

KALEIDOSCOPE

JEWISH LIFE IN UPPER FAIRFIELD COUNTY

SPRING & SUMMER 2019

INSIDE:

**Rabbi Ita Paskind
Interviews
Cantor Deborah
Katchko-Gray**

**What's Cookin'?
Kosher Meals
Delivered to
Your Door**

**A Ground-Level
View of Our
Impact in Afula**

**Scenes from
Our Gala**

**A Season Full of
Community Events**



Our Global Jewish Table

**3rd Annual Food Festival Celebrates
Our Diverse and Delicious Heritage**



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OF UPPER FAIRFIELD COUNTY



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KALEIDOSCOPE: Jewish Life in Upper Fairfield County is published semi-annually by the Federation for Jewish Philanthropy of Upper Fairfield County.

Federation Board Chair: James Sugarman
Executive Editor: David I. Weisberg
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Federation encompasses the communities of Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Georgetown, Monroe, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Rowayton, Southport, Stratford, Trumbull, Westport, Weston, and Wilton.

Guided by our Jewish values of *Tzedakah* (righteous giving), *Chesed* (loving kindness), and *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the world), we work together to meet vital needs at home, in Israel, and around the world, and to cultivate a vibrant and inclusive Jewish community, now and for future generations.

With your support, our Federation improves and saves lives at home and around the world through partners including:

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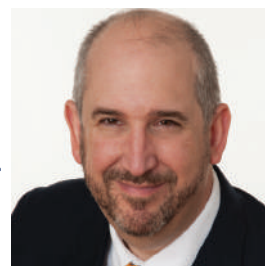
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From the Lens of David Weisberg



Maybe it's just that I buy cheap umbrellas, but often, in the midst of a downpour, with the wind whipping around, I find my umbrellas blown inside out...and fairly useless.

For many, many years, and often still in many communities, I've heard the Jewish Federation referred to as an umbrella. "The Jewish Federation is the umbrella organization for the entire Jewish community."

I've grown to increasingly dislike the umbrella metaphor, and not only because of my trauma related to overly-thrifty umbrella purchases. More importantly, the umbrella reference was always intended to suggest that the Federation is above other organizations in the community. For all the great things I believe our Federation does – and can do – I certainly don't see it as being above our congregations and Jewish community organizations.

An alternative metaphor might see the Federation as the center of a wheel, with spokes connecting it to all of our congregations and organizations. And while I see that metaphor as perhaps slightly more appropriate, I've seen too many flat tires and bent rims to accept a wheel as a sign of great strength. And more so, while being the center of a wheel connects the Federation to our congregations and organizations, it doesn't build a strong and integrated Jewish community.

In September, our Federation launched Common Threads, an innovative, year-long, community-wide programming framework, with 23 partners – congregations, Jewish organizations, and civic organizations – all working individually and collectively to create a schedule of diverse programs celebrating our Jewish ancestry and heritage. Our estimate is that, by the end of the year, over 1,500 attendees will have participated in Common Threads programs (not including our May 19 Southern Connecticut Jewish

Food Festival, which is anticipated to attract another 750!); and, just as importantly, community-members have been participating in programs outside of their typical congregations and organizations.

At our Federation's annual meeting in January, I conducted an experiment. I asked our wonderful Federation Program Director, Stacy Kamisar, to take a map of our Upper Fairfield County region, and beginning with our opening Common Threads program in September, draw lines from program to program throughout the year. Her on-the-spot connect-the-dots took her from Bridgeport to Fairfield to Norwalk to Trumbull to Bridgeport to Trumbull to

Ridgefield to Westport and on and on from September through May. When we finished the experiment, Stacy held up her map to display a spider web.

A spider web is intricate and beautiful. A spider web is connected in countless directions. And, according to *Science* magazine, "most spider silk is five times stronger than steel."

At its best, our Federation doesn't see itself as above the community like an umbrella; nor do we see ourselves merely as a central organization.

To build an

integrated and strong community, our Federation is a weaver, taking our common threads and building beautiful and impactful connections that offer the opportunity for collective experience and collective impact.

Those common threads, that beautiful web, is the heart of our Federation, the heart of our community, and the heart of our KALEIDOSCOPE magazine.

And maybe I should invest in a better umbrella.

Enjoy reading.

David Weisberg, Federation CEO

"A spider web
is intricate
and beautiful.
A spider web
is connected
in countless
directions."



There's something for everyone on the Federation Community Calendar!



COMMON THREADS

Explore the heritage of our diverse ancestry which weaves together the fabric of our Upper Fairfield County Jewish community. Led by the Federation, area Jewish congregations and organizations offer a rich menu of programs delving into our collective Jewish heritage, ranging from the arts to lectures to global culinary feasts.

Our Common Tapestry: MyHeritage DNA results revealed!

Sunday, 4/7 at 4 PM

Federation Offices, 4200 Park Ave., Ste. 300, Bridgeport

From Old World to Our World

Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County Art Exhibit

Tuesday, 4/9 at 7:45 PM

Federation Offices, 4200 Park Ave., Ste. 300, Bridgeport

Shalom Y'all: The History of Jewish Immigrants in the American South with Rabbi Rachel Bearman

Sunday, 4/28 at 6 PM

Temple B'nai Chaim, 82 Portland Ave., Georgetown

Come to the Yiddish Cabaret with Zhenya

Thursday, 5/23 at 7 PM

The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Campus,
4200 Park Ave., Bridgeport

Film & refreshments: *The Secret Jews of Calabria*

Wednesday, 5/29 at 7:30 PM

Introduction by Andrée Aelion Brooks

Congregation B'nai Torah, 5700 Main St., Trumbull

What's your "ancestry?" Share your favorite family anecdotes and recipes on the Common Threads blog:

shalomct.org/commonthreads

JOIN US FOR THESE FEDERATION EVENTS

Community Yom HaShoah Observance

Wednesday, 5/1, 7 PM

Temple Shalom, 259 Richards Ave., Norwalk

3rd Annual Southern Connecticut Jewish Food Festival

Celebrating Global Traditions:

Our Common Table

Sunday, 5/19, 2-6 PM

Held at Temple Israel,

14 Coleytown Road, Westport

Community-wide Yom HaAtzma'ut Celebration

Thursday, 5/9, 7 PM

The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Campus,
4200 Park Ave., Bridgeport

Federation Israeli Emissary Farewell Party

Wednesday, 6/12, 7 PM

The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Campus,
4200 Park Ave., Bridgeport

There's so much more on the Federation Community Calendar!
shalomct.org/calendar



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Party with a Purpose Federation Gala 2019

Music luminaries and guests from throughout Upper Fairfield County and beyond filled the Wall Street Theater in Norwalk to honor David Ball & Bonnie Slyn of Easton and Alison & Robert Wachstein of Weston. Co-chaired by Anne & Mark Kirsch and Linda & Len Russ, the evening featured a star-studded performance, "Songs of Our Jewish Heritage: A Musical Tapestry," headlined by David Amram, Renaissance Man of American music; Neshama Carlebach, Jewish music superstar; and Debbie Gravitte, Tony Award-winner. The Gala raised funds to advance the Federation's impact locally and around the world with a special focus on advancing women's empowerment.

Photos: Capitol PhotoInteractive



Building Community Through Books and More!



PJ Library hops through Shabbat, with a new program that brings families together to celebrate in a different venue one Friday night a month. During the Shabbat Hops, families gather for an interactive PJ Library activity as well as an age-appropriate service led by the hosting synagogue clergy.

“We hop to congregations within our catchment area to expose families with young children to the diverse and vibrant local Jewish community and its offerings,” says Monique Lions-Greenspan, PJ Library Coordinator. “It’s lovely to welcome Shabbat together each month and we hope friendships will grow from our Shabbat Hop program.”

PJ Library is also building community through its new Share Shabbat Dinner program, which encourages young families to make new friends as they share Friday-night dinner together, sponsored by Federation. Host families within the ages of 20 to 40 are invited to hold a Shabbat dinner in their homes and Federation will contribute \$20 per participant, up to \$200. The catch: 50 percent of the guests should have no relationship to the host. While candle-lighting and kiddush are encouraged, there are no mandated rituals or food restrictions – just that the dinner must be held on a Friday night. Plus, PJ Library provides the challah. If you are interested in hosting a dinner, or attending one as a guest, contact Monique at monique@jewishphilanthropyct.org.

PJ Library sends families with children ages 6 months-11 years a free book each month, sharing Jewish values, traditions, and heritage. For more info, visit facebook.com/PJLibraryCT.

The **Book Buddies** literacy-volunteer program is completing its second chapter, building on the success of its pilot program at Blackham Elementary school in Bridgeport with plans to expand the program to a second school in the fall.

“Book Buddies is flawless! I am so thrilled to have this program at Blackham,” says Assistant Principal Cathleen Anderson. “In fact, recently, I had three 4th-grade students in my office and I overheard them reminiscing of their time at Book Buddies. They talked about how nice their ‘teacher’ was and how she always brought new books to read, etc. That is a true testament to the impact Book Buddies is having on our students!”

With expansion plans in the works, Book Buddies has room for new volunteers to pair with a growing list of students. Every week during the year, volunteer readers meet one-on-one with students to practice reading skills. This Federation-run program, led by Anita Chagar and Lauren Zirn, not only helps to improve literacy, but also fosters a love of reading among the children in the pilot program, who look forward to their weekly sessions with their buddies.

For more information on the program or to become a Book Buddy, visit books2connect.org.

UPCOMING PJ LIBRARY PROGRAMS: Open to all members of the community

Friday, April 5, 5:30 PM

at TCS, 30 Hillspoint Road, Westport: Passover-themed Shabbat

Saturday, May 11, 9:30 AM

at Congregation B'nai Israel, 2710 Park Ave., Bridgeport: Family Shabbat service and celebration of Israel!

Friday, May 31, 10 AM

at Barnes & Noble, 1076 Post Road East, Westport: Parents are invited for an interactive presentation of social-emotional learning and how children's literature can be used to support self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and empathy.

A Letter from Our Federation Israeli Emissaries

Eyal, Shay, Rotem, and Yuval graduated from high school in Israel last June and, instead of immediately beginning their mandatory Israeli military service, they chose to take a gap year, performing community service in Upper Fairfield

County. Since their arrival in August, the Federation Israeli Emissaries have been joining various area Jewish congregations on Friday evenings, sharing their version of an Israeli Kabbalat Shabbat with the community and nurturing the living bridge that spans between Israel and Upper Fairfield County.

special and so unique – one short prayer that caught our attention and got into our hearts, “Prayer for the State of Israel.”

Going to synagogue was not something in our routine back in Israel. Therefore, you can understand why going into a

bond that exists and our role as Emissaries here in the U.S., working every day to strengthen this bond and make sure that neither side takes it for granted.

We are amazed and so touched that there is a special prayer for the tiny country that we are living in. In a few months, we will be returning to Israel to begin our army service, where we will take our turn defending our country. Now we know that during our service, we will be inspired by the thought that there are so many Jews all over the world, and especially right here in this community, sending prayers and wishes for the well-being of our home. This makes the sentence, “Israel is the country for every Jew in the world,” a reality; it makes the ideal of modern Zionism come true.

The Israeli Young Emissary Program, supported by our local Federation for



“For each of us, reading the Prayer for Israel in front of so many American Jews is something we will never forget.”

Shay, Rotem, Eyal, and Yuval share their observations about a special prayer connecting our community with Israel.

It's been six months since we arrived. Six months that have been filled with work meetings, social meetings, adjusting to amazing, warm and kind host families, and a bit of homesickness too. We got to know so many great people who welcomed us to the community and made us feel a part of this big loving family.

Past Emissaries have shared with us that Shabbat and the holidays might be the hardest part of settling in. It's a time when we are used to being with our families back in Israel. Between our homesickness and our endless calls from home (especially from our moms), we noticed something so

synagogue in the United States for the very first time in the middle of the High Holidays might be overwhelming. For each of us, reading the Prayer for Israel in front of so many American Jews is something we will never forget. It was amazing to hear the congregants joining in the prayer out loud. We realized how special it is to be in a synagogue 5,000 miles away from Israel. Only then did we begin to understand the importance of the State of Israel to people here in the United States, and what we are doing here as Federation Israeli Emissaries. Each time we go to synagogue, especially on Shabbat, we are reminded about the love the American Jewish community feels for our country, about the

Jewish Philanthropy in partnership with our community congregations, was launched as a pilot program in 1998 in our community and we are proud that, thanks to that vision, there are now more than 150 Israeli Young Emissaries serving in Jewish communities throughout North America and Europe. Each year, four young “ambassadors” join our community to share their love of Israel in our congregations, schools, and community agencies.

To invite an Emissary (or four!) to your family's dinner table or to learn about becoming an Emissary host family for three months, contact Stacy Kamisar skamisar@jewishphilanthropyct.org or Judy Blumenthal jblumenthal@jewishphilanthropyct.org.



Gathering for Good



Federation's inaugural TzedakahFest was graciously hosted by Congregation B'nai Israel in Bridgeport, as some 500 community-members gathered to celebrate the power of collective impact. Visitors enjoyed a diverse exhibit hall of Federation's partner organizations, participatory philanthropy through fun and engaging giving circles, informative breakout sessions on health issues, and a spirited children's concert by The Nields.

At TzedakahFest, the community honored an inspiring new class of community Mitzvah Heroes, volunteers selected by Upper Fairfield County Jewish congregations who make a difference every day.

Steve "Simcha" Cooper

Beit Chaverim Synagogue of Westport/
Norwalk

Wendy Engel

Temple Shalom, Norwalk

Betty Feldman

Congregation Beth El Fairfield

Eileen Glickman

Temple Israel, Westport

David Jutkowitz

Congregation Ahavath Achim, Fairfield

Marvin Rosenbaum

Congregation Beth El-Norwalk

Martin & Martha Rosenfeld

TCS, Westport

Stephen Schwartz

Beth Israel of Westport/Norwalk

Robert Sussman

Congregation B'nai Israel, Bridgeport

Steve Ulman

Congregation for Humanistic Judaism
of Fairfield County

Penny Volpe

Congregation B'nai Torah, Trumbull

Edith Winick

Congregation Rodeph Shalom,
Bridgeport



The Kaleidoscope Profile

Cantor Deborah Katchko-Gray

Congregation Shir Shalom of Westchester and Fairfield Counties

Interviewed by Rabbi Ita Paskind,
Congregation Beth El-Norwalk

Cantor Deborah Katchko-Gray's office is a living embodiment of the mantra, "Don't waste time."

The urgent credo, imparted by her beloved teacher and mentor, Elie Wiesel, seems to express itself on every inch of wall, every surface; the space is all at once a museum, showcase, studio, library, archive, laboratory, think tank, shop. It hums with energy and creativity, as does the woman who is behind the desk one moment, at the piano the next; now pointing to a photo or plaque or article on the wall, now gesturing toward a rack of *tallitot* she has made and another rack of CDs she has recorded, and now paging through the galleys for *Prayerful Creations*, the book on a Swedish embroidery technique that she is about to publish.

"Cantor Debbie," as she is affectionately known, is married to Dr. Scott Gray and has four sons, two step-sons, and one grandchild.

When Cantor Debbie was hired by Congregation Beth El in Norwalk in 1981, the fourth-generation cantor was only the second woman in the country to hold the position at a Conservative synagogue. Coincidentally, her interviewer is Ita Paskind, for the past four years the rabbi of that same synagogue, and the first woman to serve as its spiritual leader.

The two colleagues met in Cantor Debbie's office in March 2019 to compare notes and explore what makes Debbie run. Following is an excerpt of the conversation.

Rabbi Paskind: I've been in town for almost four years and I hear your name at Beth El-Norwalk pretty regularly. Introduce yourself: what should people know about you? How do you describe yourself?

Cantor Debbie: I am a fourth-generation cantor and I'm very proud of that. [pointing to a wall] I like to remember from where I came. My grandfather's father, Pinchas, was a cantor in Kalisz, Poland but that wasn't his profession; he was probably a *shochet* [Jewish ritual slaughterer]. I think a big part of my identity is that my grandfather had two brothers who were cantors and three sisters, who were all lost in the Holocaust. He never

mentioned that he had siblings and I grew up thinking my grandfather was an only child and only through my studies with Elie Wiesel, I started doing a lot more research and I found out that there were two cantors and other singers and opera singers who came to Israel and then didn't sing after the war.

I feel lucky to have survived and be part of this chain: my great-grandfather, Pinchas, in Poland; my grandfather, Cantor Adolph Katchko, the famous composer; my father, Theodore Katchko, who was part-time cantor and had a little liquor store in Stamford – he always said that he dealt in spirits – and he never wanted to be a full-time cantor because it was just too traumatic to be under the shadow of his father, who was very revered.

I came along, feminist and proud, and I know I ruffled a few feathers in the early days. I was supposedly the second Conservative woman cantor in the country and that was before Jewish Theological Seminary ordained women.

I had studied with Elie Wiesel in college, studied with my father, studied with Rabbi Joseph Polak at Boston University Hillel. In 1981, I was married to a photographer who went to a wedding and heard that there was a job available in Norwalk. I called up Beth El and spoke with Rabbi Jonas Goldberg and I said, "Would you consider a woman?" and I'll never forget: he said, "My dear, we've interviewed 18 male rabbis. At this point, I'd interview a monkey." Or maybe it wasn't "monkey;" maybe it was, "I'd interview anyone." I had 10 or 11 very good years there.

I am also the founder of the Women Cantors' Network; I'm very proud of that. In 1982, after being at the pulpit in Norwalk for a year, I noticed this great void, a silence. There were male cantors all around but there was no colleague talking to me, nobody was reaching out, and that might be a particular New England thing, too, where people just kind of stay in their corners. But still, I like to share and network and learn – and maybe this is a female thing – but that's how you grow, by experiencing other ideas. I would hear about cantors' concerts and other events being planned and I wasn't invited to anything. I didn't like the feeling and I thought, "I can sit in the corner and complain about it or I can do something."

I went to a Cantors Assembly convention and there were a bunch of women there studying to be cantors, interested in the

cantorate, musicologists, composers, singers. I said, "I'd like to have a conference. Let's get together and meet." Cantor Elaine Shapiro, who was the first-ever full-time woman Conservative cantor, in West Palm Beach, had graduated from JTS but at the time, they didn't give the degree of Chazzan; she got a master's degree in Jewish music. She studied the whole curriculum just like any male cantor, and she was my hero at the time; we're still friends. She and I thought it would be a great idea, and I went running with it. We had the first conference in 1982



in Norwalk, and 12 women showed up. One woman came from Brooklyn and she was Orthodox and she said she was afraid that if her family found out she was at the conference, they would disown her.

It was a beautiful beginning and now we have about 275 members, it's a national organization, we have annual conferences, we have a very active listserv and we have a Facebook presence and we just became a 501(c)3. We do have seminary graduates and traditional certified, ordained women. But there are a lot of women who have gone the non-traditional path and sometimes, for women, that makes more sense: you can't always relocate to New York or study full-time if you have a family – there are a lot of variables. So when I started, I felt it should



be open to everyone and that if a synagogue hired you as a cantor, it's our obligation to become better cantors, not to judge how you got there, what your qualifications are. Sometimes you can have an innate talent or a great spirit that can't be certified, that might not be something on paper. At the time, it was pretty radical and there were a lot of people angry with me for many years that I was legitimizing "illegitimate" cantors. And I just felt that it was supporting the women who were out there already, and let's all get better.

Over the years, it's attracted many mainstream cantors who see the value of this wonderful, open organization, and a few men have joined because they love how open it is.

Rabbi Paskind: You've mentioned Elie Wiesel; tell us more about him.

Cantor Debbie: He was teaching at Boston University, and that's why I went to BU. I didn't care what kind of degree I got. I chose not the most difficult program – elementary education – because I wanted to sing in the coffeehouses and study with Elie Wiesel.

When I walked into his classroom in 1976, it was the first class that he ever taught on the Holocaust. He had us write on a 3-by-5 index card why we wanted to take his class because there wasn't enough room for everyone to sit in the classroom. The idea of a "selection" was abominable to him. I wrote something like, "I come from a family of cantors and I want to learn more about our history and my family's history, and I want to impart my love of Judaism to children in some way, through music, art, history."

When we were walking out, he said, "My door will always be open to you." That meant that I could take every class he gave without even registering. He let me sit in on graduate-level doctoral classes so I made my schedule around his. I took copious notes in his classes and sometimes I rewrote them and I would send them to him and he wrote me this beautiful note: "If a teacher has one student – you – it would be *dayenu* [enough]."

Joel Rappel, who was head of the BU archives for seven years, came to get material from me – class notes, lecture notes; I have a whole binder of personal, hand-written notes, and that's all in the library. The very first class he taught on the Holocaust – he never taught it again because it was so painful – the university had no record of it; they didn't have a syllabus, they

"I come from a family of cantors and I want to learn more about our history and my family's history, and I want to impart my love of Judaism to children in some way, through music, art, history."

didn't have a reading list and I had my class notes, and that's the only record they have of that class.

One day, hopefully not in the too-distant future, I want to write a book showing my class notes, what I've learned from them. I have almost 50 essays a few more that I still want to write. I have the blessings of most of the Wiesel scholars and teachers. I'm hoping that that will be my next project, after I finish my second book on Jewish huck embroidery.

Rabbi Paskind: You've built up a whole world of activities that you love to do.

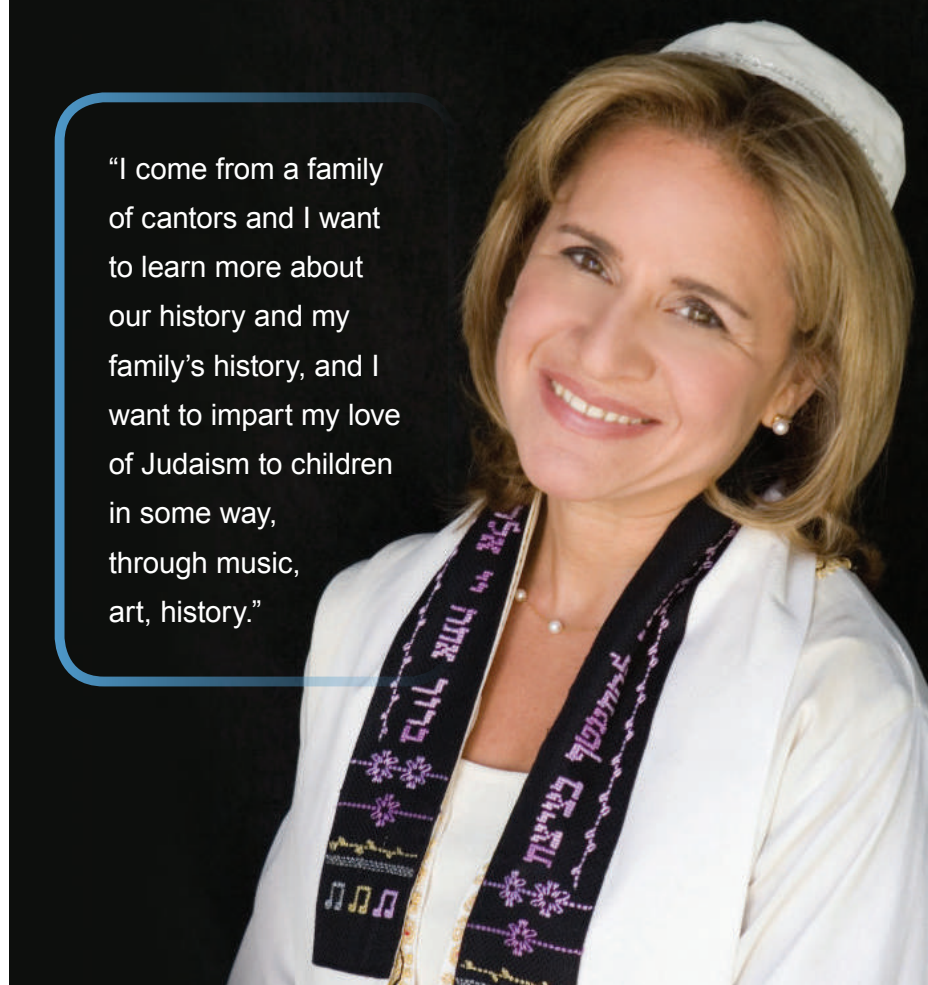
Cantor Debbie: From my studies with Elie Wiesel, he really imparted to us the miracle that we're alive at all; it's a miracle that there are any Jews alive today, so we shouldn't waste time. I love making stuff, I like doing music. I play cello and I got back into it recently and I'm playing in a string quartet and the Danbury Symphony Orchestra.

I've been dying to do a project for my father, who taught me. His father transformed American *nusach*: he took the very ornate cantorial chant from Europe and rewrote it for American cantors and Hebrew Union College owned the rights

to it; it was part of their curriculum. When I started in Norwalk, I knew the High Holidays because I had done them in college; I knew a little bit about Shabbat services but I hadn't done the three Festivals. I would run to my father and I would say, "*Hallel!* Help me!" or "*Ha-El!* How do you start it?" "*The omer!*" My father would hit the button on the cassette-recorder and out would come the most perfect voice and the most beautiful music and it was all Katchko compositions. I want to take my father's recordings from the entire year of liturgy and remaster them and get them onto my website.

I feel like I'm in my prime of creative energy, I don't want to waste time, I want to get as much done as I can. I just turned 62 and I know I'm not old but I just feel like I want to make the most of however many years I have in life. I feel more and more like I want to waste less time, I feel more urgent. I want to work as long as I can, 10 years at least.

Read and listen to the entire conversation at shalomct.org/cantordebbie. Learn more about Cantor Debbie's work and programming at cantordebbie.com.



What's Cookin' in the Jewish Community

A New Partnership Brings Kosher Meals to Your Door

Schoke Jewish Family Service is proud to announce the launch of the new Pamela and Michael Hirsch Kosher Home Delivered Meal Program. This unique initiative combines meal delivery to those for whom food-shopping and preparation is a hardship, with a short, friendly visit which provides human contact for many who find it difficult to socialize outside of their home.

The program is coordinated by Jill Knopoff, a Registered Dietitian with more than 25 years of experience working in long-term care and private practice. Jill has volunteered with Schoke JFS for more than two years and joined the agency earlier this year in order to manage the new program and the volunteers who make it happen.

Bringing kosher-meal delivery to Fairfield County has been a dream of Schoke JFS CEO Matt Greenberg since he joined the agency 20 years, after having started a successful meal-delivery program as clinical director of Jewish Family Service of Atlantic and Cape May Counties. "When I tried years ago, there did not seem to be enough interest," Greenberg recalls. "Over the years, I have had multiple conversations with Meryl and David Gordon, who have always been big supporters of efforts that address food insecurity. I shared my idea with them, but we never had the funds to initiate it. Last year, David approached me, as he was now the executor of the will for his uncle, Michael Hirsch, who had recently passed away. As a result, David and Meryl were able to establish the Pamela and Michael Hirsch Kosher Home Delivered Meal Program."

The meals, prepared by partner organization Jewish Senior Services in Bridgeport, are flash-frozen and packaged to be heated in the microwave for maximum convenience. Participants receive seven meals weekly, each consisting



of an entrée, starch, and vegetable, as well as soup, dessert, fruit, and bread. An advantage of this program is its flexibility. Recipients are not required to enter into a long-term contract, and may sign up for any frequency of delivery. "We are so pleased to partner with JFS to provide the meals for this important service," says Jewish Senior Services CEO Andrew Banoff.

Volunteers from throughout Fairfield County receive a short orientation and then help assemble and deliver the weekly packages. Most volunteers find the process very rewarding as they build relationships with the people to whom they deliver meals.

"We are grateful to David Gordon for

creating this legacy in memory of his Aunt Pam and Uncle Michael," says Greenberg. "Hundreds of people who have difficulty shopping and preparing their own meals will now be able to obtain nutritious, affordable meals delivered right to their home as a result of the generosity of this legacy gift."

The Pamela and Michael Hirsch Kosher Home Delivered Meal Program is available to all Fairfield County residents, with a nominal fee of \$7.50 per meal. To receive delivery or to volunteer, contact Volunteer Coordinator Jill Knopoff: jknopoff@ctjfs.org / 203-921-4161.



Past the Façade

Seeing Federation's Impact on the Ground in Israel

When an organization works to “help people,” the visual can be very vague and abstract. What does it *actually* mean? How are donations used? Can a visitor observe a real change in the person being helped?

From January 2-9, Federation Development Manager Janet Wainright took her first-ever trip to Israel, accompanied by her daughter, Lucy. Janet spent most of that time visiting with several of our partner organizations in the Afula-Gilboa region in northern Israel, and got a firsthand look at some of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's projects in Jerusalem.

That opportunity to witness Federation's impact on the ground was the purpose behind the trip. Janet likens her experience to the difference between driving by a house and being asked to step inside. “We typically drive by houses and only see the outside,” she says. “We think we know how people are living, but we have no idea unless we walk in. Visiting our beneficiary organizations in Israel was like being invited to see the reality of life on the inside, not just the façade.”

The itinerary included organizations that help all sectors of Israeli society, from kids to teens to adults, from secular to ultra-Orthodox to Muslim. Janet was most surprised by how great the need is, how hard each organization works to improve lives.

“They all do so much,” she says. “We may have a preconceived notion of who we help and what their needs are but we don't realize how broad their needs are. What does it mean, ‘helping a child?’ It means making sure that they have a building that is secure, safe, up-to-code, warm and inviting, and structurally sound. It means hiring qualified people to work with that child. It means feeding and clothing the child, providing leisure activities and a petting zoo with cared-for and healthy

animals. We may look at ‘helping a child’ as giving money to cover only one of those needs, but we don't always realize everything it encompasses.”

There was plenty of heartening news along the way, evidence of how Federation donors and volunteers help to make a real difference. Thanks to the work of Beit Singer, a severely abused child has grown up to become a productive citizen in Israeli society and raise a family of his own. At Be-Atzmi (On My Own), a woman from an repressive home is learning the skills to launch a fashion-design business. At-risk teens benefit from academic and enrichment programming through the Ethiopian National Project's SPACE Program and learn to create marketable works of art at Susan's House in Jerusalem.

Janet returned from Israel with some very clear take-aways. Not only is it easy to lose sight of the standard of living in Upper Fairfield County, but the Federation catchment area is less diverse than what Janet observed in Israel.

“Our Jewish community isn't defined by minority populations, so it can be hard to understand the complexity of Israeli society,” she says. “There are Ethiopians, Jews from Arab countries, ultra-Orthodox, the LGBTQ community – all of whom are looked upon as minorities, who experience discrimination, and who are just beginning to have a voice.”

The biggest lesson learned is that the up-close experience is the most effective. “Israel is more than just sightseeing and history; it's people, not politics, not tourist Sites,” Janet says. “Federation helps the people and anyone involved with Federation needs to go see those people, to see for themselves not just the need, but the results of what we accomplish together.”

Read more insights from Janet's journey at shalomct.org/janet-israel-blog.



Janet and Lucy visit the Karmiel home of Ethiopian-Jewish spiritual leader Qes Efraim Zion Lawi for the traditional buna coffee ceremony.



The Ethiopian National Project's SPACE (School Performance and Community Empowerment) Program provides socioeconomically disadvantaged Ethiopian-Israelis throughout the country tools for academic success.



Susan's House, a project in Jerusalem supported by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, where at-risk teens learn to create jewelry, ceramics, and glasswork

Grab a Seat at the Global Jewish Table

Take a journey into the cuisine of our Jewish heritage at the 3rd Annual Southern Connecticut Jewish Food Festival on May 19th, sponsored by the Federation for Jewish Philanthropy.

This year's theme, Celebrating Global Traditions – Our Common Table, highlights Jewish foods from around the world, with tastings and treats planned throughout the day. Keynote speaker Leah Koenig, best-selling food writer and cookbook author, will headline a menu of fascinating breakout sessions, including:

- **Everything But the Challah:** The Jewish Mezze Table
- **Beyond Chicken Soup:** Dealing with Stress, Trauma and Illness from the Jewish Kitchen
- **The Culture of Jewish Food:** Why We Eat What We Eat
- **How I Started My Gourmet Food Business**

What's more, the day will be filled with

- Cooking demos from Israel to Eastern Europe
- Authentic Ethiopian *Buna* coffee ceremony
- International kosher wine-tasting
- Children's cooking demo
- DIY pickling
- Vendors selling an array of Jewish and Israeli treats
- International food court featuring Jewish delicacies from Persia, Ukraine, Morocco, Israel, and beyond

The food festival is the brainchild of Federation CEO David Weisberg, who launched the event in June 2017 as a way to bring the community together around a shared interest in food and Jewish values. The idea struck a chord, and hundreds of attendees of all ages convened to enjoy the

inaugural event. This year's festival promises to be even more engaging. "No single event brings together more people from throughout the Jewish community than the Southern Connecticut Jewish Food Festival!" David says. "While many of us have different ways of observing Judaism, we can all connect over favorite family recipes lovingly preserved through our various migrations and passed down from one kitchen to the next."

Inaugural Food Festival chair Elise Meyer is at the helm again this year, infusing the event with her passion and expertise as an organic gardener, travel writer, and blogger

"From generation to generation, our culinary heritage is the glue that binds us to our traditions, our celebrations, and our history, bringing the flavors cherished by our grandparents and great-grandparents into the present."

at MuchAdoAboutStuffing.com.

"We are so excited to continue engaging our vibrant community in celebration of the foods and customs that unite us as a people," she says. "This year, we explore the Global Jewish Table with tastings and

discussions about foods from around the Jewish world that have transcended time and geographic boundaries to reach us today. From generation to generation, our culinary heritage is the glue that binds us to our traditions, our celebrations, and our history, bringing the flavors cherished by our grandparents and great-grandparents into the present. From Eastern Europe to North Africa, from Australia to Brazil, the simmering stock-pots of Shabbat and Yom Tov bring us together for happy times and deeper connections to our tradition."

WHAT: Federation's 3rd Annual Southern Connecticut Food Festival: **Celebrating Global Traditions – Our Common Table**

WHEN: Sunday, May 19th, 2 – 6 PM

WHERE: Temple Israel, 14 Coleytown Road, Westport

TICKETS:
Advance purchase: \$5/adult, \$20/family of 5
Day of event: \$10/adult, \$30/family of 5

\$100 family sponsorship includes \$20 of food tickets and program listing

To register online and reserve guaranteed space for cooking demos and breakout sessions, visit shalomct.org/foodfestival or call 203-226-8197.

Food Festival

Keynote speaker

Leah Koenig

Leah Koenig's writing and recipes have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *New York Magazine's* Grub Street blog, *Saveur*, *Epicurious*, *Food52*, *Departures*, *More*, *Hemispheres*, and *Tablet*, among other print and online publications.

Leah's most recent cookbook, *Little Book of Jewish Feasts* (Chronicle Books, 2018), was praised by *The Forward's* Liza Schoenfein as "a tiny book with a big, broad reach across the Jewish holiday table." Her 2015 book, *Modern Jewish Cooking*, was featured in Food52's prestigious Piglet Cookbook Tournament.

"I love how truly global Jewish cuisine is and am always searching for ways to represent the entire spectrum of Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Middle Eastern cooking in my writing," Leah says. "I appreciate when people come up to me at cooking demonstrations and ask me to help them track down a family recipe from Morocco, Greece, Hungary, or wherever. Those conversations are so meaningful and often launch a whole new path of culinary discovery."

Leah is currently at work on two new books, including a 400-recipe treasure trove of global Jewish cuisine, *The Jewish Cookbook*, which will be published by Phaidon Books this fall. In addition to writing, Leah also leads cooking demonstrations and workshops around the country and throughout the world.

Don't miss Leah Koenig in conversation with food writer Liz Rueven of *Kosher Like Me*, for the Food Festival's engaging keynote, **What Makes Food Jewish Anyway? A Discussion on Diaspora, Recipe Evolution, and Delicious Food**

Borrowing is at the heart of Jewish cuisine. Throughout history and across the globe, Jewish communities have eaten the foods of their neighbors, adapting these dishes to accommodate the kosher rules and holiday rituals. So how, then, does one define what makes a particular dish "Jewish?"

In this lively discussion, Leah and Liz will debate, and gently push, the boundaries of Jewish cuisine.



Jewish Community Resource Directory

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Bridgeport

Congregation Bikur Cholim

2365 Park Ave.
203-336-2272
Orthodox

Congregation B'nai Israel

2710 Park Ave.
203-336-1858 | welcome@cbibpt.org
cbibpt.org
Reform

Congregation Rodeph Sholom

2385 Park Ave.
203-334-0159 | mblock@rodephsholom.com
rodephsholom.com
Conservative

Jewish Senior Services

4200 Park Ave.
203-396-1001 | sshulman@jseniors.org

Fairfield

Congregation Ahavath Achim

203-372-6529 | office@ahavathachim.org
ahavathachim.org
Orthodox

Congregation Beth El Fairfield

1200 Fairfield Woods Road
203-374-5544 | office@bethelfairfield.org
bethelfairfield.org
Conservative

Georgetown

Temple B'nai Chaim

82 Portland Ave.
203-544-8695 | tbc@templebnaichaim.org
templebnaichaim.org
Reform

Norwalk

Beth Israel of Westport/ Norwalk - Chabad

40 King St.
203-866-0534 | bethisraelct@gmail.com
bethisraelct.org
Orthodox

Congregation Beth El-Norwalk

109 East Ave.
203-838-2710 | office@congbethel.org
congbethel.org
Conservative

Temple Shalom

259 Richards Ave.
203-866-0148 | admin@templeshalomweb.org
templeshalomweb.org
Reform

Ridgefield

Chabad Jewish Center of Ridgefield

27R West Lane
203-403-5372 | chabadridgefield@gmail.com
chabadridgefield.com

Congregation Shir Shalom of Westchester and Fairfield Counties

46 Peaceable St.
203-438-6589 | office@ourshirshalom.org
ourshirshalom.org
Reform

Trumbull

Congregation B'nai Torah

5700 Main St.
203-268-6940 | office@bnaitorahct.org
bnaitorahct.org
Conservative

Westport

Beit Chaverim Synagogue of Westport/ Norwalk

85 Post Road West
203-227-3333 | office@beitchaverim.com
beitchaverim.com
Modern Orthodox/Traditional

Congregation for Humanistic Judaism of Fairfield County

P.O. Box 82
Westport, CT 06881
203-293-8867 | info@humanisticjews.org
humanisticjews.org

Temple Israel

14 Coleytown Road
203-227-1293 | info@tiwestport.org
tiwestport.org
Reform

TCS

30 Hillspoint Road
203-454-4673 | execdir@tcs-westport.org
tcs-westport.org
Conservative

COMMUNITY AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS

**Anti-Defamation League
Connecticut Regional Office**
connecticut.adl.org | 203-288-6500

**Federation for Jewish Philanthropy of
Upper Fairfield County**
shalomct.org | 203-226-8197

Israelis-in-CT

israelisinct@hotmail.com
facebook.com/israelisinct

Jewish Family Service of Connecticut, Fairfield

jfsct.org | 203-366-5438

Jewish Federation Association of Connecticut (JFACT)

jfact.org | 860-727-5701

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Holocaust Child Survivors of Connecticut, Inc.
hcs-ct.org | 203-226-3092

LifeBridge Community Services, Bridgeport
lifebridgect.org | 203-368-4291

Schoke Jewish Family Service of Fairfield County
ctjfs.org | 203-454-4992

The Jewish Community Foundation, Serving Upper Fairfield County
dweisberg@jewishphilanthropyct.org | 203-226-8197

Voices of Hope – Holocaust and genocide education
ctvoicesofhope.org | 860-470-5591

LIFECYCLE

Mohel

Rabbi Yitzchok Adler
860-798-9555

Mikvah

Mikvah Israel
1326 Stratfield Road, Fairfield
203-274-2191

End of Life

Abraham L. Green and Son Funeral Home, Fairfield
greensfuneralhome.com | 203-255-8993

Jewish Cemetery Association of Fairfield County
203-452-1221

Loyalty Cemetery Association, Fairfield
203-452-1221

Martin H. Green Memorials & Lettering
203-452-1221

YOUTH & EDUCATION

Early Childhood

PJ Library: Free Jewish-themed books and music for kids
Federation for Jewish Philanthropy of Upper Fairfield County
monique@jewishphilanthropyct.org
jewishphilanthropyct.org | 203-659-3602



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Aleph Bet Early Childhood and Daycare Center, Westport
myalephbet.org | 203-635-4118

B'nai Torah Nursery School, Trumbull
bnaitorahct.org/nursery | 203-268-0227

Bonim Preschool
Congregation B'nai Israel, Bridgeport
cbibpt.org | 203-335-5058

Carol Schoke Early Childhood Center
Temple Israel, Westport
tiwestport.org | 203-227-1656, ext. 312

Gan Yeladim Preschool
Temple Shalom, Norwalk
templeshalomweb.org | 203-866-0148

K'tanim Preschool
Congregation Beth El, Fairfield
bethelfairfield.org | 203-374-5544

Nitzan Nursery School
Congregation Beth El-Norwalk
congbethel.org | 203-838-6019

TCS Preschool, Westport
tcs-westport.org | 203-454-4673

Dayschools

Bi-Cultural Hebrew Academy
(Pre-K – 12 Grade)
2186 High Ridge Road, Stamford
(Pre-K – 8th)
bcds.org | 203-329-2186
1937 West Main St., Stamford
(9th-12th)
jhsct.org | 203-357-0850
A merger of Bi-Cultural Day School and Jewish High School of Connecticut

Carmel Academy
270 Lake Ave., Greenwich
carmelacademy.com | 203-863-9663

Ezra Academy
75 Rimmon Road, Woodbridge
ezraacademyct.org | 203-389-5500

Southern Connecticut Hebrew Academy
261 Derby Ave., Orange
schacademy.org | 203-795-5261

Hebrew

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israelisinct@hotmail.com | 203-434-7705

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Jewish Community Resource Directory

Youth Activities

BBYO Connecticut Valley Region
Fairfield, Ridgefield, Westport Chapters
bbyo.org | 203-389-2127

Circle of Friends Connecticut
circleoffriendscct.org | 203-293-8837

Friendship Circle of Fairfield County
friendshipcct.com | 203-329-0015, ext. 131

Keshet Jewish Enrichment for Children with Special Needs and Their Parents
Congregation B'nai Israel, Bridgeport
cbibpt.org/keshet.html#keshet | 203-336-1858

Merkaz Community High School for Judaic Studies
4200 Park Ave., Bridgeport
merkazct.org | 203-450-5303

Westport USY
TCS, Westport
tcs-westport.org/communities/youth-groups | 203-454-4673

Day Camps

Camp Gan Israel of Westport, Weston & Wilton
ganisrael.com | 203-226-8584

JCC of Greater New Haven Day Camps
jccnh.org/jcc-summer-day-camp | 203-387-2424, ext. 253

Mishkan Israel Day Camp
mishkanisrael.com | 203-268-0740

LIFELONG LEARNING

Fairfield University Carl & Dorothy Bennett Center for Judaic Studies
fairfield.edu/judaic | 203-254-4000, ext. 2065

Israelis-in-CT Hebrew Conversation Group
Meets every other Monday at The Westport Library
israelisinct@hotmail.com

Keshet Project for Developmentally Challenged Adults
Congregation B'nai Israel, Bridgeport
cbibpt.org | 203-336-1858

Schneerson Center for Jewish Life, CT
schneersoncenter.org | 203-635-4118

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CULTURAL

Connecticut Jewish Ledger
jewishledger.com | 860-231-2424

**Jewish Arts & Film Festival of
Fairfield County**
jewishartsandfilm.org | 203-487-0941

**Jewish Historical Society of
Fairfield County**
jhsfc-ct.org | 203-321-1373, ext. 150

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Greater Bridgeport Jews (20s & 30s)
eschultz@cbibpt.org | 203-336-1858

Jewish Twenties & Thirties
ctjfs.org | 203-921-4161

Young Jewish Professionals, CT
yjpc.org | 203-354-3090

WOMEN

**Hadassah, The Women's Zionist
Organization of America, Inc.**
Connecticut Region
hadassah.org/regions/connecticut | 203-307-1319

SENIORS

Jewish Senior Services
Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Campus,
Bridgeport
jseniors.org | 203-365-6400

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Congregation Beth El Fairfield

1200 Fairfield Woods Road, Fairfield | 203-374-5544 | bethelfairfield.org

Exciting things are happening at Beth El Fairfield's K'tanim Preschool!

K'tanim has a fabulous new director, Kate Luedtke! With over 20 years' experience in Early Childhood, Kate has completely transformed the program and curriculum — with truly stunning results:

Two of our wonderful enrichment classes — STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math), and Mindful Breathing & Yoga — have been so successful that we're now beginning to add them into our regular weekly curriculum.

Students are also enjoying delightful age-appropriate field trips to a firehouse, children's theater, and more.

Sensational new enrichment programs include: Energy Burn, which focuses on

games, sports skills, and cooperative play; and We've Got the Beat, exploring all forms of music, dance, and playing musical instruments.

To meet increased demand, our Early Drop-Off and Extended Day coverage are now offered both quarterly, and also as needed with 48 hours' notice — a rare jewel in Early Childhood Care.

All enrichment programs are sold out through the end of this school year, and consequently will be expanded from three days per week to five.

Our 2-year-olds' class is now completely filled through the 2019-2020 school year (spots on the waiting list may be available) and our 3s & 4s are filling up fast! (Summer Camp, too!)

Interested in being a part of the Beth El Fairfield or K'tanim Preschool family?



Check out facebook.com/ktanimpreschoolfairfield or instagram.com/ktanimpreschoolfairfield and bethelfairfield.org and call Kate at 203-374-5544 to schedule a tour right away!

Beth Israel of Westport/Norwalk – Chabad

40 King St., Norwalk | 203-866-0534 | bethisraelct.org

Beth Israel Chabad is excited to announce the expansion of its Weston after-school Hebrew program on Tuesdays from 4-5:15 PM.

The program offers a curriculum of Hebrew reading, culture, Mitzvot, art, song, and Torah values -- subject matter relevant to today's youth that conveys and instills a sense of Jewish peoplehood and connection to Torah



and the Jewish people worldwide. The program is under the direction of veteran educator Morah Freida Hecht and Rabbi Yehoshua S. Hecht, who is in charge of Bar- and Bat-Mitzvah education and preparation.

There is a special ingredient that permeates the entire after-school program, namely, a teaching staff of experienced educators and who have a firsthand knowledge of Judaism, whose lives reflect an observant lifestyle and fealty to the Jewish people and Israel. Beginning with 1st-graders through Bat and Bar Mitzvah-age students, the program has seen an expansion under the expert tutelage of Freida Hecht. The non-judgmental, inclusive policy means every Jewish child is welcome regardless of religious affiliation, level of observance, or prior knowledge. The diverse student body provides a setting where each child is comfortable and is able to learn at their own pace.

No synagogue membership is required. **For more** information, visit our website westonhebrewschool.org or contact us: **203-716-1052** / westonhebrewschool@gmail.com

Congregation Ahavath Achim

203-372-6529 | ahavathachim.org

By Rabbi Peretz Robinson

For centuries, the Jewish people has looked to the wisdom of the Rabbis as encapsulated in *Pirkei Avot* (*Ethics of the Fathers*) for guidance in lifelong ethical and moral quests. It is the wisdom of the sages as contained in those short chapters that serves as the embodiment of generations of Jewish religious and humanistic thought.

A passage at the beginning of *Pirkei Avot* quotes Simon the Just: "The world depends on three things: on Torah study, on the service of God, and on kind deeds."

As the spiritual leader of Congregation Ahavath Achim, I have set as our congregation's goal to excel in these three areas.

The primacy of Torah study and the continued pursuit of Jewish knowledge are evidenced by the numerous study sessions and classes that our congregation conducts weekly. Whether the topic be Talmud, Bible, Jewish history, or Hebrew language, you will find groups of congregants studying in our shul.

"The service of God," as expressed in *Pirkei Avot*, is exemplified in Congregation Ahavath Achim by our steadfast dedication to daily prayer services. Every morning, Sunday through Shabbat, we meet together for

our daily minyan. It is our belief that starting the day off with an intimate encounter with our Creator infuses our lives with meaning and direction.

Finally, Simon the Just informs us that one of the three things on which the world stands is kind deeds, *gemilut chassadim* in the original Hebrew. Our congregation strives to be a congregation of kindness, of *chesed*, where the typical congregant is always concerned with the needs of a neighbor or fellow congregant. While building a faith community together, we aspire to be cognizant of the spiritual, emotional, financial, and physical needs of all of our fellow congregants.

Since the sale of our historic building on Stratfield Road in Fairfield last year, we have been holding services, together with Congregation Agudas Achim of Bridgeport, at the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Campus on Park Avenue in Bridgeport, home to Jewish Senior Services. We are proud of our relationship with Jewish Senior Services, and are working together with all parties to coalesce into a warm and inviting congregation, firmly rooted in its storied past, but with its eyes towards the bright future.

Please join Congregation Ahavath Achim for any of our regular prayer services, and experience for yourself what we believe to be a meaningful davening experience.

Congregation B'nai Israel

2710 Park Ave., Bridgeport | 203-336-1858 | cbibpt.org



Keeping Kids Connected Beyond Bar and Bat Mitzvah

Welcome to Kitah Chet, Eighth Grade, at Congregation B'nai Israel!

Every Monday night, a group of about 20 eighth-graders gather in a circle with their teacher, Rabbi Evan Schultz, to think about a big question: "When you were young, you learned about the difference between right and wrong. But often our decisions in life are more complex. What if you are faced with two 'right' choices? What if we must choose between two difficult options? How do we decide?"

Each week, the students delve into this question in fun and engaging ways, learning about everything from utilitarianism to the complexities of giving *tzedakah*, money to charity. Rabbi Schultz also puts an emphasis on community-building, taking time each week for the students to share with one another about their lives and to just have fun and be silly together.

"We want the students both to have a real, intentional learning experience, and to build relationships with their peers in our group," he says. "Additionally, our eighth-graders learn from one of our Federation Israeli Emissaries each week; they are an integral part of Monday nights." Yuval Shahaar and Rotem Sharon talk about Israeli current events, teach a Hebrew word of the day, and share their favorite Israeli music or foods with the students. The eighth-graders also have opportunities to meet BIFTY (B'nai Israel Federation of Temple Youth) teens and are invited and encouraged to be active participants in the youth group on Thursday nights. Says Rabbi Schultz, "Our eighth grade is just one of the ways Congregation B'nai Israel shows its commitment to life-long learning and is such a special place."

Congregation for Humanistic Judaism of Fairfield County (CHJ)

P.O. Box 82, Westport, CT 06881 | 203-293-8867 | humanisticjews.org

What Is a Humanistic Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

As a Humanistic Jewish congregation, CHJ's Bar/Bat Mitzvahs combine and reflect the blending of a human-centered approach with deep respect for Jewish culture, heritage, and our meaningful traditions. The goal is to strengthen our students' Jewish identities through reflection on *what it means* to be a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, within the context of today's world, emphasizing Jewish self-identity and social responsibility.

Every Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony is unique and engaging

The process of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is individualized, requiring students to tap into their interests and strengths. Each student engages in a two-year curriculum that includes academic study encompassing Jewish culture and history, as well as a community-service project and an individualized research project. In the final six to nine months, the

student works in tandem with a volunteer congregational mentor on the research project, while the parents meet with the congregational ceremonial leader in developing and customizing the service.

Research projects have included topics such as dance, sports, food, immigration, civil rights, the Holocaust, and a variety of other historical and social themes, all containing a Jewish connection. In addition to verbal presentations, the projects are presented to our community in other interesting ways, including videos, slide shows, and music. Recently, one student followed his research presentation on the history of Kol Nidre by playing the renowned 19th-century *Kol Nidre* melody on the cello.

The CHJ Bar/Bat Mitzvah prepares a young person for today's challenges

Our Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony features a research project and humanistic blessings, songs, a Torah commentary

or reading, and candle-lighting. Parents and mentor reflections combine to make a lasting impression on a young Jewish person's life.

To learn more about CHJ's Humanistic Jewish Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, contact us at info@humanisticjews.org.



CHJ

Congregation Rodeph Sholom

2385 Park Ave., Bridgeport | 203-334-0159 | rodephsholom.com

Congregation Rodeph Sholom is a close-knit community for those seeking to balance tradition while practicing our Jewish faith in the context of a changing world.

Our devoted members are the core of our synagogue. Rodeph Sholom is a kehilla with the desire to enhance our own Jewish experience within the Conservative movement while ensuring our relevance for generations to come.

Our engaging and energetic Hazzan Niema Hirsch, along with our professional staff and volunteers, create a warm atmosphere for spiritual connection and growth through our daily and Shabbat services and programs.

We are offering a new religious-education experience spearheaded by Hazzan Hirsch at no cost for young unaffiliated families, which provides an opportunity for in-home learning and monthly family Shabbat programs.

We invite you to get to know us better and welcome you to contact our Executive Director Mark Block at mblock@rodephsholom.com.



Congregation Shir Shalom of Westchester and Fairfield Counties

46 Peaceable St., Ridgefield | 203-438-6589 | ourshirshalom.org

Congregation Shir Shalom of Westchester and Fairfield Counties is a vibrant and inclusive community inspired by Jewish values and traditions.

Our Vision:

- We honor the diversity of our backgrounds, experiences, and aspirations.
- We celebrate our shared values: the study of Torah, participatory worship driven by music, the promotion of lifelong learning, the ongoing project of *Tikkun Olam* (Healing the World), and the work of social justice.
- We embrace the responsibility/task of being "a light unto the nations," building a brighter future for our community and the world.

Located in Ridgefield, we are eager to welcome you and connect your

Jewish life journey to our sacred community through our meaningful and uplifting worship, engaging educational programs, and so much more. Our clergy team includes Rabbi David Reiner, Cantor Deborah Katchko-Gray (featured in this issue of *KALEIDOSCOPE*), and Rabbi Emeritus Jon Haddon.

Our Early Childhood Center offers school-year programs and summer fun, integrating art, nature, music, and movement, with science/reading readiness programming through age 5. Contact Jane Emmer, our Director of Early Childhood Programs for more information.

Our Religious School offers engaging and creative programming for students in Grades K-12 that meets the needs of all families. Learn



Congregation Shir Shalom High School students and Rabbi Reiner visit Rep. Jim Himes (CT-4) on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. during a L'Taken Social Justice Seminar with the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

more about our customized Bar/Bat Mitzvah experiences, our new Social Action as Jewish Education (SAJE) program for 8th- through 12th-graders, and many more inspiring opportunities for Jewish learning, from our Religious School Director, Leslie Gottlieb.

TCS

30 Hillspoint Road, Westport | 203-454-4673 | tcs-westport.org



Ten years of outstanding leadership!

The TCS community joined in celebration with friends and clergy from throughout Fairfield County and across the country to honor Rabbi Jeremy Wiederhorn on his first 10 years leading the congregation. Our hard-working and creative committee delivered a wonderful evening!

TCS is a dynamic Jewish community dedicated to the continuity of Jewish life and the communal expression of our religious traditions, values, and culture. Our lives reflect a sense of belonging and commitment to one another, our local communities, Israel, and the larger Jewish world. Everyone at every age and every level of knowledge and practice is supported, challenged, and stimulated for an increased understanding of themselves and Judaism.

Come celebrate your Judaism with us!



Temple B'nai Chaim

82 Portland Ave., Georgetown | 203-544-8695 | templebnaichaim.org



Temple B'nai Chaim is much more than just a synagogue. It is an inclusive, warm, welcoming community in which:

- Both children and adults learn about Judaism and what it means to live a Jewish life with the encouragement and assistance of our Director of Lifelong Learning, Karin Beitel, and our Rabbi, Rachel Bearman.
- We support our community through a wide range of social-action activities.

- We worship together at services that are spiritual, moving, and often fun with Rabbi Bearman and Student Cantor Suzanne Hamstra.
- Our Sisterhood and Men's Club sponsor a wide range of activities – from barbecues and lectures to parties and movies.
- We celebrate together and give strength to each other.
- Our Caring Committee helps to support families in time of need.
- We work with the community at large to build mutual understanding.
- We strive to adapt to our congregants' changing needs.

To learn more about Temple B'nai Chaim and our vibrant community, visit templebnaichaim.org or call (203) 544-8695.



Temple Israel

14 Coleytown Road, Westport | 203-227-1293 | tiwestport.org

The Carol Schoke Early Childhood Center at Temple Israel

The Early Childhood Center offers a high quality program that provides a safe and nurturing environment while promoting the physical, creative, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development of young children. We provide an age-appropriate, developmental approach that employs our philosophy of learning through play. The Carol Schoke Early Childhood Center at Temple Israel is licensed by the State of Connecticut Office of Early Childhood.

Here in the ECC, we reinforce the connection between your child and their Jewish heritage as the unique traditions and values of the Jewish family are integrated into the curriculum. Jewish holidays are celebrated through stories, dramatic play, songs, cooking, art, and language experiences. Our facilities are open, inviting learning centers designed to stimulate discovery, socialization, and play.

Our staff of experienced and degreed teachers is nurturing and supportive. The lead teacher and assistants work as a team and are supervised by the Early Childhood Director. Our low teacher-student ratio provides each child with individualized attention.

As we believe that parent involvement is key to a child's school success, communication between school and parents takes place via newsletters, photos, videos and conversations with teachers. Parents are invited to participate in special events and our weekly Shabbat celebration with clergy.

The ECC programs are offered for children from 12 months to four years of age. Classes begin in September and conclude in early June. For more information, please contact Nancy Isaacs, Director of Early Childhood Education: nisaacs@tiwestport.org, (203) 227-1656 (x312).



Temple Shalom

259 Richards Ave., Norwalk | 203-866-0148 | templeshalomweb.org

Celebrate the Joy of Jewish Life at Temple Shalom

Temple Shalom draws its membership from communities across Fairfield County, people looking for a unique and personal synagogue experience. We are a warm, inclusive and interfaith family-friendly Reform congregation, welcoming congregants from all different backgrounds. We celebrate the richness of Jewish life through beautiful and inspiring music and services, education for all stages of life from our wonderful full daycare program and preschool to Hebrew school, teen, and adult learning. We offer engaging Jewish educational, cultural, musical, spiritual, social, and social-action opportunities for all.



Our clergy and staff go above and beyond to ensure all of our congregants are treated as individuals and valued members of our community. Our Shabbat, Holiday and Lifecycle services are uplifting and joyful, with beautiful music and inspiring leadership of our clergy. We are dedicated to our mission of providing enriching Jewish experiences and helping our congregation to foster a meaningful connection to Jewish values and community and make a positive impact in our greater world.

Come to enjoy our beautiful services, learn more about Temple Shalom, and meet our dedicated and welcoming rabbis, cantor, and staff. Be a part of strengthening Jewish life with us in this wonderful community! We welcome you to make Temple Shalom your new Jewish home.

Congregation Beth El-Norwalk

109 East Ave., Norwalk | 203-838-2710 | congbethel.org

Where's Waldo? Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego? Beginning in January, Beth El-Norwalk added a new question: Where's Rabbi Paskind meeting folks for coffee?

Rabbi Ita Paskind has been "popping up" at different area coffee shops with one purpose: To enjoy good coffee and conversation.

Traditionally, of course, the rabbi is usually found within the synagogue – on Shabbat, at minyan, during school hours; for meetings, classes, and for getting together with congregants. But it's clear that Jewish life is no longer limited to the synagogue. We connect to Jewish moments everywhere and any time!

In the biblical story of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, God speaks directly to Hagar after she and her son Yishmael have been cast out of the home and tells her that God will be with the boy *ba'asher hu sham*, "wherever he is"



Rabbi Ita Paskind, left

(Genesis 21:17). In modern times, *ba'asher hu sham* means that wherever a Jewish person is found is the perfect place to interact with him or her. To that end, Jewish communities and leaders the world over are taking Jewish experiences and conversation out into the public arena – public Chanukah candle-lightings, handing out hamentaschen on Purim morning at the train station, and yes, the opportunity to grab coffee and a chat with a rabbi while you're out doing errands.

There's no agenda, no set topic. Whoever shows up – congregant or new friend, Jewish or not – is the right company. Rabbi Paskind spent Wednesday mornings in January at Norwalk's Café Dolce, in February at Tusk & Cup in Wilton, and in March to *Aux Délices* in downtown Westport. Find out where she's going next on #PopUpRabbi and on Congregation Beth El-Norwalk's Facebook page.

Congregation B'nai Torah

5700 Main St., Trumbull | 203-268-6940 | bnaitorahct.org

B'nai Torah Tichon High School students took an enlightening trip to Boston over Presidents' Day Weekend. As Jews, we understand the importance of religious freedom, freedom from persecution, and acceptance of all human beings, because our Jewish Patriarchs and Matriarchs were dedicated to establishing liberty and a safe haven for all. These ideas were reinforced during visits to historical sites, memorials, and the Leonard P. Zakim Bunker Hill Memorial Bridge, named for the Jewish civic leader and civil-rights activist who championed "building bridges between peoples," and a relative of B'nai Torah members. One student said, "The Mapparium tour at the Mary Baker Eddy Library ... made us understand that we are part of a bigger picture."

This journey enabled the students to learn more about their heritage. They developed an appreciation of how memorabilia provides insights into the past. Through pictures, letters, and accounts from living relatives, we get a better understanding of family history and how that influences who we are today. Each student created a family tree and planted the "seeds" of where they have come from and where they are heading.

Shabbat services were led by the students, filled with *ruach* and spirituality. They shared their knowledge, challenged each other, and explored their Judaism. Rabbi Colin Brodie helped to create the perfect balance of education and fun through games, connections, and special programs. As one student said, "Going to Boston with the Tichon students was truly an amazing experience." Another shared, "We got closer to one another by experiencing the world through a Jewish lens."

We are so proud of our B'nai Torah students!





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Visit jccnh.org/camp

Camp Director Debra Kirschner
at summercamp@jccnh.org
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