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Shalom 11|26

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Afro-Semitic Experience to bring music, movement to Leo Camp Lecture

By Richard Bradbury
Development Director

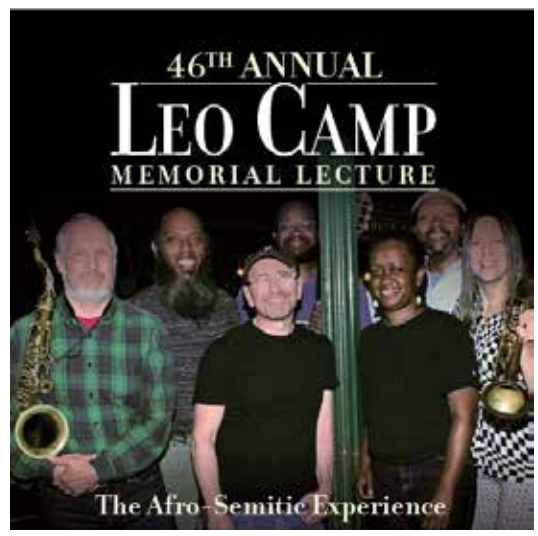
Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks is extremely excited to announce the 46th Annual Leo Camp Memorial Lecture will be on Wednesday, Nov. 18 at 7 p.m. This year's lecture will be a CONCERT featuring The Afro-Semitic Experience. The Leo Camp Memorial Lecture is free and open to the public.

For 2026, the Leo Camp Lecture will take place at the WCR Center for the Arts (140 N. Fifth St.,Reading). Due to high demand, registration for the concert is required. Register today at www.ReadingJewishCommunity.org, use the QR code with this article or call 610-921-0624.

Hosting a seven-piece jazz ensemble requires an enormous amount of audio and technical support, so a mutual decision was made to temporarily move the lecture from Albright College, home of the Leo Camp Lecture for 45 years, to the historic, acoustically splendid, 200-seat WCR Center for the Arts.

WCR Center for the Arts offers free parking in the M&T Bank lot at 50 N. Fifth Street and in the rear of the Fulton Bank located at 210 N. Fifth Street between Walnut and Elm streets. The center is accessible by elevator located in the rear of the building. Please contact Jewish Federation at 610-921-0624 or info@jfreading.org to arrange to use the WCR elevator.

Co-founded by African-American jazz pianist Warren Byrd, and Jewish-American jazz bassist David Chevan in 1998, The Afro-Semitic Experience combines an eclectic array of styles, sophisticated musicianship, good songwriting, deep grooves, and years of friendship with a simple message: Unity in the Community. Their music



has been heard around the United States — at festivals, in churches, synagogues, colleges, and wherever people come together to share their love and respect for community. Their performances are celebrations of community and culture that invariably get audiences up and dancing.

With their unique instrumentation, solid grooves, and their ability to get an audience on its feet, The Afro-Semitic Experience has reimagined the jazz concert. This is a band beyond category—performing an intricate tapestry of spiritual, world-beat, funk, jazz, cantorial, gospel, salsa, swing … soul-driven music. Their concerts are celebrations where they play great music, tell stories, and offer a positive and meaningful message: Unity in the Community.

Their recording projects have garnered critical acclaim and made numerous best-of lists. Their newest work, "My Feet Began to Pray," is a collection of original compositions inspired by the social and racial justice movements, along with a few classic songs from the back in the day. All imbued with passion, groove, blowing, dancing, and soaring freely in sound and spirit.

After The Afro-Semitic Experience, please join the band, staff of Jewish Federation and your friends for a coffee and dessert reception in the two beautiful parlors of the WCR Center for the Arts. For more information or questions about the Leo Camp Memorial Lecture, please call 610-921-0624 or info@jfreading.org.

Jewish Federation would like to thank the WCR for their partnership and hospitality and we look forward to partnering again with WCR's Strings of Hope Concert on Saturday, March 6, 2027. Strings of Hope brings together violins that survived the Holocaust and the Hiroshima Atomic Bombing. We hope you will join us. More information as details become available.

Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks is tremendously grateful for Albright College's 45-year partnership for the Leo Camp Memorial Lecture. We'll be back at Albright College again in 2027 for the 47th Annual Leo Camp Memorial Lecture.

Learn more about Leo Camp. Page 14

Registration link

Celebrity chef at Literatour Berks





Chef Pati Jinich, known for her work as a PBS cooking show host and bestselling author, kicked off this year's Literatour Berks series Oct. 20 at the GoggleWorks. Above, her discussion with Nancy Russo and Margo Levin. At right, Jinich with Sen. Judy Schwank. See story on Page 4.

Development

Annual Campaign

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DONATE NOW TO OUR JEWISH COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN

Please visit ReadingJewishCommunity.org

Make your gift today!

Your support is needed to support great community activities, services

By Richard Bradbury
Development Director

Happy November, *Shalom* readers! I hope you have been enjoying the autumn magic; the Northeast always gets a terrific show.



Recently I joined my husband and his two sisters on their "sibling trip" to the Hudson Valley to enjoy the scenery and the changing colors of the leaves. It was a little early to enjoy the complete palette, but it was starting! Now these glorious and warming colors are in full bloom (bloom?) here in Berks County. Take the opportunity to get out, look up and take in the beauty of this season. There is a row of aspens on Museum Road not to be missed! To our Diaspora, I hope you get to experience fall in your own ways that are unique and special to where you live.

Here at Jewish Federation, we are busier than ever. I say that every month, but every month it's totally true! October saw the moving commemoration of October 7 at Kesher Zion, Literatour Berks with Chef Pati Jinich, the Jewish Family Service volunteer lunch, Friendship Circles and, of course, the overwhelming outpouring of interest and empathy for our guests from Israel, Eliya Cohen and Ziv Abud. October was busy, fun, and at times, profound and emotionally charged. Federation is proud of our passion and determination to host so many diverse events and personalities for our community.

Now, fasten your seatbelts because here comes November! Federation has an exciting month planned for you, your family and your Jewish and (non-Jewish) friends — of all ages.

Kristallnacht

Gather with us Monday, Nov. 9, at 6 p.m. for the Kristallnacht commemoration and Circle of Light ritual hosted by Christ Episcopal Church in Reading (Fifth and Court Streets).

"Fire Witch" by Melanie Gill

Literatour Berks welcomes our second author of the season, Melanie Gill, for a Noontime Knowledge program on Wednesday, Nov. 11 at noon at the JCC. Melanie will discuss her book, "Fire Witch: Kate Claxton and the 1876 Brooklyn Theatre Inferno." Discover the history behind the book and learn about the celebrated actress at its center.

"One Big Happy Family"

A Hollywood star will shine on Reading Thursday, Nov. 12, when Federation hosts Lisa Brenner, actor, screenwriter and producer for our first movie of our Reading Jewish Film Series, "One Big Happy Family" at the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts in Reading. Make reservations to see this female-forward comedy and pop into Thorn Alley Café at 6 pm to mix and mingle with Lisa Brenner and your friends.

"The Diary of Anne Frank"

Tulpehocken High School presents this timeless play on Saturday, Nov. 14 at 7 p.m. Federation is selling a group of 20 tickets via our website (readingjewishcommunity.org). Ride sharing to Bernville is available on request. Let us gather as a community to celebrate these young people and their school as they present a play central to our history and people.

46th Annual Leo Camp Memorial Lecture

Break out your dancin' shoes, Louise, and get ready to party! The 46th Annual Leo Camp Memorial Lecture is going to be, dare I say, "Off the Hook"?

Join us Nov. 18 for a complete 180 from the traditional Leo Camp speaker series for a night on the town with The Afro-Semitic Experience. The concert will be at our temporary home at the WCR Center for the Arts at 140 N. Fifth St. in Reading. Reserve your tickets today — seating is limited!! Personally, I don't think you'll be doing much sitting!

And then, cranberry relish and corn puddin', it's Thanksgiving!

Do these events and services cost money?? You bet they do!!

And I haven't found the tree it grows on! Most of our events and celebrations are FREE and open to the public! Jewish Federation programs and services (*please, do not forget about all the services offered to our community and Reading/Berks thanks to Jewish Family Service*) depend on YOU and your financial support! This is YOUR Federation.

We are in the FINAL TWO MONTHS of our 2026 Annual Campaign

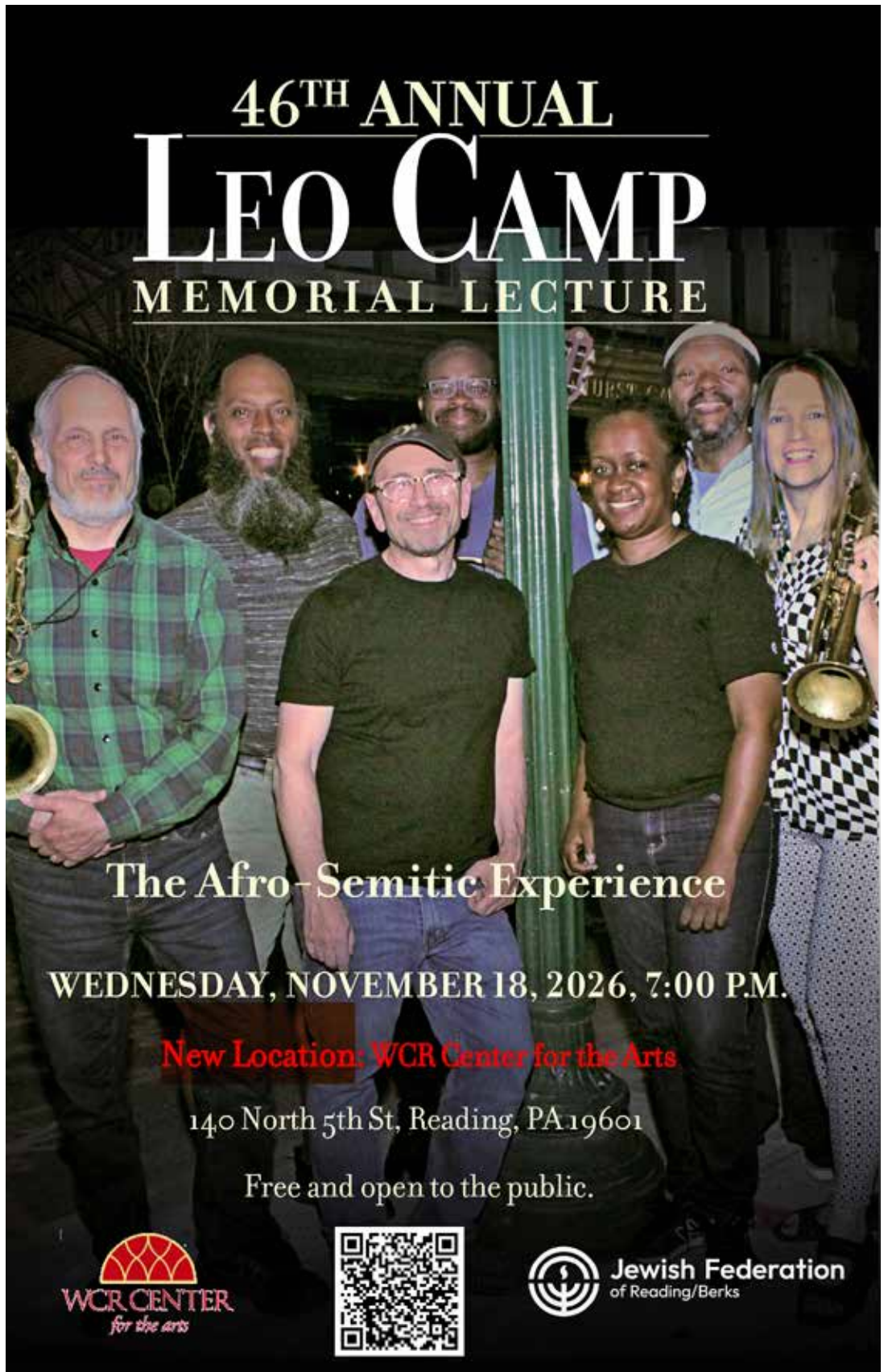
And truthfully, friends, I'm concerned. Our goal is $443,000, and I shudder when I think how far we are from our goal. I always keep my articles light and upbeat but friends, I'm worried we may not make our goal for 2026. Less income = fewer programs, fewer services.

In September, every *Shalom* reader received a letter from Federation asking you to contribute a gift that matches your ability and budget and to consider an increase above last year's gift. If everyone reading this column responded with a donation, the nagging and wringing of hands would cease.

Thank you to those who responded to our call to support our good works. We're honored that you find our mission worthwhile and that the Federation makes being Jewish in Berks County something to celebrate.

If you have not given your gift for 2026, the time is now. Seriously. We depend on you, our Reading/Berks Jewish community, to sustain the work, the services and the programs of YOUR Federation. If not you, WHO?

The clock is ticking! Please give as generously as you are able to your Jewish Federation today by sending your check with (or without) your Annual Campaign card or donate online at ReadingJewishCommunity.org or call the Federation office at 610-921-0624.



A Message from the CEO

Building bridges, sustaining community: Why your gift to the annual campaign matters now more than ever

By Cindy Gerber Tomlinson
Chief Executive Officer



In an increasingly complex world, the strength of a community is measured by its willingness to show up for one another. For decades, the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks has served as that crucial foundation—a centralized lifeline and cultural hub ensuring that Jewish life thrives, local families are cared for, and neighbors of all backgrounds are welcomed into meaningful dialogue.

But these vital connections do not happen by accident. They are built, sustained, and expanded through the generosity of donors like you. As the **Annual Campaign** gets underway, your contribution is the fuel that powers indispensable educational, social, and cultural programs for the Jewish community and beyond.

Educating, Inspiring and Connecting Our Community

The Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks is a buzzing center of activity, offering an array of unique community series that stimulate the mind and enrich the soul. Your support directly funds crowd-favorites such as:

- **Literatour Berks:** A popular community-wide celebration presented in partnership with the Exeter Community Library and the Jewish Book Council. This inspiring series brings bestselling and award-winning authors — such as world-renowned chef Pati Jinich — right to Berks County to share stories of tradition, identity, and resilience.
- **The Great Decisions Series:** Offered in conjunction with the World Affairs Council, this critical foreign policy program brings local academics and curious citizens together to tackle the globe's most pressing diplomatic and political challenges.
- **Special Holiday Celebrations:** From joy-filled family Havdalah gatherings to community festivals for Chanukah, the Federation keeps the warmth of Jewish tradition alive for generations to come.

A Global Voice for Truth and Resilience

The true impact of the Federation extends far beyond traditional programming. It provides a platform for profound global truths, healing, and human connection.

Recently, the Federation proudly hosted Eliya Cohen and Ziv Abud, bringing their unforgettable program, "From Captivity to Freedom," to our local community. Eliya was kidnapped from the Nova Music Festival during the devastating Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attacks on Israel, enduring 505 grueling days in captivity underground. His fiancé (now wife), Ziv, survived the attack and became a tireless international advocate fighting for his return.

Bringing global voices of this magnitude to Berks County is only possible because of the infrastructure funded by your donations. These programs offer irreplaceable, firsthand insight into the lasting impact of terrorism, the power of hope, and the incredible resilience of the human spirit.

The Power of Tzedakah: Your Impact

In Jewish tradition, giving to a centralized community fund is considered one of the highest forms of tzedakah (charity). It ensures that resources are distributed effectively where they are needed most — whether funding a local elder transportation taxi, maintaining a Holocaust library at Albright College or sending global relief to those in harm's way.

The community programs we love, the critical global conversations we host and the social safety net we rely on cannot exist without collective giving.

Please consider making your gift to the Annual Campaign today. The campaign is in its last two months. Together, we can ensure that the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks remains a vibrant lighthouse of education, culture, and community for years to come.

If you'd like to get more involved or learn about how donations are distributed, please let us know. We can provide details on:

- **How to donate** online or by phone: **readingjewishcommunity.org or 610-921-0624 or mail your check to Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks, 1100 Berkshire Blvd., Suite 125, Wyomissing, PA. 19610**
- **Upcoming volunteer opportunities** with Jewish Family Service
- How to register for the next event at **readingjewishcommunity.org**

November ✡ Chesvan-Kislev



Shabbat Candle Lightings



Torah Portions

November 6 6:26 p.m.	**November 7/27 Chesvan** **Chayei Sarah** (Genesis 23 :1-25 :18)
November 13 6:15 p.m.	**November 14/ 4 Kislev** **Todot** (Genesis 25:19-28:9)
November 20 6:04 p.m.	**November 21/11Kislev** **Vayeitzei** (Genesis 28:10-32:3)
November 27 5:54 p.m.	**November 28/18 Kislev** Vayishlach (Genesis 32:4-36:43)



Kristallnacht Commemoration Service

Monday, November 9, 2026
6:30 P.M. Circle of Light candle lighting on the church steps
7 P.M. Interfaith Service indoors
Reception to follow

Hosted this year at
Christ Episcopal Church
435 Court St. Reading, PA 19601
Parking lot located at Madison Ave and Washington St

Join us for our annual commemoration of Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, which marked the beginning of the Holocaust.

The public is invited to this free event.
For information, please contact info@jfreading.org or 610-921-0624

Edwin & Alma '91 Lukas Holocaust Library and Resource Center

Christ Episcopal Church

Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks

Shalom

A newspaper serving the Jewish community of Berks County, Pennsylvania, and published monthly, September through June, under the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks. Funded by the Annual Jewish Community Campaign.

General Offices: 1100 Berkshire Blvd., Suite 125 Wyomissing, PA 19610
Phone: 610-921-0624 **FAX:** 610-929-0886
Web site: www.ReadingJewishCommunity.org

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The opinions expressed in Shalom are of the writers and not the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks

Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks

Literatour Berks begins 8th season with Pati Jinich

By Margo Levin and Nancy Russo

LiteratouBerks kicked off its eighth season on Oct. 20 with a delightful evening featuring acclaimed chef, author, and television personality Pati Jinich at GoggleWorks Center for the Arts. With her infectious enthusiasm, warmth, and wonderful sense of humor, Pati took the audience on a journey through food, family, culture, and the unexpected turns that can shape a life.

Best known as the host of the award-winning PBS series "Pati's Mexican Table," Pati shared stories of growing up in Mexico City as part of a close-knit Jewish Mexican family. She spoke about her parents, siblings, and childhood traditions, offering a fascinating glimpse into the rich history and culture of Mexico's Jewish community. While some of her experiences were different from our own, the importance of family, food, and tradition felt wonderfully familiar.

Of course, no conversation with Pati would be complete without talking about chile peppers! From their remarkable variety to their essential role in Mexican cooking, Pati's enthusiasm for this iconic ingredient was contagious. She also spoke candidly about balancing a demanding career with marriage and raising three sons, reminding us that even internationally recognized television personalities face many of the same challenges as the rest of us.

A special highlight of the evening was a preview of the second season of her PBS series "Panamericana," giving the audience another opportunity to experience Pati's gift for discovering the connections between food, history and culture.

Throughout the evening, Pati's stories were filled with humor, insight and genuine affection for the people and places that have shaped her life.

More than a conversation about cooking, it was a celebration of identity, heritage and the ways food brings people together across generations and borders.

Literatour Berks is a partnership between the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks, Exeter Community Library and Jewish Book Council, bringing outstanding authors, speakers, and cultural experiences to our community.

We are grateful to our generous sponsors and to the Yiddish Book Center for its grant support, which helped make this special programs possible.

Our heartfelt thanks to Pati Jinich for sharing such a memorable evening with the Reading community. What a wonderful way to begin another exciting season of Literatour Berks!



Pati Jinich, PBS cooking show host and author, during her Oct. 20 visit to Reading for the opening of Literatour Berks' eighth season.

All Around the Town

Mazel Tov to **Louise Zeidman**'s daughter **Dr. Joan Zeidman** on her marriage to Dr. David Fish on Oct. 4.

***

Send good news to Marknem@aol.com or call 610-921-0624.

Until next time: Shalom!







Teens kick off Stand With Us workshop series

By Margo Levin
JCRC Coordinator

Our teenagers are learning, connecting and asking important questions! We were excited to kick off the first of three Stand With Us workshops with "Antisemitism Through the Ages."

The evening brought together teens from our community for an engaging and interactive program led by Michelle Waksman, Mid-Atlantic High School Regional Manager for Stand With Us. Our community's teens participated in discussions, shared their thoughts, and gained a deeper understanding of the history of antisemitism and how it continues to impact our world today.

It was a great start to the series, and we are looking forward to the next Stand With Usa workshop, "Israel 101," on Nov. 8.

For more information contact Margo Levin at margol@jfreading.org







JFS TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

This program provides transportation to members of the Jewish community, age 60 and over or those with disabilities, who have no other way of getting around. It allows participants to retain their independence and keeps them from becoming homebound and isolated. It can be used for medical appointments, synagogue attendance, shopping and other errands.

It is easy. Purchase a book of 25 taxi tickets from the Federation at a cost of $25. Each coupon is worth $3. The phone number for Reading Metro Taxi is on the ticket book. Call the company and arrange your ride. At the end of the ride, sign your coupon(s) before giving them to the driver. Tipping is left to the passenger's discretion. Coupon does not include cost of tipping.

Program subsidized by
The Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks

JFS Hospital and Outpatient Visits

- Friendly and supportive visits
- Provide access to social services in conjuction with hospital case workers
- Information about home care, rehabs, and nursing homes
- Information about our taxi transportation services program

If you or a loved one are being treated at a local hospital or nursing home and would like a visit, please call Carole at 610-921-0624.



Jewish FamilyService

I believe in you: The blessing of community

By Carole Robinson
Jewish Family Service



My daughter Rebecca recently competed in her first, and according to her "last", half marathon. Her niece, my 6-year-old granddaughter Adelaide (an avid runner herself), gave her some advice prior to the race: "Make sure your sneakers are tied. Bring water. I believe in you. Never give up."

Although most of us aren't running marathons, Adelaide's inspirational words prompted me to think of our caring Reading Jewish community. The powerful combination of the simple messages — "I believe in you." and "Never give up." — reminds me that hope is strengthened through connection. And it inspired me to write down the numerous ways our community blesses us.

As a community, our connection is strong. We come together to celebrate in times of joy, to support one another in moments of uncertainty and to find ways to bring comfort during difficult times. I am constantly amazed by the many kindnesses I witness. You continually look out for one another. You check in with phone calls, offer rides, and let me know if you are concerned about a neighbor's health or someone's financial difficulties. Your compassion, friendship and concern for one another are truly beautiful. Jewish Family Service touches many lives in partnership with all of you, and I am grateful to be part of this community!

I am also blessed by our wonderful team of JFS volunteers. You generously share your time, your talents, and your hearts. Whether offering a helping hand, supporting a program, or simply being there when someone needs connections, our volunteers remind me that "chesed," loving kindness, is what Jewish Family Service is all about!

I am especially appreciative of our many food pantry volunteers. Because of your tireless commitment, we serve over 600 households each month. These neighbors face difficult choices about how to make ends meet. Your service eases some of their worries about feeding their families. Every hour you volunteer, every bag you pack, and every car you load makes a difference for those facing food insecurity.

I am truly grateful for the support of our exceptional Federation team. Your compassion and commitment to JFS and our community allows us to serve so many. You help foster a communal spirit where everyone can find meaning and feel valued. I am constantly in awe of you!

And a special thank you to our generous donors. Your support provides a strong foundation that allows JFS services and programs to flourish. Every gift is an expression of your belief in our community. With your help, we run a senior citizen group, offer holiday programs and outreach, operate monthly food pantries and provide emergency financial assistance. Our community is a better place because of you!



Adelaide offers us an inspirational message.

These blessings are interconnected. Caring community members, volunteers, staff, and donors each bring something necessary for Jewish Family Service to thrive. Together, we create a stronger, more compassionate Jewish community.

Let's continue to be the voice that says, "I believe in you." May we always have someone who believes in us, the courage to keep going, and grateful hearts that recognize the blessing of walking this journey together. And someone who reminds us to tie our shoes!

Busy fall at food pantries





Lisa Levine packing food on Oct 7. Russ Shanahan and Sid Lempiner loading cars.

Food Pantry
Friendship Circle
Counseling Services
Transportation
Financial Assistance
Hospital and Home Visitations
Living with Loss
Information and Referral
Case Management
Holiday Programs

Many thanks to our October Food Pantry volunteers who distributed food to over 600 households.

Marsha Adelman
Allison Althouse
Mary Anne Avins
Cindy Balchunas
Paula Bub
Marc Filstein
Raymond Gehring
Sharon Gernsheimer
Patty Hartman
Sari Incledon
Pete Jacobson
Elaine Jones
Sid Lempiner
Alan Levine
Lisa Levine
Annette Peppard
Jenn Reilly
Mike Robinson
Paul Schwartz
Russ Shanahan
Ryan Spengler
Oleg Umanov

Observing Sukkot at Friendship Circle





Louise Zeidman and Paulo Kuczer shaking the lulav at Friendship Circle on Oct. 1

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

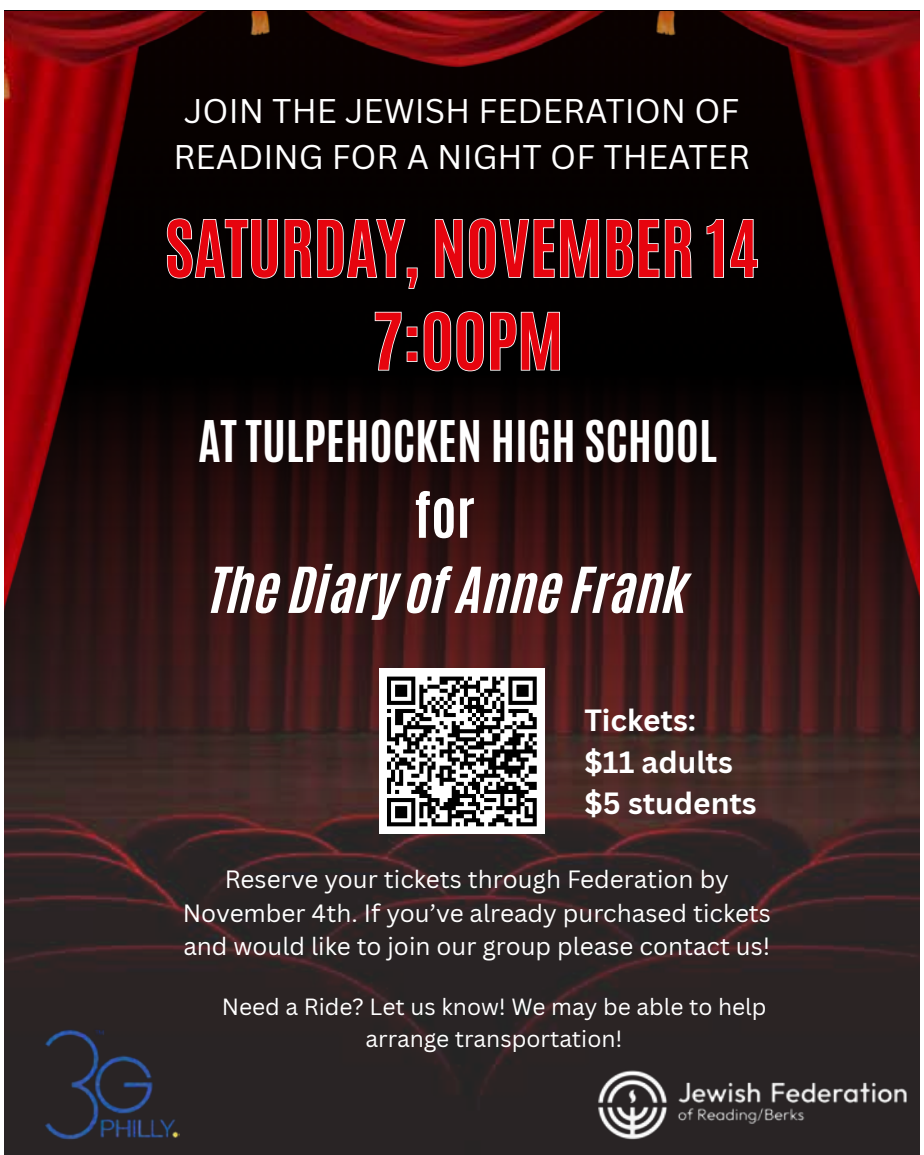


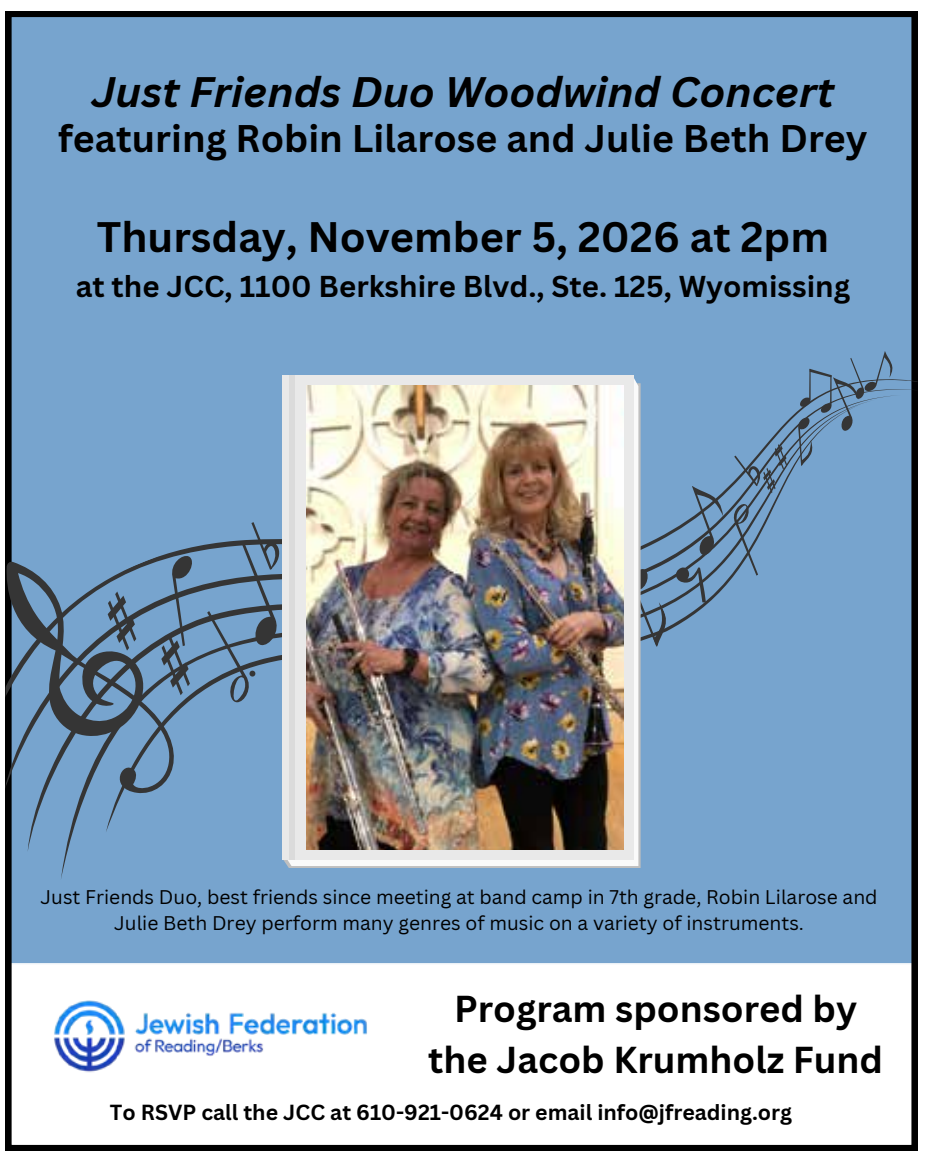
Nov 5 -"Just Friends Duo Woodwind Concert"
Robin Lilarose and Julie Beth Drey, best friends since seventh-grade band camp, make up the Just Friends Duo. They will bring their love of music to Friendship Circle as they perform many genres of music on a variety of woodwind instruments.
Program sponsored by the Jacob Krumholz Fund

Nov 19 - "Thanksgiving Celebration"
Enjoy a festive lunch, while getting to meet the new social worker, Stephanie Rotenberg and be thankful with your Friendship Circle friends.

Friendship Circle is held twice a month on Thursday afternoons at 1:00 p.m at the JCC. An optional lunch is served, followed by an entertaining or educational program or holiday celebration.

Programs are free; optional lunch is $7. Contact Carole at 610-921-0624 to make lunch reservations.





Film series kicks off with 'One Big Happy Family'

By Richard Bradbury
Development Director

After a false start in October — so sorry about postponement our screening of "THE NEW JEW: Days of War" (more about a new date later) — Jewish Federation officially kicks off our Reading Jewish Film Series with the comedy "One Big Happy Family" on Thursday, Nov. 12, at 7 p.m. in the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts Please purchase your tickets by scanning the QR code in the ad for "One Big Happy Family" below or at www.ReadingJewishCommunity.org.

Jewish Federation is excited to make our Film Series kickoff a big, splashy opening, so we've invited the star and screenwriter of "One Big Happy Family," Lisa Brenner, from Los Angeles to the GoggleWorks to screen and talk about her movie! Make plans to come rub elbows with Lisa at the Thorn Alley Café from 6-7 p.m., before we screen the movie.

After we enjoy Lisa's comedy, co-starring film, TV and theater legend Linda Lavin, Lisa will take your questions and talk about her creative journey making "OBHF"! This is a great night you don't want to miss. Purchase your tickets today!

"One Big Happy Family" (a somewhat true story) is Lisa's personal story about her tumultuous journey after taking a DNA test. On her 40th birthday, Rachel is grappling with a looming midlife crisis and the nerve-wracking task of delivering a speech at her daughter's Bat Mitzvah. But when a DNA test unexpectedly reveals that she's only half-Jewish, Rachel's life is thrown into disarray. Suddenly, she's on a wild ride of family chaos and embarking on a journey with her mother. Lisa's film is a female-forward film presenting a woman's voice that resonates between three generations — a grandmother, a mom, and a soon-to-be bat-mitzvah daughter.

Reserve your tickets today for what will be a fun and exciting evening on the town! Scan the QR code or visit www.ReadingJewishCommunity.org for tickets!

Lisa Brenner's Statement & Bio

"Since I was very young, I always believed that when I turned 40 something big was going to happen. And then I turned 40 and … nothing happened. However, little did I know that a fun little DNA test, which I took to discover all my Jewish relatives around the world, would tell me I'm not all Jewish and would turn my world upside down. That was pretty big. Earth-shattering to say the least. However, what happened after that was a journey of self-discovery, sadness and humor. 'One Big Happy Family' is a re-imagining of my own personal story. It is about identity, tradition, and family; the family we are born to and the family we create, and how it all evolves along the way. It is fiction, however the most unbelievable parts of the story, are most likely fact."

Lisa Brenner is best known for her role as Anne Howard in the classic American Revolutionary War film "The Patriot." She starred in many indie films such as "Cesar Chavez," "Finding Home," "What Boys Want," "Bad Samaritan" and "The Remains." Aside from acting, Lisa has produced films such as the romantic comedy "Say My Name" as well as Roku original "The Deal."

Lisa guest-starred in television shows such as all three "CSI" series, "Criminal Minds," "The Mentalist," "Leverage," "Perception," "Almost Paradise," "My Life in Pieces" and SyFy's "The Ark." She wrote, directed and produced the award-winning comedy short "The Good Guys" and the ElectricNow Original "Merry Licemas." She is releasing her vertical series, "The Guest Star," which she wrote, produced and directed for her production company Long Island Girl Films.

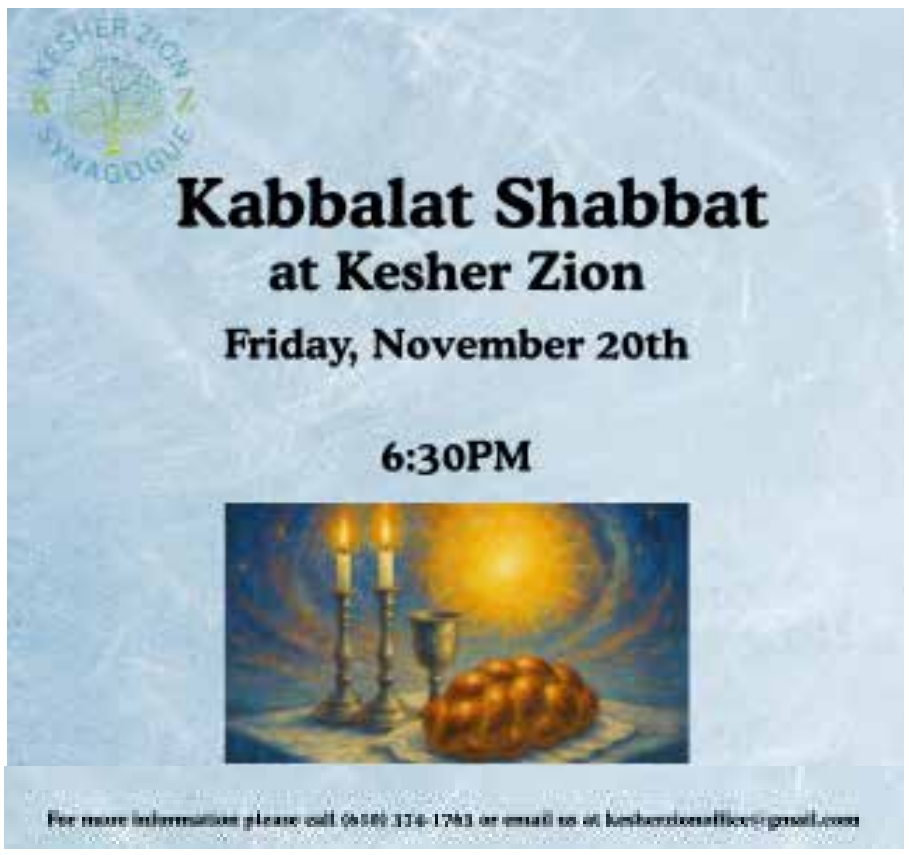
"THE NEW JEW: Days of War" will be screened in January with a snow date in February. A date and time will be released as details become available.

Questions about the Reading Jewish Film Series? Call 610-921-0624.





A scene from "One Big Happy Family" featuring Linda Lavin, foreground at right. Above, the film's screenwriter and star, Lisa Brenner.



READING JEWISH FILM SERIES

Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks

GoggleWorks Center for the Arts

Monthly film screenings at Goggleworks
New Jewish films
October 2026 to April 2027
No films will be screened in Jan/Feb 2027



One Big Happy Family
November 12, 7pm

When a DNA test completely upends a woman's life, she embarks on a journey with her mother to find out who she is.

The film stars actor Lisa Brenner, who will be doing a meet and greet prior to the film at Thorn Alley at 6pm followed by a post film discussion with Lisa.

Learn more and buy tickets at ReadingJewishCommunity.org or scan the QR code.

READING JEWISH FILM SERIES

Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks

GoggleWorks Center for the Arts

Monthly film screenings at Goggleworks
New Jewish films
October 2026 to April 2027
No Films will be screened in Jan/Feb 2027



Thursday, November 12, 7pm
One Big Happy Family
A woman's journey to find out who she is after a revealing DNA test!

Tuesday, December 22, 7pm
Monument
An architect's mission to build a soldier's memorial.

Thursday, March 11, 7pm
Swedishkayt
Comedians Jamie Elman and Eli Batalion travel to Sweden to uncover it's Jewish history.

Wednesday, April 7, 7pm
Hold On To Your Music: A Mother's Legacy
A documentary that tells the story of a child prodigy pianist from Vienna.

Learn more and buy tickets at ReadingJewishCommunity.org or scan the QR code.

Judaism is all about giving thanks

By Rabbi Brian Michelson
Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom



In Genesis, Leah gives birth to her fourth son and names him Yehudah, from the Hebrew root meaning "to thank." She chose the name because she was grateful to God for another child. It was simply an act of gratitude. His name, also the name of one of the twelve tribes, eventually gave us the word Yehudi and, from there, "Jew." So, when someone asks what it means to be Jewish, "being someone who says thank you" is a pretty good place to start. (The runner-up answer, "having strong opinions about brisket," must settle for second place.)

Judaism doesn't treat gratitude as a once-a-year holiday with a turkey attached. It's meant to be built into our daily routine. We begin each morning with Modeh Ani, "I thank you, God," thanking God for returning our souls before we've even gotten out of bed (or had coffee). The Talmud suggests we aim for 100 blessings a day, covering everything from bread to rainstorms to the fact that our bodies work at all. There's even a blessing for after using the bathroom. Nothing is too ordinary to merit gratitude.

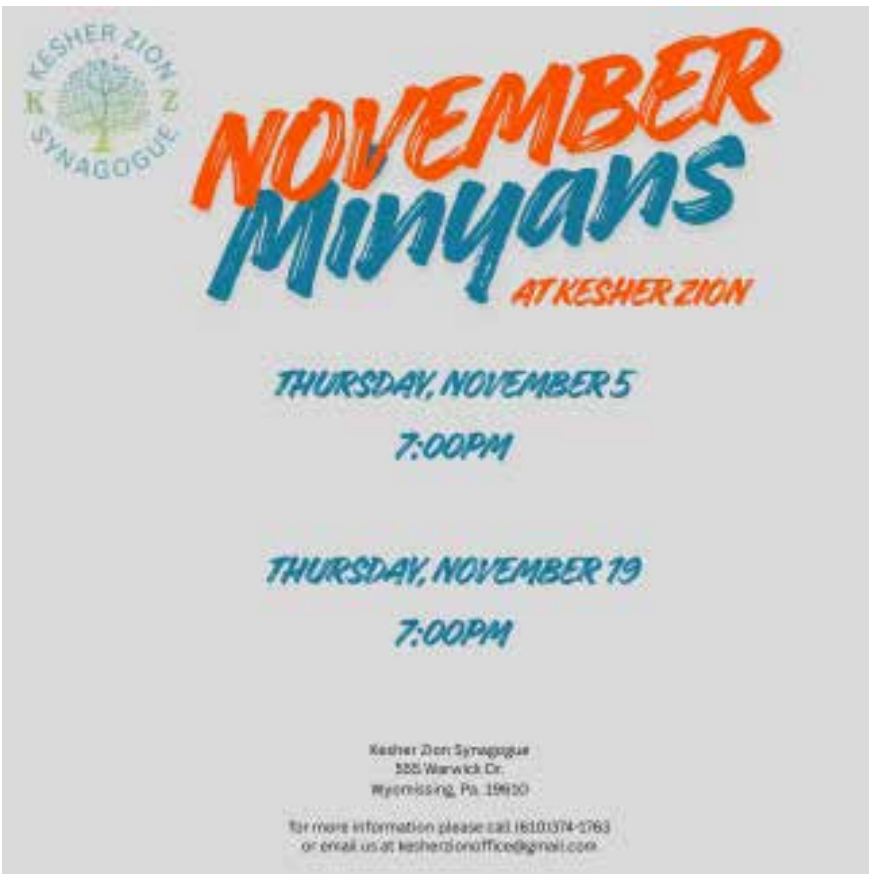
I think this habit is clever. When you pause to bless a piece of fruit, you notice that someone grew it, picked it and shipped it. It did not magically appear at the grocery store or the farmers' market. Many hands made it possible for us to enjoy this snack. Gratitude and blessings turn a snack into a small act of paying attention. It forces us to recognize that we are lucky enough to have food to eat and that others' labor brought it into our hands.

There's also a long-running argument that the Pilgrims, who knew the Hebrew Bible well, were inspired by Sukkot, our autumn harvest festival, when they sat down for that first feast. Historians still debate it, but the overlap is real: both holidays are about stepping back from the harvest and acknowledging we didn't produce it all by ourselves. It is one of the most American holidays. It asks us to give thanks, and I think we should, not just on this one day but every day.

I know many families who go around the table on Thanksgiving to share what they are grateful for from the past year. That brings us to Reading. Our Jewish community may be small, but we know how to show up: at a shiva meal, a Shabbat dinner, or for a neighbor who needs a casserole or a kind word.

This Thanksgiving, try a Jewish experiment. Before the first bite, say a blessing, or say thank you out loud to someone at the table. Then do it again on Black Friday, the day after, and the day after that. Do that for a week, and you'll be on your way to 100 blessings; 100 moments of gratitude. Happy Thanksgiving, and todah rabbah (Thank you!).









CenterPiece

Upcoming events offered by the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks (listed as JCC, JFS, JFR), Kesher Zion Synagogue (KZ), Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom (RCOS), and Chabad-Lubavitch of Berks (Chabad). To learn more about any event listed here, read articles throughout the Shalom or see our online calendar at readingjewishcommunity.org/calendar. Contact 610.921.0624 or info@jfreaing.org with questions.

NOVEMBER 2026

SUN	MON	TUE
1 **RCOS Jewish Food Festival**	2 **Election Day** **JCC ROMEO Lunch at Paolo's**	3
8 **RCOS & KZ Beyond B'Nei Mitzvah** **StandWithUs Workhop**	9 **Kristallnacht Commemoration**	10
15 **Chabad JLI Learning** **RCOS Kozloff-Rotenberg Night of Music**	16 **Arts, Culture, Ideas** **Chabad Pre Thanksgiving Pasta Class**	17
22 **Chabad JLI Learning** **PJ Our Way Bowling Event**	23	24
29 **Chabad JLI Learning**	30 **Movie Monday- " The Red Sea Diving Resort"**	

Legend **Federation** **Chabad**

CHESHVAN -KISLEV , 5787

WED	THU	FRI	SAT
4	5 JFS Friendship Circle JCC Evening Mahjong	6 JULIET Lunch - at Wyomissing Family Restaurant	7
11 **Veteran's Day** JCC Noontime Knowledge & Literatour	12 Jewish Film Series- One Big Happy Family at Goggleworks	13	14 RCOS Tot Shabbat Veterans Shabbat
18 Leo Camp at WCR Center for the Arts	19 JFS Friendship Circle	20	21 Chabad Family Havdala Night
25	26 **Thanksgiving Day** JCC Closed	27 JCC Closed	28

Oheb Sholom | Kesher Zion | National Days/ Holidays

Preschool, kindergarten students learn about Jewish holidays

By Vicki Haller Graff
Executive Director,
Yocum Institute for Arts Education

This fall, we welcomed new and returning toddlers, preschoolers and kindergarteners to the Yocum Institute for Arts Education's school. Our program integrates the arts into early childhood learning.

Thanks to our partnership with the Jewish Federation of Reading, we integrate Jewish holidays throughout the year. For children from Jewish homes, this allows them to experience their culture at school with their friends! For children from non-Jewish homes, we provide a fun, age appropriate introduction to Jewish life and holidays.

At the beginning of the school year, the students learned about Rosh Hashanah, the holiday that happens in the fall when the new moon appears as a small sliver in the sky.

Students enjoyed hearing "Sammy Spider's First Rosh Hashanah" by Sylvia A. Rouss, illustrated by Katherine Janus Kahn. Everyone tasted sliced apples, honey and awesome challah for a sweet new year. Classrooms listened to a recording of the blowing of the shofar.

During the week of Sukkot, classes learned about the harvest festival, celebrating the harvest and the journey in the desert of the Israelites many years ago. They enjoyed hearing another Sammy Spider story, "Sammy Spider's First Sukkot" by Rouss and Kahn. All students enjoyed learning about, gathering in, and, of course, having snacks in our makeshift sukkah on our playground.

We still have space if your child or grandchild would like to join us in our school!

If you would like more information about our programs for young children ages 2 to 6 or you would like to volunteer, please contact me at Yocum: vgraff@yocuminstitute.org or 610-376-1576 x 203.







Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks

Evening Mahjong at the JCC

Beginners level

On the first Thursday of each month, we will meet for a night of Mahjong between 7:00 and 9:00 pm, at the JCC.

It is recommended to bring your own set.
Registration is required.

ENRICHING LIVES
מעשירים חיים

Sukkot celebrations



It was an amazing night with wonderful people, awesome weather, great energy at Chabad's annual Sushi in the Sukkah, as seen above. Chabad also hosted Pizza in the Hut in partnership with PJ Library and the Jewish Federation. It brought a great crowd of families who enjoyed activities and games, including etrog dot cakes and healthy edible sukkahs.

Obituaries

Arlene Michelle Blum Krumholz passed away Oct. 14. She lived her life with grace, elegance and dignity, guided by her devotion to her family and to her friends.

Her happiness was derived from being able to connect to the people in her life in a transcedent and intimate way. Her gratefulness for these relationships was made even more memorable by her thoughtfulness, quick and often irreverent sense of humor, her wonderful laugh, and extraordinary gifts of food from her very creative and experimental kitchen.

The beauty of life, to her, was not in perfection, but in the details. It was her quest. It showed in her conversations, her writing, her art. We will miss all of this.

She is survived by her children: Michael (Sheila), Lisa (Larry), Beth and Amy; seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

"We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all of our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the very first time."

Jewish organizations react to Italy controversy

Jewish Federations of North America

The Jewish Federations of North America, Anti-Defamation League), American Jewish Committee, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and Prizmah are appalled that a planned professional development trip of early childhood educators affiliated with Jewish institutions to the Reggio Children, Loris Malaguzzi International Center in Reggio Emilia, Italy was met with political litmus tests and antisemitic rhetoric.

Announcement of a trip to the Center by educators affiliated with Jewish institutions and by Israeli educators was met with protests and antisemitic rhetoric. There was also indication that several participants' social media profiles were being searched for connections with Israel, the Israel Defense Force or support for Israeli policies. The response by Reggio Children was not to decry the protests but to issue a pledge educators could sign renouncing Israeli policies and military action.

There is no circumstance in which educators at Jewish institutions should be singled out for their personal views, social media or online profiles in an effort to identify connections to a country of deep religious, cultural, historic, and personal significance to Jewish people worldwide. Further, to use those connections against them is alarming and antisemitic. It must be recognized as such — not legitimized with political litmus tests.

This distressing incident continues a pattern of isolating Jews and Jewish institutions, limiting cultural exchange, learning and understanding, and suggesting that our full participation in civic spaces is contingent on our renouncing the State of Israel, the only Jewish state in the world seen for many Jews as the only clear refuge we have in the face of antisemitic violence. Bringing this trend into educational environments — into early childhood no less — is deeply disturbing.

In the days since the trip cancellation, trip organizers have been in ongoing conversation with Reggio Children and the municipality. We recognize that the mayor of Reggio Emilia has clarified that a signature was not required and has renounced political or religious litmus tests. We are similarly aware that a group of Israeli educators both refused to sign the statement and insisted on attending the event nonetheless and reported warm treatment and appropriate security. Reggio Children has demonstrated that it now understands that Jewish delegations need clear security in the face of threats or protests, and they are in dialogue over the harms of the statement.

Yet the mayor continues to reaffirm the value of that very statement, and while direct references to Gaza were removed it remains an incongruous political affirmation denouncing "genocide," a contextually clear and inaccurate reference to Israeli policy, on an organization devoted to early childhood education. This is insufficient.

We call on Reggio Children to issue an unambiguous public apology that acknowledges the antisemitism Jewish educators experienced, and to take concrete steps to ensure that educators of all backgrounds are welcomed, respected, and treated equally, regardless of their religious identity or historical ties to any country. A genuine commitment to inclusivity, including the safety and security of participants, must be reflected not only in words, but in actions.

Movie Monday at the JCC

November 30, 2026, 1pm



Red Sea Diving Resort

130 Min



Chris Evans stars as an Israeli Mossad agent, who runs a covert operation to rescue Ethiopian-Jewish refugees from Sudan to a safe haven in Israel. It is loosely based on the events of Israel's Operation Moses and Operation Joshua in 1984-1985.

Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks

Grab a seat for a Jewish themed movie each month at the JCC (1100 Berkshire Blvd., Ste. 125, Wyomissing). It is usually held on the 4th Monday of the month, and the popcorn and the movie are both free!

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The story of Leo Camp and his community legacy

By Federation Staff

We are looking forward to the 46th Annual Leo Camp Memorial Lecture on Wednesday, Nov. 18, at 7 p.m. in our temporary location for 2026, the WCR Center for the Arts, located at 140 N. Fifth St. in Reading.

This year's lecture will be a musical performance featuring The Afro-Semitic Experience. Co-founded by African-American jazz pianist Warren Byrd and Jewish-American jazz bassist David Chevan in 1998, the band combines an eclectic array of styles, sophisticated musicianship, good songwriting, deep grooves, and years of friendship with a simple message: Unity in the Community.

This is a band beyond category — performing an intricate tapestry of spiritual, world-beat, funk, jazz, cantorial, gospel, salsa, swing … soul-driven music. Their concerts are celebrations where they play great music, tell stories, and offer a positive and meaningful message. This lecture/concert is free and open to the public.

Reservations are required due to space limitations. Register at www.readingjewishcommunity.org or use the QR code on the cover of this *Shalom*.

The Camp lectures were established at Albright College by the Jewish Federation of Reading as a lasting tribute to Leo Camp, humanitarian and respected business and community leader. Due to the nature of this year's lecture, the decision was made to relocate it to the WCR Center for 2026.

Born in 1912, Camp was the youngest of three children born to Carl and Irma Camperlik, proprietors of a small grocery store in the working-class district of Vienna. His formal education ended at age 14 when he went to work in a textile factory. By 21, Camp had established himself in the business world through the founding, together with his brother Erwin, of a successful manufacturing company for Jersey Fabrics.

At the time of the Nazi Anschluss in Austria in 1938, Camp was in Switzerland on business. On his return to Austria to spirit his mother and sister out of the country, he was arrested and confined for a time at Dachau and Buchenwald. His release in 1939 was secured through the tireless efforts of his sister, Pepa.

"Every day of life that I live is a gift to be deeply appreciated," Camp remarked on reflection of his survival. That same experience also clarified his strong sense of purpose and instilled in him a commitment to champion the cause against injustice.

After immigrating to the United States in 1939, Camp lived in New York until 1942, when he joined the Army. He served as an intelligence noncommissioned officer and participated in the Normandy invasion and subsequent European campaigns.

Following military discharge, he moved to Reading to join the firm of Camp & McInnes, which had been founded by his brother Erwin. In 1948, he married the former Henrietta Greenfield. They had two sons, David and Jonathan.

Active in the affairs of his community, Camp served as chairman of the Reading United Jewish Campaign and was a founder and president of the Jewish Community Council, a predecessor of the Jewish Federation of Reading. He contributed significantly to educational and cultural endeavors and to fostering a better understanding of Judaism.

Camp possessed an enormous affection for his adopted home of Reading, and he pursued, with a deep sense of responsibility, the building of bridges between the Jewish community and the community at large. He exemplified his belief that community service was more an opportunity than an obligation, and he placed high priority on education and the acquisition of knowledge. To perpetuate the memory of Leo Camp, these lectures are presented annually to illuminate and explore topics of significance in Jewish culture that add to the enrichment of the entire Reading community.



Above, former Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer gave the 45th annual Leo Camp Memorial Lecture to a full house at Albright College in 2025. Below, Joshua Nelson at Leo Camp in 2010.



The distinguished roster of Leo Camp memorial lecturers: Elie Wiesel, Ambassador Abba Eban, Samuel Pisar, Bernard Lewis, Chaim Potok, Abram Sachar, David S. Wyman, Amos Oz, Rev. Richard McBried, Fred Friendly, Marshal Goldman, Wolf Blitzer, Leslie Gelb, Ellen S. Hurwitz, James Ingo Freed, Gloria Borger, Judith Miller, Julius Lester, Hirsh Goodman, John Loftus, Sir Martin Gilbert, James Carroll, Sabi Shabtai, Jay Bushinsky, Daniel Pipes, Jonathan Sarna, Ruth W. Messinger, Rita Katz, Stephen M. Berk, Jonathan Schanzer, Joshua Nelson, Deborah E. Lipstadt, Daniel Gordis, Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, Art Spiegelman, Adam Garfinkle, Clive Lipchin, Jeffrey Rosen, Evelyn Farkas, Thomas Wolf, James Grymes and Avshi Weinstein, Ira Forman, Alon Tal, Avi Melamed and Daniel C. Kurtzer.

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Kozloff-Rotenberg
Night of Music
Sunday, November 15 at 4:00
Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom



British Pianist
Simon Mulligan

Simon Mulligan has been described by *The Times of London* as "the most abundantly gifted of pianists." By Yehudi Menuhin as "one of the finest pianists I have ever had the pleasure of performing with" and by *Steinway & Sons* as "the world's most versatile pianist."

Please join us as we honor the memories of
Jeraldine (Jeri) Kozloff and Alison Rotenberg,
members of RCOS.

Dessert reception to follow the performance in the Social Hall.

To support the Night of Music, a starting donation of $40 is required per person. All donations $100 and above will be listed in the program.
Please visit the link at
https://ohebsholom.org/kozloff-night-of-music

Community gathers to mourn on Oct. 7







The community gathered for a memorial program on the anniversary of the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attacks on Israel. Clockwise from top left, Jennifer Koosed, Vic Hammel and Richard Bradbury.



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REINCARNATION, SOULMATES, DREAMS, NAMES: WHAT THESE AND OTHER MYSTERIES REVEAL ABOUT THE HIDDEN DESIGN OF YOUR LIFE

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LESSON TWO
Traces of the *Sefirot* in Your Body and Soul



LESSON THREE
The Mystical Backstory of Your Soul



LESSON FOUR
Signals from Heaven in Your Daily Life



LESSON FIVE
The Ripples of Your Thoughts and Words



LESSON SIX
How You Can Touch Infinity in a Finite World



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Bagels, lox and an incredible true story

By Nancy Russo

Join us for a special afternoon of good food, meaningful conversation, and an extraordinary true story as Literatour Berks presents a Bagels & Lox Brunch with author Liz Hirsh Naftali on Sunday, Dec. 13 at 1 p.m. at the Jewish Federation of Reading.

Liz Hirsh Naftali will discuss her powerful book "Saving Abigail: The True Story of the Abduction and Rescue of a Three-Year-Old Hostage." The book recounts the remarkable story of Naftali's great-niece, Abigail Mor Edan, who was just 3 years old when she was taken hostage during the Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel. Through this deeply personal story, Naftali shares her family's experience and the extraordinary efforts to bring Abigail home.

Guests will enjoy a traditional bagels and lox brunch while hearing directly from the author about the story behind the book, her family's experience and the hope and determination that sustained them during an unimaginable time.

Two ticket options are available: $36 includes one copy of "Saving Abigail" and one bagels and lox brunch, while $54 includes one copy of the book and two meals.

Literatour Berks is proud to continue bringing authors and readers together to explore Jewish stories, history, culture, and experiences through the written word. We hope you'll join us for this memorable afternoon of community, conversation, and connection.

Come hungry for brunch — and leave with a story you won't soon forget.

Let's reclaim what we found after October 7

By Ted Deutsch
American Jewish Committee

This piece originally appeared in The Times of Israel.

I was so hopeful about Israel's future just hours before the nightmare of October 7.

I was at a Shabbat dinner in Abu Dhabi, at a table alongside Emiratis, Americans, and Israelis, discussing the promise of normalization and prospects for peace, toasting to our hopes for a brighter future ahead. It was an evening of infectious optimism and belief.

By morning, everything changed. We watched in horror as Hamas carried out the deadliest attack against the Jews since the Holocaust.

I also remember the feeling I had just days later: profound unity, even in the face of unprecedented tragedy. The global Jewish community mobilized, living up to the call of *"Kol Yisrael arevim ze le zah*, we are all responsible for one another," raising money to support Israeli communities devastated by the attacks, leading emergency missions of volunteers to Israel, bringing supplies for soldiers, marching in support of Israel and the hostages. A palpable feeling emerged of a shared mission, coming together as a Jewish community to defend our people, bring the hostages home, and look ahead to an eventual long-term path forward, knowing the dynamics in the Middle East had forever changed.

Three years later, the path forward has become harder to see. The promise and optimism we felt that evening gave way to war, loss, and a global surge of antisemitism. The horrors of that day were forgotten, excused, justified, or even denied by too many. The conflict became about slogans, social media campaigns, and political battles that obscured the truth. The promise of that evening in Abu Dhabi felt farther away than ever.

But what most concerns me is what has happened among the Jewish community. In the days immediately following the attacks, we experienced a profound sense of shared purpose. We felt connected to one another in ways most of us had never experienced before. We understood that October 7 was not only an attack on Israel, but an attack on Jewish life itself. We raised funds, organized missions, delivered supplies, cared for traumatized communities, stood up for Israel and fought for the release of the hostages. Sustaining that feeling has become difficult.

We know the Jewish people have differences across generations, denominations, countries, and politics. Those differences are real, and they matter. But with the challenges we still face, we can't afford to allow our differences to define us.

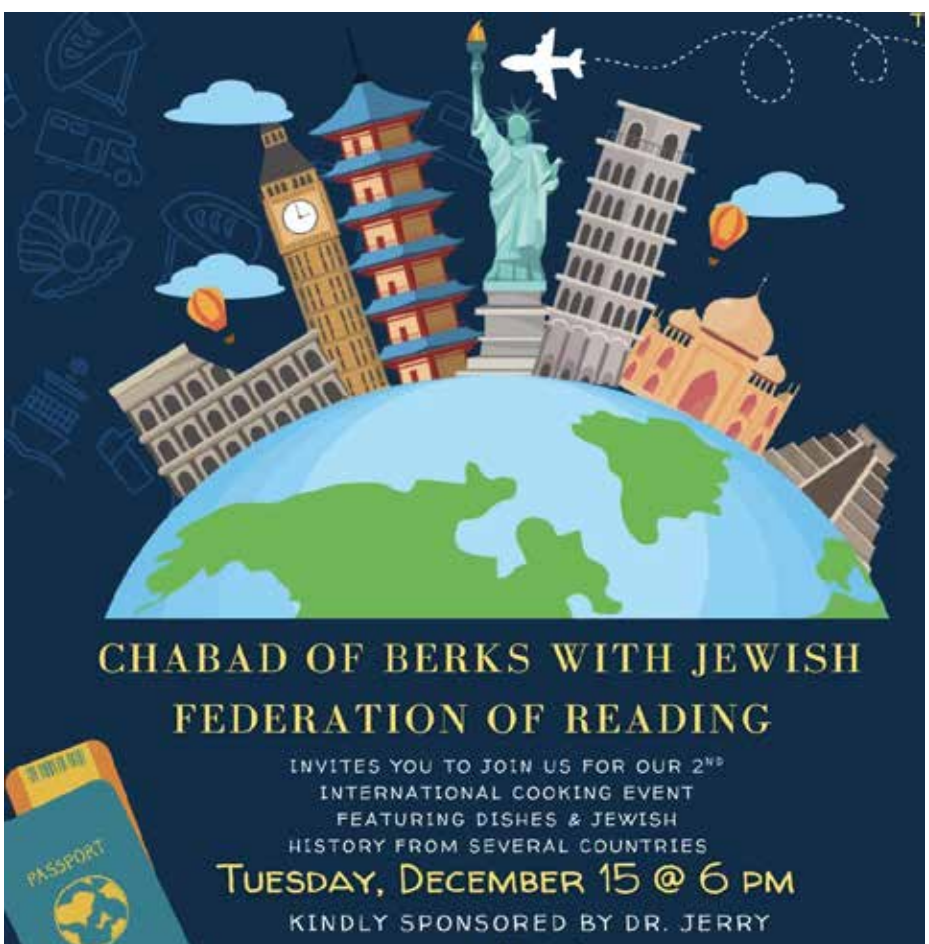
The anniversary is not just a day of remembrance. It is a call to reclaim something we found immediately after the horrors of 10/7. When we refused to allow others to write our story for us. When we marched arm in arm for loved ones we'd lost, and hostages we were desperate to bring home.

Beyond what we're battling against, let's allow the anniversary to remind us what we're fighting for: flourishing Jewish life, a secure Israel, the eradication of Hamas, and an enduring peace in the Middle East that returns hope to a region that has known too much tragedy.

The challenges are real. But so is our capacity to meet them, if we do so united. That is my hope: Not that we think alike, but that we remember what binds us. Not that we erase our differences, but that we refuse to let them define us. And that Jews everywhere remember the shared purpose that drew us together in the days after our darkest moments.

The future we toasted to in Abu Dhabi is still worth fighting for.







Federations hiring professionals to combat antisemitism

Jewish Federations of North America

Jewish Federations across North America are strengthening our communities' response to rising antisemitism by adding 100 professional positions to our frontline advocacy and community relations teams. Focused on local and state advocacy, K-12 and higher education and interfaith and intergroup partnerships, these professionals join the teams already on the ground, adding the depth and breadth of support needed to push back against the hate that is rearing its head in too many areas of civic life.

The 100 new professionals are being hired through the Jewish Federations of North America's Frontline initiative. With support from over 25 funders, this $35 million initiative is providing targeted grants to 120 local Federations, while also ensuring that Federations' local efforts are backed by training, shared tools and resources, and expert guidance to address this growing challenge.

Since the October 7th attacks, antisemitic incidents have skyrocketed, with antisemitic physical assaults reaching a record high last year, and Jews targeted in 64% of religiously motivated hate crimes. In the U.S., 65% of Jews say that the country has "a lot" of antisemitism, up from 45% in 2020.

These professionals are our community's first line of defense, building strong relationships to represent our community's needs and address antisemitism wherever it surfaces, whether in city council meetings, in health care settings, on school boards or education curricula, or in other civic spaces.

"Federations have been deeply engaged in the work of community relations and civic engagement for decades. Today, we require new strategies and increased resources to address the dramatic rise of antisemitism that is permeating every facet of civic life. Federations are on the 'frontlines' of this work every day," said Shira Hutt, Executive Vice President of Jewish Federations of North America. "Frontline is a game-changing initiative that will equip Federations with the talent, support, and resources they need to confront the increasingly complex and growing challenges they face, whether in government, in educational institutions, in media, or our other civic spaces."



Strategically strengthening our communal ties is a critical element of fighting antisemitism, but we know there are other areas of work that must be addressed. We need to communicate our message effectively, to mobilize the community across important issues, and to start planting the seeds for the next generation. That's why frontline also includes investments in the following programs to support Federation professionals in these efforts:

Year-round training: Strengthening the knowledge, skills, and network of these professionals and their Federations.

The Project Halo messaging hub: Project Halo provides high-level, real-time, data-driven strategic messaging guidance on the key issues and narratives regarding our security and support of Israel.

Student to Student: A high-school initiative that is now active in 50 communities, which helps engage young members of the Jewish community, build early bridges to non-Jewish teens, and strengthen our ties within school systems. In the last three years, Student to Student engaged over 60,000 non-Jewish teens, nearly half of them in the last year alone.

One Mitzvah A Day (OMAD): An engagement and mobilization platform that has already reached a daily distribution list of 25,000 people and is growing.

"In the aftermath of October 7th, our community was very disappointed to see that many people we thought were our allies stayed silent. We learned the hard lesson that our civic engagement efforts must be more focused, more targeted, and more outcomes based, and that is exactly what Frontline is designed to do," said Julie Platt, chair of Frontline and Jewish Federations of North America's immediate past Board Chair. "Only through deep, sustained, and strategic engagement can we ensure that antisemitism is neither tolerated nor normalized, and that our communities remain safe."

Frontline builds on a model Jewish Federations established with LiveSecure, the $130 million initiative to ensure that every Federation community has a professionally run security program. When a shooter attacked our community at Tree of Life in 2018, fewer than 20 communities had professionally-run Community Security Initiatives that met the necessary standards to protect their communities. LiveSecure built out a national security infrastructure, growing that number to over 140 in just four years and making communities measurably safer, more closely coordinated with law enforcement, and better equipped to respond to threats.

Leaves Are Falling. Donations Are Calling!

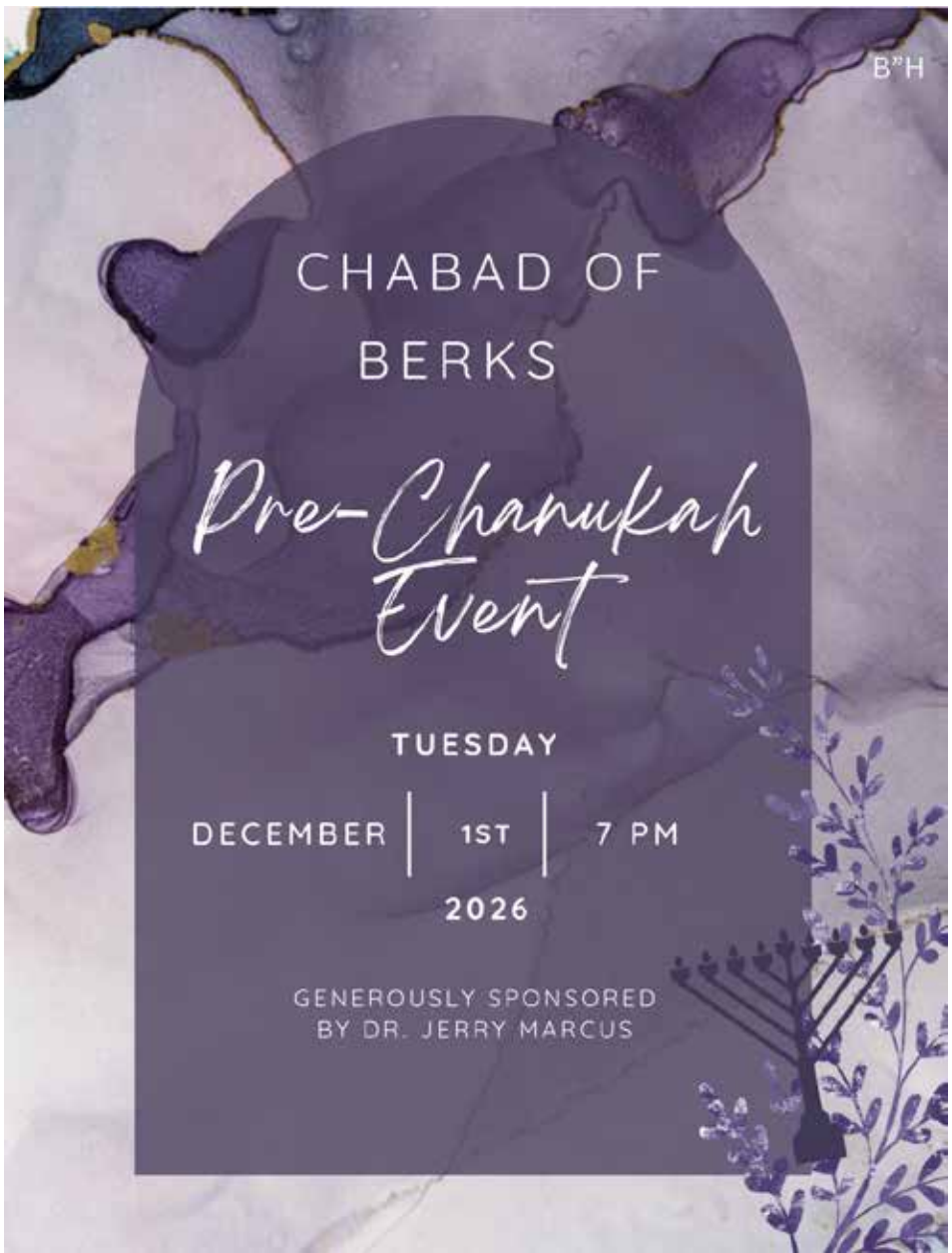
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Your donations help Jewish Family Service support those in need in Reading/Berks County.

Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks

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3 years after October 7, the 'Surge' is the new normal

Jewish Federations of North America

Three years after the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks on Israel, Jewish Americans are still showing up and connecting more to Jewish life. The data suggest this is no longer a temporary reaction to a single moment, but the new shape of Jewish life in America today.

Jewish Federations of North America's third survey of Jewish life since October 7, conducted May-June 2026 among 2,836 Jewish Americans, found that after a dip last year, the "Surge" in Jewish engagement grew or sustained over the past year, climbing seven points to 38%.

"Many people expected the increased interest in Jewish life to fade as time went on, but our data shows the Surge sustaining and even building momentum since last year," said Mimi Kravetz, Chief Impact and Growth Officer at Jewish Federations of North America. "Jewish Americans are actively creating and seeking Jewish life in many different ways, and Jewish institutions, including Federations, are continuing to respond to this need."



What makes it stick

There are two factors clearly at play in the Surge: Israel and antisemitism.

People in the Surge are more likely than those who never Surged to feel emotionally attached to Israel, and to say Israel makes them proud to be Jewish.

"Surgers" are also more likely to say there is "a lot" of antisemitism in the US today and more likely to report being targeted online. Concern about antisemitism is high across the board (65% say there is "a lot" today, up from 45% in 2020), but it runs hotter among those who keep showing up.

For the first time, this year's survey also asked open-ended questions to understand Surge experiences directly, drawing on more than 700 responses.

The clearest findings mirror what we know about building Jewish community in general: informal, social settings, like a Shabbat dinner with friends, were the single most-cited factors people said made them more engaged (named by 241 of 709 respondents). Showing up repeatedly was the next most common (184), because the more people showed up, the more comfortable they felt over time. Peer connection mattered just as much and cut both ways: 117 respondents said a welcoming individual made the difference, while 45 said the absence of one sent them away.

The data also surface factors currently deterring people from staying more engaged. Political tension, around Israel and antisemitism alike, was the single largest barrier respondents named (140 mentions, more than three times the next biggest barrier). And, importantly, they name it from all different sides and perspectives, not just one. People described feeling too critical of Israel for their community, or too supportive of it; others said they were simply tired of the debate taking up space. But most didn't leave Jewish life. They moved within it, finding a different congregation or community that fit.

The Surge lands differently

While nearly all people in the Surge did more socially, the additional ways people connected depended largely on their prior communal engagement. For Jewish Americans who were already connected before October 7, the Surge has meant showing up more at their existing institutions and often taking on more, including through advocacy. Those who were previously less engaged have Surged differently, largely through education, often on their own, through podcasts, news, and other independent sources, as they feel more connected to Israel and to being Jewish than before.

The opportunity ahead

Many Jewish Americans who were less engaged before October 7 are still seeking a Jewish community that fits. This year's findings on what works and what gets in the way offer some insights on reaching them.

Awareness and confidence in community safety also grew in the last year, which may reflect the hard work the Jewish community has done. Fifty-eight percent of Jewish Americans now say they know where to turn if targeted by antisemitism, up from 46% in 2025. Awareness of specific security programs protecting Jewish institutions rose from 39% to 57%, and 60% believe Jewish organizations are effectively providing safety and security for their community, up from 47%.

"The Surge continues because, even amid deep concern about antisemitism and security, that concern is not keeping people away," Kravetz said. "People are still showing up, still learning, and still finding their way into Jewish community. There's a real opportunity to reach even more of them, and we now have lessons from individuals and institutions doing this work on how to sustain this new normal."



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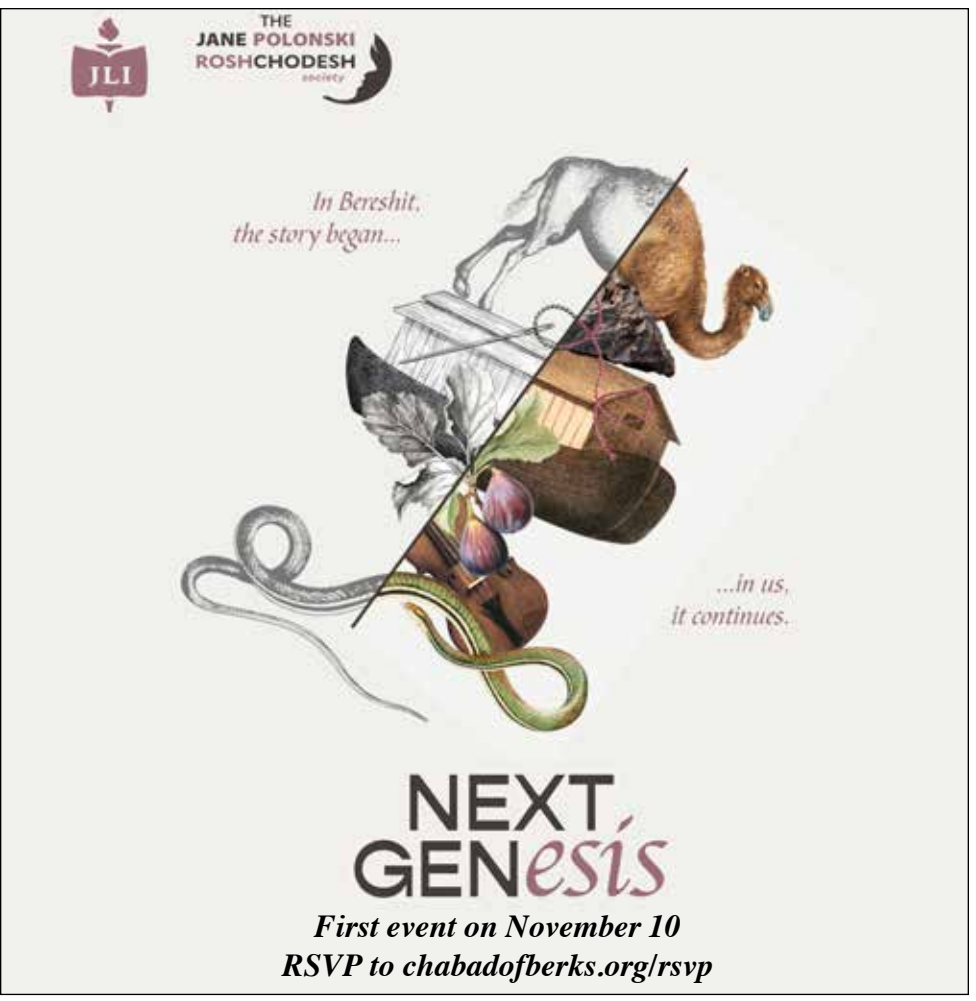
Jewish Federation

In memory of:

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In honor of:

Joan Zeidman's wedding - Debbie Goodman



First event on November 10
RSVP to chabadofberks.org/rsvp







Saturday, November 14 will be Veterans Shabbat

Any Jewish Veteran, or someone who is currently serving, or in the Reserves will be honored by being called to the Torah for an Aliyah.

Family members who have a relative who has served or is currently serving will also be honored with special participation in the service.

If you are a veteran or are serving, or have a veteran or someone serving in your family, please contact Rabbi Prosnitz or the Kesher Zion office.

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