

L'CHAYIM

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Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties

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L'CHAYIM

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Photographs should be clear, black-and-white or color prints. If you wish a photograph returned, include a stamped, self-addressed envelope of appropriate size.

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DECEMBER ISSUE EDITORIAL DEADLINE:
Wednesday, November 4

OUR MISSION
To strengthen and enrich the Jewish Community by providing and supporting philanthropic, educational and social service programs locally, in Israel and throughout the world.

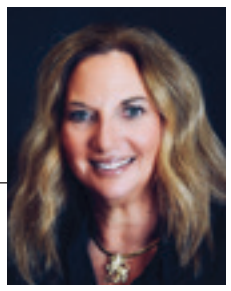
OUR VISION
A Jewish Community that is based on Jewish values such as Tzedakah (benevolence), Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) and K'lal Yisrael (taking responsibility for one another).

I have some news . . .

I am no longer the Executive Director!

FROM THE Chief Executive Officer

■ **Debbie Sanford**



Well, I have some news to share with our community, and I suppose there is no easy way to say it. After eight wonderful years with the Jewish Federation of Lee and Charlotte Counties, I am no longer the Executive Director.

Yes, you read that correctly. Before anyone starts calling, texting or wondering what on earth happened, I should probably explain. The Board of Directors thought it was a good time for a change. A title change, that is!

I am incredibly honored and grateful to share that I have been named the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties!

I hope I didn't scare too many of you. Although, if I did, perhaps it means you would miss me just a little! All kidding aside, this new title is deeply meaningful to me, and I want to share why.

When I first joined the Federation eight years ago, I could never have imagined the journey ahead. What began as an opportunity to serve our Jewish community has become one of the greatest privileges of my life. Over the years, I have watched our Federation grow, evolve and respond to the changing needs of the people we serve.

We have expanded our programs, strengthened our partnerships, increased our community outreach and worked tirelessly to ensure that Jewish life in Lee and Charlotte Counties remains vibrant, welcoming and secure.

And through it all, our mission has remained the same: To strengthen and enrich the Jewish Community by providing and supporting philanthropic, educational and social service programs locally, in Israel and throughout the world. But the Federation of today is not the same organization it was eight years ago.

Our Jewish Family Services Food Pantry is serving an extraordinary number of individuals and families struggling to put food on their tables. Our security initiatives have become an essential part of protecting our Jewish institutions, schools and community members. Our educational programs, Jewish Film Festival, youth and family engagement initiatives and community events continue to bring people together and strengthen Jewish identity.

We are also navigating an increasingly complex world. Rising antisemitism, growing financial needs, security concerns and the responsibility to stand with Israel and Jewish communities around the world have placed greater demands on Jewish Federations everywhere.

Our work is no longer simply about organizing programs and raising funds. It is about leadership, strategic planning, building relationships, managing resources, responding to crises and ensuring that our Federation is positioned to serve future generations.

That is why this new title means so much to me.

The title of Chief Executive Officer reflects the scope of responsibility that comes with leading an organization that has grown in both its reach and its impact. It recognizes the work we are doing today and the vision we have for tomorrow. More importantly, it represents the confidence and trust that our Board of Directors has placed in me. For that, I am truly grateful.

I am especially thankful to our Board for their leadership, support, and belief in the future of our Federation. I am equally grateful to our dedicated staff, whose hard work and compassion make everything we accomplish possible, and to our volunteers, donors, community partners, and supporters who stand beside us every day.

No title, no matter how impressive it may sound, can replace the importance of the people who make this organization what it is. And while the letters after my name may have changed, my commitment to this community has not. I will continue to show up, work hard, advocate for our community, seek new opportunities and do everything I can to make our Federation the very best it can be.

As we welcome the Jewish New Year, I am filled with gratitude for how far we have come and excitement for all that lies ahead. Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving this remarkable community. I look forward to continuing this journey together.

Read the current and recent issues of *L'CHAYIM* online at www.JewishFederationLCC.org.

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When the shelves are empty ...

By Monica Wildonger, JFS Case Manager & Food Pantry Coordinator

There is something heartbreaking about looking across the shelves of a food pantry and seeing more empty space than food.

At the JFS Food Pantry, we are doing everything we can to keep those shelves stocked. We were recently able to secure an increase in the amount of food we receive from the Harry Chapin Food Bank of Southwest Florida. That additional food is desperately needed, but even with more food coming in, the demand has grown faster than we ever could have imagined.


Monica Wildonger

Record numbers

Our neighbors are coming through our doors in record numbers. On one particularly overwhelming day, more than 100 households — representing over 400 individuals — came to the pantry for food. Even more striking, 42 of those households were new, representing 167 individuals who had never before needed to turn to a food pantry for help.

Behind every one of those numbers is a person. It is a parent trying to stretch a grocery budget until the end of the month, a senior choosing between food



and other necessities, or a family wondering how they will put a meal on the table. Increasingly, it is someone who has never needed assistance before.

Increased need

The need has increased exponentially, and our pantry is not alone. Food pantries throughout our community are facing the same tremendous demand. Recently, one local pantry had to close early because they had run out of food.

But in the middle of this growing need, we have also seen something incredibly encouraging: our community has responded.

At the end of September, synagogues throughout our community came together for food drives to support the JFS Food Pantry. The response from congregants, families and individuals was overwhelming. We are deeply grateful to everyone who participated and helped fill our pantry shelves.

That generosity means more than simply cans and boxes on a shelf. It means a family can bring home food for dinner. It means a senior can worry a little less about making it through the month. It means a parent can put food on the table without having to choose between groceries and another essential expense.

We hope that this outpouring of support will continue, because the need is not slowing down.

Doing more

As Thanksgiving approaches, we want to help our neighbors do more than simply get by. We want families to be able to sit down together and enjoy a Thanksgiving meal with dignity and without worrying about how they will afford it. Gift cards to help families purchase turkeys would be especially meaningful this year.

If your synagogue, congregation, organization, family or business would like to organize a food drive or support the JFS Food Pantry, your help is needed now more than ever.

The shelves may be empty, but our community has shown us that they don't have to stay that way. Together, we can make sure that our neighbors don't have to face hunger alone.

A New Chapter, New Experiences, and More Ways to Connect!

By Amy Hallock, Community Events Manager

I am so excited to share some wonderful news! I have officially transitioned into a full-time role as Community Events Manager for the Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties!


Amy Hallock

As this position continues to evolve, I have more time to focus on creativity, fresh ideas, and meaningful ways to bring our community together. What I love most about this work is seeing people connect, build friendships, and discover new experiences. And this year, we have plenty to look forward to!

With the help of Gail, Russ, and Jan, we have launched a Federation Book Club! Meeting on the third Thursday of each month at the Federation, we will share thoughts, exchange perspectives, and enjoy great conversations about the books we read. What makes this club especially exciting is the opportunity, through the Jewish Book Council, to speak with some of the authors themselves.

One of those authors, J.A. Schwartzman, who wrote *Wiseguys, Rabbis, and the FBI*, will be our featured speaker at our Community Breakfast on December 6 at the DoubleTree by Hilton. I hope you will join us for an engaging morning of stories and conversation.

We are also putting a new twist on a familiar favorite! Instead of JFed Hits the Road, we are introducing **JFed Hits the Tracks**, right here in Fort Myers. We will board a train for a three-hour adventure featuring a murder mystery show and a five-course dinner. What a fun way to share an experience and make new friends!

Another exciting addition is **The Travelling Shuk – Shuk to the Core**, coming to Temple Judea on Sunday, November 22. We will welcome Israeli vendors for a unique shopping experience, bringing a little taste of Israel to our community. I am looking forward to exploring their merchandise, meeting the vendors, and seeing everyone enjoy this special event.

And please save the date for our **2nd Annual Community Menorah Lighting at Bell Tower on December 10!** We cannot wait to gather again and celebrate Hanukkah together.

These events are just the beginning. I am excited to explore new partnerships, try creative ideas, and offer a variety of experiences that welcome both familiar faces and people joining us for the first time.

For me, successful events are about more than what happens on the calendar. They are about the conversations that continue afterward, the friendships that begin, and the feeling of belonging we create together.

Whether you have been involved with the Federation for years or are just getting to know us, I hope you will find something on our calendar that sparks your interest. Bring a friend, introduce yourself to someone new, and help us keep building a community.

Be sure to sign up for our Federation newsletter to stay updated on everything we have planned. I look forward to seeing you soon!



THE STRENGTH OF PEOPLE.
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

The Jewish Federation Annual Campaign provides the resources to strengthen and enrich our Jewish community locally, in Israel and around the world.



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With a tribute gift you can mark a milestone, celebrate a special occasion, extend your sympathy or send wishes for a speedy recovery. It is a meaningful way to acknowledge friends or family and strengthen our Jewish community by contributing to the Annual Campaign.

A personalized tribute card will be sent to the honoree or bereaved on your behalf, reflecting a personal message if you wish.

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Gail Margolis & Jerry Weber

jewishfederationlcc.org/tribute-memorials

HOW
THE JEWISH FEDERATION SERVES

Local Jewish Education and Culture
- Community-wide Jewish Education and Cultural Programs for all ages.
- L'CHAYIM published monthly to keep the Jewish community informed about local, national and international Jewish issues.
- CRC-Community Relations Council to address issues of anti-Semitism and Interfaith Relations.
- Israel Advocacy and Initiatives to strengthen local Jewish community ties with Israel. Holocaust education for middle and high school students in the community and a college campus Jewish life experience committee.
- Volunteer opportunities for all ages.

Overseas
- Funding to the Jewish Agency for Israel and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) for full-spectrum social services to Israel and Jewish communities in 60+ countries around the world.
- Partnership 2Gether relationship with the Hadera-Eiron Region in Israel.

Jewish Community Foundation
- An endowment that ensures future social and educational programming and support for our community.
- Needs-based college scholarships and study scholarships in Israel.
- Jewish camp scholarships.

Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties | Jewish Family Services

Local Seniors Services
- Lunch Bunch, a monthly gathering with a free lunch for older adults to meet and schmooze.
- Holiday baskets and teen visits to seniors and senior facilities for Rosh Hashanah, Hanukkah and Passover.
- Holocaust survivor outreach.

Local Social Services
- Non-sectarian, individual & family outreach, information & referral services.
- South Fort Myers United Way House.

Local Emergency Services
- Food Pantry and gift cards.
- Emergency financial assistance grants to families and individuals in crisis.
- Local disaster outreach and assistance.

Education, Arts & Culture Programs

Israeli Folk Dancing	Holocaust Remembrance	Lion of Judah
Jewish Social Club	Jewish Film Festival	Women's Day
Mah Jongg	Community Breakfast	TRIBE
Holiday Senior Visits	Major Gifts-Pacesetters	Annual Meeting
PJ Library	Jewish Heritage Day	Men's Division
Federation Hits the Road-Day Trips		P2G Partnership Together

What do you think?

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From strangers to family

A week we will never forget

By Brittany Salem, Youth and Family Engagement Coordinator


Brittany Salem

This past month, our community had the incredible privilege of welcoming a teen delegation from our Partnership2Gether sister region of Hadera-Eiron, Israel, to Lee and Charlotte Counties. After months of planning, coordinating and anticipating their arrival, five amazing visitors finally arrived in Fort Myers.

I spent so much time thinking about what we would do while they were here, where we would take them, what activities we would plan and how we could make their visit special. What I could never have planned for was the incredible bond that would form between all of us in just a few short days. They arrived as strangers, but they truly left as family.

Throughout their visit, we wanted to give them a chance to experience some of the things that make Southwest Florida and our Jewish community so special. We explored Sanibel Island, spent time sightseeing around Fort Myers, went bowling, created art together, shared countless meals and conversations, and most importantly, had the opportunity to simply spend time together.

Welcoming our Israeli guests

The teens and their Israeli chaperone, Nili, visited Temple Beth El, where they joined Lunch Bunch and participated in a Q&A panel. Members of our community were able to hear directly from them about their lives in Israel, ask questions and connect with them on a much more personal level.


At Lakes Park with P2G

They also spent time at Temple Judea, participating with both the preschool and religious school students. Watching our local children interact with teens who had the opportunity to step inside the sukkah and shake the *lulav* and *etrog*. It was a meaningful way to celebrate Sukkot together and another beautiful reminder that although our visitors had traveled thousands of miles from Israel, we were connected through the traditions and experiences we share.

Our Family Game Night at Jewish Federation brought even more members of our community together with our visitors. There was plenty of laughter, conversation, food and fun, but what I will remember most are the connections being made all around the room.


Visiting Sanibel Island with P2G


Bowling with P2G teen delegation;

The moments that mattered

While we planned many activities for their visit, some of the most special moments were never on the itinerary. They were the conversations in the car, sitting around a table together, laughing over a meal, sharing stories about our lives, learning about one another and realizing just how much we had in common despite living thousands of miles apart.

Opening hearts and homes

None of these experiences would have been possible without our incredible host families. Opening your home to someone you have never met takes a special kind of generosity. Our host families did so much more than simply provided a place for our visitors to sleep. From the moment they arrived, they opened their homes, their families and their hearts to them.

They welcomed them with such warmth and treated them as if they were their own children. They made sure they felt comfortable, cared for, included and loved. They shared their homes, their meals, their family time and their everyday lives with them. In only a few days, the relationship between our hosts and their guests became so much more than any of us could have expected.

Watching those relationships form was one of the most beautiful parts of the entire experience. Our visitors weren't simply staying with host families; they became part of those families.


Lunch Bunch with P2G at Temple Beth El

More than a visit

As someone who helped plan this visit, I knew that building relationships was one of the goals of the delegation, but I didn't think I fully understood what that could mean until I watched it happen right in front of me.

There is something incredibly powerful about bringing people together who otherwise may never have had the opportunity to meet. We started the week learning one another's names and ended it hugging and exchanging promises to stay in touch and already talking about when we might see each other again. Saying goodbye was much harder than I ever imagined it would be.

In such a short amount of time, these five amazing people have become such a meaningful part of our lives. The laughter, conversations, hugs, stories and

continued on page 7



P2G teen delegation at Temple Judea

Smoothies, stories and Sukkot fun

By Brittany Salem, Youth and Family Engagement Coordinator

PJ Library families gathered at Temple Beth Shalom in Cape Coral for a sweet celebration of Sukkot at our "Smoothies in the Sukkah" event. Fresh fruit smoothies were served in the sukkah as families enjoyed time together and celebrated the holiday.



Brittany Salem

The children had a wonderful time designing and decorating their own mini sukkahs, adding creative touches to make each one special. We finished our afternoon with a Sukkot-themed PJ Library story time, bringing everyone together through the joy of reading.



Smoothies in the Sukkah



Thank you to Temple Beth Shalom for welcoming us and to all the families who joined us for an afternoon of creativity, connection and holiday fun!



Hanukkah story time with PJ Library

Hanukkah is coming up next! Come celebrate with PJ Library, Dec. 2, from 5:45 to 6:45 p.m., at Lakes Regional Library (15290 Bass Road, Fort Myers, FL 33919).

Join us at the library for Hanukkah stories, donuts and crafts. Register at jewishfederationlcc.org/calendar.

from strangers to family...continued from page 6



Teen Delegation with Rose

memories we shared are things I know I will carry with me long after this visit.

The meaning of partnership

Partnership2Gether is about creating meaningful, lasting relationships between Jewish communities in Israel and around the world. This week showed me exactly what that mission looks like in real life. It isn't simply about visiting another community or filling an itinerary with activities. It is about sitting across the table from someone, hearing their story, welcoming them into your home, sharing your own life with them and discovering that the distance between us isn't nearly as great as it sometimes feels.

I cannot thank our host families enough for the love they gave so freely. You helped create a home away from home for our visitors, and you showed them what it means to be embraced by our community. This experience simply would not have been possible without you.

I am also incredibly grateful to everyone throughout our community who welcomed our delegation, participated in activities, shared meals with us, asked questions, offered support and helped make these few days something none of us will soon forget.

Five visitors traveled thousands of miles from Israel to Fort Myers as part of a teen delegation. A few days later, saying goodbye felt like saying goodbye to family. That is something I could never have written into an itinerary, and that is what made this week so incredibly special.

Until we meet again.



Volunteering at JFS Food Pantry





Lunch Bunch brings Israeli teens and community together

By Elizabeth Elba, Life Enrichment Coordinator

On Tuesday, Sept. 29, we gathered for Lunch Bunch at Temple Beth El in Fort Myers for a special afternoon of food, conversation and connection with some very special guests. The lunch was catered by Go Pita and was enjoyed alongside beautifully arranged fresh fruit platters and an assortment of baked goods.


Elizabeth Elba

This month's program was special, as Lunch Bunch welcomed five Israeli delegates who were visiting Southwest Florida as part of a cultural exchange. The group included four teenagers — two girls and two boys — and their chaperone. After lunch, the delegates shared several prepared remarks about unity, Jewish culture and finding courage in the face of uncertainty. They also shared two short creative videos that the teens had made while in Israel, giving everyone a glimpse into their lives and experiences.





The highlight of the afternoon was an open Q&A session between the Israeli teens and members of our local community. The delegates spoke honestly about what life is like for them living outside of Tel Aviv during a time of war. They shared about celebrating Jewish holidays, their Jewish identities and what it means to grow up Jewish in Israel. The conversation went both ways, as the teens also asked our community members questions about Jewish life and culture in America and what their experiences have been like as Jews in the United States.

Throughout the conversation, the teens demonstrated remarkable honesty and vulnerability. Their willingness to openly share their experiences created an atmosphere of understanding and connection that went beyond a typical lunch gathering.

At the end of the afternoon, everyone came together for a group photograph to commemorate the connection formed that day, which was a reminder that even across countries and generations, sharing our stories and experiences can help us feel connected in uncertain times.





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Nar-Anon support meetings

By Joann Goldman

Nar-Anon Family Groups is a 12-Step fellowship that offers a recovery program for those affected by someone's addiction. The group will meet in the Community Room at Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties.

Addiction is a family disease; it affects the relationships of those close to the addict — parents, spouses, siblings, children, longtime friends and employers. In the group meetings, these family members and friends share their experiences, strengths and hopes to help each other and themselves.

If someone's addiction is affecting you, first you must help yourself. Come to a meeting and hear from others who are going through similar problems and talk about how they cope and find recovery.

Nar-Anon is based on a set of spiritual principles and has no affiliation with any particular religion. There are no dues or fees. The only requirement for membership is a problem of addiction in a relative or friend.

This group has been a part of the Lee County community for more than 18 years. Meetings are held at 7 p.m. every Thursday at Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties (9701 Commerce Center Court, Fort Myers).

For more information, please contact me at jogo118@gmail.com or 239-470-4827.



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WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

Lions of Judah play a vital role in creating social justice, aiding the vulnerable, preserving human dignity and building Jewish identity. We are the most dynamic philanthropic Jewish women in the world. We are a part of an international sisterhood of thousands of global activists who care deeply about the Jewish future. The Lions of Judah set an exemplary standard of leadership and giving.

Our impact can be seen through contribution of our time and resources. Each woman makes an annual donation to their Federation that reflects her capacity to give. In our community, the threshold annual commitment is $5,000. Some Lions also choose to endow their gift to benefit future generations.

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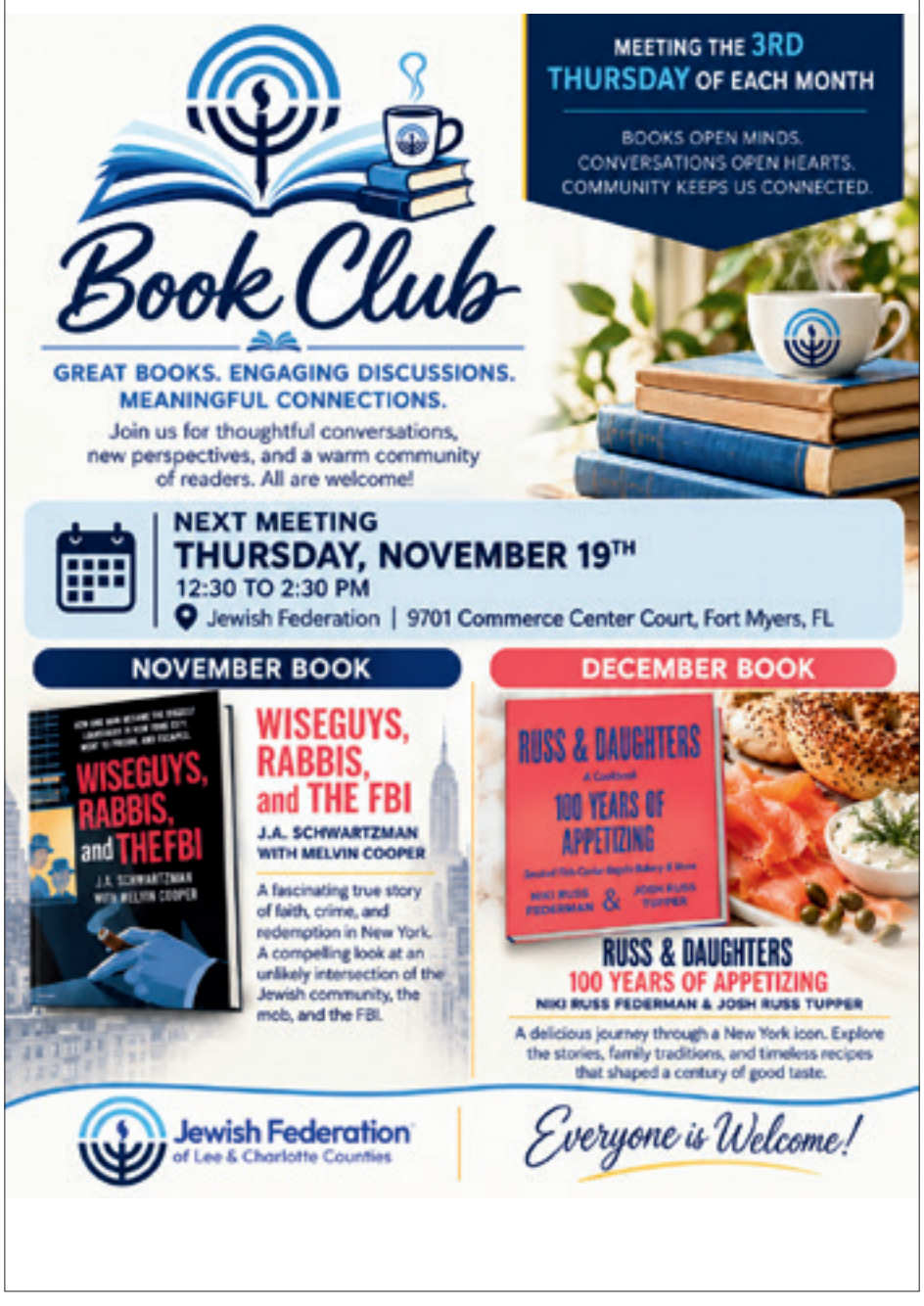
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The Jewish Long Goodbye

Aging Jewishly — What our traditions teach us about growing old.

By Rabbi Barbara Aiello

David blinked his eyes and made a tiny, almost imperceptible motion toward the front door. Ann, having been married to David for nearly 50 years knew his every move, especially this one, the head gesture to the left that meant, "Let's get going. It's time to leave."



■ Rabbi Barbara Aiello

Slowly Ann lifted herself from the easy chair, straightened her skirt and looked around for her tote bag — the one she used to carry her famous *kreplach* to every family gathering.

As she headed toward the kitchen, Ann saw it coming — Aunt Ruth's bear hug and lament, "Oh Annie, don't go so soon. I want to tell you about my *kreplach* disaster!" At that, cousin Gordon piped up with a story from his grandfather about harvesting beets in the Old Country, while Ruth's sister shouted from the kitchen that Ann and David should wait a minute more while she wrapped the leftover pie.

But it wasn't a minute. It wasn't 15 minutes. Forty minutes later, Ann and David offered hugs all around and made their exit from a phenomenon well-known to every Jewish extended family, the "Jewish long goodbye."

Journalist Chaim Steinmetz (*Jewish Journal*, Dec. 22, 2023) believes that Jewish protracted leave-taking is a cultural response, often triggered by the subtle yet powerful, "Let's get going," and that for some Jewish families saying the word, "goodbye" is speaking an inscrutable foreign language. Steinmetz goes on to say that "the process typically involves announcing the departure, moving to the coat rack or doorway, starting entirely new deep conversations and lingering for repeated hugs. Culturally, it stems from a deep-rooted reluctance toward finality, separation and the warmth of communal connection."

Journalist Samantha Long's article "The Magic of the Jewish Long Goodbye" (Feb. 22, 2022) describes the leaving process as a manifestation of Jewish storytelling skills that began thousands of years ago and found a heyday in *shtetl* times. Long writes that regarding the decades long Jewish contributions to entertainment and the arts "this Jewish presence has always signified an outstanding creativity and affinity for storytelling that exists within the global Jewish community."

Yet, the Jewish Long Goodbye may have a traditional connection that runs even deeper. Could it be that our reluctance to let go derives from the obscure and often misunderstood holiday of *Shemini Atzeret*, a festival sandwiched between the end of Sukkot and the beginning of Simchat Torah, the last holiday in the High Holy Day cycle?

Yet, the Jewish Long Goodbye may have a traditional connection that runs even deeper.

Legend has it that rabbinic sages compared Shemini Atzeret to a king who hosts a massive festival for his family, neighbors, friends and even travelers passing by. When the feast ends and everyone prepares to leave, the king turns to his children and asks them to stay just one extra, quiet day with him.

Later the rabbis compared the king's request to what God asks of us Jews; that we understand and appreciate how important it is to spend an intimate, focused time connecting with our spiritual selves (*Exploring Judaism*).

In the phrase Shemini Atzeret, the word "shemini" has its roots in the word "gathering," while "atzeret" is rooted in Hebrew as "to hold back." "to stop" or "to pause." In modern terms, we gather to "hold back" our exit and to "pause" before leaving our family and friends; a beautiful tradition that forms the spiritual foundation of the Jewish Long Goodbye.

Rabbi Barbara Aiello served the Aviva Campus for Senior Life in Sarasota, Florida as resident rabbi for 10 years. Her most popular columns are now published in her book, "Aging Jewishly," available on Amazon books. Rabbi Barbara now lives and works in Italy where she is rabbi of Italy's first Reconstructionist synagogue. Contact her at Rabbi@RabbiBarbara.com.

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- Missed medications / appointments

DECLINING NUTRITION AND PERSONAL CARE
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- Spoiled food • Wearing the same clothing

SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS
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FILMS ✡ CONVERSATIONS
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The Jewish side of Hollywood

Stars of David

By Nate Bloom, Stars of David Contributing Columnist

*Editor's Note: Persons in **bold** are deemed by Nate Bloom to be Jewish for the purpose of this column. Persons identified as Jewish have at least one Jewish parent and were not raised in, or identify with, a faith other than Judaism. Converts to Judaism, of course, are also identified as Jewish.*

"Ghost Solider"

This action film opens on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, which makes sense, because the hero of the film is a military veteran: Henry "Fitz" Fitzgerald (Jim Caviezel). Fitz is a weapons system engineer and a former Green Beret. He's "out there" protecting his Wyoming rural neighbors from a ruthless corporation.

As I write this, there's no information about the character backgrounds" except for Fitz. However, I am 99% sure that **Olivia Thirlby**, 39, plays Fitz's sweetheart or wife. Thirlby has worked steadily in films since 2006 in supporting film roles (and in a few star roles). Thirlby is the secular daughter of a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father.

"How to Rob a Bank"

This action-comedy heist film opens in theaters Nov. 13. Here's the set-up: A crew of bank robbers have been using social media to document the heists they pulled off. The social media heist videos move the police to really go after these robbers.

Zoe Kravitz, 37, is second in every "how to" actor cast list. She plays Reagan Gardener, a robber. Just above Kravitz's name there's Nicolas Hoult, a British actor, who plays Ryan, the "top" robber.

Kravitz has referred to herself as a "secular Jew." She has been a very good and busy actress for almost 20 years now. And here's a Veterans Day note: Zoe Kravitz's great uncle, Army Private **Leonard Kravitz**, was given the Medal of Honor (2014), 63 years after his death in the Korean war (1951).

"Mouse"

Opening in theaters Nov. 13, "Mouse" is an American coming-of-age drama. Here's the brief premise: Teens Callie and Minnie's relationship is upended on the eve of their high school senior year. Minnie forms a complicated relationship with Callie's mother (played by **Sophie Okonedo**, 58). This film received great reviews after it was shown in film festivals.



Okonedo is a British actress, but she can certainly play an American character. Her American honors include a Tony Award, an Emmy Award, and a Golden Globe Award. She got an Oscar acting nomination for "Hotel Rwanda."

Her mother is a Caucasian English Jew who married a Black British Nigerian. Five years after they married, he left Sophie's mother and moved to Nigeria. Sophie was raised Jewish by her mother and her mother's parents, and she strongly identifies as Jewish as an adult.

"Giant – The Play"

"Giant" is a 2024 play that first opened in a major London theater and then in a Broadway theater. On Nov. 19, the live-recorded theatrical screening of the West End/Broadway production opens in theaters. The play and the movie take place in one afternoon, and it received very good reviews.

Mark Rosenthal, 48, a British Jew and top theater director, wanted to find someone to write a play about author Roald Dahl's antisemitism. He consulted **Sir Nicholas Hytner**, an acclaimed (Jewish) British director. Hynter told Rosenthal that "Rosenthal should write himself." So, Rosenthal wrote and Hytner, 70, directed the film version of "Giant."

In 1983, Dahl, the author of many books, including "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," known for the eccentric chocolatier Willy Wonka, and faced backlash following his literary review of a book about the Lebanon-Israel war. The book's view was the Israeli army was way too bloody. Dahl gave the book a rave review and made his own antisemitic remarks to boot. These remarks were not Dahl's first nasty comments about Jews.

The play/film finds Dahl talking to his (real) Jewish publisher, **Tom Maschler** (played by **Elliot Levey**, 52, a British Jew). Dahl also talks to Jessie Stone (played by **Aya Cash**, 44), a fictional Jewish sales executive from Dahl's American publisher. Stone tries to persuade Dahl to issue a public apology after his controversial book review. Already, she tells Dahl that he has sparked a fierce backlash and accusations that Dahl is an antisemite.

"Paper Tiger"

Written and directed by **James Gray**, 57, this crime-drama film opens Nov. 19. Advance reviews are largely good.

The film follows the Pearl family, a suburban New York Jewish family who become entangled with the Russian mob. The main Pearl family adult characters are: Hester, Edwin Pearl's wife, and the mother of two teenage sons (played by **Scarlett Johanson**, 41). Hester is hiding her terminal diagnosis from her family while trying to keep them together; Edwin (Miles Teller) is an engineer; his older brother Gary (Adam Driver) is an ex-cop with lots of connections. He gets the Pearls into the scheme with the mob.

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Back to the future

By Brian Simon



■ Brian Simon

The comedian Nate Bargatze has a great bit about being the dumbest time traveler. Bargatze said if he somehow got transported back 100 years ago, he could tell people that we all have phones in our pockets now. But, when they asked how that worked, Nate would just shrug. "I don't know, satellites?" And when they asked what satellites were, he'd be stumped again. "I don't know if I could even prove I was from the future."



I know how he feels. I am part of a generation of well-educated people that know a lot about pop culture and very little about how anything works. It's not all of us. There are a few, like my brother and my best friend Andy, who cannot only use power tools but can actually identify them by name and know what they're used for.

My brother built a wheelchair ramp for our parents in their garage. I was there to hold the other end of long boards and occasionally pay for supplies at Lowe's. I marveled at his ability to consider the logistics and engineering of each step as we progressed. There was no kit. This wasn't a ramp we found at IKEA. The point is that I had no idea what to do.

When I was working as a television sportscaster my friend Warren used to joke about how he had friends who were lawyers, so he could ask them legal questions, and he had friends who were accountants, so he could ask them tax questions. What could we offer in return? "Hey, if you need anyone to do highlights. . ."

I suppose I have some useful knowledge in my current career, but I don't know how much of it would have been useful 100 years ago. "You know, Jebediah, you might consider some life insurance in case your horse Lightning Bolt kicks you in the chest again," or "If the shoeshine boy is offering stock tips, it might be time to get out of the market."

I have useful knowledge, but no useful skills. I'm a really fast typist. Maybe I could have worked as a secretary in the 1920s. Mindi's great aunt Sylvia used to tell a story about being hired to type letters for a wealthy business man in New York many years ago. One day, she said he gave her a letter to type that she thought had an error. "This says to sell 100,000 shares of stock," she said.

"Yes, he responded, that's correct."

She said, "Oh my goodness! Can I touch you? I've never met anyone who owned 100,000 shares of any stock."

The businessman replied, "Don't you and Harry own stocks?"

She said, "Sure, we own a share of AT&T, and a share of General Electric."

And he said, "Oh my goodness! I've never met anyone who owned only one share of any stock!"

The point is that we should be teaching more relevant skills to our children. Every American should know how to change a toilet fill valve, safely start a campfire and select a good watermelon.

I saw something come across my Substack feed about survival skills, ~~because social media is monitoring us~~. What a coincidence!

I thought it was going to be something kind of basic, but the guy built an underground bunker with a ladder and a covered hearth, and there were wooden beams and mud caked interior walls. I don't know who their target audience was, but there's no way it was me. Unless you know, they somehow knew I was writing a story about my lack of survival skills.

The point is that we should be teaching more relevant skills to our children.

Here's an example of my survival skills. My aforementioned friend Andy came to visit me at my basement apartment in Junction City, Kansas. It was very cold in the apartment, and we wondered if there was a problem with the heater. I figured I would have to ask the landlord. Andy had a different idea.

"Why don't we check the vent?" It was closed. He opened it. Problem solved. Everyone enjoyed a good laugh that I was willing to live in the cold without thinking to check the vent.

My friend Jeff says everyone should build a house as the contractor because you get to spend a lot of time with regular people and it puts you in touch with humanity. I don't know about all that, but I wouldn't spend a night in a tent I put up, let alone a house I built! Although, I did help build a sukkah several times. It was from a kit, and someone else always oversaw the effort.

On Morgan Housel's podcast, he talked about how AI is making analytic intelligence (the stuff we learned in school) less important and other kinds of intelligence like creative and practical intelligence far more important.

So not only is AI going to take my job, but it's going to render me pretty much useless. The good folks at *L'Chayim* will probably boot me and let AI write the column next month. And it will probably be funnier. If the byline says Br-AI-an you'll know something is up!

The point is, I'm running out of time. Not only for this column, but also as a productive member of society. The world of the future will have AI to do all the things we learned to be good at, so people will need to know more practical things, like our great grandparents did. Mindi and I might have to move in with my brother.

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A groundbreaking exhibit

Naples Art District and Holocaust Museum partner together

By Paula Brody, Naples Art District President

"Portraits of Memory" is a groundbreaking exhibition initiated by The Naples Art District, in collaboration with the Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center. Conceived by the Naples Art District as a way to bring the extraordinary talents of Southwest Florida's professional artists into direct relationship with Holocaust survivors, the project transforms Holocaust testimony into enduring works of visual art. It creates a lasting bridge between Jewish memory, contemporary art and future generations.

"Portraits of Memory" paired 12 artist members of the Naples Art District with 12 Holocaust survivors living in Southwest Florida. Through careful listening, personal conversation and artistic interpretation, each artist created an original portrait that captures not only a survivor's physical likeness, but also the voice, memory, identity and humanity that defined that life.

The 12 artists came from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds and used a variety of artist mediums — oil, acrylic, watercolor, collage, red chalk and mono printing — to create their survivor portrait.



Portrait in oil and silver ink of Sarah Rockler by artist Rochelle Buss Szews



Portrait in oil of Cesare Frustaci by artist Arturo Samaniego

From memory to art

The inaugural exhibition at the Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center, opening Nov. 15 and continuing through December, is expected to welcome approximately 1,200 middle and high school students through guided educational visits, in addition to hundreds of adult visitors from Southwest Florida and beyond. For many students, this will be their first opportunity to encounter the testimony of a Holocaust survivor, not through a textbook, but through art that reveals both history and humanity.

At a time when antisemitism continues to rise and Holocaust denial threatens historical truth, "Portraits of Memory" offers an affirmative response rooted in beauty, dignity and artistic excellence. It invites audiences to encounter difficult history through compassion, creativity and the extraordinary resilience of the human spirit.

This extraordinary exhibit opens to the public on Nov. 15, 3:30 p.m., with many artists and survivors present, and includes a 4 p.m. program highlighting the very meaningful artist/survivor relationships that developed through "Portraits of Memory"

Registration is requested. Please visit hmcec.org/events.

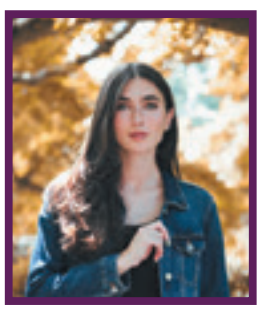
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We invite you to join us for The Luncheon, our annual winter fundraising event. Net proceeds support our Holocaust Education programs, which last year impacted over 90,000 students and teachers in 10 South Florida counties.

Your support helps us preserve and share the history and authentic stories of the Holocaust for the next generation.

Please visit **hmcec.org** for reservations and information. We hope to see you there!

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Programs worth coming for

Fit some meaningful events into your schedule

By Ida Margolis and Shelley Lieb

We're all busy. There are errands to run, appointments to keep, friends to see, and so much more. Some days there may be more on your calendar than you know what to do with. So, when you decide to attend a program, it should be worth your time.

That's what GenShoah SWFL strives to offer. With the help of our coordinating committee, the Holocaust Museum staff, community partners and many of our members, we have developed a wide variety of offerings from October until May. Our programs have been chosen to inform, inspire, challenge, and some, to entertain. They bring interesting people, stories, history and conversation together in a number of ways. Some of our past programs have stayed with attendees long after the program ended.



Ida Margolis and Shelley Leib

In this upcoming season, we hope our programs teach you something new or make you think about something familiar in a new way. And may we introduce you to a person, a story or an idea you had not encountered.



Jeff Kraus

So, when you see one of our programs in an article or newsletter, or if someone tells you about it, don't just think, "That sounds interesting." Please, put it on your calendar, and come join your friends — or make some new ones! Don't forget, our programs are offered from October to May.

Sunday, Nov. 8

The Annual Kristallnacht Commemoration, will be held Sunday, Nov. 8, 2:30 p.m., at St. Williams Church. As in the past, it should be an interesting and informative program and will include a moving lighting of candles.

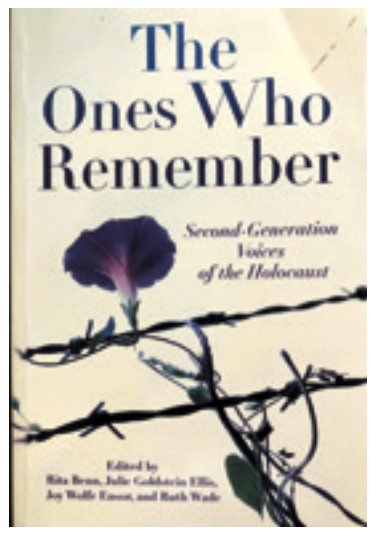
Wednesday, Nov. 11

On Veteran's Day, Nov. 11, 2 p.m., well-known speaker Jeff Kraus will be at the Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center to profile his father's service as a Ritchie Boy, an interrogator of prisoners of war in WWII. The story of the Ritchie Boys is fascinating. If you have not heard of them, you will learn a great deal; if you already know about the amazing Ritchie Boys, you will learn even more.

Jeff Kraus practiced law in Chicago for 40 years, before retiring and moving to Sarasota, Florida. Both of Jeff's parents were born and raised in Germany and each immigrated to America after experiencing years of Nazi persecution while they were children and young adults. Jeff is passionate about sharing their stories of how they endured, escaped and prevailed over persecution. Jeff is on the Speaker's Bureau Committee of the League of Women Voters' Sarasota chapter, is involved with the Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee's Holocaust Education Initiative and is co-chair of its Generations After Committee.

Wednesday, Dec. 9

On Dec. 9, 2 p.m., at the Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center, author and editor Ruth Wade will discuss a collection of 16 2G stories in a book that she edited: "The Ones Who Remember: Second Generation Voices of the Holocaust."



About GenShoah SWFL

GenShoah SWFL is an affinity group of the Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center and is for children and descendants of Holocaust survivors and others interested in:

- Promotion of Holocaust education and human rights
- Preservation of the history and memories of the Holocaust
- Connection of descendants of the Holocaust with one another



Ruth Wade

- Support of the Holocaust Museum & Education Center of Southwest Florida

For more information about this group or to receive the newsletter that contains a list of all the programs for the season, e-mail genshoahswfl@hmcec.org. All of the above programs are offered to the community at no cost, as is the GenShoah newsletter.

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Finding meaning in November

By Cheryl Fulmer and Marcia Rudin

November is a quiet month for Jewish festivals. So, what does November offer Jews? It offers us the respite from those September and October holidays that took up so much of our time, energy and focus.

November places us in the middle of the Book of Genesis in the Torah with all our patriarch and matriarch ancestors. Genesis is all about human relationships and dysfunctional families. Human nature has remained the same down through the centuries!

Election day

November may not have Jewish festivals, but it is an important month for all of us. Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 3. It is vital that all eligible individuals exercise the privilege of voting; our democracy depends on it.

Kristallnacht remembrance

Kristallnacht (Night Of Broken Glass, 1938) remembrance is Nov. 9. It foretold what the Nazis had planned and intended implementing with the loss of more than 6 million Jews before the end of World War II.

Veterans Day

Veterans Day is November 11. We must remember all the men and women who served the U.S. in the military during all its wars near and far. Chavurat Shalom has several members who are veterans that we thank for their service to the United States.

Veterans Day is not to be confused with Memorial Day. Memorial Day (the fourth Monday in May) honors American service members who died in service to their country, while Veterans Day pays tribute to **all** American veterans — living or dead — but especially gives thanks to living veterans who served their country honorably during war or peacetime.

In November 1918, during World War I — at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of that year — an armistice, or temporary cessation of hostilities, was declared between the Allied nations and Germany. Commemorated the following year as Armistice Day in many countries, Nov. 11 became a federal holiday in the United States in 1938. In the aftermath of World War II and the Korean War, Armistice Day became known as Veterans Day.

America's war effort during World War II saw the greatest mobilization of the U.S. Army, Navy and Air Force in the nation's history (more than 16 million people); 5 million in World War I and some 5.7 million served in the Korean War.

In 1954, after lobbying efforts by veterans' service organizations, the 83rd U.S. Congress amended the 1938 act that had made Armistice Day a holiday, striking the word "Armistice" in favor of "Veterans." President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the legislation on June 1, 1954. From then on, Nov. 11 became a day to honor American veterans of all wars.

In contrast, Israel holds its official day of remembrance for fallen soldiers in April or May on the fourth day of the month of Iyar. It is called Yom HaZikaron. It includes a two-minute siren at 11 a.m. during which everyone stops what they are doing. Public and private memorial services are held throughout the country.

Thanksgiving Day

Thursday, November 26 is Thanksgiving, a day to share with family and friends and to acknowledge all things big and small that we appreciate and make our lives a blessing.

Recurring programs

Chavurat Shalom holds Friday night Shabbat services every week throughout the year at 7:30 p.m. Eastern time. Services are led by volunteers, with English readings, original readings and poetry, Hebrew and English singing, and Torah reading with commentary by a thoughtful member.

On the first Tuesday of the month, we enjoy our informal "schmooze" session at 7:30 p.m. "Torah Talk," where we study the Parsha of the week together, is the second Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. Jewish Current Events is the third Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. The fourth Tuesday is set aside for the lecture and discussion which takes place at 7:30 p.m. (All times are Eastern time.)

All Chavurat Shalom activities are held via Zoom, with in-person gatherings planned occasionally. All are welcome to attend our activities. For further information and to obtain the schedules, email chavuratshalom@gmail.com or check out our website: chavuratshalomofswflorida.org.

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The strength of our Jewish story

By Marina Berkovich, JHSSWF President

We showcase local Jewish history films during our annual festivals to educate the present community about how it came about and whose ideals and leadership are the fundamental source and vision of local Jewish communal strength. Where does our Jewish strength forge? From our strong leaders in the Torah and in real life.



Marina Berkovich

Learning from our leaders

Growing up in the Soviet Union, I was taught to hate Israel. Soviet newscasters hissed Golda Meir's name with venom during the nearly nightly anti-Israel "news" from 1967 through the end of her term as Prime Minister in 1974, using the same anti-Israel vocabulary this generation's Jewish children are exposed to now. Back then, Jewish children of the USSR were systematically harassed, bullied, beaten at school and in the streets, just as those in the intolerant corners of the U.S. in the 1960s. Yet, somehow, knowing that Jewish people have a State, was already inspiring so many of us for our next moves.

Golda defied terrorists, jihadists and historical revisionism because she understood and respected the history of the land she was briefly placed in charge of. She, a Jewish-American woman born in Kiev, Russia, continued to make Israel strong and impacted every Jew everywhere. As Israel's first and only female Prime Minister, Golda is a guiding light for every Jewish woman since, whether or not we agree with the entirety of her legacy — and for men as well. We will have a special presentation about her impact later this year.

Remembering our local pioneers

Join us Nov. 5, 2 p.m. (**note date change**) for the first day of the "Annual Local Jewish History Film Festival" (LJHFF). Naples' unique historian Dr. Lois Bolin will enlighten the audience about the Naples' mayors of the past, and then we will screen Southwest Florida Jewish Pioneers documentary, "Bill Barnett – Mayor With a Heart."

Passing it on

When Nina, a 6-year-old girl who is the same age Golda Meir was when she moved to the U.S., heard the pilot's calls for help onboard FlyDubai last month, Nina alerted adults. Perhaps she, too, will have an important role in history. Or just grow up to preserve and pass down Jewish traditions and love for Israel to the next generations, like the heroines of our Day 2 and 3 films, Judith Friedland and Florence Hertzman.

Whatever your personal knowledge or involvement with the local Jewish community, we encourage you to attend our events to learn more about our local Jewish experience or reinforce what you already know, and to join the pieces of our shared history more cohesively.

We appreciate your continuing support of our mission throughout the year. Sign up for our mailing list at jhsswf.org. Our telephone number is 833-347-7935 (833-JHS-SWFL). Kindly direct all correspondence, including contributions and renewals to: The Jewish Historical Society of Southwest Florida, P.O. Box #10075, Naples, Florida 34101.

The Jewish Historical Society of Southwest Florida is a section 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Contributions are deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Fall 2026 Contest

My Jewish family in 20th century Charlotte/Hendry/Lee County

Who – This contest is open to the general public.

When – The submission window is Nov. 1 through Dec. 31.

How – Submit a 1,000-word typed essay to JHSSWF. Students in grades K-12 can submit a 200-word essay to receive automatic special mention in local Jewish publications. Parental assistance is welcome.

Prizes and awards

- **1st Prize** – A documentary short about your family and County.
- **2nd Prize** – Your family history featured on the Jewish Historical Society of Southwest Florida website.
- **3rd Prize** – An opportunity to speak about your family at a local community gathering.

HADASSAH Collier/Lee Chapter (732) 539-4011

Standing with Israel

By Shelley Einhorn, President Collier/Lee Chapter of Hadassah

On Oct. 7, 2023, Israel experienced one of the darkest days in its history. In that moment of tragedy, Hadassah did what it has done for more than a century — it responded.



Shelley Einhorn

At Hadassah's hospitals in Jerusalem, doctors, nurses and medical teams treated the wounded and cared for soldiers and civilians affected by the war. Hadassah expanded rehabilitation services at the Gandel Rehabilitation Center, helping the injured begin the long journey toward recovery and independence, but Hadassah's response did not stop at the hospital door.

Here in the United States, Hadassah members raised critical funds, advocated for Israel and the hostages, and spoke out against the alarming rise in antisemitism. Through the End the Silence campaign, Hadassah also demanded recognition and accountability for the sexual violence committed against women during the Oct. 7 attacks.

For more than 100 years, Hadassah has stood with Israel — not only during times of celebration, but especially during times of crisis. Oct. 7 reminded us why Hadassah matters.

We heal. We advocate. We educate. We stand together.

As Hadassah women, we have the opportunity — and the responsibility — to continue that work, ensuring that Israel and the Jewish people know they are never standing alone.

Looking ahead

Be sure to mark your calendars for these upcoming programs and events.

Monday, Nov. 16

Legacy and Laughter – Join us for a presentation by a planned giving and estates speaker, along with a luncheon and delightful magic show.

Sunday, Dec. 13

Chapter recognition of 2026 donors – The entire chapter is invited to a Naples country club.

Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2027

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Our school year started on a high note! Because September is a busy month on the Jewish calendar, our students dove right into the season. They explored the holidays through storytelling, crafted Rosh Hashanah gifts, and created a "Tree of Life" featuring their personal goals for the new year. They also learned new songs and completed beautiful, meaningful art projects.

This year, our students also launched an ongoing mitzvah project. Each month, a different student or teacher will introduce a new way to support our community. For September, we collected toys and school supplies for children living in a local women's shelter. In October, one of our older students will lead a donation drive for the animal shelter.

Our school remains deeply connected to our temple community. This fall, all of our students attended and participated in High Holiday Services. They also made decorations for the Sukkah, helped decorate it and enjoyed a snack inside. To wrap up the holiday season, they marched with the Torah on Simchat Torah and attended Shabbat Services.

Cantor Barry Butensky and our dedicated teachers love working with the children, ensuring every school day is engaging, meaningful and filled with exciting projects. Classes meet every Wednesday from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. We always welcome new families!





Children at 2026 Kol Nidre Service

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TEMPLE BETH EL RELIGIOUS SCHOOL
Fort Myers
Allison Fego, Religious School Coordinator

We are thrilled to share that our Religious School continues to grow! This year, we are excited to welcome eight new students, ranging from Pre-K through middle school, to our school community, bringing our enrollment to more than 50 students. With that growth has come the wonderful opportunity to add additional classes and continue creating meaningful learning experiences for all of our students.

It has certainly been a busy month as we wrapped up our High Holiday season and settle into another exciting year of learning, celebrating and building community together.



Religious School students singing during Neilah Service on Yom Kippur



Religious School families helping at Gladiolus Food Pantry

We also kicked off our community service projects with a visit to Gladiolus Food Pantry. Our students and families worked together sorting and organizing food and other non-perishable items, checking expiration dates and packaging products to help support families in our community. It was a wonderful hands-on opportunity for our students to put the Jewish value of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) into action.

And we're just getting started! We are already looking forward to our next community service project at Eva's Closet, where our students and families will have another opportunity to give back and make a difference.

As our Religious School continues to grow, so do the opportunities for our students to learn, connect, serve and discover what it means to be an active part of both our Jewish community and the community around us. We are so proud of the enthusiasm our families have brought to this new year and can't wait to see what we accomplish together in the months ahead.

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TEMPLE JUDEA RELIGIOUS SCHOOL
Fort Myers
Tehila Cherubino, Director of Education

There is something special about experiencing the Jewish holidays through the eyes of children.

Over the past several weeks, our community moved through some of the most meaningful days on the Jewish calendar: from the sweetness and hope of Rosh Hashanah, through the reflection of Yom Kippur, and into the joy of Sukkot. For our children, these holidays were not simply dates on a calendar or stories in a book. They were opportunities to experience Judaism with all their senses — to sing, create, play, learn and celebrate together.



IDF themed activity

During both days of Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur, we offered children's holiday programming designed to give our youngest community members meaningful, age-appropriate ways to connect with the holidays. Through prayer, stories, activities, conversations and games, they explored ideas that can sometimes feel very big — even to adults — in ways that were relevant and accessible to them.

Then came Sukkot, a holiday that naturally invites us to learn by doing. Our children created decorations for the sukkah, made holiday-themed art, and had the opportunity to hold and shake the *lulav* and *etrog*. There is something powerful about watching a child encounter a Jewish tradition not only by hearing about it, but by actually doing it.

We were also fortunate to welcome a group of Israeli high school students who brought another wonderful hands-on experience to our Religious School. They led our students through an IDF-themed program in which the children were divided into four groups representing Golani, Nahal, the Israeli Air Force, and the Israeli Navy. Each group had its own "commander" and flag and rotated through a variety of stations. The children colored unit symbols, created military ranks, participated in fun "training" activities, and even learned some Hebrew words along the way.

The smiles, energy and enthusiasm said it all.

These experiences remind us that Jewish education happens in so many ways. It happens through prayer and study, but also through art, music, movement, laughter, relationships and shared experiences. When our children shake a *lulav,* sing a Hebrew song, create something with their hands or spend time with young Israelis, Judaism becomes more than something we teach them.

It becomes something they experience, something they connect to and ultimately, something that belongs to them.



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ROOTS & WINGS PRESCHOOL AT TEMPLE JUDEA

Suki Kelly, Preschool Director

October was a month filled with fun and celebrations at Roots & Wings Preschool!

The children had a wonderful time celebrating Sukkot with their friends. Each class created special decorations to brighten our sukkah, and the children loved seeing their artwork become part of the celebration. Our Pre-K friends made colorful paper chains and painted beautiful fruit to hang in the sukkah. All of the classes enjoyed a special story time, followed by one of everyone's favorite traditions: pizza day under the sukkah! It was a wonderful way to come together and celebrate as a school family while bringing the High Holiday season to a close.



We also had a fantastic time at our Touch-a-Truck event on Oct. 25! The children and families had a chance to get up close to some exciting vehicles and enjoy a fun afternoon together. Thank you to everyone who helped make this special community event possible!

Another highlight was our very special "Challah"ween Shabbat! The children arrived in their favorite costumes and started the day with a fun costume parade. We then gathered together for Shabbat with Rabbi before heading out on our special Treat Trail. Families created wonderfully decorated booths and waited along the trail to greet the children and hand out special goodies. It was such a fun and memorable way to celebrate together!



November brings one of our most beloved preschool traditions: the Pre-K Thanksgiving Play. This tradition has been part of Roots & Wings Preschool for decades. Our Pre-K children will perform for their families and share what they are thankful for. We can't wait to see their special performance!

We will also gather together in the social hall for a special Thanksgiving lunch with all of our classes. We will invite families to gather together to cook for the school. The children, their families and staff will share a meal together and enjoy some delicious pie for dessert.

We are so thankful for our wonderful preschool families and the joyful community we share. Happy November from all of us at Roots & Wings Preschool!





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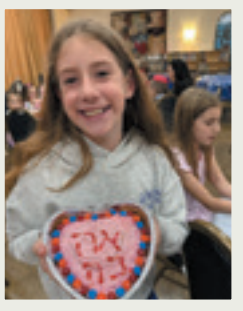




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The last and the first Thursday

By Rabbi David Arias



■ Rabbi David Arias

It is interesting that Thanksgiving always falls on a Thursday, and we all know there are historical reasons for that.

A few years ago, one of my colleagues brought an interesting fact about this holiday to my attention. It may not have been intentional, but we can learn a profound message from it.

If Thanksgiving fell on a Friday, Muslims couldn't celebrate it because Friday is their sacred day. If it fell on a Sunday, many Christians and Catholics couldn't celebrate; and if it fell on a Saturday, it would be challenging to celebrate Thanksgiving on Shabbat. So, maybe Thursday is more than a coincidence; it's a call to be universally thankful and to recognize our equality as human beings beyond our beliefs.

Every human being needs to be acknowledged for what they do and to be thankful for what others do for them.Thursday is an interesting day in the Torah. The book of *Bereshit* (Genesis) tells us that on the fifth day of creation, the first Thursday in history, the birds and fish were created. (Maybe that's somehow related to the turkey? Who knows?!)

There's even a specific *Mizmor* (Psalm) to read on Thursdays: Psalm 81, which says, "Sing joyously to God, our strength." The Talmud (Rosh HaShanah 31a) connects this psalm with the fifth day of creation. One sage says that "Hashem created birds and fish to praise His name," meaning there are so many kinds of birds and fish, in different colors and shapes, that seeing them reminds us how wonderful and varied our world is. If we can recognize the diversity not only among birds and fish but also among human beings, we will be amazed by God's power. In turn, our thankfulness can flourish and inspire others.

Every human being needs to be acknowledged for what they do . . .

This Thursday's psalm contains another famous verse: "*Tiku baḥodesh Shofar*," "Blow the horn, the Shofar, on the new moon, on the full moon, for our feast day." This is the *pasuk*, or verse, that we sing and quote on Rosh Hashanah, the festival when we also remember the creation of the world. As Jews, we celebrate Rosh Hashanah in particular by ritually blowing the Shofar, while universally declaring our commitment to a world created for all humanity.

On the last Thursday of November, we will universally celebrate, and this time we will add a memory of the first Thursday of history, when the birds and fish were created under the same sky, reminding us of the beauty of the manifold, the varied and the colorful.

Chag Sameach!

Rabbi David Arias serves at Temple Judea in Fort Myers.

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Remembering October 7

By Cantor Barry Butensky



■ Cantor Barry Butensky

Three years have passed since the morning of Oct. 7, 2023, yet the date still hangs over Israel and the Jewish world like an open wound that refuses to close.

On that Simchat Torah, as families prepared for the holiday and young people danced at an outdoor music festival near the Gaza border, Hamas and its allied armed groups executed a meticulously planned assault that combined rocket barrages, paraglider incursions, sea infiltrations, and mass ground breaches. In a few hours of calculated savagery, roughly 1,200 people were murdered, most of them civilians, and some 250 others were dragged into Gaza as hostages. Kibbutzim were turned into killing grounds, children and the elderly were slaughtered in their homes, and festivalgoers were hunted through the fields.

It was the deadliest single day in Israel's history, an attack whose deliberate targeting of noncombatants, documented sexual violence and public celebration of the dead marked it as something beyond ordinary warfare: a deliberate campaign of terror designed to shatter a society's sense of safety and force a strategic realignment through pure horror.

The assault was not spontaneous. It was the product of years of preparation, external support and a strategic decision by Hamas to abandon any remaining pretense of deterrence. Israel's subsequent military campaign in Gaza sought to dismantle the organization's military capacity, recover the hostages and ensure that such an operation could never be repeated at the same scale.

The war that followed

That war produced its own profound human costs: tens of thousands of Palestinian deaths according to Gaza health authorities, the near-total devastation of large parts of the Strip and a humanitarian crisis that continues even after major combat operations subsided.

By early 2026, the last hostages, living and deceased, had finally been returned. A ceasefire framework took hold, yet its deeper provisions on demilitarization and governance remain incomplete. Iran's proxy network has been bloodied but not eliminated; across the world, antisemitic incidents that erupted in the attack's immediate aftermath have settled into a new and uglier normal.

Three years later

Today, on the third anniversary, the question is no longer only how to remember. It is how to ensure that remembrance produces security rather than ritual alone. The failures that made October 7 possible — intelligence complacency, over-reliance on technology, a policy of containment that allowed military infrastructure to mature under the guise of calm and the underestimation of an enemy's willingness to absorb losses for the sake of massacre — must be corrected permanently.

Three years later, the dead of October 7 still demand more than ceremony.

Preventing another October 7

Prevention rests on several concrete pillars. First, intelligence and risk systems must treat mass-infiltration scenarios as catastrophic risks requiring mandatory mitigation, ownership and verification rather than probabilistic dismissal.

Second, border communities need multi-layered physical defenses, empowered local rapid-response units, drones, real-time command systems and forces positioned close enough to arrive before the killing is finished.

Third, any arrangement in Gaza must include enforceable, verifiable demilitarization: the destruction of tunnels, production sites and command structures, combined with sustained interdiction of smuggling routes and the exclusion of rejectionist armed groups from power.

Fourth, external enablers, especially Iranian funding, training and weapons pipelines, must be continuously disrupted.

Finally, reconstruction aid and political horizons must be conditioned on the explicit rejection of eliminationist ideology and the prioritization of governance over "resistance" that targets civilians.

From lessons to action

These measures are already partially in place. The IDF has overhauled community defense frameworks, increased readiness based on enemy capabilities rather than assumed intentions and maintained pressure against reconstitution. Containment failed once; drifting back toward it would be a second, self-inflicted disaster. At the same time, security without a longer-term political horizon risk becoming endless management of a conflict that continues to radicalize new generations.

The only durable path is one that pairs uncompromising military and intelligence standards with clear conditions: no return of armed groups whose charter and practice celebrate the deliberate murder of civilians and no international legitimacy for narratives that excuse or romanticize that murder.

Memory and responsibility

Three years later, the dead of October 7 still demand more than ceremony. They demand a society and an international community that refuse to allow the ideology which produced that day to regenerate under any new name or temporary truce. Prevention is not a single operation or a single agreement. It is the disciplined, multi-year commitment to intelligence that challenges its own assumptions, borders that cannot be casually breached, demilitarization that is enforced rather than hoped for and a political culture — Israeli, Palestinian and global — that finally treats the deliberate slaughter of civilians as disqualifying rather than negotiable.

Only when that standard is internalized and sustained will the memory of October 7 cease to be a recurring warning and become, at last, a closed chapter.

Remembrance is not passive mourning. It is the disciplined commitment to ensure that the ideology of October 7 finds no sanctuary, that Jewish communities live without fear and that any future political arrangement prioritizes life over the cult of martyrdom. Only then does memory become a foundation for a less violent tomorrow.

Let it be God's will . . . לְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ

Cantor Barry Butensky serves at Temple Beth Shalom in Cape Coral.





Yud Tes Kislev

A New Year for Jewish mysticism

By Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz

Yud Tes Kislev (19 Kislev) marks the date of the liberation of R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi from prison in Czarist Russia slightly more than 200 years ago. It is, however, more than a day of personal deliverance. R. Shneur Zalman explained that he was imprisoned because of what he stood for: the growing strength of the Chassidic movement.



■ Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz

The Czarist authorities feared the growth of a new movement with which they were unfamiliar. In the spiritual realms, negative forces were aroused, for G-dliness was being revealed in a manner beyond the ordinary limits. On both planes, his liberation marked acceptance of his approach and a willingness to allow it to expand and progress.

Why Chassidus, and why now?

One might ask: If chassidic thought is so important, why was it revealed so late in the world's spiritual history? The Torah was given over 3,000 years ago. The Talmud was written over 1,500 years ago. If our people could have existed so many years without the teachings of Chassidus, why was it so necessary to reveal them in the present age?

The challenge of progress

Two answers are given to this question. The first focuses on the spiritual challenges facing mankind. As the industrial, and then the intelligence, revolution proceeded, man began to feel his own strength. I can achieve! Look at what we have accomplished. Instead of the complacent, accepting attitude that prevailed in previous eras, we have changed the face of the world.

In earlier ages, man felt dwarfed by the huge world around him and this opened him up to accept the spiritual as a higher authority. But as he began to achieve success in overcoming his environment, his attitude was expressed by the Biblical verse, "It is my strength and my power that brought me this prosperity." The spiritual became secondary as man became impressed with what he can do.

The intent is not that progress is bad and that we should remain in a primitive environment at the mercy of nature. Quite the contrary is true. The power and the desire to accomplish are G-dly gifts, granted to be used. However, as they are used and progress is achieved, we become near-sighted and put too great an emphasis on the material world around us.

Even — and, to a certain extent, especially — a successful person can be dwarfed by the spiritual.

Even — and, to a certain extent, especially — a successful person can be dwarfed by the spiritual. For no matter how great his achievements are, they are limited. G-d, by contrast, is infinite. Moreover, that infinite potential is vested within our own beings, for each one of us possesses a soul that is an actual part of G-d.

Awakening to the spiritual

Achieving this awareness, however, is not easy. It requires us to go beyond our ordinary perception of reality and focus on the spiritual. To facilitate this change of approach G-d revealed the teachings of Chassidus. These teachings grant us awareness of the manifold levels of spiritual existence that transcend our consciousness, the G-dly nature of the soul, the true infinity of G-d, the mystic power of the Torah and its mitzvos and many similar concepts.

In the previous eras, it was not necessary to reveal these teachings because the world was inherently sensitive to the spiritual. In recent generations, as the spiritual sensitivity of the world descended, the revelation of these truths became necessary to empower us to appreciate G-dly truth.

Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz serves at Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida.



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Torah, revealed again and again

By Rabbi Nicole Luna



■ Rabbi Nicole Luna

Every Wednesday, congregants and guests gather in the Temple Beth El library to explore the *siddur*, the Jewish prayer book. This is not a worship service, but an adult education class to learn the history of the prayers, read and examine the translation, debate the theology expressed and gain a deeper appreciation of our Hebrew prayers. Recently, we looked at the blessing after the Torah reading.

We recite, "Blessed are you God, who gave us the Torah of truth." In Hebrew, this is in the past tense. God gave us the Torah, on Mount Sinai, to Moses and all Israelites and all Jews who were and would be. This is the grand moment as described in Exodus with thunder, lighting and Moses up on the mountain for forty days and nights. The blessing continues, "[God] implanted eternal life in us. Blessed are you God who gives the Torah."

Rabbi Arthur Green explains a Hasidic teaching about the Torah blessing that each of us must take the "*chayei olam*," the "eternal life," within us to read Torah in a way that speaks to our life now. Then Torah becomes a *Torat emet*, a Torah of truth. And then, only then, can we say, "Blessed are you God, who gives the Torah," right now, in the present moment.

That is how we move from blessing God who gave us Torah, *natan Torah*, to blessing God who gives us Torah, *notein Torah*. Torah is not only something that God only gave once on Mount Sinai; God gives us the Torah anew, each time we read it.

Revelation of Torah never ceases.

In Reform Judaism, we call this continuous revelation. Revelation of Torah never ceases. The 1937 platform of Reform Judaism states that "revelation is a continuous process" and that "the Torah remains the dynamic source of the life of Israel." If you ever wondered what it was like to be on Mount Sinai, to experience the wonder of receiving Torah from God, all you have to do is come to Torah study.

Every time we study Torah, we receive new insights. The meaning of Torah does not come from reading and then, "poof," knowing the text. The meaning of Torah comes from the interaction of a text with the people reading and interpreting it. Revelation happens over and over again when we ask questions, when we seek out the meaning of the text and make it ours.

May we experience the abundance of wisdom and guidance throughout our days — Torah continually revealing herself to us.

Rabbi Nicole Luna serves at Temple Beth El in Fort Myers.

Remember that we suffered

By Rabbi Sunny Schnitzer



■ Rabbi Sunny Schnitzer

Last month I was leaving the parking lot of Gulf Coast Hospital in my convertible when two young women wearing the hijab, driving up Metro Parkway, slowed down and pointed at me. They said a few words to each other and then sped off. Feeling a bit self-conscious — did they simply like my sports car? — I realized that I was wearing my kippah.

Rarely had I given the slightest thought to wearing my kippah in public, but now I found myself wondering if it was safe to do so driving the roads of Southwest Florida. I began to remove it, but then pushed it firmly back into place, thinking, "darned if I will let the antisemitism of this moment dictate my actions as a Jew." Ok, I used a stronger explicative than "darned," but sadly I realized that generations upon generations of trauma, persecution and violence held an iron grip on my psyche.

We Jews are a people who carry trauma deep within our bones.

Carrying trauma

We Jews are a people who carry trauma deep within our bones. One could say it begins with our ancestor Yitzchak who carried the burden of being bound for sacrifice on Mount Moriah for the remainder of his days, or with the Jewish parents who had to watch helplessly as their children were drowned in the Nile, or the old and the weak who died by the sword of Amalek.

A history of suffering

This month of November brings with it more commemoration of Jewish suffering: Kristallnacht — the Night of Broken Glass — the beginning of the destruction of 20th century European Jewry. Last month, the anniversary of the massacres of Oct. 7, 2023, opened wounds that are still too fresh to heal: the martyrologies of Yom Kippur and Yizkor.

So many days of loss populate our Hebrew calendar that it sometimes seems that the Jewish people are fixated upon remembering that we suffered.

Then, I remembered a song:

Now it's time to celebrate, grab a drink and fix a plate

But, before you feel too great, remember that we suffered

Nights like these are filled with glee, noshing, dancing, singing, whee!

But we sing in a minor key, to remember that we suffered.

Finding humor in the darkness

The song, hilariously delivered at a fictitious Bat Mitzvah by national treasure Tova Feldshuh and the cast of the TV show, "Crazy Ex-Girlfriend," pokes fun while highlighting the Jewish talent for finding humor within even the darkest moments of our history. It might explain why so many Jews are comedy icons in almost every country. From Mel Brooks in America to Max Ehrlich in Weimar, Germany, to Volodymyr Zelensky, the modern-day president of Ukraine, Jewish humor in the face of danger has sustained us and brought us laughter and light.

So, if your spirits are dampened by current events, seek out the humor in every moment. Because humor is the antidote to fear and the weapon we need to strengthen us to continue the struggle against tyranny.

As our teacher Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav taught us, "it is a great mitzvah to be in happiness always. Joy breaks the constricted consciousness that fear creates."

Rabbi Sunny Schnitzer serves Bat Yam Temple of the Islands.

Stay connected all month long at www.JewishFederationLCC.org.

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TEMPLE JUDEA
Fort Myers

(239) 433-0201 • www.tjswfl.org

Temple Judea is busy in November as our friends return from the North.

Tuesday, Nov. 3 6:30 p.m., "Five Books, Five Voices" – A new series of classes with Rabbi David Arias. Explore Torah through the eyes of our greatest commentators with "Five Books, Five Voices."

Friday, Nov. 6, 6:30 p.m. – Musical Shabbat with Rabbi David Arias

Tuesday, Nov. 10, 6:30 p.m., "Five Books, Five Voices" – A new series of classes with Rabbi David Arias. Explore Torah through the eyes of our greatest commentators with "Five Books, Five Voices."

Friday, Nov. 13, 5:30 p.m., Shabbat B'Kef! – Submit your RSVP through our website.

Tuesday, Nov. 17, Nashim Circle – Nashim Circle's events are a beautiful way to come together. For additional information, call our office (239-433-0201) and/or register online (tjswfl.org).

Friday, Nov. 27, 6:30 p.m. – Thanksgiving Shabbat and potluck dinner

Back from break

After Nov. 9, President Jan Klein will be available Monday mornings at Temple Judea from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Regular programming

Monday Minyan and Breakfast are back! Mondays, 9 a.m. at Temple Judea, followed by breakfast at Sunflower Café.

Temple Judea Religious School continues Sunday mornings and Tuesday afternoons.

Temple Judea continues to accept food donations for the Cadkin Foundation Food Pantry at Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties. There are collection envelopes near the front door for contactless monetary or gift card contributions. Contributions may be mailed. Please call the office to ensure your contribution has been received.

Temple Judea is conducting in person services with an online Zoom option. Synagogue members can use the Zoom ID and password as published in our weekly megillah. Non-local residents may contact the synagogue for information.

Friday evening Shabbat services at 6:30 p.m. Saturday morning Shabbat services at 9:30 a.m. Kiddush luncheons are served every Shabbat. If you are interested in sponsoring a Kiddush, please contact JoAnn Lewin at jalewin2@aol.com. We would love to see you in person or via Zoom.

TEMPLE SHALOM
Charlotte Harbor & the Gulf Islands

(941) 625-2116 • www.templeshalomfl.com

Temple Shalom, the center of Jewish life in Charlotte County, celebrated Sukkot in a big way.

Our sukkah, built by Brotherhood president Arnold Kanter, was decorated by a large number of congregants, followed by a pizza party featuring, of course, ingredients representing the harvest.

Simchat Torah, the last of the major observances before Chanukah, was marked by a Shabbat service with special music.

Temple Shalom Port Charlotte has active Brotherhood and Sisterhood groups. Brotherhood members frequently visit congregants' homes to install mezuzahs and say blessings.

Social, educational and worship events at Temple Shalom in Port Charlotte, including Shabbat services held every Friday at 7:30 p.m., are open to all.

Temple Shalom is located at 23190 Utica Avenue in Port Charlotte. Visit our website for more information: templeshalomfl.com.



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The shofar being blown on the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is a plaintive and primitive sound, unlike any a human could produce. Jews look forward each year to the privilege of hearing the ram's horn being blown. It was no different this year when Rabbi Sunny Schnitzer gave it his all.

We ask ourselves what is the intention of this clarion call? Congregants experience their own personal messages. For some, it is a call to repentance; for others, it is a feeling of fear. "The gates are closing," and we want to walk through those gates and be inscribed in the Book of Life, so we are fearful. For others, it is about hope and redemption. We imagine our Messiah and ourselves on the wings of eagles being carried to the promised land. It is a day we think of our parents, ancestors and other loved ones and they become alive again, if only in our hearts. The message we take away is that we are made aware of a place higher than heaven and that message is, "do good on earth."

It is no coincidence that the we meet late in September/early-October, under the sign of Libra (the balance scales). Both good and bad deeds are measured. It is also no coincidence that we meet right around the September equinox, when the sun crosses the celestial equator. This causes many to believe we are entering the Age of Aquarius. What they are talking about is a symbolic transition into a new era. We understand we can begin anew with a clean slate. It is the shofar that makes us aware we are to be counted, we are to be judged and we are inspired to do better, to be our best selves.

We are a few weeks from the ache of the music and words of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, yet the tunes reel across our minds, as we are driving our cars, cooking dinner or before falling asleep at night. The haunting *Avinu Malkeinu* and *Un'taneh Tokef*, the plaintiff opening prayer of Kol Nidre, *Ashamnu*, the confessional prayer on Yom Kippur, are our soundtracks. These are what launch us anew as the Jewish calendar unravels.

But it is not only these tunes, it is the intellectual satisfaction of finding something new in the familiar text; it is being inspired by our biblical history; it is knowing about the Holocaust; it is what happened in Israel on Oct. 7; and it is the rampant antisemitism in the world.

We are survivors. We show up on Friday night shabbats, at Sukkot, on Simchat Torah, for Hannukah, on Pesach; we come and dance and sing and show solidarity with other Jews. We are each other's light.



The Jewish Federation thanks all our advertisers for their continued support! Without them we would be unable to provide our readers with *L'CHAYIM*. We invite other businesses in our community to explore this valuable advertising opportunity.

TEMPLE BETH EL
Fort Myers

(239) 433-0018 • www.templebethel.com

Walk into Temple Beth El on almost any day of the week and chances are something is happening. There may be a Mah Jongg game underway, a class with Rabbi Luna, a committee meeting around a table, someone stopping into the Judaica Shop, or people arriving for Shabbat. Some faces are familiar and some are brand new. That's just how we like it!

Women's Simcha Circle

Recently, our Women's Simcha Circle gathered for a Postcard Palooza, writing get-out-the-vote postcards to voters in Texas. There was plenty of conversation around the tables, and by the end, a whole stack of postcards was ready for the mail.

With Election Day coming up on Tuesday, Nov. 3, **please vote!**

Social action and community gatherings

November gives us plenty more reasons to get together.

Groovin' with Julie – If you've been meaning to try Groovin' with Julie, this might be your month. Julie gets everyone moving, laughing and having a good time — no dance experience required. November sessions are Tuesday, Nov. 3, 6 p.m., and Sunday, Nov. 15, 2 p.m.



Almost 200 bags of donated food to the Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties' Food Bank

Stop the Bleed – There are some more serious things on our calendar, too. Stop the Bleed is Wednesday, Nov. 4, 5 p.m. It's practical, hands-on training that we hope you'll never need, but it's important to know.

Mazel tov to the Schiff family! Noah Schiff will be called to the Bimah as a Bar Mitzvah on Saturday, Nov. 7. Congratulations on this wonderful Jewish milestone.

Cemetery Committee – On Sunday, Nov. 8, 1 p.m., our Cemetery Committee will introduce TBE's newly expanded cemetery and talk about Jewish traditions surrounding death and funerals, planning ahead and what families need to know when a death occurs. These aren't always easy conversations, but knowing what to expect can make a difficult time a little easier.

Annual Hanukkah Bazaar & Bake Sale – Then, there's Hanukkah! The first candle is lit Dec. 4, and Sisterhood is getting us ready with the Annual Hanukkah Bazaar & Bake Sale on Sunday, Nov. 15, beginning at 10 a.m.

Our Judaica Shop is also offering 20% off store items, so it's a good time to pick up candles, gelt, gifts or something special for yourself.

Food Drive – Our High Holy Day Food Drive was a wonderful success. Nearly 200 bags of food were collected. There were so many donations that it took several cars to deliver everything to the Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties' Food Bank. Thank you to everyone who filled a bag!

Thanksgiving Interfaith Program – Our doors open a little wider Sunday, Nov. 22, when we welcome neighbors from throughout Southwest Florida for our Thanksgiving Interfaith Program at 4 p.m. It's always meaningful to have people of different faiths gathered together under one roof.

Ladies Who Lunch – Sometimes you just want lunch! Ladies Who Lunch meets Tuesday, Nov. 24, 12:30 p.m. You don't need to belong to Sisterhood (or TBE) to join them.

Recurring programs

There are plenty of ways to find your way into TBE between the special events, too.

Mah Jongg is every Tuesday, 11:30 a.m., and beginners are welcome.

Torah Study meets Saturday mornings, 9 a.m., via Zoom.

Shabbat Services are every Friday evening at 7:30 p.m. Join us in the sanctuary, via Zoom, or watch live on Facebook. All are welcome.

Jews by Choice meets online the last Thursday of each month from 8 to 9 p.m. Whether you recently converted, are exploring conversion, or are reconnecting with your Jewish roots, this is a confidential place to talk about the joys, questions and challenges along the journey.

12-Step Recovery Group meets Saturdays, 11 a.m., via Zoom and is open to those in recovery and their allies.

Save the date

Mitzvah Day is Sunday, Jan. 31, 2027, 9 a.m. We'll have much more to share soon!

Connect with us

You don't have to wait for a special invitation to walk through our doors. **Everything we do at Temple Beth El is open to the community**. Join us for something you already enjoy or try something completely new.

To see what's happening, check our public calendar at templebethel.com/calendar), follow us on Facebook @TempleBethElofFortMyers, or give us a call at 239-433-0018.

We'd love to see you. Everyone's welcome at Temple Beth El.



Women's Simcha Circle members put pen to paper during recent Postcard Palooza

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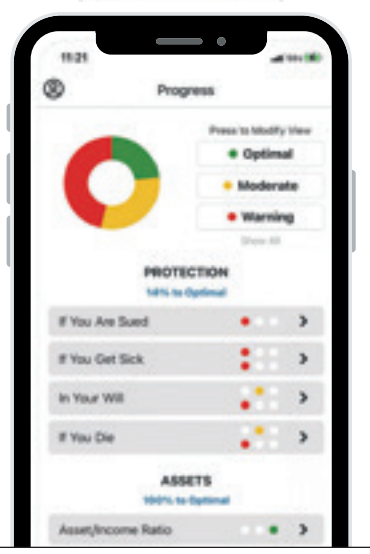
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COMMUNITY FREE SYNAGOGUE
Fort Myers

(239) 247-4556 • www.fortmyerssynagogue.com

Weekly Sabbath Eve dinners continue each Friday at 6 p.m. All are welcome. Bring a non-dairy dish, side, salad or dessert if you are able to do so. Dinner is followed by worship at 7 p.m. We gather on the Unity Campus (11120 Ranchette Road).

Shabbat morning Torah study with the rabbi is from 9:30 to 11 a.m. each week via Zoom, followed by *me shebayrakh* and *qaddish*. Easy access to the login information for the CFS Zoom Room is available on the synagogue website: fortmyerssynagogue.com.



Looking ahead

Invitation letters to our Hanukah First Night dinner, catered by Cohen & Cohen, will be sent out in mid-November. The dinner is free and open to the first 80 reservations. If you did not receive a letter last year and you wish to be invited, please send your name and street address to synfree@comcast.net or call 239-247-4556.

Celebrating our traditions

Sisters Talia, Cassie and Josie were Days of Awe standouts. They assisted by sounding their *shofarot* during *tashlikh* on the second day of Rosh Hashanah and at the end of Yom Kippur and then helped with *havdallah*.

A heartfelt thank-you to a very generous CFS family who donated our wonderful new sukkah, to Lee and Traci Pavel and Rich McConville who assembled it, and to Shayne Brown, family, friends and other CFS members for topping it off just before our Sukkot first night celebration and dinner. Once again, Shayne provided his artisan



semisweet chocolate chip *hallah* for *motsee* in the Sukkah.

We are deeply indebted to the rabbi's long-time friend and colleague, Chabad Rabbi Yitchok Minkowicz, for providing our *lulav* and *etrog* this year!

Music throughout the year: Tim Torres

Our Days of Awe musician Tim Torres will join us once a month during our Sabbath Eve dinner. Tim, who plays guitar in a number of local bands and cello in The Gulf Coast Symphony, has shared his remarkable musical gifts at several of our Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur observances over the years. We are thrilled to now have him join us throughout the year.

A new voice for November: Morrigan Brown

We are also delighted to welcome vocalist Morrigan Brown, accompanied by Jamison Alberti, for Sabbath Eve worship in November. Morrigan is 17 years old and is in her senior year at Fort Myers High School. She is a wrestler, having competed in LCAC, District and Regional competitions in prior years. She studied Hebrew with Rabbi Diamond and has assisted in making challah with her father since she was about 4 years old.

Musically, she began playing the drums and the violin at around age five, transitioning to guitar at the age of 13, and adding voice in 2025. For two years, Morrigan played with the School of Rock House Band, doing two tours, playing at the Hard Rock in Atlanta and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. She has played solo as well as with her duo, Mojo, which includes guitarist Jameson Alberti.

With appreciation

The rabbi presented Reverend Crystal Muldrow, departing pastor of the Unity Congregation with a *Hai* sculpture as a token of its respect and appreciation. Pastor Crystal was instrumental in welcoming us to share Unity's spectacular campus. She is returning to her home town of Detroit.

COMMUNITY FREE SYNAGOGUE
Fort Myers

(239) 247-4556 • www.fortmyerssynagogue.com

Through the generosity of its participants, Community Free Synagogue enabled the reconstruction of its Abuyudayah sister congregation Ahavat Yisrael's synagogue building in the village of Itonko in southeastern Uganda. The building was seriously damaged during a monsoon several months ago.

Rebuilding Ahavat Yisrael

After consulting with an engineer, the building's walls were raised nearly five feet using bricks they made from local clay, so that a new reinforced storm-resistant roof could be installed, along with sturdy new doors and shuttered windows. Once the rebuild was complete, CFS donors underwrote the cost of electrifying the building using solar panels, generator, storage batteries, wiring and lighting fixtures. There is no electricity in in the village.



Connecting our congregations

Once Ahavat Yisrael's synagogue had power, CFS's contributors provided the funds for the purchase of a camera, microphone, projector, screen and speakers. The intention was to promote a stronger connection between our two congregations, especially in the area of Jewish education. The first use of the equipment was on Yom Kippur; it was the afternoon in Fort Myers and the end of the day in Uganda. The rabbi offered a class on the Book of Jonah made up of students from both congregations.

The final phase of this project was funding a year's subscription to Starlink's satellite internet service, along with the equipment to use it. This highspeed internet connection will be used for classes and other Jewish enrichment. It will also be made available at no cost by reservation to members of Ahavat Yisrael in the synagogue building for personal use. The only other internet connection in the area is with smartphones using SIM cards purchased for blocks of time, prohibitive to most residents of Itonko.

A lasting partnership

CFS's long-term commitment to this Abayudayah community has included funding the synagogue's chicken raising project, the lease of farm land for the synagogue's people, along with four plowing bulls and two plows that congregants use to raise their own food.



The rabbi teaches their young spiritual leader, Mugoya Oren, twice a week. Two years ago, he was welcomed to Fort Myers and sent back with a CFS torah for his congregation.

TEMPLE BETH SHALOM
Cape Coral

(239) 772-4555 • www.templebethshalomcc.org

The holidays at Temple Beth Shalom were fabulous this year! Dinner in the Sukkah was delicious and everybody took a turn with the *lulav* and *etrog*. The children, especially loved eating outside both at the dinner and at the PJ Library event held at Temple Beth Shalom. Dancing with the Torahs at Simchat Torah was even better! Cantor Barry always makes that a joyous occasion for all.

On Oct. 17, we held a dinner in celebration of two of our most generous members: Steve Hertz and Lea Rosenberg. Together, they made it possible for us to hire Cantor Barry Butensky full time. Separately, Steve is fully supporting our Religious School, assuring the next generation an excellent foundation in Judaism. Lea came to our rescue providing us with a new Torah. The dinner was well-attended, the food delicious, and the guests-of-honor felt our gratitude for all they have done and all they continue to do.



Save the date

Sisterhood will meet Oct. 14, 4:30 p.m. and will meet the second Wednesday of every month.

Temple Beth Shalom Sisterhood

After a long sabbatical, our Temple Beth Shalom Sisterhood is now up and running: Co-Presidents Lynn Laufer and Arlene Cohen; Treasurer Marsha Golod; Recording Secretary Lois Horowitz; and Membership Carol Ahlert.

The women of the Sisterhood work together in a supportive environment deriving personal fulfillment and spiritual growth as they endeavor to better the synagogue and the quality of life in our broader communities. The Sisterhood embraces traditional values while giving voice to modern Jewish women.

Membership in the Sisterhood offers a unique opportunity for women to share time with other women, form friendships and explore Judaism from a women's perspective. The Sisterhood has been and remains critical to the temple's many successes.

The Sisterhood will offer a wide variety of activities and services: including social gatherings and educational opportunities; worship and Torah study; programs on reflection and renewal; community service projects, such as food drives; support of the Synagogue's youth; Women of Valor, an annual event honoring a congregation who has contributed greatly to the life of the community; joint events with Brotherhood and other Temple organizations.

It is the Sisterhood's goal to have every women of Temple Beth Shalom become a member and to share in its many enriching activities. Without you, the Sisterhood is one member short!



Looking ahead

In addition to all of the events Sisterhood is planning, check our website (templebethshalomcc.org) to receive our weekly communications or to see our calendar for other activities.

We have a book club, a photography club, and adult education; we host weekly movies and documentaries, museum visits, games nights and much more. Guests are always welcome to join us for any of our services or events.

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CHABAD LUBAVITCH OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
Fort Myers

(239) 433-7708 • www.Chabadswf.org

Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida warmly invites the entire community to join us throughout the month of November 2026/5787 for daily prayers, Torah Study, inspiring classes, ladies programs with Shani, family events, Kiddush, and meaningful Jewish community experiences.

Whether you join us every day or are visiting for the first time, there is always a place for you at Chabad!

Shabbat services

Friday evening: Welcoming Shabbat

- Kabbalat Shabbat and evening services, **5:15 p.m.**

Shabbat morning

- Kabbalah class, 9 a.m.
- Shacharit (Hodu), 10 a.m.
- Kiddush and community gathering, 12:15 p.m.

Daily prayers and Kaddish

Join us for daily services and the opportunity to say and respond to Kaddish with a minyan.

- **Sunday** – Shacharit, 8 a.m.
- **Monday-Friday** – Shacharit, 7 a.m.
- **Shabbat** – Shacharit, 10 a.m.
- **Evening services** – 5:15 p.m.

Torah Study

Weekly Kabbalah Class

Shabbat morning, 9 a.m. – Come explore the deeper teachings of Torah and Chassidus in an uplifting and meaningful atmosphere.

Ladies Torah and Tea

Mondays, 7 p.m. – Ladies are warmly invited to join Shani Minkowicz for an inspiring evening of Torah learning, meaningful conversation, connection and friendship.



Community members gathered for meaningful Sukkot prayers and celebration.



Celebrating the joy of Sukkot with special visitors from Israel through the Jewish Federation.

"Kabbalah and the Hidden Architecture of You"

A new six-part course

Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida invites the community to discover some of Judaism's most fascinating mystical teachings in a new six-part course, "Kabbalah and the Hidden Architecture of You," taught by Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz.

The course will be offered over six Thursdays, beginning Oct. 29, 7 p.m., at Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida in Fort Myers. The cost for the complete six-session course is $99.

Divided into six sessions, the course explores forty fascinating Kabbalistic ideas that can help participants better understand themselves and the world around them. "Kabbalah isn't simply about mystical concepts. It gives us a completely different way of looking at ourselves, our relationships, and the world around us," says Rabbi Minkowicz.

Topics range from profound questions such as What exactly is a soul? to insights into human psychology, including why certain people's flaws can bother us so much. The course also explores mysteries such as reincarnation, soulmates, why we marry the people we do, the spiritual significance of our names, dreams, music, and what happens to the soul while we sleep.

The course has garnered acclaim from leading scholars of Jewish mysticism:

- Professor Daniel C. Matt, author of "The Essential Kabbalah," said the course "offers all seekers the opportunity to discover the profound insights of the Jewish mystical tradition."
- Professor Ariel Evan Mayse of Stanford University says, "this magnificent program throws open the doors of Jewish mysticism and spirituality to all."
- Professor Elliot Wolfson of the University of California, Santa Barbara, has noted that "students will be exposed to the intricate mysteries of the world and of the soul."

Rabbi Minkowicz emphasizes that the course is designed for everyone, regardless of previous Jewish education or familiarity with Kabbalah. "You don't have to read Hebrew, and you certainly don't have to be a Kabbalah expert," says Rabbi Minkowicz. "This course is open to the entire community. All you need is curiosity and a desire to look a little deeper."

Always something happening

Throughout the month, look out for additional ladies events, classes, family programs, holiday celebrations, community gatherings and special events.

Please feel free to join Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida (5620 Winkler Rd., Fort Myers, FL 33919). For the latest programs, schedules and community updates, please visit ChabadSWF.org. We look forward to welcoming you!



"Kabbalah and the Hidden Architecture of You"

New course information

Instructor: Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz

When: Six Thursdays beginning Oct. 29

Time: 7 p.m.

Course fee: $99

Location: Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida, 5620 Winkler Road, Fort Myers, FL 33919

For additional information and registration, visit ChabadSWF.org or Myjli.com.

SYNAGOGUES & JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS IN LEE & CHARLOTTE COUNTIES

Jewish Federation of Lee & Charlotte Counties

www.JewishFederationLCC.org

BAT YAM TEMPLE OF THE ISLANDS
REFORM

Friday evening services at 7pm at the Sanibel Congregational United Church of Christ
2050 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel
Spiritual Leader and Cantor:
Rabbi Sunny Schnitzer
President: Allison Goldberg
Vice Presidents:
Daniel Sager, Annette Pacyga
Email: batyamsanibel@gmail.com
Website: batyam.org
Services: September through April
For more information on our service times and programs, please write to batyamsanibel@gmail.com or PO Box 84, Sanibel, FL 33957

CHABAD OF BONITA SPRINGS/ESTERO
ORTHODOX

24611 S. Tamiami Trail
Bonita Springs, FL 34135-7024

Rabbi Mendy Greenberg
Phone: 239-949-6900
Web site: JewishBonita.com
Services: Saturday at 10:00 a.m. followed by a Kiddush

CHABAD JEWISH CENTER OF CAPE CORAL
ORTHODOX

1716 Cape Coral Pkwy. W.
Cape Coral, FL 33914

Rabbi Yossi Labkowski
Phone: 239-963-4770
E-mail: info@chabadcape.com
Web site: chabadcape.com
Sunday - Friday 8:00 A.M Shacharit
Friday Evening 5:30 P.M.
Saturday Kabbalah Class 9:00 A.M.
Shabbat Services 9:30 A.M.
Kiddush Luncheon 12:00 P.M.
Hebrew School of the Arts Sunday 10:00 A.M - 12:30 P.M
JLI Classes Monday 7:00 P.M.
Torah Study Tuesday 7:30 P.M.
Women's Weekly Class Wednesday 11:30 A.M.

CHABAD OF CHARLOTTE COUNTY
ORTHODOX

424 W Henry St.
Punta Gorda, FL 33950

Rabbi Simon Jacobson
Phone: 941-833-3381
E-mail: chabadpg@yahoo.com
Web site: chabadofcharlottecounty.com
Services: Saturday at 10:00 a.m. followed by a kiddush
Torah study: Wednesday at 8:00 p.m.

CHABAD LUBAVITCH OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
ORTHODOX

5620 Winkler Road
Fort Myers, FL 33919

Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz
Phone: 239-433-7708 • Fax: 481-9109
E-mail: rabbi@chabadswf.org
Web site: chabadswf.org
Services: Friday 5:15 p.m.;
Saturday Kabbalah
class 9:00 a.m.; Shacharit 10:00 a.m.;
Kiddush at noon
Minyan: Monday & Thursday 7:00 a.m.

COMMUNITY FREE SYNAGOGUE
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The Unity Campus 11120 Ranchette Road
Fort Myers, FL 33966

Phone: 239-247-4556
E-mail: synfree@comcast.net
Web site: fortmyerssynagogue.com
Sabbath Eve Dinner every Friday at 6:00 PM followed by worship at 7:00 PM
Torah Study on Zoom every Sabbath morning from 9:30-11:00 AM
Meeting Room ID: 527 117 7864
Passcode: 435419
Rabbi Bruce Diamond, D.D.
Cantoral soloist Traci Pavel

CHAVURAT SHALOM OF SWFL
CHAVURA

20031 Sanibel View Circle Unit 202
Fort Myers, FL 33908
Chavuratshalom@gmail.com
Web site:
chavuratshalomofsouthwestflorida.org
Cheryl Fulmer, President
Shabbat services - 7:30 p.m. every Friday
Schmooze - 7:30 p.m. 1st Tuesday
Torah Talk - 7:30 p.m. 2nd Tuesday
Current events - 7:30 p.m. 3rd Tuesday
Speakers - 7:30 p.m. 4th Tuesday

TEMPLE BETH EL
REFORM

16225 Winkler Road, Fort Myers, FL 33908

Rabbi Nicole Luna
E-mail: rabbiluna@templebethel.com
Learning Tree Preschool Director: Ronni Vega
Ronnilearningtree@gmail.com
President: Michael Altman
Email: President@templebethel.com
Phone: 239-433-0018
Office Manager: Karen Kagan
Email: manager@templebethel.com
Web site: templebethel.com
Shabbat services: 7:30 p.m. Friday
Torah study 9:00 a.m. Saturday
Religious School: 9:30 a.m.- Noon Sunday
Mazel Tots (0-5 yrs. old). Sunday 11:00 a.m.
Religious school coordinator: Allison Fego
Religiousschool@templebethel.com
Judaica Gift Gallery
Affiliated: Union for Reform Judaism

TEMPLE BETH SHALOM
REFORM

702 S.E. 24th Ave., Cape Coral, FL 33990

President: Helene Glocer
Phone: 239-772-4555
Spiritual leader: Cantor Barry Butensky
Email: templebethshalomcommunications@gmail.com
Web site: templebethshalomcc.org
Services: 7:30 p.m. Friday
Saturday morning Torah Service/Torah study twice monthly at 10:00 am
Enrichment night every Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

TEMPLE JUDEA
CONSERVATIVE

14486 A&W Bulb Road
Fort Myers, FL 33908

Rabbi David Arias
E-mail: rabbi@tjswfl.org
Executive Director: Jackie Eldan
Email: Jackie@tjswfl.org
President: Jan Klein
E-mail: giaof3@gmail.com
Religious School Education Director:
Tehila Cherubino
E-mail: tehila@tjswfl.org
Roots & Wings Preschool Director: Suki Kelly
rootsandwings@tjswfl.org
Phone: 239-433-0201 • Fax: 239-433-3371
E-mail: admin@tjswfl.org
Web site: www.tjswfl.org
Services:
Monday Minyan: 9:00 a.m. (October to May)
Kabbalat Shabbat: Fridays 6:30 pm
Shabbat Shacharit: Saturdays 9:30 am

TEMPLE SHALOM CHARLOTTE HARBOR AND THE GULF ISLANDS
REFORM

23190 Utica Ave. / P.O. Box 494675
Port Charlotte, FL 33949-4675

President: Judith Migdol
Phone: 941-625-2116
E-mail: Shalompc06@gmail.com
Web site: templeshalomfl
Organizations: Sisterhood; Brotherhood
Affiliated: Union for Reform Judaism

SHALOM LIFE CENTER
TRANS DENOMINATIONAL

Rabbi Lawrence Dermer
Phone: 239-218-3433
Email: info@shalomlifecenter.org
Web site: shalomlifecenter.org

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

- AIPAC
  (American Israel Public Affairs Committee):
  Lynda Adler & Ian Noy - 617-676-7567
- AJC (American Jewish Committee):
  Brian Lipton - 941-365-4955
- Anti-Defamation League: 561-988-2900
- B'Nai B'rith International: 941-302-4500
- Chabad Jewish Student Life at FGCU
  Rabbi Mendel Gordon - 347-452-0489
  mendelgordon@gmail.com
- Chevra Kadisha: Taryn Sasser
- Generations of the Shoah SWFL: 263-9200
- Hadassah - Collier/Lee Chapter:
  Joyce Toub - 518-330-1559
- Hazak 55+ Chapter:
  Joyce Rosinger - 239-437-1566
- Israel Bonds: Regional Headquarters:
  800-622-8017
- Jewish Community Services:
  239-481-4449
- Jewish National Fund:
  Joshua Mellits, Director, Western Florida
  941-462-1330 ext. 865
  Memorial Tree Planting in Israel
  1-800-542-8733
- Jewish War Veterans:
  Post 400: Commander
  Harvey Charter - 239-246-3151
- Mikvah Bashka of Southwest Florida:
  Nechamie Minkowicz - 239-822-2784

Jewish Federation
of Lee & Charlotte Counties

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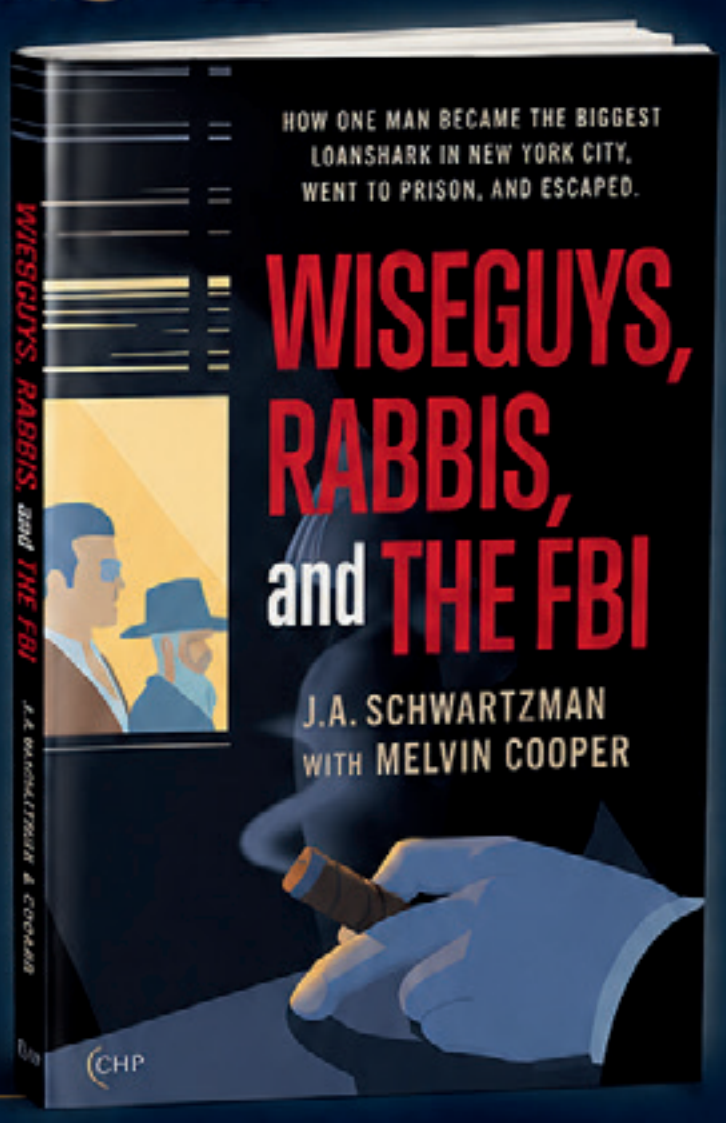
FEATURING SPEAKER

J.A. SCHWARTZMAN

Author of

WISEGUYS, RABBIS, and THE FBI

The incredible true story of how one man's faith, values, and courage changed lives.



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6TH
10:00 AM

DOUBLE TREE BY HILTON
13051 Bell Tower Dr.
Fort Myers, FL 33907

ABOUT J.A. SCHWARTZMAN

J.A. Schwartzman is a copywriter and author whose work has appeared in publications including *Mademoiselle Magazine*, Barbara Probst Solomon's *The Reading Room*, the *New York Press*, and others. Her writing and editing has included non-fiction books, articles for commercial publications, and a screenplay. She brings a sense of humor to all work—even true crime.

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