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THE JEWISH JOURNAL

A publication of The Buffalo Jewish Federation

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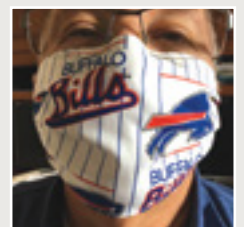
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Editor's Note



Ellen Goldstein, Editor

The world has changed overnight. Our Jewish community has, as well. Where past springs heralded holidays and commemorations spent with family and community, such as Passover, Yom Ha Shoah, Yom Ha Zikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut, this year these events have been "virtual" - watching or participating online, in very small groups or alone. This new normal has been frustrating yet at the same time liberating and in most instances effective.

This issue of *The Jewish Journal* has been produced by a team mostly working from home, as so many in Jewish Buffalo have been doing. And where other community papers are not able to print, we are very fortunate to do so, because of our cherished partnership with SPREE Publishing.

The cover of this special issue proclaims "Community in the Time of COVID-19." And we have been searching our community to find the bright spots, the rainbows, the heroes and heroines. Indeed we found many—too many to feature this month; stories about mask-making *menches*, *simchas* that were not cancelled, poignant poems, inspiring Mussar insights and passionate volunteerism.

And while I missed hosting a large Passover Seder last month, my family was able to experience something totally new—Zoom *Sederim*. The memorable first night with family and friends from around the US and Australia, the second night as a participant in a magical Seder created and organized by Federation CEO Rob Goldberg, CIEL Adult Education Director Susan Goldberg Schwartz and Hospice Chaplain Rabbi Adam Scheldt. We're doing warm and communal Zoom Shabbat dinners too. And while these events are not quite the same as being in the same room hugging friends and family, they enable community festivities, weddings, bar mitzvahs, minyans, funerals and group Shabbat dinners to continue, and thus, our Jewish Community to continue as well.

Finally, I must express my profound gratitude to those who have made this issue a reality and to those who have made working in this new time possible. *Buffalo Spree* Publisher Barbara Macks insisted the paper was going to get done, and designer Kim Miers made it happen. Federation CEO Rob Goldberg has pulled our staff and the greater community together energetically and with joy through Zoom meetings, texts, phone calls and e-mails. I am also grateful to my husband Mltch, my family, my neighbors and dear friends. I am grateful for my garden and most especially

Ellen Goldstein - Editor

to be a part of such a vibrant and caring Jewish community. Stay safe and take care of yourself and each other. The light is flickering at the end of this tunnel.

On The Cover



In mid-April with forsythia as background elegance, neighbors from Buffalo's Middle Highland / Ashland Avenues came together to create this month's *Jewish Journal* cover, which says "Community in the Time of COVID-19." From left: artists Justin and Lucy Rowland, driveway owner Dorothy Shaw, and admirers Marcia Buhl and Jenny Wood.

Sidewalk art by Justin Rowland, Lucy Rowland.

Cover photo by Ellen Goldstein

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Published by
Buffalo Jewish Federation
2640 North Forest Road
Getzville, NY 14068
716-204-2241
www.buffalojewishfederation.org



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The Buffalo Jewish Federation is a proud member of the Jewish Federations of North America and the American Jewish Press Association

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Submissions:

Submit editorial stories, photos, and calendar items by the 1st of the preceding month of issue to ellen@buffalojewishfederation.org.

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Finding Meaning in Uncertain Times

Venus has been shining brightly in the western sky for weeks. When we go for walks at night we look for it and often, when there are no other stars visible, we can still see Venus like a beacon reminding us that some things are sure in this universe.

Grappling with the outbreak and spread of COVID-19 has shown us that life on earth can be anything but a “sure thing.” Each of us is experiencing impactful disruptions. We are thinking about our lives and the people in them in ways we couldn’t have imagined just days ago, and we find ourselves making and changing our assumptions hourly. Faced with what I can only describe as surreal events, information that belies the control we normally feel over our routines and our priorities is producing fear, anxiety and other distressing emotions that we haven’t experienced before. And we each find ourselves responding and comprehending in accordance with our own inner timetables.

Fast forward and we are now, as a society, coming to terms with what we face. And we are, one by one, starting to understand that we face this crisis together. In fact, I’ve begun to think of the human race as one single organism. I heard that biologically, the way the coronavirus sees us, we actually are one giant, accessible organism. But I’m not talking about the scientific view, rather the philosophical one. Each of us is a part of that organism, and each of us, through our every action, impacts the other and the entire organism.

We search daily for inspiration and hope. I was moved early on in this “new reality” when the *Times of Israel* reported that, when Israelis were restricted to gatherings of no more than 10 people, “Israeli couples



(were) holding impromptu weddings in the streets, on rooftops and even in supermarkets.” Onlookers joyfully became impromptu wedding celebrants. And, scrolling through YouTube I saw how Italians cooped up in their homes are sharing music and joy from their apartment windows, including Italian tenor Maurizio Marchini singing for his neighbors in Florence. The humanity and the beauty of all these acts of joy moved me to tears. Then, I became a celebrant in our own Buffalo Jewish community wedding on Facebook Live when Nina Lukin and Elliot Gabelnick exchanged vows under a *chupah* outside their Snyder home (see page 10), their beautiful children (all five of them) participating with energy and excitement. What joy that brought so many of us lucky enough to share virtually in their *simcha*.

In times of crisis, we MUST rise to be our better selves.

Years ago, as part of the Melton Adult Jewish Learning course, I read an excerpt from the diary of a man living

in the Warsaw ghetto during WWII. In emotional prose he described all that the Jews were doing in the ghetto to maintain a semblance of normalcy, and to continue living a full Jewish life. I was so stirred by his account of his wife, that she taught in a ghetto school; that she helped those in need and in worse situations than theirs. I was forever moved by his words, and that he was driven to write this account so that survivors of the Holocaust, and future generations would know what an *eishet chayil*, a woman of valor and goodness, his wife was. He feared they would die and nobody would know about her.

I was struck by his love for his wife and his understanding of the necessity to memorialize the humanity that existed in the nightmare of their lives. Not in control of their circumstances, they created normalcy through the work of and for the community and for each other.

Our people, in every generation, have risen to our challenges as we prioritize our humanity, our kindness and our care for one another.

And now we too are living with dramatic and drastic change in the world. What was certain a month ago has been pushed aside. Our Jewish community both locally and nationally is rallying to assist those in need, to assist agencies and businesses with tools to obtain government funding, while facing financial stress and uncertainty. Many programs are now online, on Zoom and other such virtual connecting rooms, and many have been cancelled or postponed. But our spirit lives throughout the community, as evidenced by everything from online prayer services with our synagogues to Virtual Happy Hours with Nickel City Jews.

I thank each and every one in this

community for striving to be kind, to be caring and to reach out to one another. I thank our unflagging professionals who, together with so many passionate and dedicated volunteers, give tirelessly to our community, working within challenging parameters to create some normalcy and value to us every day.

These days I find myself in moments of humor and gratitude for what and who I have in this life, but I also feel sadness, stress, and worry. Looking for guidance, I have turned to Mussar teachings, those that pull from the *middot*, or values, that guide us through the vicissitudes of life. One of those *middot* is *Equanimity*, or *menuchat han’Nefesh*. Alan Morinis, the author of *Everyday Holiness*, reminds us that “equanimity and tranquility are attractive in these turbulent and uncertain times”, but that “(i)n the Jewish view, the goal of spiritual life is not to reach an enlightened state in which all the questions and conundrums of life are unknotted with finality, but rather to become much more skilled at the processes of living.” All the situations we face in life teach Mussar, and are actually tests of how we deal with those challenges.

In this current test, I wish for all of us the strength and character to pass with flying colors, with humanity, beauty and grace. I wish all of us strength to be kind to our families and neighbors, to act with compassion and generosity, and to come out of this current crisis not only healthy but with a sense of pride for who we were during this time, and how we chose to face, and pass this test together.

Leslie Shuman Kramer is President of the Buffalo Jewish Federation.

GIVING BACK

A Jewish-owned movie making company in Syracuse, NY had to shut down filming to comply with mandates related to the coronavirus. American High, in partnership with Budmen Industries, developed reusable face shields/masks using 3D printing. President of the Syracuse Studios, Molle DeBartolo, connected with our Community Security Coordinator, Susan DeMari, and offered masks at no-charge for our partners in law enforcement. To date, DeBartolo, with the assistance of DeMari on behalf of the Buffalo Jewish Federation, has provided hundreds of masks to the Buffalo Police Department, the Town of Amherst Police Department and the New York State Police.



Community Compassion Fund Will Safeguard the Most Vulnerable

Buffalo Jewish Federation in partnership with Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies, along with dozens of leaders and major donors in the community, has launched a **Community Compassion Fund** to safeguard those most impacted by COVID-19. Federation and Foundation together have allocated \$200,000 to seed a campaign to raise \$360,000 this spring. While this



effort does not replace Federation's Annual Campaign, there is an immediate need to support members of our Jewish community and the greater community most impacted by the pandemic.

100% of the funds will support individuals and families, and distribution will be managed by Jewish Family Service, the caring heart of our community.

The Community Compassion Fund will

enable JFS to provide essential services to our most vulnerable populations so that their basic needs can be met, including mental health and wellness counseling, funds for food, prescriptions, rent subsidies and other essentials.

The Fund has already been used to provide financial support to nearly 150 Jewish communal workers who have been furloughed. In addition, the fund has covered costs to provide over 100 elderly Jews isolated in their homes Seder essentials so that they were able to celebrate Passover.

To contribute, please go to Federation's website, www.buffalojewishfederation.org/COVID-19 and click on the "Community Compassion Fund Donate Today" button. Or, you can send a check to Community Compassion Fund, c/o Buffalo Jewish Federation, 2640 North Forest Road, Getzville, NY 14068. Finally, if you have a Donor Advised Fund with the Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies, please contact their office to recommend a distribution to the Compassion Fund.

The New Normal Now

By Mark Faber

It is approximately three weeks after my 4-day weekend trip to Austin for a friend's bachelor party. Within days of returning, I celebrated my birthday and hosted a Nickel City Jews event with close friends who admitted that they were worried about COVID-19 and what was yet to come. We noted that we were thankful for each other's company. Just days later, our lives were all turned upside down.

As a physician, my life initially seemed unchanged, other than having to consider which patients to test for the novel coronavirus, AKA "COVID-19". There are few consistent guidelines regarding the care for those with COVID-19, though new information is disseminated daily. I worked the night shift for the last two weeks of March and with each passing night, I became more thankful for my job, my health, and of course, my colleagues.

There were at least a handful of occasions when I was caring for elderly patients who were admitted to the hospital for various medical problems and who were subsequently diagnosed with COVID-19 days into their hospitalization. Unfortunately for them, their conditions quickly deteriorated. There is a toll on physicians when our patients suffer; however, I am appreciative of those who contact me saying they appreciate the job that I am doing. I was also awestruck when I heard that every evening in New York City, people go outside to applaud healthcare workers who are on "the front lines."

The mandatory quarantine initially did not impact my personal life. However, this past week I have been instructed to stay home from the hospital as all elective rotations have been cancelled. After a few days of being confined to my apartment, apart from going out for necessities such as gas and food, I realized that this is not a vacation. I am relaxing; however,



I need structure in my life. To make matters worse, I was unable to fly home to Long Island for Passover. I planned to spend time with my mother, my sister, and her new fiancé. I was supposed to see a Broadway show, and have a belated birthday celebration. I was also excited to meet my close friend's newborn. Instead, I abided by our social distancing policy by participating in a virtual Seder although that cannot replace a traditional Seder.

My heart goes out to my countless friends who were furloughed or laid off from their jobs. These are jobs that they enjoyed and were literally taken away overnight by COVID-19. During these unprecedented times, I am regularly reaching out to friends and family to let them know I am thinking of them. I encourage all of you to do the same, especially if they are healthcare workers.

For the next month, we will need to adjust to this new "normal." We should be thankful for our friends and family. With that, we should put aside our political beliefs. We will survive and we will be stronger. With each day that passes, we are another day closer to ending our virtual meetings and being within 6 feet of each other. I look forward to seeing you all soon.

Mark Faber is a resident physician at UB Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Science, and also is an active participant in Nickel City Jews.



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Projects of Skill and Conscience

By Gail Siskin

COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on all of our lives, but amongst the rubble, positives can be found. My granddaughter, Hannah, started sewing lessons at Fashion Lab NY on Hertel Ave. in Buffalo last year. It did not take long for her to fall in love with sewing, which is super, as it was not a skill passed down to me by my mom, and so I could not pass it on to my daughter. As a result of Hannah's new skills, we have all been saving our alterations for her. We were thrilled that Arlene Kaye Wasserman, owner of Fashion Lab NY, made sewing fun for her students, and that Hannah was so taken by her new skills.

Arlene has once again provided a project for her students. She has assembled kits for making face masks to help fight the Coronavirus. Students picked up the kits, sewed them and returned them to be donated where needed. Arlene now added another skill beyond just sewing. She is teaching students social responsibility skills, many times overlooked by today's youth.



Kudos to Arlene Kaye Wasserman for being so community conscious and offering a way for our children to make a difference!

Giving Blood. Saving Lives at TBT

Temple Beth Tzedek hosted a Red Cross Blood Drive March 17 during the beginning of the quarantine. Thirty-five people from all over the greater community came to donate blood. Linda Steinhorn, Chair of TBT's Blood Drive for more than 20 years, said it was a something really good during a difficult time. "We hold blood drives every 6 weeks now. TBT's involvement started over 20 years ago, when we used to do it twice a year. But now with a greater need for blood, it is every 6 weeks, and people come from the entire community to supports us," she said.

Linda had cancer in 1999, was very sick from the chemo treatments, and needed blood transfusions at the time. "This is my way of giving back," she said. "It is the one gift you can give that does not cost anything." She also has been a volunteer in Roswell Park Cancer Institute's patient education program for more than 10 years.

Temple Beth Tzedek's interim rabbi Moshe Silberschein was one of the blood donors. "I have always given blood because my father did. I started when I was 16, growing up in Detroit, and was also a blood tech in college," he said. "The Mishna tells us that if you save one life, it is as if you saved the whole universe. And it's not a coincidence that I gave blood this week in Buffalo, and my sister gave platelets this week



Linda Steinhorn

in Nashville." He also explained how careful the Red Cross was in sterilizing the donation sites. It took a long time—from 1:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.—he said, but no one complained. "I was very proud of our community," he added.

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Two Buffalo Teens Speak Out on Their “New” Lives

By Karen Levy & Angelica Levy



My name is Karen Levy. I am 15 years old and in 9th grade at Clarence High School. I am on the JV Cheer Team, Lacrosse Team and the Clarence Business Academy. I also cheer competitively for the New York Icons. In the winter I love to snowboard at Holiday Valley,

and I enjoy teaching my friends. In my free time, I hang out with my friends. On Fridays after school, we walk to the Clarence Coffee Shop to hangout and catch up with each other.

Due to the current pandemic, I have not been able to do these things that help me to relax after a busy school week. The first week of the COVID-19 quarantine started off badly, because we were trying to get used to the new schedule. Monday- Friday we wake up at 8:30 a.m. have breakfast and start our homework. During the day we take breaks to eat or bake something. My mom is teaching me how to make homemade challah, chocolate chip cookies and brownies. We also try to exercise every day. I practice lacrosse and play tennis with my little sister. We also go on a 3-mile family walk around the neighborhood.

My older sister is home from medical school. She helps us with homework and is a lot of fun to have around. She tries to educate us about Coronavirus and what it does to the body. I am happy she is home during this time instead of being in Long Island. To make sure we stay fit, we came up with some exercises we can do. This week we started a 30-day yoga challenge. We do yoga every night to relax before we head to bed at 9:30 p.m.

I look forward to Saturdays because I can sleep in and have the whole day to myself and relax without having to do any school work. I love my family, but sometimes too much time together is not good. After being together for several weeks, we start to annoy each other. Sundays we get back to work and start doing schoolwork for the week. I miss my friends, school and my regular daily activities. I cannot wait for the pandemic to be over so that I can get back to all the fun that I have been missing!



My name is Angelica Levy. I am 13 years old and in 8th grade at Clarence Middle School. When my mom told me that I got a chance to write about how I am dealing with the pandemic, I got really excited. I play tennis at the Village Glen and my favorite hobby is drawing. I normally hang out with my friends on the weekends and have sleepovers, but now we can't do that. With being quarantined everything going on, we Facetime a lot.

In addition to adjusting socially, I had to adjust scholastically. The first week of the quarantine was very difficult because the teachers were still struggling with how they were going to assign work and grade assignments. For me, learning how to be on a new schedule was very difficult. My older sister Amanda made a daily schedule for us all to follow so that way we can stay on track. I get up at the same time every day

and I do my homework for a certain period of time; after that I make sure to exercise and get fresh air.

One of my favorite ways to exercise is by playing tennis. Most of the time, my sister will join me while she plays lacrosse and sometimes I join her and we play together. One way I relax is by drawing and painting. I've been working on painting a wooden box during my free time.

Something that my family recently started doing is taking walks around the neighborhood. We also play games, do puzzles, started yoga, and baking. In the evening, I try to Facetime at least one of my friends and then sometimes we have a family movie. On Friday nights, we have been celebrating Shabbat services at home. My family listens to services online from our temple. I am learning to make challah as well.

I have even started taking on more responsibilities. such as walking and feeding the dog, helping decide what to make for dinner and to help prepare it and doing my own laundry. As you can see, quarantine isn't the best situation, but you can still make the best out of it and stay safe. I am very lucky that my whole family is together and staying safe and I hope the same is true for everyone else!

CJEL Responds to COVID-19

By Miriam Abramovich

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, volunteer and professional leaders from the Center for Jewish Engagement and Learning (CJEL) have been working together to assess communal needs, support individuals through calls of connection and support, and to design and deploy meaningful virtual gatherings.



Over the four weeks since our isolation began (as of this mid- April writing) we have gathered together, virtually, with more than 260 individuals: teens, PJ Library families, parents of school aged children, young adults, women who are part of Wise Aging cohorts, PJ Our Way tweens, Hebrew and Intro to Judaism students, and adults of all ages.

As many celebrated Passover away from loved ones and community, for the first time ever CJEL created a piece called “How to Host a Virtual Seder.” In the Haggadah we read “*B’chol dor vador chayav adam l’rot et atzmo k’ilu hu hatza mimitzrayim*. In every generation, a person is obligated to see themselves as if they, themselves, were redeemed from Egypt.” This story we tell each year is supposed to be deeply personal; a story of great suffering, but a suffering from which we emerged. For many, the 2020 Passover holiday was a timely and hopeful reminder that that we will emerge from this suffering, that we will find our way to a new land and a new normal.

More virtual gatherings are being offered through CJEL in the weeks to come. If you want to connect, or are looking for virtual ways to engage with Jewish life or Jewish learning, please reach out to CJEL Director, Miriam Abramovich miriam@buffalojewishfederation.org.



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Ethan & Sarah's Garden

By Jill Komm

My daughter Sarah's teacher at the JCC Early Childhood program posted a video of how to make construction paper flowers on the JCC Early Childhood Facebook Group. My son Ethan and his sister Sarah watched and were excited to do the craft. Their excitement turned into a "garden" of flowers and they decided they were going to give them to our neighbors. We walked around our street in Williamsville and delivered paper flowers to everyone's mailboxes. A few flowers were left and were put in special birthday packages for some friends who couldn't have typical celebrations. Some of our #PandemicPositivity.



Jill Komm is Federation's Director of Social Media and Communications.

Harold's Bialys

By Maya Koven

I recently signed up as a volunteer to call and check-in on friends of the Buffalo Jewish Federation. After three unanswered calls, the first family to pick up the phone was Harold and Mary Cohen, aged 95 and 91, respectively. Their daughter was visiting and told me that everything essential was taken care of like groceries and medications. Harold inserted that one very important thing was missing, though— his Bagel Jay's bialys!



After our call, I checked on Bagel Jay's Facebook page to see if they were still open for business. They were open for drive-through service. I called Harold back, and asked if he would accept my gift of bialys to him and his wife. He graciously accepted my offer.

The following morning, my mom and I picked up the bialys and drove to Cohen's apartment in downtown Buffalo. Because of COVID-19, I was

unable to hand deliver them to Harold, but the concierge staff member in his apartment building did. As I handed the bialys to the doorman, he agreed to send me a photo once the bialys were delivered to the Cohens.



The following Monday, I received a call from Harold telling me how much he "ENJOOOOYED" the bialys. He added a short story explaining why they were so important to him and his wife. Mary's family came from Bialystock, Russia, where bialys originated, and it was tradition in her family to bake the bialy bread. This story warmed my heart, and is why I'm proud to be helping the Buffalo Jewish Federation!

Maya Koven is a graduating senior at the University of Rochester. She is the daughter of Mara Koven-Gelman, Director of Buffalo's JCRC. While she is busy with online courses and a psychology honors thesis, she enjoys making calls and connecting to Buffalo community members.

Mask Maker Menches!

Protective face masks for medical professionals, and all sorts of other workers and individuals, have not been easily accessible during the past two months. So, many of our community members made them. Here are just a few examples of hometown heroines living among us.

Ronna Brooks Glickman retired in June from her job as a Home and Careers teacher (formerly Home Ec) in the Williamsville Schools. Now, the self-employed lecturer speaks about how to keep kids safe on-line. With schools now closed, she was not working. "When I saw there was a need for sewers via Facebook, I knew I could contribute. This is something I could do. Sewing 6-8 hours a day, as of April 12 she has made about 200 fabric masks and donated them to Kaleida Health and to friends and family who need them. One friend is a physical therapist who works in a nursing home in Indianapolis, and Ronna sent her some. The masks for Kaleida were created by a whole network of people, some sew, some cut the patterns, some deliver. Together they are saving lives with the creation of those masks.



Ruth Isenberg Lipsitz lost her beloved husband Gregg to esophageal cancer several years ago. Last month at the height of the Coronavirus pandemic, several of her friends suggested she should sew "medical" masks. "I didn't have any fabric that would be useful for this project, so I went through my closet. I found a few of Gregg's shirts in my dry cleaner bags. What a gift!" She put his old shirts still hanging in the closet to use saving lives, and in the process enabled Gregg's memory to live on as a blessing.

Barbara Carr, former Executive Director of the Erie County SPCA and JFS Executive Director Molly Carr's mother-in-law, made 20 masks which were donated to Jewish Discovery Center volunteers putting together the more than 400 Seders-in-a-Box (see page 16).

Sandra Montgomery works full time at the Upstate NY Better Business Bureau and also makes custom figure skating costumes. She is making masks because she has the ability and resources to make them. "I want to do whatever I can to support people in our community during this crisis. I've also signed up with #BuffaloResilience, an online sewing squad, a community-sourced PPE supplier, that has collectively donated 1300 masks locally. They source materials, get them to the sewers, pick them up and deliver them to medical facilities and nursing homes." She donated her masks to Kenmore Mercy Hospital's pharmacy and Roswell Park Cancer Institute.

Karen Zakalik explained that the pandemic caused shortages on many products including common items for sewing like fabric and elastic. "While I have a "stash" of fabric, I also upcycled a men's shirt, linen napkins, and tee shirts for material. I found the pattern for the mask on the **Free Sewing** website and I made cardboard templates of the three sizes so I could simply trace the cut lines and cut multiple masks with relative ease. With elastic being hard to find and purchase, I made ear straps from stretchy t-shirt material (a time consuming process) and shoe laces purchased at one of the local "dollar" stores. The metal nose inserts I made using plant ties and hot glue. The nose strips are hand sewn into the seam allowance of each mask before turning it right side out and finishing the piece. The Asian-inspired mask I am wearing in the photo is made from cotton quilt fabric and an upcycled black Chico's t-shirt.



Gavin Steinacher's Virtual Bar Mitzvah

By Charlotte Gendler

On Shabbat morning, March 21, courtesy of livestreaming from Temple Beth Tzedek, I along with an invisible and anonymous congregation, witnessed the Bar Mitzvah of Gavin Steinacher. The service was conducted by Rabbi Moshe Silberstein in a largely empty sanctuary save for the presence of the Steinacher family.

The Rabbi conducted the service and Gavin chanted the longest *Maftir* and *Haftorah* of the entire year (!) and delivered a well thought-out speech about the *parshah* concluding with a message about his passion for sports. His Bar Mitzvah project is to distribute slightly used sports equipment to his contemporaries who might be able to use them.

As if to make this Bar Mitzvah even more unique, this *parshah* marked the completion of *Exodus*, the second book of Torah. Continuing with the custom of standing as the last sentences are read, we (each in our respective homes) joined Gavin in reciting "*Chazak, Chazak, v'Nichazek*. Be strong, be strong and we will be strong." Could there have been anything more fitting to conclude this Torah service?

It was a remarkable moment in time to witness this poised young man transitioning through his rite of passage amidst the constraints imposed arbitrarily by the coronavirus. As I watched, I could only think of the months and months of planning that preceded this day: the extended family and friends who live so far away and their excitement and anticipation; the invitations, hotels, catering, phone calls, new clothes and shoes – all of that blown away and cancelled in the blink of an eye.

So when the Steinachers addressed their son at the conclusion of the service, tears of joy were flowing not only in the TBT sanctuary, but among this wondrous virtual congregation, as well. None of us were able to hug Gavin or his family or embrace them – have to save that for another time ... and there *will* be another time when we all can do just that!!



Gavin Steinacher

By Dr. Robyn Steinacher

The time for my son's Bar Mitzvah was drawing near. It was already March. Everyone was coming from out of town. My husband Richard and I are physicians, and we began to realize that a large family gathering was going to be untenable due to the COVID-19 virus and the ensuing travel and gathering restrictions.

We pulled the party a week and a half before the March 21 date, because by then, no one was able to travel to Buffalo, and postponed it to a later time. TBT President Andy Gewurz and Rabbi Silberschein said this Bar Mitzvah was going to happen somehow, and that Gavin would recite his *parshah* for whoever could see it online. We did it at the Temple with Rabbi Silberschein and technology.

Our family, including our 15 year-old son, Daniel and 10 year-old daughter Rebekah, me and my husband, was there. We didn't take the Torah out, because no one could touch it due to the virus. Our Rabbi turned the service into a different kind of a Saturday morning Torah Learning session, with songs for Shabbat and prayers. The Rabbi picked parts of the *parshah* and the kids read in English, Gavin read his total *parshah* in Hebrew, gave his *D'var Torah* and talked about gathering and plagues and family and his freedom. And yes, this *simcha* was indeed something we all will remember forever.

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THE JEWISH JOURNAL
 A publication of The Buffalo Jewish Federation

Back to the Shtetl

By Dr. Pinny Young & Sonia Gellman Young

Thursday March 26th was the day our daughter Leia was going to marry Moshe Baitelman of Vancouver, BC. The wedding festivities would begin with a beachfront ceremony in Florida, followed by a rooftop reception overlooking the ocean. Friends and family from all over the world would come and revel in the celebration. We would all spend Shabbos together continuing the Simcha. Well that was the plan anyway.



Turns out that G-d had a different plan. The wedding took place in our backyard with the immediate family and the required two witnesses. No caterer, no florist, no band, no fancy Viennese table. There was love and joy and closeness and Simcha abounded.

The Baitelman family, the bride and groom all arrived in Buffalo from their respective self-quarantined quarters. Thank G-d no one developed any symptoms at all. At the veiling part of the ceremony, I told my daughter that Moses received the first set of tablets with great fanfare and noise. They were shattered not long after that. The second set of tablets were given quietly, with none of the previous grand public display. The second tablets are forever.

This marriage too was celebrated with an intimate crowd of parents and most of the siblings. They stood under a chuppah made from a silk sheet decorated by the young siblings attached to bamboo poles. The father of the groom performed the ceremony. A modest affair by all accounts with the feel of a wedding in the old shtetl. But the joy was palpable, the simplicity added to the depth of experience. An event openly orchestrated from on high.

When the dust settles from the current crisis, maybe people will have a different outlook on what's important in life. Maybe we will see the value in more shtetl-style



weddings. Certainly this allows us to strengthen our commitment to our nearest and dearest and to deepen our relationship with G-d.

As we presently experience the final chapter of living life in a very different way, as we pray for this chapter in history to come to an end, we reflect on the simplicities of life. We internalize the concept that so much of what we thought we needed were, in fact, extras. We look with awe and appreciation to the blessings we have....health, love, family. We look to the example of a bride and groom who marry with the simplicity of a ring and handcrafted chuppah, surrounded by the closest of family and blessings from so many loved ones from afar.

Dr. Pinny Young is an ENT and the director of Otolaryngology at the Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital. He is also a Rabbi. Sonia Gellman Young is an accomplished artist and community leader. They are the proud parents of 7 children.

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Nina & Elliot's Wedding

Nina Lukin and Elliot Gabelnick were married Friday afternoon, March 20 at their home in Snyder by Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein, standing at an appropriate social distance. It was a short ceremony, attended in person mostly by immediate family, neighbors, but also by many on Facebook as it was streamed live.

Nina, the Federation's JCRC Co-Chair, said the wedding had been brewing for a long time, but as the coronavirus began imposing more restrictions on everyday life, they made a quick decision and pulled it together in about a day. The following are excerpts from the ceremony with remarks by Nina's three sons and Elliot's two daughters.

Jack – Age 11, 6th grade

Welcome- welcome everyone! We've come together to have some fun!

Gather 'round and we'll start this attraction; Cue the music- LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION!

Let me make it clear why we've come here today; there's two people in love who have something to say!

Benjamin – Age 8, 3rd grade

This man and this woman have been talking a lot; their decision's been made to now tie the knot.

They want family and friends, even Murray (our dog) to hear; they've chosen this time- on this day- in this year.

So we've gathered together to witness their vows, and join them in marriage as our law allows.

Samuel – Age 13, 8th grade

My mom and Elliot have come a long way; not just in distance to get here today.

They've created an amazing blended family; they have truly a love that's meant to be!

Soul-mates and best friends in the garden of life, we can't wait for them to become husband and wife!

SOOOOO, Will you love him if he's rich; Will you love her in a ditch?

Will you love through good and bad, even in times, be they happy or sad?



Will you love with all your heart; Will you love 'til death do part?

From this day on and ever more, no matter what life has in store?

Will you take each other as man and wife, and love each other your entire life?

Sara – Age 13, 8th grade

You have always been there for me, Dad since I was born and Nina for the last three years. Sometimes I forget

that you are not married yet considering I can't believe we've been living together for so long. This is special that we are all here together. Thank you for being such amazing parents and always been there for all of us. I've been cooking dinner and the wedding cake all day so let's get on with the wedding since I'm hungry!

Hannah – Age 15, 10th grade

Wow. A spring wedding amidst a global pandemic that we planned in less than 36 hours! That was definitely not what we were all expecting. Still, we are gathered here today to celebrate the love between my dad and Nina.

You two, and the love you have for one another set the example for the family we've built together. Your kindness, strength, empathy, and senses of humor have gotten us through the many ups and the very many downs we've experienced. I know that the five of us kids can rely on you both for anything whether it's a ride to school, \$1100 for a school Band trip to Disney (that got cancelled due to COVID-19), or a shoulder to lean on throughout our lives. Your relationship has showed me how to make the good out of the bad and that life doesn't need to be perfect to be joyous. Congratulations to you both. If corona couldn't stop you, nothing will.

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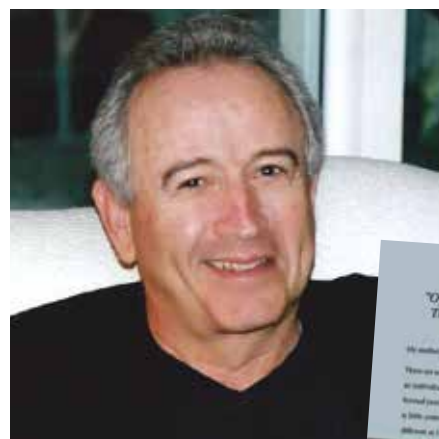
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Powerful Lessons for Today: Marv Dubin Reflects in His Memoir *Dubin's Life*

By Ezra N. Rich

He began collecting rags, papers and bottles as a young boy with his father on a horse-drawn wagon and eventually established a successful law practice in Buffalo, New York. Together with his “forever bride” Shirley, they raised three children and enjoyed what he describes as “a remarkable life.”

Now, Marv Dubin is bringing his potent autobiography to life in his first book, *Dubin's Life: A Memoir*, from Peppertree Press. It is at root the story of a child of Ukrainian Jewish immigrants, who, despite obstacles, realized the American Dream through hard work and education.



Marv Dubin

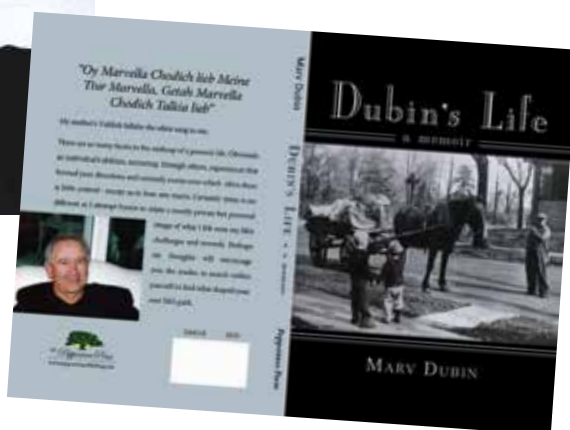
Money was scarce and his childhood full of challenges, some of which were commonplace among first-generation Americans. “As a kid, I thought all bananas were black, as that’s how we ate them, along with the thee-day old bread,” he said. His narrative contains surprising twists and turns guaranteed to keep readers turning the pages of *Dubin's Life*—straight to the end. And yet, the memoir is replete with thanksgiving for the many people who enriched his existence and paved the way for a life beyond what he ever imagined.

The stories in his book provide an easy read. It is filled with anecdotal remembrances that will no doubt give rise to readers recalling their own experiences. At the same time there are precious glimpses into Western New York people, places and things representative of a bygone era complete with the author’s thought-provoking, at times heart breaking, funny and-yet introspective view of his life’s influences.

Marv retired several years after 52

years as a practicing attorney. Rather than slowing down or replacing his law practice with other endeavors, he chose to reflect on his life by writing this memoir. “There were events and people who inspired me which, encouraged the effort, but deep down I selfishly wrote it for myself, to relive the memories, the good and bad, one last time,” Marv observed.

In addition to the book honoring his family and friends, Marv is donating the net proceeds from the sale of the memoir to the **Hebrew Benevolent Loan Association**, which at times supported



his father during the long winter months that made Buffalo’s side streets impassable and continues to help those in need within the community, particularly now during the pandemic. Marv will speak about his memoir at upcoming book signings at the Buffalo JCC – Benderson Building in Getzville and at his synagogue in Longboat Key, Florida.

Please check subsequent issues of The Jewish Journal and the JCC for more information on the Buffalo book signing. The mission of the HBLA is even more pressing as the Jewish community grapples with the financial impact of COVID-19. For more information about the HBLA, please visit www.wnyhbla.org or call 716.204.0542.

Ezra N. Rich is a member of the Board of Directors of the Hebrew Benevolent Loan Association of WNY.

The Age of Contagion

By Alex Lazarus-Klein

We are living at a time of contagion. Even as the Coronavirus sweeps through our neighborhoods and world, another more benevolent force does as well: kindness.

I heard it in the story of my Octogenarian congregant wintering in Florida, who, desperate for toilet paper and finding only empty shelves, was offered the personal supply of one of the workers at her supermarket.

I heard it in the story of the local Unitarian minister who stepped in to film the graveside funeral of a Jewish man whose daughter was heartbroken that she could not make it into town for the service.

I heard it in the voices of my Bible study group at a local nursing home who held a phone up to one another to continue our conversation virtually, even as in person gatherings had become impossible.

And, I heard it in the many notices we received from teachers and administrators in Amherst Central School District who were working hard to continue my childrens’ education from afar.

It is during these times of constriction that we realize just how lucky we are. Interactions that once blended into the rhythm of the week are now filled with meaning. I have taken to signing off my email communications with the words, “stay safe, stay healthy.” I feel the need to express “I love you” in any conversation I have with anyone. And, physical sightings of people on walks with our dog, have left me feeling teary-eyed.

We need each other more than ever, even as our movements become increasingly restricted. Just as I have seen in other times of societal crisis, normal boundaries between strangers have broken down. This is when we realize that when it comes down to it, we are all in this together.

So, this is the moment I express my thanks. Thank you to the front-line workers, in hospitals and nursing homes, in supermarkets and police stations. You, who put yourself at risk, are so appreciated.

Thank you to the politicians and societal leaders who have made the hard decisions to shut things down, even in the face of opposition.

Thank you to all those who are obeying social distancing measures. As hard as it is, each one of us who chooses to stay in the confines of our homes increases the likelihood we can flatten the curve of the pandemic.

Thank you to *The Buffalo News* and other local news sources who continue to



Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein

keep us informed and give us a semblance of normalcy in a world turned upside down.

Thank you to fellow clergy leaders and community activists who continue to stay in touch with their flocks, even as religious services and other public gatherings have come to a halt.

I, like most of you, am filled with trepidation about what the coming weeks and months have in store for us. This is like nothing I have seen in my lifetime, an invisible war against an enemy that forces us to give up the things we hold most dear.

As my Biblical ancestors once said to one another, “be strong and resolute.” Even as you feel yourself turning away from one another for fear of who might already be infected, feel those other mysterious forces, of love and compassion, of good-will and kindness that know no physical bounds. As the poet Lynn Ungar recently wrote in her poem *Pandemic* “Do not reach out your hands./ Reach out your heart./ Reach out your words./ Reach out all the tendrils/of compassion that move, invisibly,/where we cannot touch.”

In that spirit, I send my prayers out to you dear reader. May you, who I cannot see and may not know, feel the strength to overcome anything that comes your way.

Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein is Rabbi at Congregation Shir Shalom. This first appeared in *The Buffalo News* “My View” column March 26. It is reprinted with permission of the author.

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BUFFALO JEWISH
COMMUNITY RELATIONS

That's What Friends Are For

Father Greg Jakubowicz and Cantor Irwin Gelman shared a smile before the first Seder. Father Greg was invited to the Gelman's Seder but given social distancing, Cantor Irwin instead dropped off a Seder care package which included matzah, his home-made brisket and home-made pickles. Next year in Jerusalem? They were there together three years ago.



Mail-in Ballots for June 23 NYS Primary

Given the importance of social distancing, NYS has moved the presidential primary and special Congressional election (US legislative 27th district) to June 23. We encourage everyone to apply for a mail-in ballot. If you register to vote in the Democratic primary of the 27th district, you can either obtain a PDF version of the Absentee Ballot Application Form or have one mailed to you, here is the website: www.elections.erie.gov/Absentee. If you have any questions call the Erie County Board of Elections: Hours Mon-Fri 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. General Inquiries (716) 858-8891 or Absentee Department (716) 858-7818.

Note: Registration must be received 25 days before the election. Contact Mara Koven-Gelman with any questions at mara@buffalojewishfederation.org.

"No Hate In Our State Bill" Passes with NYS Jewish community support

Last month, Buffalo and Rochester JCRCs advocated for New York State passing the "No Hate In Our State" bill which includes the newly renamed "Josef Neumann Hate Crimes Domestic Terrorism Act" in memory of the first fatality from the Monsey Chanukah attacks, Josef Neumann, z"l.

Buffalo JCRC worked with Michael Snow, Governor Andrew Cuomo's Director of Jewish Affairs, to help mobilize Jewish communities and their friends across the State to send a strong message to legislators. After it passed, Michael thanked our quick efforts. "We succeeded in including the Governor's 'No Hate In Our State' package in the FY2021 Budget which passed last night. I'm sure the Buffalo JCRC outreach and support made a big difference. Thank you again for your solidarity and support."

Mazel Tov!

MAZEL TOV

To Our Confirmands

Joshua Garson
Shoshanna Hertz
Jordan Levine
Emily Steinberg

Nathan Wallens
Rayna Wallens
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Chinese Club of Western New York Donates Masks to Buffalo Doctors

The Chinese Club of WNY (CCWNY) ordered masks from China and delivered some to local doctors and hospitals during lack of medical supplies faced during the Coronavirus pandemic. Yanhong Baranski, Club President, said the CCWNY has ordered 4,000 masks for community use and dropped off 1,000 masks at Buffalo Medical Group. She said that 3,000 more masks recently arrived and she will deliver them to Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital, and 10,000 more are on order.



Yanhong Baranski, president of CCWNY, gives masks to DENT Neurology.

Through a relationship JCRC leadership has with CCWNY and Yanhong, a press release was created and sent to local media. Yanhong was very grateful for all the publicity. She remarked, "I really appreciate JCRC's support! Let's get together to fight the virus. God Bless America!"

Despite recent racist remarks toward Chinese and the Chinese American community concerning COVID-19, Baranski, said, "We are Chinese, but we are also Americans and Buffalonians. We love this country and care for people here. We should not fight; we should love each other."



Congregation Beth Abraham's Poets

Covid Chai-ku

Virus surrounding
Inside our warm loving homes
Waiting to emerge
By Iris Danziger

Coronavirus Blues

The news screams pandemic
I'm locked in my home
My boredom's systemic
I'm tied to my phone
So how will I stand it
And stave off defeat?
Like my mothers before me
I'll kvetch and I'll eat
By Shelly Kerker

Alone Together

Social distancing, isolation
Streets are empty, throughout the nation.
Despite a fear, that strikes to the core,
We're more together, than ever before
By Marty Kerker

Slipping through our quiet pain,
The Spring's upon us once again!
And all the fears and all the dreads,
Can't keep sweet Spring from turning heads!

The grasses wake, and tender shoots
Send up their buds, and down their roots.
The crumpled winter slinks away,
To render green what once was grey.

And though a microbe none can see,
Spreads terror, universally,
Be grateful, friend, for this fresh start,
And let a crocus melt your heart.
By Grant Golden

Passover Bunny

'Tis almost April and not a soul can come,
To the Seder at my house, cuz of the bad virus bum.
So time for Zoom and time for Skype,
To fulfill the occasion of the Passover hype.

So for Elijah this year he gets no wine,
Like everyone else he is in quarantine.

Kaddish

Friends travel to a foreign land.
Why mourn their absence?
Rejoice! They have found peace.

The journey may be painful, but the destination is not.
By Deborah Greitzer

We see the world
Through altered eyes
Our vision re adjusted
But not in order, tilted,
Our compass is off

Skewed as if tumbled and tossed in a big
Clothes dryer
Wrinkled and disheveled.

We try to straighten our lives and the world
As rugs below our feet
Are pulled daily, tugged gently or roughly
You can't know which one
The day will bring

Order- we seek calm by cleaning
Hands, floors, dishes, knobs
Again and again

I dusted the window shades today
And the sun shone through.
By Leslie Shuman Kramer

Like all tyrants
This virus has a weakness
I heard on NPR that
because it succumbs to abrasion
(hand washing)
Scientists call it "Wimpy"
By Holly Hutchinson

So let's have a good time and make it funny,
And let me invite the Passover bunny.

As the host of the Seder, no affikomen to hide,
Just a computer to watch my family with pride.
So with my friend the Passover bunny,
I saved so much of my Passover money.
By George Schwartzman

New Beginnings

Spring brings the promise of life renewed.
Birds returning from their time away.
New lives will be begin.
This year is different, however.
But like the 10 plagues of Egypt, evil haunts us.
A wave of death and disease spreads across the earth like a swarm of locusts.
No one is truly safe.
The streets are deserted
Where has everyone gone?
It brings out the worst in us and the best in us.
Try as we might, we cannot overcome our enemy.
We seek help from above, but wonder if anyone is listening.
When will this end?
By Sheldon Soman

Exercise blues

Bending, flattening?
We can do this to a curve.
How 'bout my stomach?
By Lisa Unher

In these times

When you see your neighbor walking down the way
Just try and stay six feet away.
Do the best you can to stop the awful spread
Of germs and virus causing so much dread.
You've got to keep your social distance,
Keep your social distance.
We all can help to flatten out the curve.
Just keep your social distance,
Keep your social distance.
Please do it right and don't lose your nerve.

When you see the rolls of paper on the shelf,
Don't grab them all for your own self.
Don't panic buy, it just isn't right.
So others have to search both day and night.
Please think about your neighbors,
Take care of your neighbors.
We're all in this together, don't you see.
Just think about your neighbors,
Care about your neighbors,
And this will go so much more easily.
By Lisa Unher

It is in times like these when most fear the dread,
Of a sickness that could very well leave us dead.
Yet many people hang on to their hope
From the lowest person to even the Pope.
The Irish even have their 4-leaf clover.
But we have more than just hope, for we have the "Pass Over."
By Jackie Nowak

T. S. Elliot

"April is the cruelest month."
Fasten your seatbelts...
By Grant Golden

O Covid-19!
Heavenly creation or
Just one of those things?
By Grant Golden

How Mussar has Helped Me through the Covid-19 Crisis

By Evie Miller Weinstein

I have been a student and practitioner of *Mussar* for the past 10 years. This practice was introduced to me by George Gellman when I was the Executive Director of the Bureau of Jewish Education. Along with Susan Schwartz, I was trained as a *Mussar* facilitator by Dr. Alan Morinis, Dean of the Mussar Institute. I have led groups, learned with some of the most brilliant Jewish scholars from around the world and attended international conferences where I learned with others who also held *Mussar* near and dear to their hearts.

The practice of *Mussar* provides us with a meaningful Jewish guide to live a well-directed life. It teaches us Jewish values that challenge the way we respond to others and react in everyday situations through a Jewish lens. It has helped me profoundly to make important decisions as well as taught me how to live my daily life with consideration and balance. The study and practice of *Mussar* is transformational.

When I began my *Mussar* journey, I had no idea that one day I would rely on the



Evie and Barry Weinstein

middot (character traits) of *Mussar* to help me through this COVID-19 pandemic. My practice has elevated my spirits, helped me understand my reactions to social isolation, aided me in my relationships with my family and friends, urged me to reach out to friends who I haven't spoken with in years or friends and family who are lonely and scared. I have concentrated on my practice on finding balance with the character traits of **patience, equanimity, order, gratitude, calmness, trust, simplicity, compassion, kindness and responsibility.**

As an example, the *middah* of *order* (*Seder* in Hebrew) teaches us that we don't want to live in a chaotic situation but we also don't want to be obsessive in our pursuit of an orderly existence. When my husband Barry and I were first in quarantine, I started to clean, straighten, dust, scrub etc. You've got the picture. But by practicing the *middah* of *order*, I was able to see that I was starting to be obsessive. I slowed down and saw I could be thorough without being compulsive.

Another example is relying on the *middah* of *trust* (*Bitachon* in Hebrew). In the practice of *Mussar*, we are taught that we need to trust in God, even when we don't understand why things are the way they are. This trust is difficult in the best of times. But we also know that we must not be complacent, or at the other end of the extreme, be paranoid. In this time of COVID-19, it is certainly easy to become scared, and paranoid. But listening to scientists, doctors and other experts, I now know that in the area of *trust*, I must remain cautious, so I can stay virus free. Complacency in this time would not be the best way to stay healthy. I also *trust* that we will find a light at the end of this tunnel and life will go on.

I could give many other examples of how *Mussar* has helped me deal with this virus, and I'd be happy to share my stories. What I can do now, is share my gratitude. I would like to thank my husband, children, extended family, colleagues and friends who have demonstrated compassion by their acts of kindness and love. I am grateful for the phone calls, *challah* and food deliveries, Zoom happy hours, and Facetime. I am humbled by the selflessness of the doctors, public health officials, public officials and community leaders who have risked their own health to guide us through this unprecedented time. The study of *Mussar* has taught me to recognize the good, be patient and bear the burden of this new reality. It has helped me to be content with what I have and forgo many of the materialistic needs that I had prior to the virus spread. As all of us are, I continue to be challenged in ways I never could have foreseen, but I am positive that *Mussar* will always be with me to help navigate this new reality.

If you have interest in finding out more about Mussar, please contact Susan Schwartz at susan@buffalojewishfederation.org.

Town Square Food Pantry

Our Commitment to the Community

By Larry Cohen

It has been over four years that our food pantry has been serving the needs of the community, but by far this spring has been the most challenging of times. A joint venture between Catholic Charities and Temple Beth Zion, Town Square serves nearly 200 clients including Jewish Family Apartments residents at Essjay.

Under the new guidelines of social distancing, Town Square currently restricts clients from entering the complex. Instead, volunteers personally provide curb side delivery to their cars. The bags of food include selections of canned goods, fresh produce and frozen meats, poultry and fish when available. We have also been designated to provide food to clients with special needs. In addition, Feed More WNY, formerly the Food Bank of WNY, has designated this site as an emergency response facility



when the need arises in the community. This means that residing in our normal area of service is not a requirement for using our services for the time being.

According to Darlene Sery, coordinator of the Town Square Pantry for Catholic Charities, "The volunteers such as Amy Jacobs, Cheryl Tobias, Phil Chazen, Eric Van Aernam and Larry Cohen, are



a terrific reminder of the self-sacrifices that people make under very difficult and trying times in our community. Without them, this food delivery system would not exist. We are so grateful for their continued dedication."

Larry is a Temple Beth Zion volunteer for the Town Square Food Pantry.

Facetiming with Jess

By Vickie Rubin

Coronavirus has changed all our lives in so many ways. One of the saddest changes is the absence of seeing and hugging family. But through sadness, in our situation, we found some illumination and a bright light that brought a smile to my husband, Mitch, and myself.

Our eldest daughter, Jessica (age 37), has multiple disabilities and is non-verbal. Although Jess is unable to speak using words, she can hum many familiar tunes. She has a range from "Jingle Bells," once hummed quite loudly at Temple during Rosh Hashanah, to the *Shema* plus many other tunes that lift one's spirits.

How do we explain to Jess that we are unable to visit her, to give her a hug and too many kisses? That we cannot hold her hand or look at videos and photos on my phone together. We cannot share a chocolate decadent cake or go outside for a walk. That her siblings, nephew and niece



or her friends Sheryl and Ellen can't visit.

Jessica lives in a group home two miles from our house, but she may as well be 200 miles away since families are not allowed to enter her home now and she is not permitted to exit. We thank People Inc. and most importantly her house manager, Kelly, who is strictly keeping these rules. Most of the women in Jessica's house are vulnerable and every day we wake up thinking, "is this the day that someone will be exposed to the virus?"

So, we Facetime. Jessica's superpower is connecting with those she loves, and it is no surprise that Jess is able to embrace and engage in Facetiming. She is not sad that we are not there in person; her smile and joy emanate through the phone at seeing our faces and hearing our voices.

Last week, my husband and I were Facetiming with Jessica and decided we would try to have a conversation with music. Mitch was the videographer with his phone while I started humming the *Shema* to Jessica. (See Facebook page *RaisingJessStory* for the actual video <https://www.facebook.com/RaisingJessStory/>).

Jess looked at me, rubbed her nose, and immediately sang the *Shema* back to me!

We were talking, we were singing, we were communicating and we were speaking the language of love and music.

We have sung with Jess in the past, but she usually takes a several minutes to sing the song back to us but this time the pause in between my singing and her reply was conversational; in other words, immediate.

Coronavirus has changed all our lives, but in the depths of sadness about not seeing those closest to us turned into a magical moment. I think we all need to focus on those magic moments while we are social distancing in our homes. They are out there.

Mitch and I are thankful for technology and we are thankful that Jessica is able to engage with us through Facetime and we are thankful for her dedicated staff who are doing everything they can to keep our daughters safe and happy, including taking time to Facetime on their phones.

We will get through this apart in proximity, but together in unity.

(The book *Raising Jess: A Story of Hope* by Vickie Rubin is expected to be released early 2021. Follow Vickie's Views Blog - <https://vickierubin.com/>)

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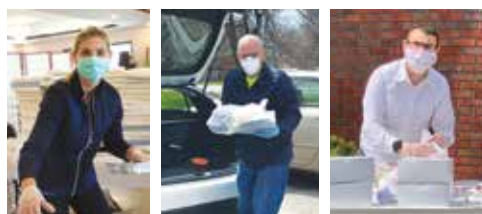
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JDC's Passover Seder-in-a-Box

This Passover season, virtual togetherness was more important than ever. The COVID-19 health crisis left many people concerned about how to celebrate Seder this year, especially the most vulnerable community members. "Many in our community spent this Seder alone because of COVID-19," said Rabbi Laizer Labkovski, whose Kosher Meals on Wheels Program oversaw the Seder-in-a-Box project. To address those needs, Kosher Meals on Wheels of Greater Buffalo led the efforts to provide Seders-in-a-Box, with support from Jewish Family Service and partly funded by Buffalo Jewish Federation.

Rabbi Labkovski received many calls and notes thanking JDC for the ready-made Seders. "I got a call before Pesach from many who lived more than an hour away and said who 'This is the greatest gift I have gotten in my lifetime.' Another woman said, 'I am crying from joy. I didn't think it would be possible to do a Seder this year.'"



"My family sat down this year for our Seder by ourselves," he said, explaining that this year was first time in 25 years without a public Seder. "We are missing everyone, and it is sad not to have the community join us, but at least we knew hundreds of people could have a Seder that otherwise would not have happened. We put together 400 Seders in a Box, then had to add 15 more due to last minute phone calls," he added.

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5 THINGS YOU CAN DO in May to Repair the World

- 1» **Make a donation TODAY to the Community Compassion Fund**, a special fund opened to help support individuals and families hit hard by the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the funds will funnel through Jewish Family Service. The monies raised so far have been assisting furloughed JCC workers with groceries and have help to pay for the JDC's Seder in a Box. **Go to the Federation's web page at www.buffalojewishfederation.org, click on the bright green "COVID-19" button and you will be able to make your donation there.**
- 2» Families in WNY are hungry and there are still food scarcities during this difficult time. **You can help by donating to Feed More WNY**, which now encompasses Meals on Wheels and The Food Bank. **Go to www.feedmorewny.org to donate online, volunteer or learn more.**
- 3» **Be Counted!** By April 1, 2020, every home should have received an invitation to participate in the 2020 Census. You will have three options for responding: Online. By phone. By mail. **Go to www.2020census.gov for more information. You can respond through mid-August.**
- 4» **Make a gift to the Jewish Federation Cemetery Corporation** in honor of your mother or grandmother, or any other important woman in your life for Mother's Day May 10. The Cemetery Corporation maintains and repairs several Buffalo Jewish cemeteries and your help is greatly needed. **Go to www.buffalojewishfederation.org and click on "Donate" where you will find a button to click on for the Cemetery Corporation, or call 716-204-2246.**
- 5» **Why not thank a police officer, janitor, garbage worker, fire fighter, grocery store employee or other essential worker this month.** This gesture doesn't cost a dime, but will be worth the trouble you take to offer thanks to that important person, who often goes unrecognized, but has been so necessary during this pandemic.

WHERE IN JBFLO?



Where is this found exactly in Jewish Buffalo?

The first 5 people to correctly identify the location will win
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E-mail your answers to ellen@buffalojewishfederation.org

Last month Marsha Goldberg, Einav Symons, Gunilla Kester, Ezra Rich, Cheryl Tobias and Lily Bink identified the heart-shaped memorial stone in the Cantor Susan Wehle Garden behind Congregation Shir Shalom's

We are in unprecedented times!

By Irv Levy

Or are we? The Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies was founded in 1911. The years that have passed held many good and bad times. I fully recognize the seriousness of COVID-19 and each day I include a prayer for those who are sick, those of blessed memory who have passed, and for the continued health of everyone else.

But are we in unprecedented times? Perhaps we are in our lifetimes. I have personally never gone through something like this. For strength, let's look to our parents and grandparents and possibly our great grandparents.

Between Fall 1918 and Winter 1919, the Spanish flu killed an estimated 50 million people around the world including over 675,000 people in the United States. Since 1918, there have been several other pandemics, although none as deadly. A flu pandemic from 1957 to 1958 killed around 2 million people worldwide, including about 70,000 people in the United States, and a pandemic from 1968 to 1969 killed approximately 1 million people, including about 34,000 Americans.

Aside from the health concerns, we can talk about the various times over the past century during which there was chaos in the job market, the stock market, the fear of war including the use of nuclear weapons and a whole host of times during which it appeared that our personal and national interests were in peril.

As FDR said, "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself." While there is plenty to worry about, there is so much more to be thankful for. I have become so appreciative of my family, my friends, my community and that G-d has placed me on this earth at a time during which we can help each other and grow as individuals and as a community. We are blessed to have the knowledge of how to limit the spread of disease, the knowledge of how to treat this disease and hopefully soon, the knowledge to cure and prevent the disease.

And while it's not "Business as Usual," technology has given the Foundation's entire team the opportunity to carry out the important work we do on behalf of Buffalo's Jewish community and all Western New York. Janine Allen serves as the Foundation's Director of IT. Over the course of a weekend, Janine transitioned the Foundation's team from a 100% office-based platform to a 100% remote based. We even have a video coffee break every day just to catch up on what's new outside of Foundation business.

Every school day, my three girls



San Francisco forced people to wear masks during the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic. While the suit appears to be a little dated, the mask has not changed very much.

are around the kitchen table doing schoolwork. (See page 6 for their reflections.) I have come to appreciate how hard they work, and they have come to appreciate how hard I work. It has been a time when we can share a greater appreciation of family. We had our Seder, but instead of feeling isolated we were more connected. Andrew Isenberg arranged to virtually connect 11 households around the country to have our family Seder which was attended by at least 50 individuals.

Rob Goldberg, CEO of Buffalo Jewish Federation, and I have been increasing collaboration between the Federation and Foundation for the past year. We are currently working together to raise \$360,000 for the Community Compassion Fund (see page 4). While everyone is impacted by COVID-19, there are many in our community who are suffering more than most. 100% of the contributions raised for the Community Compassion Fund will be distributed by Jewish Family Services to support those individuals and

families who have suffered the most as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Working on and supporting this Campaign has taken on a greater importance for me than just the dollars raised. The joy in helping those most in need and the opportunity to do so together brings a sense of clarity to the importance of our Jewish institutions and the community that we all serve.

Like our parents, grandparents, and those who came before us, now is our time to rise to the occasion and define our generation. We will get through this and we will do so together, as a stronger Jewish community.

My prayers are with you and your families. If you need help, please reach out to the agencies that are here to serve you. Do what you can to help your friends and neighbors and if possible, please support the Community Compassion Fund.

And finally, a big thank you to the front-line healthcare workers, first responders and all the people who place themselves at risk in their service to all of us. You are heroes.

Irv Levy is Executive Director of the Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies

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Too Much Lemonade

By Brocha Leah Greenberg

The novelty is over. Pun intended, I guess. That whole frenzy of “making the most of it” that so charmed me at the start. That whole “embracing the quiet” thing I was feeling now feels more like a strangle-hold. I made so much lemonade from these lemons, that I could start a lemonade stand, but ain’t nobody out there on the street to buy or sell it without getting a \$500 ticket.

I’ll keep at the positivity, no doubt. But now it’s just plain hard work. There are still the glorious moments – like this morning’s musical *davening* session on the trampoline with my adorable holy Meir maniac. The warm fuzzies of cooking together in the kitchen and acting as if I was some sort of domestic goddess, for once. This stuff is hard to keep up.

When this is all done, I’ll toast you a *L’Chaim* with all the lemonade. I think we already had our share of *maror* this year. I’m going to try to enter the Seder reflectively with the deep determination to transform bitterness to sweetness and pain to joy...blessing us all with the radical resilience to transform our lives and the world.

May we learn to see the world through the wonder eyes of the child and the wise one simultaneously.

H’kol B’Seder! May it zoom by with joy.

We need to use all our coping tools to beat our negativity and



Brocha Leah Greenberg

pain. Pesach symbolism gives us insight. We dipped the bitter herb into the *charoset* to teach us that we must dip our bitterness in some sweetness. Bitterness alone is self-destructive. Try to inject some optimism and humor into it. The Korech- Hillel sandwich teaches us to take the bitterness *maror*—our challenges, the sweet *charoset*—our blessings, the tasteless matzah—our daily responsibilities, and wrap them all together in a SINGLE sandwich. For otherwise, life is a mess of fragments.

Educator Brocha Leah Greenberg came down with COVID-19 in mid-March. She has recovered and wrote this right before Passover.

Happy 100th Birthday Jenny Pohl!



Jenny Pohl, Congregation Shir Shalom member (CSS), volunteer extraordinaire, role model and beloved community member turned 100 years old in April. A celebration had been planned to honor her, but because of the coronavirus prohibitions about gatherings, a party was not possible. But her friends at CSS honored her with a car parade on her birthday. Many people drove by with signs on their cars, waving, clapping and singing. We wish you a happy and healthy century year, Jenny! We hope all your friends and admirers can celebrate with you soon!

What I’ve Learned During Coronavirus

By Sophie Miriam Hart Green (age 6)

edited with (a little bit of) help by her parents

One Shabbat when I read the April *Jewish Journal*, I knew I wanted to write my own article. Writing an article looked exciting and I wanted to share what I have learned over the last month while I’ve been home because of coronavirus.

Here are three fun ideas that will not only impress your parents and your family but will also make you proud.

The airplane (take a look at the picture) started as a big cardboard box. One day I said, “That box could be an airplane.” We spent one Sunday morning painting our airplane in the kitchen. It got a little messy. It made my brother happy because we both got to put our toys and blankets in the airplane together. We pretended to fly all around the world and made videos for our cousins and grandparents and flew to each of their houses.



Sophie Miriam (6) and Judah Nathan (3 1/2) Green with their airplane

My mother gave me a goal. She said that if I learn to type, I can get my own email address to write my cousins. It made me want to practice. I’m already on level 2 of my typing program (free on BBC!).

School closed a few weeks ago and my parents started their own school! Once a day I take a Zoom class with my Ohr Temimim friends. Then, with my parents at home, we started learning more Hebrew language with cue cards and a notebook. I’m learning root words and how to speak and build sentences. I want to be able to speak a bit of Hebrew to my friends.

Each time I do one of these things I work really hard. Even if you’re a grown up, it’s good to learn new things and it’s good to review old things too. If parents know something special, this is a good time to teach it to your kids so they can teach it to their kids. I think it’s important to share all of the exciting things you are doing during this time off with your family and friends so it will make everybody happy.



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Self-Care Advice from JFS

By Jennifer Levesque and Shannon McGrath

Think of the last time you traveled by airplane. As you found your seat, the flight attendant asked if you feel comfortable sitting in the Emergency Exit. He politely explained what your responsibilities would be in case of an emergency landing and offered to have someone else take your seat if you felt uncomfortable. As the plane started to taxi from the gate, inflight instructions began and you were reminded, "In case of emergency secure your own mask before helping those having difficulty." The instructions made sense. If you assist others before ensuring your own safety, you might not be able to offer aid and stability. In your daily life you draw upon your experiences and ability to rationally problem solve when faced with life's challenges. What are the odds of actually being in such a situation? And yes, you remained in your emergency exit seat thrumming with excitement and anticipation, quickly forgetting these abstract concepts. What were the odds of there being an emergency? Not much.

But now we ourselves are amidst the global outbreak of the Coronavirus. Sure, we saw the evidence and felt the crisis moving closer and closer, but for many it remained an abstract concept until it found its way to our Western New York doorstep. As schools and businesses have closed, changes to daily routines have become impossible to ignore, and it feels at times as though the very foundation on which we stand is no longer stable. Our local leaders made efforts to plan, prepare, and manage this crisis. As our 'flight crew,' the responsibility falls to them to ensure systems are in place to maintain order and adjust course for the community as a whole.

They cannot do this alone. What was abstract has now become reality. Our figurative flight crew needs us to become active passengers and community members. Those with the ability to assist are asked to do so, and should, but they must put on our own mask. We don't know how long this crisis will last, and it is simply not enough to put our mask on once and expect it to work indefinitely.

We must conserve and replenish our energy in order to continue to be there for those we can help. It is easy to feel guilt for taking the time to do something for oneself when there are others who are struggling, but remember, if our personal resources run low, we will have nothing to offer to support others. To conserve and replenish our own energy reserves, we must practice self-care. Self-care is any activity done with the intention of maintaining or improving one's mental, emotional, and physical health. Self-care is deliberate. Self-care is the goal. Like all goals, self-care is individualized and it will require dedicated resources and time.

Here are some tips, techniques, and suggestions for ways to engage in self-care. Don't make it feel like work. Make



it something you look forward to. Most of these may feel like things you already know. So ask yourself, are you practicing self-care?

- **Maintain Healthy Habits** – Eat healthy, get eight hours of sleep, and exercise.
- **Keep a Routine** – Routines are important for maintaining balance. Wake up on a schedule, take off those pajama pants, and if you're working from home, remember to "punch the clock" and leave work behind at the end of the day.
- **Be Active** – Spring has sprung. Get outside and enjoy the beautiful weather or set aside a space inside to get some exercise.
- **Stay Connected** – Call or connect with family and friends on the web.
- **Limit Your News Diet** – The news cycle is 24-7, but you don't need to be.
- **Set Boundaries** – It is ok to say, "No." or "I can't do this now."

Most important, reach out for help and support when you need it. We have entered

the early stages of collective trauma and we each grieve in our own way over the loss of what had been the normalcy of everyday life. Now, more than ever, it is important to understand that our physical well-being directly connects to our mental well-being. To stay healthy we must take care of our body and mind. If you need someone to talk to, please let JFS be there for you. With telehealth services, we are able to come to you in the comfort and safety of your home. You can even wear your pajama pants. Give us a call today at 716-883-1914. Remember, we are stronger together.

Jennifer Levesque, LMHC is the Director of Clinical Services at JFS. Jennifer has dedicated her 10+ year career to the development and delivery of client-centered services throughout the Buffalo area to those in high risk and intense need situations utilizing a systemic approach & collaboration with local government and community partners.

Shannon McGrath, LCSW-R is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker at JFS. Shannon has been practicing social work for the last eighteen years. She has spent the last seven years working at JFS as a psychiatric social worker focused on working with the older adult population.

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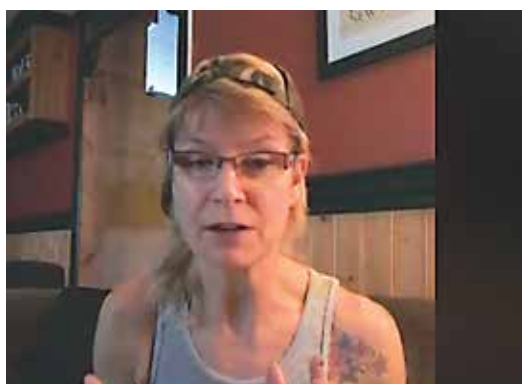
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JCC Keeps Going Through the Pandemic- Virtually

In any typical week, more than 1,000 people spend time at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Buffalo. Families bring babies, toddlers, and preschoolers to get their best starts at Early Childhood programs. School buses pull up on North Forest Road and Delaware Avenue every afternoon, and children pour out, chatting with friends and heading to classrooms where they do homework and socialize at educational afterschool programs, before being picked up by working parents.

All day long there's a friendly stream of members working out, joining fitness classes, doing laps and swim classes, and working with personal trainers and each other to improve their health. There's an energy throughout both JCC buildings as people stop to enjoy a new art gallery exhibit, a cup of coffee or meal or a discussion group together. Summer days are filled with the happy sounds of Centerland campers, and everyone enjoying the outdoor pool complex with its Pirate Ship, wading pool, sand box, beach volleyball court, locker room facilities and picnic shelters. Evening comes and the energy continues at special events, live theatre, authors, concerts, speakers and more. There's always something interesting going on at the JCC and people are always there to share those experiences.

"We are ready and waiting to open our JCC buildings and see them full of people again," says Rick Zakalik, JCC Executive Director. "In the meantime, teachers have been engaging and teaching Early Childhood children and Kids' Place students with online programs, storytelling, singing, and creative educational play. Members have been keeping fit with Facebook



Group Fitness Instructors are teaching classes on our JCC Buffalo Group Fitness at home Facebook group as well as providing tips, support and wellness solutions for while members are at home during the pandemic.

and Zoom classes and personal training sessions. Staff continue to reach out to members to check on their wellbeing and help those who feel isolated with our online Fitness and Cultural Arts resources. It's been a remarkable time of helping people

we are used to seeing in person every day, improve their days and connect with their friends and their community."

While the Center is closed, JCC facility crews have been sprucing up and sanitizing buildings. Halls, locker rooms

and classrooms have been painted, fitness equipment has been being oiled and repaired, and preparation for the Grossman Outdoor Pool Complex and Camp Centerland at the Irving M. Shuman campgrounds has begun.

Senior management staff, along with the JCC's Board of Governors carefully deliberated options to ensure the JCC remains a vital community resource. "Of primary importance were two things: the ability for the JCC to reopen as a strong and vibrant agency and the safe welfare of each and every valued member of our staff," says Zakalik. "We've worked with the JCCA, law firms, and government to find the best approach to reaching these two goals. Our board members have initiated a Resiliency Fund to support staff salaries and health insurance. During this interim we have had to institute a reduction in salaried staff, which will be adjusted once we are back on track," says Zakalik.

While the JCC waits for Federal and State loan applications to become available, maintaining costs continues to be a priority. "We are immensely grateful to the vast majority of our members who continue to support the JCC with monthly dues payments and program fees," says Zakalik. "Our staff continues to take care of our early childhood families and members through Facebook classes, story times, telephone calls and more and we are so grateful for their ongoing creativity, compassion and concern. Every day, we see the vast difference between a for-profit, customer-driven enterprise and a not-for-profit membership facility with a mission to improve the lives of our members and communities with programs and services in concert with Jewish values."

Members who continue their memberships and program fees will receive letters acknowledging their contributions which may be eligible for tax deductions. The JCC will also provide up to six months of free membership to those who can provide evidence of layoff or termination as a result of the nationwide shutdown.

"We will survive this as a strong nation and we will survive this as a community that understands the immense value of working together," says Zakalik. "In the meantime, we are standing by, waiting to open again and encouraging everyone to please stay well, observe recommended guidelines and keep the faith. You are sorely missed."

Donations to the JCC's Staff Resiliency Fund may be made at www.jccbuffalo.org.

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Buffalo-based company Safetec and owner Scott Weinstein are producing a disinfecting product called Sanizide 1 which is being used world-wide against the coronavirus.

Buffalo –based recycling company Manitoba Corporation through VP Adam Shine donated N95 masks to Erie and Monroe County Hospitals.

*** We apologize if you or your business was omitted from the list. Please contact us to be included in the June issue.**

Hillel Implements a Coronavirus Curriculum

By Rabbi Sara Rich

Like most of us, we couldn't have imagined how much COVID-19 would co-opt the Spring semester at Hillel of Buffalo. Alas, in early March, Gov. Andrew Cuomo ordered that all SUNY and CUNY institutions would move to online-only for the remainder of the semester. As students assessed their options, Hillel switched from in-person engagement to virtual contact.

Our first priority was to call every student to see whether they stayed in Buffalo or went home, and to check on their well-being. We called close to 100 students in the first two weeks, and we are still calling each day. Although most of the students were managing with an expected degree of anxiety, we found ourselves giving resources to students for food pantries and mental health services. Students were grateful to discover that Hillel was there for them, even when they were no longer in Buffalo.

The semester has continued to evolve in some special ways, notably:



Passover Care Packages: While Passover at Hillel is usually a special time of student-led seders and a delicious meal together, this year we brought Passover to them. We learned of more than 20 students who remained in Buffalo, away from their families for the seder and with limited access to kosher for Passover food. Thanks to the generosity of the Buffalo Jewish community, we assembled and safely distributed care packages to these students with seder plate ingredients, Passover foods, a Haggadah, seder resources and simple recipes so that they could make Passover in their apartments.



Hillel Helpers: The phenomenon of socially isolated college students with extra time on their hands led to a perfect volunteer opportunity. Buffalo students, as well as college students from Buffalo who moved back home to finish their semester online, can volunteer to provide academic assistance and entertainment to school-aged children and/or to call socially isolated senior citizens on a weekly basis. We expect that the social contact will be just as helpful for the college students as the individuals with whom they are paired.

Hillel@Home: Our global movement, Hillel International, launched Hillel@Home, a platform offering virtual meet-ups that bring together Jewish students from around the world in real-time. Initial presenters have included Natan Sharansky, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, and former NBA All-Star Amar'e Stoudemire, as well as wellness presentations, pre-Shabbat meditations, global Havdallah services, and more.

Our students have been touched by the well wishes and generosity of the Buffalo Jewish community during this challenging time. We are now working on ways to honor our graduating seniors and to reach out to prospective students to tell them about Jewish life on campus in Buffalo. We believe our students will emerge from this period with greater resilience and an understanding that Jewish life can thrive under any circumstance.

If you would like to learn more about how you can support Jewish life on campus, please contact me at rabbisara@hillelofbuffalo.org.

Rabbi Sara Rich is Executive Director of Hillel of Buffalo.

Rabbi Motti Kopman z”l

A dear friend, father, and husband Mordechai (Motti) Kopman was ripped away from us so young at the age of 34. Motti was battling lymphoma for the last six months, and his body succumbed to COVID-19 in mid-April.

Motti was everyone’s best friend, everyone’s open ear, and always had a good word to say. He was a dedicated father and a committed community member. He served the Knesset Center (Chabad Shul on Starin Avenue) like a soldier. He was always first to volunteer for any communal need; if anyone needed a minyan for a burial or a shiva, he would drop everything he was doing and run over to help. Motti also served as Cantor for the High Holy Days every year at the Chabad House at University at Buffalo, and would then walk after services to the dorms to blow Shofar for students who did not have the opportunity to attend services.

The world lost a real tzaddik – a righteous man – in Motti; he was such a great father to five beautiful children, a dedicated husband and friend. But now is the time for us to



rise to the occasion to help Motti continue his legacy! A fund has been established by Motti’s friends to help support his family. Please open your hearts as Motti always opened his and contribute today: <https://www.charidy.com/Kopman>.

May Motti’s memory always be for blessing and may our support to this important cause hasten the arrival of *Moshiach*!

This eulogy was compiled from the words of Rabbi Moshe Gurary, Chabad House of Buffalo.

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In Remembrance

The following individuals in our community passed away during the period from March 17-April 17*. May their memories forever be a blessing, and may their loved ones be comforted among the mourners of Zion.

Donald Barish
Joshua Biltekoff
Dr. Alan G. Burstein

Janet F. Dimet
Lorraine Dweck
Nina Freudenheim
Harvey Gross
Mordechai Kopman
Phyllis Kramer
Paul Leff
Jerome Michaels
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Shepping Nachas

By Rob Goldberg

I've often been teased as being a "glass half full kind of guy." I rarely push back as I see the jest as a truism for each day I try to find the good, and count my blessings seeking to live by the watch-words: "This that too shall pass."

Yet my positivity has been tested by the unpredictable spread of COVID-19 and the impact it has had on daily living and working, not just for us in Western New York but around the globe. But in the end, my **perspective** has made me **proud** of our community, **honored** to be among those who serve it, and **grateful** for the daily blessings of our lives.

Perspective

During the past month, I've Zoomed with colleagues from around the US, Israel, and Europe and my wife Shira and I have Facetimed daily with our kids and grandkids that live in Chicago and LA. In the spirit of physical distancing, we've even been connecting virtually with our son Ari and his family who live in Clarence! In all of these experiences, I have gained the perspective that we are in this pandemic together as a global community, and that we'll get through this period of time stronger and even more connected.

Pride

As I write this in early April, it is the eve of Passover. The overwhelming feeling that cascades around me is pride. On some level I'm *kvelling* (derived from the Yiddish *kveln*, meaning to gush or swell) with pride of the Jewish Federations of



A Zoom view of a Monday community leadership check-in meeting during April.

North America (JFNA) that sprang into action to bring information to the entire Jewish community about ways to access resources through the CARES Act. On one of its Zoom gatherings to provide details on obtaining funds through the Small Business Administration (SBA), over 5000 individuals participated. JFNA, under the leadership of Eric Fingerhut, with whom I was privileged to work closely when I was with Hillel International before joining our

Federation, also created a new web-based resource called **JewishTogether** that features rich content, opportunities to engage with colleagues, and a daily video message from Eric providing timely information and reassurances.

I'm also *shepping nachas* (another Yiddishism meaning to be happy and proud, especially of another's accomplishment) of my team and our wider Jewish communal leadership. Federation's professional staff pivoted quickly to work from home, (*check out my colleague Miriam's story on page 6*) adjusting their lives while still serving

Jewish Buffalo with excellence. We made changes to *The Jewish Journal* to make it timelier; we created an outstanding and time-sensitive resource page on our website; we launched a Compassion Fund with the Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies to raise dollars to help those most in need (*see page 4 for details*); the Center for Jewish Engagement transformed most of their gathering to be virtual, and in close partnership with Irv Levy from the Foundation, our

team worked collectively and quickly to prepare other agencies and synagogues to be able to apply for SBA funds.

Honor

The Hebrew word for honor or respect is *kavod*, though it can also mean a sense of "heaviness" as in Genesis 13:2 when Abraham is described as very "heavy" in the context of his material wealth and importance. I see being honored to help lead Jewish Buffalo as heaviness in terms of responsibility. Indeed, there was a significant heaviness when the pandemic struck our region, but I knew from the onset that I was not alone, as the heaviness of duty was quickly shared by so many in leadership roles. My partner Leslie Kramer and I organized community-wide Zoom gatherings each Monday (our latest on April 13). Synagogue leaders quickly shuttered their buildings to keep their communities safe, and if able, converted their worship and programs to on-line experiences. In fact the first reference I heard of "social distancing" was in early March in a communication from Young Israel to its membership. Rick Zakalik and his leadership team at the JCC took swift action to protect its membership by closing down its fitness and aquatic facilities and childcare, and creating dozens of virtual work-out opportunities, (*see page 20*); Molly Carr and her team at JFS ramped up their ability to deal with the emotional challenges that many were experiencing as a result of the virus (*see page 19*); the community *mikvah* closed and Kosher Meals on Wheels led by Rabbi Laizer Labkovski created an opportunity for all to celebrate Passover through the delivery of a "Seder-in-a-Box" (*see page 16*). Our community leadership embraced the heaviness of responsibility and made it possible for Jewish Buffalo to be safe and secure.

Gratitude

One of my favorite Mussar *middot* (traits) is the description of gratitude: *hakarot hatov*. The literal translation is "recognizing the good," but for me it is shouting out all that is good in spite of the challenges we face in living amid COVID-19. In this, our shortened May issue of *The Jewish Journal*, I want to call out how blessed I feel to be an American, a New Yorker, and a Jew. And I'm grateful to each of you for your resilience and perseverance, for being calm and creative, and finding new silver linings each day. May the day come soon when this pandemic has passed and we can resume our daily grind and gather together in joy and celebration. Remember: "This too shall pass."



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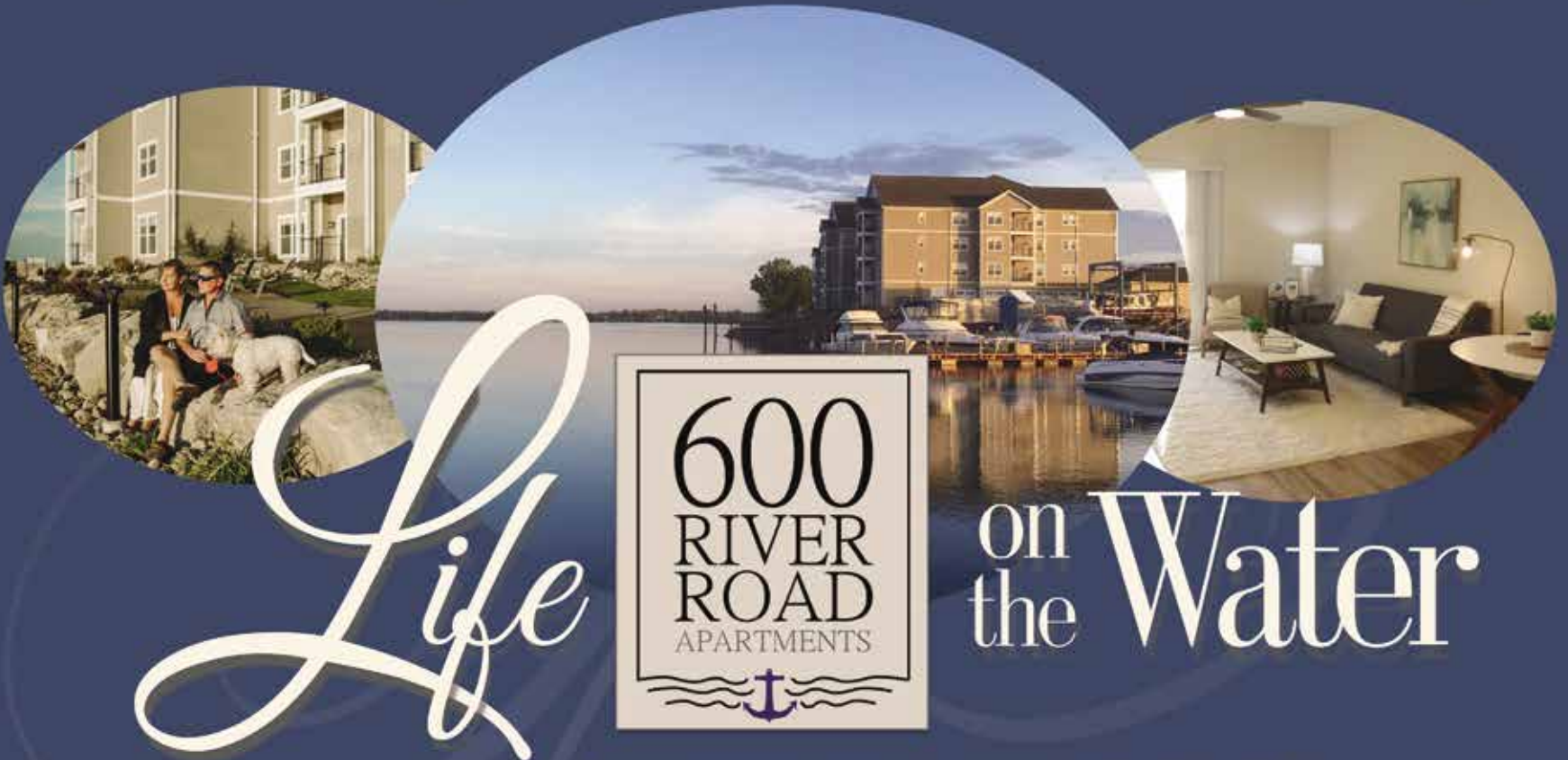
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