

KALEIDOSCOPE

JEWISH LIFE IN UPPER FAIRFIELD COUNTY

SPRING/SUMMER 2020



INSIDE:

Local Rabbi to Head
New York Board

Sharon DeFala
Reports From
Afula-Gilboa

Memories from
an Evening with
Stephen Schwartz

Book Buddies
Expands to Norwalk

New Program
Supports Local
Holocaust Survivors

Two Rabbis Four Questions

Rabbis Sarah Marion and
Elana Nemitoff-Bresler
answer four questions,
not all about Passover



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From the Lens of David Weisberg



I am older than I once was and younger than I'll be, but that's not unusual.

— Paul Simon, from "The Boxer"

Yes, we are all older than we once were and younger than we'll be.

For those who have known me since I arrived in our community three-and-a-half years ago, you know that I'm also smaller than I once was, having decreased my personal mass by roughly 25% over that time. (And I finally have changed the headshot that I use with this column.) I've gotten much congratulations in the past couple years on my getting healthier. Sometimes becoming smaller can be a great thing.

And, of course, there are ways that becoming larger can be a great thing too.

When we first launched *KALEIDOSCOPE* in spring 2017 with the support of *The Connecticut Jewish Ledger*, it was a great experiment. Could we create an effective publication to serve our Jewish community in partnership with many of our congregations?

We published our first 32-page edition of *KALEIDOSCOPE* in the hopes that it would become a valued and anticipated semi-annual resource.

The reviews were significantly positive, and we received valuable critical feedback that helped us improve. Our circulation grew to well over 8,000 households as we gained new congregational partners. Last year, with gratitude to *The Connecticut Jewish Ledger*, we went out on our own, taking graphic design in-house and undertaking a complete redesign.

But still, with just 32 pages, and a good percentage of that necessarily dedicated to advertising, we found ourselves

constrained in trying to offer diverse and dynamic content.

I'm delighted to report, having now transitioned our advertising sales in-house with remarkable success, we're growing. For our lucky 7th issue of *KALEIDOSCOPE*, we are so pleased to expand for the first time to a 48-page issue.

Increasing the size of our magazine by 50% allows us ample opportunity to provide the kind of stories of interest to our Jewish community that we have always had a vision (and dream) to include. I hope, as you page through this issue – and I hope you read it from cover-to-cover – that you'll notice and value those new additions.

In this issue, those additions include

a story about one of our local rabbis becoming president of the New York Board of Rabbis, a feature written by one of our community members who recently visited our Israeli partnership region of Afula-Gilboa, exciting reports on new and innovative endeavors from some of our wonderful local partners, and a fun

"Four Questions" feature focused on two of our own community's new young rabbis.

What's just as exciting is that we continue to publish and distribute *KALEIDOSCOPE* at no cost to our Federation community, due to the generous support of our advertisers. As you look through this issue, I ask you not only to read the wonderful content but also to take note of the advertisers that make *KALEIDOSCOPE* possible and to consider supporting them in kind.

Enjoy reading. And set aside a little extra time – it should take you 50% longer!

"I am older than I once was and younger than I'll be, but that's not unusual."





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Connecticut Rabbi Tapped to Lead New York Rabbinical Organization

Nearly 140 years ago, seven New York rabbis from various denominations established the New York Board of Jewish Ministers with the aim of working together to foster Jewish education and advance Jewish practice. In 1946, members formally adopted a new name, the New York Board of Rabbis (NYBR), which still serves as the organized Jewish voice in the Tristate New York Metro, advancing the motto, “where unity and diversity meet.”

With some 750 member rabbis from the Orthodox, Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist branches, NYBR works to enhance and expand the role of the rabbinate for the betterment of the Jewish people and the world at large by providing its members with a spiritual environment and opportunities to grow professionally, promoting *Klal Yisrael* (Jewish peoplehood), and building bridges across denominations and with other faith communities.

This spring, for the first time in the Board’s 139-year history, a Connecticut rabbi will take the organizational reins.

Rabbi Jeremy Wiederhorn, spiritual leader of TCS in Westport, joined the NYBR upon ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary in 2000. Even when he left the New York Metro to serve a congregation in Henderson, Nev., he maintained membership. “It was always important to be affiliated with that organization, no matter where I lived, because it plays such a key role in the larger Jewish community,” he says. “In a world that is so polarized, the New York Board of Rabbis is one of the few organizations today that actually brings leaders together from all corners of the Jewish world and finds ways to have a unified voice and build bridges.”

Wiederhorn became more active in the organization in 2008, when he joined the TCS clergy, eventually taking on leadership roles. In that capacity, he has participated in several NYBR delegations promoting advocacy and interfaith missions: a private tour of a soon-to-be-dedicated Mormon temple in Salt Lake City; an interfaith trip to Israel with former Yankees pitcher Mariano Rivera and members of his church, Refugio de Esperanza-Refuge of Hope, in New Rochelle; an international conference on antisemitism held in Rome. Wiederhorn was also among NYBR leaders who brought a unified Jewish voice to meetings



with representatives of various foreign governments in the wake of challenging incidents. In 2015, after the terrorist attacks in Paris, a delegation met with the Consul General of France in New York. In 2018, when Poland’s Senate made it illegal to blame the Poles for complicity in the Holocaust, Board leaders met with the Consul General of Poland. Last year, when the Irish parliament passed a bill prohibiting the sale of goods from Israel’s West Bank settlements, NYBR met with the Consul General from Ireland. In January, the Board co-sponsored the interfaith “No Hate, No Fear” Solidarity March across the Brooklyn Bridge, in response to a spate of antisemitic attacks around New York.

Wiederhorn is seen by NYBR leadership as a fitting exemplar of the organization’s mission.

“What makes Jeremy special for us is that he’s a member of the Conservative movement but he’s also a pluralistic rabbi who understands the need to have unity and diversity next to one another,” says Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, New York Board of Rabbis Executive Vice President. “We tell rabbis that we don’t want to have ‘denominationitis,’ where denomination matters more than membership in the Jewish People. We’re all part of one rabbinic family, different branches, same roots – or as we also say, one union with many locals.”

What’s more, according to Potasnik, electing a president from outside New York speaks to the organization’s wider mission. “What makes Jeremy’s selection very newsworthy for us is that, even though we

are the New York Board of Rabbis, our reach is really global – we have members around the world,” he says. “Having somebody from another state reaffirms our ability to connect with rabbis throughout the world.”

Expanding the Board’s network and programming will be a top priority of Wiederhorn’s two-year tenure – both to Connecticut and outside the U.S. – as the organization works to establish an international conference of rabbis comprising representatives of different denominations. “Given the global issues we must confront as a Jewish People, it’s important to have a rabbinical voice in that arena,” Potasnik says.

Wiederhorn enjoys the respect of his colleagues in the rabbinate, Potasnik says, and is known for his dedication to interfaith outreach in the Westport community and surrounds. Among the more noteworthy indications of his deeply-held faith? Quips Potasnik, “He’s an avid Detroit Tigers fan.”

Installation of Rabbi Jeremy Wiederhorn

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Anachnu, the Schoke Jewish Family Service Program Caring for Holocaust Survivors

There are more than 100,000 Holocaust survivors in the U.S. today. Many are aged 85 or older, and one in four lives in poverty. Many live alone and are at risk of social isolation, depression and other physical- and mental-health conditions stemming from periods of starvation, disease, and torture.

In April 2019, the Jewish Federations of North America's Center for Advancing Holocaust Survivor Care awarded Schoke Jewish Family Service a grant to help advance person-centered, trauma-informed (PCTI) supportive services for Holocaust survivors in Fairfield County. The program, "Anachnu" (Hebrew for "we are together so you are not alone") serves almost 100 survivors in Greater Stamford and Greater Bridgeport with a range of social activities and support services.

With many of the events offered in Russian and English and transportation provided for all participants, the activities over the first year have drawn from 40 to 75 attendees each. Café Europa, a quarterly program offering complimentary luncheon and entertainment, is one of the best-attended Anachnu events. In between these meetings, Holocaust survivors are treated to lectures, chair yoga, Rosh Hashana and Purim celebrations, and Yom Hashoah commemoration. Special events such as a trip to Pinot's Palette, a local art studio, was a resounding success! Often, social gatherings are organized in partnership with other organizations in the community, such as a musical performance by the Chabad of Stamford Gan Yeladim preschool and a soon-to-be launched program of teen volunteers who will visit Holocaust survivors in their homes.

As Anachnu has grown, so has awareness about the program, and Schoke JFS has received additional grants. Kavod SHEF provides funds for emergency medical care and to purchase devices such as hearing aids, eyeglasses, canes, or walkers. The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, and the Kuriansky Teen Tzedekah Fund of United Jewish Federation of Greater Stamford, New Canaan and Darien also lend their financial support to Anachnu. In Upper Fairfield County, a Café

Europa luncheon and music program was held in March at TCS in Westport.

The popularity and success of Anachnu can be attributed to its dedicated program director, Marina Sapir, a Russian speaker. Her close relationship to the Holocaust-survivor community is essential to the execution of the program. Sapir finds that Inge Ecker-Verheggen's story is representative of the experience of many participants in the program.

Inge, a Norwalk resident, attends

relief agencies helped Inge and her father with housing and income but after the war spread to the Pacific Theatre, they were living under the Japanese occupation. Life was difficult, with many refugee families housed in cramped quarters.

When the war ended, Inge and her father were sponsored by a German Jewish neighbor who brought the family to Toledo, Ohio. Inge worked in an office during the day and attended school at night to earn her GED. Ready to explore the U.S., Inge and a friend

Today, Inge spends her time telling the story of her life and warning anyone who will listen about her observations of the similarities between the world's current political state and Germany before Nazism gained power.



Inge (right) and her daughter, Lini

Anachnu programs to accompany other survivors to the social activities. She finds getting out more difficult these days. Inge's daughter, Lini Ecker, briefly retold Inge's convoluted escape from Nazi Germany to the United States.

Born in Elbing, Germany in 1926, Inge and her parents negotiated an exit out of Germany to Manila, Philippines in 1938. They were told to pack up their belongings to be shipped after their departure, but the items never arrived. Inge's father and his brother had been forced to sell their business to the Nazis after they were arrested during Kristallnacht. With no income as the Third Reich's restrictions on Jews tightened, Manila was the only way out. Inge's mother died two years after they arrived in the Philippines. Jewish refugee-

traveled to New Orleans, where she met and married Tibor Ecker, Lini's father. Mr. Ecker died of a heart attack at the age of 41. At this difficult point, Inge already had two children and another on the way and no living relative nearby (Inge's cousins, who had survived the war, had scattered to England, Guatemala, Israel, Switzerland, and Australia.) She picked up her life again: ultimately, Inge remarried and settled in Fairfield County.

Today, Inge spends her time telling the story of her life and warning anyone who will listen about her observations of the similarities between the world's current political state and Germany before Nazism gained power.

For more information about Anachnu, please visit ctjfs.org/anachnu or contact Marina Sapir at 203-921-4161 / msapir@ctjfs.org.



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2019 was a special year for our Jewish Federation and our Jewish community.
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- ... increased our annual campaign and our impact for the second consecutive year.
- ... launched the Gesher Campaign to sustain our Federation Israeli Emissary program, which has already raised \$350,000 in 5-year pledges towards our \$500,000 goal.
- ... had an extraordinary Major Donor Reception in November, featuring a performance by Grammy-, Tony-, and Academy-Awardee, composer Stephen Schwartz.
- ... built a new paradigm for the way we work with our congregations, including year-round security consulting and engagement training.
- ... had a year of exciting, interesting, and provocative programs that brought our Upper Fairfield County community together, transitioning from our *Common Threads* series to our *Judaism: A 2020 Vision* framework and many events beyond, attracting more than 3,000 participants.
- ... facilitated an interfaith program, *A Flood of Ideas: A Symposium on Noah, the Great Flood, and Climate Change*, presented in partnership with the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, which was broadcast nationally by Jewish Broadcasting Service.
- ... engaged an average 1,200 community-members per month through our Federation Israeli Emissary program, further enhanced online when our emissaries transformed the Federation conference room into a TV studio for an interactive Facebook Live broadcast of Israel's April 2019 election results.
- ... launched our new Jewish Community Relations Council, focused on community education and outreach efforts, including a forum on proposed Clean State legislation presented in partnership with CONECT (Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut) and a well-attended and well-received Intro to Islam program.
- ... produced and shared a powerful video message in commemoration of the one-year anniversary of the Tree of Life-Or L'Simcha Congregation shooting, featuring representatives of 13 Upper Fairfield County congregations, Jewish Senior Services, and our Federation.
- ... opened a second Book Buddies site at Brookside Elementary School in Norwalk, pairing adult literacy volunteers with students on the cusp of reading proficiency.
- ... grew our PJ Library program for children and young families, with fun and innovative activities and congregational partnerships throughout our catchment area, including a screening of *The Number on Great-Grandpa's Arm* and talkback that attracted over 300 attendees.
- ... sponsored, hosted, and helped to coordinate professional-development seminars for Jewish educators throughout Upper Fairfield County through our Jewish Early Educators Network and our Jewish Educators Council.
- ... allocated our collective community *tzedakah* that provided social services, food and medical assistance, programming for the developmentally disabled, vocational training, emergency assistance, day-school and summer-camp scholarships, teen programming, and Holocaust education; that supported the fight against hate crimes, bullying, and anti-Semitism; and so much more, both locally and for our extended Jewish family and beyond around the world.

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And, together, there is so much more to come.

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JEWISH LIFE IN UPPER FAIRFIELD COUNTY



Journey to Afula-Gilboa

By Sharon DeFala

Sharon DeFala is a member of the Federation Board, a new member of the SNEC board, and a member of Congregation Beth El-Norwalk.

The global Jewish family is stronger together, and the Jewish Agency For Israel's Partnership2Gether program makes this vision a tangible reality. By connecting regions of Israel with Jewish communities worldwide, the agency creates an ever-growing network of support and friendship, as well as a way of understanding the rich variety of religious expression around the world.

The Southern New England Consortium (SNEC) was created with a mission to establish relationships with the residents and organizations of Afula and Gilboa in northern Israel by sharing in the development of mutually beneficial programs. SNEC currently includes 12 Jewish Federations in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island.

The small city of Afula and the Gilboa region are located in what Israelis refer to as "the periphery" of the country. Afula has 58,000 residents and Gilboa has 33,000 residents, including five Arab villages. It comprises a large percentage of immigrants, and most residents fall into a lower socio-economic bracket.

Most of the commerce and industry in Israel takes place within a 40-mile radius of Tel Aviv; the rest of the country falls into the periphery, whose communities receive less government funding, less international attention, and fewer American dollars than their cosmopolitan counterparts. Periphery communities have more international "absorption" centers to help acculturate people from every continent into Israeli society. And, because there is a broad range of immigrants – both in terms of countries of origin and period of arrival – periphery communities have a greater wealth gap between their most established regions and their poorest ones.

I was privileged to travel to our sister region in January 2020 as one of 11 American "ambassadors" on a SNEC-sponsored mission. We spent four days in the Afula-Gilboa region to explore and understand how our partnership works. We were tasked with taking a deep dive into understanding what initiatives we have supported there, how they are proceeding, and what additional work needs to be done.

When Israel was first established, it was a poor country that could not survive without support from the global Jewish community. Now, Israel has resources, industry, technology, and financial success. Our partnership is no longer just about sending money to Israel; it is a true partnership in which ideas and information run back and forth between the two countries. Nowhere is this more apparent than in our "Living Bridge" programs. (See below.)

At the Jewish Agency For Israel, we 11 American professional and lay leaders sat in a classroom with 11 Israeli counterparts and were instructed by a facilitator to close our eyes for a moment. The Americans were told, "Picture what it would feel like to be a Jew in America and know that there was no Israel." To the Israelis: "Picture what it would feel like to live in Israel and know that there was no global Jewry." When we opened our eyes, we all felt a greater appreciation for our partnership.

The phrase we heard, and repeated, frequently throughout our trip:

"We share the same history. We will likely share the same destiny."

It is true of Israel and global Jewry. It is true of Jewish and Arab Israelis. It is true of Israelis and citizens of all Middle Eastern countries. It is true for Jews in North America, Europe, Africa, Central and South America, and Asia. Our connections link us to each other and may be the source of our ultimate demise or our shared strength. It is really up to us.

SNEC uses money collected from its constituent members to augment the funding that Jewish Federations allocate directly to the region. Currently, SNEC funds 10 non-governmental organizations. These programs vary by year, based on need and allocations made by a committee of all SNEC partners, along with input from the partnership's steering committee in Israel. We visited more than two dozen programs in four days. Some are highlighted below; others are profiled on my mission blog: <https://bit.ly/2TKGrOh>

Tarbut Movement: Young artists and educators banded together to create urban art kibbutzim in underserved communities, using artistic and cultural activities as a vehicle for self-empowerment and social change.

Home in the Valley: An LGBTQ+ advocacy group to secure needed services and create accommodating solutions for a shared society

Jewish-Arab Joint Girls' Basketball Team: Given the complexities of the region, co-existence initiatives are crucial and these teen girls learn respect and integration through sports.

Beit Singer: A therapeutic school for children ages 7 – 18 who cannot live with their own families, featuring a therapeutic zoo where children learn responsibility and empathy. Future plans include building communal housing for resident "lone soldiers" serving in the IDF, who cannot return from duty to their own families.

Valley Rape Crisis Center: A satellite of the Haifa Rape Crisis Center that provides support for victims and families, including advocacy, legal, education, prevention

Emunah-Sarah Herzog Children's Center: A youth-therapy center for 50 residents and 70 day participants ages 6-18, creating a functional, nurturing, and safe family/home for underprivileged and abused children.

Marching Together for a Shared Future: Promotes coexistence between Israeli Jews and Arabs through joint activities to get to know each other and dispel fear and stigmas.

Seeing these programs in action and how they made a positive change on the communities of Afula-Gilboa was a gift I hope I can repay with my involvement on our own Federation's Executive Committee and on the SNEC partnership lay-leader board.

Read Sharon's Afula-Gilboa SNEC Mission blog at <https://bit.ly/2TKGrOh>.





Lay and professional leaders from SNEC and Afula

Youth Futures

Ofek was a sad, quiet boy who sat in the back of the classroom. His past attempts to connect with classmates had resulted in him being bullied and ostracized. At this point, he preferred to keep to himself. At home, younger siblings needed his help. Mom's mental health wasn't always reliable. Dad was rarely home.

Luckily, his name came to the attention of the non-government agency, "Youth Futures" (in Hebrew: *Potkhim Atid*, "opening a

Ofek continued to gain confidence - in his school work, in his home life, and with friends. He found his voice. And then, he *literally* found his voice: once he was no longer afraid of being ridiculed by classmates, he began singing in music classes and even became a song leader.

When the SNEC ambassadors met Ofek, he was surrounded by his mentors and Youth Futures staff, who encouraged him to sing us a song. He hesitated, and then, he just sat there in this room full of American adults, closed his eyes, and opened his mouth and sang "*Yeled Shel Abba*," ("Daddy's Boy," - "Daddy is always here to embrace and protect you") in a clear, beautiful, and strong tenor voice. He sang the first verse while we all held our breath, in the first chorus he gained more confidence, his voice becoming fuller. The second verse resonated against the walls of the small conference room.

In the last chorus, all of the Israelis in the room joined in and sang along with him like so many spontaneous back-up singers. The Americans all sat quietly, wiping our eyes.

Ofek told us that, thanks to Youth Futures, he feels that he now has a strong future. He has friends, he has confidence, and most of all, he has found his own voice.



The SNEC delegation at the Jewish Agency For Israel

future"), sponsored in part by the Jewish Federations of North America. In 5th grade, Ofek was assigned an in-school mentor named Toem. Every week, he would meet with Toem to discuss what was going on in his life.

Toem identified concerns about Ofek, beginning with his self-esteem. She is assigned 16 cases per semester, and works with each child at three different levels: individual counseling, group activities to help improve social skills, and directly with the families to help them get access to the social services they need.

After Toem and Ofek had worked together for two years, they were joined by Elinor, the middle-school mentor. Over the next two years, Toem and Elinor helped Ofek's mother get help for her mental-health issues and reengaged Ofek's father. With both parents more present, Ofek was able to look after his grades, instead of his siblings.



Elinor, Ofek, and Toem at Youth Futures office



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Literacy Volunteer Program

Expands to Norwalk

Building on the success of its Book Buddies pilot project in Bridgeport, the Federation expanded into a second school this year, with the launch of a new Book Buddies literacy program at Brookside Elementary School in Norwalk.

According to Anita Chargar, Book Buddies co-chair, the program affords students an opportunity to gain confidence as readers and strengthen their literacy skills as they develop new strategies, expand their vocabulary, and become more fluent readers. The goal of the program is to increase literacy rates in Upper Fairfield County, particularly in Norwalk and Bridgeport, opening up new opportunities for children as they become life-long readers.

“As they bond with their buddies, students learn to engage in meaningful conversations about the text they are reading; this enhances the experience,” Chargar says. “Reading is a powerful tool and Book Buddies is an approach that aims to engage and motivate children in their literacy learning.”

Launched in fall 2017 at Blackham Elementary School in Bridgeport, Book Buddies pairs each volunteer adult reader with the same student for a half-hour each week, to strengthen reading skills and encourage self-confidence and a love of reading. At the new site, Brookside administrators selected 20 students on the cusp of reading proficiency to meet with volunteers, who not only read with the students, but also do educational puzzles and wordplay games. What’s more, they bond during their weekly meetings, creating role modeling and opening a window into new worlds that transcend the half-hour time slot.

“Together, each Book Buddies pair read and laugh and, one-to-one, they forge a bond,” says Lauren Zirn, who co-chairs the project with Anita Chargar. “When reading a book, the children don’t just sound out the words; they talk about who-what-where-when-and-why. They make connections with other stories and real life. In fact, just recently, I heard a volunteer talk to her buddy about Picasso and Monet while the two were working on a word-search about artists.”

Book Buddies has met with rave reviews at Brookside, according to interim principal James Crouch, who is thrilled to have introduced the project to his school this year. Currently, 77% of the student body at Brookside are eligible for reduced-price or free lunch and only 44% of the children read at grade level.

“Our students have benefited, not only from the Tier III individualized instruction provided by the tutors, but also from the positive relationships,” Crouch says. “I hope we can continue the program in the future and I would recommend the program to my colleagues throughout the district.”

Book Buddies is a project of the Federation’s Books2Connect program, which was established in 2010 to collect and donate gently-used and new books to young readers. Since its inception, Books2Connect has donated more than 10,000 books to organizations throughout Connecticut, including city schools, community health centers, food pantries, and shelters. For more information, visit shalomct.org/books2connect.

Two Rabbis, Four Questions



Last summer, the Upper Fairfield County Jewish community welcomed two young new rabbis to our clergy ranks – Rabbi Sarah Marion of Congregation B’nai Israel in Bridgeport and Rabbi Elana Nemitoff-Bresler, Rabbi-Educator at Temple Israel in Norwalk. We asked the pair to contemplate four questions appropriate to the season.

Rabbi Sarah Marion’s journey to the rabbinate began when she was 12. In the midst of her Bat Mitzvah preparations, a relative reminded her that she would be the first woman in her family to have a Bat Mitzvah. Realizing that she had a Jewish leadership role to play in a family with a weak history of religious identity, she felt a newfound sense of purpose and belonging. Her home and her temple became places where she felt she had value and something unique to bring to those around her. That moment ultimately empowered her to set her sights on the rabbinate.

Rabbi Elana Nemitoff-Bresler is passionate about making learning and Judaism accessible to all, no matter their background or learning needs. This passion was imbued within her at a young age, as she attended Goldman Union Camp Institute in Zionsville, Indiana for many years and saw how inclusion made all aspects of camp that much stronger. After her first year of rabbinical school, she spent a year working at Beit Issie Shapira, a school for kids with special needs in Ra’anana, Israel.

Beyond your own congregation, what, in your short time here, do you think makes the Upper Fairfield County Jewish community particularly unique?

Sarah: Two words: Disco Night! My first night here, pictures started flooding my Facebook page of my new congregants and colleagues dressed in their finest sequins and bell-bottoms for the Federation’s spring celebration. If I had only known – I wouldn’t have packed away all my ‘80s outfits! Clearly, ours is a community that celebrates together, a community that has fun together, a community in which a sense of love and joy is infused into everything we do. I’ve also been lifted and inspired by the truly collaborative relationships among



the clergy and professionals who make this community so special and so unique.

Elana: The connection between the clergy of congregations across denominations. There is such a collaborative relationship, both professional and otherwise, that I have loved getting to know and benefitting from. I've also noticed that there is not a centrally organized Jewish location where families go – we are a constellation of different communities in our own bubbles. The beautiful part of this area is when we come together to make a beautiful quilt of Jewish life.

What do you hope to be your most defining/memorable characteristic as a rabbi?

Sarah: So hard to choose just one, so here are four: *Fearless, Feminist, Friendly* and *Fun*. I want to be known for standing up and speaking out in a world that is so broken. I want to showcase that women can simultaneously raise children and lead communities and move us beyond the gender stereotypes that have held us back for far too long. I want to be known as the rabbi that is *fiercely friendly*, the rabbi that others know they can come to, for any reason, at any time. And, I want to be known for having the perfect costume for every (appropriate) occasion.

Elana: Joy and love. From the time I was a young child, Judaism came alive through song, food and experience. In my role, I have the opportunity to infuse joy into so many corners of Judaism, bringing it alive and helping sustain it for 21st-century Jews. Judaism cannot work in a vacuum and I hope to bring a smile to Jewish experience for years to come.

Is there a new kind of oppression you are thinking about this Passover?

Sarah: I think a lot about the expectations we place upon our children these days about everything they “should” be doing: get good grades, be involved in tons of extra-curricular activities, be the “best” at everything, all in preparation for the highly competitive college process. These days, kids don't have the freedom anymore just to be kids. I so believe that synagogue and the Jewish community can be the place where parents and kids receive the message that “it's OK to be OK sometimes, and we will love you no matter what” – a message that, I think, can be highly liberating for the parent or child who needs to hear it the most.

Elana: Although not new, I'm thinking of the oppression of mental illness, as something that isn't talked about much. There are so many ways that all of our lives are impacted by the hatred and vitriol in the world, but how often do we ignore the inner demons or struggles that we each live through? My hope is that this Pesach, we can help liberate ourselves by accessing the appropriate help and care we each need to be the best person we can be.

Did your family have any Passover traditions or foods that are close to your heart (or stomach)?

Sarah: Passover does not feel complete without my Grandma Gertrude's potato kugel and her Passover sponge cake. Though she now lives in Kauai and I don't often get to see her for Passover, her

**“It's OK
to be OK
sometimes,
and we will
love you
no matter
what.”**

– Rabbi Sarah Marion

presence is always felt when I make her sponge cake and remember how she taught me to separate the egg whites, and how she used to shush us while the sponge cake was cooking, lest we got too loud and caused it to collapse. (And, of course, how my nice Jewish bubbe ended up living in Hawaii is another answer for another day!)

Elana: Passover was always the time that we gathered around the kitchen and spent time cooking together with my mom, while my dad locked himself in his office preparing the various gaffes he would present at the seder. My mom taught me to make Linzertorte and Chicken Marbella while my dad taught me the importance of throwing snakes at the table and putting fish in our water cups. Passover is a family holiday of fun.



Is Screen Time Toxic for Teens?



See the New Documentary That Plumbs the Depths of Internet Addiction

By Eve Moskowitz, LCSW

Clinical Director, Schoke Jewish Family Service

Adolescence is historically a time of turmoil and transition for most young adults, with hormonal surges and a preoccupation with social groups rather than immediate family. Today's teens have vastly different experiences than those who came of age a decade ago. Those born between 1995 and 2012 are growing up with smartphones and tablets and believe that the internet has existed since the beginning of time. As teen depression and suicide rates have been on the rise since 2011, it might be safe to say this generation is on the brink of a mental-health crisis. The deterioration can be traced to their addiction to the digital world.

There is no definitive proof that excessive use of electronic devices has a negative effect on the adolescent population. Nonetheless, according to San Diego State University psychologist, Jean Twenge, who has researched generational differences for the past 25 years, evidence suggests that there is an inverse relationship between time spent on digital devices and happiness.

The question arises as to which comes first: Are the feelings of unhappiness – often, anxiety and depression – a result of excessive screen time, or does the screen time serve to soothe the unhappiness, as addictive activities often do?

Research suggests that many teens are using their devices for a minimum of four hours per day, and most teens remain on social media well into the night. As the adolescent brain continues to form, a minimum of eight to 10 hours of sleep per night is optimal. It is difficult to trace whether the lack of sleep might cause increased depression and anxiety or if depression and anxiety might result in a lack of sleep.

It has been noted that teens today are spending less time outside the home, less time interacting face to face, and less time dating,

which translates into less time practicing interactive relational skills. Learning how to communicate and interact by sharing stories at a dinner table or spending time in the same room with a friend (with no distractions) appears to be a lost skill.

As the world of electronic communication is not likely to go away, what is necessary to shift the paradigm? In her 2016 documentary, *Screenagers: Growing Up in the Digital Age*, physician and filmmaker Delaney Ruston explores the question, probing into the vulnerable corners of family life, including her own, to explore struggles over social media, video games, academics, and internet addiction.

Ruston's new film, *Screenagers NEXT CHAPTER: Uncovering Skills for Stress Resilience*, explores ways that parents and educators can help young people thrive in our screen- and stress-filled world.

Parents and teens are invited to a free showing of *Screenagers NEXT CHAPTER*, presented by Merkaz Community High School for Judaic Studies and Schoke Jewish Family Service:

Tuesday, May 5, 7-9 PM

Congregation B'nai Israel, 2710 Park Ave., Bridgeport

Stay for a post-screening conversation with Nadja Streiter, LMSW, a psychotherapist and parent coach in Westport, with expertise in treating problematic internet and technology use and video-gaming addiction.

The program is open to the community free of charge; reservations are required:

<http://nextchapterbymerkaz.eventcombo.com>





A Flood of Ideas



Here All Along with Sarah Hurwitz

New York Jewish Food Discovery Tour with The Gefilteria



June 14, 8 AM – 5 PM

Cost: \$200, includes all tastings, lunch, coach bus, and fact-filled journey curated by leading Jewish food experts

Info/registration – Stacy Kamisar
skamisar@jewishphilanthropyct.org
 or call 203-226-8197

Join Federation for Jewish Philanthropy and Jeffrey Yoskowitz and Liz Alpern of The Gefilteria, leaders of the Jewish Food Renaissance, on a food tour through several off-the-beaten-path Jewish communities in New York City. We'll begin in an Ethiopian-Israeli cafe in Harlem, dine in a Bukharian (Uzbeki) restaurant in Queens, and end in the Hasidic communities of Brooklyn. We'll also learn about the intricacies of the ultra-Orthodox community as we get hands-on at the Masbia Soup Kitchen. Learn about the history and present-day story of Jewish life beyond the Lower East Side or the Upper East and West Sides, and to taste some unique flavors of our global Jewish World that is so close to home.

Judaism: A 2020 Vision

What happens when Jewish traditions, rituals, and culture collide with modern-day perspectives, issues, and modalities?

Since September, the Upper Fairfield County Jewish community has been asking these questions through a series of exciting, interesting, and provocative programs – and coming up with equally compelling responses.

Join us for these upcoming *Judaism: A 2020 Vision* programs (all open to the community free of charge), and stay tuned for another themed year of communal exploration, to be announced in the coming weeks!

***Catbird: The Ballad of Barbi Prim* with Cantor Barbara Ostfeld**

Sunday, Apr. 19, 12 noon

Temple Shalom, 259 Richards Ave., Norwalk

The first ordained woman cantor in Jewish history, Barbara Ostfeld was the first female cantorial student to graduate from the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College School of Sacred Music, in 1975. Her new memoir is a candid, poignant journey through struggles and triumphs from childhood to maturity, and reveals how she found her true calling in the Jewish world and shattered the glass ceiling for women to be Jewish leaders in a field that long excluded them. Thanks to her courage and tenacity, women now make up over 50 percent of the cantorial profession in Reform and Conservative Judaism. INFO 203-866-0148 / admin@templeshalomweb.org

An Afternoon of Klezmer with Radio KLEZ

Sunday, June 7, 3 PM

Congregation B'nai Israel, 2710 Park Ave., Bridgeport

It was not so long ago that klezmer music was everywhere as you walked the hot summer streets of Bridgeport's "Little Bessarabia." Those days are gone now, the old neighborhood replaced by power plants, parking lots, and sports arenas. But listening to Radio KLEZ, you can still taste the savory richness of the bourekas, smell the salty fish-market air, feel the heft of a picket sign in your hands, and sweat the night away to the traditional music of old Yiddish Connecticut. INFO 203-336-1858 info@cbibpt.org

Jewish Pride: Celebrating the Rainbow of Humanity

Sunday, June 14, 4 PM

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

Judaism's ancient commitment to seeing a reflection of God within each person leads us, as contemporary Jews, to celebrate the full rainbow of humanity. At "Jewish Pride," we'll explore both the ancient Jewish roots of LGBTQ+ equality as well as the work that still remains to be done. INFO 203-544-8695 / tbc@templebnaichaim.org

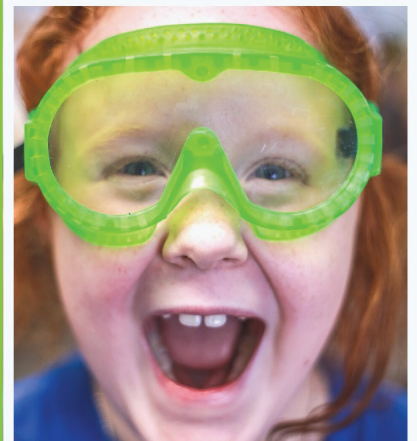
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 contact Sarah Tropp-Pacelli
 at 203-372-3521 x114 or
tropp@discoverymuseum.org



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What Has the Upper Fairfield County Jewish Community Been Up To?



Federation's Cocktails for a Cause 2019 host, Karen Ferleger (center) with guest speaker Barbara Lerner Spectre (left), founding director of Paideia-The European Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden, and her assistant, Adrienne Palmer



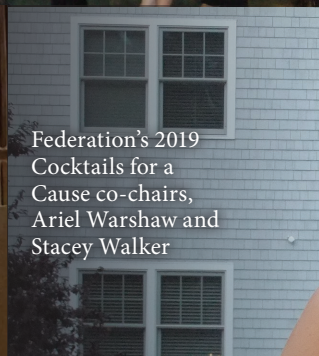
Former White House speechwriter Sarah Hurwitz discussed her memoir, *Here All Along* as keynote speaker at Federation's Taste of Torah evening of adult Jewish learning, held at Congregation Beth El-Norwalk



The Upper Fairfield County Jewish community's third cohort of Mitzvah Heroes were honored at Federation's TzedakahFest, held at Congregation B'nai Israel in Bridgeport.



Federation's community-wide Kristallnacht program at Congregation Beth El Fairfield featured a screening of the documentary, *Robbery of the Heart* and a talkback with (left to right) the film's director, Micah Brandt; siblings Harry Weichsel and Eva Hausman, featured in the film; and moderator, Federation CEO David Weisberg.



Federation's 2019 Cocktails for a Cause co-chairs, Ariel Warshaw and Stacey Walker





Rabbi Sarah Marion offers a blessing as the new Federation board is installed.



Federation's Jewish Community Relations Council, co-chaired by Barbara Schellenberg (left) and Art Gang (right), presented "Intro to Islam: Inside the Koran" with Imam Kemal Cecunjanin (second from left), moderated by Rabbi James Prosnit (second from right).



Steven Skybell (center), who played "Tevye" in the smash Yiddish production of *Fiddler on the Roof* by National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene, was a guest speaker at a screening of *Fiddler: A Miracle of Miracles* at TCS, part of Federation's "Judaism: A 2020 Vision" programming.



Federation participated in the "No Hate No Fear" Solidarity March across the Brooklyn Bridge on Jan. 5, an interfaith response to a spate of antisemitic attacks in the New York area.

Fed Squad 2020



Squad Goals 2020

Include Person-to-Person Engagement

By David Weisberg

Technology can be our best friend until it becomes our enemy. Take some recent elections, as an example. As voting processes progressed over decades from paper ballots to electronic machines to apps, it became increasingly evident that the most reliable results might come from the most basic method – checking a box on a piece of paper.

At the same time, as our individual worlds become larger, as it has become increasingly easy to connect with people and with information around the globe, our worlds can also feel less small, less intimate, and, ironically, less connected.

These challenges can be particularly acute when it comes to building community. In a world where everyone can be overwhelmed by flooded email inboxes and unsolicited phone calls and texts, it is hard to create new connections, and nothing replaces building new person-to-person relationships.

It is within that context that our Jewish Federation is introducing **Fed Squad 2020**, a new initiative aimed at making our large Jewish community feel just a little bit smaller, and we are seeking squad

members to be part of that effort.

The concept is a simple one. Fed Squad 2020 ambassadors will each be assigned five or six community-members with whom to make a monthly contact, inviting the community-members to join them at an upcoming event, a volunteer opportunity, or even just for a cup of coffee, helping them if necessary to navigate the many wonderful resources that exist in our vibrant Jewish community.

The core messaging for these monthly communications will be provided by the Federation, with Fed Squad 2020 ambassadors' focus being on making those personal touches and building those person-to-person relationships that can help advance engagement, involvement, and a sense of connection.

With the program set to launch this spring, our Federation is seeking members for the Fed Squad 2020 team, and the qualifications are simple – a friendly disposition, a kind manner, and a shared vision of building a more welcoming and connecting community.

If you are interested in joining Fed Squad 2020, please email fjp@jewishphilanthropyct.org.



Circle of Friends Crumb Together Kosher Bakery ... Always Rising

Very meticulously, Hannah rolls a chunk of dough into a smooth ball, then dips it into a bowl of cinnamon sugar, brushes off the excess, and deposits it onto a baking sheet set on a stainless steel table. Hannah is in the commercial kitchen at the Crumb Together Kosher Bakery, which rents space at Beth Israel Chabad in Norwalk.

She works under the watchful eye of Executive Pastry Chef Michelle Klem who, like Hannah, started at Crumb Together Bakery — a program offered under the umbrella of the non-profit Circle of Friends, whose mission is to train and employ young adults with disabilities in the bakery industry. Incorporated in the curriculum is the ServSafe Food Handler Program, required by the State of Connecticut for those seeking employment in the food industry.

The pair were moving slowly through Klem's recipe for snickerdoodle cookies, one of several of the bakery's kosher offerings prepared by a staff of baker-trainees — adults with disabilities, aged 20 to 30 — overseen by Klem.

The bakery, which turns out pareve, non-dairy, nut-free, kosher baked goods and challah, was started by Freida Hecht in 2018 as part of Circle of Friends, the non-profit she founded in 2004. The organization engages children, teens, and young adults

with special needs and involves them in inclusive social experiences, through interaction with more than 150 teen volunteers.

The bakery — whose tagline is “always rising” — takes this engagement a step further and seeks to provide valuable job skills to adults with disabilities. “Seventy-five percent of adults with disabilities are unemployed,” says Hecht. “After an individual with special needs leaves high school, there are no opportunities, no jobs or training, no socialization.” But with Crumb Together, Hecht, Klem, and Job Coach Rachel Carusone (who was busy in the kitchen with another group making chocolate crinkle cookies) are working to empower these adults.

“Maimonides writes that there are eight levels of giving, and the highest level is giving someone a job, a way to make a living, because you are giving them their independence and allowing them their dignity,” Hecht says. Why a bakery? “Everyone loves to bake, and everyone loves to taste. And there’s no kosher bakery around here,” she says.

Hannah has been working at Crumb Together for almost a year. She says she struggled at first with measuring the ingredients but has since gotten the hang of

it. “I like being here because I like making friends and it gives me lessons how to make stuff like cookies,” she says. “It feels good and it’s fun.”

It’s crucial to Hecht and Klem that the adults with disabilities are the ones to perform all the kitchen tasks. Paul and fellow baker Kathryn were making progress on the chocolate crinkle cookies, while Hannah and Chase were loading the first baking sheet into the oven. Even those unable to bake fill important roles, whether packaging, labeling, or delivering orders.

“The strength of Crumb Together Bakery is not only that that every baker learns baking and marketable skills, but the work builds confidence and self-esteem and they feel they are contributing to society in a very productive way,” Hecht says.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, who is the guiding light behind Circle of Friends and Crumb Together Bakery, taught, “Just as it is impossible to escape our own life’s challenges, so too, we can never turn our backs on the challenges faced by our fellow.”

For more information: ctbakery.org / 203-293-7599

The Circle of Friends and Crumb Together Bakery are beneficiaries of the Federation for Jewish Philanthropy of Upper Fairfield County.



Qes Efraim Zion Lawi is a spiritual leader of the Ethiopian-Jewish community in Israel, the first Israeli native to be appointed to this position.

In January, Qes Efraim made his second visit to Upper Fairfield County, three years after a successful introduction to our community. He spent nine days davening at various congregations; meeting children in preschools, religious schools, and Merkaz; teaching cantors Ethiopian-Jewish blessings in the Ge'ez language; speaking at Federation's annual meeting; and sharing meals with community-members.



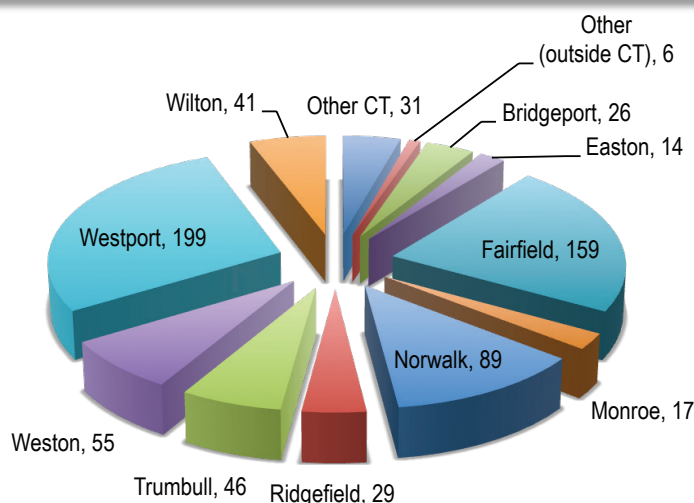
Does PJ Library Work?

Over half of our current families were previously unknown to the Jewish Community

97% of PJ families feel that PJ Library has made them more interested in Jewish traditions, values and/or customs.

63% of PJ families are interested in getting more connected to local Jewish organizations, activities and/or people.

PJ Library Subscriptions by Town



Town	Subscriber #
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Easton	14
Fairfield	159
Monroe	17
Norwalk	89
Ridgefield	29
Trumbull	46
Weston	55
Westport	199
Wilton	41
Total	712

PJ Library by the #s

540 Active PJ Library Families

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700 + recipients of our monthly eNewsletter

PJ Library Events in the Past Year

31 Total Programs

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17 Programs at Jewish Locations

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11 PJ Only Programs

20 PJ Collaboration Programs



A gift to our community from Federation and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation: Jewish books mailed to your children every month! Learn more at pjlibrary.org.

New Independent Senior Living Facility to

Rise in Downtown Fairfield

After years of planning and constructing The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Campus on Park Avenue in Bridgeport, Jewish Senior Services (JSS) has turned its attention to the one level of care which could not be offered at that location: independent living.

Independent living communities are designed to offer seniors high-quality apartment-style living with a range of amenities to support their independence. While there are many such communities throughout the U.S., few exist in the Upper Fairfield County area.

Jewish Senior Services has proposed to operate a 148-unit complex with a combination of floorplans, each built to the highest industry standards by Shelton-based developer, R.D. Scinto, Inc. Located off Exit 21 of I-95, the seven-acre site on Thorpe Street in Fairfield is adjacent to a large wetlands area and close to shopping and restaurants along Post Road.

R.D. Scinto chairman, Bob Scinto, has worked over the last year with Jewish Senior Services leadership to design the community and to apply for necessary



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Town of Fairfield permits for construction. The final Planning and Zoning Commission public hearing was held in December 2019, with project approval granted in January.

"Not a day goes by when we are not asked about independent living," says JSS president and CEO, Andrew Banoff. "We are very excited to offer a great alternative to those who want to remain in the area – close to downtown restaurants, shopping, etc."

The monthly rental fee will not only cover all basic utilities and taxes, but will also include a daily meal plan, weekly laundry and housekeeping services, recreational and fitness activities, an on-site movie theatre, and in-house health nursing staff. Residents will also enjoy priority access to other Jewish Senior Services programs and services, including Assisted Living and Skilled Nursing Care, if needed, and membership in The J Fitness Center, as well as transportation to the Weinberg Campus on Park Avenue in Bridgeport.

For more information, contact
Liz Lockwood: 203-396-1024.

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Jewish Community Resource Directory

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Bridgeport

Congregation Bikur Cholim
2365 Park Ave.
203-981-4458
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
84 Senior Place
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

continued on the next page





Stephen Schwartz was In the House!

On November 14, members of our Jewish community gathered at the home of Linda and Michael Gordon in Westport for a very special major donor reception featuring Grammy-, Tony-, and Academy-Awardee, composer Stephen Schwartz, himself a member of our Upper Fairfield County Jewish community. It was an amazing night, as Stephen treated our major donors to some of his most memorable songs from Broadway shows such as *Wicked*, *Pippin*, and *Godspell*, joined for one tune by special guests Rabbi-Cantor Shirah Sklar and Rabbi-Cantor Dan Sklar.

Regina Madwed, Capitol Photo Interactive: capitolphotoevents.com



Regina Madwed, Capitol Photo Interactive: capitolphotoevents.com



FIGHTING HATE FOR GOOD™



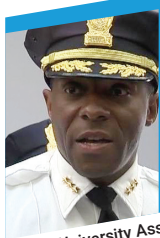
I also use my ADL training as a resident assistant in my dorm where I help students stand up for what they believe and never cower in the face of adversity.

– Ellie Cooper, former ADL teen trainer



ADL is an organization that stands up for the rights of all people of all different backgrounds and views. By coming together in the face of adversity, we can stand as one.

– CT State Senator Saud Anwar



I think that the work that ADL is doing is underrated. They've been doing a great job... to help people to come together and feel safe and secure because there are far more things that unite us than divide us.

– Yale University Ass't Chief of Police Anthony Campbell, Participant in 2018 Nat'l Counter Terrorism Seminar



ADL is a leading anti-hate organization. Founded in 1913 in response to an escalating climate of anti-Semitism and bigotry, its timeless mission is to protect the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all.

ADL's Connecticut Regional Office covers the entire state with its services and programs.

To learn more:
Visit connecticut.adl.org
Email us at connecticut@adl.org
Call us at 203.288.6500

Jewish Community Resource Directory

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
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Border Song

Opens a Window onto the U.S. Migrant Crisis

In January, Federation CEO David Weisberg took a week of personal time away from the office. Last summer, he did so in order to become a living liver donor; on this trip, he chose to devote his time to learning about the migrant crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border, flying to Tucson, Ariz. to do a deep dive into the situation while volunteering with a variety of local non-profits engaged in the migrant issue.

Throughout the week, Weisberg wrote a blog documenting his journey and his experiences, and that blog caught the attention of noted rabbi Menachem Creditor, Weisberg's personal friend and the Pearl and Ira Meyer Scholar in Residence at UJA-Federation New York, who suggested that the blog be published as a book.

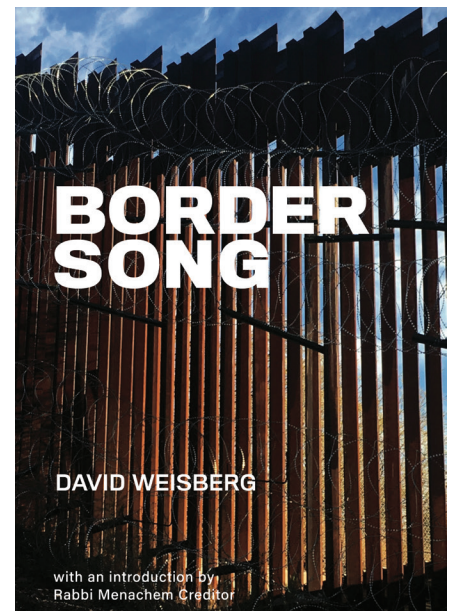
February saw the publication of Weisberg's first book, *Border Song*. In his introduction, Rabbi Creditor writes: "To David should go our great thanks for expressing himself so skillfully, for being brave enough to make this journey, for the music of his soul, and for deciding that his own listening was only the beginning. May we decide to hear as David has. May we do

more than just listen; may be do everything in our power to change what is into something better, so that our sisters and brothers can finally sing a new song, a song of freedom. A song of coming home."

The book, which represents Weisberg's personal experiences and reflections, has captured the interest and positive feedback from a variety of national Jewish leaders.

Mark Hetfield, CEO of HIAS, the leading Jewish organization working to provide humanitarian aid and assistance to refugees, wrote: "In *Border Song*, David Weisberg takes the reader on a journey with him along the Arizona-Mexico border. Weisberg writes beautifully about an ugly subject. As the leader of HIAS, the American Jewish community's agency for forcibly displaced persons, I am grateful that, by telling us what he sees, Weisberg makes the case for why Americans, particularly Jewish Americans, should care."

The book also resonated in the Upper Fairfield County community. Federation Co-Chair Deborah Hochhauser called Weisberg's work "an honest and real-time portrayal of the crisis at the U.S. border."



She says, "David's wonderfully written, eye-opening retelling of his journey to the Arizona-Mexico border should help us all understand and appreciate the anguish and desperation of those migrants – hopefully causing more of us to care and assist."

Border Song is available on Amazon. Weisberg has pledged that any proceeds from the sale of the book will be used to help organizations in the Tucson area that he worked with during this trip.



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Jewish Community Resource Directory

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
jfsc.org | 203-366-5438

Jewish Federation Association of
Connecticut (JFACT)
jfact.org | 860-727-5701

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 | 203-659-3601

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

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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 & PJ Our Way: Free Jewish-themed books for kids to age 11
Federation for Jewish Philanthropy of Upper Fairfield County
fjp@jewishphilanthropyct.org
jewishphilanthropyct.org | 203-659-3602

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

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Dayschools

Bi-Cultural Hebrew Academy
(Pre-K – 12th Grade)
2186 High Ridge Road, Stamford
bcha-ct.org
Lower School: 203-329-2186
Upper School: 203-883-8970
A merger of Bi-Cultural Day School and Jewish High School of Connecticut

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

Alef-Tav Hebrew for Children & Ulpan Habait
An Israeli program for learning Hebrew
israelisinct@hotmail.com | 203-434-7705

Youth Activities

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

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

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

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

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

Westport USY
The Conservative Synagogue, Westport
tcs-westport.org/communities/youth-groups
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Summer 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
*Contact Federation for Jewish Philanthropy to learn
about subsidized bus transportation from Upper
Fairfield County: 203-226-8197*

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

Ramah Sports Academy
Held at Fairfield University
ramahsportsacademy.org | 855-577-7678

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

Kesher 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

CULTURAL

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

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

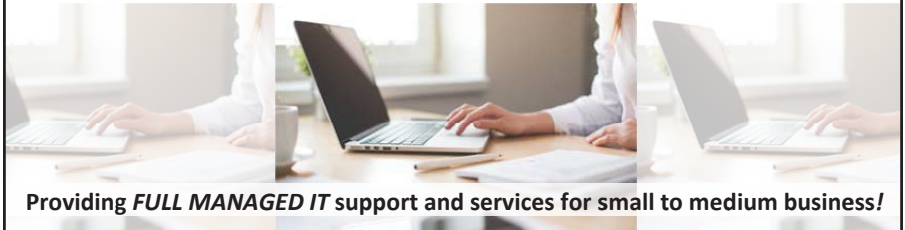
Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County
jhsfc-ct.org | 203-321-1373, ext. 150

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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

Seymour I. Hollander Apartments
Greater Bridgeport Jewish Housing Corp.
hollanderhouse.org | 203-374-7868



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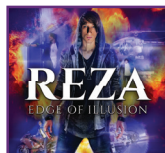


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From Camper to Camp Director: A Szarvas Story



Camp Director Sasha Friedman

For a young Sasha Friedman growing up in the former Soviet Union, practicing Judaism was the furthest thing from his reality. Born under the reign of communism, his family was Jewish, but Judaism didn't play much of a role in his life.

"...I knew about Judaism, but I never really understood it. It was never a part of me," says Friedman.

That was until Sasha spent his first summer at Szarvas, the international Jewish summer camp that had recently opened in the Hungarian countryside. Founded in 1990 by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) – the global Jewish

humanitarian organization and Federation partner – and the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, Szarvas began as a place for young Jews from Central and Eastern Europe to rediscover their heritage, where decades of communism had all but snuffed out Jewish culture and religious life in the region.

And it was there that Sasha celebrated his first Shabbat, explored Judaism, and connected with his larger community.

"It became something that was part of my heart," he says.

That one summer was all he needed. From then on, he spent many years at Szarvas, first as a camper from 1996 to 1998,

and then as a counselor for a few years. Finally, in 2006, he became Szarvas's beloved camp director.

Today, three decades since it first opened, with more than 25,000 alumni worldwide, Szarvas is a global home for the reinvigorated Jewish identity that is fueling communities across Europe.

Every summer, Sasha and his team make magic happen for around 1,600 campers, aged 6-18, from more than 25 countries. The key to the camp's success is Sasha's understanding that Szarvas is much more than just a summer camp; it's a place that provides a first real encounter for many young people with Judaism – its traditions and customs, and the feeling of inclusivity and connection that comes with it.

"At Szarvas, European Jewish life is brimming with possibility and young Jews are unabashedly proud of who they are, eager to contribute to the rich tapestry that makes up the global Jewish experience today," says Friedman.

Each summer's curriculum is carefully designed to be accessible, thought-provoking, and fun. Campers are encouraged to draw inspiration from Jewish culture and history, and to explore what being Jewish means to them, and how they can apply it to their daily lives. They leave Szarvas equipped with a powerful connection to their Jewish heritage and the leadership, communication, and organizing skills to build the Jewish communities of their dreams.

In fact, Szarvas alumni have become Jewish leaders in their communities and today run or have created Jewish community centers, kindergartens, and local summer camps all over Europe, including Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and the Baltics.

"I have the most fun job in the world," Friedman says, "but the real reason I've devoted my life to this cause is that the work we do is critical. We inspire the next generation to action, creating future community leaders and future engaged Jews."

This summer, many Jewish children across Connecticut will attend their own local Jewish camps. Now, thanks to the Federation for Jewish Philanthropy's support of JDC, thousands of young Jews around the world have that same access to Jewish education and culture, giving them the opportunity to discover a passion for Jewish life and explore their Jewish identities at a summer camp of their own – Camp Szarvas.



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Building Bridges over Breaking Bread

With the crack of an egg, the Federation Israeli Emissaries are bringing a taste of their country to host families in our region, as a way to share their beloved recipes from home with their new “homes” in Upper Fairfield County. Sharing a home-cooked meal is an immersive experience for host families, who literally get to taste a bit of daily life imported from Israel.

“There’s nothing like the power of food to bring people together,” says Stacy Kamisar, Program Director. “With this simple, yet fun idea, our Emissaries connect their new host families with the familiar tastes and smells of an Israeli kitchen, sharing more than a meal, but also a sense of community around the table.”



Ella and Ido cook with the Kesselman family



Israeli Emissaries with the Portnay family

For the past few years, the Federation Israeli Emissary team has been visiting each host family to cook a meal in their kitchen. The idea began as a way to meet all the host families, but quickly changed into an opportunity to further deepen the cultural bonds between our community and Israel.

This year, the menu included such Israeli family favorites as *shakshuka* – a popular egg-and-tomato casserole – as well as Israeli salad, *ptitim* (Israeli couscous), turkey schnitzel and tahina cookies.

“Sitting down to eat together and learning about the Emissaries’ lives in Israel, their transition to the United States, as well as their plans for the holidays, was really fascinating,” says Debbie Portnay, whose family hosted Emissary Noya Ben-Or in the fall of 2019. “The entire night provided our kids and us with a glimpse into current Israeli life and what it’s like for these young adults to grow up there.”

Each year, the Federation brings four recent high-school graduates from Israel, who postpone their IDF military service to spend a year in our community. These young “ambassadors” volunteer in the religious schools, preschools, public schools, and community agencies throughout Upper Fairfield County, designing innovative activities to share their love of Israel. They live with host families for a three-month period, creating lifelong bonds. If you are interested in learning more about the program, contact Stacy Kamisar at skamisar@jewishphilanthropyct.org.

Tahina Cookies

From the Kitchen of Efrat Ben Or, Noya’s mom

- 1 c. tahina
- 3 c. flour
- ¾ c. sugar
- 1 ½ tsp. vanilla sugar
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder

1. Pre-heat oven to 350° F.
2. Mix all ingredients until blended. Roll dough into small balls and place on baking sheet, one inch apart. Gently press a walnut or almond into the top of each ball.
3. Bake for 10 minutes until golden brown and small cracks appear. Let cookies cool before removing from baking sheet.
4. B’tayavon!

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From inspiring spiritual growth and educational classes to our popular daily morning minyan, Beit Chaverim has become a “full-service” Jewish center, where members and friends join together regularly for fun, learning, holidays, and celebrations.

Scholarly and academic appetites are indulged at our ongoing Tuesday-evening “Shmorg” of adult Jewish learning and lively weekly Lunch and Learn with Beit Chaverim’s spiritual leader, “Jazz Rabbi” Greg Wall, both open to the community free of charge. From communal gourmet feasts, an annual “Floating Torah” men’s sailing trip to the Caribbean, and holiday celebrations with live music featuring Rabbi Wall, there’s always something cooking at Beit Chaverim.

Join us on Sunday, May 31st for our Gala, “A 2020 Vision - Looking Forward/Looking Back,” when we honor our past presidents who have brought the congregation so far, and our future leaders -- the young congregants who are already stepping up to take us even further!

To learn more about Beit Chaverim’s upcoming Gala, weekly services, and inspiring programs, please visit BeitChaverim.com. We hope to see you soon!

Congregation Beth El Fairfield

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

Announcing the livestreaming of our Shabbat services

Since its founding in 1952, Congregation Beth El Fairfield has been on the forefront of Jewish life in our community. We have a growing preschool that serves our younger families. We have a vibrant religious school that inspires and educates our children. We have a strong morning minyan that serves not only our members but other families in our area, and we offer attractive programs that nurture the body and soul.

Four years ago, we started to use the new *Siddur Lev Shalem* to enhance our spiritual experience in the sanctuary. Along this same line, we have been adding new melodies and prayers to our services. We have also offered alternative services and beach services to broaden the spiritual experience of our congregation. Last year, we were very fortunate to welcome Dr. Samantha Stinson to our clergy team as director of education, ritual, and music. She and her family have been a wonderful addition to our synagogue.

As part of our constant effort to be on the forefront of Jewish life, Congregation Beth El Fairfield is pleased to announce a new feature: livestreaming of our Shabbat

services. This initiative allows people unable to participate physically in the service to feel connected to our Beth El family. It also brings Congregation Beth El Fairfield to people who live out of town and will provide families with the opportunity to share their *simcha* with relatives who can’t attend a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, wedding, or baby-naming celebration. Broadcasting our services is also an excellent way to showcase our synagogue and outreach to potential new members.

We are very excited to accomplish this milestone and we are grateful to Steven Robifker, our VP of House, for the many hours he invested in this project. While streaming does not provide the same spiritual experience of attending services in person, we are certain that we will be making a big difference in helping several of our members feel connected to our community and to Jewish prayer.

Watch the livestreaming of our Shabbat services at <https://bethelfairfield.org/worship/live/>

L’shalom,
Rabbi Marcelo Kormis

Beth Israel of Westport/Norwalk – Chabad

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

The “Mother SHUL” of Fairfield County Beth Israel Chabad Celebrates its 121st Anniversary

Beth Israel Chabad was incorporated in the State of Connecticut in October 1899 as Hebrew Bet Israel Society, Inc. Prior to this date, from around 1880, prayer services and some Yom Tov social events were held in private homes. For the High Holy Days, rented facilities were obtained to accommodate the growing Jewish community.

At the turn of the 20th century, people were migrating from New York in search of a better life as well as seeking employment in the hat factories and manufacturing industries of Greater Norwalk. The wave of immigration in the 1880s saw many European Jews settling in the Norwalk and Stamford region.

In 1906, a majestic new SHUL building was constructed on the corner of South Concord St. in South Norwalk, dedicated amidst great joy and promise. Named Beth Israel Synagogue, the SHUL was both spacious and beautiful and included a mikvah (ritualarium) on its lower floor.

As we fast-forward to 2020, we see that the self-sacrifice and vision of Beth Israel's founders has not dimmed nor diminished. Over the many years, five additional congregations have established themselves in the Norwalk-Westport area. However, they all may trace their

roots and beginnings to Beth Israel.

Today, Beth Israel Chabad stands proudly yet humbly as being the MOTHER SHUL within the community. It continues to be the welcoming SHUL for people on all levels of observance. Everyone is welcome and its prayer services and adult-education classes are both uplifting and inspiring. The Weston Hebrew School program, Circle of Friends involving hundreds of youth, and the Crumb Together Kosher Bakery are truly making a major impact within the broader community and we are thankful that Rebbetzin Freida Hecht leads these programs with incredible dedication, knowledge, and professionalism.

The challenges of modernity and tradition are well known. Beth Israel Chabad will continue to be true to its foundational principles.

Today, we are a vibrant link to the past as we nurture a new generation to be proud and active with their heritage of Torah and Mitzvah observance – infused with the Chabad warmth and the Rebbe's teachings.

This spring and summer, Beth Israel Chabad will be hosting a series of cultural events marking our 121st year of service to the community. We hope that you will join us in celebrating Jewish life in Fairfield County, Connecticut.

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 JSS, 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



Got Keif (fun)? In our *Kehilah*, learners in *Kitot Daled – Vav* (4th – 6th) participate in *K'vutzat Keif* – the Fun Club – each week, playing games that help them get to know one another as individuals.

Kehilah means Community

It is an exciting time for Youth Education at Congregation B'nai Israel in Bridgeport! In partnership with Director of Education Ira Wise and our rabbis, our Religious School Vision team has assembled three teams comprised of parents and teachers to re-think and re-imagine our curriculum, our teaching methods, and how we tell the story of who and what we are as a learning congregation.

One important change we have made so far is the name of our Youth Education program. What we used to call Religious School we now call “*Kehilah*,” which is the Hebrew word meaning “community.” Instead of schlepping to school, our learners are going to meet their friends *in their community*. It is a powerful label because it is backed up by the way we

are changing how learning happens. We are measuring our success one relationship at a time. And that comes from hearing each learner's personal story and helping them connect it and themselves to Jewish values.

We are also excited about the ways in which our faculty continues to devote a great deal of time and energy on Social, Emotional and Spiritual Learning (SESL) and Experiential Education. Ira Wise is currently a Fellow in the M² Senior Educators Cohort of the Institute for Experiential Jewish Education, where he is deepening skills to teach our faculty.

We welcome you to join us to experience the ways in which we are changing how we connect our learners to Judaism, the Jewish people, and one another.

Congregation for Humanistic Judaism of Fairfield County (CHJ)

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

The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism takes on climate change

On Nov. 3, 2019, in cooperation with the Federation for Jewish Philanthropy, CHJ presented the symposium, “A Flood of Ideas: Scientists and Clergy Deliberate the Biblical Noah and Modern-Day Climate Change.”

Engaging a packed house at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, the event was underwritten by the Saul Haffner Jewish Enrichment Fund. This fund was established in 2018 by CHJ as a tribute in memory of long-time member Saul Haffner. “This is exactly the kind of program Saul would have loved,” says Barbara Jay, co-chair of the fund. “Reading an Old Testament story and relating it to the here-and-now was his favorite way of making Judaism relevant in the 21st century.”

The central question of the symposium was: Did the great flood described in the Bible and Qur'an actually happen? Will the planet experience a great flood in the future?

This question was deliberated and discussed by an interfaith panel of local clergy-members and a trio of renowned climate scientists. Each panelist presented his/her position on the subject, followed by a Q & A session with the audience.

CHJ is proud that the symposium's overarching message and call to action reflects the philosophy of Humanistic Judaism: climate change is a human problem and requires a human response. *Tikkum Olam*, or repairing world, was a common theme of the event.

The program was recorded and broadcast nationally by the Jewish Broadcasting Service. For viewing information: jbstv.org.



Congregation Rodeph Sholom

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

Congregation Rodeph Sholom is a special welcoming community. Rabbi Richard Eisenberg and Cantor Niema Hirsch create a warm atmosphere for spiritual nurturing and connection. Our community draws from many towns throughout Fairfield County including Bridgeport, Fairfield, Westport, Trumbull, Easton, Stratford, Shelton, and Monroe.

Highlights include:

- Joyful holiday celebrations
- Programming and learning opportunities
- Education alternative for children, 8 complimentary at-home Hebrew lessons
- Complimentary Shabbat-morning Hebrew lessons for children (by arrangement)
- Customized Bar/Bat Mitzvahs
- Reduced membership fees for new members and alumni
- Twice-daily services
- We welcome LGBTQ individuals/families and interfaith families
- Breathtaking sanctuary and chapel adorned with 22 magnificent stained-glass windows; perfect for Jewish lifecycle celebrations



For further information, call us at 203-334-0159, or email info@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
46 Peaceable St., Ridgefield
ourshirshalom.org | 203-438-6589

Congregation Shir Shalom of Westchester and Fairfield Counties is a vibrant, inclusive, and caring Reform community that thrives on Jewish culture, Jewish history, and Jewish thought.

- We honor the diversity of our backgrounds, experiences, and aspirations.
- We celebrate our shared values... study of Torah, participatory worship lifted by music, advocacy of lifelong learning, ongoing participation in *Tikkun Olam* (Healing the World), dedication to social justice.
- We embrace the privilege of serving as "a light unto the nations," building a brighter future for our community and the world.
- We are eager to welcome you and to connect your Jewish life journey to our community through meaningful and inspiring worship, engaging educational

programs, and social and cultural activities.

- Shir Shalom's clergy leadership includes Rabbi David Reiner, Cantor Deborah Katchko-Gray, and Rabbi Emeritus Jon Haddon.
- Shir Shalom's Religious School classes range from K-12 to meet the needs of all families. To learn about our new, parent-friendly morning sibling program, our personalized Bar/Bat Mitzvah experiences, our Social Action as Jewish Education (SAJE) program for grades 8-12, and our other innovative learning opportunities, contact Religious School Director Leslie Gottlieb.
- Shir Shalom's year-round Early Childhood Center, for children through age 5, integrates art, nature, music, and movement, with a separate, fun focus on science and reading readiness. New this year is "Practically Religious School," a light, one-hour Sunday-morning program that introduces



Congregation Shir Shalom's Rabbi David L. Reiner and Cantor Deborah Katchko-Gray, along with The Rev. Whitney Altopp (center) of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, comprise the Ridgefield Clergy Association.

children to the Jewish holidays and includes storytime and playtime. For more information, contact Director of Early Childhood Programs Jane Emmer.

TCS

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

Introducing the TIES that bind

Over 300 members of our community came out in support of TCS at our annual Gala, as we honored our friend, Bill Mitchell, of Mitchells Westport. Twenty-five years ago, when we were looking to build our new home on Hillspoint Road, we faced some resistance from neighbors who were concerned about parking and other issues. Bill Mitchell spoke on behalf of TCS at the Planning and Zoning meeting, and even offered the Mitchells store parking lot for overflow parking. The vote for approval was unanimous and the rest is history!

As we celebrated the 25th anniversary of that P&Z meeting, we wanted to honor Bill in a way that would be appropriate and meaningful to him. While many people associate Bill Mitchell with suits and ties, Bill is also passionate about community ties and building bridges. When there is a need to bring people together, in times of celebration or crisis, Bill is always there. Therefore, in honor of Bill and his dedication to TCS and the larger community, we created a special fund, "TIES," to support our sacred work of building community.

TIES stands for Tolerance, Inclusivity, Education, and Solidarity. We believe that these values are essential to the task of building bridges in an increasingly polarized society. TIES will support guest speakers, symposiums, concerts, youth programs, interfaith dialogues, and anything that helps us understand, respect, and learn from each other as a community. As we stand up against anti-Semitism, discrimination, and hatred of all kinds, TIES will help us provide opportunities to acquire more knowledge, understanding, and unity in Westport and beyond. Contact us to learn more about TCS.



Temple B'nai Chaim

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



Temple B'nai Chaim (lovingly known as TBC) is a modern Reform congregation inspired by over 3,000 years of tradition. At TBC, our passion for Jewish life permeates every aspect of our community! Every day, Rabbi Rachel Bearman, Director of Lifelong Learning Karin Beitel, and our Student Cantor work in partnership with the congregation to connect today's Jewish families to ancient traditions.

Come see TBC! We offer:

- Meaningful and creative worship experiences (Family Shabbat, special themes) for our congregation and the larger community
- Social Action activities that bring our congregation into the wider community where we can live our values
- Diverse families celebrated and honored
- Caring Committee representatives supporting congregants who are going through difficult times and celebrating with those who are experiencing simchas
- Lifecycle events that honor the individual journeys of their participants!
- Family programming that brings parents into their children's educational journey
- Students laughing, learning, and praying together
- Interfaith partnerships with local congregations that bring strength and joy to our community
- At TBC, Judaism is something that we live and love. We hope that you'll join us!

To learn more about TBC, please call 203-544-8695 or visit www.templebnaichaim.org.



Temple Israel

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

Education and Innovation at Temple Israel

Temple Israel of Westport offers a wide array of exciting opportunities for community enrichment and engagement. Shabbat and holidays offer multi-generational experiences for all, with inspiring music, joy, and community.

At Temple Israel, every child feels at home. For over 25 years, we have continued to offer the highest quality of education for students in our area. Young families enjoy our toddler and caregiver Gan Katan program, which introduces them to the joys of learning. Our NAEYC-accredited Carol Schoke Early Childhood Center provides programs for children ages 2-5, fostering creative, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development.

Students in grades K-12 grow and thrive while participating in unique and extraordinary educational programming. Adults broaden their perspective by learning together: from choir to conversational Hebrew, to social events and celebrations, there is always something new to engage learners of all ages.

Our TI Clergy and staff team invite you to join us as we embrace our rich Jewish heritage through engagement and tradition.

For more information, please email info@tiwestport.org or call 203-227-1293.



Temple Shalom

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



In this season of rebirth and renewal we wish you and your families a happy, healthy and sweet Passover from all of us at Temple Shalom.

Are you new to the community or looking to reinvigorate your spiritual connection? Celebrate the joy and inspiration of Jewish life with us and discover what makes our community so special!

We are a vibrant, warm, interfaith-friendly and inclusive Reform Jewish community drawing from across Fairfield County. Jewish life here draws us close to the deepest

sense of our humanity – we strive to enrich the lives of all who walk through our doors through musical, spiritual, cultural, educational, social and social-justice experiences and opportunities.

We welcome you to make Temple Shalom your new Jewish home!

Call us or email to talk or schedule a visit:

admin@templeshalomweb.org / (203) 866-0148 / www.templeshalomweb.org

Congregation Beth El-Norwalk

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

What is “radical inclusion?”

Inspired by Federation’s “Judaism: A 2020 Vision” theme, our congregation hosted Rabbi Lauren Tuchman in January.

Ordained from the Jewish Theological Seminary in May 2018, Rabbi Tuchman teaches about “radical inclusion,” particularly as it pertains to people with disabilities. And she understands from personal experience: she’s blind – as far as she knows, the only blind woman ordained as a rabbi!

Rabbi Tuchman touched our community in several ways. First, she taught about Moses’s speech impediment with such sensitivity that we were able to understand how he must have felt... and how any person with a disability might feel upon entering a synagogue and not knowing what to expect. From the Talmud, she taught about a famous rabbi who learned a lesson from an ugly man after insulting him: *everyone* is created in God’s image—even physically unattractive people, even people who live with disabilities.

By the end of the morning, we understood that simply stocking a synagogue with the trappings of welcome—a Braille siddur, a loop for the hearing-impaired, or even a ramp to the bimah—isn’t enough. A person with a disability



has the same needs as any congregant: to meet the people, to develop relationships, and to be asked directly what would be helpful to them in order to participate and integrate.

Rabbi Tuchman’s visit was also special because it was the inaugural William Grossman Memorial Scholar-in-Residence program, in memory of a beloved congregant who led stimulating conversations around the minyan breakfast table. We look forward to instilling this tradition honoring Bill z”l’s legacy in our congregation.

Congregation B’nai Torah

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



The Mensch Initiative

The idea of The Mensch Initiative is to bring together a group of remarkable people – to see if they can be something more and if, together, they can enrich, enlighten, and grow our B’nai Torah community.

B’nai Torah brings hope, spirituality, love, family, Judaism and much more to its members. The Mensch Initiative strives to enhance these qualities for us, and by us all.

2020 will bring exciting, innovative, community-driven and inclusive plans for BT. The Mensch Initiative is a key component. Thus far, The Mensch Initiative has put up and taken down our synagogue sukkah, developed an online community, changed views on what a faith-based club is,

and most visibly in our B’nai Torah home, spearheaded major beautification projects with the painting, wall removal, office moving and cleaning inside BT. Future plans include a trip to a local brewery and a creator experience with a local art workshop. These are in addition to participating in events from B’nai Torah, the Federation for Jewish Philanthropy, and youth-focused plans with BBYO, Merkaz Community High School for Judaic Studies, and B’nai Torah’s Tichon, Talmud Torah, and Pre-K students.

The Mensch Initiative’s guidelines are intended to be living and ever-evolving:

- Thoughtful and sincere participation
- Inclusion, equality, tolerance, acceptance
- Exploration and discussion of the collective Jewish and B’nai Torah life experience
- Respect of self and all others
- Open doors, hearts, and minds to and for all
- Willingness to teach, learn, lead, follow, speak, listen, think, agree, disagree, laugh, and cry
- Avodah (service), Kehillah (community), Tzedakah (charity)



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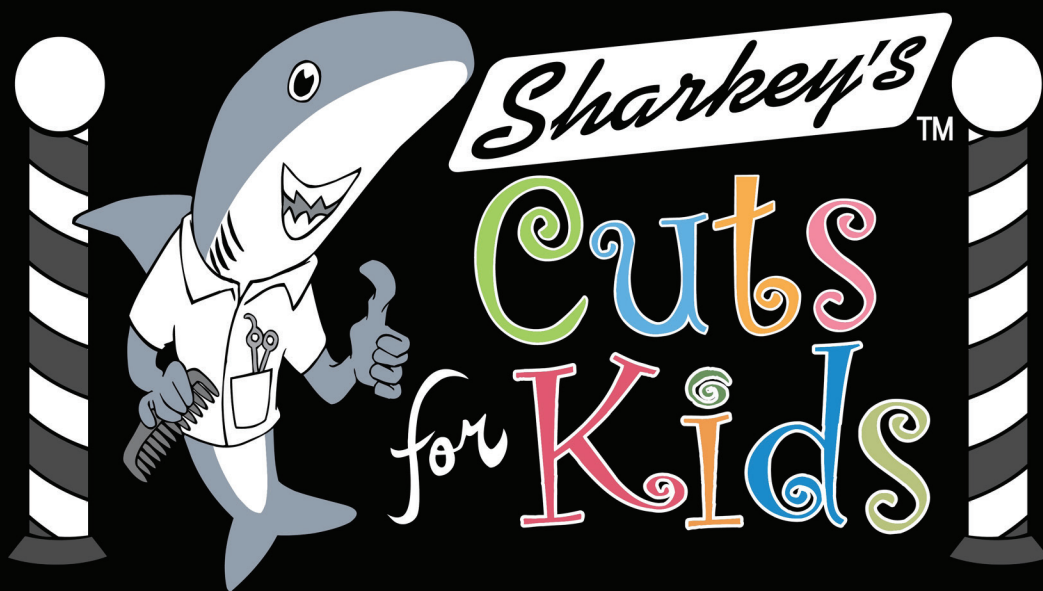


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