

Jewish Observer of Central New York

A publication of the Jewish Federation of Central New York

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5655 Thompson Road
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From the Editor



Barbara Davis

It is said that all prayer comes down to two things: "Please, please" and "Thank you, thank you." Well, this issue of the *Jewish Observer* is about the latter kind of praying. Saying "thank you" is a primary Jewish value. The first thing one is supposed to do upon awakening each morning is to say *Modeh Ani*, "I thank You, living and enduring King, for You have graciously returned my soul within me." The prayers of thankfulness pile up as the day goes on. When a Jew sits down to eat, he or she says: "Blessed are you God, for bringing bread from the earth." There are prayers of gratitude for seeing a rainbow, for going on a trip, for surviving a serious illness or a dangerous journey, even for going to the bathroom. And then there is the *Shehecheyanu*, a prayer thanking God for bringing us to this moment.

This issue of the *JO* is a prayer of thanks for all the good that is in our community. It is a recognition that we have many blessings and, while we may not be conscious of them at all times, it is important that we pause and count them. Thanksgiving, whether it really began with Pilgrims and Native Americans or not, is still a holiday of merit and meaning. Thankfulness has been shown to improve sleep, mood and immunity. Gratitude can decrease depression, anxiety, difficulties with chronic pain and risk of disease. Participants in a study who regularly engaged in recognizing and expressing gratitude experienced a significant increase in their overall sense of well-being. Specifically, they reported considerably more satisfaction with their lives as a whole, felt more optimism about the upcoming week and felt more connected with others compared to the other groups. The gratitude group also reported feeling more optimistic about their lives. They felt a heightened sense of joy and happiness. And a nice bonus—they experienced a greater willingness to help others. The study further found that feeling grateful had a positive impact on relationships. The act of recognizing and expressing appreciation for others fostered stronger bonds and a greater sense of connectedness. It served as a reminder to affirm and share appreciation with others.

So, in the age of heightened anxiety, pessimism about the future and great divisions, it is more important than ever that we stop for a while—an hour, a day, a week, a month—to think about all the good things we have, the good people we know, the kindness of people and organizations in our community. They are the emotional glue that holds us together and while we often give them short shrift, perhaps in November we can make the effort to thank them and tell them how much what they do is valued and appreciated.

This issue of the *JO* tells the story of three men who were not generous during their lives, but whose estates were put to wonderfully good use by the man to whom they entrusted their legacies. It tells the stories of exceptional volunteers who selflessly spend hours each week working for the betterment of our community and its residents. It reports on donors who want to give to the community not only during their lifetimes but also after they are gone—the Foundation PACE funders. You may not know these people; you may not even know of them, but this issue is a corrective and we hope you will not only respect and thank them, but perhaps emulate them.

The month of November is also the month in which Americans go to the polls, this year to elect a president as well as members of Congress and local legislative bodies and judgeships. There are many prayers to be found online intended to be reciting before casting one's ballot, but one by Rabbi Jonathan Kligler of Woodstock, NY, seems very appropriate:

May we each exercise our right and responsibility to vote in this year's election, as voting is the sacred duty of all citizens in a democratic nation.

May we find within ourselves a calm center, a refuge from the unrelenting anxiety and anger that storms around us.

May we treat everyone we encounter with graciousness and care, even when we disagree.

May we do our best to banish contempt, for even as contempt demeans others, it also poisons our own hearts.

May we stand up boldly for our principles.

And may we remember and embody the words of President Abraham Lincoln as he closed his first inaugural address to a nation on the brink of civil war:

"We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory...will yet swell...when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

As we approach the holiday most associated in the United States with thankfulness, I would like to reproduce a paragraph written by Rabbi Jack Abramowitz, educational correspondent for "Jew In The City." Rabbi Abramowitz wrote: "A turkey in Hebrew is called a *tarnegol Hodu* (India chicken). It's unclear whether it acquired this name because turkeys reached the Jewish community by way of India, or perhaps there was some confusion about their point of origin similar to the way Native Americans were called 'Indians' for hundreds of years. Regardless, the name for a turkey is commonly shortened to simply *Hodu*. *Hodu* doesn't only mean India, it also means thanks, as in *Hodu LaShem ki tov*.... So the bird we eat on Thanksgiving is known in Hebrew as a 'thanks.' Seems appropriate."

The *Jewish Observer* wishes you, our readers, and your families and friends, a November of blessings and thankfulness.

The beautiful artwork on the cover of the JO is by Nishima, an artist in San Antonio, TX. Nishima converted to Judaism in 1995. Her 30 years as a ketubah artist have instilled in her a love for Hebrew, both as a living language and as a beautiful calligraphic artistry. Nishima generously allowed the JO to use her art for this issue. To see more of her work go to hebrew-art.nishima.com or use the QR code.



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From the Jewish Federation of CNY President/CEO

[Note: As articles for the Jewish Observer are written at least a month and a half before publication, this message was written by Michael Balanoff in early September.]

I have made the elimination of silos one of my priorities as your Federation president/CEO. We have been extremely successful in doing this and have seen increasing collaborations between the Federation, our partner agencies and our synagogues. But divisions are inevitable in any social organization and we must redouble our efforts to work together in common purpose. Now is not the time for divisiveness or competition or enmity.

Our Jewish community must continue to unify, to come together as we did on October 8, 2023 and present a united front and take concrete actions to support Israel and combat antisemitism. Our community has been, and must continue to be, determined, organized and active. We must build on the momentum and determination created by the tragedy of October 7. While recognizing that we will all not agree about all things, we must nonetheless agree on some things: we support the State of Israel without reservation; we support our local Jewish community in all of its facets; we must safeguard, defend and advocate for the civil and religious rights of the Jewish people at all times.

The Federation has a hundred-plus year history of working on behalf of our community. We have earned the respect of the larger community and we work with our neighbors and our partners to accomplish our mission. This task is not easy and it is never-ending, particularly in times of conflict. But it is what we do.

I suspect that most people do not know exactly what Federation is or does. Here are some facts: we raise over a million dollars each year to support our partner and beneficiary agencies through a quiet campaign that relies on the expertise of staff and the efforts of dedicated volunteers. We do not raise those dollars to support a huge infrastructure with large operating expenses; the Federation does not even have one full-time staff member. But we do the work successfully and, despite the fact that our Jewish community is not growing, we are able to raise increased funding every year to meet the educational and social needs of Jewish Central New York.

What people probably also don't realize is how many people rely on the Federation. Each and every day, we get phone calls from people moving into town, people seeking services for their children or their parents, people looking for advice and information,

people seeking financial support, people needing scholarships or camperships or friendships. Most people probably don't know how often Federation interacts with law enforcement, university officials, school leaders, elected officials and the media. But I can assure you that these things are daily occurrences and, while it is clearly inappropriate for us or the other parties involved to disclose details, they are the measures that keep our community secure and engaged in those areas which are important to us.

We also know that people appreciate what Federation does. When we get letters such as the following, from someone who used one of the scooters Federation provides for the visitors to the Rosamond Gifford Zoo on behalf of the Jewish community, it shows that we make a difference: *"I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Jewish Federation of Central New York for their recent support by providing mobility scooters at the zoo. Their contribution provided me with an experience I would not have enjoyed without the use of a scooter. [I invited] a student that I worked with during my last four years as teaching assistant with the Syracuse City School District....Ella loved the interaction displays in the Outpost building. We spent almost 30 minutes at the Play Space. She loved playing in the sand with a pail and shovel, playing in the water in a bowl and interacting with the other children. I was able to enjoy watching Ella while sitting on the scooter. Ella's mom said that the day was one of the most enjoyable activities she has ever had with her daughter. It made her so happy that her daughter was happy! It made me happy that I was able to enjoy it with them, thanks to the use of the scooter. I live three blocks from the zoo. I can now plan many more outings to the zoo, thanks to the Jewish Federation of Central New York and their contribution of mobility scooters, at no cost to visitors. Their contribution is priceless!"*

When children and teens write to

us to tell us how Federation support has made it possible for them to have life-enhancing Jewish experiences, it shows that we make a difference: *"Dear Jewish Federation: Thank you so much for your generous check to help me go to camp this summer. Camp is truly my favorite place on earth and I have had the privilege of growing up there and making lifelong friends. I am so grateful for this experience."*

When our food pantry is emptied each week, we know our work has impact. When we can put on a concert for the residents of Menorah Park or make a meal for the families at the Ronald McDonald House or donate groceries to the residents of Springfield Gardens or plant trees to prevent floods in the town of DeWitt or collect school supplies for the children of the Syracuse City School district or help support volunteers going to help rebuild Israel or provide our local Jewish childcare agencies with \$50,000 for security, we know our work has impact. We hope you know it also.

A federation is an organization made by joining together smaller organizations. That's how our Federation began over a century ago and that's how we are today. Federation does a lot of fundraising so that our partner organizations don't have to do so much of it. Over the years, some of our agencies have broken away, some have been so successful that Federation support has become a less significant part of their income, and some have come to rely on Federation more than ever. Some of those we join with are new partners; we are increasingly supporting our synagogues in small but meaningful ways. But the important thing is that we work **together**. Federation does not micromanage; it does not impose strictures on its partners; it does not compete with them or conflict with them. We are **partners**.

This year, we have had the joy of having our month of Jewish holidays followed by our favorite American holiday, which reminds us of how fortunate we are to be able to live freely and worship freely in a great democracy. We want to acknowledge and thank all the generous people who give their time and their funds to support our community, its

schools and synagogues and agencies, its programs and people. Babies, school children, teens, young adults, adults and seniors are all able at some point in their Jewish lives to be assisted by a Federation-supported entity. This is no small feat in a small Jewish community. Just as our larger Central New York community has one art museum, one university, one symphony orchestra, one community college, one airport, et al, so too does our Jewish Central New York community have one (and sometimes more) of everything we need to live a full Jewish life: synagogues, a day school, a community school, a Jewish high school, a mikvah, a community center, a continuum of care facility, Jewish cemeteries.

When I think about all that we do, when I consider all the people we work with and for, I am overcome with gratitude for the small role I am able to play in serving as head of the Federation. It is a privilege and an honor to do this work. There are nearly 200 Jewish Federations in North America, one in every city with a Jewish population of over 1,000. Together we and they help to create welcoming communities that bring together people from different backgrounds and generations and work to sustain Jewish communities for future generations. Our work is not limited to our own community. Through the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA), you and we provide humanitarian relief and disaster relief to Jewish communities throughout the globe. You and we provide services for vulnerable and elderly Jews and you and we support at-risk Jewish populations in 70 countries worldwide.

The phrase that keeps running through my head is: *Hodu l'Adonai, ki tov*. It seems so appropriate to give thanks to God for all that we have that is good. I wish all of the members of the Jewish community of Central New York a happy Thanksgiving. May you enjoy a lovely festival of gratitude with your family and friends.

Expressing Gratitude

By Rabbi Evan Shore, Shaarei Torah Orthodox Congregation of Syracuse

The greatest strength of the Jewish people lies in how we express and articulate gratitude. The Hebrew word for Jew, “Yehudi,” shares its root letters with the word “Todah,” meaning thanks. The first word a Jew says upon waking each morning is “Modeh”—thank you, expressing gratitude to Hashem for the gift of another day.



Research from Harvard University in the field of positive psychology has shown that gratitude is linked to greater happiness. Practicing gratitude enhances positive emotions, helps people savor good experiences, improves health, fosters resilience in challenging times, and strengthens relationships.

The concept of gratitude is also conveyed through the term *Hakoret HaTov*, which means recognizing the good. This recognition can be directed toward Hashem or any person who has positively influenced our lives. Interestingly, this recognition of good can sometimes arise from a negative experience, making us more aware of how it felt and motivating us to avoid causing similar harm to others.

For example, because the Hebrews endured hundreds of years of slavery, it is important for us to be compassionate toward those who are less fortunate. Interestingly, the Torah instructs us not to mistreat the Egyptians, as they initially welcomed Joseph’s family to Egypt with open arms and treated them with great honor.

A captivating aspect of our daily services is the repetition of the Amidah. According to Halacha (Jewish Law), the congregation listens attentively to every word of the Chazzan, responding with “amein” to each blessing. However, there is one notable exception: when the Chazzan reaches the section of Modim—where we give thanks—the entire congregation recites its own version. The Sefer **ELIYA RABBAH** by Rabbi Elia Shapira emphasizes that when it comes to expressing gratitude to the Almighty, it is not enough for the Chazzan to fulfill this duty on behalf of the congregation. Instead, each individual must personally join the Chazzan in thanking God for the abundant goodness He has bestowed upon every one of us.

The Talmud Brachot 7b) teaches:

Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: From the day that God created His world, no one expressed gratitude to God, until Leah came and did so, as it says, “This time, let me express gratitude to Hashem.”

Leah, one of the four great Matriarchs, was swift to express her gratitude to Hashem for the sons she bore to her husband, Jacob. Her actions serve as a model for everyone. It’s not enough to simply feel grateful; one should also express that gratitude. By articulating our thanks, we allow our entire being to experience the sense of appreciation. As King David writes in the Book of Psalms: “Let every breath thank God.”

I, therefore, am very appreciative of the opportunity to share my thoughts about thanks and gratitude.

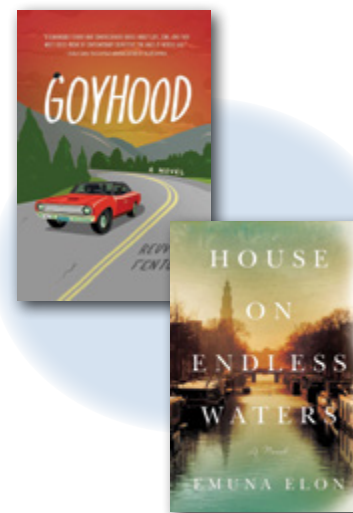
» BOOK REVIEWS

Goyhood by Reuven Fenton and House on Endless Waters by Emuna Elon

Reviewed by Angela Locke

What happens when you find out that your entire life, your previously unquestioned identity, your relationships and all that you believed in—what happens when you find out that all was built on a lie? That would be enough to catapult you into a personal tumultuous quest toward the truth. But what if the lie you founded your life on came from your mother? And what if your mother is dead so you cannot talk to her or question her or rage at her or cry in her arms?

The protagonists of two recent novels, *Goyhood*, by Reuven Fenton, and *House on Endless Waters* by Emuna Elon, confront this dilemma. “The past cannot be hidden,” Yoel Blum, himself an Israeli novelist in Israeli author Emuna Elon’s novel, says almost nonchalantly to an audience asking him a typical question about being Israeli. Though his mother had made him promise, before her death, that he would never, *ever*, go to Amsterdam, at his publisher’s insistence, he’s there, where his previous novels have been published. The truth of his statement sinks its talons into Yoel’s heart when he is asked an unexpected question, a question that has never before been asked of him, a question which he has never even asked himself, a question posed by someone who managed to dig deep enough in their research to discover: “*You were born here in Amsterdam?*” With this question echoing in Yoel’s mind, his wife Bat-Ami leads him to a photo in the Jewish Museum that is both perplexing and terrifying. And so begins Yoel Blum’s mystery.



Mayer Belkin, in *Goyhood*, is in his beloved *beis medrash*, lost in his daily studies, when he receives a phone call from his long-estranged, law-breaking twin brother who tells him that not only has their mother passed on, but she died in a most un-Jewish way, by her own hand. And when his ever-capable wife puts him on a flight to Atlanta, where his mother lived and where his twin brother waits, he discovers, in a tragicomic way, that his mother wasn’t even Jewish. And so begins Mayer Belkin’s mystery.

Who am I then? Who am I if my past has changed? Mayer and Yoel’s identities are turned upside down, and the premise of both novels is their difficult, upsetting, even devastating search for the truth.

But that is where *Goyhood* and *House on Endless Waters* part company. How differently that dilemma is approached by two vastly different writers. Fenton, educated at Yeshiva University and Columbia, is primarily a journalist. His story begins in the 1990s and brings us into the 2010s. Though the quest is painful for Mayer, the reading is hilarious at times, an outrageous collision of crazy God-less American culture and Orthodox Judaism as experienced by a man unfit to take care of himself. Not everything in the book pleased me, including the end, but I laughed my way through and read it in two days.

House on Endless Waters, on the other hand, demanded more of me. Emuna Elon’s book was translated from Hebrew, and I wondered if that might have added to its ponderous nature. But, of course, there isn’t a lot of humor to be had in looking back at the Amsterdam Jews of the 1940s and the horror that overtook them. Elon’s style is dense and repetitive, but she creates a vivid picture of Amsterdam’s past and modern post-war Amsterdam. This book adds to the literature of consequence: those stories that tell of the reverberation of the *Shoah* and its disruptions of modern identities and families, including Yoel Blum’s.



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IN MEMORIAM: Michael Balanoff

By Barbara Davis

Michael Balanoff was a *mensch*.

Mensch is a beautiful word. It has no translation. It's Yiddish and is cognate with the German word "*mensch*" which means "human being," "man" in the general sense. But the Yiddish word is completely different. *Mensch* has no gender. It is a completely value-laden word. You know a *mensch* when you meet one, but words fail to describe with exactitude what a *mensch* is. Michael Balanoff was a *mensch*.

Leo Rosten, in *The Joys of Yiddish*, says a *mensch* is "someone to admire and emulate, someone of noble character. The key to being 'a real *mensch*' is nothing less than character, rectitude, dignity, a sense of what is right, responsible and decorous." Calling someone a *mensch* is to convey the ultimate compliment, expressing the rarity and worth of that person's qualities. Michael Balanoff was a *mensch*.

Guy Kawasaki wrote a book about how to be a *mensch*. These are his guidelines:

1. **Help people who cannot help you.** A *mensch* helps people who cannot ever return the favor. He doesn't care if the recipient is rich, famous, or powerful. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't help rich, famous, or powerful people (indeed, they may need the most help), but you shouldn't help *only* rich, famous, and powerful people.
2. **Help without the expectation of return.** A *mensch* helps people without the expectation of return—at least in this life. What's the payoff? Not that there has to be a payoff, but the payoff is the pure satisfaction of helping others. Nothing more, nothing less.
3. **Help many people.** *Menschdom* is a numbers game: you should help many people, so you don't hide your generosity under a bushel.
4. **Do the right thing the right way.** A *mensch* always does the right thing the right way. There is a bright, clear line between right and wrong, and a *mensch* never crosses that line.
5. **Pay back society.** A *mensch* realizes that he's blessed. For example, entrepreneurs are blessed with vision and passion plus the ability to recruit, raise money, and change the world. These blessings come with the obligation to pay back society. The baseline is that we owe something to society—we're not doing a favor by paying back society.

So as I said, Michael Balanoff was a *mensch*. He helped people who could not help him, he helped without expectation of return and he helped as many people as he could by doing the right thing, the right way.



As head of the Jewish Federation and the Jewish Foundation of Central New York, Michael raised funds to support community agencies that provide childcare, education, meals for seniors, meals on wheels (both kosher and halal), a food pantry, a senior citizen home, a group home, counseling services, emergency loans, scholarships, camperships, funding for programs and festivals and support for interfaith efforts such as InterFaith Works.

Asking people for money day in and day out is not an easy thing to do, but Michael did it willingly and successfully because he was not doing it for himself but for others. Michael was a *mensch*.

It was an honor and a privilege for me to work for Michael. He was kind, funny, open-hearted and dedicated. Our Jewish community and everyone else, whatever their faith, whatever their nationality, whatever their

background, was fortunate that he was working on behalf of all of us.

Michael cared deeply about our Jewish community. He loved to schmooze. He hated Oxford commas, semicolons and ampersands. When I asked him what he wanted to see happen in our community, he said, "Jewish people doing Jewish things." He wasn't in it for himself, he was in it for others. The security of the Jewish community was always uppermost in his mind. He was very proud of what had been accomplished in that area. He was also proud of the increasing cooperation and collegiality that he saw in our community—"breaking down the silos," he called it.

Michael was a caretaker. He wanted to take care of his beloved Euni and his three much-loved sons, his brothers and their families. He wanted to take care of Jewish Central New York. Sadly, he was not able to fulfill this dream for as long as he wanted. But his legacy will live on in the good will he engendered, in the many programs he supported and in the memories of the people who loved him for what he did and who he was.

We have lost a unique and rare person. Michael Balanoff was truly and genuinely a *mensch*. He will be deeply missed. May his memory be a blessing for us all.

Pomeranz, Shankman, Martin Charitable Foundation Transformed the Community

According to [Upstategiving.com](https://www.upstategiving.com), the Pomeranz, Shankman, Martin Charitable Foundation “has supported nonprofits interested in religion, education, seniors, human services, arts and culture, cemeteries and women.” But this bare bones description does not do justice to the tremendous impact the Pomeranz, Shankman, Martin Foundation has had on the Jewish community of Central New York.

“It started with three separate people,” explained Sheldon Kall, executor of the tri-named foundation. “David Martin was a widower with no children. He left an estate in the late 1990s to help needy Jewish kids attend college. The grants were loans which were supposed to be repaid, but they were not and the trust was being depleted. It also became more challenging to decide who was a ‘needy Jewish student.’” Then, Kall continued, in the early 2000s, Sam Pomeranz died. “He had been divorced for 50 years and had been predeceased by his son. He had a lot of money, but he was frugal. He came to see me and said, ‘I’ve been a poor Jew. I’ve never given anything. I’d like to be a better Jew when I’m dead.’ He instructed me to give \$10,000 to the Federation, \$10,000 to Temple Adath and \$10,000 to the JCC. I asked him, ‘Why not give the money to them now?’ He replied, ‘I can’t do it. I’ll need it.’” Kall added, “Abraham Shankman was Sam Pomeranz’s accountant. He was also well-to-do. He was a widower with no children.” Shankman died in 2006.

Kall was the executor for the estates of all three men and decided to consolidate their bequests. “Putting the three trusts together was a learning process,” he explained, “but it made the philanthropic intentions of the donors more coherent.” Kall, his wife Mateele and their daughter Jackie Miron became the trustees of the consolidated Pomeranz, Shankman, Martin Charitable Foundation in 2012. Mateele Kall passed away in 2023, so the fund is now managed by Sheldon Kall and Jackie Miron. They discuss at length with the agencies leadership and collaborate constantly to determine how much money will be distributed quarterly for each upcoming year. The funds are

given to the Jewish Community Foundation and placed in Special Needs accounts. The beneficiaries are required to tell the Foundation directors exactly how the funds will be used before they are released. “We want to make sure the money is used for good purposes,” Kall noted.

“We want to get behind projects that involve the entire community,” Kall elaborated. “Together, together, together,” he stressed. “The more it involves, the more behind it we are.” The Foundation does not want to just hand out money. Kall favors “bricks and mortar” projects and also matching grants, noting, “but if you raise nothing, you get nothing.” Jackie Miron explains more about the Foundation’s giving philosophy: “Optimally, we want to spend where the most urgent needs are, but also when it can help the most community members. We hold back a small amount for ‘emergencies,’ almost always using them for the unexpected. Once in a while, we don’t use up those funds and we give bonuses at the end of the year. We get behind most projects where multiple agencies are doing something together. Since COVID, we have tried to reach the most needy members of Syracuse for food pantries, winter clothing, items for shelters and school supplies for inner-city kids. A lot of times we do this by giving funding to synagogues and one of the Jewish schools doing this as a mitzvah project or *tikkun olam*. We are all proud when we can be generous to the community no matter the religion and show the generosity of the Jewish community.”



Beneficiaries of the Foundation’s grants include virtually the entire scope of the Central New York Jewish Community. There are 18 Special Needs accounts set up to benefit from the Foundation’s largesse. The Syracuse Community Hebrew School receives one third of its annual budget from the Foundation (with another third coming from the synagogues and the balance coming from Federation.) The Jewish Community Center (“which would not exist without Pomeranz,” noted Kall) received over one million dollars in funding and was therefore named in Sam Pomeranz’s honor. JCC head Marci Erlebacher is quick to acknowledge the Center’s debt to the Foundation: “Since the day I took over as the executive director of the Jewish Community Center 23 years ago, the Pomeranz, Shankman and Martin Trust has been a supporter in unparalleled proportions. In 2001 the JCC was struggling in so many ways, especially monetarily and physically. The Trust’s business support enabled us to turn the JCC around so we could be the town square of our community. Today our strength is thanks to the unending support that we have received from this Trust. The guidance that we have received from the Pomeranz, Shankman and Martin Trust will never be forgotten.”

Others who receive funding from the Foundation are equally appreciative of the support. Melissa Klemperer, interim head of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, said, “The generosity of the Pomeranz, Shankman, Martin Foundation helps us foster a nurturing environment where students thrive academically, socially, and spiritually. Thanks to their partnership, we maintain high standards of education and community engagement. We are especially grateful for their contribution toward

funding the ViewSonic interactive boards, enhancing our classrooms with innovative learning tools.” Jillian Juni, executive director of Syracuse Hillel, expressed gratitude “for the longstanding support that we receive from the Pomeranz, Shankman, Martin Foundation. It is through their generosity that we are able to provide students, who depend on us at Hillel, with delicious Shabbat dinners, friendship, community, and a taste of home.”

The Epstein School’s director, Aaron Spitzer, said, “We are deeply grateful to the Pomeranz Shankman Martin Charitable Foundation for their ongoing generous support of teens at the Epstein School. Their commitment enables Epstein to provide special experiences outside the classroom, like our Hillel Campus trips, which give students the opportunity to tour college campuses through an explicitly Jewish lens.” Ora Jezer, head of the Community Hebrew School, said, “The Pomeranz Shankman Martin Charitable Foundation is critical to creating a vibrant Jewish educational community. Without their support, the Syracuse Community Hebrew School would not exist; their commitment to bringing together our young students from three different congregations has transformed our community over the past decade. The visionary leadership from Pomeranz Shankman Martin Charitable Foundation spurred the community to begin our unique program.”

What is the future for the Pomeranz, Shankman, Martin Charitable Foundation? Will it run out of money? Sheldon Kall is confident that the Foundation will be a force long into the future. “It’s big,” he says, “Multi-millions and still growing. Judicious management and careful spending will ensure it will benefit the community in perpetuity.”

ERRATA: there was a misspelling in the bio line for a review in the October JO. The correct bio is: *Rebekah Tanner, retired librarian and member at Temple Adath Yeshurun, now spends some of her time as a volunteer at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo and is an active senior at the JCC.* The JO regrets the error.

This column features businesses owned by members of our community, as well as artists and musical programs and is generously sponsored by RAV Properties.

A New Spin on the Dreidel

Syracuse native Adam Zucker has created a new and exciting dreidel game. Zucker is an engineer, and in thinking about the traditional dreidel game and how the fun of the simple conventional game wanes quickly, he concluded: “You remove chocolate gelt from the equation and everybody pretty much loses interest altogether.” Then, in 2013, on the eve of Thangsgivukkah, that once-in-generation convergence of Thanksgiving and the first night of Hanukkah, he felt compelled to create a more engaging Hanukkah tradition for his family.

He wondered, “What happens if you spin two dreidels together?” He then began writing down the possible combinations of spins: gimel gimel, gimel hay, gimel nun, shin hay and so forth. Adam got goosebumps when he realized that “there are six two-letter dreidel spin combinations and there are six sides on the Star of David.” At that moment, he knew that he was onto something big—or, rather, Super.

Adam created the Super Dreidel board by sketching out a Jewish star. He populated each point with the Hebrew letter pairings from the dreidel. Adam then included space for doubles and single-letter spins and calculated the probability/payout for each spin. He used pennies and pieces of colored paper as game chips, and the initial version of the game was ready to go.

He gathered multiple people around the game board to play Super Dreidel and play all at once. Adam noted that the players were very enthusiastic—from spinning two dreidels and being able to bet with their game chips on the possible dreidel combinations on the board. Think: traditional dreidel meets an exciting casino-style craps/roulette game. For several years, the game evolved to include various game chips, including a stint of colored candies. Adam’s family learned that despite the conventional wisdom, M&Ms DO melt in your hands.

Adam and his family set up Super Dreidel tournaments with people of all ages, sometimes playing for candy and sometimes for money for charity. Over and over, Adam’s family and friends kept telling him that he needed to make a commercial version of Super Dreidel so he could share it with the world.

Finally, Adam and his wife Shelley, his greatest supporter, decided it was time to make a product to sell. The creation and marketing of the product has become a family affair, with his wife, children, sister and parents all pitching in to help. His uncle, Syracuse native Michael Zucker, took up the role of Uncle Moishe and starred in TikTok videos promoting the product.

Although he now lives in Portland, Oregon, Zucker will always remember his Jewish roots in Syracuse. He grew up in Dewitt and graduated from Jamesville-Dewitt High School and Cornell University. He has fond memories of his bar mitzvah at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevre Shas. His parents, Arleen and Bob Zucker of Syracuse, followed him to Portland 15 years ago. **More information about Super Dreidel can be found at <http://www.superdreidel.com>.**



SYRACUSE FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

Syracuse Friends of Chamber Music is an all-volunteer organization made up of music lovers dedicated to bringing some of the world’s finest chamber music ensembles to Syracuse. Concerts are held at Grant Middle School Auditorium, 2400 Grant Boulevard, Syracuse.

PACIFICA QUARTET – October 5, 2024

The Pacifica, undoubtedly one of the foremost American quartets performing today, will open our season with a dream program: the Barber Quartet with its much-loved adagio movement, the passionately romantic music of the still teen-aged Mendelssohn, and Shostakovich’s intense post-war third quartet.

Barber: *String Quartet in B Minor, op. 11*

Mendelssohn: *String Quartet no. 2 in A Minor, op. 13*

Shostakovich: *String Quartet no. 3 in F Major, op. 73*

QUARTETTO DI CREMONA – November 2, 2024

The internationally-acclaimed Cremona Quartet does full justice to the name it bears—the town in Italy that was home to the golden age of violin makers. After one of the Quartet’s London concerts, the critic of *The Strad* called their playing “as sleek and elegant as an Armani suit, with the music tailored to perfection.” And what music we will hear!

Ravel: *String Quartet in F Major*

Bartók: *String Quartet no. 4*

Schumann: *String Quartet op. 41, no. 1*

PARKER QUARTET with FLEUR BARRON – November 23, 2024

Mezzo-soprano Fleur Barron has been creating quite a sensation internationally. The *London Times* called her a “knock-out performer.” The excellent Parker Quartet together with Fleur have devised this contemplative program celebrating the natural environment, “ecopoetry”, and their primarily Asian heritage. They join forces in the world premiere of a piece co-commissioned by SFCM in which Anthony Cheung explores the many ways music can facilitate cross-cultural dialogue.

Brahms: “*Im Herbst*” from *Fünf Gesänge, op. 104*

John Luther Adams: *The Wind in High Places*

Anthony Cheung: *New Work*

Mahler: “*Der Einsame im Herbst*” from *Das Lied von der Erde*

Brahms: *String Quartet no. 3 in B-flat Major, op. 67*

THE SYRACUSE ORCHESTRA – January 18, 2025

A chamber orchestra drawn from The Syracuse Orchestra joins forces with community partners to present this varied program of uplifting music.

Mozart: *Solemn Vespers, K.339*

C.P.E. Bach: *Symphony in D Major, H.663 (W.183/1)*

Mendelssohn: *String Symphony no. 12 in G Minor*

THE NAUGHTON PIANO DUO – March 15, 2025

Twin sisters Christina and Michelle Naughton have captivated audiences around the world with their seemingly mystical communication. “They have to be heard to be believed,” raved the *Washington Post*. Their performance at Tanglewood “lit up the stage, leaving the audience calling for more,” said the *Boston Globe*. As the sisters join two hearts and four hands at two pianos, be prepared for an electrifying experience.

Mozart: *Sonata K. 358 in B-flat Major*

Debussy: *Petite Suite*

Jennifer Higdon: “*Jumble Dance*” from *Dance Card no. 3*

Tania Leon: *Satine*

Beethoven: *Sonata for Piano Four Hands in D Major, op. 6*

Saint-Saëns: *Variations on a Theme by Beethoven*

Ravel: *La Valse*

FRAUTSCHI-NAKAMATSU-MANASSE TRIO – April 5, 2025

A Van Cliburn Piano Competition Gold Medal Winner playing a breath-takingly thrilling Chopin work. Three superb musicians bringing to life Stravinsky at his most inventive! Join us as we welcome back Van Cliburn International Piano Competition winner Jon Nakamatsu, two-time GRAMMY nominee violinist Jennifer Frautschi, and clarinetist Jon Manasse, former first chair of the Metropolitan Opera. Their program spotlights their individual talents and explores some musical gems.

Debussy: *Sonata in G Minor for Violin and Piano*

Debussy: *Première rhapsodie for Clarinet and Piano*

Chopin: *Andante spianato & Grande polonaise brillante, op. 22*

Khatchaturian: *Trio in G Minor*

Stravinsky: *Suite from L'Histoire du soldat*

Novacek: *Two Rags for Violin, Clarinet and Piano*

IMANI WINDS – May 10, 2025

When this splendid woodwind quintet returns to close our series, they will perform a new work that SFCM is commissioning for them. The composer is Loren Loiacono of Syracuse University’s Setnor School of Music, a prolific composer of orchestral, chamber, and choral music whose works have been performed by the Detroit, St. Louis, and Albany Symphonies, and many others. A fitting culmination of our 75th Anniversary celebration.

Lina Mathon Blanchet: *A Haitian Tale, arr. Gil DeJean*

Jean Françaix: *Wind Quintet no. 2 (1987)*

Lalo Shifrin: *La Nouvelle Orleans*

Loren Loiacono: *New Work (World premiere)*

Igor Stravinsky: *The Rite of Spring arr. Jonathan Russell*

Supporting the IDF

If you met Jack Lyon, in his bright yellow shirt and Alex Lyon & Son baseball cap, you might not believe him when he told you he had lunched with Donald Trump a few months ago, had been talking on the phone with Israel's president Isaac Herzog a few weeks ago, and was planning to meet with Mexico's new [Jewish] president, Claudia Sheinbaum, in a few weeks. But you would be wrong. Jack has really done all those things and a lot more besides.

Jack is the president of Alex Lyon & Son Auction, described as "America's Auction Company: We're big enough for the industry leaders, yet personal enough for America's farmer." What they auction is heavy construction equipment to customers from across the United States, China, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, Israel and Africa. Jack jets around the country and the globe on



his private jet to conduct over 100 auctions every year.

His father, Alex Lyon, of the eponymously named company, was a Lithuanian Jew from the town of Vandžiogala, which was destroyed by the Germans and Lithuanian nationalists in 1941. Alex was one of the few Jews who escaped. He hid in the woods for three and a half years, assisted clandestinely by local Lithuanians. Alex eventually made his way to the United States and

ultimately to Syracuse. Helped by family and friends, he worked as a butcher until he was able to purchase a farm and property in Bridgeport and establish the Alex Lyon Livestock company. The company primarily handled private treaty negotiations of cattle and farm machinery, growing to become one of the largest livestock businesses in New York State. Alex was a generous man and was always supportive of the Jewish community and Israel.

Jack has followed in his father's footsteps in terms of support both for the local community and Israel. Following the October 7 massacre at the Nova Festival, Jack turned his full attention to the Jewish state, making significant donations to the Friends of the Israel Defense Forces and, in July, flying to Israel for three days to visit IDF bases and provide barbecues for the troops there.

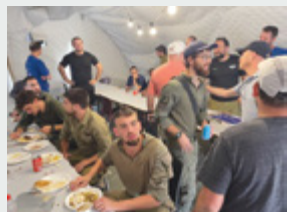
"The Israeli people are so demoralized," Jack said when interviewed for the *JO*.



"They think people are against them. I decided, let's do something creative to show that we're with them." He went to three military bases, one in the Golan Heights, one near the Gaza Strip and one near Hebron. Not only did he feed the soldiers but he brought "oodles and oodles of gift certificates" for food, clothing and other necessities for the Israelis who had been displaced from their homes by the rockets fired at them in the north.

And he brought a message to all the Israelis he met: "We're with you. People appreciate you. There has to be a strong Israel because, without Israel, everyone's safety in the whole world is jeopardized." Jack is not naïve or unfeeling about the current conflict. "I feel sorry for the Palestinians," he says. "They are pawns in a chess game." And he is concerned about how October 7 could have happened, about the failure of Israeli intelligence to prevent the attack. "There will be a day of judgment sometime," he predicts. "How did you let this happen?"

But for now, all Jack wants is to support the IDF and Israel. "Israel is the most expensive country in the world to create," he says. "It took 6 million lives before there was Israel." Then he adds, "Had there been a place to go in the 30s and 40s, there would never have been a Holocaust."



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Volunteering with Passion

By Eric Antosh



Every chance I have, I'm in Israel or I try to be. No hesitation. If you've been once, you're lucky. If you've been twice, you're home. I had previously visited solely to spend time with family and connect with my history, but never with the intention of giving back. Since October 7, I had visceral intention to devote my time supporting Israel, but I was saturated in my professional needs as a young adult. Trying to find my balance. But, when the opportunity did come, there was no hesitation.

I had planned to do just that when on July 31, Hamas leader Haniyeh was assassinated. Hamas threatened to retaliate, as did Iran, attempting to put fear back in our minds. I wouldn't let them. I knew the opportunity to be in Israel during time of rehabilitation would be far more significant than any fear I could have felt. I also knew I was supported by Taglit, my family and friends. So I got to the airport four hours before departure, like any good Jewish man, and was taking action.

While on my flight, I truly didn't think too much about what my volunteer experience would be. I just knew I wanted to spend my time supporting Israel anyway needed and meeting likeminded individuals—maintaining the sense of Jewish community that we have continually fought to protect. This required rolling with the punches and being prepared to wake up with the sunrise. Plans changed on a whim, as the needs varied by the hour. But a group of 30 of the most spiritually energized and hungry-to-work Jewish men and women came together, from all over the globe, to support and take action.

Our first few days were spent

picking and packaging fresh fruits and vegetables from *moshavim* as well as sifting through 5'x5' containers filled with unmarketable produce—lightly bruised or misshaped but still just as nutritious, from within *Leket* Israel's warehouse. The opportunities continued as displaced families were just returning to their *kibbutzim* within the Gaza envelope. August 15 marked this positive transitional period for *Nir Am*, *Mefalsim*, and *Erez*. We were honored to be able to reinvigorate these communities prior to their members coming back home. Tasks included: weeding, cleaning walkways and pools, and reorganizing furniture. Not pretty, but necessary work to bring families home to a clean and comfortable environment. It was a privilege to be able to share these moments with community leaders and teenagers eager to not only rebuild but also expand their communities.

It was an unimaginable experience of togetherness and commitment to a greater purpose—to *our* purpose. With a majority of migrant workers returned home due to the continued war, Israel is in need of further volunteers. I want to note a very impactful statistic, but I want to preface the notion that people are not statistics, I just want the severity of the need to be felt. Here it goes: one of every two school-aged children in Jerusalem do not have lunch, and one of every three throughout Israel do not. There is still ample support required of us. With or without war. I urge everyone who can, to take that leap of faith and volunteer your time.

Eric Antosh is currently a graduate student of psychology at Lesley University and a proud graduate of SHDS and Binghamton University.



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Grateful For Life: Five Holocaust Survivors Reflect on Their Childhood at Fort Ontario

By Susan Keeter

2024 is the 80th anniversary of the opening of a United States refugee camp at Fort Ontario in Oswego. This camp represented the only time that the United States offered shelter to people fleeing the Nazis. On August 5, 1944, 987 predominantly Jewish refugees arrived at Fort Ontario after a harrowing 14-day journey on a troop transport ship from Naples, Italy.

This August, five of those refugees returned to Oswego. Their reunion included visits to the Safe Haven Holocaust Refugee Museum, located in a building that was part of the refugee camp. Below, these five former refugees share glimpses of their childhood journey to America.

Arnon Finger: U-boats and star-filled nights

Arnon Finger was four when he arrived at Fort Ontario with his parents, Oskar and Livia. His memories of the 18 months at the refugee shelter include the birth of his sister, Susan.



He remembers being treated at a hospital for severe malnutrition and muscle atrophy. Once, Finger escaped the refugee shelter by slipping through a hole in the fence that surrounded the camp. He got lost exploring the shore of Lake Ontario, but was rescued by his friend, Sammy. Finger remembers the wooden sled his father built and used to pull him through the Oswego snow.

Finger also remembers his family's journey to the United States. The Henry Gibbins, the

ship that took them from Naples to New York, was being chased by Nazi seaplanes and U-boats. The crew created smoke screens to hide the ship and Finger remembers that his lungs burned from the smoke. His mother, an opera star, sang for the refugees and injured soldiers on the ship. Before Naples, his family was interred at the Ferramonte camp in Calabria. There was barely enough food to survive. Finger remembers being sick with malaria. He remembers hiding in the woods for days, but can still picture beautiful, star-filled nights. He remembers two British soldiers handing him a pistol that was too heavy to hold.

Finger was six weeks old when his mother had to go to Gestapo headquarters to ask them to replace their stolen tickets so the family could board an illegal transport that was to take them to Palestine. That boat was shipwrecked in the Adriatic Sea.

Tamar Hendel: A Brownie scarf and a settlers' story

Tamar Hendel was nine when she arrived in Oswego with her parents Hana and Isaac, her brother David, her aunt Berta Kremer and four cousins. Hendel enrolled in the sixth grade at an Oswego elementary school and learned English by reading an "enthraling" book about settlers travelling to the American West in horse-drawn wagons. She remembers Miss Esther, a Quaker social worker who led a Brownie troop for Hendel and other girls at the refugee center. Hendel remembers winning a game that involved writing words using letters found in "Thanksgiving." Today, her Brownie scarf and pin are in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.

Hendel, like all the 987 refugees, had fled to Italy before being chosen for shelter in the United States. "The Italians were very good, generous people," she remembers. "They saved a lot of Jews during the war." "We are very grateful to have been brought to the United States," Hendel continued, "but I wish more Jewish people had been saved. I wish the U.S. had been willing to do something sooner." Two of Hendel's relatives who lived at the Oswego refugee shelter—cousins Jetta, 99, and Giselle, 89—are still alive. Hendel, a retired teacher and art therapist, and eight of her relatives attended the reunion in August. It had been more than 20 years since she had visited Oswego.



Irving Schild: Going to school, working for Mad

Irving Schild was 13 when he and three family members arrived at the Oswego refugee camp in 1944. He remembers that his family lived in a room with metal cots, a table and a storage locker. It was the first time Schild was able to attend school and the first time that he lived without danger. Schild was nine when his family fled Brussels to escape the Nazis. His father was arrested in Rome, and the family was forced into an internment camp, where they lived for a year. Schild's father bribed a guard to let them escape and the family fled through the Italian Alps. In Rome, his mother and sister hid in churches and Schild hid in a Catholic seminary. Schild's father was an artist, and throughout their journey of escape, he traded portrait sketches for money and food.



Best known as a photographer for *Mad* magazine, Schild spoofed advertisements in the decades before Photoshop. One of his favorite projects was a poster that read "WIPE OUT HATE!" and showed a roll of toilet paper covered with swastikas. In 2017, Schild spoke at SUNY Oswego in commemoration of *Yom haShoah*, Holocaust Remembrance Day. "The love we got from Oswego was incredible," Schild rhmembers. "My life is a miracle."

Ben Alalouf: A donkey, lifeboat and a bootlegger

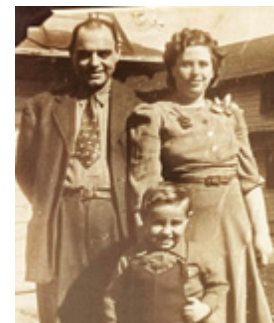
Ben Alalouf was three years old when he arrived at Ft. Ontario with his parents Alfred and Doudoun and his 15-year-old brother Morris.

Alalouf had been born in a bomb shelter in Yugoslavia in 1940. The country was being overrun by Nazis, so the family fled. Newborn Ben and his mother rode on a donkey; his father and brother walked the hundreds of miles to Albania. After nine months, German troops moved in and the Alaloufs escaped again. His aunt and cousins stayed behind, waiting for his uncle. They didn't survive.

Eventually, the Alalouf family made it to Bari, Italy where his father exchanged bootleg wine for pieces of gold. He was warned by a police officer that SS troops were coming. The family boarded a ship, but it struck a German mine and sank. Two-year-old Ben and his mother survived on a lifeboat; his father and 10-year-old brother floated in the water until a British ship picked them up.

In 2009, Alalouf made his first trip back to Fort Ontario. He visited the museum and thanked the mayor for the wonderful treatment his family received from the people of Oswego. In 2018, Alalouf was reunited with Flora, his childhood friend at the shelter, thanks to the PBS series, "We Meet Again."

Alalouf, a retired teacher, athletic director and business owner, attended the 80th reunion with his wife, Martha, and daughter, Amy. It was her first trip to Safe Haven. "My father was on the run for the first three years of his life," she reflected. "His life started in Oswego."



Dorrit Blumenkranz: Shiny shoes and a found memoir

Dorrit Blumenkranz (now Doris Schechter) remembers being a bewildered six-year-old when she arrived at Oswego's emergency refugee center with her parents Efraim and Bertha and baby sister Ruthie. Schechter remembers little of that time. "We need to understand that war and prejudice can destroy the emotional life of a child," she explains.

Schechter does remember going to school in Oswego and being fussed at by her "strict Viennese" father for pestering a boy in class. (Schechter suspects it was an early experiment with flirting). She remembers her mother's pride when first lady Eleanor Roosevelt visited the camp and asked to hold her baby sister. Schechter remembers shopping for her first pair of black patent leather shoes. She remembers the trauma of her father dying from meningitis just a few months after they arrived at the refugee shelter.

Schechter credits the Fort Ontario refugee center with providing her with two extraordinary gifts. One was finding the 1944 memoir that her father wrote for *Reader's Digest*. "It is a history of our journey," she said. "It gave me back my formative years."

Through her father's memoir, Schechter learned that her family fled to Italy when she was six months old. When she was five, Nazis marched into Guardiagrele, their once safe town. Schechter ran through a minefield, literally following in the footsteps of Italian friends who were helping the family flee. They avoided the mines, but Schechter and her mother lost their shoes.

Schechter's second gift from Fort Oswego was her 40-year friendship with Ruth Gruber, the legendary photographer and journalist who accompanied the refugees on the ship and helped them throughout their 18-month stay at Fort Ontario. The two travelled and gave talks

together until Gruber died in 2016 at age 105. Schechter, a retired restaurateur and cookbook author, is executive producer of the film "Ahead of Time," a documentary on Ruth Gruber. Schechter attended the 80th reunion with her partner, Saul Troen, her daughter, Dena and son-in-law, Scott.

After the Oswego refugee camp closed in February 1946, most of the 987 refugees remained in the United States. Like most of the refugees, all five who attended the 80th reunion achieved the "American Dream" of raising families and having successful careers. However, during her speech at the reunion dinner, Schechter acknowledged the trauma they experienced as children. What is her message to today's children who have had to flee their homes because of persecution and war? "Never lose your identity," Schechter implored. "Be proud of who you are."

Susan Keeter is an artist and writer living in Syracuse who became enthralled with the Safe Haven story a decade ago.

Gratitude for a New and Wonderful Life in America

By Doris Schechter

As I stand before you today, I'm struck by how a lifetime can be compressed into mere moments. Eighty years ago, I was that bewildered 6-year-old girl who arrived at Fort Ontario, Oswego, with my parents and baby sister. A newspaper photographer captured me eating my first American hot dog—an image that appeared in 26 cities across the nation. That little girl, frozen in time, carried the weight of her past and uncertainty about her future.



I remember my father's promise: "We will have a new and wonderful life in America." Those words echoed in my mind as I grappled with questions no child should face. Why were we considered criminals simply for being Jewish? Why were we expelled from our birthplace? As a little girl, I couldn't understand why I was hated for being Jewish. It was incomprehensible to me then, and it pains me deeply that, 80 years later, I find myself experiencing that same hatred once again.

Within a month of our arrival, my father passed away. His death plunged me into a whirlpool of guilt, remorse, and doubt about facing life's challenges. Yet, amidst this darkness, I found unexpected strength. My father's memoir, written at Fort Ontario for *Reader's Digest*, chronicled our journey. It serves as a testament to our resilience and hope.

America opened its arms to us, offering refuge and opportunity. My mother's resilience became my beacon. I learned to seek emotional support and recognize the gifts life offered, even in the face of adversity. The extraordinary friendship with Ruth Gruber, who became my surrogate mother and mentor, provided guidance and love when I needed it most.

As I grew, food became a metaphor for everything I've done in my life. It's been a source of comfort, a bridge between cultures, and a powerful symbol of new beginnings. When I opened My Most Favorite Dessert Company, it was more than just a business venture—it was a reflection of my roots in Vienna, Austria. As time passed, this concept evolved into My Most Favorite Food, offering pesco-vegetarian fare. I chose this path because vegetarian cuisine knows no borders or limitations. My vision was to create a place where everyone could come and eat under "one roof," a microcosm of the America that welcomed me so many years ago.

My late husband Marvin and our five wonderful children—Phillip, Stuart, Laura, Renee, and Dena—helped me realize the American Dream in its fullest sense. The joy of grandchildren and great-grandchildren further enriches my life. The unexpected gift of a new life partner in Saul Troen reminded me that love and companionship can find us at any stage of life.

Looking back, I'm filled with gratitude. Gratitude for the chance to build a new life, for the strength to overcome trauma, and for the opportunity to contribute to this great nation. To the United States, I say thank you. Thank you for being a beacon of hope, for providing shelter to the persecuted, and for allowing countless refugees like myself to find a home.

As we face today's challenges, including the resurgence of antisemitism, let us remember the power of compassion and strength. Let us honor the memory of those lost by building a world of tolerance and understanding. We must stand united against hatred in all its forms, ensuring that no child ever has to wonder why they are hated for who they are.

God bless America, and may we always strive to be a nation that opens its doors to those in need and protects all its citizens, regardless of their faith or background.

REUNION PHOTOS



Irving Schild, Doris Schechter, Ben Alalouf, and Arnon Finger gathered in Oswego on the 80th anniversary of their 1944 arrival at Fort Ontario's emergency refugee shelter. They were four of the 987 refugees who lived at Fort Ontario, the only shelter for victims of the Holocaust in the U.S. during WWII.



Arnon Finger, a retired mechanical engineer, attended the 80th anniversary with his daughter, Deborah Gordon, and granddaughter, Alexandra. "My family's resilience is amazing," noted Gordon. "I am so proud to say this is my history."



Doris Schechter holds a portrait of herself as little Dorrit Blumenkranz at the Safe Haven refugee center in Oswego. Painting by Susan Keeter.



Holocaust survivor Tamar Hendel, right, with her son Zalman Fishman on the grounds of Fort Ontario at the 80th anniversary of her arrival at the emergency refugee shelter on August 5, 1944.

Gemilut Hasadim

Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote, “When you are kind to others, it not only changes you, it changes the world.” The Jewish Volunteering Network points out that “the Hebrew word *lehitnadev* (to volunteer) comes from the root *nadav*—a donation freely made, not compulsory; a willingness to do something. The *lehit* part of *lehitnadev* makes it reflexive because the act of volunteering changes us—it is transformative. Thus, not only do we give to others by volunteering, we give ourselves the opportunity to help others and to have a sense of self-worth.”

In an article entitled “The Immeasurable Value of Volunteerism” Susan Kohn and Diane Wohl describe volunteerism as “a core Jewish value and a traditional way for Jews to be engaged in their communities. The concepts of community service, *tikkun olam*, and social justice all serve as important methods of involvement and connectivity between and among the local and global Jewish community.” They say that volunteering has proven to “strengthen the Jewish and philanthropic muscles of participants, especially if the service is meaningful, regular and enriched by a Jewish educational context. In all likelihood, Jewish participants accrue additional benefits in terms of strengthening the commitments that bring them together in the first place: Jewish identity, philanthropic generosity and an actionable desire to help one’s community.”

The *Jewish Observer* is proud to feature four exceptional community volunteers in this issue devoted to thankfulness.



Sharon Birnkrant is a retired school principal who leads the Coffee Club with the residents of The Oaks at Menorah Park every weekday morning. She describes what she does: “We have coffee, conversations and collegiality. We support each other with our pains and pleasures. We discuss the weather, sports scores, food, and politics I share stories of the antics of the students I tutor at Nottingham High School. They share memories of their days growing

up, in school, the military and on the job. I bring them jigsaw puzzles, treasures from garage sales, and items they have had trouble finding. I also try to make them laugh. They are eager to live life to the fullest and support each other. They rejuvenate me and constantly remind me that age is only a number. The Coffee Club is a community of friends that cares about each other and the world they live in. I try to help make this period of their lives easier, whether it’s finding a tax preparer or books they have been dying to read.” Summing up her feelings about her volunteerism, Sharon says, “It’s a blessing to volunteer there and I feel like I’m with family. They give me more than I could ever give them.”



a Latin root meaning something like “of one’s own choice.” How Jewish that is: volunteering as an exercise of free will. Those of us who volunteer do so out of choice, not obligation, and offering what you do best and love most brings great satisfaction. Words are my thing, and when what I’ve written clarifies or motivates or invites people to engage at Temple Concord, I know that I’m adding my bit to the fabric of Temple life.”

Mickey Lebowitz believes in “doing my part to carry on fabulous endearing Jewish traditions and passing them forward to the next generation, just as they were passed onto



us. I believe in the mission of *tikun olam*, a sense of meaning and purpose to leave the world better than I found it.” He says that volunteering offers him another opportunity to pursue his mission: “I believe that contributing to my community, which I love and cherish, allows me to be a part of something that is much bigger than me and I am grateful for the opportunity to be able to do so. I believe in doing my part, being civically responsible to do what needs to be done and not leaving it to ‘someone else.’ I believe and hope that volunteering brings value to people in our community while bringing me personal joy, happiness and satisfaction knowing that I might have made a positive difference in people’s lives.” What Mickey likes best about volunteering is connecting with people and developing meaningful relationships. He likes “hearing people’s unique and diverse life stories and learning from them, sharing time with people who have similar interests, values and goals and take actions to maintain and progress them, learning new skills and overcoming challenges.” He sees volunteerism as “an opportunity to lead on issues that are important to me and being part of something that is bigger than me.”



Harley Finkelstein has been a volunteer for most of his life. He recounts, “As a high school senior, I volunteered for the U.S. Army. They taught me how to peel potatoes and scrub pots and pans that are industrial size. Along with many other things. When there was a need to fill sandbags because of flooding on Oneida Lake, I felt the need to help outside of my community. When Frumah Packard Cemetery reorganized, I volunteered and became treasurer. As a senior citizen, I volunteered to peel potatoes for hundreds of latkes and scrub industrial pots and pans at Temple Adath. “Harley’s volunteering had come full circle. It’s clear that he enjoys being a volunteer. He explains: “Temple Adath

became my morning minyan place for over 10 years, before COVID. We minyanians also volunteered to prepare a nutritious breakfast, read Torah, chanted, sang, blew shofar, and enjoyed each other’s company. Oh yes, scrubbing pots and pans again. Volunteering at the Temple community is not a task. I have met many volunteers over the years and become friends. Others may do big things to enhance the Temple, but I hope my small things help, too. I believe in the saying that many hands make light work.”

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Setting the PACE

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Hillel

Can your charitable legacy extend beyond your lifetime? How can you help those in need, support your community and enrich Jewish life into the future?

The answer to these questions is a PACE fund—a Perpetual Annual Campaign Endowment fund. A Perpetual Annual Campaign Endowment (PACE) is a permanent fund endowing your annual campaign gift—a lasting legacy that will continue to make an annual gift to the Central New York Jewish community forever.

There are 49 individuals or families in our community who have PACE funds. Some donors have passed away, but their generosity is still benefiting the children, adults and seniors of today and will continue to do so forever. Others are enjoying life to the fullest, continuing their annual campaign donations but also providing additional support through the funds that their endowments are generating each and every year, again forever. When they can no longer make annual donations, their PACE fund will do so for them. Forever.

The Federation and all of its beneficiaries are extremely grateful to the philanthropic donors whose generosity will live and benefit our community without end.

Perpetual Annual Campaign Endowment funders: Allen & Nirelle Galson, Arlene and Jerome Gerber, Arnold and Libby Rubenstein, Barbara and Leslie Davis, Ben and Goldye Meltzer, Bernard and Norma Goldberg, Berse Family, Carl and Rose Rosenzweig, CEPP, Dave and Phyllis Poushter, Eve Isley, Frank and Beverly Goldberg, Gerald and Barbara Black, Gerald Levy, Gerda Friedeman/Ruth Stein, Gershon and Dina Vincow, Gloria L. and Joshua N. Goldberg, Howard and Anita Weinberger, Howard and Ellen Weinstein Family, Ivy Besdin, J. Jeffrey Solomon, Julius Esther and Helene Shrier, Matee and Sheldon Kall, Gwen Kay and Jef Sneider, Lawrence and Sandra Gingold, Lynn and Corinne Smith, M. and A., Marcum Family, Martin Irwin, Michael and Jacki Goldberg, Muriel Rubin, Neil and Jan Bronstein, Neil and Robin Goldberg, Paula Alexander, Paul B. and Georgina H. Roth, Robert and Diane G. Miron, Robert and Vicki Lieberman, Sandra and Malcolm Smith, Sanford Lavine, Sheldon and Karen Kruth, Sid and Donna Lipton, Sidney and Suzanne Devorsetz, Sidney Manes and Amy Zamkoff, Steven and Sondra Goldberg, Steven K Alexander Memorial, Stuart and Laurie Shapiro and William Serog.

Myrna Koldin, Volunteer Extraordinaire

By Sonali McIntyre

For over a decade, if you called the Onondaga County Department of Aging and Long-Term Care Services with questions, the helpful person who answered was Myrna Koldin. From 2007 until her retirement in 2020, Koldin provided assistance to those dealing with the complexities of the Medicare program in her capacity as the Aging Services Specialist. Prior to that, she served as the Senior Adult/Adult Director of the Syracuse Jewish Community Center and an Outreach Representative for New York State’s EPIC prescription program, presenting programs and assisting senior adults with their prescription options in nine counties. Koldin holds an MSW with a concentration in Gerontology from Syracuse University, as well as a B.S. in Social Work from Buffalo State College. Even in retirement, she continues to assist Medicare beneficiaries as a volunteer counselor. This year, Myrna was named chair of the board of InterFaith Works.

Volunteering has always been important to Koldin. “I started volunteering in high school,” she says. “When I got married, I wanted to meet new people and decided volunteering would be a way to that while also serving our community. I have always liked the quote from Gandhi, ‘The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.’”

In addition to playing a key role in Federation Super Sunday events, serving as Co-Chair from 2009 to 2014, Koldin has held numerous positions of responsibility in the National Council of Jewish Women and at Temple Adath Yeshurun.

In addition to her work in the Jewish community, Koldin has been a member of InterFaith Works’ Senior Companion advisory committee for the past 25 years and its Chair for the three years. She became a member of the InterFaith Works’ Board of Directors in 2022 and Board Chair in 2024.



Beth Broadway, President and CEO of InterFaith Works wrote of Koldin, “Myrna was chosen by the Nominating Committee to fulfill this role because she has been an active volunteer with our agency for over 25 years. She was first with us as a member of the advisory committee for the Senior Companion Program, and then with our newly expanded Center for Healthy Aging. She caught the attention of the Board because of her diligence, grace, and ability to pitch in wherever needed. She can do everything from running a high-level policy meeting, to setting up the snacks for the Legislative Breakfast! Myrna is a big thinker with the ability to roll up her sleeves.”

Koldin declares, “Being a volunteer has given me more than I could have imagined. It has helped shape who I am. I love working to make our community the kind that provides for all who live here.”



Wishing you a Happy Thanksgiving!
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A Night of Gratitude: Lisa Levens Premieres Hodaya Album

By Yolanda Febles

Gratitude was the driving force behind the launch of *Hodaya—New Jewish Melodies* on September 10, 2024 at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas. Reflecting on the evening, Levens shared, “Just deeply grateful for the support of my community and my musicality and support of me, and I wouldn’t have launched this endeavor anywhere else. CBS-CS has embraced me, and I embrace them. I look forward to doing more.” From the moment guests entered, it was clear that every detail had been thoughtfully crafted to honor the journey of the singer-songwriter. Surrounded by community members, local dignitaries, and music lovers, Levens expressed her deep appreciation for the congregation that had supported her every step of the way.



The album’s title, *Hodaya*—meaning “thanksgiving” or “praise” in Hebrew—set the tone for the evening. The stage was adorned with vibrant colors that coordinated perfectly with the promotional posters and invites Levens designed. The menu of light bites and desserts was carefully selected and catered by CBS-CS Sisterhood. A film crew was on hand to capture the performance, ensuring that every moment would be remembered.

As the music began, Levens took the stage alongside five standout musicians: Todd Hobin on guitar, Brett Hobin on bass, Judy Stanton on violin, Matt Ulrich on cello, and Gary D. Lucas on percussion. Together, they brought *Hodaya* to life, performing a mix of Hebrew and English songs that seamlessly blended traditional Jewish prayers with Levens’ original compositions.

Levens’ journey has been nurtured by many within the CBS-CS community. From her first steps in leading services to the production of this album, the support from her congregation has been unwavering. Rabbi Oren Steinitz

reflected on this journey: “It has been an honor to witness Lisa’s leadership and talents blossom.”

Hodaya CDs were available for purchase, and many left with not just the album, but also with a renewed sense of connection to the music and the community. For those who missed the event or want to experience more of Levens’ soulful music, she leads Friday night *Kabbalat* and *Ma’ariv* services at CBS-CS, known as “*Shirat Shabbat* with Lisa Levens,” which are open to all.

To stay informed about services with Levens, go to <http://eepurl.com/dsYgh5>. For information about Levens and her new album, visit her website, www.lisalevensmusic.com.

SHDS Students Show Gratitude at Hancock Air Base

By Melissa Klemperer



Students from Syracuse Hebrew Day School’s fourth through sixth grades were treated to an extraordinary field trip to Hancock Air Base. The students had a chance to explore the heart of the base’s operations, gaining an up-close look at some of the impressive technology and equipment used by the U.S. Air Force.

One of the day’s highlights was the students’ visit to the hangar, where they marveled at the enormous drones that play a crucial role in modern military operations. The sheer size and advanced technology left many in awe, providing a real-world glimpse into the tools that help keep our country safe.



In addition to the drones, the students were given a tour of several Air Force vehicles. The opportunity to climb aboard and learn about these impressive machines made the experience all the more immersive.

The excitement was palpable as students asked questions and learned directly from the experts who operate them daily.

As part of their visit, the students also brought a special piece of their own tradition to share. They blew the shofar alongside the service members, adding a meaningful touch to the visit. The powerful sound of the shofar resonated, symbolizing unity and respect, a moment that left both the students and the military personnel moved.

The visit concluded on a heartfelt note as students expressed their gratitude to the men and women at Hancock Air Base. Each student had prepared a handwritten card or letter thanking the service members for their dedication and service. Along with the notes, students presented kosher goodie bags as a gesture of appreciation, which were warmly received by the airmen and women.

The trip was a remarkable blend of education, inspiration, and cultural exchange. For the students of Syracuse Hebrew Day School, the visit to Hancock Air Base was more than just a field trip; it was a chance to connect with their local heroes and gain valuable insight into the vital role of the Air Force in ensuring our nation’s security.



Derek Black, Author of *The Klansman's Son*, to Speak at Temple Concord

By Chana Meir

R. Derek Black will discuss *The Klansman's Son: My Journey from White Nationalism to Antiracism* at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 7, 2024, as part of Temple Concord's Regina F. Goldenberg Cultural Series.

Black (who uses the pronouns they/ them) is the son of Don Black, a former Grand Wizard in the Ku Klux Klan who started the neo-Nazi internet forum Stormfront. Schooled in hatred by their father and close family friend David Duke, Black was expected to take over the white nationalist movement in the United States.

In 2013, while in college with students of different religions and races, Black was ignored and isolated by most of the student body. But a Jewish classmate, Matthew Stevenson, invited Black to Shabbat dinner in his dorm. The dinner turned into an ongoing relationship with the Jewish community that led Black to

renounce white nationalism and eventually apologize for their former actions.

Observing the spread and mainstreaming of hate during 2016, Black felt that they could no longer stay silent and begin writing their story of "a childhood built on fear, and of breaking from a community of hate." Nancy MacLean, author of *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: the Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, calls *The Klansman's Son* a "must-read for all who hunger for hope in these cruel times."

Black is a doctoral candidate in history at the University of Chicago. Since 2016 they have spoken at numerous venues such as universities, foundations, synagogues, and churches. They are the recipient of the Elie Wiesel Award and a humanitarian award from the Anti-Defamation League.

This event is virtual and free. To receive the Zoom link, register by clicking on the link on the Events Calendar at templeconcord.org.

Are You the Grandchild of Holocaust Survivors?

By Eileen Angelini

Grandchildren of Holocaust survivors are invited to join a new Upstate New York group of 3GNY to connect with other regional 3Gs (3rd-Generation descendants of survivors). 3GNY is an educational non-profit that brings together 3Gs to educate diverse communities about the perils of intolerance.

3GNY's signature education program WEDU (We Educate) provides guest speakers to visit middle and high school classrooms, in-person or virtually, to share compelling family stories of surviving the Holocaust. As grandchildren of survivors, 3GNY speakers make personal connections with students which leave a lasting impact. Hearing WEDU speakers share their grandparents' Holocaust stories helps students:

- Connect a human face to the past and create a living link to the present;
- Deepen their understanding of the impacts of antisemitism and hatred;
- Think critically about their individual and collective roles in standing up to hatred and acting with courage and compassion; and,
- Spark their curiosity to learn more about history and their own family stories.

An information session will be held on Monday, November 18, 2024 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Congregation Beth Shalom-Chevra Shas, 18 Patsy Lane, Jamesville, NY. Coffee and snacks will be served.

Participants will discuss their shared Holocaust legacy and how they can work together to educate the next generation. They will also explore ways that they can support Holocaust education in Central New York and proactively counter antisemitism and hate. To attend, contact Eileen Angelini at eangelini@3gnewyork.org. To learn more about 3GNY, go to www.3gny.org/.

Those who cannot attend the November 18 meeting but want to learn more and get involved should contact Eileen Angelini, Upstate Regional Coordinator, at eangelini@3gnewyork.org.

Childcare Providers Express Appreciation for Security Grant

The \$50,000 grant the Federation obtained from the Jewish Federations of North America and the Tepple Foundation provided much-appreciated financial support for security costs for two local entities. Alicia Gross, executive director of Temple Adath Yeshurun, expressed thanks "to our partner the Jewish Federation of Central New York," noting that the \$25,000 security grant their Rothschild Early Childhood Center received "will help us bolster security at our early childhood school year program and summer camp program, as we are committed to creating safe spaces for children at RECC. Together, we will stand against hate and intolerance and build a stronger community for all." The Jewish Community Center's executive director Marci Erlebacher wrote to thank the Federation "for your support of the Jewish Community Center of Syracuse and your efforts to continuously provide security for the entire campus." She concluded "we thank you again for your support and assistance in applying for this essential grant for our organization. We truly couldn't have done any of this without the Jewish Federation of CNY."

NCJW Promotes The Vote as A Jewish Value

By Joan Bordett and Marlene Holstein

Founded in 1893, the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) is the oldest Jewish women's grassroots organization in the country and is continually guided by Jewish values that call for the improvement of the lives of the most vulnerable women, children and families. NCJW works in both the United States and Israel to achieve this goal. The local Greater Syracuse Section was founded only three years later in 1896.

NCJW advocates have encouraged voter engagement for decades by registering people to vote, educating communities on the issues they care about, strengthening and expanding voting rights and getting out the vote on Election Day.

As part of this year's national NCJW "Promote The Vote—Protect The Vote" efforts, NCJW is emphasizing the connection between Jewish values and voting. Everyone is encouraged to vote and express their Jewish values.

Voting and Judaism

NCJW
National Council of Jewish Women

VOTE

We are commanded to pursue justice.
Tzedek tzedek tirdof — or justice, justice shall you pursue. This is the guiding imperative of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW). Our tradition teaches that we have an obligation to secure access to health care, welcome immigrants, care for those in poverty, ensure fair wages, and much more. We can impact the way the United States lives out these principles by voting.

We must contribute to the place where we live.
Based on Jewish experiences of the Diaspora (starting in the 6th century BCE with the Babylonian exile), Jewish leaders have taught that our well-being is tied up with the well-being of the places in which we find ourselves. Through voting, we invest in the welfare of America and its democratic ideals.

We need to exercise our rights.
Many rabbis have extended the idea of *hakarat hatov* — recognizing and appreciating the opportunities we have — to voting. Throughout history, there have been few times when Jews were able to have a say in the composition of their government. Our history compels us to exercise the rights that we have now and drives our work to strengthen and expand those rights for not only all Jews, but all people in the United States.

We cannot remain silent.
The Talmud teaches that anyone who sees harm and does not speak out is held responsible. Our vote is our voice, and we must also protest attacks on the rights of other voters. We are obligated to speak up and take action to ensure that every eligible person can cast a vote and have that vote counted.

We believe equality is a core Jewish value.
Judaism teaches we are all created in the divine image, *b'tzelem Elohim*. This means we are all equal, yet the United States is rife with injustice that particularly impacts people of color. Voter suppression tactics, such as voter purges and gerrymandering, hurt our democracy; we are obligated to fight for equal access to the ballot for all.

It's on us.
A midrash teaches, "If a person sits in their home and says to themselves, 'What have the affairs of society to do with me?... Why should I trouble myself with the people's voices of protest? Let my soul dwell in peace!' — If one does this, they overthrow the world." Staying on the sidelines is in itself an act of destruction. We each must do our part to repair the world.

Greater Syracuse Section • ncjw.syracuse@gmail.com
National Council of Jewish Women • ncjw.org

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in the **DECEMBER** Holiday issue of the *Jewish Observer*

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TAY Shabbat Happiness

By Alicia Gross

In the month of November Temple Adath Yeshurun celebrates thankfulness and family togetherness. The Jewish people are so fortunate to have a holiday each week called Shabbat. TAY is providing different opportunities in a monthly rotation to celebrate Shabbat together. Starting with the First Friday of the month, Shabbat is welcomed in person with a moving, musical Kabbalat Shabbat service. Each Shabbat morning, Rabbi Saks takes time to teach about the workings and meanings of the prayers in the *Siddur Lev Shalem* providing a deeper understanding of the prayers. On the second Shabbat of the month, congregants stay after Saturday morning services for a Lunch & Learn to discuss the Jewish approach to various issues of the day. The third Shabbat of the month, they enjoy Shabbat dinner together after Kabbalat Shabbat services. Rounding out the end of the month, the fourth Shabbat morning is a Family Shabbat followed by kiddush lunch together. This new rhythm of services and shared meals will help congregants connect with each other as they take the time to slow down and reconnect after a long week of work. Everyone is invited to join TAY for one or all.

חדשות טובות

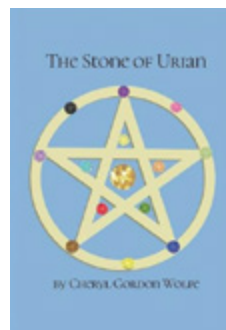
Hadashot Tovot



Carla & Mark Bregman celebrating 40 joyous years of marriage, on Mohonk Lake in the Hudson Valley.



Tovah Lieberman and Jeremy Drazner are engaged to be married in Chicago in 2025.



Cheryl Gordon Wolfe recently published her first fantasy fiction novel. *The Stone of Urian* is available for purchase on Amazon.



Ona & Bernie Bregman, with their family, celebrating 67 incredible years of marriage.



Welcome Raphael James (Naphtali ben Simcha)

Celebrating the Holiday Season at the JCC

By Carlett Spike

The holiday season which means time to celebrate at the Pomeranz Jewish Community Center, where there is something to get everyone in the spirit. The celebrations begin on November 26 with classroom Friendsgiving Meals for preschool and pre-K children in the Early Childhood Development Program (ECDP). Classes will partake in a traditional Thanksgiving meal and will work together to create decorations to display in the classroom. As themes of kindness and gratitude are at the heart of Thanksgiving, classes will also discuss the importance of these principles.



ECDP will continue its celebrations later that week on December 19 with parties in their classrooms. “We love to take this opportunity to teach our community about Jewish holidays, identity and the value of community,” said Pam Ranieri, director of children’s programming at the JCC. “These special days help create traditions for our children at a young age that will last a lifetime.”



Seniors will also have unique opportunities to gather and celebrate throughout the holiday season. **Thanksgiving lunch is scheduled for November 22 and Chanukah lunch will be on December 6.** Both lunches will begin at noon and reservations are required. To end the year on a high note, a New Year’s Eve celebration is scheduled for December 31 at 5 p.m. Seniors are invited for both food and fun as the community rings in the new year.

The holidays are not only about celebrating. They are also a great opportunity to give back. **The community can support the JCC by shopping at the annual Holiday Shopping Soiree in the JCC gymnasium on Wednesday, December 4 from 5 to 7:30 p.m.** This fundraiser helps support the Early

Childhood Development Program as a portion of all sales are donated back to ECDP. The annual Gift Card Fundraiser is another chance for the community to support ECDP and children’s programming. Gift cards for a variety of purchases from clothing and dining to health and travel will be available through the JCC. Gift card forms can be found on the JCC’s website (jccsyr.org) and are due by December 13. Gift cards will be received by December 20.

Childhood Development Program as a portion of all sales are donated back to ECDP. The annual Gift Card Fundraiser is another chance for the community to support ECDP and children’s programming. Gift cards for a variety of purchases from clothing and dining to health and travel will be available through the JCC. Gift card forms can be found on the JCC’s website (jccsyr.org) and are due by December 13. Gift cards will be received by December 20.

For more information about fundraisers, reach out to Amy Bisnett at abisnett@jccsyr.org. For more information about the celebrations, visit the JCC’s website: jccsyr.org.



As the calendar rolls into December, celebrations for Chanukah will begin on Sunday, December 15 at 12:30 p.m. with the JCC’s annual Community Chanukah Party. All are invited to the JCC gymnasium to celebrate Jewish culture and traditions during this exciting afternoon. The community can enjoy refreshments and a variety of foods including latkes, bagels, *sufganiyot*, and more. Inflatables, crafts, face painting and other activities will be available for children to enjoy. The community is also invited to the front steps of the JCC as the chanukiyah is lit at 4:30 p.m. every weeknight during Chanukah.



The Israel Initiative for Yom haAtzmaut 5785

By Kelly Klapper

Get ready to embark on an exciting journey through Israel with “Israel Quest: An Epic Adventure Through History, Culture, and Tastes!” This new initiative, developed by a group of community educators, will begin in the December issue of the *Jewish Observer* and will continue to *Yom Ha’Atzmaut*. It will be a fun and interactive way for kids to explore the wonders of Israel through games, puzzles, art, and more.

Each month, we will dive into a new topic with activities designed just for kids. From Chanukah traditions in Israel to the country’s diversity and even the story of Israel’s rise as a Startup Nation, there’s something for everyone. Using QR codes, participants will unlock a treasure trove of multimedia surprises, making this journey even more fun.

All community children’s organizations, including the day school, the community Hebrew school, synagogue youth programs, PJ Library and the Epstein School will contribute awesome content designed for different age groups. Here’s what to look forward to each month:

DECEMBER: Chanukah in Israel
JANUARY: Notable Israelis
FEBRUARY: Tu b’Shevat and Israel as a Startup Nation
MARCH: Diversity in Israel
APRIL: The History of Israel

Orit Antosh, who spearheaded the project said, “Everything will come together on Thursday, May 1st, at the community *Yom Ha’Atzmaut* celebration, where you’ll get to show off what you’ve learned, created, and discovered. We can’t wait to see what you’ll achieve on this epic adventure!”

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LYNN MITCHELL
September 5, 2024

Lynn Mitchell, Cantor Francine Berg's mother, passed away peacefully on September 5, 2024 at the age of 102.

Lynn was a talented woman who sang in New York City nightclubs in her 20's. She continued singing and dancing after she met her husband Ira Mitchell at a Hadassah dance in 1946. She opened a dance school in Geneva, New York in 1950. Lynn raised a family of three children, Fran, Alan and Andy, as she continued to entertain and run her dance school.

The highlight of her life was when, for her 80th Birthday, Lynn was a guest on the Rosie O'Donnell Show. She sang and tapped with the band and brought the house down. In 1985, Lynn and Ira retired to Florida. Lynn immediately developed a one-woman show, singing and dancing, creating her own costumes and performing in South Florida.

Lynn's husband, Ira Mitchell, predeceased her in 2018. She is survived by her children.

Contributions in Lynn's memory may be made to the Temple Concord general fund.

MICHAEL MELTZER
September 9, 2024



Michael Meltzer, 82, passed away on September 9. Born in Syracuse to Hannah and Barney Meltzer on October 31, 1941, he was a graduate of Nottingham High School and Syracuse University; he earned his master's degree from SU as well. He was a lifetime member of Temple Adath Yeshurun and a longtime member of the Fitness Center at the JCC. He was a past president and member of RAGS (Radio Amateurs of Greater Syracuse), a longtime member of LARC (Liverpool Amateur Repeater Club), was honored many times as a Distinguished Teacher, and volunteered with the Red Cross water safety program. His call sign was K2SDD. Mike became an amateur HAM radio operator at the early age of 13, and it remained a passion of his throughout his life.

He was a physics teacher at ESM for more than 30 years. He served on the Physics Regents writing committee in Albany and received numerous accolades and awards for his outstanding teaching ability and connection with his students and fellow educators.

He will always be remembered as a master storyteller and for his dry sense of humor, his kindness, and his gentle soul.

He is survived by his wife Sandy of 60 years, their children Dawn, David and Steven (Colleen); grandchildren Gabby, Jack, Josie, Brooke and Cara, sister-in-law Elaine Meltzer and a large and loving extended family. He was pre-deceased by his brother Stephen in 2019.

Contributions in Michael's memory may be made to Temple Adath Yeshurun or the JCC.

www.sisskindfuneralservice.com

ETHEL BLACK
September 15, 2024



On Wednesday, September 25, Ethel Freeman Black passed peacefully away surrounded by her loving family. She was 102 years old.

At the age of 11 she showed great ability on the violin and was taken as a special student to SU's School of Music Violin Department where she studied with Andre Polash. In her senior year of high school she competed for a full 4-year scholarship and won, which she accepted. A few years later she received a full graduate scholarship to the New York Juilliard Graduate School. Years later she became a member of the Syracuse Symphony and also had a private practice.

She married Dr. Martin Black in 1948 and had four wonderful children. They were greatly influenced by their father. They had a wonderful life doing so many beautiful family things and still do. Ethel's whole life was raising her family. That is what she loved.

She enjoyed bridge and golf and loved entertaining. She was a member of Temple Adath Yeshurun, the Auxiliary of Menorah Park, the Syracuse Jewish Federation, Sigma Alpha Iota, The National Honorary Music Organization and Hadassah.

She is survived by her four children: Dr. Gerald (Barbara), Dr. Michael (Rosemary), Dr. Robert (Regina), her wonderful daughter Deborah, her sister-in-law Ellie Freeman, 16 great-grandchildren, 8 grandchildren and numerous cousins.

Donations may be made to The American Heart Association, Temple Adath Yeshurun, or The Upstate Norton College of Medicine to benefit The Martin Black Family Scholarship Fund.

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ROBERT SILVERMAN
September 16, 2024

Robert Silverman, 89, passed away at home from natural causes. Bob was born in Syracuse on September 30, 1934 to Philip and Helen Silverman.

He was a graduate of Great Neck High School, attended Central Tech, earned his undergraduate degree from Queens College, and his JD from NYU Law School. He was a practicing attorney with the Department of Social Services for Onondaga County for more than 30 years.

Bob was a member of Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas and the Onondaga County Bar Association. After retiring, he volunteered at University Hospital. He was a wonderful husband, father and grandfather.

His family, whom he adored, includes his wife Harriet of 61 years, their son David (Jessica), daughter Stephanie, grandchildren Raia and Samuel, his brother Stuart (Irene), and his sister Suzanne Cole. Their son Paul passed away this past July.

Contributions may be made to Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas or the Southern Poverty Law Center – SPLCenter.org.

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LYNDA LLOYD FUCHS
September 17, 2024

Lynda Lloyd Fuchs, 76, died at home surrounded by her loving husband, daughters Leah and Marla, and pets on September 17, 2024.

Lynda was the daughter of the late Jack W. Lloyd and Margaret Postlewait in Punxsutawney. She lived in the village of Valier and attended elementary school in a two-room schoolhouse. She was always quick and proud to point out that all her classmates graduated high school, and many went on to complete college.

Even before graduating from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Lynda was an activist, first for civil rights, and then other social justice issues throughout her life. She was a career activist for the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, and active in a myriad of community and religious organizations. She was a member (and often officer) in Temple Sisterhood, Hadassah, WRJ, Women Transcending Boundaries, NOW and others. As an individual, she fought the good fight for special needs education and advocated for many in her lifetime.

Lynda was a licensed Ham Radio operator with a magnificent command of Morse Code. In the 1970s, her callsign WB2PGL was well known in ham circles foreign and domestic.

Lynda created a beautiful and welcoming home and gardens in Syracuse, New York, filled with life, laughter and love. She collected meaningful objects from the people and places and was known for her kindness and openness. She welcomed many new and old friends and family who gathered in her home for holidays and celebrations, making sure that visitors always left with more friendships, food and art. Her beaded jewelry and art can be found around the world.

Lynda leaves a relatively small family, but a very large community. She is survived by husband Jeffrey, daughters Leah Fuchs (Lars Kalnajs) of Boulder, Colorado and Marla Fuchs (Timothy Sendall), grandchildren Izaak, Amos, Iona and Magnus, all of Cambridge, UK; brothers-in-law Ron Fuchs (Susan) in Florida and Ken Fuchs in Charlottesville, Virginia, Jim Lantz and extended family in Pennsylvania and chosen family and friends around the world.

Lynda donated her body to Upstate Medical University. Please consider making a donation in Lynda's memory to SUNY Upstate Medical Cancer Center; Planned Parenthood; Spay and Neuter Syracuse; or a charity of your choosing.

MICHAEL J. BALANOFF
September 19, 2024



Jewish Federation President/CEO and Foundation Executive Director Michael J.

Balanoff, 82, passed away on Thursday, September 19. Born on May 21, 1942 in Arlington, MA to Abraham and Helen Balanoff, he had been a resident of Syracuse for more than 50 years.

He was a graduate of Lawrence High School, Tufts University and Boston College Law School. Michael was drafted into the U.S. Army following graduation from law school in 1967. He was awarded the Bronze Star for his service.

Michael and Euni met at a party before he went to Vietnam and they were married in 1970 when he returned from the war. They settled in Syracuse where she was from and began their life together. Mike started his law career, becoming partner in his own firm before combining forces with Bousquet Holstein to manage their bankruptcy arm. He served as director of development of Legal Services of CNY, was the former president of Temple Beth El, the former president of the JCC and the former president of Syracuse Jewish Federation. He was the 2023 honoree of the Interfaith Leadership Award and a member of the Round Table of Faith Leaders. Most notably, Michael was a proud supporter of the Syracuse Jewish community and devoted to revitalizing it.

Michael was devoted to his family—his wife Euni (Cohn) Balanoff, their sons Jared (Stacie), Brian (Jamie) and Noah (Samantha), their grandchildren Sarah, Jacob, Miriam, Lucy, Ellie and Alex, and his brothers Gil (Shelly) and Glen (Kate). He was predeceased by his sister Joyce.

Contributions in his memory may be made to the Syracuse Jewish Federation or Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas.

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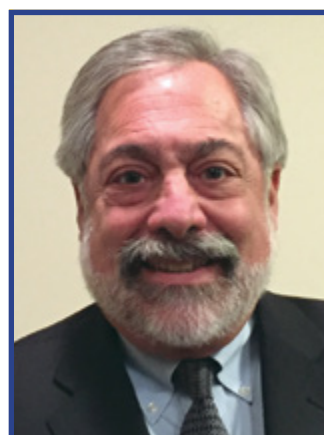
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Each generation of Jews has the blessing and the responsibility of ensuring the future of our people.

When you create an endowment at the Jewish Community Foundation, you leave a legacy that demonstrates your commitment to the future.

Because of you, we will grow from strength to strength here at home, in Israel and around the world.

To establish your endowment fund at the Jewish Community Foundation, please contact Barbara Davis at bdavis@jewishfoundationcny.org.