

» HAPPY TU B'SHEVAT!

Jewish Observer of Central New York

A publication of the Jewish Federation of Central New York

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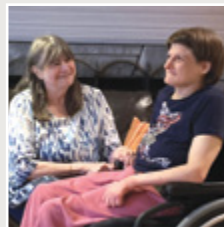
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FEBRUARY 2025 | SHEVAT 5785



**February is Jewish Disability Awareness
and Inclusion Month**

EMBRACE EVERY ABILITY



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OUR BONES
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NEW
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From the Editor



Barbara Davis

The always quotable Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks wrote: “Every Jew is a letter. Each Jewish family is a word, every community a sentence, and the Jewish people at any one time are a paragraph. The Jewish people through time constitute a story, the strangest and most moving story in the annals of humankind.”

“Every Jew is a letter.” What a profoundly beautiful concept. “Every Jew.” Not “some Jews” or “smart Jews” or “rich Jews” or even “generous Jews.” “EVERY Jew.” And every Jew is part of a word, part of a family, just as every letter is part of a word. February is Jewish Disability and Inclusion Month. When we think of all Jews as letters, parts of families that are words, parts of words that make up a sentence, which is a community – and part of the paragraph which is the Jewish people, we realize what inclusion really means.

We know that the Jewish people, like people everywhere, have to cope with disabilities, some visible and some not visible. The Torah deals with some of these issues. Leviticus 19:14 forbids insulting the deaf or placing a stumbling block before the blind. Other biblical statements about disability are more problematic. The language of Leviticus 21 is stark: “No man of your offspring throughout the ages who has a defect shall be qualified to offer the food of his God. No one at all who has a defect shall be qualified: no man who is blind, or lame; or has a limb too short or too long; no man who has a broken leg or a broken arm; or who is a hunchback, or a dwarf, or who has a growth on his eye, or who has a boil-scar, or scurvy, or crushed testes. No man among the offspring of Aaron the Priest who has a defect shall be qualified to offer the Lord’s offering by fire; having a defect, he shall not be qualified to offer the food of his God. He may eat of the food of his God, of the most holy as well as of the holy; but he shall not enter behind the curtain or come near the altar, for he has a defect. He shall not profane these places sacred to Me, for I the Lord have sanctified them.”

Approaches to disability within Jewish law have changed over time. Issues involving disability in the Jewish community have, if anything, grown more complex since ancient times. The status of Jews who are deaf provides an example. A *heresh* is a person who is both deaf and mute. Because traditional Jewish culture was predominantly oral/aural, with speaking and hearing being the primary modes of teaching and learning, some rabbinic sources assumed that a person who could neither hear nor speak was unable to learn or communicate. They were thus exempted from virtually all Jewish rituals and obligations. Yet the Babylonian Talmud reports that the mute sons of Rabbi Yonanan ben Gudgada studied with the great authority Rabbi Judah the Patriarch and acquired expert knowledge of Jewish scripture and law. Further, the Mishnah maintains that a *heresh* can transact business via sign language or by lip-reading and may contract a marriage or divorce by means of gesture.

Fast forward to the 21st century. It is known today that congenital deafness occurs in approximately 1 in 1000 live births, and 50 percent of these cases are hereditary. Scientists have identified a gene called connexin 26 (GJB2) that is a major cause of inherited deafness in Ashkenazi Jews. The finding is one of several recent advances that make it possible to offer genetic tests to help people determine why they are deaf and to confirm a diagnosis of deafness in infants too young for hearing tests. But an article in *The NY Times* points out that “the research is controversial, because it means that fetuses can also be tested, raising the possibility that some parents might choose abortion rather than give birth to a child who cannot hear. In addition, some Jewish people fear that genetic studies involving Jews will stigmatize them by creating the false impression that they are more prone than others to hereditary disease.”

There are other diseases that are genetically based and thus more common among Individuals of Ashkenazi Jewish descent because this population originally lived isolated from others. This increased the risk for autosomal recessive genetic disorders such as cystic fibrosis, Canavan disease, familial dysautonomia, Tay-Sachs disease, Fanconi anemia and Gaucher disease, among others. Such is also the case with Parkinson’s disease. A paper in *JAMA*, the journal of the American Medical Association, entitled “Genetic movement disorders in patients of Jewish ancestry,” revealed that “genetic forms of PD are much more common in patients of Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry with sporadic and familial PD than in the non-Jewish population.” That is why the *JO* is devoting space in this issue to this particular disability.

But the *Observer’s* primary focus this month is not on disability but on awareness and inclusion. February is, as our cover notes, Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month. Our stories in this issue are about people who are working on both awareness and inclusion. At the heart of Jewish teachings about human worth is the concept of *b’tzelem Elohim*—the belief that all people are created in the image of God. Because community is central to Jewish life, ensuring the inclusion of individuals with disabilities is a moral and communal responsibility. God selected Moses, a man with a speech impediment, to be his spokesperson. Could there be a better way to raise awareness about the experiences and rights of people with disabilities within Jewish spaces? That is why the *JO* is proud to highlight the works of two local authors who show us how Jewish communities can build a future where diversity of human life.

In an article entitled “The Care of Patients with Dementia: A Modern Jewish Ethical Perspective,” three physicians cite the following passage from the Talmud: “Therefore man was created as a single human being, to teach that if any person causes a single life to perish, Scripture regards him as if he had caused an entire world to perish; and if any person saves a single life, he is regarded as one who has saved an entire world.” The authors say, “This statement demonstrates the extraordinary value placed on even a single human life, irrespective of its quality, in a totally nonutilitarian way. According to Judaism, life possesses an intrinsic value as a divine gift of creation.”

Celebrating life in all its many forms is a theme that runs throughout this issue. In Israel, where the almond trees are springing to life again with beautiful white blossoms, *Tu b’Shevat* reminds us that life is good and that all lives matter. As we look ahead with hope and optimism, enjoying the blessings of renewal, let us rededicate ourselves to making our world a better place for all.

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We invite you to lead and inspire our community by making a generous gift to the Jewish Federation’s 2025 Campaign for Jewish Life.



Let’s Get Our Mahj On

In *Mahjong: A Chinese Game and the Making of Modern American Culture*, historian Annelise Heinz describes how mah jongg connected American expatriates in Shanghai, Jazz Age white Americans, urban Chinese Americans in the 1930s, incarcerated Japanese Americans in wartime, Jewish American suburban mothers and Air Force officers’ wives in the postwar era. Heinz explains that mah jongg contributed to a greater sense of belonging for groups of “others,” in particular Jewish and Asian American women.

Mah jongg is a game of skill, strategy and luck, played in groups of four, using a set of 144 tiles based on Chinese characters and symbols. It arrived in America from China in the 1920s and ‘30s. In 1937, a group of Jewish women formed the National Mah Jongg League, unifying rules and creating annual cards dictating permissible tile combinations. In Americanizing the game (and adding the second g), they made mah jongg a unique part of Jewish American culture. Mah jongg’s appeal lay not only in the play but in its ability to foster social connections, provide a sense of community and allow women to bond, share stories and support one another.

Mah jongg has experienced a renaissance in recent decades, with younger and older players rediscovering the game. For both experienced players and curious novices, mah jongg promises camaraderie, laughter and a sense of belonging that’s as timeless as the game itself. **The Federation’s Lions of Judah and Pomegranate Society members invite the community to play or learn Mah jongg at a fun-filled evening on February 2.**





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The Symbolism of Trees at Tu b'Shevat

by Rabbi Ilan Emanuel, Temple Concord

We all know that the 1st of Tishrei, otherwise known as Rosh Hashanah, is the Jewish New Year. But according to the Mishnah there are, in fact, four new years in Judaism. One of them, Tu B'Shevat (the 15th of Shvat), is the new year for the trees. But what does that mean? Different rabbis over the years have had different views.

Initially, it was the beginning and end of the cycle of tithing (like yearly taxes) for the support of the priests and the poor. The Jewish mystics in the 16th century and beyond connected the trees to the Garden of Eden and the imagery of the Torah as a tree of life and saw Tu b'Shevat as an opportunity to fix the world and return us to a place of wholeness and peace as we were in the Garden of Eden. In modern times Tu b'Shevat has become significant from a Zionist perspective, focusing on the Jewish connection to the land and reflecting the essential role of tree planting in the early years of reclaiming the land for building and agriculture. And it is now a significant focus of Jewish environmentalism, using the symbolism of trees as a focus for celebrating nature and our responsibility as humankind to conserve God's creation and ensure that future generations can enjoy the pleasures of the earth and nature for many years to come.

But as different as these views are, they all have themes in common. In the imagery of trees, each of these



views reminds us of the importance of being rooted - in our tradition, in our community, and in the living Judaism of modern Israel. And, of course, the deeper our roots and our commitment to all of these the stronger we will be and the more we will find strength and support to face the many challenges the world throws at us.

In a profoundly selfish and self-centered age, these perspectives on Tu b'Shevat also remind us of our responsibilities to something greater than ourselves - to humanity, to Jewish peoplehood and the land of Israel and to the earth itself - inspiring us to connect with others and not to turn in on ourselves.

And all these perspectives reinforce the central Jewish ideal that we can make the world better by our actions. Like a seed planted in fertile soil, the festival of Tu b'Shevat has grown beyond its origins and become something so much more. We can do the same for ourselves and others as we water our moral, spiritual and physical well-being to blossom as human beings and draw on our rootedness and connections to help ourselves and the world grow like a beautiful tree, bearing beautiful fruit for all to enjoy.

» BOOK REVIEW

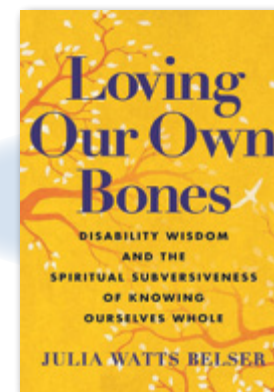
Loving Our Own Bones

by Julia Watts Belser

Reviewed by Jessie Kerr-Whitt



"Disability has taught me much about potent spiritual subversiveness of being radically comfortable in my own skin, of daring to find the presence of G-d in this fierce and fragile flesh."



In her book about disability wisdom, Rabbi Julia Watts Belser, a professor of Jewish Studies at Georgetown University and a longtime activist for disability justice, begins by defining disability, whether hidden or visible, in the social-political dimensions in which we live now. She continues with a detailed analysis of Leviticus

21 where the biblical criteria for which priests can come to the altar are cited. Priesthood is an inherited position (for men only, of course), but there is an emphasis on their bodies being without blemish or flaw when performing the rituals. As you might imagine, she has some issues with the biblical focus on physical perfection.

Rabbi Belser looks closely at the biblical stories of physically disabled figures such as Isaac, Jacob and Moses. She encourages us to consider the possibility that Isaac is visually impaired long before he is "tricked" by Rebecca and Jacob and asks us to ponder the impact it might have had his whole life. Jacob's encounter with the angel disables him, yes, but it is the angel who pleads to be released and then gives Jacob a new name. Moses's self-claimed inability to speak fluently is discussed in great detail, and the different facets of its effect on his interactions throughout his life provide many challenges to the reader's understanding of both the text and one's own views of the nature of disability. She concludes the chapter focusing on Moses's delivery of the words of Deuteronomy, disputing the often-drawn inference of flawless fluency: "...the Torah of Moses told in his own truest tongue. Moses becomes a man of words by claiming his place before his people as an unabashedly disabled speaker... I hear him stutter without shame."

The book's final chapter is entitled "G-d on Wheels" and focuses primarily on Ezekiel's famous vision of the fiery chariot and the angelic figures. Rabbi Belser shares her joy in recognizing that this vision celebrates divinity on wheels, that it's a wondrous thing, and that the existence of her wheelchair, the wheels on which she rides, is also wondrous: "As a disabled theologian, the practice of turning my attention to a G-d who wheels through the world has permitted me to let go of apology, to stop trying to press my spiritual insights into a walking person's skin."

Each of us was created *b'tzelem Elohim*, in the image of G-d. The author calls on each of us to develop our own relationship with G-d, with our own bones. I found this book very thought-provoking and well worth the read. I recommend it highly!

Jessie Kerr-Whitt taught at the Syracuse Hebrew Day School for 36 years, after which she studied for her ordination as a Maggidah, a Jewish spiritual storyteller. She is the mother of an amazing multiply-disabled woman.



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Disability and Denial

by Michael Gordon, Ph.D.

My mother shook her head in mournful reflection: “If only we could find David a program that would prepare him for college, maybe he could learn a profession.”

Her comment stopped me cold. David had graduated from high school, but under special circumstances and thanks to a small army of tutors and the beneficence of the local school system. While he had much to offer then as now, he was not college material, to put it mildly. Anything in his life that required him to process information, communicate clearly, or manipulate numbers was daunting for him. Anyone spending even a few minutes with David would know that his life course would take him on a tack more vocational than professional.

As she turned for a response, I found myself at a loss for words, at least kind ones. What came to mind fell more along the lines of “Are you nuts?” I didn’t quite know how to tell my otherwise highly intelligent and insightful mother that her dreams of a post-secondary education for

David were way, way out of bounds. And so I didn’t. I just mumbled something about how we might want to focus more on helping him keep his job at the supermarket.

My mother’s difficulty fully accepting David’s limitations were usually kept well under wraps. But it wouldn’t be unusual for her to express what I came to label in my clinical work as “If Only’s.” We’d be talking about David’s struggles, and she’d say something like, “If only we could have gotten him into that special preschool” or “If only his neurologist had started anticonvulsants earlier.” At the heart of each musing was the (unrealistic) notion that David’s limitations would be remediable “if only” she and my father had made the right decisions. But, of course, David’s limitations were not benign. While not devastating, they were certainly

sufficient to forever preclude admission to postgraduate training.

When we trade reason for whimsy, the exchange serves a purpose. My mother’s fantasy about David going to college was just that – a dream that was born of her refusal to fully acknowledge the reality of his limitations. She couldn’t let go of the notion that David could be normal – if only. It was important for her to cling to the hope, the comforting self-delusion, that miracles might happen, notwithstanding the improbabilities. As such, she acted like so many of us when we are confronted with painful circumstances. She let a gauzy fantasy salve a reality too harsh to manage comfortably.

Most parents will find a way to blame themselves for whatever might have gone wrong for their children. I have heard parents express remorse for passing along a genetic condition, when they had no control over how their DNA combined. A mother once told me she’d never forgive herself for a taking a glass of wine during her pregnancy, even though the likelihood of a single chardonnay causing learning disabilities is beyond remote. The capacity for a parent to assume culpability is boundless. They work their way back along

the chain of events until they can grab hold of a link that has their name etched upon the steel.

When parents are stuck in guilt and denial mode, it becomes harder for them or others to help the cause. Children won’t make much progress if their parents are ambivalent, unsupportive, distracted, hostile, externalizing, reactive, depressed, minimizing, unmotivated or impatient. Children won’t even arrive for treatment on a consistent basis if mom and dad are too busy hiding from reality or chasing illusory solutions.

I’m a lifelong fan of denial as a way of dulling the pain and infusing hope for a better outcome. I don’t blame anyone for endeavoring to make the bumps of life smoother. But the point of diminishing returns looms large when denial stands in the way of healthy coping. It’s fine to see the world through those rose-colored glasses if you remember that the tint of the lens impacts your perception of reality.

Effective problem solving, regardless of the circumstances, requires a clear-eyed acceptance of the facts at hand. In my experience, confronting those realities squarely is always the best first step toward progress.



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Menorah Park Services for Jewish Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

by Mary Ellen Bloodgood

Jewish tradition teaches us that each of us, with all of our differences, is created by God to be exactly as we are. As a Jewish community, it is our obligation to ensure equal access for all people and to help facilitate the full participation of individuals with disabilities in the life of our community. In *Ethics of the Fathers* 2:5, we read, “Do not separate yourself from the community.” Accordingly, we must prevent anyone from being separated from the community. The Havurah at Menorah Park, programs designed to meet the spiritual needs of people with cognitive and developmental disabilities, helps us fulfill this communal responsibility.

Since 2008 when Menorah Park opened *Beit Tikvah*, the first and only home for Jewish young adults in the Central New York region, we have continued to provide outreach to other Jewish members living in secular group homes. Through the auspices of the *Havurah* and the *Tachlis* of Inclusion Program (which was recognized

as an award winning Jewish program by the Association of Jewish Aging Services in 2018), Menorah Park understands the need and importance of inclusivity and maintaining opportunities to fully live a Jewish life, regardless of community setting.

The Beit Tikvah Group Residence welcomes up to four young women living with developmental disabilities. The residence provides a comfortable environment that meets diverse developmental, emotional, and physical requirements. To ensure a safe environment, trained direct care staff offer 24/7 supervision. During their time at Beit Tikvah, residents are encouraged to prepare for greater living independence. Our team works with each resident to define habilitation goals and increase autonomy, as well as to emphasize community integration through a variety of unique programming. Residents and their guests partake in essential Jewish traditions and holidays during their stay,

providing a strong connection to their spiritual community.

The three most important and directed programs for people with disabilities are the *Havurah*, *Chaverim L'Avodah*, and *Tachlis* of Inclusion programs. The goals of the programs are to provide projects that foster inclusion of people with disabilities

within the Jewish community, encourage creating of a culture of welcoming and acceptance of persons within the Jewish community and energize and strengthen our organization in the field of inclusion and create new programs.

Susie Drazen, director of development at the Menorah Park Foundation, is a strong community and social services professional and a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. As part of her portfolio at Menorah Park, she regularly reaches out to other care centers to provide information about Jewish holidays and invitations to their Jewish residents to attend Jewish community events. “What we do really makes a difference,” she says.

Is Old Age a Disability?

The Americans with Disabilities Act defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. So while old age is not itself a disability, aging can lead to disabilities. As people grow older, they experience changes in hearing, seeing and moving and may develop chronic conditions such as Parkinson's or Alzheimer's disease. Judaism considers aging a gift and not a disability. Proverbs 16:31 says, “Gray hair is a crown of glory; It is attained by the way of righteousness,” Leviticus 19:32 says, “You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old.” Nonetheless, everyone knows that there are disability issues that need to be addressed with those who are older, because these issues “limit major life activity.”

Menorah Park, Temple Adath Yeshurun and Temple Concord are partnering to present a community-wide event, titled “Menorah Park and You: Pathways to Care for All Generations.” The idea for the program came from the many questions that have been asked by members of the community regarding services available at Menorah Park and how families are able to access those services. Many do not realize that Menorah Park offers a full continuum of care for seniors through the Oaks, the Inn and the Jewish Home of Central New York. The Oaks offers independent living in a safe and secure environment, the Inn offers assisted living for those who may need some help in their daily activities, and the Jewish Home provides rehabilitation



services and skilled nursing for short or long term medical needs. Menorah Park also has an elder shelter for victims of domestic abuse, an adult day rehabilitation program and a group residence for disabled individuals and they offer mental health counseling and other therapeutic services through their human services agency, Syracuse Jewish Family Service.

Because families are frequently faced with making decisions regarding medical placement of a loved one when they are in crisis (for example, when a hospital discharge is imminent but the family member cannot return home safely). In times of crisis, families may not have time and opportunity to fully understand and evaluate what services would best meet their loved one's needs. Menorah Park hopes to alleviate some of the anxiety and turmoil families face by explaining what they can expect as their loved one moves into or through a continuum of care.

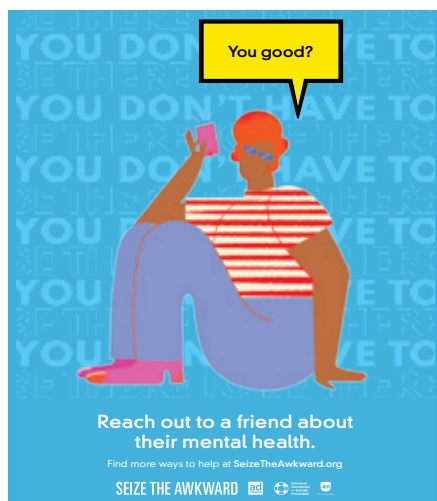
The 90-minute informational workshop will present the services Menorah Park offers, and explain admission requirements, financial documentation requirements, and funding sources. Immediately after the presentations, there will be individual meetings with Menorah Park staff to answer specific questions that families may have.



“Early detection allowed us to take control of the situation and make a plan together.”

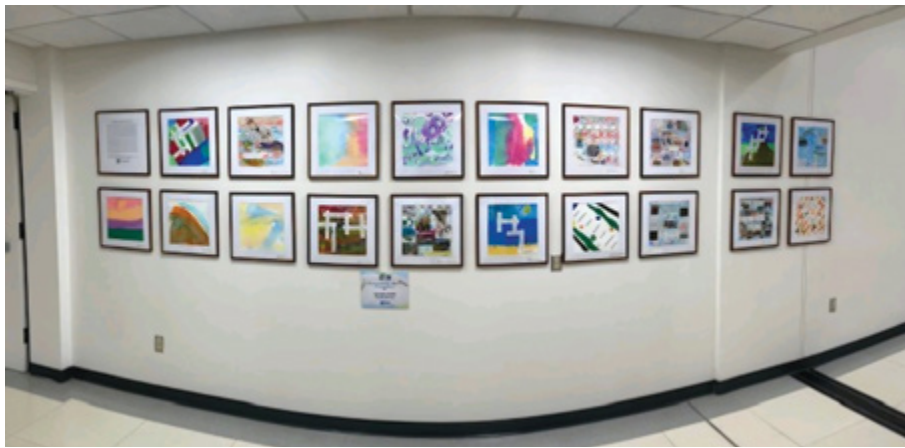
If you're noticing changes, it could be **Alzheimer's**. Talk about visiting a doctor **together**.

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SJFS Arts & Minds Exhibit at Hancock Airport

An exhibit of works of art by adults with mild memory loss and early dementia opened at Terminal B of the Syracuse Hancock International Airport. It will be on display for a year. The artists are participants in two groups run by Syracuse Jewish Family Service's M-Power U Learning Community. The groups, which meet at Menorah Park, serve older adults who are struggling with memory loss, cognitive impairment and conditions such as early-stage dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Relying on imagination rather than memory and strengths instead of lost skills, the artists experience the joy of creative expression through the Arts and Minds program.



The theme of the airport exhibit is "What Does Travel Mean to You?" and features mixed media artwork created using maps and magazine clippings, as well as travel-themed paintings. The showcase is part of the airport's SYR Community Art Program, which started in 2020. There are over 200 pieces of art from across the community featured throughout the airport, according to Matthew Szejbka, the airport's Customer Experience Manager who founded the program. He says between 15 and 20 organizations, from local schools to juvenile detention centers to organizations that support individuals with disabilities, from across six counties are represented.

Hannah Pietra, Arts and Minds coordinator at Menorah Park, says Syracuse Jewish Family Service was attracted to the showcase at the airport as part of its larger mission to bring its unconventional artwork into places where people might not ordinarily be exposed to

it. This is the first display the group has had at Hancock, but they have a traveling art show which has been shown at Art in the Atrium in Armory Square, in Sylvan Beach and at the Pebble Hill Presbyterian Church. Pietra said Arts and Minds, which was started in 2018, is centered around the concept of creative aging, where participants use art lessons and techniques to work on skill building, memory enhancement, emotional processing, and communication through the arts. "The programming is not focusing on what they've lost and what they can't do, but rather on designing projects that they can be successful with, projects that they can make and really express themselves," Pietra said. Robert Remesz, a long-time member of the group who has Alzheimer's, said he appreciates the experience, which his doctor recommended. "Our brain is still active," he said. "So it's not just sitting around the house and saying I can't do anything. It keeps your brain active and keeps it going and they reinforce that."

Syracuse Jewish Family Service's exhibit, *Embracing the Unexpected*, features works by elder artists in SJFS's Arts & Minds programs. This past year, senior artists explored unconventional art techniques and engaged in projects that incorporated an element of surprise. The results will be showcased in the Jewish Home Gallery corridor and Bistro at Menorah Park from February 4 through March 31. There will be a free artists' reception on February 11 from 3:30 to

5 pm. The showcase is made possible through the CNY Arts Grants for Regional Arts and Cultural Engagement regrant program and administered by the New York

State Council on the Arts, the Alzheimer's Foundation of America, the Leonard and Irwin Kamp Family Foundation and individual donors and corporate sponsors.

Front Row Players at TAY

by Alicia Gross

Front Row Players is a theater troupe for adults with disabilities. Their mission is "to nurture and inspire dramatic performance in adults of all abilities, deliver high quality arts instruction in a supportive environment, and provide a venue for each actor to share their voice and passion with their community." Musical theater creates community, empowers, changes perception and expands understanding. It might be a challenge to sing on key, dance with rhythm, or articulate lines, but many still have a passion for performance as strong as any actor on Broadway. What they truly desire is to be an integral part of something magical. Wear the mic tape. Don the costume. Have the spotlight squarely on them. This is the reason Front Row Players exists.



Two years ago, Front Row Players used Temple Adath Yeshurun as a venue for their annual fundraiser. The event was very successful and discussions began about holding their fall performance at TAY. That first performance went off without a hitch and was the beginning of a beautiful partnership. In February, FRP again held their annual fundraiser at TAY as well as their spring 2023 performance. They just finished another successful performance in December 2024.

Now Front Row Players are joining forces with TAY to upgrade the performance area. Project "Light Up the Stage" kicks off in February 2025 as part of Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month. The first phase will be to upgrade the lighting on the stage, which is original to the building from the early 1970's. After that, they will work on upgrading the sound system. Once these projects are complete, the sky is the limit to what they can dream of next.

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The Unstoppable Tapper Barry Shulman

Barry Shulman had a long career as an attorney and as a Jewish community leader. When he became partner in the Mackenzie Hughes law firm, he brought nearly 50 years of experience representing corporate and governmental organizations, including local, regional and state authorities. He negotiated complex commercial leases for landlords and tenants, as well as contracts for the acquisition and development of shopping centers and other large commercial properties. He also served as counsel to the New York State Senate Judiciary Committee, authoring laws to protect both landlords and tenants and drafting the legislation that created the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (CENTRO) and its many subsidiary corporations operating transit and major parking facilities throughout Central New York.

Somehow, in his spare time, Barry was a tap dance instructor and choreographer. Many of his students ended up dancing on Broadway and on national tours. His love of tap dates to his childhood. He began dancing at age 5, started teaching dancing at age 12, and appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show at the age of 19. In recent years, he has taught tap at the Jewish Community Center. His students are very enthusiastic about Barry's teaching. "It was a blast. He took on super beginners to advanced dancers, and he made sure it was informative and/or challenging for either level. And everyone in the class seemed to really enjoy being there," one posted on social media.

Shulman was also always active in the

community, holding leadership positions as the former chair of WCNY-TV's Tel Auc, president of Temple Adath Yeshurun, director of the Onondaga County Bar Association, counsel to the Jewish Home of Central New York, campaign chair of the Syracuse Jewish Federation, chair of the United Way's Lawyers' Fund and chair of the Jewish Community Center's campaign to purchase its building on Thompson Road. He served as a board member of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, the Hiscock Legal Aid Society, and Huntington Family Center. He is the recipient of the Temple Adath Yeshurun's Citizen of the Year Award, Syracuse Jewish Federation's Roth Award, the Syracuse Hebrew Day School's Mensch Award, the



Jewish Community Center's *Kvod Gadol* honor, the Community of Color's Richard Ellner Award of Hope and the 2022 JCC Hall of Fame Award. Shulman holds a Juris Doctorate from Cornell University where he was awarded the John J. Kelly Award as outstanding law student, and a bachelor's degree in economics from the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce at the University of Pennsylvania. Barry was a member of the New York State and Onondaga County Bar Associations and was included in the Upstate New York's edition of "Super Lawyers."

In 2020, Barry was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, a neurodegenerative

disorder that usually results in slow movement, stiffness, tremors, involuntary movements, difficulty walking and imbalance. Did that put an end to Barry's tap dancing?

The answer is not what one might expect. "I may not appear as such, but when it comes to Parkinson's, I'm a fighter," Barry says. "I will not let Parkinson's keep me from doing something I love."

So today Barry is still teaching an advanced tap-dancing class at the Pomeranz Jewish Community Center. One of his former students, engineer Matthew Hinshaw, principal technical consultant at Boston's aPriori Technologies, shares Barry's passion for passing on the oral tradition of tap to the next generation and called to inquire whether a permanent record existed of Barry's unique combinations and routines. Learning that there was not, Matthew volunteered to come for a week to work out with Barry and video everything. Then Matthew will preserve and archive the material and place it online. He plans to include videos of Barry's routines as well as specific instructions on duplicating the steps, listing their names and which beat they fall on. In this way, Barry's unstoppable love of tap will be transmitted to many future generations of dancers.

» BOOK REVIEW

Advice from a Parkinson's Wife

by Barbara Davis

My husband, Leslie Davis, had Parkinson's disease for twenty years. I was his caregiver. I wrote a book about it, called Advice from a Parkinson's Wife: 20 Lessons Learned the Hard Way. I wrote the book to help other caregivers of PWP (People With Parkinson's) by sharing experiences that no one else was writing about. All royalties from sales of the book go to the Parkinson's Foundation. I thought it might be helpful to include mention of this book in this issue of the Jewish Observer, but it would be inappropriate for me to review it. So I will just share with you some of the 545 reviews that appear on Amazon and you can decide for yourself whether it would be something you would want to read yourself or recommend to someone who is a caregiver for a PWP.

"I never write reviews but I must make an exception for this book. It is absolutely a must-read for a Parkinson's spouse. The author writes about the many challenges of the disease and offers realistic suggestions on how to respond as a caregiver and spouse. I found myself highlighting many paragraphs and can see myself referring to this book frequently as my husband's disease progresses. I will also recommend this book to my adult children since the

author's husband experienced many of the same symptoms as their father."

"As my husband's Parkinson's worsened, I was looking futilely for a book that would help me get through the tough days and nights. I found nothing that helped until I found Davis' book that addressed real day-to-day experiences! I got the Kindle version and have read and re-read the whole thing and parts of it countless times. I cried and laughed out loud as she described so many episodes



I could relate to. Only someone who has experienced the ravages of Parkinson's can understand the journey my husband and I are on. Thank you for such a great book. It's not only a keeper, but it has brought sanity back to my life."

"This was a well written and helpful book. It's actually been the most helpful for caretakers than any other Parkinson's book that I've read."

"If you have a family member with PD, you really should read this! When you are faced with this life-changing disease, you need advice from others who have been on that road. I am so thankful she shared her journey - their journey!"

"Every care giver should read this book, but more importantly I wish every Parkinson's doctor would read this book. The writer validates your life as a care giver."

"I am a hospice nurse and this book was one of the many books provided to me by my employer to help educate the staff with different diagnoses we may encounter with our patients. I have purchased it on a few occasions for patients' families when I see they either just don't seem to really understand what is ahead for them or are having difficulty in coping. The feedback from the spouses/caregivers has always been positive and they verbalize they are grateful and appear to be less overwhelmed after reading it. It's helpful to read firsthand experiences and feel less alone and know what is 'normal disease progression.' It really is a great tool for anyone caring for a loved one or patient with Parkinson's."

Israeli Researchers Claim Progress in Parkinson's Study

Jewish News Syndicate

A team of Tel Aviv University researchers claims to have made progress in the path to treating Parkinson's disease. The team found that a variant of a protein, caused by a genetic mutation, enhances the spread of Parkinson's pathology through nerve cells in the brain. The research was published in the scientific journal *Aging Cell*.

"Researchers have long tried to discover how the protein *α*-synuclein spreads through the brain, affecting one cell after another, and gradually destroying whole sections of the brain," said TAU doctoral student Stav Cohen Adiv Mordechai. "Since *α*-synuclein needs to cross the cell membrane in order to spread, we focused on the protein TMEM16F, a regulator situated in the cell membrane, as a possible driver of this lethal process."

The researchers also looked for mutations or variants in the TMEM16F gene that might increase the risk for the disease. "The incidence of Parkinson's among Ashkenazi Jews is known to be relatively high, and the Institute conducts a vast ongoing genetic study on Ashkenazi Jews who carry genes increasing the risk for the disease," said TAU's Dr. Avraham Ashkenazi. "With their help, we were able to identify a specific TMEM16F mutation which is common in Ashkenazi Jews in general, and in Ashkenazi Parkinson's patients in particular."

COPING WITH PARKINSON'S DISEASE

A Symposium – Sunday, March 30, 2025

11 am to 1 pm

Presented by

Menorah Park

The Parkinson's Foundation

with a grant from the Philip L. Holstein Community Program Fund of the Jewish Federation of Central New York

This program is being offered to the entire community at no charge, with special outreach to communities of color.

I. WELCOME BRUNCH

Host: Chris Jamele, Parkinson's Foundation New York Chapter

II. PARKINSON'S 101: An Overview

Nancy Nealon, Parkinson's Foundation, Northeast Director, Education & Outreach

III. DAILY LIFE WITH PD:

Sleeping, Eating, Driving, Working, Freezing, Falling and Fatigue
Renante Ignacio, MD, Medical Director, Menorah Park, Board Certified Internist, Geriatrician and Palliative Care and Hospice Physician.

IV. CARING FOR A PERSON WITH PARKINSONS

Barbara Davis, PhD, author of *Advice from a Parkinson's Wife: 20 Lessons Learned the Hard Way*

V. RESOURCES TABLE

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Contact Rachel Wasserman at rwasserman@buffalopree.com, 716-725-1173
Or Keren Green at kgreen@buffalopree.com, 347-400-9939

Two Unique New Books on Awareness and Inclusion

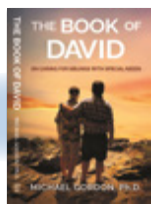
The Book of David: On Caring for Siblings with Special Needs

by Michael Gordon, Ph.D.

Dr. Michael Gordon is a distinguished psychologist based in Syracuse, New York, renowned for his expertise in clinical psychology and attention disorders. Dr. Gordon has dedicated his career to advancing the understanding and treatment of psychological conditions, particularly focusing on ADHD and related behavioral challenges. He has contributed extensively to the field through his academic research, publications and professional practice and is known for his ability to translate complex psychological concepts into practical strategies for patients and their families. His compassionate and evidence-based approach has earned him a reputation as a trusted clinician and a respected voice in psychology.

Gordon, former professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences and director of the Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders Clinic at SUNY Upstate Medical University, was inducted into the Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) Hall of Fame. The CHADD Hall of Fame includes only those individuals who have been recognized as leaders throughout the world for their contributions on behalf of people with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). CHADD, a national non-profit organization founded in 1987, helps individuals and families with ADHD by providing education, advocacy and support.

Gordon is the inventor of the Gordon Diagnostic System that is used worldwide to test for ADHD. He is a member of numerous professional organizations, including the American Psychological Association, the Society for Behavioral Pediatrics and the Central New York Association for Learning Disabilities. In addition to his clinical work, Dr. Gordon is an engaging speaker and educator, often presenting at conferences and workshops to train other professionals in effective assessment and intervention techniques. He remains actively involved in the Syracuse community, advocating for mental health awareness and accessibility of psychological services. He is the author of 11 books including *ADHD-Hyperactivity: A Consumer's Guide* and *ADHD on Trial: Courtroom Clashes over the Meaning of Disability*, *My Brother's a World-Class Pain: A Sibling's Guide to ADHD-Hyperactivity*, *Jumpin' Johnny Get Back to Work! A Child's Guide to ADHD/Hyperactivity* and *Accommodations in Higher Education under the Americans with Disabilities Act: A No-Nonsense Guide for Clinicians, Educators, Administrators, and Lawyers*.



Readers of the *Jewish Observer* have enjoyed many of Michael's columns over the years. He is an excellent writer as well as a wry observer of the Jewish world. Michael has also shared some of his brother David's experiences with *JO* readers on several occasions, including in this issue. To celebrate David's birthday this year, Michael wrote and published a book about and for him, entitled *The Book of David*. In his introduction, Michael writes: "Most books that address life with a special needs sibling focus on the negative consequences that can so often flow from the experience. To be sure, caring for a brother or sister with disabilities can be burdensome and, in some cases, overwhelming. No matter how much we love them, we can still suffer mightily under the weight of the responsibilities they bring into our lives." But, he adds, "while I absolutely understand why the downsides of sibling caregiving have taken center stage, I've read precious little that adopts a more nuanced view and considers how managing the less-than-perfect among us can also enrich us all—individually, within our families, and across the community at large. My aim is not to sugarcoat disability or trivialize the substantial negative impact caring for a sibling might have. I simply feel that there's value in considering the entirety of the experience, both adverse and otherwise." *The Book of David* is a compelling and thoughtful book and provides a poignant and meaningful answer to the question Cain asked God in Genesis, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Opening Doors

by Micah Fialka-Feldman

Micah Fialka-Feldman is a prominent disability rights advocate, educator and public speaker who has made significant contributions to the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in higher education and community life. Born in 1984, Micah was diagnosed with an intellectual disability, but his passion for learning, his determination to challenge stereotypes and his unwavering advocacy have made him a trailblazer in creating more inclusive spaces for people with disabilities.

Opening Doors, written when Micah reached the age of 40, is a memoir, an autobiography and a collection of stories and essays in his own words. It is his story of his life - dictated into his iPhone in collaboration with Lynn Albee. His four decades are spelled out frankly as he describes the struggles and incredible accomplishments of living a full life, now as a teaching assistant at Syracuse University. "It's about my story and my journey," said Micah, "and I hope people can read it and think about how your families and schools and people can learn about how to build a community."

Micah grew up in Huntington Woods, Michigan, in a supportive family that encouraged his independence and sense of community. His parents, Janice Fialka, a noted social worker and disability rights activist, and Rich Feldman, an organizer and educator, were instrumental in fostering his confidence and drive. Micah developed an early passion for advocacy, spurred by his family's values and his personal experiences navigating a world often unaccommodating to people with disabilities. He attended Berkley High School, where he began advocating for his rights and inclusion in general education classes. With the support of peers, teachers, and family, Micah became an active member of his school community, participating in clubs, student government, and extracurricular activities.

His determination to pursue higher education led him to challenge the status quo. In 2003, he became one of the first students with an intellectual disability to live in on-campus housing at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. He enrolled in Oakland's OPTIONS program, which supports students with intellectual disabilities in accessing higher education. His presence on campus was part of a groundbreaking inclusion initiative, demonstrating that individuals with intellectual disabilities could benefit from—and contribute to—the college experience.



Micah's advocacy for inclusive education reached a broader audience when he became a subject of a 2009 documentary. "Through the Same Door: Inclusion Includes College." The film highlighted his journey and the broader implications of inclusive education. Micah decided to dedicate his life to disability advocacy. He has served as a teaching assistant at Syracuse University's Leadership and Public Policy Program, where he co-teaches about inclusion, social justice, and disability rights. His work at Syracuse is part of the university's InclusiveU initiative, which supports students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in accessing higher education.

Micah has received numerous awards for his work and is a sought-after public speaker, sharing his experiences and insights with audiences across the United States. His presentations focus on the importance of inclusion, the value of community and the dignity of all individuals. At the conclusion of *Opening Doors*, Micah sums up his purpose in writing this book: "I am hoping people will go thinking about other ways of inclusion and how people should be included. I am an example. I wasn't included, I would be like two or three blocks away from my parents, going there every Sunday night period now, I am living independently, working at a university, and working through the struggles of any other adult. I'm trying to find love, thinking about my future, and figuring out relationships with my friends and family. This is what everyone should be able to deal with, very normal things. I know I have a disability but I can do things like everyone else."

Celebrating *Tu b'Shevat* in Wintery CNY



Tu b'Shevat, the Jewish New Year of the Trees, is celebrated in Jewish communities around the world, although the climate of Central New York makes it hard to emulate the Israeli festival that occurs when the first blossoms of spring begin to bloom on almond trees throughout the Jewish state. So while picnics, hikes and nature walks are not part of CNY *Tu b'Shevat* observances, several local traditions connected to the holiday have become established.

At Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevre Shas, Rabbi Daniel and Dr. Rhea Jezer annually lead participants in singing English and Hebrew songs and reading passages that highlight our dependence on and responsibility for the natural world. The celebration includes eating fruits associated with Israel (e.g., dates, figs, olives, pomegranates), *Tu b'Shevat Haggadah* readings and the singing of songs related to the holiday. Congregants and guests feast, sing, and celebrate the bounty and beauty of life-sustaining trees in our area and around the world.



At the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, *Tu b'Shevat* has been the occasion for visits by Blue Box Bob, the *pushke* associated with the Jewish National Fund since 1901 when, at the Fifth Zionist Congress Theodor Herzl asked delegates for donations to purchase land in Eretz Yisrael to re-establish a Jewish homeland. Stamped with the words "National Fund," the small tin boxes were distributed to Jewish communities across the globe and numbered over a million by World War II. Their impact was immediate, generating vital funds to develop and cultivate the land of Israel. Even today, more than two hundred years later, the Blue Box remains a powerful symbol of the link between Diaspora Jewry and the people of Israel. Other SHDS traditions include planting parsley, to be used for the model seder at Passover and enjoying a *Tu b'Shevat* with a unique "worms in dirt" dessert.



For *Tu b'Shevat* 2025, Temple Concord will have a *Tu b'Shevat* seder after Shabbat Service on Saturday, February 8th for Religious School and member families. Temple Adath Yeshurun will have a Young Family *Tu b'Shevat* program on Sunday, February 9 from 12 to 2 pm. Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevre Shas will hold its annual *Tu b'Shevat* seder at 12 noon on February 8.



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



The Syracuse Orchestra is celebrating the culturally rich Syracuse and Central New York community with a concert featuring local artists and celebrating local not-for profits. The gala will take place at 7 pm on February 27, 2025 at the Landmark Theater. Principal Pops Conductor Sean O'Loughlin will conduct the world premiere of a brand-new work for Syracuse, commissioned by Robert & Vicki Lieberman of RAV Properties.

Nine local not-for-profits will be honored with inaugural Syracuse Orchestra Harmony in Action awards. These organizations were chosen for the impact they are creating in Central New York in nine different categories. The honorees are Arts & Culture: CazArts, Anti-Poverty: Samaritan Center, Education: PEACE Inc,

Economic Development: Manufacturers Association of Central New York, Environmental: Onondaga Earth Corps, Health Equity: Joseph's House for Women, DEI: ACR Health, Veteran Support: Clear Path For Veterans and Housing: A Tiny Home for Good.

The musical program consists of works by Sean O'Loughlin, Calvin Custer, John Williams, Henry Mancini, Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein and others. The featured artists are mezzo soprano Kay Weber, vocalist Ronnie Leigh, CirqOvation, country singer Steven Cali, saxophonist Joe Carello and a mega choir with singers from the Syracuse Community Gospel Chorus, the Syracuse University Oratorio Society and the Syracuse Pops Chorus.

MY ISRAEL QUEST
TU B'SHVAT
 ISRAEL AS A
 STARTUP NATION

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 AND CREATING A LASTING IMPACT ON
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Tu B'shvat, the jewish new year for trees, is not just a celebration of nature and the environment, but also a time to reflect on growth, renewal, and the interconnectedness between humanity and the earth

Noah Satterlee and Noah's Care Bags

When Noah Satterlee was 12 years old, he started a charity called Noah's Care Bags. He filled bags with travel-sized soap, shampoo, conditioner, lotion, toothpaste, a toothbrush, a candy bar and a positive note for the parents of children who were staying in the hospital.

Noah started this charity because he himself had been in the hospital many times due to a combination of diseases, including an immunodeficiency. While in the hospital, he realized that the hospital only cares for the patient, leaving the parents/guardians on their own. Having a child in the hospital can cause a lot of stress for parents and often they are so busy worrying about their child that they forget to take care of themselves. Noah's Care Bags aimed to provide parents with the items they need to take care of themselves, so they can be fully present for their child.

By 2024, Noah had donated over 9,000 care bags to over 19 different children's hospitals across the state and country. He donates to children's hospitals in batches of 100 bags. Typically, the Child Life Department takes the bags and gives them out to the parents of children staying there. The care bags add a personal touch by letting the parents know that they aren't alone. This is accomplished by adding positive notes. The toiletries are provided so the parents have everything they need to take care of themselves. The candy is in the bag in order to remind parents that they need to eat, and because chocolate can make anything better.



Jan Maloff and the CNY Family Bike Giveaway

During the last two weeks in November and the first two weeks in December, Jan Maloff and a crew of volunteers, including Federation CFO Don Cronin, are at the NY State Fairgrounds getting ready for the annual CNY Family Bike Giveaway. For almost 30 years, Jan has been collecting, refurbishing and giving away bikes to any family in need. "Everyone should have access to a bike. Especially young kids," says Maloff. "We want to make sure that anyone in Syracuse who wants a bike can have one."

Maloff estimates the foundation has given away more than 50,000 bikes. He explains, "The focus of our program is to supply families with the opportunity to enjoy bike ownership. For the children who are recipients of the bicycles we refurbish, there is the thrill of that first bike ride and the freedom that goes along with it. We also donate bicycles to adults as well. Many adults who receive bicycles from the program are now able to enjoy a bike ride with their children. We feel as an organization it is important for parents to have a healthy activity they can enjoy and share while mentoring their children."

Getting the bikes ready for the giveaway takes a lot of work. Donors bring bikes to the Center of Progress Building to be sorted and separated into those to be repaired and those to be used for parts. The day before the giveaway, the bicycles are loaded onto large trucks supplied by the Syracuse Department of Public Works and driven to Fowler High School where student volunteers move them into the school's three basketball courts. The giveaway starts at 10 am but the lines start to form outside the school as early as 5 am. Additionally, during the summer over 700 bikes are distributed in some of the most impoverished neighborhoods in Syracuse and hundreds more are repaired. A fully equipped repair trailer, stocked with bicycle parts and tools, is a regular part of the summer giveaway program, which also mentors recipients on how to care for their bikes.



Jeff Gewirtz and Team USA at the 2025 Maccabiah Games



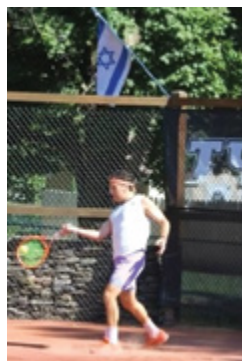
Central New York's Jeff Gewirtz recently qualified for his age group in Men's Tennis for Team USA for the 2025 Maccabiah Games, which will be held in Israel July 8-22, 2025.

The Maccabiah Games are the world's largest Jewish athletic competition and the second largest sporting event in the world – in terms of number of athletes competing – after the Olympic Games. Taking place every 4 years in Israel, the Games are Maccabi World Union's largest initiative. The 2025 Maccabiah Games will include over 10,000 athletes from 80 countries participating in over 40 different sports.

The Maccabiah Games are more than an international sporting competition; they are a celebration of Jewish culture, unity and pride. All athletes take part in Maccabi educational seminars and tours. They even offer any athlete who never had a chance to celebrate his or her bar or bat mitzvah to celebrate together at the Western Wall.

Jeff is married to Fayetteville native Brooke Raphael, who is a board member of the Pomeranz JCC. Their children, Eton and Dalia, attend the Syracuse Hebrew Day School.

Jeff is the Executive Vice President of Business Affairs and Chief Legal Officer for BSE Global (BSE), a renowned sports and entertainment enterprise with assets such as the NBA's Brooklyn Nets, the 2025 WNBA Champion New York Liberty, and the Barclays Center arena in Brooklyn. In addition, BSE ownership holds a minority



investment in the Miami Dolphins and the Formula 1 Miami Grand Prix, and they also own two teams in the National Lacrosse League.

BSE also includes The Brooklyn Nets & New York Liberty Foundation, on which Jeff serves as a Board member. The Foundation serves needs across New York City by providing positive experiences and resources for individuals, including health and wellness, food insecurity and homelessness, and

equitable development. In 2020, BSE's ownership also launched the Social Justice Fund in Brooklyn, with a 10-year, \$50 million commitment to support the borough's equitable economic recovery from the COVID pandemic.

Jeff has played tennis since he was seven. As a junior tennis player, growing up on Long Island and training at the Port Washington Tennis Academy, Jeff held the #1 Doubles Ranking in the Eastern Section of the United States Tennis Association and the #1 Singles Ranking for the Long Island District of the Eastern Section. As an undergraduate at Tufts University, he was a 4-year member of the Tufts Varsity Tennis Team, which he captained in his senior year. He also contributed to its New England Championship team.

Jeff, Brooke, their children and their parents all are looking forward to their July trip to Israel and to meeting Maccabiah Games participants from all over the world.

Doing Good and Having Fun

In November, InterFaith Works of CNY put out a call-to-action to collect winter coats for new Americans arriving from various countries with significantly warmer weather. The Jewish Federation of Central New York and the Jewish Community Center took on the task of collecting 150 coats for children ages 0 to 15. The Syracuse Jewish Community truly exhibited the meaning of tzedakah and provided nearly 200 coats. Rhonda Butler, Community Engagement Manager at InterFaith Works said, "We are so appreciative of the warmth and kindness of our community in welcoming our newest neighbors." We thank all who helped to provide a warm welcome for our new immigrants.

The Federation's NextGen group, ably chaired by Juliet Maloff and Sarah Hammer, ended 2024 with a flurry of activities. To celebrate the Festival of Lights, NexGen sponsored a Hannukah cookie decorating class, led by Double Oven Cookies, which took place at Seneca Street Brew Pub, and a dreidel- and chanukiya-making ceramics class held at the Everson Museum. Participants of all ages had a joyous time.

Students at the Syracuse Hebrew Day School made Chanukah cards for lone soldiers (soldiers whose families do not live in Israel.) Students in Ayala Goren's Hebrew classes excitedly made cards wishing the soldiers a safe and happy Chanukah. The Klein family, CNY residents, took the cards to Israel to deliver to the soldiers.



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Sarah Cumbie Reckess was honored by the Volunteer Lawyer Project of CNY as a Pro Bono Champion in the area of immigration law for representing Afghan asylum seekers. She has worked tirelessly to prepare asylum applications and help clients remain safely in the United States.



Lois Weiner's granddaughter, Arielle Geismar, is one of Forbes 2025 "30 under 30" for social media. Arielle, 23, led the Design It For Us campaign for California's Age-Appropriate Design Code, making it the first U.S. law of its kind.



Boaz and Emmet Garelick took on the meaningful mitzvah of laying tefillin for the first time.



Rabbi Moshe and Meira Saks are happy to announce the birth of their 10th grandchild, Nes Gavriel Hallel Pollack, to Reena Saks and Oren Pollock, in Philadelphia, on December 12.

Syracuse Hillel was honored with the Excellence Award at the 2024 Hillel International Global Assembly. This prestigious award recognized FreshFest, Syracuse Hillel's signature pre-orientation program, for its extraordinary impact on Jewish students transitioning to college life. FreshFest 2024 set a historic milestone for the Hillel movement with over 350 participants - the largest turnout of any Hillel - providing incoming students with a warm and inclusive community even before their first day of classes.



3GNY to Hold Second Meet-Up

After a highly successful November 18 meet-up of third generation survivors of the Holocaust, 3GNY is happy to announce its next gathering on Monday, February 10 at 6 pm at Congregation Beth Shalom-Chevra Shas. At the February meeting, participants will watch and discuss "The Forger," a documentary which uses handmade shadow puppets to tell the story of Adolfo Kaminsky, who by his 19th birthday had helped save thousands of children from the Nazis by hand-making false passports. *3GNYers who would like to attend should RSVP to Eileen Angelini at eangelini@3gnewyork.org by February 6.*



CBS-CS Launches Shabbat Squad for Youth Engagement

by Kelly Klapper, CBS-CS Director of Youth and Education

Congregation Beth Shalom- Chevra Shas has introduced Shabbat Squad, a quarterly program designed to immerse children in the joy and meaning of Shabbat. Replacing the regularly scheduled Sunday School on these designated mornings, Shabbat Squad provides a vibrant youth-focused Shabbat experience in the school wing.



The program begins at 9:30 a.m. with Joyful Songs with Moret Remi, a session where parents and children come together to sing, dance, and celebrate. This lively introduction sets an inviting and uplifting tone for the morning. Following the opening session, children are divided into age-appropriate groups for Shabbat-friendly lessons, accompanied by a light snack.

Each Shabbat Squad session offers a variety of activities aimed at engaging young participants. These include Parsha Plays that bring the weekly Torah portion to life, interactive games combining fun with learning and creative crafts such as play dough projects that encourage imagination while adhering to Shabbat guidelines. These hands-on experiences are designed to foster meaningful connections to Shabbat traditions.

The program concludes with a youth-led Torah service, empowering children and teens to take leadership roles and develop a sense of belonging within the community. Shabbat Squad emphasizes experiential learning, ensuring participants not only understand the traditions of Shabbat but also experience its spirit in a tangible and memorable way.

Shabbat Squad is open to all children, including those not enrolled in the CBS-CS Shul School. The program aims to create an inclusive and welcoming environment, offering opportunities for children to build friendships and deepen their connection to Shabbat through shared experiences.

Upcoming Shabbat Squad dates are scheduled for Saturday, March 1, and Saturday, April 26. *More information about Shabbat Squad and CBS-CS service offerings is available through the CBS-CS email list, accessible at <https://tinyurl.com/cbscemails>.*

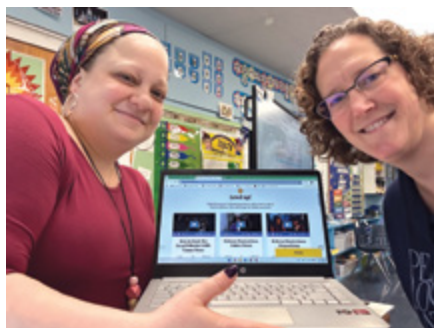
Yalla! Local Educators Head to Citizen Café

Teachers are becoming students in order to improve Hebrew language instruction in Central New York. While there are outstanding teachers in the community's schools for elementary-age students, local teachers are going online to get a test of what it is like to learn Hebrew in Israel. Citizen Café is a Tel Aviv-based Hebrew language and culture school offering 10-week courses spanning 12 levels, divided into three tiers: Foundation, Flow, and Freedom. This structure ensures that learners at every stage—from beginners to those seeking advanced fluency—can benefit. By participating, educators gain not only language proficiency but also a deeper cultural understanding that will enhance their teaching and enrich the broader community.

Funded by a Philip L. Holstein Community Program Fund grant from the Federation, six local educators have committed to participating in this transformative professional development program to strengthen communication in Hebrew and foster a stronger connection to Israel throughout the community's schools. Melissa Klemperer, Phyllis Zames and Rosie Glasser of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, Aaron Spitzer of the Rabbi Jacob Epstein School of Jewish Studies, Ora Jezer of the Syracuse Community Hebrew School, and Kelly Klapper of the Shul School of Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevre Shas have been tested for proficiency and assigned to their appropriate instructional level.

"I'm so excited," said Rosie Glasser. "In the introductory class, the instructor said they want to change our minds so that we think in Hebrew. I've heard that some people in the class start *dreaming* in Hebrew!"

Citizen Café's holistic learning approach puts language communication skills at the forefront and focuses on how to speak Hebrew in real life. Its unique approach to language instruction is based on three guiding principles that fall under the category of social-emotional learning: 1. lessons are built upon relevant,



everyday dialogues that combine culture with language, lifestyle with art, and proper Hebrew with slang; 2. Classes are high energy and rhythmic in order to create a fun environment for trial and error and boost participation; 3. Courses are designed to be a rewarding experience.

"We are incredibly grateful for this opportunity to immerse ourselves in the Hebrew language and Israeli culture," said Melissa Klemperer. "Our participation in Citizen Café will not only strengthen our linguistic skills but will ultimately empower us to bring authentic Hebrew instruction to our students and our community."

The Last Ships from Hamburg Author to Speak in Temple Concord's Goldenberg Series

by Sally Cutler

Historian Steven Ujifusa will speak on February 6, 2025 at 7:30 pm as part of Temple Concord's Regina F. Goldenberg Cultural Series. *The Last Ships from Hamburg: Business, Rivalry, and the Race to Save Russia's Jews on the Eve of World War I* recounts the dramatic story of how millions of Jews—many from the Russian empire and despite numerous obstacles—fled Europe in the years leading up to World War I, emigrating through Western Europe to the United States. Felix Frankfurter, Emma Goldman, Irving Berlin, and Mark Rothko were among those arriving at Ellis Island at this time.

The Last Ships from Hamburg uncovers three key players in this history: Albert Ballin, the German Jewish director of the Hamburg-America Line, Jacob Schiff, who provided monetary support and, albeit less willingly, J.P. Morgan, who was in competition with Ballin for the lucrative maritime business.

Ujifusa is the recipient of the Washington Irving Medal for Literary Excellence from the Saint Nicholas Society of the City of New York, a MacDowell artist residency, and the Athenaeum of Philadelphia's Literary Award for Non-Fiction. He has appeared on National Public Radio, CBS Sunday Morning, and numerous other media outlets.

This author talk is supported by The Jewish Book Council, the Jewish Federation of CNY, and the Jewish Genealogical Society of CNY. It is virtual and free. **To receive the Zoom link, register by clicking on the link on the Events Calendar at templeconcord.org.**

Jewish Community Foundation Grows and Serves

For twenty years, the Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York has assisted members of the community in realizing their philanthropic goals. Each year the funds held at the Jewish Community Foundation convert generous ideas into deliberate action.

The Foundation's assets have grown in the past two decades from two to thirty million dollars. The Foundation has modernized and streamlined its operations. It employs the most up-to-date foundation-specific software, making it easy for community donors to fund an organization or cause they value. Fundholders may communicate with Foundation staff on a personal basis via phone or email or may access the Foundation's online portal, which provides real-time access to their account information.

Funds at the Foundation are invested judiciously and profitably. The Foundation's Investment Committee, chaired by Neil Hoyt, determines and monitors the Foundation's investment strategy for maximum security and return. Last year, the Foundation's investment return was 14.41%. The Foundation's fees are low compared to other institutional investors. The Foundation currently administers over 100 donor advised funds (DAFs),

115 endowments and 30 legacy gifts. In December 2024 alone, it added one PACE fund, two endowments, three donor advised funds and two legacy funds to its growing portfolio. In addition, it disbursed over \$300,000 dollars in charitable gifts to over 400 501c3 organizations on behalf of community members, sparing them the work of writing checks, addressing envelopes and affixing stamps.

Foundation Board Chair Howard Port said, "The Foundation's goal is to assist community members on a personal and confidential basis to fulfill their philanthropic goals through donor advised funds. We also help people create lasting legacies through endowments and legacy endowments funded through an after-lifetime gift. The central purpose of the Jewish Community Foundation of CNY is to serve the needs and philanthropic aims of donors who wish to better our entire community now and in the future."

Small acts of kindness can have a big impact in making people feel welcome. When we reach out and connect with others, we can build a stronger community where everyone - regardless of their background - feels like they belong.

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ARTWORK BY STEVE SHAN - AMPLIFELLO

JCC Announces 2025 Annual Meeting and Gala Award Recipients

by Erin Hart

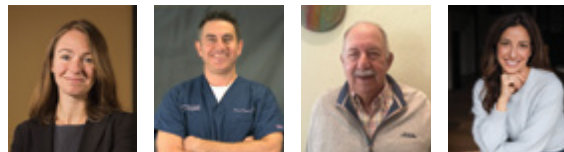
The Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center of Syracuse is planning their 162nd Annual Meeting & Gala. The community will come together on Sunday, June 22, 2025, at Palladian Hall to honor and celebrate those who have been instrumental in the growth and development of the JCC over the years. This year's fundraiser is once again being presented by the Wladis Family and promises to be another spectacular event.

The Annual Meeting & Gala is the JCC's largest and most important annual fundraiser. The proceeds provide significant funding for scholarships to the JCC's Early Childhood, After School, Summer Camp and Senior programs as well as funding to help mainstream children with special needs within these programs. The distinctive celebration brings together many members of the Central New York Jewish community to benefit the JCC of Syracuse and pay tribute to those who have acted so selflessly over the years.

This year's honorees represent a wide range of dedication and support. The

Kovod Award, which signifies honor and importance, will be presented to JCC Board vice president and ECDP co-chair, Jessica Malzman. Jessica is the chief operating officer of Whitney Partners and a past recipient of the Leslie Award.

The JCC's Kovod Gadol Award, which translates to great honor, will be presented to Sara Temes. This award is presented annually to honor an individual or couple who demonstrated, usually over a period of years, an extraordinary degree of commitment, energy and loyalty to the JCC and greater community. Sara has served on the JCC Board of Directors since 2010



in both the treasurer and vice president roles. She is also a past recipient of the Leslie award.

A long-standing supporter of the Syracuse Jewish community, Neil Bronstein, will be presented with this year's Hall of Fame Award. The Hall of Fame was established in 2009 and was created to honor members of the Jewish community who have shown an extraordinary level of commitment not only to the JCC but to the community as a whole. Neil has dedicated his life to the entire Jewish community in Syracuse. He has served on numerous boards across the community, including Menorah Park, CenterState CEO, Crouse Hospital, Temple Adath, the Jewish Community Foundation and the Jewish

Community Center where he also served as board president.

This year's Leslie Award, the seventh to be given since it was introduced in 2016, will be presented to Dr. Brian Raphael. The Leslie Award recognizes younger up-and-coming professionals for their outstanding commitment and service to the JCC and to the local community – the qualities which the award's namesake, Leslie London Neulander, personified throughout her many selfless volunteer pursuits. Brian was born and raised in Syracuse, established the local non-profit End Antisemitism Now and continues to advocate for the Jewish community bringing quality programming and services to all of Central New York.

"I am beyond thrilled with those being honored at this year's event," says Marci Erlebacher, executive director of the Jewish Community Center. "They have all been instrumental in the success of the JCC over the years and deserve to be recognized for their selfless acts and generosity."

For more information about the JCC's upcoming Annual Meeting & Gala, including tickets and sponsorship opportunities, please visit www.jccsy.org.



Putting a Fresh Face on the Syracuse JCC

by Shane Tepper

The Jewish Community Center of Syracuse is embarking on a major renovation project this spring to modernize its main entrance. The project, set to begin in early March, will transform the building's entrance to enhance accessibility, safety and overall functionality for all members of the community.



“This has been our dream for several years,” says Executive Director Marci Erlebacher. “The JCC is not just an institution, but it’s a soul. We were founded during the first battles of the Civil War and we have existed all of this time. We’re the second oldest Jewish Community Center in North America. It’s time we cleaned up the face of it.”

The renovation will be completed in two phases, starting with the main entrance and followed by improvements to the Early Childhood entrance. The three-month initial phase includes the installation of heated sidewalks, renovated steps, enhanced lighting and improved handicap accessibility. While the building has seen minor improvements since the JCC moved here in the early 1980s, this marks the first major renovation to its exterior. “This is the place where literally hundreds of people walk through, from babies to senior

citizens,” Erlebacher notes. “We need to put a prettier face on ourselves, because there’s so much richness that happens in these hallways.”

The improvements reflect the JCC’s commitment to serving the community with excellence. Members can expect some temporary adjustments during construction, but the result will be worth the wait—a more beautiful and functional entrance that matches the warmth of the community within. “This project represents the concept that we’ve been here for over 160 years as the town square of the Jewish community,” Erlebacher explains. “The newness of the construction, I think, is going to add even more strength and character to the whole being of the JCC.” **For questions about accessibility during construction, members should contact the main office at info@jccsyr.org.**

Name our Mascot Contest!

Help us name our new Dreidel Mascot!

Entry Deadline:
Monday, March 3 by 6:00pm

Submit your entries to:
info@jccsyr.org

More info:

SAM POMERANZ JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER OF SYRACUSE
5655 Thompson Rd, DeWitt

jccsyr.org/name-our-mascot-contest

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JOAN SHAPIRO
November 27, 2024

Joan Shapiro of Boynton Beach, Florida, passed away peacefully on November 27, 2024, surrounded by her loving family. She was born August 5, 1931 in Tarrytown, moved to Oswego and graduated from the State University College at Oswego.

Joan and her husband, Bernard, seven children, 20 grandchildren and 31 great-grandchildren. She was a member of Temple Adath Yeshurun, and Shaarei Torah in Syracuse, Temple Emeth of Delray and Palm Beach Orthodox of Palm Beach, Florida. Joan loved supporting many charitable organizations. She also served as the president of sisterhood at Adath Israel synagogue in Oswego and vice president of Hadassah in Syracuse. Recognized as the matriarch of her family, she also was an outstanding mahjongg and bridge player and won numerous tennis championships at different venues.

In addition to the pride she felt for the beautiful family she and Bernard raised, she also took great pride in the accomplishments of her three brothers, each of whom received congressional appointments to West Point and the Naval Academy and had distinguished military careers. May her memory always be a blessing.

Contributions in Joan's memory may be made to Palm Beach Synagogue: <https://www.palmbeachsynagogue.org/> and Leket Israel: <https://www.leket.org/en/>.
www.sisskindfuneralservice.com

EVELYN K. SABINE
November 29, 2024

Evelyn K. Sabine, 101, passed away on November 29, 2024 at The Cottages. Born on June 11, 1923 to Herman "Hy" and Marcia Silver Kassel, she had been a life resident of Syracuse. Evelyn's beloved husband of 60 years, Bruce, passed away in 2003.

Evelyn was a consummate homemaker, the "CEO" of the house. Her job that she loved was to take care of and be there for her family. She was a graduate of Nottingham High School, the "Old Nottingham" (T. Aaron Levy), a lifetime member of Temple Concord, having started school there at age 6, and was an active member of The Sisterhood of the Temple and of Hadassah. In her younger years, she worked and managed Evelyn's Dress Shop in downtown Syracuse with her mother Marcia. She also was a counselor and co-director with her husband of the CITs at Bradley Brook Camp.

Evelyn was an avid SU fan, especially football, dating back to the Archibald Stadium days. She was an amateur golfer, playing in several leagues throughout CNY. She loved fishing on the Jamesville Reservoir and her

traveling canasta games with her childhood girlfriends. She loved the thrill of gambling, playing the slots as long as there was an arm to pull and having a seat at the blackjack table. A 4:30 pm vodka and tonic with "just one shot" was a final toast to every full day. Bubbie loved cooking and being with her family, especially for holidays, birthdays and any special occasion or no reason at all. Most of all she loved watching her grandsons Eric and Kevin in any sport, concert or show.

Her family includes her devoted son Lee and his life partner Hana, grandsons Eric and Kevin (Anastasia), great-grandson Sullivan and many loving nieces, nephews and cousins.

Special thanks to the entire staff at the Cottages at Garden Grove, especially Tara, Jolene, Melissa, and Rachel and the staff at Cottage 21: Angie, Antoinette, Jim, Jailisha, Chef John, Brianna, Kate, Trendetta, Ashley, Christie, Felicia, Heaven, and Sally-Jo. A special thank you to Karen Brooks for her many years providing loving care and support.

Contributions in her memory may be made to Temple Concord, Carol M. Baldwin Breast Cancer Research Fund or Meals on Wheels.
www.sisskindfuneralservice.com

MELVYN CHARNEY
December 13, 2024



Melvyn Charney, 80, passed away with his family beside him on December 13, 2024 at Crouse Hospital. Born on May 20, 1944 to Jerome and Phyllis Charney, he was a life resident of Syracuse.

He was a graduate of Central High School and attended the University of Miami. Mel began his lifelong career in their family's business, Charney's Men's and Boy's Clothing, when he was 14. In 2001 the store was named to the Esquire Retail 100 list of menswear specialty stores. At one point there were four generations of Charneys and Kruths working at the stores.

Mel was a life member of Temple Beth El. He was especially proud to have served as the chairman of the capital campaign to raise the funds for the stained-glass windows at the synagogue. He and his family were also involved in sponsorships at the Early Childhood Development Program at the Jewish Community Center and Golisano Children's Hospital. He served as the chairman of the Israel Bond Campaign of Syracuse. The Charney and Kruth family also established the Holocaust Information Resource Center at the JCC. He was one of a small group who established the Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York.

Mel will forever be remembered for his love of his family. They were his first thought in the morning and his last thought at night. His family includes his wife Sarah of 57 years, their children Lisa and Adam Waldman, Jennifer Charney and Jill and Jeff Braverman, grandchildren Jake, Ryan, Koby, Alexis and Rylie, his sister and brother-in-law Karen and Shelly Kruth, his brother-in-law and sister-in-law Jack and Gina Davis and his nieces and nephews whom he treated like his own. He was predeceased by his older sister Dianne in 1950.

Mel's family is greatly appreciative of the loving and gentle care he and his family received at Crouse Hospital. The doctors, nurses and support staff were outstanding.

Contributions to perpetuate Mel's memory may be made to a charity of one's choice.

STEVE SUSMAN
December 2, 2024

Steve Susman, 79, passed away suddenly as a result of a stroke on December 2, 2024. Born on December 24, 1945 to Abraham and Sylvia Susman in New York City, he had been a resident of Syracuse since 1975.

He was the director of the Westcott Community Center for more than 15 years. Steve was very involved in the Westcott community. He was active in the Westcott Street Fair, the Westcott Art Trail, UNPA (University Neighborhood Preservation Association) and was the assistant director of the Station Gallery. He was skilled as a grant writer for many non-profit organizations in the Syracuse area. Steve loved to cook and cater, travel, edit films, play his guitar and develop websites under the name 21st Century Marketing.

His family includes his wife Mary Lou of 36 years, their children Molly (Dale), and Abraham and his sister Judy (Jack) Susman.

A celebration of Steve's life will be held in January at the Westcott Community Center at a date to be announced. Contributions in his memory may be made to The Westcott Community Center.
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JOY G. MOSS
December 16, 2024



Joy G. Moss, 94, of Dewitt died December 16, 2024 at Crouse Hospital. She was the daughter of Leopold and Goldie M. Goldberg and was born on April 15, 1930.

She graduated from Nottingham High School and the University of Miami. For many years Joy worked at Markson Brothers Furniture Store and Bern Furniture Company, Inc. both family-owned retail chains in Upstate New York.

As a member of Temple Society of Concord, she served as a trustee, treasurer and vice president of the Temple as well as president and treasurer of the Temple Sisterhood. Joy served as chairperson of the Jewish Federation Women's Campaign for 2 years followed by service on the Federation Board. She was treasurer of the Syracuse Chapter of Hadassah as well as a Life Member. For many years Joy was active in the Blood Bank Program for the American Red Cross and volunteered in Social Services at the

Veterans Administration Hospital. She also voluntarily served as treasurer of the Hamlet Crest Homeowners Association for 30 years. Joy, along with her later husband Mike enjoyed memberships at Lafayette Country Club, Drumlins Country Club, and The Cavalry Club.

She was predeceased by her husband Michael of 71 years. She is survived by daughters Peggy (Harold) Bertram of Fayetteville, and Jacqueline (Scott) Ayres of Manlius; grandchildren Rachel (Brandon) Wooten, Amy (Brittany Ellenberg) Bertram, Richard (Mekea Larson) and Christopher Ayres; and great-grandchildren Ryder, Brinley and Rowen Smith; and Mac, and Stone Wooten. Besides her parents, Joy was pre-deceased by a daughter Anita; and a brother Richard.

Contributions may be made to Temple Concord

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