When Lois and Bruce Zenkel approached UJA-JCC Greenwich with an idea – and generous support – for a 2021 series exploring anti-Semitism in its shape-shifting forms, “we quickly swung into action to create a multi-disciplinary program that would promote tolerance and respect while combatting bigotry, hatred and violence,” said CEO Pam Ehrenkranz. “Art, music, film, literature, photography, social media, advocacy and politics all provide powerful lenses through which we probe the roots and resurgence of anti-Jewish sentiment today.”

On February 9, *The Many Faces of Anti-Semitism: Confronting the Longest Hatred*, kicks off with a Focus on Advocacy. Dr. Charles Asher Small and Dr. Mehnaz M. Afridi will explore *Muslim Anti-Semitism*, the first in a series of five programs. Next up, *The Many Faces of Anti-Semitism* presents a special evening with Marc Lapadula on February 24 at 7:30 pm, entitled *Jewish Filmmakers & Discrimination in America*. Lapadula, an award-winning producer and playwright who runs the screenwriting program in Yale University’s Film Studies Department, brings his hotly in-demand presentation to the Zoom screen, revealing social resonances in Jewish American life through iconic movies. YMCA Greenwich and the Avon Theatre are co-sponsors.

The series continues on March 8 at 10:30 am, with a virtual excursion into literature. Audiences will enjoy *30 Minutes with Rabbi Dr. Ariel Burger* as he discusses his book, *Witness: Lessons from Elie Wiesel’s Classroom*, a winner of the National Jewish Book Awards. The event is co-sponsored with Bi-Cultural Hebrew Academy and Perrot Memorial Library.

The series is free and open to the community. Interested participants can register at [www.ujajcc.org](http://www.ujajcc.org) to receive a Zoom link. More details on page 8.
PJ PAILS Overflowed with Eight Nights of Fun

Over the summer PJ Library knew how to bring smiles to children's faces – PJ PAILS!

After the first successful distribution, it was clear to the PJ PAILS committee: Rebecca Cooper, PJ Library Chair, Meredith Isacoff and Ashley LaTorre, that families wanted more. So PJ PAILS was born. PAILS are jam packed with activities, crafts and surprises mixed in for infants to 8 year-olds, and they are customized for specific age groups of children. Almost immediately, demand skyrocketed.

Although the initial PAILS sold out quickly, there was one big advantage to this program's popularity. Beth Cutler jumped in, and due to her generosity, children in need are able to receive PAILS. To reach appropriate families, the committee collaborated with The Friendship Circle, an organization that serves children and teens with special needs and their families by providing them with social and recreational opportunities. As part of GET AND GIVE, the Friendship Circle was able to deliver PAILS to deserving families during their Chanukah Parade Drive. PJ Parents sent us some very appreciative and heartfelt feedback. Here are a few examples.

“Sam loved it! He just said: Mommy, [the snowman crayon] is so cool!”

“Adriana loved her PJ PAIL. She keeps unpacking and packing it. Thank you!”

“Stella absolutely LOVED the PJ PAIL!”

PJ PAILS will be available for purchase again, for Passover in March, for Lag B’Omer in May, and Tu B’Av in July. If you are interested contact randi@ujajcc.org.

Reading Chanukah Stories in Our Community

PJ Passover Food Drive

PJ Library will be holding a Kosher for Passover Food Drive with donations going to the Shoke JFS Kosher Food Pantry in Stamford. For families who have purchased PJ PAILS, please leave your food donations outside for contactless pick up when your PAILS are delivered. For anyone else who is interested in participating, contactless donations can be dropped off in the lobby at One Holly Hill Lane.

Recommended food items to donate for Passover: Shabbat candles, matzah, dried fruit, grape juice, and macaroons. Food must be labeled kosher and kosher for Passover.
Dignity Grows provides monthly personal and menstrual hygiene products to women and girls who cannot afford them. The Dignity Grows program was launched by the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford and is funded by individual donors. UJA-JCC Greenwich was quick to sign up. In the most recent distribution along with dignity packs to JFS Greenwich, we also donated packs to Greenwich YWCA. Our next distribution is to MetCouncil on Jewish Poverty.

Help from volunteers made packing a breeze!

Acting Consul General Daniel Agranov personally delivered 10 cases of hand sanitizer to be included in our Dignity Grows distributions. Our card inside the dignity pack highlights this gift from the State of Israel.

Margarita Mixer!
Meet & mingle virtually with couples who recently moved to Greenwich
Tuesday, February 23 • 8:15 PM
$25 per couple, RSVP by February 16
Click Here to Register
A gift bag with your cocktail ingredients will be dropped off at your home prior to the event. Zoom link to be provided upon registration.
Event Co-Chairs: Meredith and Oren Issacoff, Stacy Deliat and Robert Marmor, Rachel and Jordan Rubin

A Message from
Women’s Philanthropy President
Christine Toback

I am so happy to lead our Women’s Philanthropy this year. One of my many goals is to promote all the good that UJA-JCC Greenwich does on social media. The simple act of liking, tagging or commenting on our social media sites is a powerful yet effective way to share and highlight the important work and programs offered by UJA-JCC Greenwich. If you haven’t already, please take a moment to like us on Facebook, like an Instagram post and retweet! Here are our social media links:
https://www.facebook.com/ujajcc
https://www.instagram.com/ujajcc/
https://www.twitter.com/ujajcc?lang=en

On another note, our Newcomers program, chaired by Women’s Philanthropy Board Member Abby Vorobyevich has welcomed more than 50 new families to Greenwich over the past nine months. WP volunteers have taken on the role of hosts, delivering welcome baskets, and making sure to be in regular contact with newcomers, so that their transition to Greenwich is a little easier during the Covid-19 Pandemic. This year, there have been a variety of newcomer events, including virtual welcome coffees, walks at Tod’s Point Beach, and a Couples Virtual drinks night. If you know anyone who is new to Greenwich, please let us know by sending an email to claudia@ujajcc.org.

Last month, the Lion of Judah conference was held virtually. The two-day event, had over 4500 participants from Federations across North America, and 22 Lions from Greenwich. The conference highlighted the phenomenal work of National Women’s Philanthropy, including a spotlight on Dignity Grows. Did you know we are the first chapter in the country to take Hartford’s lead on this project?

Leadership. Giving. Making our community strong and relevant. Helping Jewish community in need – that’s what we are about. Want to get involved in Women’s Philanthropy? Please email me: christine@ujajcc.org.
Selma Maisel, longtime leader in Jewish Greenwich, Lion of Judah and “Bubbie to the Community,” passed away on November 14. Selma was born Selma Eleanor Abramsky on September 23, 1924, in the Bronx, New York, to Jacob and Anna Abramsky. Her parents emigrated to the United States from a shtetl in Poland, in the early 1920’s. Selma told her children many times about her early years: every Friday night her family would share one chicken with neighbors because neither family could afford to buy a whole chicken. One of Selma’s early memories was going with her mother in 1928, at the age of 4, to greet her mother’s sister, Ruchel, and her family, the Karps, when they arrived by boat from Europe. The Karp family remained very influential in Selma’s life for 80 years, especially her beloved cousin Abe.

Selma attended public schools in the Bronx. In first grade a kind German-speaking teacher helped her make the transition to English from her Yiddish-speaking home language. Selma’s parents were secular Jews with a strong cultural Jewish identity. She was a frequent visitor to her Karp cousins in the neighborhood, where she first saw her Tante Ruchel lighting Shabbat candles and was drawn to this tradition. She then went home and asked her mother to start lighting candles on Friday night.

Selma met her future husband, Melvin Maisel, in a Hebrew Language class in high school. They were married in 1946. Selma attended New York University and graduated with a BA in sociology in 1947. Selma and Melvin moved to Mount Vernon, New York and had three children: Naomi, Marc, and David. Selma decided that her children were to have a Jewish education and enrolled them in Westchester Day School, in Mamaroneck, New York. Selma began her own Jewish education at the same time that she set this course for her children. She attended a weekly Chumash with Rashi class taught by her beloved rabbi, Rabbi Aaron H. Blumenthal, for 20 years.

In 1964 Selma and Melvin visited Israel for the first time and placed all three of their children in summer programs in Israel. Thus began Selma and Mel’s lifelong involvement with the State of Israel. The trip left a very deep impression on both Selma and Mel, and they became tireless workers for the State of Israel for the rest of their lives.

Selma and Mel moved to Greenwich in 1979. Through her own adult study at Congregation Emanuel and through osmosis from her children’s day school education, Selma was ripe for taking on a leadership study at Congregation Emanuel and through osmosis from her children’s day school education, Selma was ripe for taking on a leadership position in the fledgling Jewish community in Greenwich. Dozens of young Jewish families were moving to Greenwich, hungry for a feeling of belonging in their new Jewish community. Selma had a deep desire to make a difference and was instrumental in nurturing the Greenwich Jewish community. She wanted the Jewish children in Greenwich to have the same opportunity as she had given her own children. So she helped found the Selma Maisel Nursery School in Temple Sholom.

Selma was a master fundraiser for UJA and later for Greenwich Jewish Federation. People she called upon for contributions were aware of the examples that Selma and Mel had set with their philanthropy. At Federation board meetings, it was common for women to prefix their remarks with two weighty words, “Selma says…” She was a role model for an entire generation of Greenwich Jewish women on how to lead a life fully engaged in the Jewish community. Her son Marc was recently told by a leader of the community, “everything Jewish that happens in Greenwich today began with Selma and Mel.” Selma was most known for saying, “give how you live.”

Jane Weitzman, co-founder of UJA-JCC’s Women’s Philanthropy commented: “Selma was the Grande Dame of the Greenwich Jewish Community. She was a mentor to so many of us and her wisdom always guided us. It was through her that we met Prime Ministers of Israel and their wives. Once when she was driving my children and me to New York, she heard them talking about someone at Hebrew school who was very wealthy. Selma said ‘Anyone can have money. It’s what you do with it that counts.’ For her, that meant tzedakah. I don’t know if she influenced my daughters, but I still think about what she said over 40 years ago.”

In recent years Selma had dementia and her active involvement in community affairs ended in 2016. In 2019 Selma’s children decided to bring her to Israel to be surrounded by her loving family there. At Selma’s funeral her granddaughter Shayna summed up the feelings of the family and closest friends, “We had a treasure living here, and now she’s gone.”

Selma is survived by her 3 children, Naomi Goldis (Stanley), Marc Maisel, and David Maisel (Tamara Chernow); her 4 grandsons and their wives, Joshua and Shaya, Eli and Rochy, Jon and Susan, and Ezra and Sandy, all Dukers; 18 great-grandchildren, Meira (Chaim Simcha Brand), Shaya (Tovi), Miryam, Chana, Moshe Dov, Yaakov Meir, Zevy, Chaim, Tzika, Moshe, Simcha, Mimi, Tirtsa, Noah, Ilan, Tal, Assaf, and Asher; and one great-great-granddaughter, Esther.

If you would like to send a note to the family, here are the emails:
marcmaisel@icloud.com
naomi.goldis@gmail.com

This tribute was written in collaboration with Marc Maisel, Selma’s son.

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This tribute was written in collaboration with Marc Maisel, Selma’s son.
UJA-JCC Greenwich Women’s Philanthropy, collected a record number of gifts for the annual Chanukah Gift Drive. The gifts were donated to participating families from Schoke Jewish Family Services of Fairfield County and Jewish Family Services of Greenwich.

Thank you to program chair Yael Rosen (UJA-JCC Greenwich Women’s Philanthropy Board Member), who spearheaded the event, and to all the generous families who donated gifts.

Andi Fern (r), Women’s Philanthropy immediate past President, with Claudia Brenner, Director of Women’s Philanthropy, were overwhelmed by the amount of gifts received.

A huge thank you to those who gave to the Chanukah Toy Drive:

Tara Agroskin  Lisa Daniel  Andi Fern  Shelby Katz  Dina Klein Lunder  Rachel Rubin
Rebecca Anikstein  Jennifer Davis  Randi Held  Jamie Kesmodel  Ruth Moskowitz  Kim Sands
Anna Buzik  Stacey Delikat Marmor  Joui Hessel  Silvina Knoll  Romina Rapoport  Debra Shore
Bonnie Citron  Jill Derikrava  Alison Hoenig  Nancy Korobkin  Jessica Rickert  Michele Stuart
Marissa Cohen  Danielle Eason  Gaby Isman  Jody Lazlo  Yael Rosen  Carolyn Sargent
Rebecca Cooper  Stephanie Esquenazi  Bryanna Kallman  Lauren Levin  Karen Ross  Christine Toback

Did you know that your gift to UJA-JCC supports this?

Entwine is building a generation of young Jews who lead and live a life of action with global Jewish responsibility at its core. Entwine offers transformative global service and travel experiences, innovative educational programs, and tailored leadership development opportunities through which young people can explore, find meaning, and take action. Entwine is an initiative of JDC, the largest Jewish humanitarian organization in the world.

In 2020:

- **78** emerging Jewish lay leaders were trained and served as fellows, community reps, and on JDC’s Board of Directors.
- **31** new global leaders shared Jewish values and JDC’s work in 11 cities across the US and around the world through Entwine’s Community Reps program.
- **50%** Jewish service corps fellows report they are very likely to pursue career opportunities in the Jewish community. 100% are very likely to seek out volunteer opportunities in the Jewish world.
February 2021 Lunch & Learn Schedule

February 4
The Quest for the Historical King David
Prof. Yosef Garfinkle
Dig into the archaeological evidence surrounding Israelite ruler King David, with the Chair of the Institute of Archaeology at the Hebrew University.

February 11
Why Jews Do That: Or 30 Questions Your Rabbi Never Answered
Rabbi Avram Mlotek
What's with Jews and candles? Why are Jews obsessed with food? Is sex kosher? Bring your own questions!

February 18
The Meaning of Tests in Our Lives
Rabbi David Ehrenkrantz
Why does God feel the need to test us?

February 25
Science vs. Religion
Rabbi Shmuel Lynn
A lesson from Queen Esther.

March 2021 Lunch & Learn Schedule

March 4
Jerusalem: At the Heart of Judaism - Part I
Chaim Lauer
A literary and pictorial exploration of Jerusalem’s place in Jewish life and history.

March 11
Pharaohs and Kings of Israel: Ancient Egypt and the Exodus
Dr. Yael Ziegler
Why is the Exodus the central biblical event? We will discuss the significance of this biblical story and its formative role in Israel’s history.

March 18
Steadfast Faith: Reclaiming the Suppressed Narrative of Women’s Leadership
Dr. Tammy Jacobowitz
Come and learn about the hidden heroes of the Pesach story, and how they can teach us about redemptive dreaming.

March 25
The Meaning of Jewish Freedom
Dr. Yakir Englander
Explore how Jewish theologians understand the meaning of freedom from biblical, Talmudic and mystical Jewish perspectives.
VIRTUAL BOOK CLUB PRESENTS:

House on Endless Waters

WITH AUTHOR EMUNA ELON

Connect with other passionate readers—and our featured internationally bestselling author—around a riveting family mystery the New York Times calls a “jewel box of a novel.” Come full of questions for Emuna Elon about spinning the intricate tale of Yoel Blum, a successful Israeli author who unravels dark truths about his childhood in Holland, the fate of Dutch Jews during WWII and his relatives in present-day Israel.

February 17th • 10:30 am

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER
### Advocacy

**February 9 | 7:30 pm**

**Muslim Anti-Semitism**

45 Minutes with Dr. Charles Asher Small & Dr. Mehnaz M. Afridi

Dr. Afridi will draw on her interviews with Holocaust survivors and with recent victims of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia—as featured in her newest book *Shoah Through Muslim Eyes*—to parse the struggle of anti-Semitism within Muslim communities and offer a fresh way of bridging the two communities.

Dr. Small will discuss how to understand contemporary anti-Semitism in the U.S. beyond party politics, including the radical left, the radical right and political Islam.

Co-sponsor: Classrooms Without Borders

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### Film

**February 24 | 7:30 pm**

**Jewish Filmmakers & Discrimination in America**

With Marc Lapadula, screenwriter, film producer and senior lecturer at Yale University

Produced shortly after World War II, and extremely controversial for their time, films like *Crossfire* and *Gentleman’s Agreement* startled audiences by provocatively portraying Jewish individuals dealing with the complex challenges of assimilating into mainstream American life. Socially conscious film directors embedded poignant themes of the Jewish American experience into movies that general audiences enthusiastically embraced. We'll screen clips from films including *Citizen Kane*, *You Only Live Twice*, *Gentleman’s Agreement*, *Crossfire*, *West Side Story*, *The New Centurions*, *Little Big Man*, *Chinatown* and *Annie Hall*, and explore issues of discrimination, social justice and the plight of the underdog.

Co-sponsors: Avon Theatre & YWCA Greenwich

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### Literature

**March 8 | 10:30 am**

**Witness: Lessons from Elie Wiesel’s Classroom**

30 Minutes with Rabbi Dr. Ariel Burger

Memory, madness, faith, friendship, language—these were the lifelong preoccupations of survivor, witness and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel. But Wiesel was also a teacher and writer who left us a treasure trove of tales and moral teachings that can illuminate today’s world.

Join Rabbi Dr. Burger, a devoted protégé of Professor Wiesel, as he shares insights from his book *Witness: Lessons from Elie Wiesel’s Classroom*, a National Jewish Book Award winner. As we grapple with renewed questions of racial justice, hatred, power and polarization—all against the backdrop of a global pandemic—what do Wiesel’s teachings tell us? Can they empower us not only to survive these challenging times, but also to make moral sense of them? *Witness* serves as a primer on the urgency of memory and individual responsibility and on the role of the arts in making the world a more compassionate place.

Co-sponsors: Bi-Cultural Hebrew Academy & Perrot Memorial Library

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### Photography

**April 14 | 10:30 am**

**Photo Negatives: Lingering Images of Anti-Semitic Stereotypes**

With Judith Cohen, former Director, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Photo Archives and Chief Acquisitions Curator

Anti-semitic imagery has gained increasing exposure with the advent of social media. But is this new? Dollar signs, rats, hooked noses, globes symbolizing world domination—explore how today’s tropes draw on common stereotypes that date back hundreds of years.

Co-sponsors: Aperture & Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center

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### Culture & Politics

**April 21 | 7:30 pm**

**Alternate History of Anti-Semitism & Fascism in American Culture: What If or What Now?**

With Gavriel Rosenfeld, PhD, Professor of History and Director of Judaic Studies at Fairfield University

Since the 1930s, many American novels, films, TV shows and comic books have explored the possibility that the U.S. might one day embrace fascism. Today pessimistic assessments have saturated American culture as never before, including through works of alternate history such as: Amazon Prime’s *The Man in the High Castle*, Netflix’s *Hunters*, HBO’s *The Plot Against America*, and *Watchmen*. We’ll scrutinize fictitious scenarios of collaboration, racism and anti-Semitism in domestic culture and try to make sense of the popular response.

Co-sponsor: Judaic Studies Program, Fairfield University
As a result of the ongoing civil war in Ethiopia, the Israeli government has been bringing in thousands of Ethiopian Jews to Israel from their transition camps. Some of these people have been waiting for years for this moment. The Bet Alpha Absorption Center, in our sister city region, is at full capacity once again. It now shelters nine children in pre-k and 77 from grades 1-12.

With our SNEC partners UJA-JCC Greenwich donated 15 laptops for the center for the students to use for distance learning and homework. In addition, generous individual donors in Greenwich provided 20 more laptops so that families with school-age children will have continuing access to their schoolwork as they move out of the center into their own homes.

**The Gift Of Our Wounds**

Thursday, February 18, 7:30 PM

A son of a slain hate crime victim and a former skinhead turned anti-white-supremacist share their journey and conversation. Join this hot-button virtual exchange front and center.

**THE DAVIS FILM FESTIVAL (AT HOME) PRESENTS:**

**SHARED LEGACIES**

“If the lion does not tell his story, the hunter will.”

- African Proverb

The historical ties between Black and Jewish Americans began long before the Civil Rights era. Pivotal events of this alliance come alive through a treasure trove of archival materials. This inspiring story of empathy validates the ubiquity of the human experience.

**STREAMING:**

Saturday, February 13 through Monday, February 15

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER
Rachel Dratch Named Next Head of School of Bi-Cultural Hebrew Academy

After a 15-month national search, Rachel Levitt Klein Dratch has been named the next Head of School of Bi-Cultural Hebrew Academy (BCHA), as announced by the school’s President David Pikoff and Chairman of the Board of Incorporators Bob Zitter. Mrs. Dratch will take over as head of the Stamford Jewish day school, which is open to students in pre-K through grade 12, in August 2021. She succeeds Jacqueline Herman who is stepping down as head of school after 10 years of service.

“When Jackie Herman told us of her plan to retire as Bi-Cultural’s Head of School, we knew how difficult it would be to find the right person to fill her shoes,” wrote Mr. Pikoff and Mr. Zitter in a letter to the Bi-Cultural community announcing the appointment. “Under Jackie’s stewardship BCHA has developed and thrived as a school known for its warmth and academic excellence.”

Mrs. Dratch currently serves as director of Educational Innovation at Prizmah, The Center for Jewish Day Schools – the national network for Jewish day schools and yeshivas, headquartered in New York. At Prizmah Mrs. Dratch was charged with training and mentoring heads of school and senior administrators in day schools throughout the country.

Prior to that, she served as director of Student Life and Israel Guidance at Beth Tfiloh Dahan Community Day School in Baltimore, Maryland and as High School Dean of Students and Lower School Assistant Principal at the Berman Hebrew Academy in Rockville, Maryland.

A graduate of Stern College with a BA in Judaic Studies, Mrs. Dratch holds an MA in Jewish Education from the Azrielli Graduate School for Jewish Education and Administration of Yeshivah University.

While Rachel Dratch may be new to Stamford, her ties to the community are already strong. Her husband, Rabbi Mark Dratch, who currently serves as executive vice president of the Rabbinical Council of America in New York City, is the former spiritual leader of Congregation Agudath Sholom (1997-2005). Their daughter Yolly Faraci and her husband Yaakov, live in Stamford where they serve as Agudath Sholom’s youth directors. Yaakov Faraci is also a member of the BCHA Judaic Studies faculty.

“I am honored and excited to be appointed the new Head of School for Bi-Cultural Hebrew Academy. Building upon the vision and success of Mrs. Jackie Herman and Mr. Shuchatowitz,” said Mrs. Dratch. “I look forward to working with the school’s administrative team, teachers, staff, students, parents, friends, and community members, to prepare our students for the 21st century challenges we may not even imagine yet. As Jews, American citizens and devoted community members who share responsibility and care for our world, graduates of BCHA will be prepared for tomorrow and beyond with strong Jewish identities and knowledge, skills and deep understanding how to navigate the work based on Jewish values, living lives of excellence, curiosity, joy and respect imbuing all we do.”

Mayim Bialik Talks Judaism, Hollywood Stardom, Covid-19

“I felt as if I were sitting in her living room!” said Temple Sholom congre- gant Bob Lichtenfeld as he described Temple Sholom’s virtual conversation with Emmy-nominated actress and New York Times bestselling author, Mayim Bialik, held on January 7. “She is quite an outstanding woman – both in talent and intellect.” Bialik – best known as the star of the 90’s sitcom, Blossom, and more recently, as Dr. Amy Farrah Fowler in The Big Bang Theory, was an open book during the hour-long Zoom discussion moderated by Temple Sholom congre- gant VP of Programming Scott Kramer. She answered questions on all topics from close to 200 Zoom partici- pants. The program kicked- off Temple Sholom’s 2021 Speaker Series and was made possible by the generous sup- port of an anonymous donor.

“The conversation gave us insight into Mayim, not just as an actress but as a mom (to 12 and 15 year old boys) and as a Modern Orthodox Jew,” said Kramer. “Mayim is exceptionally proud of being Jewish.” Bialik is a strong sup- porter of Israel, and when asked whether or not she has been a target of anti-Semitism, she replied: “Even though I tend to be a bleeding heart liberal and do support rights for Palestinians and support a safe and protected Israel, the fact that I believe in Israel existing has led to death threats. When you post about Israel, all people hear is “Jew”, and then you get hate. To anti-Semites, it really doesn’t matter what your politics are. I believe in the right of Israel to exist, and for many people that is unacceptable. I don’t apologize for that.”

Bialik’s new television show, Call Me Kat premiered just days before the program with Temple Sholom. Additionally, she recently launched a podcast called “Mayim Bialik’s Breakdown,” which focuses on exploring mental health issues.
Shir Ami Invites You to Join Us for Purim and Passover

At Shir Ami, we continue to find ways to celebrate each holiday with joy, creativity and a strong sense of community. We invite you to join us for these upcoming holiday celebrations.

Purim Story Slam –
Friday February 26th, 7:30 PM via Zoom
Last year Shir Ami's final in-person event prior to the lockdown was our first Purim Story Slam. It was a fantastic evening filled with rich and moving personal stories told by our inspiring members! This year our 2nd annual Purim Story Slam will be on Zoom, but we promise to offer an evening of fun and touching stories told by our members. We invite you to join us to hear them. In honor of Purim, our theme this year, inspired by how Mordechai and Queen Esther found a way to foil Haman’s nefarious plan to harm the Jews, will be stories about times when we confronted adversity or felt stuck, but found a way out of it.

Passover 2nd Night Seder –
Sunday, March 28th, 6:00 PM via Zoom
Last year our Passover Seder was our first holiday event online, and we had a meaningful service, fulfilling our obligation to tell the story of our people. Our Hagaddah was made into a digital version, our congregation, and guests zoomed in and we helped each other feel that we were with our community and not alone during these challenging times. We welcome those of you who are looking for a virtual place to celebrate Passover. Please join us this year. There is no fee and no food, but lots of spirit, singing, sharing and inspiration.

You may register for both of these holiday events at www.congregationshirami.org.

New Men’s Study Group at Shir Ami

We really enjoy learning together at Shir Ami, and we welcome anyone who wants to learn with us. We have three learning groups meeting online this year that have been very well received and have lead to stimulating conversations. Our Women’s Rosh Chodesh Group meets monthly. We have been reading through and discussing the book My Jewish Year by Abigail Pogrebin (upcoming group is scheduled for March 15). The themes for our Essential Jewish Conversation class, which is open to all, has been Values and Beliefs (upcoming classes are on February and March 22).

We are pleased to have launched a dedicated men’s study group as a side by side offering with our women’s Rosh Chodesh group. Cantor Jill Abramson invited her husband Rabbi Jonathan Malamy to participate in leading the group, with the first session scheduled for February 7. The men began exploring the book The Unbinding of Isaac, by Aaron Koller, which provides a daring look into one of the Torah’s most troubling and challenging stories. Group members come together over Zoom to discuss this iconic story and connect it to the larger question of male identity in Reform Jewish life.

To learn more or to register to attend upcoming classes visit www.congregationshirami.org.
Several leaders of the Connecticut Jewish community will be honored for their commitment to Jewish education and their dedication to community service at the Bi-Cultural Hebrew Academy (BCHA) 2021 Celebration Dinner, it was announced recently by dinner co-chairs, Vered and Mark Links and Shira and Marc Nerenberg. The annual dinner, which for the first time will take place virtually, will be held Sunday, February 28 at 6:30 p.m. The evening will pay tribute to Guests of Honor Stephanie and Josh Bilenker. Other honorees include Nicole and Jonathan Makovsky, who will receive the BCHA Young Leadership Award, and Doris Zelinsky, recipient of the Morton G. Scheraga President’s Award.

The 2021 Alumni Award will be presented to eight BCHA graduates who are all currently serving in the Israel Defense Forces. Along with the many other courageous BCHA alumni who have previously completed tours of duty in the IDF, these soldiers are being recognized for their selfless contribution and commitment to the safety and well-being of the Jewish state. The eight are Meital Wiederhorn of Westport, Judy Fogel of Stamford, Nathan Haron of Stamford, Nathan Links of Stamford, Mia Brenner of Stamford, Maya Wiener of Ridgefield, Ella Feuerstein of Weston and Stamford, and Michal Yaari, who resides in Zichron Yaakov, Israel.

Jacqueline Herman, who is retiring as Bi-Cultural’s Head of School at the end of this academic year, will receive the inaugural Walter Shuchatowitz Award for Excellence in Education, named for the school’s founder and first principal who died in November 2019. “As with many Jewish institutions, this year is a particularly challenging one for BCHA,” says Rabbi Tzvi Bernstein, Dean of the school. “We are, therefore, extremely excited to have this group of honorees.

In addition to the dinner co-chairs, the dinner journal co-chairs are Jodi Hadge, Liat Sharabi Karsch and Maria Reicin.

For more information on the Bi-Cultural Hebrew Academy Celebration Dinner, contact Rachel Cohen at 203-329-2186 or rcohen@bcha-ct.org.

Temple Sholom’s Virtual Purim Festivities

Like many other things recently, Purim will look very different than years past. But as they say, “the show must go on!” The following programs are free and will be held virtually. Contact Lori Baden at lori.baden@templesholom.com to register/receive Zoom links.

Sunday, February 21
3:00 pm Hamantaschen Bake
Pick-up for fresh dough will be arranged with participants.

Thursday, February 25
5:30 pm Purim Puppet Show for Young Families
6:00 pm Abbreviated Megillah Reading
7:00 pm “Pandemic in Persia” Purim Shpiel
7:30 pm Full Megillah Reading
Join us for the Zoom Seder that works for you:
5 pm – Family Seder
6 pm – Adult Seder
All are welcome!
For Zoom links, please RSVP to 203-629-0018 or info@grs.org.

Welcome to Greenwich
We’d Love to Hear from You!
We are delighted to welcome and introduce you to Greenwich. If you know of newcomers in town who would like to learn more about our vibrant and exciting Jewish community, please contact us at 203-552-1818. We will extend a hearty “Welcome!”

Abby Vorobeychik, Chair
UJA-JCC Greenwich Newcomer Committee

Temple Sholom Hosts ADL’s Oren Segal

Back in November, when we first met with ADL to create a community program, we had no idea how timely it would be. The virtual event, “The Future of Hate Online and Offline and How We Fight Back” was held on January 14, just one week after the U.S. Capitol was stormed in Washington, DC. Oren Segal, Vice President of ADL’s Center on Extremism, spoke about the sharp upswing in hate and extremism that have manifested themselves in this country, inflamed by the recent Presidential election and the global pandemic. The program was open to Temple Sholom members, in addition to those of other houses of worship in the Greenwich Fellowship of Clergy, and to ADL supporters. More than 150 people participated via Zoom.

Segal began his presentation by saying: “What happened on January 6 in DC may have been the most predictable act of political violence in modern American history.” During his talk, Segal spoke about social media as a catalyzer for spreading hate and misinformation. Social media has provided extremists with the false narrative of a stolen election that may well animate them for the next four years. When asked if the extremist landscape is going to get worse, Oren’s response was: “We need not panic. But, we can’t ignore the extremist threat that has staying power. We have to focus on the long game. What we saw is not going to go away anytime soon. Extremists are most dangerous when they think something is being taken away from them.”

After audience questions, facilitated by Steve Ginsburg, ADL Connecticut’s Regional Director, Segal concluded the program with a summary of what can be done on an individual level. His recommendations include: teaching critical thinking at a young age; teaching children not to be innocent bystanders; standing up as an ally; speaking out to elected officials because our voices matter; if you see something/say something and, most importantly, not to lose hope.

“These are heavy topics,” concluded Segal, “Every time there is an incident, there is an opportunity for good people to reject it and stand up for something good.”

If you would like to watch the Zoom recording from this program, please visit Temple Sholom’s YouTube page at https://youtu.be/er6nBJqkP1w.
Here are seven ways that we are guaranteed to line our lives with silver:

**Number 1. Pause and reflect.**

The year 2020 offered us a chance to slow down and spend more time with our families, to plant flowers, sew, paint, and create. It gave us more time for family meals, for Zoom celebrations and drive-throughs for birthday celebrations. Baking banana bread, binging on Netflix and dancing on Tik Tok. Maybe we had taken our planet for granted in the past; maybe we had polluted our seas, or were less than nice to our neighbor? If so G-d gave us a time-out to hide in our homes, with nowhere else to go while our cars stopped running, planes stopped flying and home cooked meals were prepared each night. We were forced to smell the roses, we took bikes out again, went on boat and scooter rides and took long walks along the tides. We “Zoomed” with our friends and relatives in far-off places. We did yoga and Pilates online, and we started in on projects we had always meant to accomplish. We redesigned our bedrooms. We painted our toes, found pretty masks to wear with our clothes and gazed at the moon each night. We played with our dogs and rescued furry friends, giving them a home with humans at last. Our kids missed their teachers, their friends and even school. We no longer wished for a snow day, now we just longed for a full day of school. Most of all we missed their teachers, their friends and even school. We no longer wished for birthday celebrations. Baking banana bread, binging on Netflix and dancing on Tik Tok. Maybe we had taken our planet for granted in the past; maybe we had polluted our seas, or were less than nice to our neighbor? If so G-d gave us a time-out to hide in our homes, with nowhere else to go while our cars stopped running, planes stopped flying and home cooked meals were prepared each night. We were forced to smell the roses, we took bikes out again, went on boat and scooter rides and took long walks along the tides. 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Last year, the congregation’s Board of Directors signed an action statement, together with more than 110 other houses of worship as well as nonprofit and for-profit organizations, committing to taking action steps to combat racism. Through our work with the Interfaith Council of Southwestern CT, members of Shir Ami have participated in online meetings, peaceful protests and other forms of anti-racism training.

This fall, the congregation’s capstone adult learning course entitled “Essential Jewish Conversations,” addressed the topic of religion and race, and the response was overwhelming. Over half of the congregation’s membership participated in the online discussion.

In January I attended a panel on race and religion sponsored by Cradle to Career and Stamford Stands Against Racism, entitled “Seeking Beloved Community: Faith Through The Lens of Race.” Together with several faith leaders of other religions, the clergy shared personal perspectives on race. While there is much work still to do, the words of Georgian politician, attorney and voting rights activist, Stacey Abrams, in response to the insurgents’ attack on the U.S. capital last month ring true: “While today’s terrible display of terror and meanness shakes us, let’s remember that Jon Ossof, Jewish son of an immigrant, and Rev. Warnock, the first Black senator from Georgia, will join a Catholic POTUS and the first woman Black and Indian VP in our nation’s capital. God Bless America.”

Pursuing Racial Justice

by Cantor Jill Abramson, Congregation Shir Ami

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Temple Sholom Teens Continue Thanksgiving Tradition for Residents at McKinney Terrace

While Temple Sholom’s annual Teen Thanksgiving Cooking event looked very different, due to Covid-19, the goal was still the same: to uphold the long-standing tradition of providing holiday meals to residents at Greenwich’s McKinney Terrace. On November 23, Senior Rabbinic Fellow Rabbi Kevin Peters and several teen volunteers assembled at individual tables – wearing masks and gloves – to safely pack the fixings for 25 Thanksgiving dinners and fulfill the mitzvah of tikvah olam (repairing the world) through zedakah (charity). All of the food was generously donated by Steven M. Herman Glatt Kosher Catering.

“The holiday season is, for most of us, a time of joy and celebration,” said Rabbi Kevin, Senior Rabbinic Fellow and Director of Judaic Studies. “However, there are many people for whom this time of year is painful and lonely – even more so this year. On Thanksgiving, we are called to give thanks and to be grateful for all of our blessings. What better way can we give thanks for our abundance than to share some of that with those in need?”

Meals were boxed the following day and delivered directly to Jackie Ofria, LMSW, who works as McKinney Terrace’s Friendly Connections Coordinator. Ofria expressed her sincerest gratitude for the Thanksgiving dinners, noting that Covid-19 has isolated many residents from their family and friends, and has made safe access to resources like food, transportation and medication extremely challenging for their housing community.

“Every year the residents look forward to the meals cooked and donated by Temple Sholom,” said Ofria. “It’s a great community event, and we are very grateful for the partnership with the teens of Temple Sholom. Many of the residents in the building are older and not able to get out as much, so having a home-cooked meal delivered makes their holiday a little more special.”

Added Rabbi Kevin: “As it says in Isaiah 58:10, ‘And you offer your compassion to the hungry and satisfy the famished creature – then shall your light shine in the darkness.’ In caring for the physical and emotional needs of those around us, our world is made brighter. May all of us take up the sacred charge of caring for one another.”

Celebrate Purim!

Family Purim Service
Friday, Feb. 26 at 7:00 pm
Fun-filled Purim Shabbat: Zoom in costume!

Religious School Purim Celebration
Sunday, Feb. 28 at 9:30 am
Zoom in for entertainment, games, contests, and more!

All are welcome!
For Zoom links, please RSVP to 203-629-0018 or info@grs.org.

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Torah Study at Greenwich Reform

Rabbi Jordie Gerson leads lively, engaging, and participatory one-hour Torah Study on Sunday mornings at 10:30 am, twice a month. All are welcome; no Hebrew knowledge necessary! Contact GRS at 203-629-0018 for dates and Zoom information.

Question one: Who were Shifrah and Puah? Does it matter if they were Israelites or Egyptians? Does the identity of activists matter?

1) Rashi on 8:16
שפרא — This was Jochebed; she bore this additional name because she used to put the babe after its birth into good physical condition (/>.מ.ז) by the care she bestowed upon it (Sotah 11b).
- Beautified the newborn/cleaned them up/in Midrash cleaned up Puah’s bad language to Pharaoh.

2) פאה — This was Miriam, [called Puah] because she cried (י.ת.פ) and talked and cooed to the newborn infant in the manner of women who soothe a crying infant. פאה is an expression of crying out, similar to “like a travelling woman will I cry (י.ת.פ)” (Isa. 42:14).
- Rashi on Sotah 11b explains that she played with the infant to soothe and amuse him.

Question 2: What do we think about this midrashic conflation of Shifrah and Puah with Miriam and Yocheved? I read, and I can’t recall where - a statement I liked. Women are so infrequently named in Torah - that it’s an injustice really to condense them down into fewer.

Applications Available for the Weitzman Youth Award for Jewish Philanthropy

The Weitzman Youth Award for Jewish Philanthropy was founded by Jane and Stuart Weitzman, whose hope it is to ensure that the next generation is inspired to become involved with helping their fellow Jews in need.

The award will be given to those who exhibit the most creativity and personal commitment to Jewish philanthropy. UJA-JCC Greenwich is available to advise potential applicants on suitable projects. Applicants must be in the fifth through twelfth grades and residents of Greenwich or children of families active with UJA-JCC Greenwich. All funds raised from the projects must be donated through UJA-JCC Greenwich. Projects may not be political in nature. The award committee will make all final decisions regarding recipients of the award.

For more information, contact Pam Ehrenkranz at 203-552-1818 or pam@ujajcc.org.

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Greenwich Reform Speaker Series

The past year has presented exceptional challenges to all aspects of our personal and professional lives. Greenwich Reform is delighted to invite you to attend any or all of these upcoming Zoom discussions.

**Parenting in a Pandemic**  
**Wednesday, February 17, 7:30 pm**

Known for her easy and accessible style, Dr. Stone will share her thoughts and recommendations to help both parents and grandparents navigate the challenges and anxieties of surviving (and even thriving) in a pandemic, with ample time for discussion and questions.

Dr. Betsy Stone is a Yale-educated psychologist and has worked in the Jewish community for decades, as a therapist, a teacher, a youth leader, and as an adjunct instructor and board member at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

**Morals and Mammon: Jewish Ethics and American Business**  
**Sundays, March 14 and April 11, 10:30 am**

Come learn what Judaism has to teach us about business ethics. We’ll look at the Talmud, and study rabbinc conversations about how to bring Jewish moral values into the workplace. An extraordinary teacher, Rabbi Greenfield has a unique background in law, rabbinc studies, and business.

Rabbi Noah Greenfield is a consultant at McKinsey & Co. He is a graduate of Yale Law School, a doctoral candidate in Near Eastern Studies at UC Berkeley, and received his ordination from Yeshiva University. He is the proud husband of Dr. Nava Greenfield and father of their four boys; the Greenfields have lived in Brooklyn since 2014.

To register for these free workshops, please contact Greenwich Reform at 203-629-0018 or HadasElias@GRS.org.

### Making a Difference

**by Susan Nisinzweig, Co-President of Congregation Shir Ami and MSW**

As I read some chapters this morning in a new book entitled *Our Moment of Choice—Evolutionary Visions and Hope for the Future* (edited by Atkinson, Johnson and Moldow), I was once again reminded that community and a sense of belonging are critical elements for improving our personal lives and in making the larger world a better place for all of us. I hope that we have all learned this year that a healthy community must also include the components of trust, truth, kindness and love. A community based on fear, hate and lies does not lead to the same outcome in making our lives or the world better.

Like many congregations around the country, Congregation Shir Ami offers that opportunity to feel part of a strong, caring community whose members participates together in the rhythm of life. Even during a pandemic, we have been able to maintain our ability to be there for each other. We are there for the low moments of mourning and praying for the health of our loved ones as well as for peace in our country. We are there for the more neutral and yet inspiring moments of learning together and discussing challenging topics during online classes and board meetings. And we are engaged and connected with each other during the highest moments when we sing and celebrate joyful holidays and special occasions together. Contrary to what one might expect, participation from our congregants has remained high and has even risen over this past year as we have found the way to transmit compassion, joy and connection through our Zoom boxes.

We all need to remember to *reach in* and participate in the communities we want to be part of and to *reach out* to bring more people into our community and help prevent others from feeling isolated. We really can make this world better if we each take the time to think and take action to connect and build healthy communities! We must never give up trying to make that positive difference.
The Gratts shared this delightful experience with their fellow members of Shir Ami, and we felt it was just too good not to share beyond our intimate congregation. You may find a link to this and other interesting opportunities on the resources page of our website at https://www.congregationshirami.org/resources

From the Gratts:

It’s Sunday afternoon, and as we have done every Sunday since May, we are getting ready to head to Israel. No packing. No passports. No worrying about the status of Covid-19. Our tours with Israeli Guide Joel Meyer are virtual via Zoom and have been since the very beginning of the pandemic. Joel is a highly experienced licensed tour guide who is used to spending his days with groups of tourists as he roams the country he loves, imparting the deep knowledge he has about sites modern and historic. After the corona virus stopped all tourism worldwide, he came up with a way he could continue to support his family by offering virtual tours to as many people as would like to join him…(donations encouraged).

We learned of Joel through a friend who had toured with him in person in Israel and decided to try a virtual tour. After that first week we were hooked. We are now part of a virtual community of “tourists” from all over the world who gather on Sunday afternoon, Eastern time, to learn about the places Joel has been during the prior week, recording videos and doing research. We’ve been to sites as well-known as the usual tourist spots of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, to out of the way places as the now graffiti-covered Tel Aviv Central Bus Station, which had opened to much fanfare as a transportation hub of the future. We’ve visited archeological digs like Qumran, Herodian and Zippori where the Midrash was codified, and other sites too numerous to mention. Joel even recruited his wife, Eginus, an Ethiopian Jew, to spend a couple of hours sharing her family’s journey from Ethiopia to their new life in Israel. Now the group has expanded from the original 30 or so Zoom screens to as many as 125. Instead of just presenting tours on Sunday, repeats of previous tours are also available on Wednesday.

And, just recently Joel has been asked to make a presentation via Zoom during the next semester of Stamford’s Learning in Retirement. When Covid-19 presented us with lots and lots of lemons…we have used the opportunity to make wonderful lemonade. In the process we made a new friend in Joel Meyer and met people from all over the world…while never leaving home. We invite you all to come along!

Check-out joelmeyer.org

Traveling to Israel, While Never Leaving Home

by Linda and Stanley Gratt

Temple Sholom Community Connects Through Virtual Chanukah Celebrations

Better2B/Better Together
An Intergenerational Community Service Program

Nancie K. Schwarzman
15 Years Experience
Award Winning Results
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New England Properties
Westerly Properties
130 East Putnam Avenue, Greenwich, CT 06830
A Purim Spiel – The Book of V
by Anna Solomon

Looking for an engrossing read for Purim? Jewish Family Services of Greenwich’s Book Beat group has a title for you! This is a group of women who simply love to read and then to discuss what they’ve read. The group meets six times a year, currently via Zoom. And we’d love to have you join us. Interested? Contact mknee@jfsgreenwich.org.

Here’s a mini review of The Book of V, which the group read this fall:

This novel takes place in three different time zones and features three different female protagonists: Esther, in biblical times, but this is a much different, much more complicated, darker and proactive Esther than the one we’re used to; Vashti or Vee in 1970s Washington, DC, the wife of a Senator/misogynist, who commits the ultimate sin of publicly refusing to do his bidding at a drunken party (shades of King Ahasuerus); and Lily, a malcontent Brooklyn housewife preparing her two daughters to participate in a school-run play over Purim.

The three women’s lives are played out over time. They suffer setbacks, engage in multiple relationships with the men in their lives (mostly portrayed as unsympathetic), all the while either accepting or rebelling against an adage that Lily’s feminist mother proudly displayed on a sampler in her childhood home, “An ill-kept home is the sign of a well-kept life.” The novel does have a happy ending, for everyone except Esther, who mostly disappears at the end, having had her way with the King and saved the Jewish people. There are several “big reveals,” which we won’t give away here.

Check it out from the library or buy it online!

Coming up for JFS Book Beat readers:

April 7 – When Time Stopped: A Memoir of My Father’s War and What Remains by Ariana Neumann – “The story Neumann uncovers is worthy of fiction with hairpin plot twists, daredevil acts of love, and unexpected moments of humor in dark times. With a slew of colorful characters and dramatic details, this superb family memoir unfolds its poignant power on multiple levels. Yes, it makes for thrilling reading. Just as important is her lucid investigation of the nature of memory, identity, and remembrance.” – The New York Times Book Review

June 2 – The Third Daughter: A Novel by Talia Carner – “Rich with historical detail and evocative prose, The Third Daughter by Talia Carner fictionalizes the shocking true history of young Jewish girls from Russia who were trafficked into prostitution in Buenos Aires. Impeccably researched and beautifully written… an unforgettable story of strength and survival.” – Jillian Cantor, USA Today bestselling author of In Another Time

July 14 Wild Card: We will read and discuss a recently issued title that the group helps select.

To register email Melissa Knee, mknee@jfsgreenwich.org. JFS BOOK BEAT discussions are held via Zoom until further notice, Wednesdays at 7:30 pm. Facilitated by Judi Margolin, a librarian and workshop leader. Please call 203-622-1881 for details.
CEO’s Corner

All things better in 2021 - that is what I have been saying for months. Well, here we are – anything better? The first weeks of the New Year were not exactly in line with what I had hoped. While I tempered my expectations, milestone dates always give us a little inspiration for hope, change, and a sense of renewal. I have not seen any rainbows or winning lottery tickets yet this year – but if I took anything from 2020, it was perspective. There is no question the past year greatly affected my point of view in so many ways. The pandemic upended our lives overnight. With two school-age children I had no idea how my husband and I would fulfill our work responsibilities and educate our children. It was not easy. It was downright miserable at times. Yet, we came up with a system. We made it work.

The past year was full of racial injustice, natural and manmade disasters, and political divisiveness. One after another the hits just kept on coming. I am not going to try to color this pretty by balancing with a sprinkling of the good that happened. Even the most optimistic folks out there had a hard time bringing light to such a dark time. The most important thing we should take from 2020 is perspective. Often times, you don’t know your own strength until you have to use it. To all those reading this – I hope you can take a moment to recognize your strength and resilience. Whether the physical effects of COVID-19, emotional strain of the constant barrage of negativity, or simply missing the closeness of family and friends – you made it through one of the most challenging years in recent history.

In 2020 JFS Greenwich provided more than 7,000 services to the community. Throughout the pandemic we tackled problems one call at a time. We reached further into the community than ever before, serving families affected by COVID-19, managing food insecurity, increasing our learning and spiritual opportunities, and tripling our counseling services. I will keep hoping for “all things better in 2021” and in the interim, join me with the perspective to know that whatever comes our way – together – we will make it through, one day, one person, one step forward at a time.

–Rachel Kornfeld, LCSW, SBL
Chief Executive Officer
Jewish Family Services of Greenwich

One Family, One Mitzvah at a Time

by Michael Garcia, FACTS Senior Case Manager

Happy New Year! JFS Greenwich created the Families Affected by Covid-19 Transition Services (FACTS) program, to meet the needs of Greenwich families whose lives were upended by the pandemic. Funded by the Community Development Block Grant COVID-19 Fund, our core mission with this program is to provide dignity and choice to those who have struggled to survive throughout this pandemic. One step at a time, guiding them to their pre-COVID-19 level of independent functioning.

As the holidays approached, JFS Greenwich created a plan to ensure no FACTS family would worry about food on their table this season. While holidays are typically a joyous time, our families have been without income for months and manage daily food insecurity. Our Chanukah Fundraiser was an incredible success. Each dinner purchased, by a generous community member, provided a food card to buy an entire family meal. The outpouring of support allowed us to purchase 50 food cards! Our Family Farm Stand continues, with the support of Mike’s Organic. The market’s ongoing array of fresh produce provided a bounty of food for our families to enjoy this holiday season.

For Chanukah and Christmas we created our first online Holiday Wish List. The Greenwich Community clearly showed their commitment to making a difference for all. Our diverse FACTS families, of all sizes, received every single item on their wish lists. Gifts included Star Wars Legos, winter coats, Mitzvah project blankets, and Spa gift cards for single Moms. As the representative who handed these incredible gifts to the families – thank you! I am grateful for that opportunity to bring joy and comfort to those in need.

While the holidays were busy, we continue to support families with meeting their basic needs. We welcome volunteers to support our families through career/employment coaching, employment opportunities, pro bono legal or financial guidance, or your expertise. Do you know a family in need? FACTS provides support to any family of two or more, affected by COVID-19. To find out more, please call Michael Garcia, FACTS Senior Case Manager.

VISIT www.jfsgreenwich.org
for our latest Family Life Programs, Counseling Services, Supermarketing for Senior Services, and More!
Supermarket for Seniors, Why Now?
by Elyse Brown, Director of Supermarketing for Seniors

Can you invest two hours a week to improve the life of a homebound senior? Our shopping clients, from neighborhoods all over Greenwich, need help obtaining food safely, but their needs go beyond that. This past year has been challenging for everyone. Some of our clients have only left their homes for medical appointments since March, and the isolation is taking a toll.

We have clients who consider the phone conversations with their shoppers to be more important than the food they bring, and shoppers report how much they value these relationships as well.

“I am 92, live alone, and am homebound. No means of transportation. If it wasn’t for the assistance, it would be very difficult for me. You are my lifeline!”

“Each of your shoppers were a great help to me. However, my current lady, Ellen, is exceptional…Most of all, she makes me stay strong and positive during these challenging times. Each time I see her, she makes my day. She even brings me baked goodies.”

“My mother has told me many times what a G-dsend your organization is. She and I are very grateful.”

Won’t you join our volunteer shopper network? Training is provided, and the return is invaluable! Email program director Elyse Brown, ebrown@jfsgreenwich.org, or call 203-622-1881 to get started.

Tribute Contributions to Jewish Family Services of Greenwich
Robin Kanarek in honor of Rabbi MJ Newman and JFS Bikur Cholim
Phyllis Shapiro and Marty Flasher in honor of Lauren Wels
Barbara and Steve Hindman in honor of Barbara Epstein
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Phyllis Shapiro and Marty Flasher in memory of Dr. David Goldfarb
Phyllis Shapiro and Marty Flasher in memory of Stuart Simonoff

If you would like to honor or memorialize someone special in your life or community, you may do so by making a donation to Jewish Family Services and we will send a note of acknowledgment to the person or family involved, informing them of your generosity.

Kehillah Kedoshah,
Our Sacred Community Was There
by Larry Stoogenke, Director of Community Engagement

My father-in-law died a cruel death on November 17th, one of the many victims of the insidious Covid-19 virus. He entered the hospital on November 10th, with his mind still intact, but confused and in pain. A mere six days later, when the hospital staff allowed the family a FaceTime call with him, he was a ghastly sight, resembling nothing of the man that had entered the hospital. He was not conscious, and his body was decimated. After getting through the tears and shock of seeing this once vibrant man we loved so reduced, we composed ourselves enough to express our love and gratitude, and asked him not to prolong the suffering. He passed twelve hours after that FaceTime call. I shared the story in real time with the JFS Greenwich Board, Bikur Cholim, and various friends of JFS Greenwich. What I received in return was an overwhelming affirmation of the importance of investing in a community. My ineffable sadness, the dark place one dives into that can’t be reached or understood, was blunted by the response from the amazing people I have grown close with this past year.

Initially I shared this story with my JFS Greenwich community not to share my personal story, but as a warning to remain vigilant in fighting the virus. What I did not expect was the outpouring of love I received through the emails, phone calls, text messages, cards, food, and countless other offers. My JFS family accelerated the healing process and helped carry me through an unrelenting storm of pain. We are living in turbulent times right now, and we need each other more than ever.

Laurie Santos is an esteemed professor at Yale University who teaches a lecture series called “Psychology and the Good Life.” It is said to be the most popular course in the storied 316-year history of Yale. This course is all about things that make people happy. A large portion of the course focuses on the importance of making connections. Research has found that people who have strong bonds live the longest and happiest life. In short, increasing your social connections correlates to a greater feeling of well-being and measurably better outcomes. JFS Greenwich is here to help you make those connections. Those who are weary about engaging, please reach out to me. Sometimes those on the sidelines feel it is inappropriate to reach out as they will be a burden. In our Kehillah Kedoshah all are welcome, and all can find a place of acceptance and purpose. You can volunteer, attend any of our programs, reach out to speak to someone if you are feeling the strains of society pulling you in a discordant direction, or reach out to me with any ideas you may have that would benefit our community. Let us help you lean into your own community.

I am grateful for the relationships I have made this past year at JFS Greenwich. My father-in-law’s passing, and the response from the JFS Greenwich community, was a reminder of the power and impact of investing in your community. I have been rewarded with comfort, healing, growth, and enrichment. Thank you JFS Greenwich.
Learning Outdoors at Chabad’s Tamim Academy

Kindergarteners peer closely at the plants as they observe the most beautiful spider web glistening in the sunlight in their class garden. The children name their new spider friend Pumpkiny and marvel at its intricate web. When the sun beats down, students take shelter in the shade provided by outdoor tents. This is what a typical school day is like this year at Chabad Preschool and Tamim Academy of Greenwich, where students now spend a large part of the day learning outdoors in the fresh air as often as weather permits.

Seeking ways to teach safely during the pandemic, Chabad has embraced the idea of outdoor learning, just as Americans turned to open-air schools during disease outbreaks a century ago. The efforts to put up tents over playgrounds and arrange outdoor classrooms have brought new life to an outdoor education movement geared towards healthier learning amid the current pandemic.

“Moving the classroom outside provides much more flexibility,” says Maryashie Deren, Director of Chabad Preschool and Tamim Academy of Greenwich. While some educators balked at the costs and the logistics hurdles, Chabad embraced the idea, with teachers as handymen doing the carpentry work to build outdoor classrooms, and parents raising money to cover the costs. They had little to no carpentry experience before starting the project. “My husband laughs when I try to use a screw gun, or I don’t know, whatever you call it,” Maryashie says, laughing. “I relied heavily on our handymen, who were skilled in construction. I definitely learned a lot.”

“COVID-19 has hastened the pace of a shift toward trying to take better advantage of the outdoors. We bought wooden materials for fences, tents, chairs, and tables. Even our teachers hope that the temporary measures might become permanent, for as long as the weather cooperates. It is the most beautiful experience to provide for our children.”

“This summer, we were given the opportunity to lease the beautiful, spacious Carmel Campus, at 270 Lake Ave.” It became clear that outdoor classrooms might be the only way to keep students in school during the pandemic. We spent the month of August reimagining the spaces around the property. The Upper Field seemed to be the perfect space for yoga, sports, and gymnastics. Then we reached out to parents to see who could assist with donations. It is incredible to experience their generosity and willingness to help.

The students have been enjoying dance parties in the large green field for “brain breaks” and feel a greater sense of relaxation in the outdoor space. For their outdoor classrooms, teachers have a supply wagon that carries hand sanitizer, along with learning toys, books, and art supplies. They say that it is so much more enjoyable outdoors. “It is just peaceful to have trees in your presence. I just can’t tell you how wonderful it is,” shares a Kindergarten teacher. Often, she uses the outdoor space for activities that would be impossible in a typical classroom indoors. Teachers offer scavenger hunts through the garden and walks on rainy days.

The outdoor space also helps students with sensory needs to regulate their emotions. When you take deep breaths in the classroom, it’s a different deep breath than when you’re sitting outside breathing fresh air. Virtual learning definitely isn’t a desirable option for us, so our goal was to return to school in a safe way. A lot of what we do incorporates the natural world. What better way to explore and appreciate the beauty of G-d’s creation?”

It feels like camping all day long. “With camping comes a lot of packing, a lot of schlepping, a lot of back and forth. There are trials and tribulations along the way, but in the end it is all worth it and we’re so glad that we made the decision to do this. We are grateful that we have been able to offer children in-person learning by utilizing outdoor classrooms,” adds the teacher.

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