

The Charlotte JEWISH NEWS

Celebrating Jewish Life

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Jewish Community Relations Council Takes Flight

By Jessica Goldfarb, JFGC Communications Specialist

The Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte (JFGC), in conjunction with The Jewish Federations of North America, recently embarked on an organized fly-in to Washington, D.C., where they met with members of Congress and their staff to advocate on behalf of our community. This united effort aimed to amplify voices calling for support for Israel and measures to combat antisemitism.

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) is the advocacy and public affairs arm of the JFGC. It acts as a voice for our Jewish community amid the greater Charlotte community and advocates for the critical issues that we face.

The Charlotte delegation, led by Douglas Greene, JFGC's government relations and public affairs associate, engaged in a series of strategic meetings



Douglas Greene (JFGC government relations and public affairs associate), Steve Menaker (JCRC chair), Emily Zimmern (Outshine Hate co-chair), Amy Vitner (Incoming JFGC board chair), Mark Vitner, Alison Lerner, Risa Miller (JFGC board chair)

with Congressional representatives, delving into crucial topics including emergency aid for Is-

rael, funding for FEMA's Non-profit Security Grant Program, and support for the Antisemitism

Awareness Act. Throughout the fly-in, training sessions and meetings underscored the importance of effective advocacy techniques and collaboration.

The event also featured sessions with distinguished speakers and activists, Gili and Maya Roman, whose family member Yarden Roman spent 54 days in Hamas captivity, shared their poignant personal experiences from October 7 and ongoing efforts to secure the release of hostages still being held captive, particularly Carmel Gat, Yarden's sister-in-law. Israel's ambassador to the United States, Mike Herzog, provided invaluable insights into diplomatic strategies, while Alyza Lewin, Elan Carr, and Ira Forman offered perspectives on combating antisemitism on college campuses.

Steve Menaker, JCRC chair, emphasized the imperative of vocal opposition to antisemitism on

local, national, and global fronts. "Ultimately, we can't be quiet, because that's what hurts us," he said. He highlighted a quote from Congressman Ritchie Torres, inspired by Martin Luther King Jr.: "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." This resonant message underscores the critical need for collective courage and advocacy within the community and with our allies. As Federation continues to champion these causes, we urge individuals to courageously speak out, recognizing that global change begins at a local level, often with something as simple, yet impactful, as a phone call to representatives.



Jewish Federation's Response to the Crisis in Israel

By Shira Firestone

On October 7, Jewish communities worldwide were shaken to their core as news broke of terrorists from Gaza infiltrating Israel, resulting in the loss of over 1,200 innocent lives, the abduction of 240 individuals, and nearly 2,000 people wounded. This event marked one of the worst atrocities in modern Jewish history, prompting an immediate and unified response from the Jewish Federation system.

The Jewish Federation, with its robust network across North America and its global reach,

was quick to assess the needs on the ground. The system has raised to date an impressive \$780 million systemwide, with more than \$300 million already allocated to various organizations and efforts. The funds from this Israel Emergency Fund represent the single largest source of funding meeting the immediate needs in Israel. As part of this total, Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte raised more than \$2.6 million to date. This swift mobilization aimed to deliver critical resources, strengthen vital infrastructures, and provide immedi-

ate care to those affected. The funds have been strategically allocated across four main areas:

Lifeline Services: A significant portion of the funds, more than \$177 million, was directed toward providing immediate relief in the form of food, clothing, housing, financial assistance, medical care, and educational support for evacuated children. This effort supported 142,300 nights in evacuation stays, distributed \$10.9 million in food assistance, and catered to the needs of 146,100 individuals requiring respite services.

Medical and Trauma Relief: Recognizing the immense psychological and physical toll of the attacks, more than \$60 million was allocated to bolster medical facilities and mental health services. This included the procurement of medical equipment, training for 19,000 medical and mental health professionals, and direct care to over 1.7 million individuals.

Economic Relief and Recovery: With the attacks severely impacting Israel's economy, \$29 million was invested in economic relief efforts, focusing on frontline communities, establishing a loan fund for small and medium-sized businesses, and supporting families of reserve soldiers.



Community Resilience and Rebuilding: A foundational goal of the campaign, with \$2.5 million allocated, is to ensure the long-term resilience and rebuilding of communities affected by the attacks. This involves bolstering societal resilience and aiding in the recovery and growth of the Israeli people.

The Jewish Federation's response has been nothing short of remarkable, with 472 organizations supported and countless lives touched by the generosity and solidarity of the global Jewish community. The efforts have not only provided immediate relief but also laid the groundwork for the long-term recovery of Israel.

As the Jewish Federation continues to navigate the aftermath of the attacks, the focus remains on meeting the evolving needs of the affected communities and ensuring a strong and vibrant future for Israel. The collective action and support of the Jewish community worldwide stand as a testament to the unbreakable bond with Israel, demonstrating that even in the darkest times, hope and unity can pave the way for healing and rebuilding.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte extends its heartfelt gratitude to every individual and organization that has contributed to this monumental effort. The journey towards recovery and resilience continues, and Federation remains committed to supporting Israel every step of the way.

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Editor's Corner

The Courage to Speak the Truth: From the Pulpit to the Personal



Shira Firestone, Editor CJN

Rabbi David Wolpe, recognized by Time Magazine as one of the top 50 influential rabbis in 2012 and a visiting scholar at Harvard Divinity School, garnered national attention last year with his resignation from the co-chair position of Harvard's Antisemitism Advisory Group, a role initiated by the Anti-Defamation League. Rabbi Wolpe shared at the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte's Super Event in January his realization that effectively combating antisemitism from within the established system was untenable, given Harvard leadership's insufficient response to campus antisemitism. Wolpe believed his ability to effectuate change was significantly hindered by entrenched systemic issues and ideologies that perpet-

uate antisemitism. His departure underscores the call for courage to tell the truth and take difficult stands.

The audience found humor in Rabbi Wolpe's description of the inherent paradox facing pulpit rabbis and university presidents alike: selected for their "likeability," they are then confronted with decisions that inherently risk that very appeal. This dilemma, Rabbi Wolpe noted, demands a notable measure of courage due to the challenging nature of maintaining popularity while standing firm on contentious issues.

His message was echoed by Sheila Katz, also on the panel that night. She spoke about the courage of civil rights groups to speak up for women who were victims of sexual violence during the attacks in Israel — something she said was slow to come from many groups. She was directly involved in influencing those groups to make those statements in support of the victims. Also with academic connections, Katz talked about making difficult stands to combat violence against women on college campuses, echoing the broader theme of courage in leadership in many different spaces.

Maybe many left that evening thinking about the importance of our community leaders to make

these truthful, courageous stands. I left wondering more about my own willingness to trade likeability for truth, wondering about where I am and where I am not courageous in my daily life.

These musings followed me around for days, so I decided to do a deeper exploration into the idea, beginning where I often do — with the dictionary. Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines courage as the "mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty." Oxford's English Dictionary calls courage, "that quality of mind which shows itself in facing danger without fear or shrinking bravery, boldness, valour." Google offered up a site with biographies of 50 courageous individuals, which said that these people "sacrificed their own freedom to stand up for principles of human dignity and liberty."

The list included the likes of Malala Yousafzai, who defied threats of the Taliban to campaign for women's rights to education; Martin Luther King Jr., whose dream reshaped a nation; and Nelson Mandela, who was imprisoned for fighting against apartheid. Even Moses made the list! These individuals risked everything for the sake of their truth, their values — their very destinies.

The list was as intimidating as it was inspiring. It left me wondering about the relevance of courage in my life, as I'm rarely in danger of losing my personal freedom or physical safety. But reflecting on Rabbi Wolpe's insights, the challenge of risking likability for truth resonates deeply.

The choice between telling the truth or remaining likeable is one that most of us face on a daily basis. It highlights the subtler, yet significant, forms of courage required in our lives, emphasizing that bravery isn't reserved for monumental historical acts but is also found in our everyday decisions.

Consider the simple, yet pro-

found challenge of returning a meal in a restaurant because it wasn't prepared the way we asked, a small act of asserting one's voice. Or the decision to express a need within a relationship, asking for what we truly want rather than what we think will maintain peace.

Then there are the moments of standing up in a meeting to voice a dissenting opinion when conformity seems like the only option, or the quiet strength required to set boundaries with friends or family, respecting our own limits even at the risk of misunderstanding or disappointment. Saying "no" can feel incredibly risky.

Each of these scenarios, from the minor to the more significant, challenges us to choose authenticity over appeasement, integrity over ease. They ask us to be true to ourselves, even when the potential for discomfort or disapproval looms large. They ask us to have the courage to tell the truth.

However, there are moments when the stakes are higher, the risks greater. I remember, shortly after moving to the South, being with a group of potential new friends when one casually told a racist joke. Initially, I questioned his awareness of its racism, but his deliberate avoidance of the Black restaurant server's gaze confirmed he was fully conscious of it. As a newcomer eager to fit in and be liked, this situation posed an unexpected dilemma.

I found myself hesitating, contemplating the balance between my desire for acceptance within the group and the imperative to uphold my principles. Ultimately, I chose to speak my truth and voice my concerns. My approach wasn't harsh or confrontational; instead, I adhered to expert recommendations on addressing racism, antisemitism, and other hate forms in a manner that avoids alienation. Without causing embarrassment or offense, I calmly explained the harmful implications of his stereotyping and jokes.

There were multiple possible outcomes to that conversation. As it turns out, I became unliked by this person and this group. I was not openly welcome around them anymore. But, the loss turned out to be not nearly as important as I'd imagined it would be. I went on to find friends who were more inclusive and loving. Friends whose values mirrored my own.

Did anything change for the person who I talked to after he told his joke? I don't know. But something slowly changed for me. As I continue to encounter similar situations marked by racism, homophobia, antisemitism, and the like, I find that what was initially an anxiety-producing choice has become a much more clear call to action.

Of course, telling the truth in my daily life continues to be a challenge. And my attachment to being liked is strong. But I'm thinking more and more about the need to call upon courage in these small moments. Why does this matter? Why is the courage to be truthful, in moments big and small, so important? It's not about courage for courage's sake but about how these acts speaking the truth align us with our deepest values. Each truth we tell, each moment we choose authenticity over approval, we step closer to the person we aspire to be, to a world that reflects our highest ideals.

As Sheila Katz said at the conclusion of the panel discussion, "What I like to remind myself in moments of despair is that we don't have to go out and set out to change everything. We just have to take one action forward."

Just for today, I don't have to be Rabbi Wolpe or Sheila Katz. I don't have to be Malala Yousafzai, Martin Luther King Jr., or Nelson Mandela. For today, I just have to be willing to not be liked. For today I have to be willing to tell the truth. For today, that is enough. For today, that is everything.

Shira

Shabbat Candle Lighting Times

(28226 Zip Code. For other locations, visit www.charlottejewishnews.org.)

March 1 — 6:01 p.m.

March 8 — 6:07 p.m.

March 15 — 7:13 p.m.

March 22 — 7:19 p.m.

March 29 — 7:24 p.m.

The Charlotte JEWISH NEWS

THE CHARLOTTE JEWISH NEWS

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Federation Welcomes New Communications Specialist

The Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte is pleased to announce that Jessica Goldfarb has been named communications specialist.

In this role, Jessica will be a central member of our marketing team, playing an integral part of Federation's strategic communications to increase awareness and engagement. Jessica brings a wealth of experience, having worked as communications director and marketing project manager in both nonprofit and for profit environments. Most recently, Jessica was the social media and marketing project manager for RedefineU Media, a digital

marketing company.

Jessica commented, "As a Charlotte native, I am very excited to join Federation in this new role and to contribute to the Jewish community where I grew up. I look forward to bringing valuable insights and perspectives to the organization. The Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte stands out as a prime example of supporting, protecting, and educating the Charlotte Jewish population and I'm honored to be part of such an amazing team."

Jessica will report to Sam Bernstein, JFGC chief development and marketing officer.



Jessica Goldfarb

Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte

Federation Super Week Championing Change

By Jessica Goldfarb, JFGC Communications Specialist

The Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte (JFGC) recently concluded the highly anticipated Federation Super Week, with great success. The week-long series of events, held from Jan. 28 to Feb. 4, showcased Federation's commitment to championing Jewish life and fostering a stronger, more unified greater Charlotte Jewish community.

Federation Super Event

The highlight of the week was the Federation Super Event on Feb. 1. This year's Super Event embraced a reimagined format featuring a panel discussion exploring pressing current issues. Nearly 500 people gathered at Temple Israel to hear insights from nationally renowned Jewish figures Rabbi David Wolpe and Sheila Katz. Juju Chang moderated the discussion, making a return appearance after the 2023 Main Event.

The panel focused on events in Israel, the global rise of antisemitism, and strategies for our community to navigate these challenges. "Counsel culture" became a favored term, a

direct contrast to "cancel culture." Encouraging and spreading counsel culture helps our community fight antisemitism by inviting those who disagree with us to open discussion, rather than simply "canceling." It was a night full of laughter, tears, and hope. Closing remarks emphasized that by relying on the strength of our Jewish community, we will get through these difficult times.

The Super Event also marked the official launch of the 2024 Annual Campaign and the kick-off of the Jewish Community Relations Council's (JCRC) year of vital initiatives and programming. The critical work of JCRC has already begun with a fly-in to Washington, D.C., among other endeavors.

JCRC Fly-in to Washington

On Jan. 30-31, the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte participated in an organized fly-in to Washington, D.C., to help advocate for crucial matters, including emergency aid for Israel, increased funding for FEMA's Nonprofit Security Grant Program, and support for the Antisemitism Awareness Act. See front page for more details.



Rabbi David Wolpe, Sheila Katz, and Juju Chang

Community Enrichment

The Annual Campaign helps the Federation raise funds to support a variety of different Jewish causes, including community engagement.

The pre-Super Week screening of "The Boy," presented by the Charlotte Jewish Film Festival, is one such example and offered a glimpse into Israeli storytelling surrounding life along the Gaza strip, while the kickoff of the "Calaniot Before the Rain" ceramic workshops allowed participants to express their creativity and show solidarity with Israel. Additionally, Federation's sponsorship of "Israel Swings for Gold" at the Charlotte Jewish Film Festival underscored its commitment to promoting meaningful dialogue surrounding Jewish identity and history.

Super Sunday and More
For the grand finale of Federa-

tion Super Week, more than 100 volunteers gathered in the Sam Lerner Center for Cultural Arts for Super Sunday, reaching out by phone to fellow community members and offering a convenient way for them to make their 2024 Annual Campaign pledge. The phone and text outreach became a powerful way for individuals to actively contribute to the ongoing success of the campaign.

Funds raised on Super Sunday will empower Federation to continue fostering a stronger

greater Charlotte Jewish community through vital initiatives in education, engagement, Jewish identity, and philanthropy.

Federation Super Week was just the beginning. As the 2024 Annual Campaign gains momentum, the ongoing support and engagement of the community remain essential to advancing Federation's mission of championing Jewish life. If you haven't yet made your pledge, you can do so online at www.jewishcharlotte.org.



Super Sunday volunteers call for Annual Campaign pledges.



Super Event co-chairs, Sara and Jon Kulbersh



Super Sunday co-chairs L to R: Kara Culp, Eliza Carney, Rebekah Rubenstein

Calaniot Before the Rain

By Jessica Goldfarb, JFGC Communications Specialist

The calanit, also known as the red anemone, is Israel's national flower, which blooms during winter. These little red flowers, symbolizing life and resiliency, carpet the landscape for miles in Israel's south and are the basis of the annual Darom Adom (Red South) Festival.

This past winter, a group of Israeli ceramic artists came together with the goal of creating 100,000 clay calaniot across the world in memory of the victims of the October 7 attack and subsequent war. Today, these clay flowers can be found in multiple locations from the Dead Sea to Haifa. The Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte and the Levine Jewish Community Center (Levine JCC) participated in this project in solidarity with Israel and the Israeli people.

Calaniot ceramic workshops took place throughout January and February, coinciding with the peak season for the red anem-



"Calaniot Before the Rain" art installation in front of the Levine JCC

one flower bloom. The "Calaniot Before the Rain," art installation includes flowers created by more than 200 community members who came to the workshops. It can be seen in front of the Levine JCC. The final destination for these flowers is the Hebrew Cemetery.

Michelle Rusgo, director of the Art and Culture Department at the Levine JCC, remarked, "It has been so moving to see everyone come together to create these

flowers. Art is a great vessel for healing. After making donations, people are still wondering what they can do. There is a strong pull to connect with one another and to heal together. This project has been a wonderful way for our community to do that." As the clay calaniot stand as a testament to resilience and unity, they also serve as a reminder of the enduring connection among communities worldwide.



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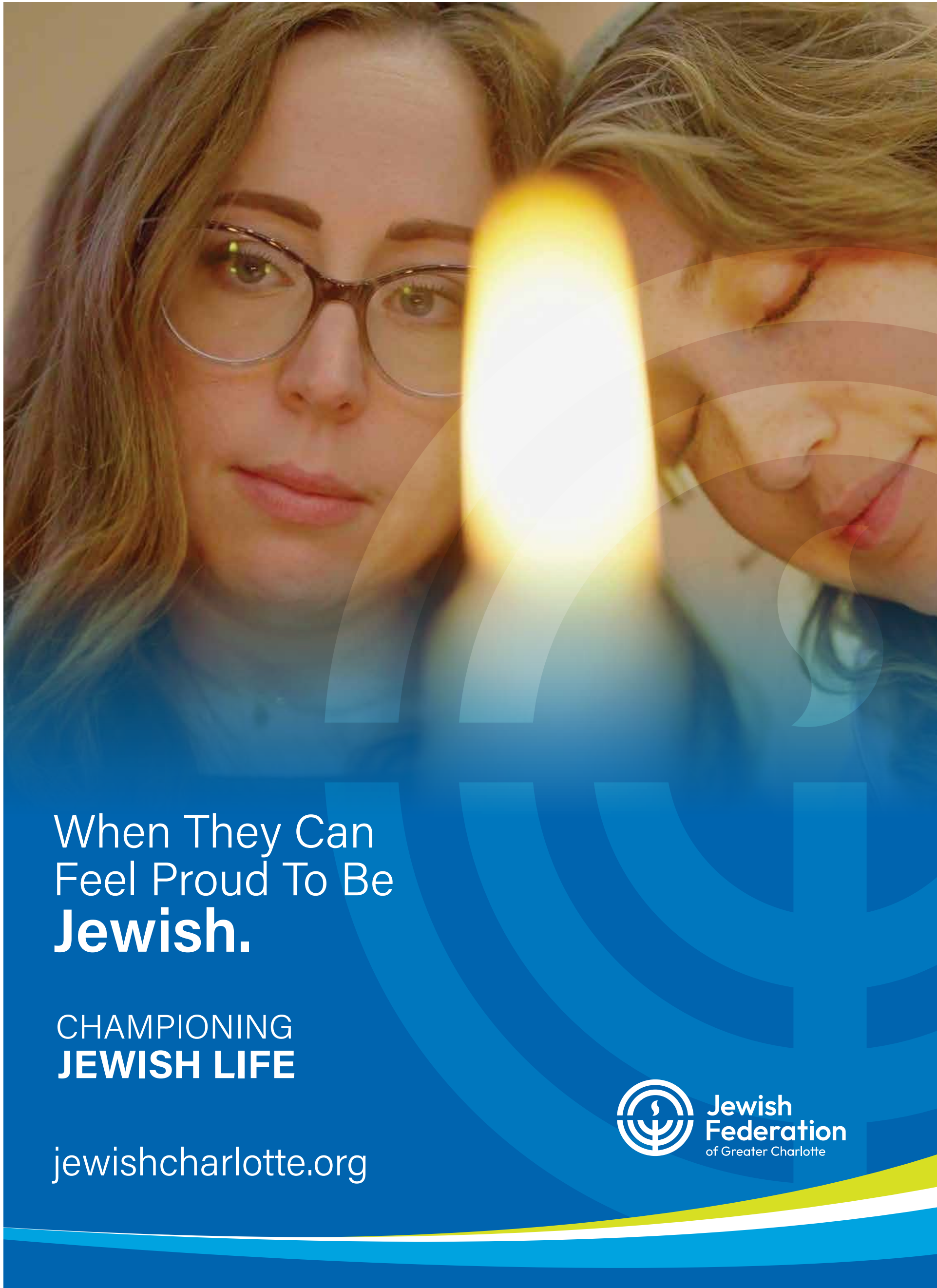
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Partnering With Project Shema To Combat Antisemitism

By Jessica Goldfarb, JFGC Communications Specialist

In the face of rising antisemitism across the globe, the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte (JFGC), through its Jewish Community Relations Council, has taken proactive steps to address this pressing issue head-on. As part of JFGC's Outshine Hate initiative, its partnership with Project Shema is central to these efforts. Project Shema is a roundbreaking program dedicated to educating and empowering Jewish communities to confront and combat antisemitism effectively.

Project Shema, named after the Hebrew word for "to hear" or "to listen," embodies a mission deeply rooted in understanding, compassion, and bridge-building across communities. Founded by Jewish leaders with extensive backgrounds in social justice movements,

Project Shema brings a fresh perspective to the complex issue of antisemitism, emphasizing strategies for meaningful conversation and intersectionality with other forms of oppression and discrimination.

A central element of Project Shema's approach is its focus on training and supporting Jewish communities and allies to recognize and address modern antisemitism, particularly in relation to anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist remarks arising from the discourse around Israel and Palestine. The program's facilitators, who are themselves actively engaged in progressive spaces and the fight against antisemitism, regularly host virtual workshops in partnership with the JFGC. These sessions provide invaluable tools and insights for professionals, educators, and community leaders within the community, equip-

ping them to combat antisemitism effectively.

Federation's involvement with Project Shema runs deep, having hosted numerous workshops since August 2022. However, recent events have seen a renewed emphasis on strategies for combating antisemitism, particularly following a troubling 337% increase in antisemitic incidents following the October 7 attack in Israel. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, Federation has expanded its collaboration with Project Shema, re-centering workshops to address this alarming trend.





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What Is the Jewish Community Relations Council?

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), recently relaunched at the Federation Super Event, acts as the advocacy and public affairs arm of the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte.

JCRC welcomes Steve Menaker as the newly appointed council chair. Joining him are esteemed council members Emily Zimmern, T'heleh Bendan, David Freeman, Rick Glaser, Sharyn Handelsman, Brad Rabinowitz, and Amy Vitner, each bringing a wealth of experience and dedication to the cause.

Within JCRC, committee members work to advocate for the collective priorities and concerns of the greater Charlotte Jewish community.

What does the JCRC do?

The JCRC educates, engages, and mobilizes the broader Charlotte community to act on critical issues. Specifically, the JCRC focuses on three key areas:

Legislative Affairs and Government Relations: Advocating locally, statewide, and nationally to address Jewish concerns, including promoting a strong U.S.-Israel relationship and combating antisemitism.

Israel Engagement: Assisting community members in forming and nurturing strong ties to Israel and the global Jewish community, while rais-



JCRC chair, Steve Menaker

ing awareness and support for Israel within Charlotte.

Intergroup Relations: Cultivating meaningful connections and alliances among elected officials and various ethnic, racial, religious, and interest groups across greater Charlotte.

The recent fly-in to Washington, D.C., was just the beginning. (Read the story on front page.) Through initiatives like Outshine Hate and Project Shema, the JCRC is doing critical work to better our community. If you would like to get involved, contact the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte at (704) 944-6757 or info@jewishcharlotte.org.



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Federation’s Israel Solidarity Mission

By Jessica Goldfarb, JFGC Communications Specialist

In January, the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte (JFGC) hosted a Solidarity Mission to Israel, uniting members of our community in an effort to bear witness to and share the stories of those affected by the October 7 attacks. The trip offered a unique blend of personal encounters and expert briefings, deepening participants’ understanding of Israel’s current situation.

The mission’s itinerary was thoughtfully planned to include visits to areas directly impacted by the conflict, such as kibbutzim and towns attacked by Hamas. These visits provided participants with a firsthand look at the toll of the attacks and war and, remarkably, the unexpected hope and resilience that is flourishing, symbolized by the blooming red calaniot in the south.

The backdrop of this mission was the profound sense of loss and solidarity felt within our community. From grief and anger emerged a shared determination to provide assistance to our struggling family in Israel. The Jewish Federations of North America’s Israel Emergency Campaign, which has raised more than \$700 million in donations, has been

pivotal in offering aid and is the largest single source of funding for Israel’s needs. The Charlotte community’s significant contribution of more than \$2.6 million underscores our collective commitment to supporting Israel in her time of need. Seeing the impact that the Israel Emergency Campaign has had, the group left Israel with an understanding that the support we provide does matter.

The eight Charlotte Jewish community members on the trip spoke with individuals who had received aid and were deeply touched by their immense gratitude. “Every single person we met thanked us,” said Lisa Levinson, who was one of the eight individuals on the trip. Levinson added that several Israelis actually expressed concern for our Jewish community in the United States as we deal with increased acts of antisemitism here at home.

A key focus of the mission was the chance to meet and speak with those closely affected, establishing a personal connection to the human stories behind the conflict. Rabbi Lexi Erdheim of Temple Beth El notes that one of the moments that resonated with her the most was hearing from

Nova music festival massacre survivor, Noa Beer, who ended her inspiring story with a powerful statement: “We will dance again.”

Rabbi Rachel Smookler remarks that it was the attention to detail that allowed her to genuinely immerse herself in Israel and its culture. “We wouldn’t have gotten the same experience if we went on our own,” she said, referring to the many meetings with survivors and families of hostages, like the family of Bar Kuperstein, who was kidnapped from the Nova music festival.

The mission illuminated the widespread impact of the conflict on Israeli society, from economic strains to the challenges faced by families and the sound of gunfire in the distance. Everyone in Israel has been affected by what has happened.

Yet, amidst these trials, the spirit of the Israeli people shines brightly. Eric Laxer summarized what was felt by every member of the trip, “The strength of this country is in the people.” He continued, “Israelis are hurting, but they are still living their lives.” He described businesses in Tel Aviv that have stayed open and people playing the popular paddle game Kadima on the beach.



A Charlotte delegation travels to Israel on Solidarity Mission

These signs of resilience gave those on the trip a profound sense of hope and relief.

The resilience observed by Eric in the streets and beaches of Tel Aviv is echoed in the experiences of the youngest members of Israeli society. Emily Zimmern recalls visiting the after-school program in Jerusalem founded for children displaced from their homes in the south. With the shortage of teachers, children were in school for reduced hours. This new after-school program offered them a chance to play soccer, perform in theater, or interact with animals. “It was wonderful to see these kids who were cooped up in hotel rooms have a chance to get out and just be kids.”

Jewish Federation of Great-

er Charlotte CEO, Sue Worrel, CEO, summed up the experience as “profoundly transformative on a number of levels. Words don’t describe the gravity of it all.”

This Solidarity Mission went beyond a travel opportunity, evolving into a powerful call to action. It was a reminder for those on the trip and for us at home of the strength found in unity and the impact of our support.

Additional trips are being planned. To make ensure you receive information as it becomes available, contact the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte at (704) 944-6757 or info@jewishcharlotte.org.

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Sue's Bookshelf



By Sue Littauer

I'm clearly a big fan of reading and promoting Jewish books and authors while building community through the love of reading. I'm able to keep up with new books and authors by visiting the Jewish Book Council's website to gain insight into what's new in the field of Jewish literature. (www.jewishbookcouncil.org)

And for the past several years, I've been facilitating a book club through the Center for Jewish Education (CJE) which has enabled me to build community through reading and discussing Jewish books.

The newly renovated and beautifully designed Levine-Sklut Ju-

daic Library, scheduled to open March 3, is a real gem among the many institutions and organizations in our Jewish community. For those of you who love to read, I hope that you will take full advantage of this resource. You will find computers for your use, educational materials, a children's library, and many, many hard-cover books to checkout for your enjoyment.

Most important to me personally is the extensive number of e-books to download to my iPad from the Libby App. I'm signed onto both the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and the Center for Jewish Education sites. I scroll through the over 230 e-books in the Center for Jewish Education listings to see what's available, then "borrow" or "place a hold" on the books I'm interested in.*

Just glancing at the "currently available" e-books on CJE's site, I can recommend several books, and one advantage of getting them from CJE over Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is that they can be checked out for three rather than two weeks. Some of my favorites are:

- "First Ladies" by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray

- "Signal Fires" by Dani Shapiro
- "Kissing Kosher" by Jean Meltzer
- "Mary Jane" by Jessica Anya Blau
- "Ms. Demeanor" by Elinor Lipman
- "The Song of the Jade Lily" by Kirsty Manning
- "The Most Likely Club" by Elyssa Friedland
- "Metropolis" by B.A. Shapiro
- "The Fun Widow's Book Tour" by Zoe Fishman
- "Dirty Wars and Polished Silver" by Lynda Schuster
- "Fifth Avenue Glamour Girl" by Renee Rosen
- "Once We Were Home" by Jennifer Rosner

These recommendations are a small selection of the books available for you, and clearly the list of "currently available" is fluid. I'd love to hear from you about the books you are currently reading and would like to recommend.

All community members are welcome to join our CJE Book Club. All participants must be signed up as members of the Center for Jewish Education Judaic Library, and you may do so by visiting the library or by calling

us at (704) 944-6783.

Our next meeting is Wednesday, March 15 at 10:30 a.m. We meet in Room A110 on Main Street at Shalom Park, and we will be discussing "Bessie" by Linda Kass. For more information about the CJE Book Club,

please contact sueb.littauer@jewishcharlotte.org

*If you need technical assistance with Libby, please contact lisa.garfinkle@jewishcharlotte.org.

Center for Jewish Education Book Club Schedule

January 10	Incident at San Miguel	A.J. Sidransky
February 14	Don't Forget to Write	Sara Goodman Confino
March 13	Bessie	Linda Kass
April 10	Once We Were Home	Jennifer Rosner
May 8	A Reason to Rise	Rabbi Jeremy Barras
June 12	In observance of the holiday of Shavuot, Shalom Park will be closed. No book club meeting this month.	
July 10	The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store	James McBride
August 14	The Marriage Box	Corie Adjmi
September 11	Golda Meir: Israel's Matriarch	Deborah Lipstadt
October 9	The Wolf Hunt	Ayelet Gundar-Goshen
November 13	Leaving Eastern Parkway	Matthew Daub
December 11	The Stockwell Letters	Jacqueline Friedland

All meetings are on Wednesdays at 10:30 AM. All community members are welcome to attend.

For more information about the CJE Book Club, please contact sueb.littauer@jewishcharlotte.org.



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FEDERATION IMPACT: BENEFICIARY AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

ZABS PLACE

Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte raises millions of dollars each year for a single purpose: to make a world of difference for Jewish people around the corner and around the globe. Working in partnership with more than 70 beneficiary agencies and programs, we touch countless lives each year. This month, we're pleased to highlight one of these valued partners: ZABS Place.

ZABS Place shares in the mission of the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte by being a gleaming example of its core strategic objectives: philanthropy, community, and Jewish identity.

Since its founding in 2014, ZABS Place has embodied the essence of philanthropy by offering tangible support and empowerment to young adults with special talents. The Matthews-based thrift boutique provides employment opportunities as well as a space for these individuals to harness their skills and move forward on a career path. By investing in the potential of these young



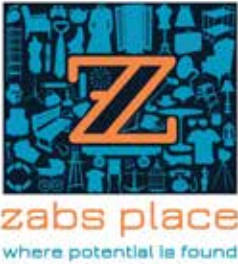
adults, ZABS Place plays a pivotal role in uplifting and inspiring members of the community.

Furthermore, ZABS Place serves as a dynamic center for community engagement and inclusivity. By creating a platform for young adults with special talents to actively participate in the workforce and contribute to society, ZABS Place fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance within the broader community. They stand as a well-known fixture in downtown Matthews and the

greater Charlotte area.

The personal story behind ZABS Place adds a poignant layer of significance to its mission. ZABS Place honors the legacy of Zachary Shporer, who passed away from leukemia in 2012 at the age of 19. Zachary, known by his Hebrew name, Zecharya Avraham Boruch Shporer, was a dedicated supporter and volunteer of the Friendship Circle, a Jewish organization committed to aiding children and teens with special needs in forming genuine friendships.

Through its partnership with the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, ZABS Place demonstrates its unwavering dedication to fostering a more equitable society for all members of the community.



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Feeding Hope: The Vital Role of JFS Food Pantry in Charlotte's Jewish Community

By Shira Firestone

In the greater Charlotte area, an already pressing issue of food insecurity has further escalated, affecting the lives of many within our Jewish community. Exacerbated by recent inflation and the ongoing effects of the pandemic, this persistent issue has forced an increasing number of our neighbors to face difficult decisions between meeting essential needs. At the forefront of confronting this escalating challenge is the Jewish Family Services of Greater Charlotte (JFS) Food Pantry, which provides much more than meals — it offers dignity, support, and a sense of community to those in need.

Recent statistics from Mecklenburg County reveal that about 15% of households wrestle with food insecurity. For the Jewish community, this statistic is not just a number but a reflection of real stories. Individuals like Allison, a single mother working part-time to align with her children's school schedules, find themselves at a crossroads between paying for utilities or groceries. For Ruth, an 84-year-old living on a fixed income, the pantry offers not only food but companionship and a connection to the community she cherishes. These stories underscore the escalating demand for the JFS Food Pantry's services, which saw a doubling in utilization by community members in need in 2023.

The pantry, a sub-pantry of NourishUp (formerly Loaves and Fishes) is not only staffed by volunteers onsite, but volunteers who make food deliveries. Pantry clients can complete their menu orders on-line and volunteers put their orders together for pick up or delivery every other week. More than 100 members of our community rely on the JFS food pantry every month.

The foundation of the JFS Food Pantry's success lies in the unwavering support of the Charlotte Jewish community.

From the diverse contributions of groups like the Shalom Club at Sun City, Temple Beth El's SPICE group, Temple Israel's Gemilut Hasadim, to the youth at LJCC's basketball league, and beyond, it's evident that the strength of our response to this crisis is communal. The Hadassah Preppies generously donate their time and resources to prepare healthy meals that are distributed to food pantry clients. The Shalom Green initiative's contribution of fresh produce from its garden at Shalom Park adds a layer of nutrition and care to the assistance provided.

However, the fabric of our support network is woven with the individual threads of every community member's effort.



One doesn't need to be a part of a large, established organization to participate in collecting food. Consider organizing your own drive through your office or as a b'nei mitzvah project.

Traditional food drives, while essential, are just the beginning. We encourage every segment of our community to think creatively about how they can contribute. Why not consider a food donation in lieu of gifts at your next birthday party? Such gestures not only enrich the giver and receiver but also weave a stronger bond within our community.

Beyond birthday donations, there are numerous ways to integrate the spirit of giving into our daily lives and special occasions. Here are a few suggestions to inspire further community involvement:

- **Special Occasion Collections:** Encourage guests at anniversaries, graduations, or any celebration to bring non-perishable food items. Celebrating milestones can also mean making a difference in the lives of others.
- **Office Pantry Drives:** Engage your workplace in organizing a food drive.
- **Community Challenges:** Initiate a challenge within your synagogue, sports team, or book club. Set a collective goal for donations and celebrate your achievement with a communal event, reinforcing the ties that bind us.
- **Mitzvah baskets:** Purchase a bima basket or mitzvah basket centerpiece for your next simcha.

As we prepare for Passover, let's remember that the need for the JFS Food Pantry is year-round. The pantry specifically organizes drives for Passover meals, ensuring all can celebrate with dignity, but the ongoing support from the community is vital. Direct donations are always welcome at the pantry every other Wednesday, and drop-off boxes conveniently located at Shalom Park in the JCC building

and temples year-round, or consider organizing a drive within your circles. This year, com-

munity members will have the opportunity to contribute to the JFS food pantry at the community Purim celebration on Sunday, March 24 from 12-3 p.m. at Shalom Park.

The stories of Allison, Ruth, and many others are a poignant reminder of the role each of us plays in the well-being of our community. Jewish Family Services and its food pantry are the vessels through which our collective generosity flows, but it is the spirit of the Charlotte Jewish community that fills these vessels with hope, support, and sustenance. Consider how you can contribute, embracing both established paths and innovative approaches to ensure no one in our community has to choose between essential needs.

By coming together in support

and creativity, we not only address immediate needs but also build a stronger, more resilient community ready to face challenges with compassion and solidarity.

For further information on making food donations or purchasing a mitzvah basket contact Roberta Rodgers at Roberta.Rodgers@JFSCharlotte.org To see a list of current food needs visit www.jfscharlotte.org.



Give Thanks to a Social Worker

By Howard Olshansky, JFS Executive Director

I am frequently asked by students eager to enter the "helping profession" which field of study they should pursue. Many consider psychology, sociology, or, for the particularly ambitious, psychiatry. My recommendation is almost always social work. To be transparent, my suggestion may be influenced by my own background; I am a social worker, with both my undergraduate and graduate degrees in social work. I was fortunate, during my own period of uncertainty about what to major in, to have been steered toward a degree in social work.

Reflecting on all this is particularly timely because March is Social Work Recognition Month. Honestly, social work has historically been an undervalued profession, often misunderstood by the general public. Initially, society tended to view social workers as "welfare workers," those who assisted the poor by distributing welfare checks, food stamps, and so forth. This perception is not entirely unfounded, as social work indeed has its origins in aiding the impoverished. The history of social work in America can be traced back to the development of public programs during the 1840s and 1850s, aimed at addressing the challenges of poverty that emerged in rapidly growing cities and were exacerbated by the steady influx of immigrant populations to the United States.

Over the years, the social work profession has evolved to become the most influential field impacting human service needs.

Social workers are integral to service delivery across a wide spectrum of areas, making their presence felt in virtually every aspect of societal support. Consider the diverse arenas where social workers make a significant impact:

In the financial and educational sectors, they provide crucial guidance and support. Social workers play a vital role in the criminal and juvenile justice systems, immigration services, and housing assistance, ensuring individuals and families receive the support they require.

Their contributions extend to addressing domestic violence, supporting veterans, advocating for animal protections, and safeguarding child welfare. They are also at the forefront of services for the aging population, individuals with disabilities, and many more areas.

The list is extensive, underscoring the fact that social workers are involved in every one of these domains. However, since this column focuses on mental health, I want to highlight the significant impact social workers have on meeting the mental health needs of our society.

When considering mental health treatment, many people's thoughts turn first to psychiatry. However, the role of psychiatry in mental health care has increasingly focused on medication management, a shift influenced by the evolving landscape of medical care and insurance policies. While medication is undeniably a critical component of mental health treatment, it's important to recognize that a range of professionals, including

psychologists, counselors, and marriage and family therapists, contribute to this field. Yet, it is social workers who stand out as the most prevalent providers of mental health treatment today. A 2021 study reported by Psych Central found that there were 708,100 social workers offering mental health services in the US, with counselors being the next largest group at 351,000.

The influence of the social work profession on mental health care is profound. Social workers have led the way in specialized interventions, particularly in treating trauma, and in applying researched evidence-based interventions. Beyond treatment, social workers have also made significant contributions to mental health through advocacy, education, and raising community awareness. They have been staunch advocates for parity in mental health services, fighting for insurance coverage for mental therapy and working tirelessly to destigmatize mental health issues.

So, let's extend our heartfelt appreciation to social workers. It's highly probable that at some stage in your life, you've been positively affected by the work of a social worker. Moreover, for those among the 20% of the population with a mental health diagnosis, it's very likely that your therapist was a licensed social worker.



JFS Experiences Record Demand for Services

By Julie Loftis, JFS Marketing Specialist

Over the years, Jewish Family Services (JFS) has led the response to our community's growing needs. In times of crisis, such as the pandemic, social unrest, and the recent Israel-Hamas war, JFS has become the emotional support system our community relies on to navigate stress, fears, and anxiety. Global issues like political discord, the economy, wars in Israel and Ukraine, community violence, and immigration have made it seem as if our society is in a constant state of crisis, impacting our day-to-day life management.

At JFS, we're directly experiencing this impact. In 2023, demand for services exceeded any previous time in our more than 40-year history across every service area. Consider the following 2023 data points:

- JFS provided 2,685 therapy sessions, a 77% increase over 2022.
 - The JFS Food Pantry doubled the number of pantry recipients.
 - Case management services for members of the Jewish community in financial crisis tripled.
 - Close to \$10,000 was distributed in rent assistance to Jewish seniors, preventing eviction and homelessness.
 - Overall, JFS provided almost 5,500 touches to our community through participation in our programs and services, almost a 50% increase from 2022.
- So, why the high spike in demand for services? Certainly, the global issues described above are

significant causal factors. However, locally, two major factors influencing the increase in needed services are the growth in the number of people moving to the greater Charlotte area and the increase in the cost of living. The recommended living wage for a single adult to cover basic expenses in Charlotte is \$37,851 or \$3,154/month. For our seniors living on Social Security, their average monthly income in North Carolina is \$1,790. For a family of four, the recommended living wage is \$82,500. The median income in Charlotte is \$68,367. The math is clear. Is it any wonder there's such an increase in the need for food pantry or financial support services?

Nationally, we're in a mental health crisis. The data doesn't lie. Youth suicides are up, and a 2023 report on mental health from the White House reported that two out of every five adults have reported symptoms of anxiety or depression. It's clear why, for the first time, JFS had a waitlist for therapy services in 2023.

One additional factor impacting the demand for services at JFS is the quality of care and treatment our clients receive. Driven by data, JFS outcomes demonstrate our clients are achieving their goals. Client satisfaction surveys reflect that over 90% of clients are satisfied with JFS services. Anecdotally, JFS continuously receives accolades from clients on how JFS has made a difference in their lives. According to Howard Olshansky, JFS' executive director, "Over the past two years, JFS has put a

great deal of effort into providing opportunities for our staff to develop their skills and grow their competencies to meet the diverse needs of our clients. Today, our therapists are credentialed in multiple, evidence-based interventions, including child and adult trauma, and our case managers have the experience and resource knowledge to connect our clients to the services they need. Most significantly, each and every staff member at JFS is committed to ensuring that JFS provides a caring and welcoming environment, along with the skill set to meet our client's needs."

Howard's response was immediate when I asked how JFS managed the increase in services: "Only through the support of our community and the dedication of our staff and board. This year we were able to increase our staffing to bring down the waitlist for therapy and navigate the increase in case management services. Support from our donors, Federation, and grants have enabled JFS to continue to grow with the demand." Howard also recognized the importance of JFS' volunteers and community partners in sustaining JFS' impact in our community.

When asked about the future, Howard said, "Whether you see it as good or bad, one thing is clear: the need for our services is not going away, and they are not slowing down. Every day we receive requests for services, therapy, food pantry, and case management. And our seniors are continuously wanting more engagement. In December, we

had a record number of 155 seniors at our annual Chanukah celebration. And, believe it or not, due to people relocating to Charlotte and the diligence of our staff, the number of Holocaust survivors involved with JFS has actually increased. As part of our strategic plan, we are strategizing on how we will continue to respond to those growing needs. Post-Covid, we are in a changed cultural environment. For example, we are learning how to use

technology to improve efficiencies while at the same time not compromising the importance of personal connection. What I can tell you is JFS has been the source of support for those in need in our community, and we will continue to be in the future."

If you are in need of support or services, contact JFS at (704) 364-6594 or email info@jfscharlotte.org.

Jewish Family Services Volunteers & Donors January 2024

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Food Drives: Adelyn Foster and Liza Stallings, Levine JCC Youth Basketball Leagues, Temple Beth El Mitzvah Market

Hadassah Meal Preppies: Gina Bonfiglio, June and Paul Hirschmann, Yvette Jacobson, Judy Kaufmann, Penny Krieger, Betsy Olinger, Mary Jane Rosenthal, Ivy Saul, Lori Trapani, Elissa Vining

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

Food Pantry Donations: Thank you 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 at Shalom Park.



Jewish Family Services Tributes January 2024

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In 2023 Jewish Family Services saw a record increase in the amount of services provided to our community. It is only due to the generosity of our community that JFS was able to continue to meet the physical, social and emotional needs for members of our community struggling with issues of mental health, aging, food and financial insecurity and domestic violence.

Thank you to each and every DONOR for your contributions and confidence in our work. Together we are able to strengthen and empower individuals and families in our community.

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Shalom Park Freedom School: A Decade of Community Growth and Tikkun Olam

By Amy Lefkof

After 12 summers, the Shalom Park Freedom School (SPFS) project has come to an end.

Shalom Park Freedom School (SPFS) expanded our sense of community and helped Charlotte's Jewish Community engage in acts of tikkun olam. When SPFS opened its doors in the summer of 2011, it was the first Jewish-sponsored Freedom School in the nation. It was the brainchild of Judy Schindler, Rabbi Emerita of Temple Beth El, following her guest reading experience at a neighboring church's Freedom School site.

Between 50 and 80 students from Sterling Elementary and Huntingtowne Farms Elementary, two schools in year-round partnerships with Temple Beth El and Temple Israel, came

each summer to Shalom Park to participate in a six-week literacy-based Children's Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom School. Freedom School's goal is to prevent summer reading loss, the foremost contributor to the achievement gap for low-income children. The program helped 80% of the campers (called scholars) maintain or gain reading ability by the end of the summer program.

SPFS, a lay-driven initiative, was a collaboration of eight agencies at Shalom Park: Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, Foundation of Shalom Park, Temple Israel, Temple Beth El, Sandra and Leon Levine Jewish Community Center, Jewish Family Services of Greater Charlotte, Charlotte Jewish Preschool, and Charlotte Jewish Day School.



Each partner agency helped support the program financially and/or by providing space, meals, cleaning services, programs, and/or constituent donations of snacks, supplies, and volunteer hours.

"The outpouring of financial and volunteer support for SPFS, our community's collective commitment to putting our Jewish values into action, was truly inspiring," explained Lisa Garfinkle, a Temple Beth El member, who co-chaired the program for several years. Members of the Shalom Park community formed an impressive, multi-year donor base to fund the program, with the help of grants from Federation and Temple Beth El's social action fund, and donations from other partner agencies.

Over the years, many from the Charlotte Jewish community touched and were touched by the program. Community members read their favorite children's story during morning Harambee (Swahili for "all pull together"). Teen Board members became sensitive to the plight of low-income children as they assisted the scholars. Dedicated volunteers served on the steering committee, where they worked behind the scenes organizing family dinner nights, scheduling guest readers, collecting snacks from local stores, setting up classrooms, scheduling enrichment

activities, hosting movie fundraiser nights, and planning end-of-summer performances.

Although space does not permit a complete listing of all those who led enrichment activities over the years, here is a sampling of the enrichment activities that defined SPFS: Artist Florence Jaffa, assisted by Linda Levy, demonstrated how to make handmade linocut greeting cards; Donna Emerson taught the art of creating paper maché masks; Tammy Seigel's yoga class challenged scholars to stand on one leg during tree pose; scholars fashioned one-of-a-kind tie dye t-shirts under Betsy Rosen's guidance; Susan Jacobs lent her culinary skills to a cooking class; Lynn Jacobson, assisted by Leah Blumenthal, taught beading; Dr. Michael Rotberg explained how our eyes and brain work when it comes to optical illusions (before distributing eyeball superballs); Barb Ziegler led the Holocaust Butterfly Project; Opera Express came to Gorelick Hall where the OASIS group and Camp Mindy campers joined the scholars to watch productions. Debby Block brought stories to life in the library. Nancy Bernstein brought Hugo the Hornet and the Book Bus to SPFS. And the Levine JCC provided on-site swim lessons.

Jered Mond of Izzy's Ca-

tering was an integral member of the team, providing warm meals to the scholars for ten summers. "Jered created lasting relationships with scholars over those years. We can't thank him enough for all of his help in making our site a warm and inviting place," said Annie Lord, a member of Temple Beth El, who, along with Margaret Musa, a member of Temple Israel, co-chaired SPFS for the last four years.

The sustainability of such a project depends on the willingness of new volunteers to take over at the helm, and the growth of other summer programs at Shalom Park over the years made sharing the Park's amenities and resources harder. In addition, the summer cost per scholar rose from \$1,200 in 2011 to \$2,000 in 2023. As a result, last summer's Freedom School was the last at Shalom Park.

In a letter dated Dec. 19, 2023, the Executive Team at Shalom Park, composed of the eight agencies, explained, "[A]fter much exploration, it became evident that there has been a shift in the priorities of our lay leadership and volunteer community in recent years." And so, after 12 years and benefitting almost 1,000 scholars, a decision was made "to discontinue hosting the Shalom Park Freedom School program."

Rabbi Schindler reflected on the transformative and fun summer educational experience that SPFS offered to hundreds of kids in the Charlotte community: "All of us can be proud of the equity we worked to create, one scholar at a time. We helped each child to believe and internalize the Freedom School song we all sang each morning, that there is something inside each one of them that is indeed 'so strong.'"

SPFS operated in partnership with Freedom School Partners (FSP), which still runs over 10 Freedom School sites throughout Charlotte. FSP recruits and trains site coordinators and college students who serve as classroom teachers. Anyone interested in continuing to support Freedom School Partners should visit their website at <https://freedom-school-partners-read-all-about-it/>. Thanks are extended to everyone who helped Shalom Park play a small part in repairing the world.



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MARCH 8-9, 2024

FRIDAY, MARCH 8 AT 7:30 PM

SHABBAT EVENING SERVICE

Our Shabbat Evening Service will feature our 2024 Israel Scholar-in-Residence, Rabbi Ayala Ronen Samuels, PhD. In the first of three presentations over the course of the weekend, Rabbi Samuels will speak during services on, "The Strengths and Challenges of Ahavat Medinat Yisrael (Love for the State of Israel)." Inspired by the name of our Israel fund, Rabbi Samuels will explore the reasons she loves Israel, as well as the current realities that make it hard to love Israel.

SATURDAY, MARCH 9 AT 9:00 AM

TORAH STUDY

Rabbi Ayala Ronen Samuels will lead our weekly Torah Study, exploring our Torah portion and sharing her own unique insights and reflections.

SATURDAY, MARCH 9 AT 7:00PM

DESSERT AND HAVDALAH: LIFE IN ISRAEL Q&A

Come together to end Shabbat with an evening of community and honest conversation. We will recite the Havdalah blessings to mark the close of Shabbat over coffee and dessert. Rabbi Samuels will share what life has been like for her and her community since the October 7th attack on Israel. Her comments will focus on responding to questions from the group.

For more information, visit
www.templebethel.org/israelscholar



Rabbi Ayala Ronen Samuels, PhD

Rabbi Samuels is the founding rabbi of Kehillat Tefilat Ha'Adam, a growing Reform community in Caesarea, Israel. She also offers Reform rabbinical services in the larger region of the Carmel Coast. Rabbi Samuels has served as the chair of Maram: the Council of Reform Rabbis in Israel since 2020.

Rabbi Samuels completed her rabbinical education and ordination at the Israeli Rabbinical Training Program at the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. She also has a BA in Jewish Thought and Psychology from Haifa University and a PhD in Jewish Education from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. Prior to entering the rabbinate, Rabbi Samuels' work focused on educational leadership training and community development.

Rabbi Samuels grew up on Kibbutz Shamir, in the Upper Galilee. She and her husband Ami have three adult sons.

Religious Life

Life, Love, and LIBERTY at Temple Beth El

By Rachel Glazer

A hallmark of the teenage years is exploring newfound freedom, and with Temple Beth El's (TBE) Temple Youth Group, teens are learning what it means to encounter LIBERTY.

LIBERTY (Life In Beth El Reform Temple Youth) is a space for Jewish teens in grades 8-12 to form lifelong friendships and deepen their Jewish identities. At the teen-led monthly events, members have opportunities to develop leadership skills, challenge themselves to try new things, make connections with other Jewish teens, and have fun in a safe and healthy environment.

The teen-elected LIBERTY Board organizes and implements programs and experiences with guidance from TBE staff and clergy. This school year, they have planned successful events such as their Kick-Off Fall Festival, Minute-to-Win-It Shabbat service, and Latke Lock-In, as well as classic gatherings to go bowling, ice skate, play laser tag, and solve escape rooms.

LIBERTY seeks to reinforce and actualize many of the values

and teachings of teens' previous Jewish education. This year's board has prioritized finding opportunities to do mitzvot. During the High Holidays, LIBERTY leads the way with their annual hunger relief project, which raised over \$10,000 this year for Second Harvest Food Bank and Shalom Park Freedom School. In February, they put their boots to the ground with the Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency, sorting and organizing donated home goods for newly arrived refugees' apartments.

Teens also can travel to NFTY (National Federation of Temple Youth) events and share experiences with other young Jews from the Southern Area Region and beyond. NFTY-SAR, along with many LIBERTY members, is gearing up for their biggest service project of the year, Camp Jenny. This four-day camp hosted at URJ Camp Coleman is planned and run by teens from around the region. They step into the roles of leaders and mentors for elementary school students from Atlanta, GA, to experience the magic of camp who might not otherwise have the opportunity.

This spring, LIBERTY is looking forward to several more fun-filled events, such as hosting a booth at the community Purim Carnival, facilitating a Passover Escape Room, attending the NFTY-SAR Spring Kallah, electing next year's board, and welcoming teens from across North Carolina for a joint overnight event right here on Shalom Park. To stay up-to-date on LIBERTY's events and registrations, check out www.templebethel.org/calendar regularly.

TBE's own Shayla Siegel, the current president of NFTY-SAR, shared her experience with LIBERTY and being a teen leader: "My goal as president is to create a safe space and loving community of Jewish teens. It's my job to tell teens that they will always have a safe space at NFTY events." Having a group with whom she can celebrate her Judaism has not only brought her comfort in the current political climate but has also brought her closer with friends locally and connected her with a community of Jewish friends nationwide.

LIBERTY is here to facilitate meaningful Jewish experiences



Teens at the LIBERTY Havdalah and Ice Skating at the Whitewater Center

crafted specifically for teens' personal, social, and spiritual development. Having Jewish friends is one of the strongest ways they can build their connection to their Jewish identity, their sense of belonging in our community, and their resilience against antisemitism and ignorance. There is no membership fee to join LIBERTY, and financial assistance is always available to ensure every Jewish teen has the liberty to enjoy all that

TBE's youth group has to offer.

Do you know a Jewish teen looking to make Jewish friends? Contact Rachel Glazer, assistant director of youth education and engagement/LIBERTY advisor, at rglazer@templebethel.org to connect them with LIBERTY today!



Temple Beth El Kids Are Taking Action to Improve the World

By Judy Coco

Many of us talk, but how many of us do? Several Temple Beth El (TBE) kids are doing. They have taken tikkun olam to heart by taking their passion to make a difference in our community. At Providence Day School, Charlie and Zach Kahn are leading others to influence alternatives to the death penalty in North Carolina. At Charlotte Latin School (CLS), Jessie Adams and Charlie Sidman are educating others on Judaism (@cls_jcc). And at Providence High School, Lindsay Pfeffer and Ben Gran are tackling antisemitism on social media with their Instagram account (@teensforjewishpride) and acting as ambassadors for our community.

Charlie and Zach initiated and lead a club to create awareness of the death penalty in North Carolina. Since 1910, more than 1,000 people have been sent to North Carolina's death row (NC Department of Adult Correction). Author Samuel Gross states that a "surprising number of innocent people are sentenced to death" and suggests that an untold number of innocent people have been wrongfully executed. ("Newsweek," April 28, 2014)

In May 2023, when Queens University hosted the film, "Racist Roots," Charlie and Zach met with the organizers to learn more. The documentary reveals

the North Carolina death penalty's deep entanglement with slavery, lynching, and racism — and inspires people to join the movement to transform the criminal legal system. "Not only are we advocating to end the death penalty because the death penalty is wrong and costly, but also because it is undeniably rooted in racism," states Charlie Kahn.

Charlie and Zach plan to

motivate others by sharing documentaries, news stories, inviting influential speakers, and leading group discussions and performances. Through letter writing, they hope the club can influence alternatives in the NC penal system.

Co-founders and leaders of the Jewish Culture Club, Jessie Adams and Charlie Sidman aim to educate peers on antisemitism

and Jewish culture to promote a more welcoming and appreciative community. At monthly meetings, students are enlightened through cultural experiences. The club hosted a Chanukah party, led discussions on the impact of antisemitism, and at a school assembly, educated classmates on the High Holidays.

By understanding more about other cultures, students may find

that they have more commonalities than differences. This awareness can foster a more accepting environment, which is so important with today's adversity.

In December, CLS students had the opportunity to connect with students at Ramot Yam High School in Israel. The Israeli students shared what life

(Continued on page 16)

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Religious Life

Temple Israel Welcomes Brooke Amo as Executive Director

Temple Israel (TI) is excited to announce the hiring of its new executive director, Brooke Amo. Brooke joins us from the Charlotte Jewish Preschool (CJP), where she served as the executive director for the past nine years (13 years in total), achieving remarkable success in various key areas and initiatives. Throughout her tenure at CJP, Brooke demonstrated an unwavering commitment to organizational growth, staff recruitment/retention (overseeing more than 60 staff members), board development, capital improvements, curriculum/programmatic development, financial strength, and strategic planning.

Brooke will bring to Temple Israel her strong leadership, coaching skills, operational acumen, knowledge of human capital, experience in increasing enrollment, and a proven ability to work in concert with a board of directors on strategic initiatives and long-term planning. She also has cultivated strong relationships with Shalom Park leadership and, most importantly, a deep passion for Jewish learning, life, and community. We feel confident that Brooke will undoubtedly contribute significantly to our congregation's continued growth and vibrancy.

In addition to her nine years of executive leadership experience, Brooke holds a master's degree in education, a bachelor's degree in education/multiculturalism,

and a certificate in nonprofit leadership and management from Duke University. She is also near completion of her certificate in executive coaching from the Center for Creative Leadership.

Amy Udoff, Temple Israel president, sat down to ask her a few questions.

Amy Udoff: Hi, Brooke! We are thrilled you are joining the TI team! What aspects of the Temple Israel community are you most excited about?

Brooke Amo: As the newly appointed executive director of Temple Israel (TI), I am thrilled to be part of such a strong Jewish community and honored to be among talented staff members. The strong sense of loyalty, unity, and commitment among the Temple Israel stakeholders excites me the most as I get to know everyone. This became apparent to me as I worked through the interview process. I remember thinking how lucky I was (if I was chosen) to be a part of a place that has a rich and deep-rooted history in Shalom Park and the greater Charlotte community. I look forward to working with all of TI's team to maintain the rich traditions and history and couple it with dynamic and innovative ways to reach our congregation's evolving needs. Temple Israel and many religious organizations, for that matter, are in a pivotal time. It is exciting to listen to what people seek in their spiritual journey, their member-



Brooke Amo

ship experience, and how they engage in Jewish life today. The spectrum is big, and the opportunities are even bigger. I truly believe the Temple leadership and staff are excited for a bright future, and they should be!

AU: In what ways do you plan to connect with and get to know the members of the congregation?

BA: Getting to know the congregants and what makes them happy to be a part of the TI community. I have learned in my short time at TI that our Temple means many things to many people. I want to learn more about why it is special to our congregants and staff members.

My plan is to (once I am settled) actively engage with the members in different ways. I will attend various services,

programs, and events to interact with our congregants. I will seek one-on-one or small group chats to get to know our members. Also, I would like to host informal gatherings such as coffee chats, where members can share their thoughts and aspirations for Temple. I know as you read this you must think I'm asking for it, but building these personal connections will be crucial in understanding the diverse needs and perspectives within our Temple community, thus helping to pave the way forward.

AU: How do you envision working together with the members and leadership to strengthen the temple's mission?

BA: Collaboration is key! I envision working closely with members, leadership, and staff to strengthen our vision and shared initiatives. By fostering open and thoughtful communication, transparency, and mutual respect, we can work together to celebrate our success while identifying areas for improvement, innovation, and growth. We have a strong team, a beautiful building, and determined leadership. In my role, I help leverage our strengths to tackle our priorities to ensure we continue to be an incredible place to worship, educate, and come together as a community.

AU: Are there any upcoming

events or projects you're particularly looking forward to?

BA: As we approach strategic planning season, I am excited to hear more about the past of TI, learn more about how we currently operate, and, of course, how we can grow and meet the needs of our current TI community and potential new congregants. The strategic plan will include many discussions about topics including building updates, marketing, security, financial health, future programming, etc. Those discussions are all very important and exciting to be a part of. As an executive director, the strategic plan is a road map to responding to the many needs of your constituents. It provides clarity, intention, and an exciting path forward. Most importantly, strategic planning sessions typically have great food, company, and conversation. It doesn't get much better than that!

Brooke looks forward to forging new relationships in our TI community and maintaining the many relationships she has built throughout Shalom Park during her time at CJP. We look forward to formally celebrating Brooke at our Annual Welcome Home Shabbat on August 23, 2024.



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Temple Beth El Kids

(Continued from page 15)

has looked like since Hamas attacked Israel. The CLS students shared their thoughts on the war. When asked what they can do to help, the Israeli students encouraged their counterparts to fact check and understand the context of the information provided in the media.

Jessie encourages others who want to start a club "to be organized in the planning and set a good goal and purpose for the club! Then go from there and start promoting it on social media and to your classmates."

As a reaction to the hatred and antisemitism they are seeing on social media, Lindsay and Ben started their own Instagram account, Teens for Jewish Pride, to spread awareness and share people's stories so Jewish kids didn't feel so alone. With dozens of followers, Teens for Jewish Pride aims to empower teens worldwide to unite against social media antisemitism through education and advocacy. Lindsay says they plan to continue to educate and be a force for Jewish youth everywhere. Lindsay and Ben are also ambassadors in the Student to Student program at Stan Greenspon Holocaust and Social Justice Education



Jessie Adams (left) and Charlie Sidman (right) advertise the Jewish Culture Club during the Upper School Club Fair at Charlotte Latin School.

Center at Queens University of Charlotte. Through this initiative, they will visit their former elementary school to speak about their lives as Jewish teens to help counter bigotry and stereotypes. The idea is that through student presentations, they will be able to put a "human face" to Judaism.

TBE is so proud of all these kids for shining a light on issues that matter to them!

Have a teen or TBE member you want to kvell about? Contact Madeline White, Communication: mwhite@templebethel.org



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Celebrate Purim at Temple Israel



Saturday, March 23

Purim Casino Night – 8 p.m.

Get dressed up or come as your are
and join us for a night at the casino!

This event is for adults only (21+).

The evening will begin with a Megillah reading.

Hors d'oeuvres and drinks will be served.

There will be a prize awarded for best costume!

Cost: \$25 (includes food, drink, raffle, and chips to play)

Get your tickets by visiting the upcoming events
page at templeisraelinc.org.

Sunday, March 24

9 a.m. – Minyan with Megillah Reading

10:30 a.m. – Family Purim Celebration with
"Esther the Barbie Spiel"

11:30 a.m. – JCC Purim Carnival



SEE ALL OF OUR UPCOMING PROGRAMS AT TEMPLEISRAEL.ORG

Religious Life

The Partnership of Temple Solel and Grace Presbyterian Church

By Dale Rivers

The congregations of Temple Solel and Grace Presbyterian Church joined in an unusual experiment 18 months ago. Temple Solel would move our services to their location. That was nothing new. Many temples without their own buildings lease space from a church. But this was going to be different. There were great hopes for this potential partnership. We planned to work together on social outreach projects, invite each other to services and social events, and create joint programs. That was the plan, but no one knew how these optimistic ideas would unfold in reality, or if they would come to fruition at all.

So how did it work out? Better than we had ever hoped for, even on our most optimistic days. For one thing, when you drive by Grace Presbyterian's location in Fort Mill, you will see the big signs outside telling you that this is the facility of the Grace Presbyterian Church. Not unusual. But you will also see something that may not exist anywhere else. You will see a permanent addition to their sign stating: "and Home of Temple Solel" with our temple logo that includes a Star of David. If you enter the building, you will see something else unusual. On the doorpost of the church is a mezuzah, which the church asked us to install as a sign of their commitment to our friendship. It's quite rare to find a church with a mezuzah on its doorpost and a church community that understands its significance; we don't know of another.

What about all those aspirations of working, playing, and even worshipping together?

During Passover, we hosted

a significant number of families from Grace Presbyterian who were eager to experience a genuine Jewish seder. Due to the large turnout, we relocated the event to their sanctuary for more space. There were many Grace Presbyterian participants who attended our High Holiday and Shabbat Services, seeking a deeper understanding of Judaism. Remarkably, one of the children from Grace Presbyterian even blew the shofar at our High Holiday Services, using a shofar that belonged to Grace's pastor.

When the church ran its giant yard sale, its major annual fundraising activity, Temple Solel congregants ran the bake sale, setting a record for donations. When Grace Presbyterian held its big pumpkin patch activity to raise money for their youth activities, several Solel folks worked shifts. When we took over the manna bag project, both congregations donated the food to make the bags. When Solel recently proposed a support group for widows and widowers, members of both congregations joined. We work side-by-side preparing food and serving at the Fort Mill Community Café free lunch program. We have participated in Grace Presbyterian's monthly family night dinners and have been welcomed into their social club activities. In turn, its members have joined us for a giant Purim costume party and our Break Fast festivities.

The essence of our journey is clear: with each passing month, we increasingly resemble not two distinct religious congregations, but rather a large family united in both work and play. Our diverse ways of worship-

ing the same God only enrich this bond. What could be more fulfilling than such unity and togetherness?

If we sound like a Jewish temple you might find attractive, come by and meet us. We welcome the presence, enthusiasm, talents, and involvement of all

members and guests. We grow with friendship, learning, doing good, and having fun. We are a Reform Jewish congregation that has eliminated the barrier of annual membership dues. While we gladly accept donations, active participation is much more important. We meet at 7 p.m.

on the second and fourth Friday of every month at the Grace Presbyterian Church at 2955 W. Highway 160 in Fort Mill. For more information about our services and other events, please visit <https://templesolelsc.org> or call 803-610-1707. We'd love to meet you.



The Growth of a School: From Kitchen Table to Borrowed Classrooms

The Temple Kol Ami (TKA) Religious School has experienced significant growth over the past 13 years, with a goal to reach and educate the Jewish youth of York County and surrounding areas. Under the leadership of our first director and educator, Michelle Silva, the school began with a small group of students gathered around a kitchen table for their first lesson. Since then, the school has evolved through various stages of growth, finding homes across York County in preschool classrooms, kitchens, and storage rooms, embodying the term "wandering Jews." This dedication to education has allowed our school to flourish, thanks to the commitment of leaders and teachers who have all volunteered their time; our school operates without paid staff.

From the moment those children sat around that kitchen table, we knew we were creating something special. When giving tours of the school, I've often been asked what makes



the Temple Kol Ami Religious School unique and why people drive 45 minutes from Charlotte to attend. The answer is simple: we are mishpacha, a family. Families are composed of different personalities and beliefs, but at their core, they care about each other and the impact they have on one another. This sense of family has been our school's guiding principle, allowing us to support our youth from the Mazel Tots program through to becoming b'nei mitzvah. For a temple that's only been around

for 13 years, it's remarkable that we've seen over 30 children through our b'nei mitzvah program.

Our religious school community is an integral part of our temple; we may be known as TKARS, but we are wholly TKA. We've had the privilege of watching our students grow up—a notable achievement for a school that began around a kitchen table.

If you'd like your child to experience the joy of being part of the Temple Kol Ami Religious School, please reach out to our Religious School director, Ashley Endy, at Yorksynagogue@gmail.com. She is eager to share all the learning and fun that awaits!



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Religious Life

A Teen’s Journey from Discomfort to Empowerment

We’re proud to share with you an essay written by Temple Kol Tikvah teen, Madison Perrin (senior), in response to the prompt provided on her University of Miami college application: “Please describe how your unique experiences, challenges overcome, or skills acquired would contribute to our distinctive University community.”

Many Jewish teenagers, especially in the South, have experienced or are currently experiencing similar feelings to Madison when openly discussing their faith with friends, at school or when planning/ running a community wide Jewish event. Madison says that her experiences have helped her realize that being uncomfortable was just “simply an opportunity for growth.” Her words may seem simple, however the act of recognition of being uncomfortable and connecting it with growing is something to truly celebrate.

Allie Gullatta, Temple Kol Tikvah Education and Youth Director

By Madison Perrin

“What kind of event is this?” asked a stranger. Confused that in these modern times, this person didn’t know what was happening, I kindly replied, “This is Chanukah on the Green.” Chanukah on the Green became my Temple’s first major event in my hometown, Davidson, North Carolina. Davidson is in the “Bible Belt,” so being Jewish is like being a goat mixed in with a herd of sheep. I look somewhat the same, but I am obviously different. Our event was sparked by “Christmas in Davidson,” a traditional three-night annual Christmas festivity. With so few members of the Jewish faith in our area, I hoped that Chanukah on the Green would help Temple Kol Tikvah make its mark on Davidson and increase awareness about our community by celebrating Chanukah and the traditions that unite us.

On the day of our event, a knot formed in my stomach. This would be the first prominent Jewish event in town, and I was concerned about how the locals would react. My heart was pounding, and my hands were shaking. I started setting up our booths and directing local businesses where to put their pop-up shops. My anxiety faded as I began to discuss Chanukah with some of the non-Jewish shopkeepers. I loved hearing and answering their questions, and our conversation allowed me to open up more. I became excited to watch the event come to life. Guests began to arrive, and the sounds of traditional holiday music, conversation, and laughter astonished me. I joyfully observed the booths entertaining the crowd, selling products, and

educating people on Judaism by celebrating Chanukah. A warm feeling replaced my worry as I watched our community’s acceptance form on the simple patch of green in the center of our town.

Looking back, I recognize how much I reframed my sense of self by helping host this event. I have been uncomfortable communicating my faith to others in the past, as it has been poorly received. In middle school, some of my fellow students began to harass me once they caught wind of my religious beliefs. Words and phrases such as “showers” and “gas chambers” became a constant bug in my ear. It got to the point where I had to get the school involved in order to get the harassment to end. I suggested that my school bring in my rabbi to discuss and educate what it means to be a member of the Jewish religion. Although the school rejected this suggestion, that did not stop me from being faithful to my religion and being a proud Jewish woman.

Chanukah on the Green reignited my confidence in my faith and reminded me how important it is to embrace who I am. After this event, I noticed progress in other areas of my life. At my equestrian competitions, I moved up a division and was surrounded by more experienced riders. This pushed me to practice harder to compete at their level and advance further. I again took a risk to try something new when my school selected me to attend Model United Nations Chapel Hill (MUNCH). MUNCH opened my eyes to a whole new academic atmosphere and, as a bonus, improved my public speaking skills. Lastly, I pushed through my physical comfort zone when I started playing varsity lacrosse in my sophomore

year. This sport was utterly new to me, as were my teammates. These experiences helped me realize that being uncomfortable was simply an opportunity for growth.

Chanukah on the Green was a community and personal success. It showed me that pushing through uncomfortable situations can unite a community and allow me to embrace who I am as a person. Rather than driving by the temple and simply noticing a building with a Jewish star, people can now remember the event that formed bonds between our community.”



KTTY Board at Chanukah on the Green

Havurat Tikvah to Host Book Discussion, Purim Celebration

On March 3, Havurat Tikvah will gather for a quarterly book discussion from 2-4 p.m. at a member’s home to review “Can We Talk About Israel?: A Guide for the Curious, Confused, and Conflicted” by Daniel Sokatch. Light kosher snacks will be provided. Books can be obtained on Amazon.com. Email RSVPs to admin@havurattikvah.org to receive the location address.

On March 23, the congregation will hold a Purim celebration in concert with Community Shabbat Services beginning at 10 a.m. at Avondale Presbyterian Church (in a marked classroom space — see sign on door), 2821 Park Rd. Following services, a

social will be held along with kiddush, challah and blessings. For those who wish to attend the service, email info@havurattikvah.org by March 22 at noon.

Havurat Tikvah is a warm, supportive, and nurturing Jewish Reconstructionist congregation with Shabbat services and a full spectrum of holiday observances, as well as religious educational options for both families and single adults. We are a diverse group of families, singles, and Jewish and interfaith couples who participate in projects that promote social justice.

We value and depend upon member participation and leadership for our religious services,

spiritual growth, and governance.

Havurat Tikvah is an affiliate of Reconstructing Judaism. For more information on upcoming services, programs, membership or other queries, call 980-225-5330, write to Havurat Tikvah, P.O. Box 12684, Charlotte, NC 28220, email membership@havurattikvah.org or visit havurattikvah.org. Havurat Tikvah is also on Facebook at facebook.com/groups/havurattikvah/.



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Religious Life

Kids Mega Challah Bake 2024

By Charlotte Rouchouze

On Monday, Jan. 15, 2024, almost 100 kids gathered for the annual kid-friendly challah-making fest at the Chabad Center for Jewish Life on Sardis Road. Organized by Ballantyne Jewish

Center and Chabad of Charlotte, the Kids Mega Challah Bake was an opportunity to learn about the mitzvah of challah and to have a lot of fun doing it! Each child received a chef's hat, a souvenir apron with the recipe printed on

it, and all the right ingredients to make their challah. The kids then made their way to the social hall where the magic began, both literally and figuratively! The children added the ingredients and then slipped on their gloves to knead their dough. As they kneaded, Leah Levin led the kids in a lesson about the mitzvah of challah and the brachot to say while making it.

Once the dough was ready to rise, the kids covered their bowls and gathered around to enjoy a magic show performed by the Magic Carpet. The kids marveled as he turned fake eggs into real eggs, changed the length of ropes, and turned notebooks from blank to black-and-white to color and back again!



Lauren Nussbaum, Eliza Carney, Heather Rasowsky, and Elinor Miller enjoying the challah bake with their kids.

After the show, the kids returned to their stations and finished shaping their loaves. Before leaving, they got to pull out their best poses and take pictures of themselves in front of the step and repeat Kids' Mega Challah Bake banner. The Kids' Mega Challah Bake is always a fun event, giving Charlotte Jewish children a chance to connect, learn about traditions, and immerse themselves in the Jewish community. Everyone left with a challah and high spirits!



Micka Ben Shabat led prayers in honor of Israel.



Olivia Dolgin shapes her challah.



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Purim NYC

ב"ה

at Chabad of Charlotte
Sunday, March 24

4 pm – Megilla reading

5 pm – Dinner & festivities

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- ↘ Mime, balloon & caricature artists
- Pickle making
- Dress up in vintage or modern NYC theme



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Fun for
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Chabad
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RSVP – Adult \$30 | Teen \$20 | Kids FREE (ages 12 and under)

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Religious Life

Rabbi Rachel Smookler Reflects on Solidarity Mission to Israel

Rabbi Rachel Smookler, rabbi for The Ruach Community, recently returned from the Israel Solidarity Mission with the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte. Below is her sermon at a recent The Ruach Shabbat Experience.

By Rabbi Rachel Smookler
In January, my husband, Harrison, and I traveled to Israel with six others on the Jewish

Federation of Greater Charlotte's solidarity mission to Israel. The morning I woke up on the day we were scheduled to leave, I was struck by a specific thought, almost a voice, that delivered a poignant message: "Israel will rise from the ashes." This thought likely stemmed from my anxiety about our upcoming international travel to a war zone. Little did I realize how pro-

foundly those words would guide our solidarity mission. We were heading into a situation where property and lives had been destroyed, families torn apart not only by murder, rape, and hostage-taking but also by the mass evacuation of thousands of Israeli families from their homes in the North and South, now living as refugees in Central Israel. We witnessed firsthand the ripple effect of the events of Oc-

tober 7, which continue to impact our people. Families have been separated, with mothers and fathers fighting on the front lines, and children displaced, living in refugee centers in Central Israel and receiving care in trauma centers.

We braced ourselves for an Israel reeling from utter defeat. However, what we found was quite the opposite and might surprise you. We witnessed the resilience and strength of Israelis, supporting one another, and coming together as one country. This unity was a stark contrast to the divisions that were prevalent prior to October 7.

Israelis are now unified in purpose, with clear goals: to bring the hostages home and defeat Hamas. Amidst all the trauma and chaos, we saw Israelis striving to continue their lives as best as they could. This resilience was evident all over the country. We saw Israeli couples of all ages folk-dancing near the beach, refusing to give up their way of life. Young Israelis were dancing at the beach, engaging in everyday activities like recording TikToks. People were enjoying the Mediterranean beach, playing volleyball, and making pilgrimages to the Western Wall.

One of the most powerful encounters on the mission was with Noa, the organizer of the Nova Music Festival, where young Israelis dancing were massacred en masse. 367 concertgoers were murdered, and 40 were taken hostage. Noa, who miraculously survived, saved the DJ and several attendees, managing to escape. Visiting the grounds of the Nova Festival was heart-wrenching. Meeting Noa and traveling to the South near Gaza, where

the massacre began, was a crucial part of our mission, giving us a firsthand understanding of the events we had been hearing about for months.

Noa, like every other Israeli we met, astonished us with her openness, faith, and strength. However, it was the unflappable attribute of resiliency, a hallmark of being Jewish, that we experienced firsthand in Israel.

We had the opportunity to meet and speak with parents of hostages and those who had lost young Israelis defending their country from terrorists. Resiliency was a common theme we observed at every step. Every Israeli, every Israeli Arab we encountered, demonstrated this remarkable resilience.

Federation did an amazing job lining up speakers, providing us with a comprehensive understanding of the situation in Israel.

After the mission, Harrison and I stayed on in Israel for a few extra days. We visited the shuks in Tel Aviv during the weekend. The markets were bustling with Israelis preparing for Shabbat, buying, eating, living their lives. The crowds were dense, and an electric atmosphere of strength and togetherness filled the air.

We decided to observe Shabbat by watching the sunset over the Mediterranean Sea on the beach. A DJ was playing the beautiful music of Idan Amedi, and we felt incredibly fortunate.

As the DJ played, a couple began to dance slowly to the music, against the backdrop of an orange and pink sky. It seemed as if the hand of God was protecting the sky. Gradually, everyone around us stood up and began dancing to the beautiful modern Israeli music. It was a moving scene, yet my thoughts returned to our visit a few days earlier to the site of the Nova Music Festival at Re'im in the South, where nearly 400 young people were massacred and many taken hostage.

In that moment, with everyone dancing around us at the beach, I recalled the words of Mia Schem, one of the released hostages: "We will dance again."

With this thought, and as Israelis danced around us on our final Shabbat in Israel, I began to sob. I sobbed for all the beautiful souls who had gathered on October 7 to dance and celebrate peace.

May we soon see the terrorists of Hamas wiped out and our hostages returned to the loving embrace of their families. "Bring Them Home NOW."



WHEN ISRAEL HURTS, HADASSAH HEALS.

HELPING ISRAEL, ONE STEP AT A TIME.

AT WAR: HEAL ISRAEL NOW

An online campaign to raise emergency funds for the Hadassah hospitals.
Now through March 31st

On October 7, Hamas attacked Israel. Hadassah responded immediately.
Hadassah hospitals continue to treat the most severely wounded patients while also providing desperately needed mental health and rehabilitation services. Every dollar donated allows Hadassah to provide care and purchase medical supplies and essential equipment. You can play a critical role in helping to #HealsIsraelNow, supporting soldiers, civilians, and displaced families.

Take the next step.
Donate at any "shoe" level that is comfortable for you.

Haifa High Heels	\$1,000
Ein Kerem Espadrilles	\$ 500
Ben Yahuda Street Boots	\$ 250
Masada Moccasins	\$ 150
Tel Aviv Tennis Shoes	\$ 72
Mount Scopus Sandals	\$ 36
What's comfortable for you	\$ ____



To donate, scan the QR code, or go to www.hadassahcltevents.org and click on event page, or mail a check made out to Hadassah Charlotte Metro (put Hadassah Heals in memo) to Hadassah Charlotte Metro, 5007 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28226.

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Charlotte Metro Area Chapter

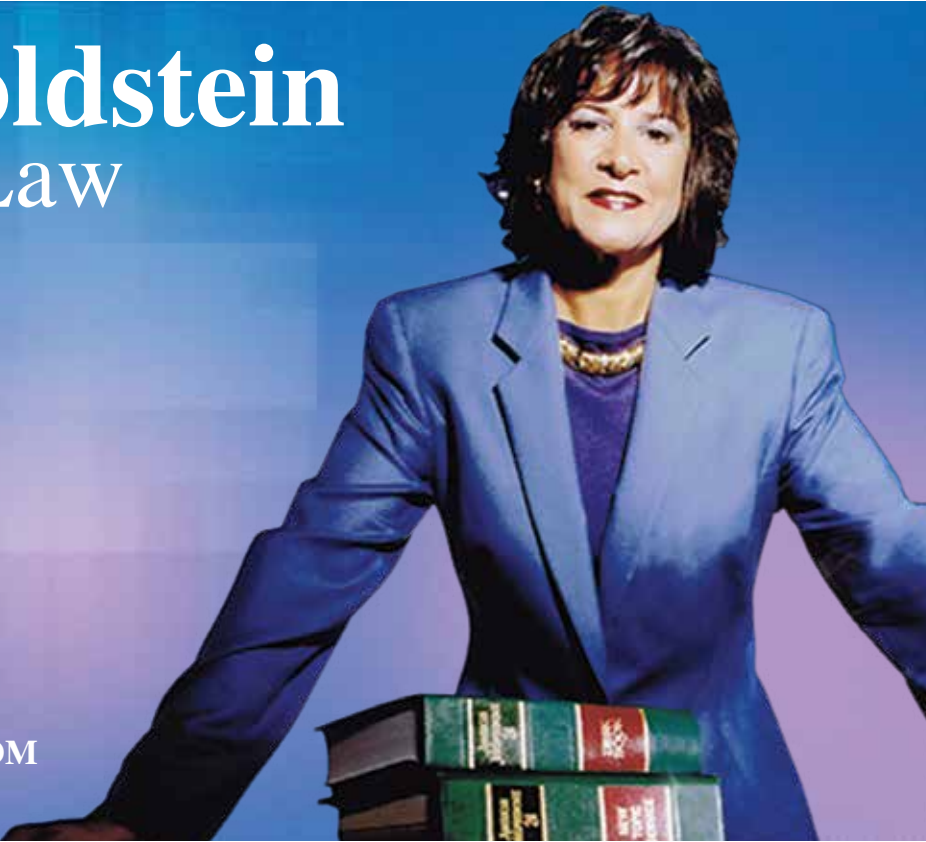
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Women's News

When Israel Hurts, Hadassah Heals

By Aileen Greenberg-Kriner

When Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, Hadassah responded immediately. Hadassah Medical Organization's (HMO) response to the terror, violence, and inhumanity unfolding in Israel provided crisis medicine and trauma-based care to the wounded. Hadassah hospitals continue to treat the most severely wounded patients while also providing desperately needed mental health and rehabilitation services.

As one of only six Level 1 trauma centers in Israel, HMO is treating many of the most severely wounded civilians and soldiers. HMO identified immediate acute-care trauma needs in the areas of head trauma, orthopedics, vascular and thoracic surgery, and short- and long-term psychological care.

Israel at War: Hadassah Heals

The Hadassah Medical Organization is currently home to the only rehabilitation center in Jerusalem. The financial needs are immense and ongoing. Hadassah members and donors across the U.S. are supporting our national "Israel at War: Hadassah Heals" campaign. Donations have helped HMO build two secure,

state-of-the-art underground facilities, launch a psychiatric emergency room service, and expand emergency and intensive care unit treatment capacity.

Gandel Rehabilitation Center

In mid-January, HMO began the phased opening of the Gandel Rehabilitation Center and welcomed patients to its War-Wounded Department. Experts in a wide range of therapies will care for military and civilian casualties using the latest equipment and technologies. The Center is adjacent to Hadassah's Mount Scopus Hospital, one of HMO's two hospitals in Jerusalem.

The Gandel Rehabilitation Center will offer physical and occupational therapy, hydrotherapy, respiratory and orthopedic rehabilitation, and other special treatments. There will be a post-traumatic stress disorder center and rehabilitation for neurological problems caused by spinal cord, brain, and nervous system injuries. When construction is complete, the 323,000-square-foot, eight-story center, will care for 10,000 patients per year. The center will feature 140 inpatient beds and

an outpatient clinic able to serve 250 patients a day.

Fundraisers for Israel

During the month of March, our Hadassah chapter is hosting "When Israel Hurts, Hadassah Heals," an online campaign to raise emergency funds for the Hadassah hospitals. Our goal is to help Israel, one step at a time, by requesting donations at levels named after different types of shoes. (Haifa High Heels, anyone?) Every dollar counts to provide care and purchase medical supplies and essential equipment. Please take the next step and donate at any "shoe" level that is comfortable for you. By donating to Hadassah right now, you play a critical role in helping #HealIsraelNow, supporting soldiers, civilians, and displaced families. See our CJN ad or website for more information and giving levels.

Join Hadassah Charlotte Metro on Wednesday, March 6 at 7:00 p.m. for Managing Our Emotions: The War in Israel and the Future of Jewish Life As We Know It. Meet at the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library at the JCC for an opportunity to explore the recent events in Israel. We will talk about our fears, hopes, and

feelings about the future of the Jewish homeland in a non-judgmental conversation facilitated by local experts on Israel. Topics will include the impact of the situation on Jewish identity, moral challenges for Israel, antisemitism in America today, the effects of social media, and how to speak to non-Jewish family and friends about Israel. The program is free and open to all. Donations are welcome and will go to Hadassah's Israel at War: Hadassah Heals fund.

Other March Events

Hadassah Wine & Schmooze on March 5 at 7 p.m. at Vintner Wine Market in the Arboretum Shopping Center.

Short Story Discussion Group continues to read stories throughout 2024 from the collection "Frankly Feminist: Short Stories by Jewish Women." The next meeting is at 11:45 a.m. on Friday, March 8 via Zoom to discuss Max's Mom Goes to Camp, by Judith Zimmer, on page 39.

Put on your best Purim costume and head to Temple Israel to play *Purim Bingo* with Hadassah. This family-friendly event starts at 1 p.m. on Sunday, March 10. Win prizes, enjoy mishloach manot, and nosh on yummy ha-

mantaschen! Sign up by March 6 on our website.

Hadassah CLT Metro Board meeting is Monday, March 18 at 7 p.m.

Hadassah BookTalk meets on March 26 at 7 p.m. via Zoom. We will discuss "People of the Book" by Geraldine Brooks. There will be no meeting in April because of Passover.

Helpful Info

To learn about membership, contact Laurie Sheinhaus at the phone number or email below, or come to one of our events.

Our website, www.hadassah-cltvents.org, has details and registration links for our events. If you have questions or need additional information, email HadassahCLT@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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“Seeing Auschwitz” Exhibit Opens in Charlotte

By Mary Eshet

Just over a year after Judy LaPietra, associate director of the Stan Greenspon Holocaust and Social Justice Education Center, saw the “Seeing Auschwitz” exhibit in London, she welcomed the first visitors to the exhibit in Charlotte on Feb. 8.

“It was a big dream to bring ‘Seeing Auschwitz’ to Charlotte,” she said. “Thanks to our many donors, including our presenting sponsor, Wells Fargo, that dream became reality, and members of our community now have the opportunity to visit this profound and poignant exhibit.”

The exhibit provides us with a powerful opportunity to bear witness to this history at a local level. It includes a collection of over 100 images of victims and perpetrators of the camp that have survived to the present day. The Greenspon Center is proud to host this world-renowned exhibit on its North American debut.

Many long months, days and nights of hard work and attention to detail led to the opening day.

“I remember the day VAPA (the Visual Arts and Performing Arts Center in uptown Charlotte) agreed to host the exhibit in their space. That was one of the mo-

ments when this started to feel real,” said LaPietra. “It truly took a village to bring this to life. Walls had to be built, graphics produced, catering arranged, and more.”

The Nine Eighteen Nine Studio Gallery at VAPA, located at 700 North Tryon Street, will be home to the exhibit through April 15. A 5,000 square foot open space has been fitted with walls to create five rooms to accommodate the flow of the exhibit.

There were many “what if?” moments when the Greenspon staff dared to make the dream even bigger.

What if we made the exhibit free for students? With the new North Carolina mandate to teach about the Holocaust, teachers and students could get great value from touring the exhibit. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and surrounding districts embraced the idea, and by the opening date more than 4,000 students were already signed up to come to the exhibit in groups. Student tickets are funded by donations, and the Greenspon Center continues to accept donations for this worthy cause.

What if the curator of the exhibit, Paul Salmons, could travel from London to join the open-



ing? Salmons was eager to join and see the exhibit come to life in a new city. “Two million people travel to the site of Auschwitz, in Poland, each year. But it has such profound meanings for our lives today that it is vital the story of Auschwitz also goes to the people of the world. I am delighted our internationally-travelling exhibit ‘Seeing Auschwitz’ now comes to Charlotte, North Carolina,” he said.

What if we invited very special members of our community — Holocaust survivors — to the very first opening of the doors? That is just what happened with the Survivor Brunch on Feb. 8. At 11:30 a.m. that morning about 40 people, including 18 survivors and their guests, entered the VAPA center. During brunch, they heard about the ex-

hibit from LaPietra and Salmons. Then, they had the opportunity to tour the exhibit, which takes about an hour and 10 minutes, accompanied by an audio guide.

“Hosting the survivors to this historic and poignant exhibit was incredibly moving,” said Rabbi Judy Schindler, director of the Greenspon Center.

That same evening, the Greenspon Center hosted another important group for dinner and a tour of the exhibit — the donors and supporters who made it possible. At 5:30 p.m., around 70 donors were welcomed by Queens University president, Dan Lugo, who expressed how congruent bringing this exhibit to the community is with Queens’ values and mission. LaPietra and Salmons shared insights into the exhibit. After

the brief program and a buffet dinner, attendees were invited to tour the exhibit.

The exhibit officially opened to the public on Feb. 9 with a 10 a.m. press briefing followed immediately by student groups who arrived in orange school buses.

“These first two days of the exhibit have reinforced the months of work were more than worth it,” said LaPietra. “And it is only the beginning! The exhibit will be open through April 15.” Visit seeingauschwitz.com/charlotte for more information and tickets.

Dreaming big does not stop with this exhibit for the Greenspon Center. One of the exit survey questions asked of visitors is: “Do you think there’s a need for a permanent Holocaust and human rights museum in Charlotte?”

“We know there is so much work to be done to combat hate,” said Schindler. “Bringing this exhibit to life has energized us to redouble our efforts to increase awareness and advocate for understanding and unity.”

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Around the Table



By Charlotte Rouchouze

It has been quite a few years since my last trip to Israel, and I know that the food culture there has exploded into a rich tapestry of European and Middle Eastern influences. In fact, the Israeli food content creators on Instagram are some of the best accounts I follow. But there is one very simple dish I saw recently on one of these accounts that I definitely do remember eating even all those years ago, and that is schnitzel. It reminded me of how much I love those thin, fried chicken breasts, and I promptly invited my friends for an Israeli-style schnitzel Shabbat dinner. Along with Israeli salad, lemony cabbage slaw, spicy bright green schug, and tahini dressing, it's a

dinner I will be making again. I did ask myself why schnitzel is so popular in Israel, and the answer I found is fairly simple. European Jews had long known of the veal or pork-based versions popular in Eastern and Central Europe, and when many of them immigrated to Israel (or British Mandate Palestine in earlier years), they brought a kosher version with them. Their chicken schnitzel was adapted into a cheap, simple dish that can be made without an oven, an amenity that many did not have in the earlier part of the twentieth century. Schnitzel also has the advantage of being kid-friendly and perfectly adaptable to different flavors and sides. The traditional way of preparing schnitzel is to dredge first in flour, then in beaten egg, and finally in seasoned breadcrumbs, and then fry in oil. This technique is a winner, but I have long been interested in creating the perfect oven-fried chicken recipe. I have tried many and have always found the results to be lackluster, always looking better than they tasted. I decided that the key was to find a way to insert a bit of oiliness into the coating, thus allowing the crumbs to bubble and crisp up in the oil, similar to

how they would in a frying pan. To do this, I use a combination of mayonnaise and buttery crumbs instead of breadcrumbs. I have devised a recipe that I think is a home run and it can be adapted to incorporate any spices you like. If you keep kosher and you can't find parve Ritz-style crackers, the crackers can be subbed with a parve alternative such as plain breadcrumbs. You can even use fish instead of chicken. The one piece of equipment you will need is a cooling rack that fits onto your baking sheet, which will allow air to circulate under the chicken.

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.



Oven-Fried Schnitzel



Serves 4-5
Equipment: Steel grid cooling rack that fits into your baking sheet
Note: sesame seeds can be purchased in bulk at any Indian market or at Super G

- 2 lb chicken breast, pounded thin (about 1/8 inch)
- 3/4 cup full-fat mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 tsp each salt, pepper, garlic powder or other desired seasonings
- 2 sleeves crushed buttery crackers such as Ritz
- 1/2 cup sesame seeds (optional)
- Nonstick spray

In a mixing bowl, add the mayo, olive oil, seasonings and 3 tbsp water to thin out the mixture. Add the chicken, cover, and marinate in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes or up to 6 hours. When ready to prepare the schnitzel, preheat the oven to 425. Line a large cookie sheet with tin foil and then place the rack on the sheet. Spray the rack generously with nonstick spray. Next, pound the crackers in a large plastic bag with a rolling pin until evenly crushed. Add the sesame seeds (and any other seasonings or spices of your choice). Sprinkle a generous amount of the mixture on a plate and then dredge the chicken, one piece at a time, in the crumbs. Sprinkle more on top and press in. Each piece should be well coated. Place on the rack and bake for about 20-40 minutes until well browned, depending on the thickness of your chicken. Optional: flip once during baking for extra browning on both sides. Note that when flipping or removing the breasts, handle gently in order to avoid pulling off the coating. Serve warm with the condiments of your choice.

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Racing for Hope: National Brain Tumor Society's Carolina Brain Tumor Walk & Race

On April 13, two members of the Charlotte Jewish community will honor the memories of their loved ones at the National Brain Tumor Society's Carolina Brain Tumor Walk & Race. Holly Gainsboro, chair of the event's planning committee and member of Temple Beth El, lost her husband, Steven Gainsboro, on Dec. 11, 2010, to glioblastoma, an incurable brain tumor. Many in our Charlotte community rallied around the Gainsboro family throughout Steven's illness and after his death. Holly has dedicated her life to volunteering, advocating, chairing events, and facilitating a grief support group for the National Brain Tumor Society. Her mission is to find a

cure so that one day, when anyone is diagnosed with a brain tumor, their doctor will say, "We've got this. We have a cure, and you will be OK." This will be Holly's 10th year involved with the National Brain Tumor Society and the 10th anniversary of the Carolina Brain Tumor Walk & Race. Laurie Sheinhaus, a Charlotte resident for 17 years and an active member of Hadassah, lost her mother 10 years ago to the same brain tumor type as Steven's. Laurie is new to the Carolina Brain Tumor Walk & Race and has become an integral part of the committee as she has rolled her sleeves up in procuring in-kind donations for event day. As Holly



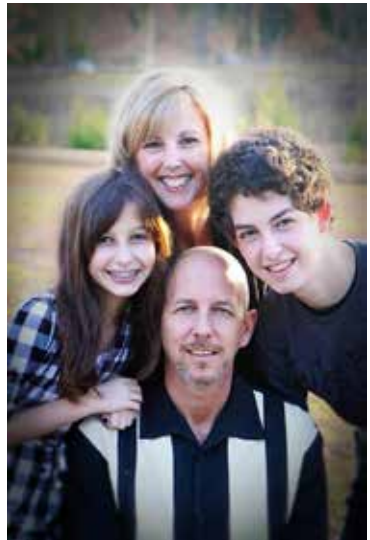
says, "Laurie has a heart of gold and is a force in this fight!" She is doing all she can for this cause as she knows all too well the experience of caring for a loved one with a brain tumor and grieving their death. Laurie arranged for a bench with her mother's name on it to be placed at the park behind Elon Park Elementary School. Both Laurie and Holly have found meaning as they grieve their family members lost to brain tumors. Glioblastoma is a particularly aggressive and challenging form of brain cancer, known for its rapid progression and limited treatment options. It represents a critical area of research within the field of neuro-oncology. The National Brain Tumor Society, a leading organization in the fight against brain tumors, plays a pivotal role in funding research, raising awareness, and providing support to patients and families affected by brain cancer. Their

commitment to advancing the understanding and treatment of brain tumors is vital in the ongoing quest for cures. The Carolina Brain Tumor Walk & Race is one of the many initiatives by the National Brain Tumor Society to galvanize community support and gather crucial funds for this cause.

The Carolina Brain Tumor community will come together on April 13, 2024, for a 5K Walk/Run to raise awareness and funds to support the needs of brain tumor patients and their families. The Carolina Brain Tumor Walk & Race is a family-friendly event for all ages! Join us for a morning of celebration, remembrance, and hope. Your community is here. Let's discover a cure together.



Linda Freedman, Laurie Sheinhaus with grand/daughter Dana Sheinhaus, taken 2009



Steven, Holly, Derek and Liana Gainsboro. Photo credit Emily Mattos, taken 2009

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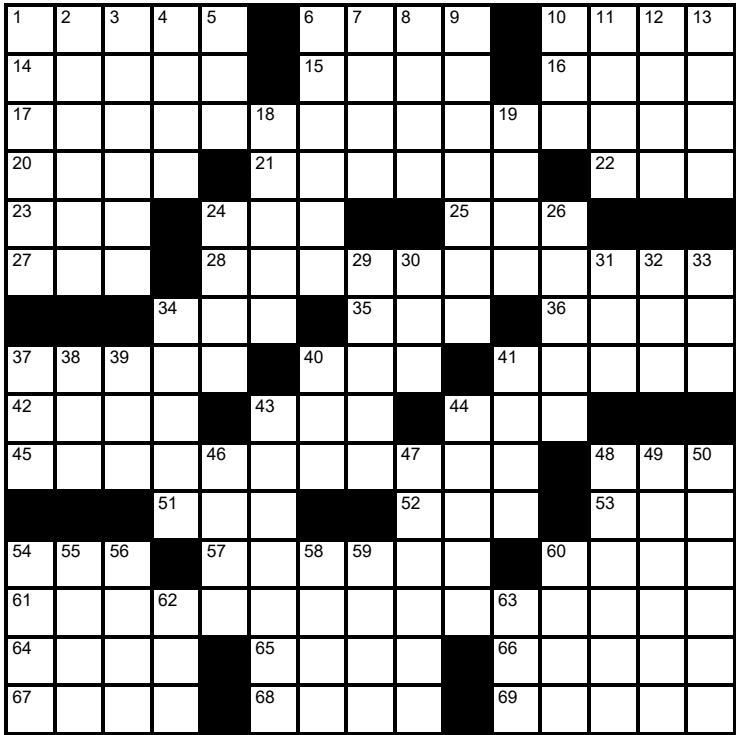
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Event Details:
7:30 a.m. – Registration Opens
8:30 a.m. – Remembrance Ceremony
9:00 a.m. – Opening Ceremony with 5K race to follow
10:45 a.m. – Closing Ceremony

For the walk/run, participants can run the 5K as a timed participant, untimed runner, or walk at their own pace. Wheelchairs and strollers are welcome, and pets on leashes are allowed. We will have a kids' tent with fun activities for the little ones. To register, visit www.braintumor.org/carolina. Questions? Email us at carolinainfo@braintumor.org.

“Yiddish Rhyme”



Across

1. Asian noodles
6. Sci. endeavor
10. Number of Seder ko-sot
14. Dickinson or Bronte
15. Yoni Netanyahu, Avigdor Kahalani, or Henrietta Szold, e.g.
16. “A League of Their Own” actress Petty
17. Clip of a TV show set in Jerusalem
20. It’s put in a pot
21. They might be in cholent
22. Must, with “to”
23. Oft-stubbed digit
24. Constantly increasing number
25. “Lost” actor Daniel ___ Kim
27. Miscalculate
28. Groban’s snacks
34. “Fifth quarters”, for short

35. Yes, to the Captain
36. A Great Lake
37. Getaways
40. The “Avatar” movies would be quite short without these letters
41. Causing goose bumps
42. Mrs. Netanyahu
43. “Diary ___ Wimpy Kid”
44. Kind of Kat
45. Gush over “The Producers” maker
48. AOL was one
51. “___ Haderech” (Israeli slang term)
52. Make an inquiry
53. Black-eyed veggie
54. 1949 UN entrant
57. Area in front of a hockey goal
60. “The Amazing Race” host Keoghan
61. Chat on Jack Daniels and Johnnie Walker
64. Farm tools
65. Elvis Presley’s middle name
66. They get scoops
67. Words before end or impasse
68. ___deals.com
69. Colgate rival

Down

1. Car sale offer
2. C major relative
3. Title that’s usually abbreviated
4. “... or ___!”
5. “Science guy” Bill
6. They’re in many a pocket
7. Altered mortgage, for short
8. Approximating phrase
9. Unidentified man
10. “Aladdin” alter ego
11. Start of the new year?
12. California’s La ___ Tar Pits
13. Doesn’t feel so great
18. Puma’s puma and Jaguar’s jaguar, e.g.
19. “May G-d bless and keep the ___... far away from us!”
24. Crawling carpenters
26. Bail out from a jet
29. Mother of Yishmael
30. Memo-opening letters
31. Sixty minutes, in Milano
32. Elevated 3-Down,

- perhaps
33. “Yo!”
34. Australian gem-stones
37. “For shame!” sound
38. Yeshiva title
39. Rage
40. Big exec.
41. Fiber from a cocoon
43. Racing or vehicles (for that racing)
44. Moolah in Modi’in
46. “Motion” starter
47. Stone workers
48. Galaxy alternative
49. Captures
50. Most ashen
54. Holy Land woman
55. Person from Edinburgh
56. Perlman of “Cheers” and “The Bad Batch”
58. Book often combined with Nechemiah
59. “___ Flux” (1990s sci-fi series)
60. Low rating
62. Rival of AOL, once
63. Secretive email letters

(Answers on page 34)

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Education and Youth

Noa's Composting Crusade: Tikkun Olam in Action

By Billie Anderson

Noa Ezer, a recent bat mitzvah from Temple Israel, participated in Shalom Green's REgeneration program this year. Through REgeneration, Noa worked with a mentor to develop a service project focused on environmental stewardship, embodying the Jewish concept of tikkun olam (repairing the world). Her project demonstrated the connection between Judaism and environmentalism.

For her bat mitzvah project, Noa advocated for Temple Israel to start composting. This initiative aimed to reduce food waste and other compostable materials from landfills, thereby decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and conserving land. Composting allows organic materials to decompose in an eco-friendly manner, producing nutrient-rich soil and reducing the need for harmful chemicals in gardening and farming. Noa's project was a literal interpretation of "repairing the world" by enriching the earth's soil.

The idea came to Noa when her family began using a composting service, and she saw the amount of waste transformed into rich soil. She wondered

about the potential impact of composting on a larger scale, like her temple. Preparing for her presentation to Temple Israel, Noa researched composting's impacts and how it could be integrated into the congregation. She audited the single-use plastic used by the in-house caterer, discovering a staggering 40 bags of trash per month. Crown Town Compost notes that over 50 percent of typical municipal garbage is compostable. Noa also gained experience and inspiration by participating in gardening days at Shalom Park, her favorite activity. Through a composting service, Temple Israel could receive compost biannually, enhancing the soil for a garden that Noa and others could nurture.

Shalom Green Youth Programming

Shalom Green's youth programs, including gardening days, Green Sprouts, and REgeneration, encourage children and families to engage in environmental initiatives at Shalom Park. Noa was first introduced to Shalom Green through Green Sprouts, a monthly program for 6- to 11-year-olds. Here, young environmentalists learn about making a difference. The pro-



Noa Ezer

gram, started by two 10-year-olds from Shalom Park, has grown into Shalom Green's most successful offering.

After aging out of Green Sprouts, children can join REgeneration, a self-paced program for 12- to 18-year-olds. Participants, like Noa, create service projects centered on environmental stewardship, gaining research and execution skills while benefiting the community. Jennifer Ezer, Noa's mother, appreciated the program for its action-oriented approach to her

daughter's bat mitzvah project. REgeneration continues to foster environmental stewardship and inspire community action. To learn more about Green Sprouts and REgeneration, visit www.shalomgreenCLT.org.

Ways to Get Involved

While Noa is among the many children in Shalom Park leading environmental efforts, there are numerous ways to engage in sustainability initiatives:

- Attend Shalom Green events, such as gardening days.
- Recycle according to Mecklenburg County's "Recycle Right" policies.
- Turn off your car when idling in drop-off or pick-up lines to improve air quality around schools and populated areas.

Sustainability doesn't end at Shalom Park. Families can set their own sustainability goals. Involve everyone in the process, allowing each member to contribute ideas. Here are some suggestions:

- Join a composting service like Crown Town Compost to reduce food waste. Mention "Shalom Green" for a free one-month trial of their at-home services.
- Eat plant-based meals to lower your carbon footprint.

- Advocate for environmental protection legislation with your elected officials.

- Borrow instead of buying to save resources. Tip: Check out the new PJ Library for book borrowing for the family.

You can also join Noa in advocating for composting at local organizations within Shalom Park and the wider community. Noa's dedication to this initiative embodies the principle of "preach what we teach." Let the commitment of our youth to tikkun olam motivate you to make the changes you want to see.

If you're interested in volunteering with or donating to Shalom Green, visit our website at www.shalomgreenCLT.org or email info@shalomgreenCLT.org. Connect with us on Facebook at Shalom Green: Shalom Park Environmental Initiative and on Instagram and X (formerly known as Twitter) at [@shalomgreen_CLT](https://twitter.com/shalomgreen_CLT).



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Education and Youth

Cultivating Growth and Community: The Power of Partnerships

By Megan Harkavy, Hebrew High Director

Creating and cultivating partnerships is one of the highlights and high priorities at Hebrew High. We believe that it is a crucial step in fostering growth and community engagement for our teens. Without these partnerships, our teens might not know that these programs exist in our community.

Some of our recent partnerships include:

Throughout the year we have several different service projects with Jewish Family Services of Greater Charlotte, including holding a food drive for the food pantry, packaging goodie bags and providing some entertainment for their Senior Chanukah Party and our cooking class prepares food for the food pantry.

We partnered with the Stan Greenspon Holocaust and Social Justice Education Center to offer a Hebrew High Jewish Heritage Tour through the Jacobs-Jaffa Charlotte Jewish Heritage Tour. It included a visit to Queens University to discuss Jewish life on campus, a scavenger hunt through the Hebrew Cemetery,

a visit to the Holocaust Memorial, and a stop at the Friendship Circle.

In addition, all of our teens or staff who are present are invited to make announcements during dinner about any upcoming event or program. This is a great partnership between BBYO, LIBERTY and the Levine JCC because they can highlight their upcoming events. We have also had members from Chabad come and talk about the Chanukah concert and volunteer opportunities with the Friendship Circle.

Hebrew High recently formed a new partnership with Shalom Green to plan an all-school program for Tu B'Shvat, the New Year of the Trees. Shalom Green is a group of Jewish community volunteers who are dedicated to promoting an understanding of Jewish environmental values. Shalom Green is united in its commitment to sustainability and is energized to take meaningful action to preserve and protect Creation.

Our students experienced two unique activities that related to Tu B'Shvat and promoted environmental values. The first ac-



A group of students participating in their Tu B'Shvat Seder led by Rabbi Lexi Erdheim

tivity was a Tu B'Shvat Seder, led by some of our teachers. The goal of this seder is for the teens to learn or remember the miracle of nature and celebrate their relationship to it. During the Tu B'Shvat Seder, our students had the chance to taste different fruits that are grown in Israel as well as to reflect on their role in the world and how to be more committed to environmental values.

But why do we specifically eat fruit that is grown in Israel?

The teens learned that the seven species have played an important role in the food of the Israelites and the religious traditions of Judaism. Indeed, to the ancient Israelites, the seven species were not only evidence of the land's great bounty, but evidence of G-d's love toward them. Wheat fields, vineyards and olive groves are still a salient feature of the Israeli landscape today. Figs, olives, pomegranates, and dates are common ingredients

in the cuisine of Israel. As part of this seder, they also enjoyed four cups (really sips) of grape juice, both white and red grape juice. The teens learned a lot and enjoyed this interactive and delicious activity.

The second activity was creating and decorating tote bags. While they were coloring and spending time with their friends, the teens learned about single use plastic and the importance of bringing your own bag when you go shopping. They were able to take home the tote bags that they created to use during future shopping trips.

Our students enjoyed this all-school program and we are so grateful for the partnership that was created between Hebrew High and Shalom Green. We hope to partner with them again in the future!



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Education and Youth

Bubbies 'N Books: Seniors Read to the Jewish Preschool on Sardis Children

"The bubbies are here, the bubbies are here," has become the happy song on Friday mornings at the Jewish Preschool on Sardis. Through a partnership with Barbara Sklut Better Together, bubbies from many of the local senior communities have read a book to the three- and four-year-old classes.

The Bubbies 'N Books program allows seniors from our

Charlotte community to see our Jewish heritage continued through these engaging Jewish children," said Lauren Stark, Better Together coordinator. Many of the bubbies come early to experience the exuberant joy of the students and their families during the Jewish Preschool on Sardis Shabbat assembly.

Leah Amler, one of the bubbie readers shared, "For a long time,

I have been a grandma, nona, and safta. Now, through the Bubbies 'N Books program, I am a 'book reading bubbie'. Who can be more fortunate than I am? Thank you, Better Together, for giving me this uplifting opportunity."

Better Together Charlotte is a senior outreach program designed to provide an intergenerational experience for youth and teens to interact with our Jewish senior community.

For more information, visit friendshipcircles.org/events-bettertogether.



Seniors read to JPS students as part of the Bubbies 'N Books program.



Seniors read to JPS students as part of the Bubbies 'N Books program.

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Education and Youth

My Friendship Story

By Aliya Martin

Ever since I was in middle school, I would spend every Sunday at Friendship Circle until Ms. Sue asked me if I would like to start meeting one-on-one with someone during the week as well. Before I met Katie, I thought this would just be a short once-a-week activity, something nice I could do to add to my Friendship Circle involvement. However, I never realized how much this friendship would impact me.

Katie and I have been meeting every Thursday for the past few years which I look forward to every time because it is a friendship where I feel we truly grow and learn from each other. You figure out other ways to communicate when words aren't always the easiest option, and in doing so, you find different ways to form connections. For us, we normally play basketball or football, something very outdoors and hands-on. When we do these sorts of activities that Katie loves she opens up, and we find out things like how we love the same sports teams and like the same music. My friendship with Katie is something I value so

highly because even though we may look at the world differently sometimes, we are still such close friends and I know if I ever need a good friend to laugh with, I have her.



Aliya and Katie at the entrance to Friendship Circle



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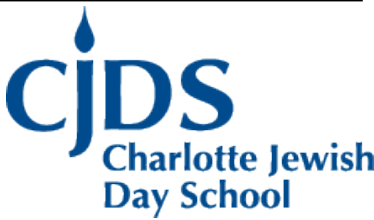


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CJDS Celebrates Rosh Chodesh Shvat With Science and Judaica Fusion



Charlotte Jewish Day School (CJDS) is always looking for innovative ways to tie our general studies program to our Judaica program and emphasizing the relevance of Judaic learning in our lives. To celebrate Rosh Chodesh Shvat, the first day of the month and the month that includes Tu B'Shvat, the beginning of a new year for trees,

CJDS invited Essy Sefchovich, a high school science teacher with a bachelors in science from the University of California, to create and lead the program about the science of trees, flowers and fruits — as in the land of Israel, this marks the beginning of the new growth cycle for fruit bearing trees. The students conducted a series of experiments from

discovering paper chromatography (the separation of colors) to extracting the “DNA” of strawberries. Ask any CJDS student in grades 2-7 about the life cycle of trees and how man is a tree of the field.



CJDS students conduct science experiments for Rosh Chodesh Shvat and Tu B'Shvat



The Hebrew Cemetery joins with the community in remembering the names of those who have been buried in the cemetery in the month of January.

Alice Jean Evans 3-3-1940 - 1-6-2024

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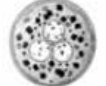
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The Best Hamantaschen Recipe Ever

Hamantaschen weren't always my favorite cookie to enjoy. The ones I grew up with were dry, would sort of crumble in your hand, and had a sad apricot, prune or poppy schmear in the middle that just wasn't enticing. My grandma would bring them home from her synagogue's sisterhood each year and I would do my best to smile and take a bite. Fast forward, and the quality and variety of hamantaschen have come a very long way. You can find hamantaschen these days in every flavor imaginable: stuffed with hot dogs, dulce de leche, guava, strawberry cheesecake, and so on. There is no end to the creativity that bloggers, bakers and chefs have infused into these traditional Purim cookies.

These triangle treats are enjoyed for the Jewish holiday of Purim, when the wicked king Haman (BOO!) was defeated

through the brilliant intellect of a Jewish woman, Queen Esther. There's a bit more to the story, of course. But we were blessed with hamantaschen cookies as one of the many ways we are encouraged to celebrate the holiday. My other favorite part about Purim is that you are commanded to "drink until you cannot tell good from evil." Consider it done.

However, hamantaschen do not actually date back to Queen Esther; they are a far more recent addition to Jewish cuisine. Triangle-shaped, yeasted dough pastries filled with poppy seed (known as mohn) were common in Germany during the 18th century, and that's when Jews started adopting them and enjoying them for Purim, the triangle shape a nod to the hat supposedly worn by Haman.

My recipe below (which, yes, is one of the best you will ever

try) is inspired by my dear friend Rachel Korycan and her mom Susan who took me under their wing to show me their recipe, which yields a far more delicate and delicious hamantaschen than many other old-school recipes. It is not made with a yeasted dough, but rather a sugar-cookie like dough which bakes up sweet and tender.

My favorite fillings include raspberry jam with mini chocolate chips, cookie butter, chocolate hazelnut spread and store-bought poppy seed filling (you can find it in the baking aisle near the cherry pie filling). But really, the sky is the limit, and the most important thing is to have fun.

Reprinted with permission from myjewishlearning.com.

1 stick (½ cup) unsalted butter or margarine, at room temperature
¾ cup granulated sugar
1 egg
1 Tbsp milk (or other non-dairy milk)
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 tsp grated lemon zest (optional)
1 ½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling
¼ tsp baking powder
¼ tsp salt

Beat the butter and sugar together until smooth.

Add egg, milk, vanilla and lemon zest until mixed thoroughly.

Sift together the flour, baking powder and salt.

Add dry mixture to wet mixture until incorporated. Note: If the dough is too soft, increase flour amount by a few Tbsp at a time until firmer.

Form dough into a disk and cover with plastic wrap. Chill dough for at least 1 hour or up to 24 hours.

Dust surface with flour to keep from sticking. Roll the dough to about ¼-inch thick.

Using a round cookie cutter, cut out and place onto cookie sheet. To keep the dough from sticking to your cutter, dip in flour before each cut.

Fill each round with ½ tsp of your favorite filling, and using your favorite method, pinch corners together tightly.

Pop into the fridge for 10 minutes, or freezer for 5 minutes, to ensure hamantaschen hold their shape.

Bake at 400°F for 7-9 minutes.

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16,500 blankets have been donated to the Levine Children's Hospital, Hemby Children's Hospital and the Shriners Hospital (Greenville, SC) and 10,000 chemo hats have been donated to facilities for cancer patients around Charlotte.

Join Us!

Wednesdays 8-11 AM at the Levine Jewish Community Center
Thursday 9 AM-5 PM in the home of Lynn Edelstein, 3802 Columbine Dr.
(704) 366-6765

(Puzzle on page 27)

1	R	A	M	E	N		6	P	R	O	J		10	A	R	B	A
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Newspaper archives are a treasure trove of collective memories, providing a snapshot of our history. The following article is from The Charlotte Jewish News, January, 2017. To read other issues of The CJN, visit the archives at <https://www.digitalnc.org/newspapers/charlotte-jewish-news-charlotte-nc/>.

Looking Back: Year 2017

2017 Main Event: The Levine Leap Inspires Donors To Pledge the Most in Main Event History

The Jewish Federation’s 2017 Main Event, held on Thursday, December 8, 2016 at Temple Israel, was a night to remember.

Main Event co-chairs, David and Debra Van Glish, welcomed nearly 600 people to the event, which featured guest speaker Joshua Malina, cast member of “West Wing” and “Scandal,” who described himself to our generous donors and community leaders as a performer second and a Jew first. In his speech “How to Remain a Mensch in Hollywood,” Joshua Malina linked his strong Jewish upbringing to his support for the great work the Jewish Federation does throughout the local and worldwide Jewish community. His solid Jewish identity and passion for Israel were key elements to his warm, witty, smart and very personal remarks. Following The Main Event, Joshua Malina was gracious and charming as he posed for endless photos with both devoted and new fans.

The Main Event is the official kick-off to the Jewish Federation’s 2017 Annual Campaign, and David Van Glish took the opportunity to announce the 2017 Campaign goal by saying, “To meet the needs of our entire community, Federation is working its way to a \$4 million campaign with a goal this year of \$3,750,000. Admittedly, that’s a lot of money, but it enables us to thrive in this amazing Jewish community we call home.

David continued his remarks with the following exciting announcements, “And to jumpstart us on our way, I am honored to announce that The Leon Levine Foundation is making a gift of \$706,000 to our 2017 Campaign! Please join me in thanking Leon and Sandra Levine for their cornerstone gift to our campaign, which demonstrates their profound commitment not only to the Federation but to each and every one of us as well.

“In addition to their own generous gift, The Leon Levine Foundation is helping us ‘jumpstart’ the Campaign with a creative and motivating match – The Levine Leap! The Leon Levine Foundation will generously match the LEAP of any donors who increase their gift to the next giving level.”

And respond they did! The 2017 Main Event raised \$330,281 which includes \$23,336 from The Levine Leap! To learn more about how you can take advantage of this incredible opportunity, please call Sue Littauer at the Federation office 704-944-6758.

Special thanks go to David and Debra Van Glish and their hardworking Host Committee for making the 2017 Main Event such a huge success!

And we’re incredibly grateful to our sponsors, Swimmer Insurance Agency and Impact Shift Media, and all of the Honorable Menschen donors who went above and beyond to support the 2017 Main Event.



Event co-chari Debra Van Glish, special guest Joshua Malina, and event co-chair David Van Glish

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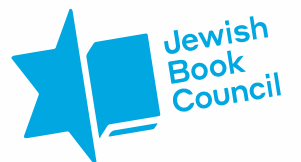
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SUN | March 3 | 7 PM

JOSHUA COHEN



The Netanyahus:
An Account of a Minor and Ultimately Even Negligible Episode in the History of a Very Famous Family

THU | March 7 | 7 PM

DANIELLE FRIEDMAN



Let's Get Physical:
How Women Discovered Exercise and Reshaped the World

SUN | March 17 | 7 PM

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