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Hamilton
Jewish

News

OCTOBER 2020 | CHESHVAN 5781

The voice of Jewish Hamilton

2nd ANNUAL Marvin Caplan Jewish Book Festival



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LUCAS FOGLIA PHOTOGRAPHY

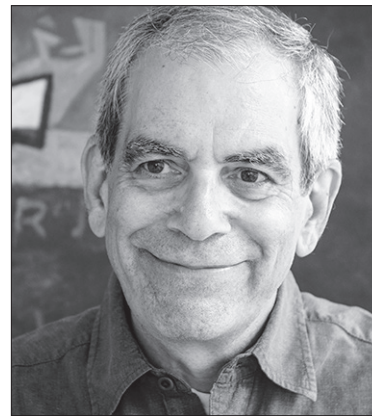
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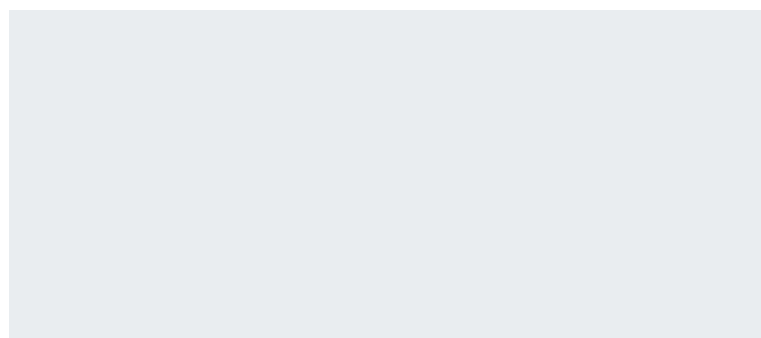
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FROM THE EDITOR

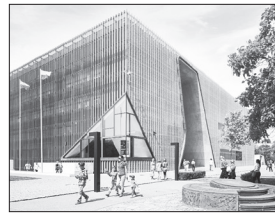
Sites, films and podcasts that inform, illuminate and inspire



Wendy Schneider

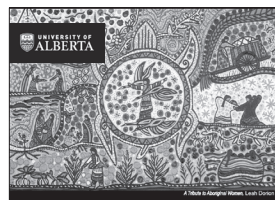
JEWISH NEWS AND INSIGHT

Virtual exhibitions



The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in many museums developing online digital offerings. Presenting 1,000 years of Jewish life in Poland, The Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews offers online visitors a special selection of exhibition tours, podcasts and lectures on a range of topics, including its not to be missed virtual tour of its core exhibition.

Raise your consciousness



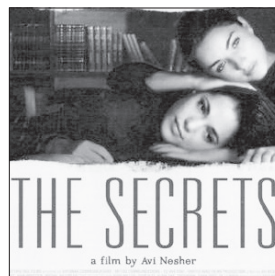
When Schitt's Creek superstar Dan Levy invited his Instagram fans to join him in signing up for a free course on Canadian Indigenous history offered by the University of Alberta, tens of thousands of people signed up. The 12-lesson course covers a wide range of historical and contemporary topics that will deepen your understanding of the Canadian indigenous perspective. Equally worthwhile are informal study group Zoom sessions in which Levy and U of A professors review each lesson. Registration information is at coursera.org/learn/indigenous-canada and study group sessions can be accessed at Dan Levy's YouTube channel.

A golden age of podcasts



There's something for everyone on the hunt for high quality Jewish podcasts. Some I'm listening to these days include, Can We Talk?, the Jewish Women's Archive podcast which features profiles of historical and contemporary Jewish women; Israel Story, modeled after NPR's This American Life; Unorthodox, a smart, fun weekly take on Jewish news and culture; Parsha in Progress, in which noted author and Reform Jew Abigail Pogrebin and Rabbi Dov Linzer, head of the liberal Orthodox, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah engage in friendly conversation about the weekly Torah portion.

Jewish and Israeli films



If you're running out of ideas for what to stream during the coronavirus pandemic, a Hamilton Public Library membership now gives you access to hundreds of Jewish themed and Israeli films for free through the excellent streaming service, [kanopy.com](https://www.kanopy.com). Kanopy's cornucopia of titles includes Israeli director Avi Nesher's *The Secrets*, a personal favourite.

One stop site for Israeli news



The Times of Israel, an Israel-based, English-language online newspaper, is your one-stop site for news and features on the region and the Jewish world. Edited by UK-born Israeli journalist, David Horowitz, the publication has no partisan political affiliation and seeks to present the news fair-mindedly.

Something sweet for the new year



PHOTO BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Hamilton Jewish Federation and Hamilton Jewish Family Services (HJFS) started two new Rosh Hashanah traditions this year. Community support and a generous grant enabled HJFS to donate 2,700 lbs of kosher food to 90 families in need, while Hamilton Jewish Federation staff (pictured above) assembled beautiful Rosh Hashanah gift baskets that volunteers then delivered to our community's Holocaust survivors.

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NEXT ISSUE: CHANUKAH ISSUE

DEADLINES

Editorial copy: **Oct. 27, 2020**

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Publication date: **Dec. 3, 2020**

HJN

The Hamilton Jewish News is published six times a year by the Hamilton Jewish Federation

EDITORIAL POLICY

The Hamilton Jewish News invites members of the community to contribute letters, articles or guest editorials. Written submissions must be forwarded by the deadline indicated in each issue. This newspaper reserves the right to edit, condense or reject any contribution for brevity or legal purposes.

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A showcase of outstanding authors to be presented

An opportunity to interact with nine authors as they expand your awareness of Jewish history and cultural life at the 2020 Marvin Caplan Jewish Book Festival

BY **ALLYSON WENZOWSKI**
SPECIAL TO THE HJN

THE MARVIN CAPLAN JEWISH Book Festival has been expanded this year, featuring nine authors presenting over eight days. This compares to the four authors who presented last year.

The second annual event is taking place from Sunday, Nov. 3 through Thursday, Nov. 12. The major change, of course, is that the author sessions will be presented live on Zoom because of the pandemic.

A committee selected the nine featured books from among hundreds of titles featured in the the Jewish Book Councils's 2019-2020 catalogue. The Marvin Caplan Jewish Book Festival was initiated in 2019 to commemorate the memory of the late Marvin Caplan, a former Hamilton city councillor, business operator and realtor.

Throughout his life, Caplan was an avid reader, who was involved in children's reading programs and literacy campaigns aimed at helping both immigrants and those already in our community. Building upon the inaugural year's success, the festival committee, headed by Caplan's wife Judi, started working several months ago to select this year's authors. "Marvin read constantly on a wide variety of topics and always had a stack of books going at any given time, so the annual Jewish Book Festival is the perfect way to honour his memory," said Judi Caplan.

Hamilton Jewish Federation CEO Gustavo Rymberg said that the timing of the book festival during Holocaust Education Week was intentional.

"With the increase in antisemitism spurred by pandemic shutdown stressors, we felt it was vital that we stay focused and united as a community," he said. "The Book Festival is thus a tangible and communal way for us to remember and celebrate Jewish history and literature, and an important outreach for us to share our experiences with the broader non-Jewish community."

Just as important, with nine authors, the book festival has something of interest for everyone.



THE LATE
MARVIN CAPLAN,
2002

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT:

•Second Annual Marvin Caplan Jewish Book Festival

WHEN:

•Sunday, Nov. 3 through to Thursday, Nov. 12

EVENT INFORMATION

•Online: jewishhamilton.org

CONTACT INFORMATION:

•Email: jstirling@jewishhamilton.org

EVENT REGISTRATION

•Online: jewishhamilton.org
•Click: 2020 Jewish Book Festival
> More information



WHEN: Sunday, Nov. 1 at 3 p.m.

AUTHOR: **Jonathan Kaufman**,
The Last Kings of Shanghai
MODERATOR: TBA

Jonathan Kaufman, a Pulitzer Prize winning author, in the *Last Kings of Shanghai: The Rival Jewish Dynasties That Helped Create Modern China*, he unfolds an epic, multigenerational story of the Sassoons and the Kadoories, who flourished in Shanghai and Hong Kong as 20th-century China surged into the modern era.

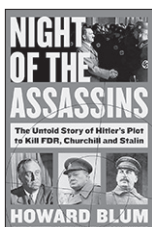


WHEN: Sunday, Nov. 1 at 6 p.m.

AUTHOR: **Raffi Berg**, **Red Sea Spies**
IN CONVERSATION WITH: Dani Limor

Raffi Berg is a BBC journalist who recounts the true story of a diving centre on the Sudanese coast run by Mossad operatives who used it as a cover to smuggle thousands of Ethiopian Jews to Israel from behind enemy lines.

Dani Limor served 25 years in the Mossad, with activities including leading the secret operation that evacuated Ethiopian Jews from Sudan to Israel. Before joining the Mossad, he was an Israeli paratrooper officer and fought in four of Israel's wars. He is a founder of the Nachshon School for Social Leadership and is mapping emerging Jewish communities around the world for the Ministry of the Diaspora.



WHEN: Monday, Nov. 2 at 7 p.m.

AUTHOR: **Howard Blum**,
The Night of the Assassins
MODERATOR: Jason Markusoff

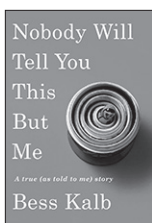
Howard Blum is a New York Times best-selling author. In *The Night of the Assassins*, he unravels the untold and true story of the Nazi plot to kill Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin in 1943. Hamilton native and Calgary resident, Jason Markusoff is an award-winning journalist/columnist for Maclean's magazine.



WHEN: Tuesday, Nov. 3 at 7 p.m.

AUTHOR: **Esther Amini**, **Concealed**
MODERATOR: TBA

Esther Amini, the American-born daughter of Persian immigrant parents who fled Iran, grew up in Queens, N.Y. In *Concealed*, she documents her struggle between being a dutiful daughter of tradition-bound parents and her desire for more self-determination.



WHEN: Tuesday, Nov. 4 at 7 p.m.

AUTHOR: **Bess Kalb**,
Nobody Will Ever Tell You This But Me
MODERATOR: Dahvi Waller

Bess Kalb is an Emmy-nominated writer for Jimmy Kimmel Live and the author of *Nobody Will Ever Tell You This But Me*. Her book, a tribute to her beloved grandmother,

Bobby, tells the broader story of Jewish immigration from Russia in the early 20th century, the desire for upward mobility, and the struggle for Jews to gain acceptance in America.

Dahvi Waller is an Emmy Award winner for her writing on television shows *Mrs. America*, *Mad Men* and *Desperate Housewives*.



WHEN: Sunday, Nov. 8 at 3 p.m.

AUTHOR: **Kathy Kacer**,
The Brushmaker's Daughter
MODERATOR: Dennis Nash

Kathy Kacer is the author of numerous stories about the Holocaust for young readers, including *Shanghai Escape*. Inspired by a true story and set in Berlin in 1939, 12-year-old Lillian and her father are on the run from Nazi soldiers because they are Jewish and are in danger of being arrested and put in prison.



WHEN: Monday, Nov. 9 at 7 p.m.

AUTHOR: **A.J. Sidransky**, **The Interpreter**
MODERATOR: Anita Bernstein

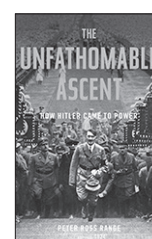
A.J. Sidransky, a National Jewish Book Award finalist for Debut Fiction in 2013, will present his book, *The Interpreter*, which tells the story of 23-year-old American GI, Kurt Berlin, who is recruited to return to Europe to aid in the interrogation of captured Nazis.



WHEN: Tuesday, Nov. 10 at 7 p.m.

AUTHOR: **David G. Marwell**,
Mengele: Unmasking the "Angel of Death"
MODERATOR: Judy Schwartz

David Marwell meticulously documents how an ambitious researcher could become a faithful servant to the Nazi genocide. As chief of investigative research at the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations in the 1980s, Marwell worked on the Mengele case, interviewing his victims, visiting the scenes of his crimes, and ultimately holding his bones in his hands.



WHEN: Thursday, Nov. 12 at 7 p.m.

AUTHOR: **Peter Ross Range**, **The Unfathomable Ascent: How Hitler Came to Power**
MODERATOR: Pamela Swett, Dean of Humanities, McMaster University

Peter Ross Range tells the story of the chilling and little-known story of Adolf Hitler's eight-year march to the pinnacle of German politics. A world-traveled author and journalist, Ross Range has covered war, politics, history, and international affairs.

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Holocaust Education Week

IN KEEPING with new realities, this year's Holocaust Education Week is going online. From Nov. 8 to Nov. 15, community members will be able to access a wide range of Holocaust related links and resources through a special portal set up at jewishhamilton.org. Resources include a section on Kristallnacht, a Yad Vashem virtual exhibit, and recordings of young Hamiltonians interviewing Hamilton Holocaust survivors.

The Yad Vashem Virtual exhibit, "SHOAH | How was it humanly possible," was first introduced at the United Nations in 2015 to commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The exhibition unfolds in sections, each recounting a major historical aspect of the Holocaust.

In addition to the online portal, four of the nine authors presenting at this year's Marvin Caplan Jewish Book Festival (see featured books on Nov. 8, 9, 10 and 12 on facing page) have written books relating to the Holocaust. These talks will be moderated by local Holocaust educator Dennis Nash and McMaster University Dean of Humanities Pamela Swett.

Federation CEO panelist at upcoming Limmud conference

HAMILTON JEWISH Federation CEO Gustavo Rymberg will be a featured panelist at Limmud Toronto's virtual festival of Jewish learning, culture and the arts on Sunday, Nov. 22.

Rymberg is one of three immigrant Jewish professionals hailing from Argentina, South Africa and the United States who are at the helm of reviving a number of smaller Jewish communities in Ontario. They will speak about how Jewish life in their adoptive communities differs from where they came from, and the unique challenges and opportunities facing smaller Jewish communities in the province. Other panellists include Dan Brotman, executive director, Windsor Jewish Federation and Joe Roberts, executive director, London JCC. For more information, visit limmud.ca.



Pj Library Chanukah activity bags

THE HAMILTON Jewish Federation and the Jewish Community Centre invite you to purchase a PJ Library activity bag for your child, filled with Chanukah themed activities, crafts and treats. Your purchase will help fund holiday gift baskets that Federation will deliver to those in need in our community.

Chanukah is a time to connect the generations and reach out to those in need. By participating in this project, you're letting the vulnerable among us know that someone is thinking of them, while teaching your child the mitzvah of Tzedakah. In addition, each activity bag will contain a Chanukah greeting card your child can colour and send to Shalom Village residents.

To order your Chanukah activity bag, email yarnold@jewishhamilton.org or call 905-648-0605, ext 301.

Jewish Family Services update

HJFS will be running a six-week Virtual Bereavement Group beginning Oct. 21, which will be facilitated by Gabrielle McSween and Doreen Korman. At a time when COVID-19 has interrupted our grieving practices and traditions, groups like this matter more than ever. To register, please email gabriellem@hamiltonjfs.ca or call 905-627-9922 x 21.

To volunteer or find out more about our programs and services, visit www.hamiltonjfs.ca.

Please donate to Hamilton Jewish Federation's Annual and Emergency Campaigns prior to Dec. 31. Every dollar raised will receive an additional 50 per cent of the donation from the Jewish Federations of North America Human Services Relief Matching Fund, and will be put towards vital supports.

Jewish Hamilton's got talent

This Chanukah is your child's moment to shine

SHINE THOSE dancing shoes, warm up your vocal chords and tune up that guitar for Jewish Hamilton's Got Talent #yourmomenttoshine coming up this Chanukah. The competition, open to youth aged six to 18, will be divided into elementary, middle school and high school divisions.

There are a lot of people doing a lot of amazing things on TikTok, and we want to see what you can do, whether it's a song, a lip synch, a dance, magic trick, physical feat or ... you name it! Share your performance video via TikTok or any other video sharing app by going to jewishhamilton.org and following the registration links.

Videos should be no longer than 60 seconds in length. The submission period begins on Nov. 15 and ends on Dec. 1. The virtual talent show will go live on Dec. 10 and the community will be able to watch and vote during the first five days of Chanukah (Dec. 10 through 14.)

Winners in each category will be announced on Dec. 17 to coincide with the eighth candle.

Show your talent

Each winner will receive a surprise gift in addition to naming a local Jewish organization of their choice to receive a donation of \$118 from the Hamilton Jewish Federation.

More information will be available soon at jewishhamilton.org or through Hamilton Jewish Federation weekly emails. Questions? Call Yael Arnold at 905-648-0605, ext 301 or email yarnold@jewishhamilton.org.



PHOTO BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

Out of the Cold volunteers display the fruits of their labour in this 2017 file photo.

Out of the Cold adapts to new realities

BY WENDY SCHNEIDER

COVID-19's arrival to the city last March brought an abrupt end to Hamilton's Out of the Cold (OOTC) program, a disastrous development for Hamilton's homeless and vulnerable populations who had come to rely on the program's home-cooked meals and warm vibe.

Tuesday night OOTC coordinator Cindy Richter and other organizers have been meeting all summer to brainstorm ways to restart the program in a safe way for both guests and volunteers. In a recent email to her dedicated volunteers, Richter wrote that, "Sadly, we will not be able to have all of our volunteers come back to the same roles/tasks in which they have become so proficient."

Richter told the HJN that many of her volunteers have asked her to count them in if the

Tuesday night program continues in some form. It's clear, however, that the program will not require the same number of volunteers as in past years. The best case scenario for Richter is having a small corps of volunteers prepare meals at Erskine Presbyterian on Pearl Street on alternate Wednesdays, which will be distributed from the parking lot.

"We have to think outside the box. Our group is developing additional innovative services which will reflect our unique OOTC essence. We have to be flexible and hope that more churches will grant access and greater frequency," she said. Appreciated for delicious meals, her group is also known for its "loot bags" of toiletries, warm socks, gloves and hats. Donations of those items are most appreciated and may be dropped at JHamilton.



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HEW 2020



Holocaust Education Week is going online

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NOVEMBER 8 - NOVEMBER 15

Visit our Holocaust Education Week 2020 Portal and the Yad Vashem virtual exhibit "SHOAH: How was it humanly possible." Jewishhamilton.org/hew



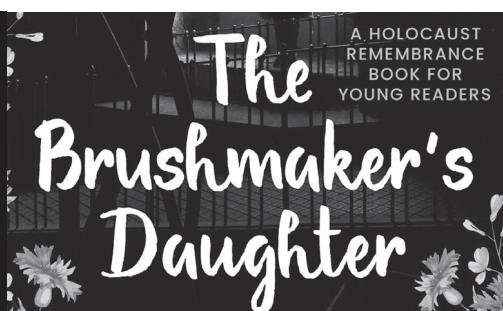
KATHY KACER • THE BRUSHMAKER'S DAUGHTER

SUNDAY, NOV. 8 | ZOOM AT 3 PM

MODERATED BY DENNIS NASH | Holocaust Educator

RECOMMENDED FOR YOUNG READERS

<https://jewishhamilton.org/2020jewishbookfestival>



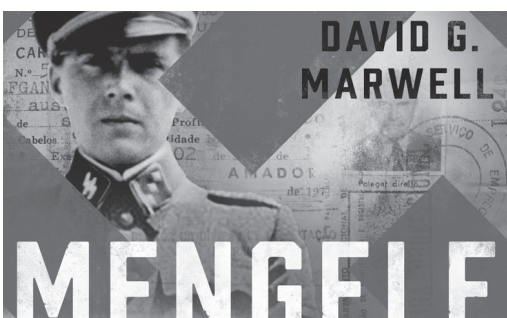
A.J. SIDRANSKY • THE INTERPRETER

MONDAY, NOV. 9 | ZOOM AT 7 PM

MODERATED BY ANITA BERNSTEIN

Education Director Kehila Heschel School

<https://jewishhamilton.org/2020jewishbookfestival>



DAVID G. MARWELL • MENGELE

TUESDAY, NOV. 10 | ZOOM AT 7 PM

MODERATED BY JUDY SCHWARTZ

Past Director of the Jewish Students Association (Hillel) McMaster University

<https://jewishhamilton.org/2020jewishbookfestival>



PETER ROSS RANGE • THE UNFATHOMABLE ASCENT

THURSDAY, NOV. 12 | ZOOM AT 3 PM

MODERATED BY DR. PAMELA SWETT

Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, McMaster University

jewishhamilton.org/2020jewishbookfestival

NOVEMBER 15 | 7 PM | SPECIAL PRESENTATION | Jewishhamilton.org/hew

VOICES OF OUR HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

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<https://jewishhamilton.org/2020jewishbookfestival>

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Emergency

\$42,654 | 28.

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Kehila Heschel thanks the Hamilton Jewish Federation for a special project allocation to assist us in expanding our technology programs. This year, 12 additional computers were purchased for older students to expand their use of technology. The computers also enable us to invite emergency relief present to our students remotely.

The Hamilton Jewish Federation and

The Second Annual M

Jewish B

Sunday, Novem

THANK YOU for support!

Emergency Campaign 2021 Update

15% of our goal of \$1.3M

Emergency Campaign Update

4% of our goal of \$150K

Emergency Campaign by December 31st,
your give will be matched by 50%!

power to help more people in our community
medical care and assistance with mental health issues

Jewish Federation for their
enhancing our technology
centers have allowed our
technology in the classroom.
experts to Zoom in and



Kehila Heschel
School

JCC Hamilton present

Marvin Caplan

Book Festival

October 1 - Thursday, November 12, 2020

HAMILTON JEWISH FEDERATION | CAMPAIGN 2021



"This year, I want us all to be free from illness, financial hardship, and social injustice. Your gift to the Hamilton Jewish Federation will help make the coming year the one we all want – filled with renewed health and healing."

Last year wasn't so easy – and we want this year to be different.

We want seniors who feel isolated to feel connected. We want parents who can't put food on their tables to be able to feed their families. And we want people of color to live in a world that supports them in every way.

We want health for the sick and comfort for the poor. And if all of this sounds a bit overwhelming, it doesn't have to be...

The Hamilton Jewish Federation works to bring about the change you want, and your gift today will help make it happen. Whether it's delivering kosher meals to quarantined Holocaust survivors living in Hamilton or extending support to the most vulnerable across the city, the Jewish Federation has been on the front lines since the beginning.

Your gift today provides crucial support to the people who will need it most throughout the coming year.

Do you want to provide critical personal protection equipment (PPE) to nurses and healthcare workers in our Jewish senior centers? **Your gift to Federation helps get it done.**

Do you want to feed hungry children and homebound seniors with food pantry supplies and thousands of prepared meals? **Your gift to Federation helps get it done.**

Do you want to support lonely and distressed individuals of all ages with virtual mental health calls? **Your gift to Federation helps get it done.**

Your gift to the Hamilton Jewish Federation allows us to ensure essential safety-net services, vital educational resources, and decisive organizational engagements to the individuals and communities that need it most during these desperately trying times.

Your gift fuels our fight against racism, strengthens our deep partnerships with leaders in other communities, and energizes our steadfast support in the fight for equality and the rights of all people – regardless of the color of their skin – to live without fear.

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I can't possibly know what the New Year will bring, but I do know what I want. I want the Hamilton Jewish Federation to continue their tireless work here and around the world. I want challenges to be met with hope, fear to be met with courage, and despair to be met with optimism.

Gustavo Rymberg, CEO | Hamilton Jewish Federation

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A good news story for Canadian Jewish journalism

New and working to become national, the Canadian Jewish Record is online with ambitions of being the country's leading voice for Jewish news and opinion

BY **WENDY SCHNEIDER**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

FROM SYNAGOGUE and school closures and charities questioning their survival to individual pain and suffering as a result of losing one's job or not being able to sit by a bedside during a loved one's final moments, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on Canadian Jewish life.

While some might not see the demise of this country's only national Jewish newspaper in the same category, when the Canadian Jewish News (CJN) announced in early April that it was ceasing operations, its loyal readership across the country mourned the end of a 60-year-old publication that provided a weekly mix of local, national and international Jewish news, thoughtful commentary, and a sense of national identity.

As it turned out, the mourning was premature. By mid-May, a new, online publication had stepped in to fill the void. The Canadian Jewish Record (CJR) was co-founded by long-time CJN journalist Ron Csillag and Bernie Farber, former CEO of the Canadian Jewish Congress and current chair of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network. Seed funding for the initiative came from a handful of local Jewish philanthropists whom Farber had approached with his vision of having newly unemployed Jewish writers continue to report the news on a pro-bono basis in the interest of keeping Canadian Jewish journalism alive.

At the first meeting of the CJR, which is edited by Csillag and published

by Farber, 25 people joined the call, among them former CJN employees, journalism students and young people with social media expertise. Csillag says there was some discussion in those early days about whether to delay publication to allow for the release of a very polished product.

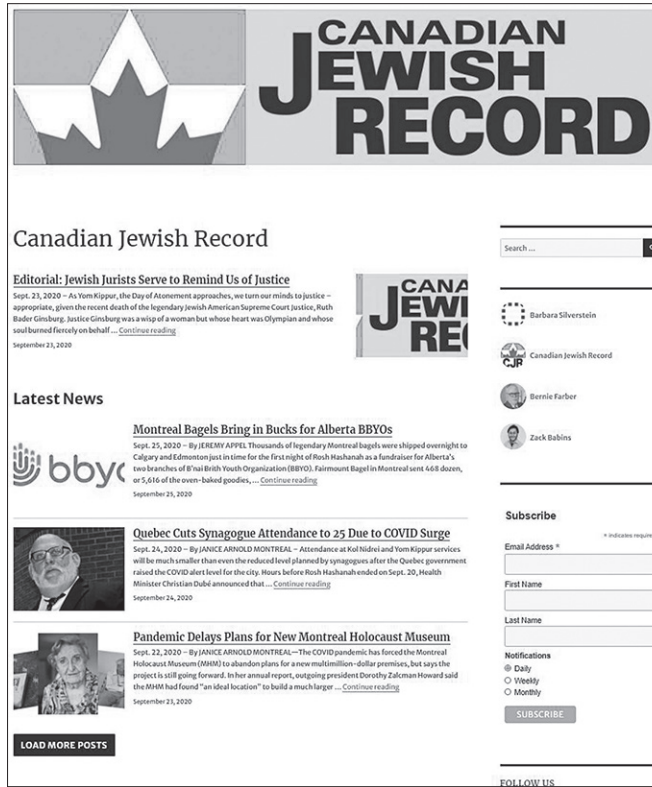
"Instead we decided to go fast and iron out the kinks as we went along. So we hit the ground running and people knew it and turned to us right away. People are hungry for Jewish news and commentary, even if they disagree with it," he says.

That strategy appears to have paid off. When York University wanted to publicize its findings on antisemitism and the Prime Minister's Office wanted to publicize the Prime Minister's visit to the Ottawa Kasher Food Bank, they turned to the CJR.

"Truth be told, without Ron this doesn't happen. He is the editor and a mover and a shaker. That's why we've been able to keep it together," says Farber.

Csillag, who was set to retire in June, acknowledges that he is putting in eight to nine hour days.

"I take this pretty seriously, because no one senses the void as deeply as I do," he says. In addition to assigning stories, liaising with correspondents, and working with his PR people, Csillag edits "virtually everything" to maintain the rhythm of uploading two fresh articles to the website every day. Those articles are written by a team of correspondents, among them, Hamilton-based seasoned journalist Steve Arnold. Other CJR writers based



canadianjewishrecord.ca

Editor, Ron Csillag, and publisher, Bernie Farber, are co-founders of the online publication, the Canadian Jewish Record.



Ron Csillag



Bernie Farber

in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and Winnipeg are producing "some very professional CJN-level copy and commentary," said Csillag, adding that he still hopes to find reporters on the west and east coasts to add to the mix.

Farber, who pens the CJR's weekly editorials, said that despite the publication's apparent success, the current model is not sustainable. "There is a commitment from a number of people

to keep this going. All of us keep putting off winding this down. So as long as it's needed and as long as there are people willing to write out of the goodness of their heart, we will, at this point, continue to do it," he said.

Csillag says he and Farber did not envision the CJR as a permanent thing. "Our original intention was to keep the engine of Jewish journalism warm while the CJN reconfigured and figured out what it was doing and maybe came back," he says. That's still their hope. But the question remains, if the CJN does come back in some form, does the CJR dissolve itself or do the two publications merge?

Csillag says he is unsure why the CJN went away completely. "I think it was a shame," he said, adding that, in the month of April alone, close to 200 newspapers across North America shared the CJN's fate. "The print model, I think ultimately, is what sank us."

In the meantime, both Csillag and Farber are enjoying doing what they see as a mitzvah to the community. "We enjoy it because both Ron and I grew up this way (with the CJN), Ron as a journalist and me as the activist," he said. "Canada is a country of 380,000 Jews, the third or fourth largest Jewish population outside of Israel. It deserves an independent national newspaper." Until then, the CJR team will continue to strive for balanced news and commentary from all sides of the political spectrum.

"I think that there are good, decent philanthropists out there. They want an open tent. They want to hear from the left, they want to hear from the right, they want to hear from the middle," says Farber. "That's our community, so that's what we'll do until something more firm comes into play."

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A city reinvents itself

As the city grows, finding new energy and straining against its capacities, what place can be found for its traditional strengths and values?

BY **PAUL WEINBERG**
SPECIAL TO THE HJN



Paul Weinberg is a seasoned writer-journalist and editor, whose specialties include Canadian politics, international relations and local history.

SOMETIME IN THE PAST 10 years or more, Hamilton discovered it had become “cool.” What that means is of course open to interpretation. Once derided as retro for its so-called lunch-bucket industrial demeanour, Hamilton is now viewed both as a cutting-edge and a less stressful place to live. But what does this mean for the city and those who have long been fighting for it and writing about it?

New restaurants, art galleries, bookstores and independent coffee shops are popping up, along with two repertory movie theatres – the new Playhouse Cinema and reopened Westdale – to boot. The Supercrawl music and arts festival planted itself firmly in the downtown core in 2009 and has reappeared every fall with its closed streets and open music stages, plus stalls selling a multitude of arts and crafts.

Further to the east, there is the conversion of the Cotton Factory, an old and gargantuan factory complex, into a creative hub of small businesses and creative activity. It is part of a larger trend to preserve and repurpose the aging and empty industrial structures that dot the city.

A major development has been the influx of former Torontonians (such as myself) who have bought homes at prices unimaginable in an overpriced GTA housing market. They are either retirees or people still working, commuting daily by car, bus or train to Toronto and back, making ties to their new urban environment rather tenuous at times.

Of course, the inevitable attention from real estate investors has led to higher prices for homes and climbing apartment rents. Hamilton is becoming less affordable for people of

modest incomes, in contrast to what the city was like just a decade ago.

As early as 2005, when retired management consultant Graham Crawford returned to his hometown, he detected a new “vibrancy” in downtown Hamilton, centred around James Street North. The street had been a largely Portuguese strip with shops operating during the day, selling distinct ethnic foods like salted cod, before shutting down for the evening.

An Art Crawl was starting to happen on the second Friday of every month. New art galleries had sprung up, but the restaurants – including the street’s first coffee shop, the Mulberry, along with the building’s upstairs consulting offices – had not yet opened their doors. It was the hospitality shown by Dave Kuruc, who was already operating the Mixed Media arts supply shop at the corner of James North and Cannon, which galvanized Crawford to start his own outlet, HIStory + HERitage, devoted to the life and history of the city.

Bounce forward to 2020 and the original galleries on James Street North have closed and moved elsewhere in the downtown as commercial rents have shot up in the inevitable transformation of a destination street in a capitalistic market. Real estate investors are buying up buildings that, in a little over fifteen years, have gone up in price from \$180,000 to \$800,000, according to one owner of a building on the street.

One of the early adopters of James North, Dave Kuruc, has now sold his building and relocated his arts supply business to Westdale, where he and his family live. He has combined his existing business with a new bookstore, King W. Books, in a commercial space once occupied by another bookseller, Bryan Prince. If you ask him about the revitalization of Hamilton,

he’ll tell you flatly that it’s over. Graham Crawford has also sold his three-storey building on James North.

Furthermore, the Artword Artbar on Colbourne Street, a hub for jazz in the city for about a decade, has closed after the owning couple decided it was time to retire and sold their property just off James North to an architectural firm. They still remain active in the cultural scene, holding events in different locations. Meanwhile, other changes are in store for James North, with new condos and offices being planned in refurbished buildings and assuredly even more sophisticated eating places.

Such things happen all the time in a vital urban centre like Hamilton and we can expect more to occur. What is certain is that a revival is continuing in Hamilton unabated and involves more than just the fate of James North or the similarly gentrified Locke Street further west. On other streets like Barton and Ottawa Street North, in other small but growing pockets like Cannon/Kensington and King East near Tim Hortons Field and even on Kenilworth, there are credible signs that the reclaiming of Hamilton is ongoing and is not neighbourhood specific.

I agree with Graham Crawford that some of the words and phrases used to describe a revival in Hamilton – now taken up primarily by the city’s economic development department and the real estate industry – are frankly over the top. The one he “hates” the most is the new Brooklyn. It is arguable that Hamilton’s American rust boom-bust parallel is more likely to be Pittsburgh, which also had a thriving steel industry.

Revitalization is also problematic because there is an implication that before the 2000s there was nothing of value in Hamilton. This discards the sense of solidarity among steelworkers in the 1946 Stelco strike, the preservation of natural areas and parks by Thomas McQuesten and Thomas

Beckett, and the majestic heritage buildings downtown, which were foolishly torn down for urban renewal on what is now the Jackson Square mall starting in the early 1970s. James North in the 1920s was a lively Italian strip where people were out and about, according to Crawford.

Crawford is a Hamilton booster par excellence but he is also realistic about his city’s shortcomings, especially with the majority of elected politicians and the bureaucracy down at city hall whom he sees as isolated in their own bubble, separate from the rest of local citizens.

So, to start talking about “an urban renaissance” there is enough to make him protest. Name the issue and this local activist will speak at length on the persistence of one-way streets, the failure of city council to inform the public or the stewards of sensitive natural areas about a massive four-year sewage spill in the billions of litres into Chedoke Creek and Cootes Paradise, the intolerance of the police towards LGBTQA+ people, the hateful characters parading in front of city hall on Saturday mornings and the general secretive atmosphere and top-down attitudes at city hall, among other festering matters at hand.

What is ultimately exciting about Hamilton is the current level of political activism, reflected in an active social media and the existence of organizations like Environment Hamilton, the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion and the various tenant rights groups. There is less deference towards authority and whatever city hall or our various elites dish out.

— from *Reclaiming Hamilton*

Paul Weinberg has written for newspapers and magazines including: Canada’s History, CBC Radio News, Financial Post Magazine, the Globe and Mail, National Post, and the Toronto Star. The focus of his interest and writing is Canadian politics, international relations and local history.

Signs of the revitalization of Hamilton’s downtown core include the Lister Block restoration, Gore Park updates, McMaster University’s presence in Jackson Square, and condo development on King William Street.



PHOTOS BY WENDY SCHNEIDER, HJN



Lost, not forgotten but never found

A Hamilton native searches her family history and records to discover her long-lost baby relative

BY **STEVEN BROCK**
SPECIAL TO THE HJN

ALL HER LIFE, Hamilton native Debbie Sacrob heard stories of the two babies in her family who had died. According to family folklore, after her father Lorne's birth in 1929, her grandmother, Rose had two more pregnancies. The first likely resulted in a miscarriage while the second, in 1941, ended in the stillbirth of a baby boy.

It was common in the 1930s and 1940s, for a stillborn baby to be buried without ceremony in an unmarked grave. Although there are differing opinions, Jewish law dictates that if a baby does not survive for 30 days, it is as if the baby never existed and one does not mourn the loss.

Dan Levy, president and general manager of the United Hebrew Memorial Chapel of Hamilton notes a formal funeral provides a certain comfort. "I don't ever say to a family that they cannot do a service if the baby doesn't survive 30 days. I think it is important for healing purposes," he says.

Debbie knew that the stillborn baby was buried somewhere in the Jewish cemetery on Toronto's Dawes Road. There is no marker on the grave and no one knows exactly where the baby was interred. However, that story never sat well with her. Her family never had any evidence that the baby existed at all. She made it one of her life's missions to find out whatever she could about this child.

Rose and her husband, William Sacrob, moved from Toronto in 1948 when they opened up a Hamilton branch of their family business, Service Sanitary Linen Supply Company. The Sacrobs made Westdale and Dundas their home for the next 16 years. Through their membership at Temple Anshe Sholom, Lorne met Selma Caller and the couple married in 1951.

Their daughter, Debbie, and son, Steven, soon followed. In 1964, Lorne, by then a manager for Coles Bookstores, accepted a transfer to a larger outlet in Toronto. The family has lived there ever since.

After Rose died in 1983, Lorne with Debbie at his side, decided to search for the grave of his lost sibling. "My father had often expressed interest in finding out where this baby was buried, but I don't believe he did anything until then. Perhaps the loss of his mother spurred him on," said Debbie.

During the trip out to Dawes Road, Lorne and Debbie were shown an unmarked plot of land where babies and stillborns were buried. The groundskeeper noted that families are free to erect a marker commemorating their relative, but there was no way to know exactly where the departed was buried. The cemetery staff was otherwise unhelpful and the pair left feeling unsatisfied with their visit. Lorne never resumed his search before passing away in 1991.



SACROB FAMILY PHOTO

In 2003, Debbie decided to once again take up the search. She wanted to obtain tangible evidence of the existence of the baby and hopefully find out exactly where he was buried.

An application to the Office of the Registrar General of Ontario, gave her the confirmation she was looking for. Debbie received a Certificate of Stillbirth for Baby Boy Sacrob. She recalls, "I was overcome by the oddest feeling. I just stared at it. Suddenly I had evidence to this sorrowful chapter of my family history. This affected me more profoundly than I had expected."

The certificate indicated that

the baby was born at Toronto General Hospital on June 4, 1941. Interment at Dawes Road cemetery was handled by Benjamin's Park Memorial Chapel and a police permit (required in those days) for burial had been issued.

This new information increased Debbie's desire to learn more. She contacted Benjamin's who told her that their records for 1941 had been lost in a flood. Debbie found out that neither the hospital nor the Toronto Police held records going that far back. Again, she was at a dead end and put her search on hold.

As years passed, Debbie made subsequent visits to Dawes Road.

A Hamilton native, Debbie Sacrob stands in the unmarked section of Dawes Road Cemetery where babies and stillborns are buried.

While the current staff has been considerably more sympathetic, they have not been able to offer any more information than she received back in 1983.

Through the Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto, Debbie discovered that Benjamin's had submitted seven record books detailing their burials from 1930 to 1980, to the National Archives of Canada. Debbie wondered if these would include copies of the records that she was told were lost. Several attempts to contact Benjamin's to clarify this have gone unanswered.

Undeterred, Debbie requested from Library and Archives Canada any records for babies named Sacrob in Benjamin's record books. In September 2020, she received a copy of a 1941 Benjamin's file card for the burial of Baby Boy Sacrob. While information on the card was the same as the certificate, it corroborated the existence and fate of the baby. Again, no specific grave location was indicated.

While the general area within Dawes Road cemetery where Baby Boy Sacrob is buried is known, the actual location of the grave remains a mystery. An equally exhaustive search for Rose's second baby has yielded no results. Believing that she has discovered all she can, Debbie said,

"I feel I have come full circle now. I wish my father had been able to see the certificate. That is what he was looking for. It might have given him closure."

Pandemic prompts birth of non-profit

BY **ABIGAIL CUKIER**
HAMILTON JEWISH NEWS

ENTREPRENEURIAL INGENUITY is the ability to create innovative ventures and value within structural and resource constraints using imaginative problem solving.

This is how Benson Honig and Ana Cristina Siqueira defined the term in their 2019 study in the Journal of Knowledge Management. Honig, the Teresa Cascioli Chair in Entrepreneurial Leadership at the DeGroote School of Business at McMaster University, and Siqueira, an assistant professor of management at Cotsakos College of Business, William Paterson University, have worked together on studies involving entrepreneurship and ingenuity for almost a decade. After the COVID-19 pandemic hit, they decided to turn that research into action.

Within weeks, they created Reframery, which empowers diverse individuals to develop their creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship skills. The non-profit organization supports individuals who face socio-economic constraints by providing entrepreneurship consulting, coaching services and online training with the purpose of improving equal opportunity, social responsibility, environmental sustainability and inclusion.

“When COVID-19 happened, we got this idea to leverage our academic research into real-world applications,” said Honig. “The pandemic is differentially affecting women and minorities and we thought this could be an opportunity to provide support.”

Honig describes Reframery as an online version of a business incubator. Such programs, including give early stage companies access to support, including mentorship, investors and office space to help them get established.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BENSON HONIG

McMaster professor Benson Honig

“Building an incubator can be very expensive and a lot of the money is invested in the building and management,” says Honig. “We created a virtual incubator.”

All of Reframery’s programs are completely free of charge. The organization received a \$100,000 investment from McMaster University and is applying for grants for further funding. Reframery is already working with a group of Brazilian immigrants in New York City and will soon be working with local aspiring or struggling entrepreneurs through YWCA Hamilton. Future projects include groups in Brazil and Kenya.

“It is a completely different model. You can really have it anywhere and we want to take it around the world,” said Benson. “We feel it is important to take what we do as academics and bring it into the real world to provide this support.”

Local pediatrician assumes Na’amat Canada presidency

BY **PHYLLIS SHRAGGE**

AS INCOMING national president of Na’amat Canada, Sandi Seigel brings superb leadership skills fine-tuned by her volunteerism with Na’amat and her professional expertise as a pediatrician.

She has been co-president of Na’amat’s Hamilton chapter, has served two terms chairing the Na’amat Canada National Education Committee, has served as national vice-president, and for the past three years has served as chair of the Na’amat Canada National Development Committee.

In 2017, Seigel headed the Israel leadership seminar, and in 2019, she represented Na’amat Canada in Israel at the Na’amat International and WZO meetings.

Seigel is a general pediatrician practicing in the Hamilton community and at St. Joseph’s Healthcare and McMaster Children’s Hospital. She has cared for HIV+ patients and children and infants of HIV+ mothers for more than 20 years in the SIS (Special Immunology Services) clinic in Hamilton. She has also been involved with the Child Advocacy and Assessment Program assessing children when there is a concern of possible child maltreatment. In St. Joseph’s Special Care Nursery, she cares for newborns with such issues as prematurity and neonatal abstinence syndrome. She served as Deputy Chief of Pediatrics at St. Joseph’s Healthcare for 13 years. She was the recipient of the Sister Joan O’Sullivan award in 2020.



Sandi Seigel

Past Mac Hillel president Max Lightstone wins alumni award

MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

MAX LIGHTSTONE, a past-president of McMaster Hillel, has been awarded the university’s Alumni Association’s Albert Lager Prize for Student Initiative. The Prize recognizes Lightstone’s leadership in McMaster Hillel and the founding of the student Interfaith Council among his many accomplishments.

Lightstone graduated with his B.Eng from McMaster two years ago. After volunteering with Hillel and the Faculty of Engineering in his first few years of undergrad, he found his niche in representation and project management. He also served as a senator, administrative officer in the Engineering Graduate Society, member of the Selection Committee for the University Provost, and several other boards and councils.

Lightstone has a passion for finding connections and building solutions, and was able to create several new initiatives on campus to fill gaps in the student experience. One of these is the Interfaith Council, a space for leaders of the major religious clubs to meet each other and work on issues of common concern. The Ontario Rover Rally is another highlight, which brought student teams and space experts together for a Mars themed robotics competition at McMaster Innovation Park. Lightstone, who is currently completing his Masters of Applied Science in Mechanical Engineering, teaches undergraduate labs in the Mechanical Engineering department.



Max Lightstone

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Welcome to the team Yves!

*Tom Cosentino
Vice President and Branch Manager
Hamilton, Ontario*

For a confidential discussion, please contact:

Yves Apel, Vice President and Investment Advisor

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