws codified by both Ashkenazi and Sephardic leaders who ruled, pre-electricity, that the light of the menorah was not to be used for anything besides enjoying the holiday.

8. The Ninth Night of Chanukah

In some parts of Morocco, Jewish children spend the last day of Chanukah going from house to house to collect the leftover cotton wicks that Moroccan Jews used in place of candles. At sundown, the wicks are ignited to create a large bonfire, and each community gathers to sing, dance and even leap over the fire, which was believed to bring good luck to the jumper, especially to women seeking a partner or struggling to conceive.

To learn more about Chanukah traditions, history, food, and more, visit www.myjewish-learning.com.



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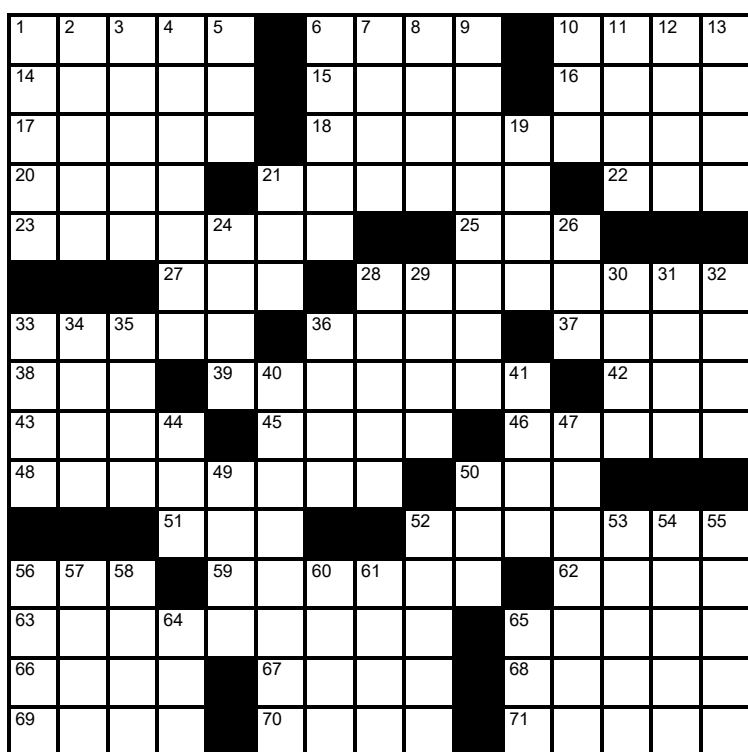
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Latke Alternatives



Across

- 1. Latke alternatives, for dessert
- 6. Like many of Shakespeare's rhymes
- 10. Comedy routines
- 14. Darwin diaper
- 15. Kind of bell
- 16. Leader after Zerubavel
- 17. Longtime sportscaster Rich
- 18. Latke alternative, in Germany

- 20. "... unto us ___ is given" (Isaiah 9:6)
- 21. Prepare Shabbat leftovers
- 22. Shmoozy beast?
- 23. Latke alternative, at the sushi bar
- 25. Eglon, to Ehud
- 27. Orbiting research facility: Abbr.
- 28. Latke alternatives, on Shavuot
- 33. River feature
- 36. Be a balabusta

- 37. Hindu deity
- 38. Water, cooler?
- 39. Latke alternative, in Israel
- 42. Tevet fast day
- 43. Where Miracle athletes once played
- 45. Game room projectile
- 46. Off-kilter
- 48. Latke alternatives, at a carnival
- 50. Bygone airline letters
- 51. Driveway sealant
- 52. Latke alternatives, at a Chinese restaurant
- 56. Card game with its own deck
- 59. 25-Across of Moses
- 62. The maximum height of schach should not be more than 20 of these
- 63. Latke alternative, on Passover
- 65. "Not on ___!" ("No way!")
- 66. Social starter?
- 67. Bellybutton buildup
- 68. Carlo or Cristo
- 69. Some Israeli shoes
- 70. An eternity, seemingly
- 71. Like the Latke alternatives in this puzzle

Down

- 1. ___ a time
- 2. Monetary reward
- 3. Sort of salt
- 4. Kind of barbecue...or hole to toss your brother into
- 5. Antonym for "antonym": Abbr.
- 6. On the Aegean
- 7. "Goldberg Variations" composer
- 8. Reason to take Aleve
- 9. Authentic
- 10. Use DraftKings, e.g.
- 11. Nickname for some Israels
- 12. Baseball star Turner
- 13. Big name in vaccine
- 19. Take ___ the chin
- 21. \$200 Monopoly properties, briefly
- 24. Mil. branch not featured in "Top Gun"
- 26. The X-Files subject
- 28. Some large men in Chicago
- 29. Hit the road
- 30. Rigatoni's kin
- 31. Kickoffs to holidays

- 32. Minus
- 33. Once popular compact item
- 34. Tunnel sound
- 35. Devilish stare
- 36. Israel's is starred
- 40. "Aww"-inspiring
- 41. Manicured expanse
- 44. Tiny carpenter
- 47. One accepting charges?
- 49. Woodworker's groove
- 50. Get some sun
- 52. Hangs on
- 53. A Sultanate citizen
- 54. Up on the map, for Mexicans
- 55. Knight's horse
- 56. Jewish pilgrimage locale
- 57. Bubbi, to some
- 58. He takes Bart and Lisa to school
- 60. Donald Duck's nephews, e.g.
- 61. Vanderbilt U. setting
- 64. Spot for concealer
- 65. Big name in bowling

(Answers on page 34)

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The Blue Card Is Providing Life-Saving Support for Holocaust Survivors Impacted by Hurricanes Helene and Milton

As extreme weather continues to impact regions across the country, the non-for-profit The Blue Card has been actively reaching out to Holocaust survivors to ensure their safety.

The devastation from Hurricanes Helene and Milton has created urgent needs for survivors, particularly in Asheville, Tampa Bay, and southern Georgia, where there is a critical demand for food, medical supplies, transportation, and caregiver support. The majority of the nation's Holocaust survivors live alone and fall well below the federal poverty line, and these hurricanes have worsened their already difficult conditions, leaving them desperate for essential resources.

The Blue Card's Natural Disasters and Severe Weather Fund is providing life-saving support, including emergency transportation and vital medical care, to those affected by these disasters. In addition to these ef-

forts, The Blue Card is working with local volunteers and synagogues to mobilize additional support for survivors in need. However, many more survivors remain in urgent need of similar assistance. Contributions to this fund are critical to ensuring Holocaust survivors receive the help they need during these challenging times.

As a national organization, The Blue Card is uniquely positioned to provide immediate assistance. Survivors like Sarah, who lives in Tampa Bay, Florida, had her only means of transportation as well as her furniture and kitchen appliances severely damaged by excessive flooding. With the support of The Blue Card, she is being relocated to a safe place to live while the organization replaces her damaged belongings and makes her home liveable again. In North Carolina, Eda, who lives in Black Mountain with no family nearby, faced the hardship

of losing power for two weeks. The Blue Card ensured she received emergency aid to replenish her groceries and household supplies, providing her with the critical essentials she needed.

Masha Pearl, executive director, notes, "The Blue Card is asking the public to let the organization know of any Holocaust survivors impacted by these hurricanes who may need assistance, so the organization

can provide the support they require during these difficult times. As we respond to the growing impacts of these disasters, your support is needed more than ever."

Established in the U.S. in 1939, The Blue Card's sole mission is to help Holocaust survivors in need nationwide by providing direct financial assistance and medical assistance, as well as the tools for mental and

emotional well-being. Ranging in age from 79 to 105, the majority of the nation's Holocaust survivors live alone and fall well below the federal poverty line. The Blue Card ensures survivors can live out their remaining years with dignity and respect and live at home.

For more information, visit bluecard.org.

The Blue Card

Who We Are

Antisemitism grew a few years before WWII began. Jews were oppressed in most areas of living, especially in the jobs and service markets. So in 1934, The Blue Card was established by the Jewish community in Germany to help Jews already being affected by Nazi restrictions through loss of jobs, forcibly closed businesses and other forms of oppression.

In 1939, The Blue Card was reestablished in the United States to continue aiding refugees of Nazi persecution resettling in America.

How The Name, The Blue Card Was Derived

The organization's name derives from the original blue paper cards that were issued to Jewish donors who raised funds for individuals who had lost their jobs to the growing antisemitism before the war. Each time a donation was made, a stamp was put on the blue card to keep a record.

After the Holocaust, the mission of the organization expanded by helping survivors of the Shoah from all over Europe travel to the United States

and start a new life. Today, The Blue Card continues to help Holocaust survivors in need in the United States by providing direct financial assistance and the tools for mental, emotional, and physical health.

As the number of survivors alive today declines, their need for financial assistance increases. Since its inception, The Blue Card has provided financial resources that improve the daily lives of needy Shoah victims and lead to a more secure future.

For more information visit bluecard.org.

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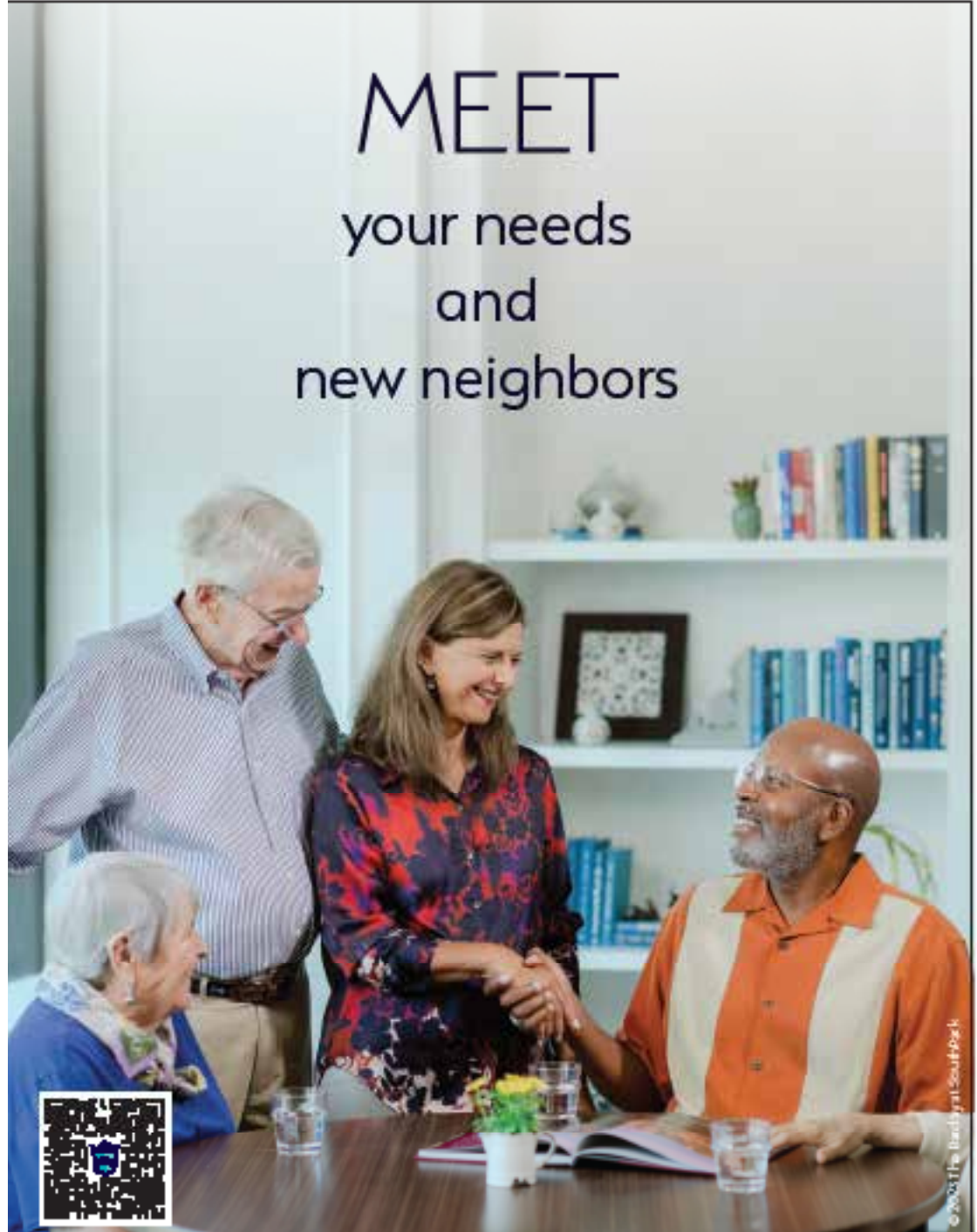
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(Puzzle on page 31)

1	O	R	E	O	S	6	A	B	A	B	10	B	I	T	S						
14	N	A	P	P	Y	15	T	A	C	O	16	E	Z	R	A						
17	E	I	S	E	N	18	S	C	H	N	I	T	Z	E	L						
20	A	S	O	N	21	R	E	H	E	A	T	22	Y	A	K						
23	T	E	M	P	U	R	A	25	F	O	E										
								27	I	S	S	28	B	L	I	N	T	30	Z	E	S
33	D	E	L	T	A	36	F	E	E	D	37	S	I	V	A						
38	I	C	E	39	F	A	L	A	F	E	L	42	T	E	N						
43	S	H	E	A	45	D	A	R	T	46	A	M	I	S	S						
48	C	O	R	N	D	O	G	S	50	T	W	A									
								51	T	A	R	52	W	A	N	T	53	O	N	S	
56	U	N	O	59	D	A	T	T	A	N	62	A	M	O	T						
63	M	A	T	Z	O	B	R	E	I	65	A	D	A	R	E						
66	A	N	T	I	67	L	I	N	T	68	M	O	N	T	E						
69	N	A	O	T	70	E	O	N	S	71	F	R	I	E	D						

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Newspaper archives are a treasure trove of collective memories, providing a snapshot of our history. The following is an excerpt from the article in The Charlotte Jewish News, January, 1979. To read the rest of the article and other issues of The CJN, visit the archives at <https://www.digitalnc.org/newspapers/charlotte-jewish-news-charlotte-nc/>.

Looking Back: Year 1979

From an Idea to Printer's Ink!

The Charlotte Jewish Federation, the Hebrew Academy and Jewish Community Center are proud to be the initial cooperating sponsors of this community newspaper, which we believe will make an important contribution to the Charlotte Jewish community.

The newspaper, edited by Ann Langman, will be published once a month and circulated to all members of the community free of charge if we contain news about the events held by the sponsoring agencies and items of interest to the community from other groups and institutions. The newspaper will hopefully replace many of the individual publications and flyers of the sponsoring agencies.

All nations and institutions are invited to partici-

pate as sponsors and to be involved in this joint effort we are especially pleased that this venture represents a collective effort by the sponsoring groups working together for the good of the community.

If an organization does not desire to become a sponsor this paper will still attempt to publish their announcements and news items subject only to space and deadline requirements of course our editor will reserve the right to make the final determination as to materials that are to be published she will be ably assisted in her duties by Rita Mond, co editor.

The newspaper is a pioneering effort which we believe has the potential to effectively provide news and information to all members of the community we are very excited about its future

potential and hope that all of you will participate fully in making it an important media of communication.

John Galsworthy wrote in "Over the River," the beginnings and endings of all human undertakings are untidy, the building of a house, the writing of a novel, the demolition of a bridge, and eminently, the finish of a voyage." So too, the beginning of the newspaper we also hope that you our readers, will feel that this is your paper and will share your opinions and viewpoints by way of letters to the editor, newsworthy happenings of your organizations, special columns and interesting stories. We want you to share with us, as well as we want to share with you.

We want those of you who have a journalism background or are frustrat-

ed journalists to feel free to join our staff. We also invite those of you who are not aspiring journalists to help us in other capacities, such as photographers, copy readers, and advertisers. An order blank for advertising appears elsewhere in this issue any organization that brings in an ad for the NEWS will earn 10% of the cost of the ad and if you are a businessman and want to place an ad, we will gladly contribute 10% of the cost to the organization of your choice. All the organizations in the community should have received a mailing from us on how to prepare a news release for publication in the news. We hope that it has been informative and helpful. Due to our printing process it is most important to follow these guidelines. If any of you have any questions

please feel free to contact our editor. All articles must reach our box at the JCC by the 8th of each month. The NEWS is and will be a bridge of communication.

The NEWS has been thought about for some time as a way of bringing our community closer together. Several people were involved in bringing this to fruition - namely Ann Langman, Marvin Beinstock, Rita Mond, and Martha Brenner. It took a long time before this came to be, but as it is said, anything worth having is worth waiting for. And wait we did - patiently. We look forward to hearing from all of you and having a long healthy association with community

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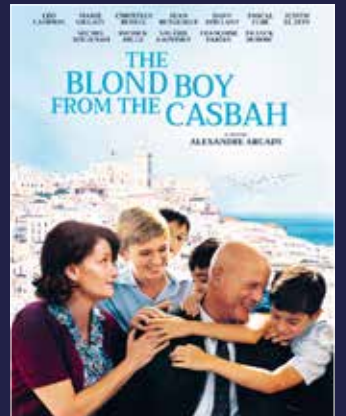
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Tue, JAN 28 @ 7:30pm
Temple Israel



Wed, JAN 29 @ 7:30pm
Temple Israel



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Wed, FEB 5 @ 7:30pm
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Sat, FEB 8 @ 7:30pm
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Sun, FEB 9 @ 2pm
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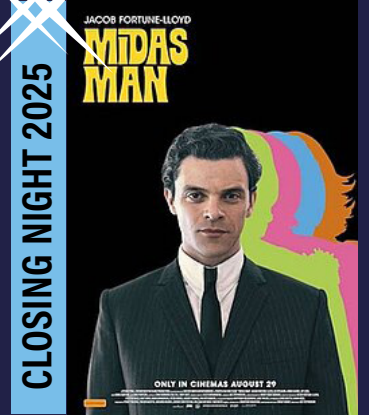
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