

The Award Winning

THE JEWISH JOURNAL

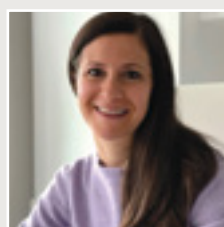
A publication of The Buffalo Jewish Federation

» STAY WELL! STAY SAFE!

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JUNE 2020 | SIVAN-TAMMUZ 5780

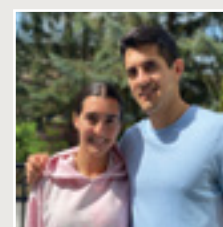
We are all High School Seniors Now (6-7)



LOOK:
A BALANCING
ACT
(5)



INSIDE:
GUARDING YOUR
HEALTH
(8-9)



DON'T MISS:
6FTCLOSER!
(11)

thank you♥



CAMPAIGN for JEWISH BUFFALO

JUNE 2020 | QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

We are excited to share with you our **Campaign for Jewish Buffalo Quarterly Impact Report** for June 2020. So much has changed in the age of Covid-19, yet our Jewish Federation, partner agencies and overseas colleagues have all adapted to provide support and inspiration for our local community and around the world. With your investment, the Campaign for Jewish Buffalo enables us to provide for immediate needs, while preparing for the future. We are here for you and our entire community. Please feel free to reach out to any of us with questions regarding the Federation and the Campaign for Jewish Buffalo.



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OUR FEDERATION COMMUNITY COMPASSION FUND

As of May 8, Jewish Buffalo raised \$316,973

- * distributed **1500** face masks to local Jewish and non Jewish organizations
- * provided financial support to **144** furloughed Jewish communal workers
- * over **150** Jews isolated in their homes received Seder essentials to celebrate Passover

Created in partnership with the Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies, 100% of every dollar supports individuals and families.



PARTNER AGENCY JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE

Covid-19 related work:

- * **18** families received direct support for food distribution (multiple times)
- * assisted over **30** individuals in applying for unemployment benefits
- * transformed the clinic to telehealth services with a **25%** increase in usage



Federation's Momentum Moms collected items for a local refugee family

JEWISH LIFE AROUND THE WORLD WESTERN GALILEE PARTNERSHIP

Our Partnership friends have offered many Zoom & Facebook Live events:

- * **600** people learned Israeli dancing & **550** people fried falafel balls
- * over **1500** people tuned in for the Dayan concert
- * **900** children heard an Israeli classic book for Yom Ha'Atzmaut



#FacingCorona2Gether

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Editor's Note



Ellen Goldstein, Editor

I write this in mid-May, as we continue to comply with New York State quarantine regulations because of the coronavirus pandemic. Most of us are home – working, home-schooling, cooking, caring for family members. Some of us are on the front lines – in hospitals or nursing homes, working at pharmacies, grocery stores – while others are helping all of us get through this time teaching classes from home, holding religious services on Zoom and so much more.

Leslie Kramer is spot on in her President's Message when she says "We are all High School Seniors now." Everyone has had to adapt and change and deal with disappointment. High school and college seniors are missing the exciting conclusion to their years of hard work and in-person graduation. Others have lost loved ones, unable to spend their final days together. Still others can't see family members, can't go home or can't leave home. Everything has an extra layer of difficulty and risk added – from grocery shopping or take-out meals to planting a summer garden to a regular dental check-up.

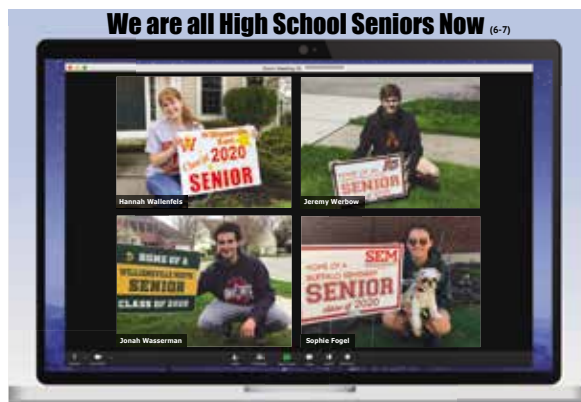
But everything is not bleak, terrible, hopeless. Again this month, out of the chaos comes stories of heroism, ingenuity, resilience, bravery, *menschlekeit*. In this issue of *The Jewish Journal of WNY*, we are proud to be able to highlight a few more hometown heroes from Buffalo's Jewish community. You'll meet the four remarkable high school Seniors pictured on the cover: Sophie Fogel, Hannah Wallenfels, Jonah Wasserman and Jeremy Werbow. And you can read about everyday heroes like Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein, *ad hoc* Pandemic Committee chair Dr. Peter Winkelstein, psychologist Dr. Kelly Norman, Drs. Liz Zausmer and Lito Gutierrez, Ben and Ariella Sharf, JFS staffer Matt Stewart, JCRC Director Mara Koven-Gelman and Federation's Asst. Executive Director Randi Morkisz and members of the Chinese Club of WNY.

All of them and so many more are the reason Jewish Buffalo and Greater Buffalo continue to thrive. The leaders we featured last month and the individuals you will read about this month and many more we don't even know have stood up to say "Hineni. I am here." They have stepped up to re-create community and everyday living and paved the

ways as leaders to make it better. And it will be better. Because together, we will make it better. Stay well and stay safe.

Ellen Goldstein - Editor

On The Cover



High School Seniors from the Class of 2020 pose with their "Senior" signs from each of their high schools against a Zoom-like background. Top row from left: Hannah Wallenfels, Jeremy Werbow. Bottom row from left: Jonah Wasserman, Sophie Fogel.

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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

Produced by



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Don't Let the Bumps in the Road Deter You, OR: We Are All High School Seniors Now

Hello everyone. Leslie here, just checking in. How are you? How is your health? Your mental health? Your physical and spiritual safety? How are you holding up? I know you're missing people and events.

This issue of *The JJWNY* highlights those High School students meant to graduate this year. Congratulations to our Jewish Buffalo graduating Seniors, and to graduating Seniors everywhere. It is an uncertain time, and it is also a time for possibilities.

In the sixth episode of John Krasinski's new **YouTube** show *SGN (Some Good News)*, he creates a virtual college graduation experience. The episode focuses on four out of hundreds of graduating Seniors who submitted questions they would like answered at such an auspicious time in their lives. He gives them the chance to ask their questions to four influential impromptu Commencement Speakers, Steven Spielberg, Jon Stewart, Oprah Winfrey and Malala. The resulting conversations are uplifting and heartwarming and offer hope for how these Seniors will fare moving forward.

Steven Spielberg, in addressing the question "How do you still follow your dreams when it feels like the world isn't supportive of them?" says, "A real dream is something that not only hangs on to you, but you hang on to it...It allows us to be game, and allows us to get over our fear, and allows us to go forward no matter what obstacles are thrown in our path."

And Oprah Winfrey, in thinking about "a time in your life that felt like a low moment but in the end changed everything for you," tells the story of being demoted from her first job as a Baltimore TV station News Anchor (inferring that the reason was based on racial prejudice) to sitting in as the host of a local talk show. After her first day at her new assignment she knew she had found her calling. Unexpected and incredible results from a low moment.

As with most college commencement addresses, these timeless lessons that the strength of our passions will guide us past the naysayers and that we must make good out of what we are faced with in life apply to each of us, particularly now.



As we navigate these times we live in, by now we are coming to realize that we will not be returning to what was normal. We will be moving forward, towards it,

"As we navigate these times we live in, by now we are coming to realize that we will not be returning to what was normal. We will be moving forward, towards it, whatever shape "it" takes. High School Seniors, by nature of their milestone are naturally moving on to new stages of their lives. I believe we all must do the same. We are all Seniors now."

whatever shape "it" takes. High School Seniors, by nature of their milestone are naturally moving on to new stages of their lives. I believe we all must do the same. We are all Seniors now.

We also know by now that the only way to quell this disease is by communal cooperation. By working together. When we wear our PPEs, we are protecting EACH OTHER from what we may carry. Our collective survival is in our strength to share responsibility for one another. In fact, in a recent Friday night community Zoom Shabbat candle lighting gathering we recited the blessing for wearing a protective mask. This act of responsibility and love is being incorporated into every aspect of our lives.

Hasn't it always been this way, even in times of good health? The selfish person doesn't help his or her community. The person who won't participate, won't

cooperate, won't lend a hand, won't offer assistance, won't spare a dime. That person is a drain on others. That person saps our collective energy. Our world thrives when generosity, openness, creativity and tolerance exist. We suffer when faced with self-centeredness, small mindedness and prejudice.

I don't have any answers to what the world will look like in a month, in a year or in ten years. Will the passion for home cooking and baking change how society produces food? Will we travel whenever we feel like it? When will we be able to attend live sports games? What will institutions of higher education look like? What will health services look like? Will we tear down buildings made empty by employees working remotely? Will that land be used for more parks and green space? Will we actually reverse the environmental harm we've done to the planet?

our agencies, our synagogues and our incredible professionals and volunteers for their determination to make our world a better place, to identify existing and newly developing needs, and to address them.

We are all surely realizing how much less we need than we previously thought to feel fulfilled. We are all realizing what elements of our lives give us meaning. I recently read Viktor Frankel's *Man's Search for Meaning*. This seminal book reveals that seeking happiness is not going to get you to happiness. Rather, finding meaning in your life will make you happy. Many of us are realizing that, ironically, this crisis is making us think about what is most meaningful to us. The bumps in the road we didn't anticipate may lead us in a new direction. That road may be not what we planned, but it just might be amazing. And it just might be the right road for right now.

People a lot more experienced and smarter than me have been thinking about these questions and so many more. But each of us should be thinking this way. Each of us is like a graduating Senior, looking ahead and asking big questions as we begin to navigate uncharted waters. And as the *SGN* Commencement Speakers suggest, we are best served by avoiding the black hole of self-pity. And I say that without judgement—just like you, I have had the crazy dreams, the low moments of sadness. I have experienced the stages of grief for what has been lost to my family members and to me.

Yet, I am feeling gratitude for what we do have. I am grateful to be part of the creativity that is blossoming within our world and within our community I am seeing warmth, cooperation, caring and gratitude for what we DO have, every day. Here in Buffalo, I am so proud of

I know you are, as I am, sometimes sad, and sometimes scared. Many people have lost friends, relatives or colleagues. Family relationships are straining under the pressures. Yet we must look forward. We must laugh and love and create. We must continue to dream and to work toward those dreams. We must travel the road, and allow the bumps to help guide us.

As we wade through our new normal, I thank you for sharing in our communal responsibility to keep each other healthy and to make our world a better place. One day at a time, one step at a time, one mask-wearing moment at a time. It will be a rocky, rollicking ride as we move forward. But we have no options—we can, and we will do this together. And I for one intend to enjoy it.

Jewish Buffalo Shines through Compassion Fund

At the onset of the pandemic, Buffalo Jewish Federation in partnership with Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies created a **Community Compassion Fund** to assist those most impacted by the crisis. Both organizations seeded the fund with nearly \$200,000 from their reserves and to date, hundreds of community members have made gifts to the fund of over \$125,000.

The **Compassion Fund** is designed to provide assistance with mental and physical health & wellness counseling, food, prescriptions, rent subsidies and other essentials. Jewish Family Service is administering the distribution of the fund assuring our community's most vulnerable populations are taken care of in the strictest of confidence.

To date, the Community Compassion Fund has provided support to hundreds of individuals and their families, including financial support to nearly 150 Jewish Community Center workers who were furloughed at the onset of the crisis, underwriting the costs for Seder essentials for more than 150 individuals, and the purchase and distribution of personal protective equipment for area non-profits.

If you know of individuals or families that could also benefit from these resources, please encourage them to contact Matthew Stewart, JFS's Jewish Community Care Coordinator at 716-883-1914.

Many of you have already contributed to the Compassion Fund and we are so grateful. For those who have yet to contribute, any amount that you are able to give is appreciated. To make a gift, 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 Drive, Getzville, NY 14068**. Finally, if you have a DAF with the Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies and wish to make a donation from that fund, please contact their office to recommend a distribution to the Compassion Fund.



Yanhong Baranski, (center) a member of the Chinese Club of Buffalo and Randi Morkisz, Assistant Executive Director of the Buffalo Jewish Federation (left), on behalf of the Compassion Fund met at People Inc. headquarters in Depew in late April to deliver much-needed masks for both clients and employees. See more on pg. 17.

Relationships Paved Way for Loan Success

By Rob Goldberg

On Monday, April 6, twelve Jewish organizations in Western New York applied for Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) loans through The CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act, passed by Congress on March 27. Eleven of the twelve organizations worked in partnership with M&T Bank and all the organizations received approval of funding totaling \$6,041,200.

The Power of the Collective

Even while the legislative details of the loan program were being written, JFNA (The Jewish Federations of North America) was preparing information to help guide Jewish organizations to understand the opportunity of the program. JFNA provided worksheets, lists of lending institutions, infographics, webinars and a volunteer network to help all Jewish organizations with their applications. The first webinars were held just hours after Congress approved the Act, and during the webinar on March 30, over 5000 individuals participated.

The Power of Partnership

Professionals from the Buffalo Jewish Federation and the Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies worked in partnership to reach out to every Jewish organization in Jewish Buffalo to provide JFNA materials, answer questions, and in some cases assist with the loan application process. In one instance, an agency wasn't even aware of the program and through the support of Federation staff successfully applied and was approved for a loan of nearly \$100,000.

The Power of Relationships

While many banks in Western New York worked with small businesses and not-for-profits to apply for and secure funds through PPP, M&T managed to get more than 96 percent of those that applied through the bank approved for the program. The Jewish community has a long-standing and strong relationship with M&T and is grateful for their role in our collective success. M&T is the sixth-largest lender of U.S. Small Business Administration loans in the country. It helped a total of 27,711 clients get approved for PPP loans, totaling more than \$6.4 billion in the first round.

The Balancing Act

By Dr. Kelly Norman

As I set up the day's first Telehealth visit, I close the door to my office (the playroom) to muffle the pitter patter of toddler footsteps and the *Moana* soundtrack playing for at least the third time today. I am a mom and a psychologist. Previously, these two roles have always had a great deal of separation but now they occupy the same space. Just as I am adapting to a new way of life at home, my patients are working hard to adjust as well.

I treat a range of presenting concerns, and my practice focuses primarily on treating anxiety, depression, and eating disorders. For many, staying at home and living among the threat of COVID-19 has exacerbated symptoms and created additional worry. For others, like those who struggle with social anxiety, staying at home has actually yielded some temporary relief from symptoms. However, with fewer natural opportunities to challenge their anxiety, patients must work even harder to meet the ultimate goal of overcoming their worries.

A large portion of my practice consists of adolescents. Adolescence is a critical period for many aspects of development, including mental health. Adolescence is a time when young people are developing a



sense of autonomy from their parents and identifying and maintaining social supports outside the home, which are important for mental well-being. Of course, staying at home challenges this notion. Nevertheless, I am amazed and inspired by the creativity of all people, but young people in particular who find ways to stay connected with one another and get their needs met during this time.

As I end the work day and open the door to my office, this time hearing "Let it Go" on my quick commute down the stairs, I return to my family and my role as a mom in our new normal.

Dr. Kelly Norman received her Ph.D from The University at Buffalo and opened her practice in 2018. She and her husband Ari live in Clarence and are the proud parents of two daughters.

Thank you MOMentum Moms!



JFS posted this on Facebook:

We are so grateful for Stacey Block and the Buffalo Jewish Federation's Buffalo Moms for Momentum, who collected and donated all of the items we were in need of for one of our refugee families. We posted our need, and this group responded instantly, collecting all of the items we asked for and more, in a matter of days. We could not be more thankful for the help of our community during this time. Thank you so much!!!



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4 Graduates reflect on this year

Senior year for high school students can be a trying, unnerving and exasperating time, as well as a time of fun, joy and pride, from applying to colleges, taking achievement exams, making big decisions about schools, to saying goodbye to close friends, prom, and graduation. But 2020, the Year of the Coronavirus, will top most other years in our lifetimes as one of stress, disappointment and hardship. Four seniors in our Jewish community, each graduating from different high schools, shared their story on the end of their memorable senior year.

JONAH WASSERMAN

Williamsville North High School

About two months ago, I was sitting in school thinking about what the rest of my year would be like. Little did I know on March 13th that it was the last day I would ever step foot in Williamsville North High School as a student.

At first, I was excited to hear that school had been closed for a week, but as time went on, we all learned more about the virus, and as school was continuously pushed back, the hopes of returning were slim to none. Then during the last week of April, we were informed we would not be returning to school, and that everything would be “virtual.” I was heartbroken. Although I had a feeling I would not be returning, I always held out a small glimmer of hope that things might turn around and I would be able to finish my senior year with my best friends.

I had hopes that Spring 2020 was going to be one of the best of my life. I had my last few soccer games to look forward to (I have been playing soccer for 12 years), the last of high school classes, senior skip day, prom, graduation and so much more. I had been dreaming about hearing my name being called and walking across the stage at graduation, taking another big step closer to my future.

For me, one of the most difficult parts of this entire situation has been not being able to spend time with friends. No more parties, sporting events, soccer practices, not even being able to just sit on my best friend’s couch...nothing. We had planned a Spring Break trip to Mexico this past March, but unfortunately, we were unable to go. And now that my friends and I are heading our separate ways and starting new lives, we may never get the chance to take a trip like this again.

Additionally, for the past ten summers I have been attending Camp White Pine, an overnight camp in Ontario. This would be my 2nd summer on staff. It is here that some of my best childhood memories have been created, as well as some of my greatest forever friendships. At the beginning of April, I was informed that the Canadian/US border was closed and camp may not happen. My friends and I are hoping and praying that this too is not cancelled.

Everything in the world has changed. I recently even had to sign up for a virtual college orientation for The Ohio State University (OSU) where I will be attending this coming fall, since we can’t be physically on campus yet. I am now hoping by fall I will be able to experience Fall Move-In Day on campus and meet my new roommate from Chicago in person.

Since I committed to OSU, I have been looking forward to starting the next chapter of my life; I will be creating new friendships, attending the famous football games at the OSU Horseshoe, hopefully joining a fraternity and making new memories that will last a lifetime. But, will I have to wear a mask during all of this? Will these things even happen? Knowing I will most likely not have a “typical” freshman year at college is depressing, but I need to think positively.

Even though this has been an extremely difficult time, I am managing to make the best of it. I have been able to spend more time with my family than ever before, and also have been able to play more with my new puppy, Grimsby. Overall, this has been a very hard time, but in life, I know there will always be challenges. And I know it is how I react to these challenges that will define me.



SOPHIE FOGEL

Buffalo Seminary

Things have a way of working out. The first week of March, right before the students left for spring break, and 10 days before most universities shut down for COVID-19, I toured the University of Pittsburgh. It felt like a great fit. I loved the urban campus, the perfect size, a cool city, and great programs in Middle Eastern studies and Arabic. I knew I had found my school.

As I settled into remote learning back home, and adjusted to a pretty big shift in end-of-senior-year expectations, people started to talk about whether colleges would start face-to-face in the fall. What? Freshman year wasn’t supposed to start for almost 6 months. My high school was doing relatively well with online learning, but the idea of missing out on in-person classes at college started to wear on me.

If college started online, maybe I would consider a gap year. I’d thought about taking a year off before, but many of those programs are also up in the air now—uncertain about whether they would be able to operate in the fall, too. As of right now, I’m trying to stay optimistic—hoping we can head off to college as planned in the fall.

Missing out on “senior week,” prom, and other end-of-year events has been disappointing, but not getting the chance to have a real graduation feels like the biggest loss for me. Like many seniors, I’ve been looking forward to that day, to walking across that stage, participating in traditions and experiences we’ve anticipated since freshman year. And it feels like something we won’t be able to ever get back—a rite of passage we can’t reclaim. Obviously we’re not alone. I’m hopeful that the classes of 2020 all over the world will feel bonded. We will share a mutual understanding of life “before corona”—our own version of “b.c.”

We’re all looking for silver linings in this, and it’s not lost on me that I’m among the luckiest groups of people. Lots of students and families are suffering, with lost jobs, lost college opportunities, and, of course, friends and family members who have been sick or died from COVID-19. Positives for me have been a renewed appreciation for solitude, and gratitude for my family and friends. Family Zoom nights, complete with tech-struggling grandparents, will be memorable. A Zoom seder was a first, but maybe not a last. A couple of milestone family birthdays on Zoom, lots of cooking and baking, Zoom yoga and other at-home exercise programs are keeping things upbeat.

Staying positive with so much uncertainty seems like a valuable life lesson—one that will stick with me always.



HANNAH WALLENFELS

Williamsville East High School

Up until March 13th, my senior year was pretty normal. As a class officer, I got to help plan our homecoming week, which was an incredible start to our final year. I went through the typical stress and then relief of completing my college applications. As president of Tzafon, our region of the Conservative Judaism's youth program USY, I went to USY's international convention in Southern California in December for a last chance to see all of my friends from across the country. I participated in East's musical in the pit orchestra for the final show of my high school career, and attended spring chorus, band, and orchestra concerts. All of these landmark events were supposed to lead up to the culminating moments of my time at Williamsville East, but that changed for me and for seniors across the country on March 13th. That day—a Friday—I remember asking all of my teachers whether they thought school would be cancelled, and almost every single one brushed off the question. None of us realized that we

wouldn't be returning to school this year.

Since then, I have missed out on notable moments of my senior year, including the last music performances, visiting the university I'll be attending in the fall, and the final convention as a USYer in which I was supposed to be "de-installed" as regional President. Prom and the graduation ceremony have been cancelled as well. This is a difficult and confusing time, to say the least.

It's easy to be pessimistic right now. Students in the class of 2020 like me have been working for these moments for the last 13 years. We've spent endless time studying and working hard in order to experience the rewards that come



Photo Credit: The Onion Studio

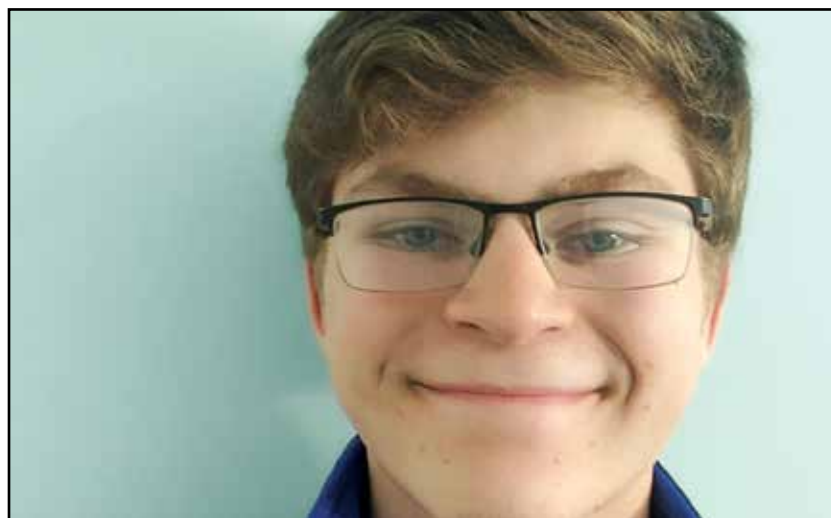
with finishing high school. Understandably, most students are beyond devastated and are grieving the loss of these important moments. This hardship is not to be taken lightly. However, I know we won't survive quarantine if we spend the coming months moping. We have to dig deep and discover what we have gained in this time.

Personally, I have spent a lot of time reflecting on how I handle my emotions and sort through my thoughts. This has helped me to mentally prepare in case my summer camp or even the fall semester of my freshman year of college get cancelled. I have also gotten lots of sleep, as my brother can attest to the fact that I haven't gotten up before 10 a.m. in 7 weeks.

The most important thing that I have learned, though, is how to adapt. I knew I wouldn't be able to go so long without seeing any of my friends, so we came up with alternatives. About once a week, my best friend and I will go to one of our houses and sit very far apart on opposite sides of the driveway so we can still "hang out." My camp friends and I do Zoom calls with each other almost every night, just talking for hours. I've been texting and Facetiming other friends to make sure everything is okay. Especially now, it's important to check up on those that you care about. This process has also made me realize how easy it will be to stay connected when we are dispersed around the country next year.

Although the class of 2020 has lost so much as a result of the pandemic, we have also gained tremendous life experiences and have the opportunity to learn more about ourselves than we ever have before. I look forward to seeing what my peers accomplish in the future.

2020 Class of



JEREMY WERBOW

Amherst Central High School

My high school career has not ended in the preferable manner, but I am still getting through it and will "graduate" this month. My plans up to mid-March were to go to high school for the rest of the year, graduate in June, work during the summer, and then go to college at the beginning of the fall semester. As of right now (mid-May), the only change to those plans is that I did not go back to high school for the rest of the year. In the fall, I will be going to Niagara University for Nursing with a minor in American Sign Language.

Because my senior year was cut short by several months, there are some things that I will not be able to take part in. I was supposed to go to Atlanta back in April to my girlfriend's prom, instead of going to my own prom in June, but was not able to go due travel restrictions and the prom also being canceled. At the end of June after all of my exams (that I am no longer taking), I was supposed to have a formal graduation and a graduation party. You probably know that no graduations are happening in person, but there will be some presentation on television. As for the graduation party, it is just postponed until a safer time.

Even though I have not been going to school since March 13, that does not mean I am not doing anything. In fact, I am doing a lot. Every day I sit down in front of my computer and do some form of homework. The amount I have from day to day varies, but I am still completing my education. I am playing video games with my brother, started cooking more and different recipes, am watching a lot of TV, talking to friends, and I am now working at Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital in the dietary department.

As for prom and graduation not happening, yes, I am kind of bummed out about not taking part in something that everyone in high school does. But am I torn up about it and mad that I won't be able to go to either? Not really. Dancing and parties like prom are just not my thing, and the graduation ceremony is something that I have never wanted to take part in. I do not find it necessary to be recognized for my accomplishments in high school over the past 4 years. I did what I had to do, and got through it.

Just keep in mind that this could be worse, and we will get through it.

Dr. Gale Burstein: Front Line Warrior for Erie County

By Ellen Goldstein

Dr. Gale Burstein has been in the vanguard of Erie County's COVID-19 battle. As Erie County's Commissioner of Health, we have seen her in news stories almost every day, informing us about what to do and not to do during this pandemic. In May, she was able to take some time out from her non-stop day to talk with *The Jewish Journal*.

Gale Burstein, MD, MPH, FAAP was appointed Erie County Commissioner of Health in January 2012. Since that time, she has been juggling the job of public health spokesperson for Erie County and has continued teaching students and medical residents at UB's Jacobs School of Medicine & Biomedical Sciences as a Clinical Professor of Pediatrics. She said that the virus made its appearance at the end of January in the United States, and has escalated since then. She has been working every day since before March, like so many of us, some of those days working from home.

Dr. Burstein explained exactly what she and her team have been doing. "We are following COVID-19 surveillance data to see where we are with this epidemic. Do the numbers show that it is increasing or decreasing? Do we have enough tests?" She said that the Erie County Department of Health (DOH) is analyzing data related to COVID-19 cases and deaths. Her team coordinates the COVID-19 response, which has components for epidemiology, specimen collection, diagnostic and antibody testing, call centers, planning and other operations to protect public health. During the disease investigation, they are responsible for contacting infected persons and notifying them of their disease; placing those who are infected in isolation and those who are close contacts in quarantine. Erie County Department of Health is also expanding testing to as many individuals as possible; working with programs to help ensure people have a place to safely isolate, monitoring Erie County COVID-19 surveillance data, keeping track of case demographics, such as ages, ZIP codes, areas of travel; and working with hospitals to follow hospitalization data.

"Communication is always a challenge," Burstein said about her constant media appearances and reports. "It's about being able to effectively communicate to the public about risks, the importance of social distancing and wearing masks, without frightening them." Another challenge is re-allocation of resources, re-assigning priorities and shifting personnel from one department to another when needed, and making sure everyone in Erie County gets appropriate personal protective equipment.

She said she is impressed with



Dr. Gale Burstein

how different Erie County departments have been able to come together and support each other. Also important is the fact that the healthcare system and hospitals are working collaboratively, including a Webex call every week with the different hospitals' chief medical officers. Dr. Peter Winkelstein (see next page) has helped to foster great collaboration with UB's Jacobs School of Medicine. "Peter and I were in same medical school class, and I appreciate how he has helped so much with developing predictive models to estimate the COVID epi curve and monitoring the public health response. Kaleida Health has specifically been a great partner in testing," she said.

As a scientist, Dr. Burstein is also grateful that the public and the rest of the Erie County departments are able to appreciate the importance of epidemiology, disease surveillance and case investigation, and the value of the Erie County Public Health Lab in keeping out community safe. She is also pleased that County Executive Mark Poloncarz has been able to secure additional resources for these vital programs. "Our county has done very well in our response, given our resources," she said. "County Executive Poloncarz has been a great leader in our community's COVID-19 response, being able to bring together different Erie County departments, community partners, and other elected officials so we can all stay on track. He has been very supportive of the

Department of Health, the Public Health Lab and the Epidemiology office," she said.

"We have had smaller scale disease outbreaks before, such as H1N1, salmonella, shigella, and hepatitis A, as well as weather emergencies, and as a result we have had to pursue aggressive investigations and response. So we have been preparing for this. We work through a public health emergency preparedness team- a division of ECDOH-and participate in emergency response exercises every year. The difference is, this time is not an exercise," she said.

She has some advice when we are listening to or reading advice from "experts," we need to know what their credible source of information is. Is it the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the NYS Department of Health, or a health care provider? Or is it a blog or Facebook post, both of which may be incorrect.

Dr. Burstein also recommends practicing social distancing and wearing masks when in public. "The more people do all this, the safer we will be as a community. We can keep people healthy and prevent a disease explosion like in New York City. The longer we maintain social distancing and wearing masks, we can 'buy time' for treatments to emerge and a vaccine to be developed," she said.

"This is a difficult time for everyone, including the Jewish Community," Burstein added. "I hope everyone stays healthy and safe. The virus is not going away. We all have to still play a part in this. I appreciate how many of the synagogues have created virtual gatherings, services, and accommodated holidays like Passover and Shavuot. When business open, people need to still practice social distancing, wear masks, wash hands, keep surfaces clean in order to keep transmissions low in the community," she said. "But we will be able to ramp down our response when COVID-19 becomes a vaccine-preventable disease. Having an effective treatment will also help us tremendously. They will probably have an effective treatment before a vaccine, but primary prevention is the most important component, preventing it from even happening, through a vaccine."

Thank you, Dr. Gale Burstein, for being here for all of us in Erie County. We are safer because of you!

Ellen Goldstein is Editor of the Jewish Journal of WNY

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Dr. Peter Winkelstein: Saving Lives in Buffalo

By Peter Simon

Fighting the elusive and deadly COVID-19 pandemic requires expertise, persistence, teamwork and — quite often — the ability to adjust to unexpected outcomes. Even so, a Buffalo area advisory board called the Western New York COVID-19 Analytics Work Group on the coronavirus has a clear vision of its mission. Our goal is to save lives,” said Dr. Peter Winkelstein, chairman of the team of experts from various technical fields. “Nothing else matters.”

Saving lives means having beds, supplies and medical equipment available for everyone who needs them, said Dr. Winkelstein, whose interests range from astronomy to Torah study. Failure to be prepared, Dr. Winkelstein said, could set off the sort of crisis here that struck earlier in New York City and parts of Italy. “Our goal is to prevent the whole (health care) system from getting overwhelmed,” he said. “Then you’ve got disaster. Then you can’t help patients.”

Instead, the committee encourages planned, step-by-step measures to loosen



Dr. Peter Winkelstein

restrictions — especially the “stay home” guidelines — and restart the deeply wounded local economy. Dr. Winkelstein, described as “an impact maker” by a rabbi who befriended him in Buffalo, practiced pediatrics for 30 years, mostly in Buffalo’s inner-city. He’s now Executive Director of The University at Buffalo’s (UB) Institute for Healthcare Informatics and Chief Medical Informatics Officer for both UBMD and Kaleida Health.

That means he’s good — really good — with numbers, data and technology. In addition to his medical credentials, Winkelstein has degrees in physics, astronomy and an MBA.

He’s an old-fashioned Renaissance man,” said Rabbi Michael Feshbach, who developed a close and continuing friendship with Winkelstein when Rabbi Feshbach was at Temple Beth Am in Amherst twenty years ago. “He has a tremendous depth and diversity of knowledge, talent and skills. When he says something, count on it being very solid,” said Rabbi Feshbach, who is now the rabbi at the Hebrew Congregation of St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The advisory committee’s work includes developing models that predict how many local people will be diagnosed with COVID-19, and how many will die. This ad hoc committee makes recommendations to county officials to try to limit the damage. “We’ve got extremely bright and energetic people working on these models,” Dr. Winkelstein said. “The difficulty is trying to predict. All of our projections are full of uncertainty. Things change.”

Dr. Winkelstein said cooperation rather than self-interest will be needed to win the battle with COVID-19. “We’re all in this together,” he said.

Dr. Winkelstein’s UB faculty profile

lists seven educational and training items, ten employment positions and 15 awards and honors. Add curiosity to that list. Dr. Winkelstein visited Israel twice on tours led by Rabbi Feshbach, once during a period of heightened tension along Israel’s borders. Dr. Winkelstein skipped the group activities one day to visit an Israeli town that was in danger of shelling from the nearby Gaza Strip, then returned to the group and briefed the others on what he learned. Now, through virtual reality — Zoom, Facebook and Facetime — Dr. Winkelstein takes part in Shabbat services and Torah study sessions led by Rabbi Feshbach in the Virgin Islands. Rabbi Feshbach said Dr. Winkelstein is not only a quick study with ancient texts, but a “bridge builder” between people with different levels of technical skills and backgrounds. “He’s passionate about doing the right thing and helping people,” Rabbi Feshbach said. “He really is an impact maker.” And we in Western New York are lucky he is on our team.

Peter Simon is a retired Buffalo News reporter and former president of Congregation Shir Shalom.



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Volunteering in NYC during the Pandemic

By Dr. Elisabeth Zausmer
& Dr. Lito Gutierrez

What could we, long retired septuagenarian physicians living in Buffalo, have to offer during this devastating COVID-19 pandemic? We did not know, but between the tears and breathlessness we experienced while watching televised and on-line views of health personnel working constantly to take care of thousands of infected people, we knew we wanted to do something.

We received applications to volunteer from Governor Cuomo; completed them and waited. Neither of us could be involved in direct patient care because we no longer had the skill set needed and our ages put us in a high-risk group. After a couple of weeks, we finally received the go ahead from the New York Dept. of Health (NYDOH). We were to report to New York City at the Command Center of the giant MASH unit that is the Javits Center (NYJMS) and work behind the scenes.

The 1,000-bed Field Hospital had military medical staff to care for between 400-500 people. The Command Center, the locus of personnel who organized patient transfers, operations, phone calls, informatics, meal service and morale building, housed about 300 - 400 people. Our DOH unit, the Health Evacuation Co-ordination Center, worked with the military to smooth operations and fill in gaps such as social workers, psychologists, software development, and patient triage.

Initially we worked with two other physicians coordinating with doctors at local hospitals about their patients' transfers to be sure that they were appropriate for the care available at NYJMS. The need for that job lasted about 5 days because of the efficiency of the military field doctors who screened the patients' charts on site.

We then found another niche. We began receiving the messages from people who had been trying to get information about their hospitalized family members without much luck. We would speak to the nurses or doctors in the hospital and return the family members' calls. Never before have either of us received more thanks, blessings,



prayers and good wishes from absolute strangers. Something as simple as saying a "patient required less supplemental oxygen" or could "walk independently" was worth the world to some of these people. We learned a lot about the diversity of people who have been affected during this plague. Among the group were visitors and immigrants from Southeast Asia, India, Bangladesh, Central and South America, and the Middle East. Also included were those who were homeless or institutionalized, as well as those who had no one to care for them once they were discharged.

We feel happy and privileged to have been a small part of the effort to expand the capacity of the health systems of New York City and the State of New York.

Liz is a retired Board Certified Internist who worked in a Primary Care Practice. Currently, Liz sits on the Admissions Committee for the Jacobs Medical School, is Volunteer faculty for the Medical School ethics course, and is on the Board of Directors for League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara.

Lito is a retired Board Certified Internist with specialization in Addiction Medicine and HIV Aids treatment. Currently, Lito is on the Public Health and Health Planning Council for New York State, a Board Member of Weinberg Campus, and Volunteer faculty for the Medical School ethics course.

Liz and Lito have been active members of Congregation Havurah for almost 30 years and look forward to traveling when the pandemic is over.

Social Distancing? Get 6FTCloser!

By Ellen Goldstein

Ben and Ariella Sharf, two entrepreneurial siblings from Williamsville, were home in late March under quarantine, living with their parents Michelle and Dr. Zvi Sharf. Ben, 24, was a senior at Colgate University at the time, finishing his last semester before moving to New York City to work for Ernst & Young. Ariella, 27, was living in Toronto, studying for her Master's degree in Project Management and running her own company, *Eight by One*, what she calls "retail therapy for a cause," an ecommerce platform where she sells accessories and clothing, with a portion of every sale donated to charity.

Like many other young adults, Ariella and Ben were caught up in the COVID-19 pandemic. Both couldn't finish school. Ariella couldn't go back to Canada and Ben couldn't return to school for graduation. So they watched television each day and witnessed doctors, nurses, even mail deliverers walking right into the virus' line of fire. They also were bored and were looking for something to keep them busy. So, together with five other friends, they came up with a way to thank first responders during this perilous chapter of history. "We all had an urge to give back in some way, because we realized a lot of people had it way worse than we did," Ben said. "This led to the inception of **6FTCloser**, a platform designed to allow people to send front line workers personalized videos thanking them for their service."

He explained that the video messaging service was created from two components. First, many people wanted a way to give back to courageous first responders, but didn't necessarily have the monetary means to send meals, money or gifts. And second, they also wanted a way to express personal gratitude to specific individuals, not just a group of, say, police. "We wanted to be able to create a way to personalize thank you messages," Ben added. "For example, in New York City and in Israel, people have been going outside on their porches or balconies and singing or playing music each evening as a way to thank doctors, nurses, hospital workers and others. But we wanted to be able to personally thank individuals, not groups."

The group started by sending personal videos to people in their personal circles. The initial response was overwhelming. Ben explained that he got a return message from a first responder who hadn't had a day off in two weeks. This medical worker said "The thank you reminded me why I do what I do" and another one said. "I just got a message

and broke into tears." And there were many other grateful and passionate responses.

Ben, Ariella and their five partners launched **6FTCloser** during the second week of April. "Since then, we have sent 1500 videos to front line workers," Ben said "... doctors, nurses, mail deliverers, cashiers, janitors, firefighters, law enforcement, grocery store workers and more. No words can capture the gratitude we feel for these workers and what they're sacrificing to fight this battle. By creating a human connection between those of us at home and those



Ben and Ariella Sharf

on the front lines, we're bringing everyone **6FTCloser**."

This is how it works: Go to www.6ftcloser.com. You can click to either thank a worker or nominate a worker to be thanked and fill out a form. Each form takes 30 seconds to fill out. It is a free service, and will

take 2 minutes of your time in total. In addition, you don't get to select the specific person you thank. **6FTCloser** randomly pairs you with a first responder and then you can make videos ranging from 20 seconds to 3-minutes long. But 30 second videos are the best, he explained.

Ben and Ariella are not making money from this, "but we hope to see if there are uses in the future for platforms like this, perhaps surrounding disaster relief, mental health, bullying or others areas." They are happy that their idea is making a difference to individuals who make a difference in the world. And they are helping to repair the world at the same time. So what are YOU doing in your spare time? Why not express your gratitude to one of the countless individuals by uploading an appreciation video, or nominate someone you know on the front lines to receive a video. **Just go to www.6FTCloser.com.**

Ellen Goldstein is editor of The Jewish Journal of WNY.

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A visit with my grandkids during the pandemic

By Susan Goldberg Schwartz

In my coat and gloves
I watch from the porch
through the window.
My breath making clouds on the glass.

I see their smiles.
I watch them play
and dance
like a visitor at the zoo.

In just 6 weeks
they have changed.
She is more confident,
He is steady on his feet.

Through the window pane
our hands touch,
our lips touch.
But we can't feel.

I take the bag they left for me,
frosted cupcakes and her artwork.
I leave one for them -
a puzzle, a book, a new dress, a roll of
paper towels.

The hug is just beyond our reach.
The laughter is muffled.
The words hang in the air -

Gramma - when can I sleepover?

New Normal

By Dennis M. Kirschbaum

We've all seen this movie before
or read the novel someone left at the beach house.
The sage doctor months from retirement
warnings unheeded
the inept government official
preening for the camera
scam artists peddling fake cures
and, of course, the brave scientist
experimenting on herself to save us all.
Later, the post-apocalypse sequel -
the ransacked convenience stores
and deserted museums, green exploding
from every crevice.
No airplanes, or cars except the one
our hardened hero drives across
the crumbling metropolis,
his gentle dog riding shotgun.
Just the odd domestic creature gone feral
or zombie to keep things interesting.
It's not so hard to imagine the world without us.

In our version, we've grown softer.
The newsfeed of tens of thousands dead
or gasping through a tube is interlaced
with the shuffle of the line outside the grocery,
the temple-like silence at the liquor store,
our gazes directed downward at the contamination
in our hands, oblivious to the new life
pushing through the pavement cracks.
And we've grown polite, even kind,
chatting with the neighbor more this week
than the last twenty years, supporting her puzzle swap.
More expressive too, learning to smile with only eyes.

What if this was our situation all along?
The mean jobs of living -foraging and fighting,
but also caring, sometimes kindness,
and the puzzles that keep arriving on the lawn
one after another, day after day
until we've solved them all.

The New Reality

By Gloria Tetewsky

This is the law of strict insistence,
It must be obeyed with great persistence.
Not to be met with any resistance,
Welcome to the World of Social Distance!

Everyone now may safely meet
At a distance of at least six feet.
If nothing else-- it keeps things discreet.
The matter is now, virtually complete!

I somehow sleep on an indefinite bed,
A virtual pillow on my make-believe head.
I tentatively rise on a virtual day,
And bungle through -- somehow, some way.

This is the story, simply told--
Social life is now on hold.
Welcome to a state so remote -
Everyone is virtually in the same boat.

So as we float in the Sea of Not Quite,
Hoping somehow to set things right,
Everyone trying to see the light,
Wondering when the end is in sight.

This is the New Reality
Down to the letter.
We liked the Old Reality
A whole lot better.

Susan Goldberg Schwartz, Director of Adult Engagement, Jewish educator and spiritual leader, is married to Steven and grandmother to Liora and Zev.

Dennis M. Kirschbaum is the outgoing Executive Director of the Hillel at the University of Rochester. You can read more poems by Dennis at his website: clatteringeast.com

Gloria Tetewsky has been a resident of Weinberg Campus for the past eight years, and writing poems has sort of become one of her hobbies.



Temple Beth Zion Proudly Presents A Virtual Exhibit by Kathleen Corff Rogers, Photographic Artist

The TBZ Stained Glass Cultural Arts Series for this year includes a beautiful and interesting photo exhibit of works by Temple Beth Zion member Kathleen Corff Rogers. While our buildings are closed and the experience cannot take place in the Temple Sanctuary on Delaware Avenue, you can see it as a virtual show on the temple's website here:

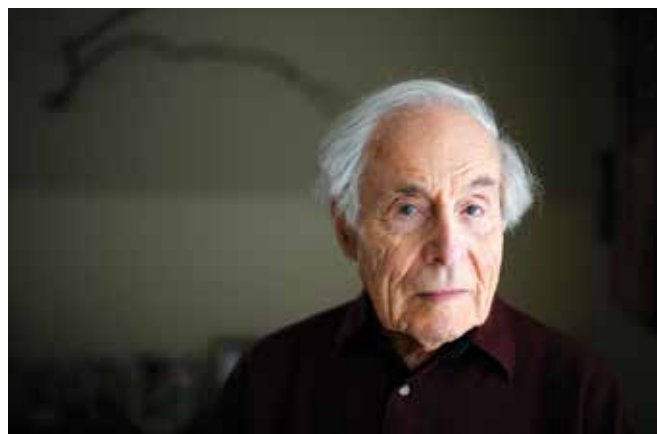
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“Surviving” the Pandemic

by Ann Marie Carosella and Elizabeth Schram

All photos by Mark Mulville/ courtesy of *The Buffalo News*. Reprinted with permission.

References to wartime are frequent when discussing the current COVID-19 pandemic. The virus is the “enemy,” our health care workers are “on the front line,” and the community is asked to make social and economic sacrifices to help “win the battle.” For local Holocaust Survivors, this is a very different type of war than they endured during World War II. How do those early years shape their experience of the current time of isolation, uncertainty and anxiety?



Nick Leibovic

For Nick Leibovic, a current resident of Canterbury Woods who experienced harsh antisemitism at his German school in Lithuania prior to his move to England in 1939, it is harder to grasp the enormity and immediacy of this threat, marked by silence and isolation than the War experience of bombs, noise and confusion. “You cannot see, hear or feel the virus, but you could see, hear and feel man’s cruelty and criminal hate.” He states, “I have lived through war and scarcities, followed by affluence and comfort, through world crises on the brink of nuclear annihilation and now through this world-wide pandemic. I sometimes feel like a grain of sand being tossed about in a violent storm.” With restrictions on visitors, Nick remains in contact with his son and grandson through phone and video chats.

Sophia Veffler, who has been content living alone, now



Sophia Veffler

experiences moments of loneliness. Her daily neighborhood walks, now marked by silence and the absence of traffic and pedestrians, have begun to trigger unwelcome and vivid memories of her Wartime experiences in hiding in Amsterdam prior to deportation to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. “I never think about the War. I don’t forget it, but I never think about it. But now when I walk, memories just ‘pop up.’ There is no one on the road now, exactly like during the War.” To cope, Sophia says she keeps on walking and she talks to herself. When she returns home, she makes coffee or cake and calls or e-mails friends.



Mark Solarz

Mark Solarz, a resident of Canterbury Woods who survived forced labor camps and then Buchenwald concentration camp says, “I’m okay. We’re locked up. We can’t go out, you know? We get the food delivered to the room. And that’s the way things are right now. I feel okay.” Mark recognizes that the challenges of long ago, where fate was determined by others are different than the dangers of today: “The situation is not good. So far, I can manage everything, and my mind is okay but I have a little bit of emphysema and breathing problems. I can’t afford to get infected with the disease because that would be the end of me. I would never survive.” When recalling his Wartime experiences, Mark states, “I was liberated 75 years ago. What can you do? It happened. We know that tragedies will always happen somewhere. That’s the way life is.” When asked how he is coping with the current situation, Mark responds, “I try to take care of myself the best I can and hope for the best. You cannot know what will be tomorrow or next week. That’s what life is, you know? I’m a positive guy all my life. I went through hardship. A lot of hardship. You cannot live with the past all your life...you have the future.”

Whether it’s accepting the current reality, redirecting thoughts, reaching out to others, going on walks, focusing on gratitude for a life well lived, staying positive, looking toward the future, or making coffee or cake, these Survivors are coping. They are relying on the same inner strength that helped them survive the Holocaust to help them cope with this current time of danger, fear, uncertainty, and sadness.

Ann Marie Carosella is President of the Holocaust Resource Center and Elizabeth Schram is Director of the Holocaust Resource Center.

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WISE AGING IN THE ERA OF ZOOM!

Before the pandemic arrived in Western New York and turned our lives upside down, there were four very active Wise Aging groups meeting regularly. Two groups had only begun in the fall, while the other groups had been together for 2 and 3 years respectively. The 40 wonderful women, with ages ranging from 58 – 88, gathered in homes to talk about both the joys and challenges of getting older, sharing their stories, experiences and lives. When we found ourselves forced to stay home, we wondered how we could continue to meet. After surveying the women, all were in favor of giving Zoom a try. Now with Susan Schwartz leading group and private tutorials, Wise Aging was launched on Zoom. Here are some responses from group members when asked what being part of a Wise Aging group has meant to them.

Marcia Valente:

When I conjure up the image of this 83 year old “Zooming” (me), I see someone darting about with the agility and energy of a teenager. But when I connected the most recent and preferred definition of the verb “to ZOOM” to me, my reaction was FEAR. How will I adapt to yet another 21st century challenge? All I can say is that the opportunity to connect with my Wise Aging buddies in real time gave me the motivation to conquer my fear and reap the reward of seeing and hearing our Wise Agers support and bring comfort to each other. Thank you, Susan. Gratitude abounds.



Rivona Ehrenreich:

I found the Wise Aging group great to talk with and learn from. So many of us are going through similar experiences, thoughts and feelings. The group was responsive, compassionate, caring and sharing, especially during this time. I enjoyed it greatly, and, I look forward to continuing both on Zoom and in person, if the occasion arose.

Jean Dubow:

I wasn't sure when I signed up for Wise Aging what to expect from the group and conversation and how I would feel about being involved with the group. I really joined because I received a personal invitation from Ethel Melzer, and because I teach yoga to a more senior group, I thought the conversations might be helpful. What I appreciate about our group is that no one complains. I think we all are realistically looking at our lives and seeing how grateful we are to be in new conversations, to dig in to our feelings. During this pandemic, the Zoom calls have been perfect. Everyone is generous about sharing which is very nice during this time of separation, that likely will go on for a very long time. Our last conversation about gratitude was an important reminder how lucky all of us are. I have spent time over the years focusing on my self-growth, and as I age, Wise Aging has brought some of that work back to top of mind. I realize this stage of life is more about me and less about everyone else, yet that we are all more alike than different.

CJEL FAMILIES CREATE NEW TRADITIONS

In May, the Center for Jewish Engagement and Learning asked local families, “What new traditions have your family created in the time of COVID-19?” See below for some of the responses:

“Prayers at every meal, more kosher recipes, PJ library events, as a blended family this community is guiding us. It's a learning experience that is making our lives deeper with God.” –Joy Murphy and Family



From top down: the Taylor Family, the Murphy Family, the Marks Family, and the Marciano Family

"We have been going for a daily walk with our two children. For our walks, we try to go somewhere new every time. If it is too cold or wet, we go for a sometimes long drive to find construction vehicles. We have been having weekly Shabbat dinners, which was very difficult with our work schedules prior to the PAUSE order. Lastly, we have been doing snack/baking exchanges with our close friends two doors away in our neighborhood. They also have two young children and it has been a lot of fun exchanging sweets that we have made at our home. We simply leave it on their doorstep and send them a text to let them know it's there."

—Rob Taylor and Family

"We're having a family dinner every night these days! We've taken advantage of gaining an extra hour daily (when we normally would have been picking the kids up from preschool). And that means the kids help us decide what to make, dinner is ready earlier and we all get to eat together. As challenging as this time has been, there is definitely a silver lining. We're lucky to spend all this time together!"

—Marni Marciano and Family

"We have always been a family that spends a lot of time together. We've worked from home for years, spend all of Shabbat as a family, and enjoy being together. But now we're being inspired to find new ways to connect to the traditions and community we love: the boys learn with their camp counselors by phone, do bar mitzvah lessons via Facetime, and we go to Kabbalat Shabbat via Zoom. Oh, and definitely more late night family movie nights – that's a new tradition we hope to keep for a long time!"

—Karen Marks and Family

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Passover of Hope – Passover Sheini - A Virtual Gathering of Faith Friends May 7

Hundreds of people gathered to see and hear diverse faith messages in the *Passover of Hope* sponsored by the Buffalo JCRC. Faith and community leaders helped participants both acknowledge this difficult time during the pandemic and reminded us in the power of belief, faith and community. It was a heartfelt, meaningful and inspirational evening. The *Passover of Hope –Passover Sheini* is a “second” Passover that many Jewish celebrate one month after the festival.

The group consisted of faith leaders who participated in the 2017 trip to Israel and other leaders. They included Lana Benatovich, Rev. Stan Bratton, Sister Margaret Carney, Cantor Irwin Gelman, Michael Hill, Father Greg Jakubowicz, Imam Khalil, Rabbi Alex Lazarus- Klein, Overseer James A. Lewis III, Cantor Penny Myers, Rev. Craig Pridgen, Lady Monique Pridgen and Rev. Dr. Al and Rev. Deb Warner. JCRC Co-chairs Nina Lukin and Deborah Goldman introduced and hosted the event. Federation President Lerslie Kramer summarized and thanked the faith leaders for their inspiration.

Messages written and spoken at the *Passover of Hope* by Sr. Margaret Carney OSF and Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein follow:



Buffalo travelers on the 2017 Buffalo Jewish Federation Clergy Mission to Israel

A Message from Sr. Margaret Carney OSF delivered at Passover Sheini May 7

When a tidal wave of tragic deaths covers us, we should not be surprised to hear the question: *Where is God in all of this?* This question was put to me by a very close friend. How could I answer?

COVID forces the question: Who is the God in whom I trust? I read the Psalms every day. Here is what they say:

You have snatched me from death (Ps. 56:14). You are my help and my deliverer (Ps.40:18) The Lord’s eyes are upon the just...delivering them from death. (Ps. 33:18-19)

These prayers salute an all-powerful God. But, hey, if this God is so powerful why are we in this mess? What good is it doing us? And suddenly I realize, I have allowed myself to replace the God above all gods with my own invention of a “divine super-hero.” The hero who shows up out of nowhere and produces happy endings. Was I really expecting my God to leap tall buildings at a single bound, stop a speeding bullet, and, hey, get with the program, God, and get us a vaccine, quick!

Was this what I was hoping for when I say I believe. Fr. Greg Boyle spends his days with gang members in Los Angeles. He has buried hundreds. He tell us this is what he has learned:

God protects me from nothing, but God sustains me in everything! He has the kind of faith described by a poet:

Faith is a well, a canyon, an ocean. It is the Challenger Deep- in the Mariana Trench. Hold your breath and dive head first. Trust you will find the grace...in the letting go of what you thought was absolute and necessary. (Adapted from Sr. Regina Bechtle’s poem: “Deep Calls Deeper”)

So, here is the truth. I do not have a very good answer to the question. What is God up to? Then I remember: Moses’ first amazing encounter with Yahweh was a burning bush—a mysterious impossible presence. Then—a voice that simply declared: I AM. This is my name for all time...for all generations to come. (Genesis 3:13-15.) And Moses believed. And because he did—we are here together tonight. This generation. Holding each other together in faith.

Sr. Margaret Carney O.S.F. is President Emeritus of St. Bonaventure University

An American Seder

By Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein

Elijah arrives late,
he had problems with his watch,
or so he said,
and he drinks the fourth cup quickly,
the wine staining his lips a brilliant purple.
His hair a burning bush,
flimsy and bedraggled,
but his eyes are as clear and deep
as an Ein Gedi spring.
I am laughing.
We are all wondering what he is doing there
Had he even been invited?
He is speaking with his arms,
nearly knocking over my sister’s Seder plate,
“You have to leave, the end is near,”
clearly the wine has already gone to his head.
My mother eyes my father
she wants to make sure he will protect his brood.
I do not feel threatened
but I also do not want to leave.
Perhaps Jerusalem will rise up next year
like a stone Golem,
overseeing the ruin of our enemies,
for now I am content eating the last crumbs of the afikoman
full and satisfied with what I already have.

Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein is rabbi at Congregation Shir Shalom.

Not the last word or even the final word from Rabbi Moshe Silberschein

At the beginning of my tenure here in Buffalo as Temple Beth Tzedek's interim rabbi, I wrote a column for *The Jewish Journal* about my search for any descendants in Buffalo of my grandfather's maternal uncle. Now at the end of my 10 month stay I can readily report that I never found any long-lost relatives here in the City of Good Neighbors, but I did find much more. Buffalo will always be for me a home away from home. From the joint *Selichot* service at Congregation Shir Shalom, way back last fall with colleagues, to the more recent weekly Zoom leadership meetings of the Buffalo Jewish Federation, I have become part of a tight, well-knit, connected community, and am the better for it.

My job as an interim rabbi I've always seen as two part: 1) to preserve and strengthen an already existing synagogue community and 2) to re-establish congregational confidence in rabbinic leadership and in themselves. But it works both ways. As a longtime teacher and mentor to American rabbinical students during their Israel year of studies, I can now go back to Jerusalem and share with

them the rich experiences I've had in Buffalo, helping my students to appreciate, and even "get excited" about what awaits them as future congregational rabbis in the American Jewish community.

Rich experiences: Like ice skating with your USY youth group, tutoring reading at the Sunday Hebrew school, teaching an interfaith group of over 60 persons about Parables in the Talmud and Christian Scriptures, and running twice daily davening meetings and weekly Midrash classes on Zoom during the Corona Virus Crisis. I'll definitely recount to my rabbinical students next year how one had to innovate in Buffalo during the threat of COVID -19, creating minimalist davening/Torah study Shabbat experiences for four B'nei Mitzvah and their immediate families on Livestream in an echoing, large but empty sanctuary. How congregants, family, and friends wearing face masks greeted them and their rabbi outside the synagogue with big posters and shouts of appreciation on Shabbat and Pesach.

I'll also tell my students about the times before the virus. About riding a bicycle by Ellicott Creek with my synagogue president, about the wonderful collegiality,



Rabbi Moshe Silberschein

staff support and volunteer support I found at my home synagogue TBT and at all the other organizational bodies of the Buffalo Jewish community. I'll tell them: "This is the way things should be run and are run in the City of Good Neighbors - with plenty of process and long committee meetings, but more importantly with communal involvement throughout and a desire to always start things off with a word of

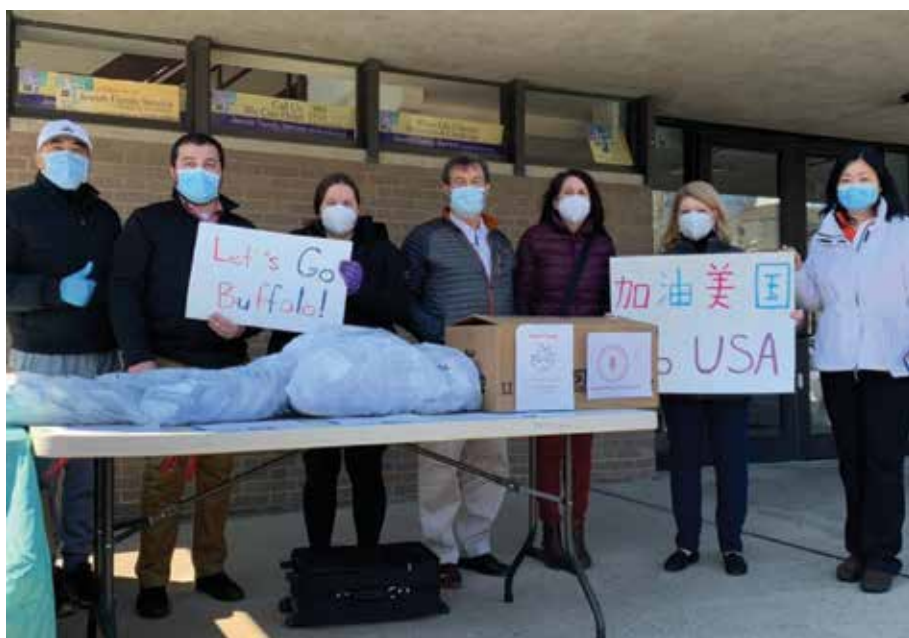
Torah."

Most of my students are attracted to future pulpits in large urban Jewish centers, but I would also have them consider the advantages of serving in smaller Jewish communities like Buffalo. In places like Buffalo, there is in general a greater sense of cooperation, of sharing resources, and there are endless opportunities for a young rabbi to make a real contribution and difference. Especially in Buffalo – a Jewish community self-aware and constantly re-inventing itself, willing to think out of the box.

So... I hope I've made some small contribution and difference here these past 10 months. Once I get back to correcting exams and papers in Israel, I know I'll miss the congregational work, the nearby hikes in nature, the quirky garden walks, the local music and concerts, the museums and the great sense of recent (by Israeli terms) history here; but I definitely won't miss the Buffalo winter weather (even in May!) which everyone here tells me I didn't really experience this year, thank Heaven. What I'll assuredly miss though are all the Good Neighbors I've made in the City thereof.

Rabbi Moshe Silberschein has been the interim rabbi at Temple Beth Tzedek since the summer of 2019. He returned to his home in Jerusalem at the end of May. You may reach him via e-mail via moshue@gmail.com.

Jewish and Chinese communities work together to distribute 1500 masks



(l-r) Behind their masks are: Zhilin Liu (CCWNY), Matthew Stewart (JFS), Maya Koven, Irwin Gelman, Mara Koven-Gelman, (JCRC) Randi Morkisz (Buffalo Jewish Federation) and Yanhong Baranski (CCWNY)

The Buffalo JCRC has a strong bond with the Chinese Club of WNY (CCWNY). Recently, it used that bond to help greater Buffalo during the pandemic. The relationship started when CCWNY president Yanhong Baranski had invited JCRC co-chair Deborah Goldman to speak at the Chinese New Year Celebration earlier this year. Unfortunately, the celebration was cancelled because of concerns surrounding COVID-19, well before any US restrictions. There were national reports of racism toward the Chinese and Chinese American community. JCRC quickly sent supportive letters to CCWNY and public statements against hatred. True to their mission and being proud Americans, CCWNY was active in raising funds to secure masks and gloves from China for healthcare workers in Buffalo. JCRC helped to amplify those



Giving and receiving masks were (l-r): Yanhong Baranski of CCWNY, Mara Koven-Gelman, Pastor George Nicholas, (Lincoln Methodist) Kelly Woffond, (ECMC), Zhilin Liu (CCWNY).

compassionate acts with a press release to local media. Ms. Baranski was recently featured on the cover of **Buffalo Healthy Living**, published by Jewish community member Annette L. Pinder.

Ms. Baranski later offered 1000 masks to the Jewish and other communities. The Buffalo Jewish Federation and the Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies contributed 500 additional masks with the help of Randi Morkisz, Federation's Assistant Director.

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A Year in Review for Securing Jewish Buffalo

By Susan DeMari

***Bashert*, the Yiddish word for “destiny,” is most commonly used to describe a soul mate. To me, however, it means a lot more. It means: “it was meant to be.”**

When I spoke with Federation CEO Rob Goldberg and the newly-formed Security Task Force about implementing my coordinated and unified approach to critical safety and security needs in Jewish Buffalo last spring, we could not have envisioned all that was soon to confront us: increased global anti-Semitism, the tragedy in Poway, heartbreaking attacks in Monsey and Brooklyn. We also uncovered forms of written hate speech locally that reminded us that threats to our community require proactive responses in order to make our community a safe place to live as Jews.

Since beginning my role as Jewish Buffalo's first Security Coordinator, most of my work has and continues to be done behind the scenes. Developing relationships with our partners in law enforcement and maintaining constant communications with our synagogues, beneficiary agencies and volunteer leadership and staff is vital and ongoing. But there are several accomplishments, after just one year of planning and preparing, of which we can be especially proud.

In addition to coordinating active shooter trainings throughout the year, we serve as the central point of contact



Susan DeMari

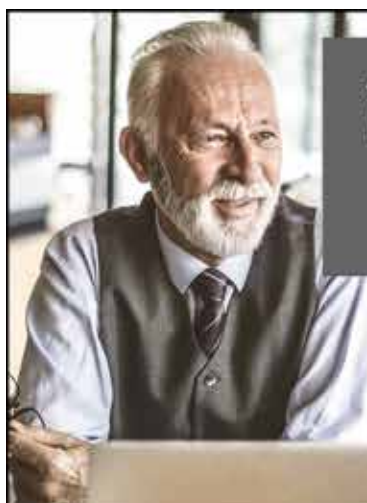
for the community to make inquiries about security-related matters, such as guidance for obtaining grants, arranging assessments and answering questions related to safety. We coordinate security needs and schedule a plethora of off-duty assignments for all locations requesting off-duty police in Amherst and have been there to assist in the City of Buffalo. Proactive measures include reviewing weekly Shabbat messages and, when the need arises, providing situational awareness emails. Despite the social-distancing imposed by COVID-19, we have remained intimately involved with confidential and critical information-sharing during any investigation in New York State and around the country that affects our Jewish community.

Just before COVID, we had the pleasure of Jewish Buffalo sponsoring a luncheon for the Chiefs of Police in Western New York that was well-received and has continued to keep us in the forefront in the minds of law enforcement.

Our protocols, improved physical security of buildings, trainings, off-duty police protection at synagogues, convenings of law enforcement and information-sharing are invaluable to us as a community to mitigate and reduce our vulnerability on both on religious and on ethnic grounds. Even as we're social-distancing, our law enforcement partners are continually monitoring anti-semitic language and imagery online and in public spaces that pose a potential threat to our local community.

When I review my year as Community Security Director for Jewish Buffalo and the visions we share for the safety of the Jewish community, I believe that my having joined the leadership in the Buffalo Jewish Community was indeed *bashert*, truly meant to be. As a native Buffalonian, I am grateful to so many of you for welcoming me “home” and providing me with the opportunity to make Jewish Buffalo a safer place for us to worship and live as Jews.

Susan DeMari is the Chief Deputy of the Civil Department of Onondaga County Sheriff's Office in Syracuse, New York. In addition to overseeing the Buffalo Jewish Federation's security efforts, she also serves as the Community Security Coordinator for the Jewish Federation in Central New York.



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Buffalo, Buffalove

By Alexa Zappia

The four walls of a building are not what make it special. It is the people associated with that space and the memories you have shared together that make it what it is. In my case, it is the Hillel students and the memories I have been lucky enough to share with them. As my two-year Springboard Fellowship comes to a close, I am forever grateful to have been the Innovation Specialist at Hillel of Buffalo.



Looking back on my journey, going from a recent college graduate to now at age twenty-three, I have worked for an organization which has enabled me to grow both personally and professionally. I entered Hillel at a very interesting time. We were in the middle of moving from our smaller suite upstairs to a brand new exciting and innovative center downstairs. As the person behind the screen of Hillel's marketing, I had a vision for which social media strategies I wanted to implement to showcase all of the "Hillel Happenings" designed for students by students each day. Through my weekly Musical Mazels, I was also able to share my passion for Judaism and musical theater with campus and the Buffalo Jewish community.

Life is all about making the world better than you found it, and my Hillel work allowed me to join with students to make an impact. For the past two years, I took a group of ten students on Alternative Break trips. Partnering with an organization called *Repair the World*, we spent a week volunteering and learning about education and food injustice within Urban Miami.

At first, I was hesitant and doubted if I could do this as the only staff member. Was I ready? What if something happened? As I grew in confidence, I was able to adapt when parts of the trip did not go as planned. There is a "magic" that happens as you progress through the trip. Honoring our differences,

there is a commonality that forms when you are able to lean on each other's strengths to complete tasks. Despite how tired we felt, we relied on one another and motivated each other to make a difference.

After a long week of work, I always cherish the last moment in the Buffalo airport when we land. As I commence our count-off for just about the hundredth time but also the last, I take a moment to look at each student's face in gratitude that this group, who were once strangers, are now family. You may not be able to repair the world in seven days, but you can make a difference and that is what matters.

To the Buffalo Jewish community, thank you for supporting me from when I was very young to now as a Jewish professional. It has been an absolute pleasure and honor to give back to a community which has given me so much. To my colleagues Sara and Logan, and to our students, thank you for an amazing two years. The support you have given me throughout my time here has been incredible. Thank you for all of our coffee dates, programs, alternative break trips, Design Hub brainstorming, and more. If you have only learned half from me as I have learned from you, then you will be set up for success in life. "Buffalove" you all.

Alexa Zappia is concluding her Fellowship at Hillel of Buffalo.

Celebrate World Refugee Day with JFS June 20

World Refugee Day, held annually on June 20th, is a global celebration of the strength, courage, and resilience of millions of refugees. It is also an opportunity for us to come together to learn about the international refugee crisis, show support for local refugees, and honor the history of our ancestors. It is a day when we focus on the incredible achievements of refugees who have become our neighbors, friends, and co-workers.

Normally, Buffalonians celebrate with soccer, festivals, food, music, and dance. This year, the COVID-19 pandemic means a more solitary celebration. With all that is going on in the world, it is more important than ever that we honor our unique tradition as a nation with a deep history of welcoming refugees by sharing their stories.

Meet Kiza. Kiza was resettled by JFS in 2012. After living in a refugee camp for more than a decade, Kiza arrived in the U.S. with no friends or family and spoke limited English. Through help at JFS, Kiza became employed within only three months of arriving in the U.S. He is now working towards his degree in International Relations and is an intern at JFS, providing support to newly resettled refugees. As confusion, fear, and anxiety over COVID-19 started to spread in the Congolese community, Kiza stepped up to help by providing spiritual encouragement, assurance, and accurate information to his friends and neighbors. Kiza contacts community-members weekly, supports food distribution, and connects the East African community with the resources



JFS Intern Kiza

they need to stay safe.

Guided by our Jewish values and history, JFS has resettled thousands of refugees with powerful stories like Kiza's throughout the years. For many refugees, we are the first people they meet in America. We provide refugees with warm homes, comforting support, and needed guidance. For those refugees traumatized by torture, JFS provides counseling and trauma care through our Center for Survivors of Torture program.

Celebrate World Refugee Day with JFS. Stay tuned to JFS' social media throughout the month of June. Follow us @JFSBUFFALO on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to hear more stories like Kiza's.

Support Refugees. Make a lasting impact on the lives of refugees by supporting JFS. There are many ways to contribute, and every gift or act of service makes a difference.

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Building a Memory Garden at Shir Shalom

By Peter Simon

Paul Michaels was a 17-year-old freshman at the Rochester Institute of Technology when a friend asked him to help pick out a piece of jewelry. Michaels was happy to help, but decidedly unimpressed by the merchandise. “This stuff isn’t so wonderful,” he remembers thinking. “I could do better myself.”

Based on that shopping adventure, Michaels switched his major from architectural design to jewelry design. Several years later he graduated from RIT on a Sunday and opened his jewelry shop the very next day. Fifty-six years later, Aurum Jewelers (Aurum is Latin for gold) remains a highly-regarded fixture on Buffalo’s Elmwood Avenue. In addition to his business, Michaels maintained a keen interest in gardens and in the local Jewish community. He served on the board of Jewish Family Service and currently serves on the Boards of the Jewish Federation Cemetery Corporation and the Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies. He fondly recalls “many, many joys” as a long-time member of the former Temple Sinai, where he restored the central courtyard.

Michael’s synagogue involvement waned after Sinai merged with Temple Beth Am to form Congregation Shir Shalom. But he had an unfinished piece of business – a memorial garden in memory of his late parents – Bess and Morris. And now it is taking shape at Congregation Shir Shalom. Using the fund from the Foundation Michaels had



Paul Michaels

created at Temple Sinai, the courtyard garden is being met with enthusiasm as it takes shape across the sidewalk from the synagogue entrance.

The Temple Board and Executive Committee are excited to see the project come together,” said Shir Shalom Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein. “The inner garden was a key component of Temple Sinai and it is nice to see it reborn in a new way.” The garden will include a variety of plantings, two restored benches from Temple Sinai and landscaping that Michaels expects to evolve from year-to-year. “A garden is a work in progress,” Michaels said. “I think it will be much more welcoming, warmer and more beautiful.”

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A year in the life of the Kadimah Scholars at Park

By Hallie Keren

What a year it’s been for Kadimah Academy! Transitioning to a new campus, starting a one-of-a-kind partnership with Park School of Buffalo, winning accolades throughout the community, and ensuring any Jewish child can get a Kadimah Scholars at Park education!



Up until COVID-19 hit, our students *davened* every morning in our beautiful new Hebrew and Judaic Studies classroom, located in the heart of Park’s 34-acre campus in Amherst. During special Friday prayers which include grape juice and challah for Shabbat, the sound of praying and joy could be heard throughout the building. Volunteers including Rabbi Ori Bergman, Buffalo Jewish Federation CEO Rob Goldberg, Kadimah Board members and others joined our students each morning.

Students and visitors can see Hebrew throughout our large middle-school classroom – sandwiched between the math-science and English-social studies classrooms for the 5th and 6th grades – and even in the surrounding hallways and on the bathroom doors. There’s also a separate classroom for Kadimah students in the lower school building. Other Park students constantly peek in and ask to join, as Kadimah Scholars have so much fun in class and are full of pride both during and after school.

Judaics and Hebrew go hand-in-hand at Kadimah at Park, and programs led by our fabulous teachers Mrs. Michal Shmuel-Lewis and Mrs. Nirit Weiner have included so many wonderful events. For Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Rabbi Bergman blew the Shofar at Park, and

our students held assemblies and taught other Park children about our holidays. A week later, our very own Kadimah Sukkah was built on the Park grounds, right outside of the central dining hall, in plain view of everyone.



Simchat Torah celebrations were held at Temple Beth Tzedek, as our students led prayers with Rabbi Moshe Silberschein. In December, the very first community Chanukah at Park program included food, a performance by our Kadimah at Park Scholars (entirely in Hebrew), and of course, *sufganiyot*! More than 90 people attended – including

Park Head of School Jeremy Besch. *Tu Bishvat* involved planting a tree in Israel as well as enjoying dried fruit and nuts.

Purim was another fantastic celebration. The Buffalo Jewish Teen Initiative came to Park and performed Purim skits with our Kadimah Scholars, who also enjoyed an afternoon at the Jewish Discovery Center, where they made *Oznei Haman*, listened to the *Megillah*, and enjoyed a fun lesson with Rabbi Laizer and Chani Labkovski.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 disrupted Park just as it did every other institution, but it couldn't stop us! With daily online classes and work, morning prayers, challah baking, and Shabbat, we have maintained the true sense of family in which Kadimah has always taken pride.

Right now, times are tough for us all, as we are all uncertain of what the future brings. Yet we, the Kadimah Scholars at Park, are confident of one thing: Our new partnership is a success, and we are thriving within the Park School community. We've created a unique program that allows for Judaics, Hebrew, Jewish identity and *ruach*, alongside secular excellence, in the midst of a broader educational environment that has welcomed us with open arms.

Park Head of School Jeremy Besch said, "The end of the first year of the Kadimah Scholars program at Park School brings with it both deep pride for the year's remarkable success, and excited anticipation for future growth and national attention. It has been an innovative, collaborative, joyful experience, and we're only just getting started".

Now it just needs you and your support. We are already garnering new interest – both from within Park and outside – and are working with Park's leadership to grow our new program as a core element. We welcome applications for enrollment through Park and for scholarships through both Park and Kadimah, and we encourage your donations to ensure that we can achieve our goals – to ensure that any Jewish child can get a Jewish education. Your donations go directly to helping our community's students, and to raising the next generation of proud Jewish leaders.

On behalf of the Board, I wish you good health, and invite you to join our growing family. Reach out, ask questions and be part of our exciting new future together.

Hallie Keren is a Park parent and Kadimah Scholars Board President.

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Miriam Abramovich - Director of Engagement
Ellen Weiss - Chair

Chabad House of Buffalo

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Rabbi Moshe Gurary
www.chabadbuffalo.com

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716 580-4600
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Chani Labkovski - Director

Department of Jewish Thought

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716-645-3695
jewish-studies@buffalo.edu
www.jewishstudies.buffalo.edu
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www.chabadbuffalo.com

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Marty Kerker - President
www.congregationbethabraham.net

Congregation Shir Shalom

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716-633-8877
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6320 Main St., Williamsville, NY 14221
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www.congregationhavurah.org
info@congregationhavurah.org

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Get Pumped! with Kathy D'Ostroph

10:00am Meeting #733-854-779

Vinyasa Yoga with Lise Watt

11:15am Meeting #998-8588-6834

Monday

Chair Today Gone Tomorrow with Betsy Hare

9:00am Meeting#884-3734-1477

Gentle Yoga with Kelly Pezzimenti

9:30am Meeting #702-666-865

Silver Sneakers Cardio with Kathy Rogers

10:30am Meeting #897-7811-4039

Pilates with Leslie Green

12:00pm Meeting#969-793-456

Combat Cardio with Derek Nichols

6:00pm Meeting#321-921-955

Meditation Mondays with Carol-Ann Gleason

8:00pm Meeting#967-5940-0209

Tuesday

Silver Sneakers Classic with Kathy Rogers

10:30am Meeting#875-9842-7868

Hatha Flow Yoga with Kelly Pezzimenti

12:00pm Meeting#152-789-410

Get Pumped! with Brandon Ash

5:30pm Meeting#540-175-466

Wednesday

Vinyasa Yoga with Kim Gionis

7:00am Meeting#840-3579-6361

Silver Sneakers Cardio with Kathy Rogers

10:30am Meeting#812-3556-3693

Strength Training with Derek Nichols

1:00pm Meeting#407-320-407

Thursday

Vinyasa Yoga with Lise Watt

9:30am Meeting#929-0115-1965

Silver Sneakers Classic with Kathy Rogers

10:30am Meeting#873-1328-1530

Get Pumped! with Kathy D'Ostroph

12:00pm Meeting#269-546-292

Total Body Works with Kathy Rogers

5:45pm Meeting#836-4346-0037

Absolute Abs with Kathy Rogers

6:30pm Meeting#836-4346-0037

Friday

Combat Cardio with Derek Nichols

7:00am Meeting#978-957-145

Chair Today Gone Tomorrow with Betsy Hare

10:30am Meeting#856-8713-6201

Get Stretched with Leslie Green

12:00pm Meeting#306-774-878

Saturday

Combat Core with Derek Nichols

10:00am Meeting#246-578-053

COMMUNITY

JCC Responds to Needs of Members during COVID-19

As the COVID-19 Pandemic hit Western New York in mid-March, the JCC quickly reacted. Within a week a series of online offerings began to take shape from several departments. Since that time more than 100 classes, gatherings and social events have emanated from the need to fulfill the JCC's mission of serving the Jewish and general communities of Western New York with programs and services that improve lives in concert with Jewish values.

Early Childhood and Kids' Place After-School participants have had regular contact with teachers and counselors who have learned to Zoom with children and their parents. Facebook and other social media have connected families with stories, photographs and greetings. Art projects, Shabbat stories and distance learning continue to connect participants with meaningful content.

Group Fitness classes have included as many as 86 participants per class. Also utilizing Zoom, programs have been offered in Body Works, Yoga, Silver Sneakers, Absolute Abs, Combat Cardio, Pilates, Meditation and more.

Cultural Arts offerings have included film offerings, links to a wide variety of Jewish music including Klezmer, Classical, Folk, Jazz and Sacred Music. Art offerings of special interest to the Jewish Community, as well as general community are also to be found on these pages. JCC



Buffalo Cultural Arts is another Facebook page with content announcing upcoming podcasts, links to recorded sessions and postings by participants.

Although restricted to families enrolled in the programs, Early Childhood Education Facebook pages are replete with postings from parents sharing their children's messages, ideas for engaging children during this shutdown, content provided by the JCC Association and other relevant topics. Separate pages are offered by the programs at both the Benderson Family Building and the Holland Family Building.

"The success of the virtual JCC has encouraged departments to look for ways to continue current and expand offerings even after we fully reopen" said Richard Zakalik, Executive Director. "The creativity and ingenuity of our staff is something about which we are immensely proud" he continued. The JCC is now looking at new membership categories, including virtual memberships which can connect families and friends living in different cities through class offerings. "Stay tuned" said Zakalik.

JRT Selected for National Jewish Playwriting Contest Site June 24

The Jewish Repertory Theater has been selected to host a City Final in the Jewish Plays project's annual National Jewish Playwriting Contest. The JCC will host the Final as an on-line event, Wednesday, June 24, from 7-8 p.m.

The contest was originally scheduled as a live event with a cast of local actors has been redesigned as an online, virtual event. Thanks to Zoom, and the creative reimagining by the Jewish Plays Project, audience members will now have the opportunity to be among the first in the country to see pre-recorded portions of three new plays, and then, be able to vote for which play will receive a full workshop production in New York City in the fall, as soon as it safe to produce live theatre again.

David Winitsky, Artistic Director of the Jewish Plays Project, will serve as host of the event. "We've invited a panel of theatre experts from Buffalo to review our top seven plays." The Buffalo vote will be combined with results in 6 other cities, plus an online vote to decide the 2020 Winner.

"This is a terrific way to help our artistic communities and give back to our generous JRT audiences who unfortunately had to miss seeing our last scheduled play of the season, *Modern Orthodox*," said JRT artistic director Saul Elkin. The event is being offered free of charge as a thank you to supportive subscribers, ticket holders and sponsors. To participate, audience members will need to register and reserve their spot at www.jewishrepertorytheatre.com.

Our History is our Future

By Irv Levy

Last month, I wrote about how we are not really in unprecedented times. While I have personally never lived through a pandemic or anything like this, our parents, grandparents and the generations before them have lived through more difficult times than those that we find ourselves in today.

I have a great appreciation for history; part of my thrill in joining the Foundation was the opportunity to learn more about Judaism and Jewish history. I was not raised in a religious household and my role at the Foundation has afforded me the opportunity to study with some of our most learned local scholars.

History has always brought me comfort, specifically Jewish history. When confronted with a difficult situation, and these times do qualify as such, I am comforted to know that our people, Jews, and our country, the United States, have overcome greater obstacles.

We are fortunate to stand on the shoulders of the great people who have come before us. Spoiler alert! The Foundation is currently working on a new website, currently scheduled to launch in late 2020 or early 2021 (in time for our 110th birthday). We are planning a section of the website to be dedicated to telling the stories of those members of our community who have created a lasting legacy and entrusted the Foundation to preserve it. This project gives me the opportunity to learn about our local Jewish history. The stories are truly inspirational. The leaders of our Jewish Community were highly successful professionals and entrepreneurs such as doctors, lawyers, bankers, and business owners across virtually every industry, as well as humanitarians and community volunteers.

Several months ago, I shared a "Legacy Spotlight" about Theodore Hofeller, whose fund dates back to 1917. As a response to the suffering caused by World War I, Mr. Hofeller created a permanently endowed fund with the Foundation.

Some of the other amazing legacies include (but of course are not limited to) recipients of the Foundation's Endowment Leadership Award (*listed in order of receipt*). This award is the Foundation's highest honor in recognition of extraordinary service, generosity and commitment to the Buffalo Jewish Community:



Irv Levy

Ann Riweh, Sheldon Hurwitz, Ruth Kahn Stovroff, Sanford Nobel, J. Milton Zeckhauser, Richard Brummer, Edwin Polokoff, Benjamin Smith, Nancy Warner, Robert Hayman, Nathan Benderson, Ambassador Leonard Rochwarger, Gordon Gross, Regina Holland, Ann Holland Cohn, Ruth Kahn Stovroff, Haskell Stovroff, James Stovroff, Harry Dosberg, Paul Dosberg, Rose and Leonard Frank, Shirley and Sam Zensky, Dr. Richard Ament, Sylvia Rosen, Dorothy and Byron Goldman, Fanette and Harold Goldman, Stanford Lipsey, Eugene Setel, Dr. Sol Messinger, Hyman Shuman, Charles Shuman, Irving Shuman, Wayne and Janet Wisbaum, Hannah and Norman Weinberg, Holly and Jordan Levy, Janet and David Desmon

Many of the people named above have passed, but their legacy and their service to the Buffalo Jewish Community will be remembered always.

A study of history gives us comfort in knowing that we can overcome today's challenges. It also reminds us that we must be vigilant not to make the mistakes of the past. In a 1948 speech, Winston Churchill said, "Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it."

I was recently asked why I am so passionate about my work at the Foundation. I firmly believe that the Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies is the Foundation for the Buffalo Jewish Community and a strong Foundation ensures a strong Jewish Community. But why is a strong Jewish community so important? Anti-Semitism is on the rise. When discriminating against Jews, anti-Semites will not ask if you are Reform, Conservative, Orthodox or completely non-observant. Even if you do not consider yourself to be a Jew, they will consider you one. Our Jewish agencies locally and across the world are there to

protect our rights as Jews. We must be there to support those agencies so that they are strong when we need them.

The great leaders of our Buffalo Jewish Community are not only in the past, but also the present and the future as well. Take a survey of the leaders of our Jewish community today and you will find highly successful and generous professionals, entrepreneurs, humanitarians and volunteers.

I have been with the Foundation for about two years now. I have worked with many great philanthropists and it is a thrill to assist them in preserving their legacy and ensuring a strong Buffalo Jewish Community for the future. Our history is our future and it is being written today. Embrace the world around us and let's make sure that we can look back and be proud of the impact we have made.

Lastly, I want to express thanks to the front-line medical professionals and all of the essential employees risking your personal health to provide for the needs of our entire community during the COVID-19 crisis.

Irv Levy is the Executive Director for the Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies.

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- 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, provided masks and other supplies around the community and have help to pay for the JDC's Seder in a Box. You can find more details on page 4. 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. Do to www.feedmorewny.org to donate online, volunteer or learn more.
- 3» **Make a gift to the Jewish Federation Cemetery Corporation** in honor of your father or grandfather, or any other important man in your life for Father's Day June 21. 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.
- 4» **World Refugee Day is June 20**, and Buffalo's JFS continues to resettle many refugees coming to Buffalo as it has for many years. Learn about some of our new neighbors at @JFSBUFFALO, and please make a donation to support this critical work at www.jfsbuffalo.org.
- 5» **New York State will hold its Primary Election June 23**. You may vote at the polls if you are registered, or now, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, you may vote absentee. To request an absentee ballot, go to www.elections.erie.gov/absentee. You will then receive a ballot that you can mail in regardless of your party affiliation.

WHERE IN JBFLO ?



Where is this found exactly in Jewish Buffalo?

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Last month no one was able to identify the sign that includes "Shalom" in Hebrew located on the campus of Erie Community College in downtown Buffalo. Better luck this month!

Chabad Lag BaOmer: Celebrating Jewish Unity and Thanking First Responders!

Chabad of Buffalo celebrated Lag BaOmer in May with a special car parade, celebrating Jewish Unity and thanking our First Responders. It began at the Knesset Center on Starin Ave., accompanied by the Fire Departments of Buffalo and Getzville. The Parade made its way through Buffalo and Amherst streets and concluded at the Chabad House in Getzville. It was an opportunity for families and children to share pride in their Jewish heritage and learn of the importance of showing gratitude to First Responders for all they do, especially in these trying times.



Mazel Tov, Class of 2020 from TBT!

By Leah Blum, Rob Taylor and Eric Mandel

Jewish Buffalo's wonderful community includes many dynamic individuals, some whom are graduating this year amidst challenging circumstances. We would like to congratulate all members of the Class of 2020, including the leaders and members of Gilgoool USY chapter and Jewish Teen Initiative participants. The greater Temple Beth Tzedek family congratulates you and wishes you success as you embark on your next chapter.



Jeremy Werbow has been a dynamic leader of our USY chapter serving as Membership/Kadima Vice President on the regional Tzafon board. Jeremy has been the ultimate role model for the entire congregation. Jeremy is graduating from Amherst High School and will be studying nursing at Niagara University.

Hannah Wallenfels has brought USY enthusiasm to a new level as the Regional President for Tzafon USY. Her passion for community work shined through during the previous year in which she broke records raising money for SocialAction/Tikun Olam as the region's Vice President. Hannah is graduating from Williamsville East High School and will be attending Northeastern University.

Sophie Fogel has been mesmerized by the State of Israel since going on her trip, Tichon Ramah. Sophie is graduating from Buffalo Seminary and will be attending the University of Pittsburgh.

Leah Blum and Rob Taylor are co-chairs of the TBT Youth-Ed Committee. Eric Mandel is Youth Coordinator and USY Chapter Advisor and a 2020 graduate of UB's M.A. in Communicative Disorders & Sciences program.

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COMMUNITY

Mourning in the time of COVID-19

Burial and mourning following a death, like so many other rituals and practices, have taken on new and more restrictive rules and regulations since the onset of COVID-19. And the pain of a loved one's death has become more protracted and sharper because of these restrictions. Mitchell Steinhorn of Amherst Memorial Chapel and Jay Mesnekoff of Mesnekoff Funeral Home reflect on the changes to our Jewish way of death and mourning and how they are working and helping grieving families to adjust.

Mitchell Steinhorn

As a professional funeral director of almost 20 years, I have encountered many different challenges facing families. However, all my training could not prepare me for what we are going through now with this pandemic.

I have dealt with numerous families who have lost loved ones to the virus; one recent case was in New York City. We made most of the funeral arrangements via e-mail and telephone calls. State and local officials discourage any services at funeral home chapels and temporary rules limit mourners to 10 people or less at the cemetery.

My heart ached when I had to tell that family that only ten people were allowed at the graveside. How do you choose which ten can attend? The beauty of Judaism is our traditions. Accompanying the dead to their final resting place is clearly stated in the Talmud, and now we are not allowed to help console a grieving friend at their most needed hour. How does a family go through the grieving process without being surrounded by family and friends? Anguished relatives have no one to console them. Those in desperate need of a hug cannot get one. How can a grieving family obtain closure without seeing their loved one last time inside the casket, because the virus could still be present?

These issues, and so much more, have been going through my mind these past several weeks. But for me, a key has been understanding that with a few minor adjustments, like Social Distancing, we can complete these important rituals.



Jay Mesnekoff

At an early stage of this pandemic at the start of February, I could see that the COVID-19 virus was going to be a major problem in the United States and abroad. I was closely following how the Israeli Health Ministry was handling COVID-19 cases regarding the care of human remains. What I found was shortly following Israel's virus outbreak, The New York State Department of Health started adopting almost the identical measures that Israel took.

Then I started implementing Israeli protocol immediately, along with having virtual communication only with the families that I was working with. The guidelines set forth now by New York State regarding the interment of human remains vary a little, depending on what county the burial is in. Here in Erie County, most cemeteries allow us to have private graveside services with no more than ten people in attendance, thereby protecting the families involved. *Pikuach Nefesh*, meaning a human life, is essential and the obligation to save a life in jeopardy is considered a major value to uphold. For all of those who have been taken by this virus, may their memory ever be a blessing.

My “Three Sisters” Pin: Mourning During COVID-19

By Ethel Roblin Melzer

Every morning when I get dressed, I fasten my “Three Sisters” Pin onto whatever shirt or sweater I happen to put on for the day. I decided, as soon as the mandate to shelter-in-place came along because of the COVID-19 virus, it was more important than ever to “get up – dress up – and show up!” I knew for me, if I did not do that, I would get restless and depressed.

One of the strange consequences about living in the sequestered environment we are all forced to accept right now, is our response to the death of a loved one. My oldest sister, Mina Roblin Neidrauer (of blessed memory), passed away in Portland, Oregon March 27. Mina was 97 years old and in relatively good health for her age. She had lived a wonderful full life and was fortunate to have a peaceful death surrounded by her two daughters.

I had been busy talking on the telephone often during the month of February with my middle sister, Ruth Roblin Winnick, from Westport, CT. We were planning to meet at one of the New York airports so



we could fly to Portland together to visit our “big sister.” It never happened. By the time we were able to make our arrangements, all flying was banned, and we were unable to travel.

I had not seen my sister Mina for over two years. We three Roblin Sisters were remarkably close, and we always wore our “Three Sisters” Pin when we were together. Another custom we had was to make a point of celebrating our “big sister’s” milestone years.



Mina, Ruth and Ethel

When Mina lived in Vallejo, California, before moving to Oregon to be near her daughter, we all met in Yosemite National Park for Mina’s 80th! We drove to Lake Tahoe for her 85th, spent a weekend in San Francisco when she turned 90, and visited her in Portland when she was 95! Ruth had visited her last year and stayed with her for almost a week.

But because I was not able to see my sister Mina at the end of her life – was unable to say goodbye or attend her funeral or even sit Shiva – it is almost as if she hadn’t died and is still there, living in her senior residence. I feel as though I should call her on the telephone and talk. Her daughters, Rikki Janal and Jill Derickson, are planning a virtual Memorial

Service sometime this spring, and we will gather on Zoom with Mina’s granddaughter, Davina and her grandson, Benjamin. Her five great-grandchildren will also attend, along with several nieces and nephews, to whom she was a special “Aunt Mina!”

Perhaps this Service of Remembrance will create the closure I, and all of us, need. My sister Mina was several years older than I and was a role model. I learned a great deal from her through the years, and I knew she loved me. We three Roblin Sisters had many wonderful adventures together and shared many laughs. I will wear my “Three Sisters” Pin every day for the rest of the year in her memory. Perhaps it will help to remind me how precious she was and how much I will miss her in the years to come.

Ethel Melzer is the former Director of Adult Education at the Bureau of Jewish Education.

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.

Irving Braun

Lillian Cooperman

Lois Garten

Allen Hope

William Keele

Richard “Dick” A. Kremer

Dr. William “Bill” Kremer

Renee R. Levine

Dr. Murray Levine

**Jeanette Cooperman
Lutkowitz**

Gerald Noznisky

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Joan Marie Reeves



If we inadvertently missed printing the listing of your loved one, please write to ellen@buffalojewishfederation.org, and we will include the name next month.



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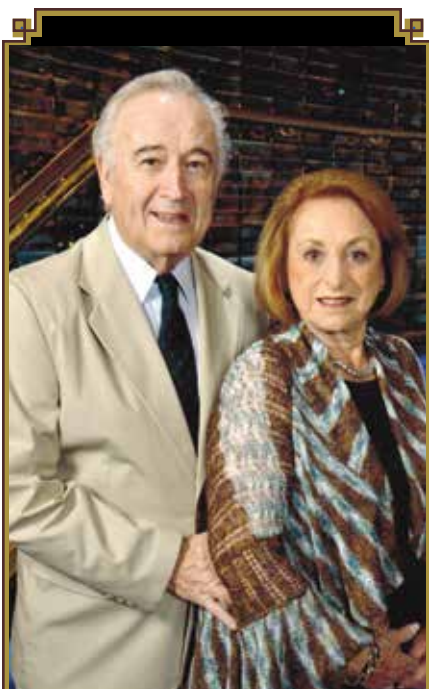
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(NOT) THE LAST WORD

Family Matters

By Alanna Sadler

As a global community, we all have been tasked with the need to alter our daily lives and routines. Just a few months ago, I began hearing about the deadly virus that was spreading throughout China. Some warned that it would reach America, recommending that we prepare for the worst. Though, as I'm sure is true for others, I underestimated the impact COVID-19 would have on our lives.

We have all been affected by this pandemic differently. Some of us may have lost our jobs. Some of us may have lost loved ones. Some of us are grappling with mental health. We all share, however, a notion of uncertainty. We hear predictions that change daily and recommendations that change hourly. It becomes exhausting to keep up with the news, so many of us have accepted the truth—no one knows what our future holds.

For many, uncertainty does not cease the need to make important decisions. For me, I am transitioning from one phase of my life to another. I graduated from Syracuse University in 2019 and spent the following six months interning in Tel Aviv. Initially, my plan was to move back to Buffalo to save money before attending law school in the fall and planned to use that time to visit a handful of law schools. I was aware that I would be leaving the most social years of my life to move back in with my parents, but I was excited to plan my future and professional career.

I received an e-mail that one of my prospective law schools had cancelled their Admitted Students' Day. Shortly after, I received cancellation e-mails from every single one of my potential



Alanna with her parents Laurie and Ron Sadler in Tel Aviv last fall.

schools. Because I was applying to out-of-town schools, I wondered how I was going to make a decision without the ability to physically see those schools and their surrounding environments.

During a significant decision-making process, I find it essential to keep things in perspective. I am healthy and my loved ones are healthy. There is absolutely nothing more important than that. I also find it helpful to grasp the severity of the situation. Events such as Admitted

Students' Days have been cancelled, but only in the interest of saving human lives. *Pikuach Nefesh* reminds me that in Judaism, preservation of human life is one of the most basic principles that must be followed.

When thinking about my decision, I try to shift the negatives into positives. Instead of feeling frustrated when struggling to decide on a particular school, I remind myself how lucky I am to have multiple schools that interest me.

Most importantly, my family has played the most significant role throughout this time. I turn to my parents for their perspective because they want the choice that will make me the happiest. I turn to my sister because I trust her gut instinct, and my brother and sister-in-law for their ability to analyze my choices from a young professional's standpoint. I am fortunate to have such immense support that can help guide me through this time.

To those with cancelled proms, graduations, and other important life moments, stay excited for what is to come. I wish the best to those who are struggling with their businesses and jobs, and pray things will continue to get better. I look forward to the day we can hug each other, share dinner tables, and spend time together as a community. We will rise above this and look back on this strange time with a hopeful future ahead.

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