

SCHMOOZE NEWS



Spring Cleaning for our Souls

BY MARCY PRICE
SENIOR CARE COMMITTEE

During this past month of Elul—a time for “Spring cleaning of our soul,” so to speak. It’s the time of season when our minds and hearts turn inward. It’s a time to examine who we are and who we wish to be in the coming year. The High Holidays offer us sacred time to make new commitments and ask for forgiveness.

The beginning of the new year is also an opportunity to reaffirm our Jewish tradition’s longstanding commitment to *tikkun olam*, repair of the world. In this issue, we profile the dynamic duo and founders of the Respect Diversity Foundation, Mike and Joan Korenblit. Their passion to pursue justice and to cultivate understanding and respect for others is the hallmark of their 25+ years as community leaders.

Jewish values teach us that we must be a light, pursue justice and honor the humanity of our neighbors. We are also often described as “People of the Book.” Each Monday at noon, members of our Jewish community gather to study Jewish writings with Helene Harpman. Every month on the second Wednesday, we gather to discuss a variety of books with Jewish themes and stories. We learn by discussing our perspectives and listening to each other’s thoughts. Study and learning lead to action and *mitzvot*.

So start the new year with a renewed heart and mind.

L’Shana Tova! May it be a sweet year of kindness and compassion for ourselves and others.



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IN THIS ISSUE

**An interview with
The Korenblits, Respect
Diversity Foundation**

Chai on Life Events

El Reno Trip

Camp Chaverim Recap

Respect Diversity Foundation



Joan and Michael Korenblit



Mike & Joan Korenblit Dynamic and Dedicated Duo of Social Justice Advocacy and Education

By Marcy Price

Most everyone in our greater Jewish community has had the opportunity to be enlightened by the dynamic duo of Mike & Joan Korenblit, Founders of the Respect Diversity Foundation (RDF). Over the past 25 years, RDF programs have reached almost a half million students, teachers and adults providing insight and better understanding of the Holocaust, racial and religious hatred, and the importance of standing up and confronting prejudice against any group that differs from their own. This past November, our greater OKC community gathered to celebrate 25 years of RDF's work.

Until We Meet Again - A True Story of Love and Survival in the Holocaust

Michael is the co-author of the best-selling book "Until We Meet Again" with Kathleen Janger, of blessed memory. Mike tells the story of his parents' survival of the Holocaust. He speaks to students and interfaith organizations yearly about this book and to share the lessons his parents learned. Lessons of humanity and civil rights.

Community & Student Collaborations

Joan and Mike both believe in the

importance and value of community collaboration. They have been integral in establishing The Jewish Muslim Film Institute in collaboration with the greater OKC Muslim community.

In the early years, they worked closely with Clara Luper to collaborate with the African American community. They have also worked with the Raindrop Turkish House.

Joan is an active member of our Jewish Federation Book Club, along with her two other book groups. As a writer, poet, teacher and social justice advocate, Joan helped launch the Respect Diversity Art & Poetry Contest which challenged teachers and students to create collaborative art projects for an annual competition showcasing hundreds of entries over a 12 year period.

Mike and Joan live their values and have found passion and purpose in their social justice advocacy, educational programs and creative approaches to understanding the meaning of peace, kindness, empathy and justice - foundational Jewish values. "And if only there were more hours in the day," noted Joan!

Kindness and Justice Begins at Home

Stories don't change but their relevance does. Mike's dedication to social justice advocacy stems directly from the life lessons his father taught him about how to treat and respect others - at the segregated water fountain, in school, and in business where his father was the first owner of the Dixie Dog Drive-in to serve the Ponca City Black community.

And now in 2026, Mike and Joan recognize the threats and policies toward immigrants as one of the many important social justice issues of today. They are proud that the recent state legislation compelled Oklahoma schools to include Holocaust education for all students 6th grade and older.

Respect Diversity Foundation

Mike and Joan have recently passed the RDF torch into the competent hands of Executive

Director, Noel Jacobs, Ph.D. Noel is the past President of the Interfaith Alliance and a lifelong Oklahoman. He completed his doctoral in clinical child psychology at the University of Kansas in 2001, and has spent the past nearly two decades as a clinical health service psychologist and Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology, currently at Oklahoma City University.

Kol HaKovod to our featured Jewish community leaders, Mike & Joan Korenblit. May you go from strength to strength!

Note: The Meyer & Manya Korenblit Holocaust testimony is recorded in the Jewish Federation video titled "I Witness," curated in the Holocaust section of the OKC Metropolitan Library.



Noel Jacobs, Ph.D.



Chai on Life-El Reno Day Trip



Until Next Summer... Thank You for an Incredible Camp *Chaverim* 2026

-Dan Johnson, Camp Director

We blinked, and another Camp *Chaverim* summer has come to an end.

It's difficult to put into words what these past few weeks have meant to all of us. We began the summer with excitement and anticipation, wondering what memories would be made, what friendships would blossom, and what adventures would unfold. Now, as we look back on the laughter, special events, songs, field trips, swimming, Shabbat celebrations, dance parties, messy art projects, and countless smiling faces, we can confidently say that the summer of 2026 was one we will never forget.

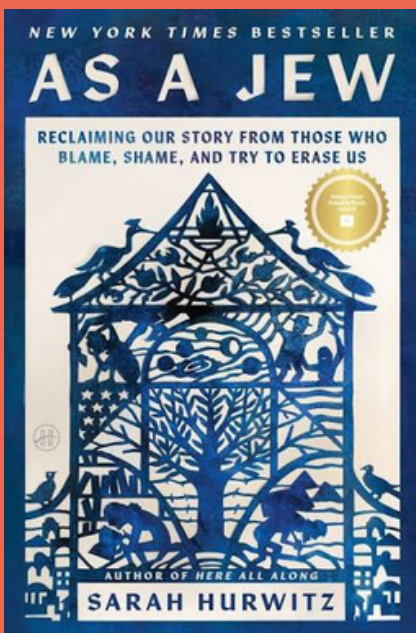
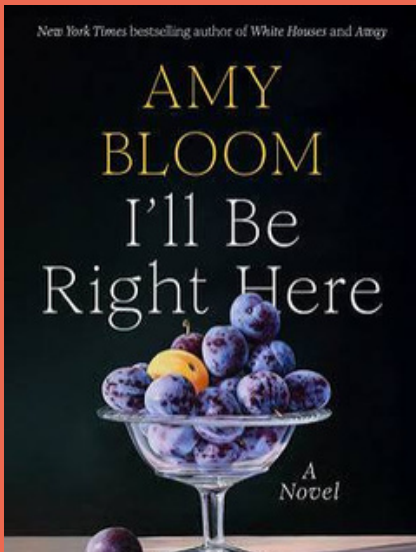
Camp *Chaverim* has always been about so much more than the activities we do each day. It's about watching a camper try something new for the very first time. It's seeing friendships formed over a game of Gaga Ball or while waiting in line for the slip-and-slide. It's singing Shabbat songs together on Friday afternoons and watching campers beam with pride as they share what they've learned. It's the excitement of welcoming the Israeli Scouts to camp, cheering one another on during Maccabiah Week, having the best time at the pool and hearing the sounds of laughter echo throughout our hallways and across our playground during the end of camp carnival!

Most importantly, it's about community and our 39th summer of Camp *Chaverim* was the perfect example of exactly that, community.



Programs That Connect us to our Jewish Community

Marcy Price, Jewish Book Club Coordinator



The Jewish Book Discussion Club began meeting 23 years ago at Full Circle Bookstore back when I was Program Director at the Jewish Federation. Our dedicated group of readers has changed and grown over the years but the value of reading and discussing books and our connections has remained.

One active Jewish book club member, Sandy Fogelson brought this point home when she noted that many years ago when she was still grieving her husband's death, she received a postcard from the Jewish Federation inviting her to join our book club, just when she was feeling the most disconnected and alone.

I went to my mailbox one day and saw a postcard from the Jewish Federation, it made me realize how important community and connection really are ...and I have been coming to Jfed programs ever since".

Another lifelong reader shared a quote that resonated with her after reading and discussing *The Stolen Life of Colette Marceau*, "To change the world doesn't require money or power or influence or higher education, it simply requires us to look inside our hearts and ask how can we help others and to do what we can to stand up for that which is right and just...". Even when some of us liked the book more than others, while discussing the themes, we often discover nuance and meaning beyond our first impressions.

The Jewish Book Club meets on the 2nd Wednesday each month at the Jewish Federation office or via Zoom at 11:00 am.

September 9 - *I'll be Right Here* by Amy Bloom

October 14 - *As a Jew* by Sarah Hurwitz

November 11 - Selection of new titles for 2027

December 9 - *Heart of a Stranger* by Rabbi Angela Buchdahl

Contact Margo@jfedokc.org if you would like to be added to our email list.

Don't forget

Torah Study class meets every Monday from 12p - 1p
Jewish Book Club second Wednesday of every month from 11a - 12p
Email Margo@jfedokc.org if you're interested

UPCOMING EVENTS



SAVE THE DATE

*Jewish Federation JCRC Mitzvah Corps
Take A Bite Out Of Hunger*

Sunday, October 11, 2026
10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
check-in at 9:30 a.m.

The Jewish Federation's Take A Bite Out of Hunger volunteer day is coming up soon! The Regional Food Bank is excited to have members of the Jewish community join them for this important annual project.

This program is free to attend, but pre-registration will be required. Registration link coming soon.

