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# THE JEWISH JOURNAL

A publication of The Buffalo Jewish Federation

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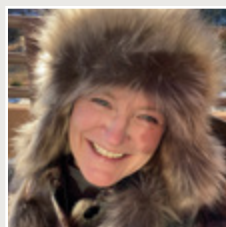
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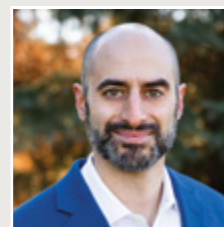
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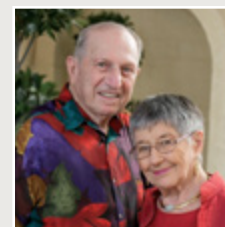
**dignitygrows**  
Buffalo Jewish Federation



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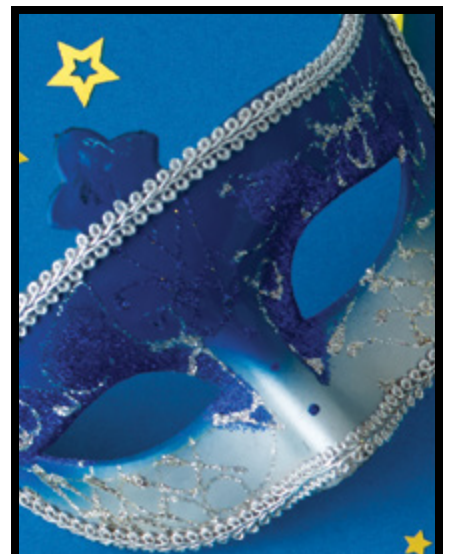
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**March 24 | 12:00 pm**



Register here:

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March 2022

Editor's Note



Ellen Goldstein, Editor

This month marks the third year of COVID in the world, and I am grateful and happy that it's finally Purim, which begins this year on March 16 (13 Adar II). Purim is, among other things, a celebration of the triumph of good over evil, a lesson about Jews speaking out against enemies, and a time to do mitzvot that benefit others. In this issue of *The Jewish Journal*, we offer two bold articles in the spirit of Purim. The first (see page 3) by Federation President Shelly Yellen and CEO Rob Goldberg castigating the evil of the synagogue attack this past January in Colleyville, Texas, and at the same time urging us as a community to continue to be prepared and vigilant in our goal to live securely as Jews. A second piece (see page 14) by Holocaust Resource Center Chair Wendy Weisbrot and Director Elizabeth Schram calls out groups on both sides of the political spectrum not to denigrate and trivialize the memory and meaning of the Holocaust by using it for their own self-serving purposes. Both pieces were also printed in the Opinion section of *The Buffalo News* during January. The cover story (see page 7) provides an update on Federation's Dignity Grows™ program for those who struggle to address personal hygiene and menstrual product poverty.

Please note that Purim festivities are happening, but mostly virtually this year at synagogues and schools from Kadimah at Park (page 12) to Shir Shalom (page 19), TBT (page 20), TBZ (page 24) and more. As Hillel of Buffalo's Rabbi Sara Rich delves into her past celebrating Purim in Israel for some spiritual meaning to the *chag* (page 25), you'll find several opportunities for doing mitzvot during Purim, too. Dignity Grows™ (page 7), and Icecycle with the JCC for Roswell (page 9) are just two examples, but I would ask you to take note of a very special mitzvah you can do all year round – donating platelets to cancer patients at Roswell Park (page 24). This is indeed a life-saving act that can make a huge difference to a person battling cancer. Please read about it and share it with your friends. Stay safe and well and enjoy Purim and the coming spring!

*Ellen Goldstein*

Ellen Goldstein - Editor

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Local teens participated in a Dignity Grows™ packing party to help their neighbors in need.

Photo by Stacey Block.

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Published by  
Buffalo Jewish Federation  
338 Harris Hill Rd., Suite 108B  
Williamsville, NY 14221  
716-463-5050  
www.buffalojewishfederation.org



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



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# A Jewish Communal Response to Colleyville

BY SHELLY YELLEN &  
ROB GOLDBERG

**Colleyville is a sobering reminder that all of us must continue to be vigilant in our fight against antisemitism and all forms of hatred.**

Recently, when the assailant at Colleyville, Texas synagogue Congregation Beth Israel instructed Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker and two other congregants to kneel down, the rabbi mouthed the word, “No.” He then picked up a chair and threw it at the armed man, allowing all three of the hostages to run free.

Rabbi Cytron-Walker’s actions were not out of the blue. He was able to take such extreme measures because of the invaluable instruction he received from the FBI, his local police department, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the Secure Communities Network (SCN), the official homeland security and safety initiative of the organized Jewish community in North America. As the Rabbi relayed to CBS News earlier in the week, “They teach you [that] in those moments when your life is threatened, you need to do whatever you can to get to safety.”



Shelly Yellen

This incident hits particularly close to home for two reasons. First, Colleyville is in the Fort Worth/Tarrant County community, one of more than a dozen Jewish Federations, that along with Buffalo, partner together with Israel’s Western Galilee. We are grateful for the work of Federation Executive Director Barry Abels and his team as well as Temple Beth Israel’s Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker for his heroism. Barry writes: “... we are so thankful that this crisis ended in a positive outcome and Rabbi Charlie and the other members



Rob Goldberg

held hostage with him are home with their loved ones. We are beginning the process of healing and truly appreciate the support of our partners.”

Secondly, Buffalo’s Congregation Shir Shalom Rabbi, Alex Lazarus-Klein and his wife Ashirah, are long-time friends and colleagues with Rabbi Cytron-Walker and his wife Adena. Rabbi Lazarus-Klein writes, “We’re so appreciative of the Shir Shalom family and the greater Buffalo community for all of their prayers and support.”

In Buffalo, we are fortunate to

have the professional services of both Community Security Coordinator Susan DeMari and Community Relations Director Mara Koven-Gelman. Their expertise and tireless efforts have built relationships with law enforcement and interfaith partners throughout Western New York, so many of whom reached out to us expressing their solidarity with the Jewish community here, in Texas and throughout the world.

Throughout the hostage situation, communication with law enforcement and SCN was constant, until notification that the FBI’s Hostage Rescue Team, an elite tactical unit that responds to terrorist incidents, had brought the situation to an end.

In the days and months ahead, we must remind ourselves that preparedness is powerful and was helpful to Congregation Beth Israel this past weekend. While our preparations for community safety have evolved, there is still much to be done.

**This article appeared as an opinion piece of *The Buffalo News* January 20, 2022 in the “Another Voice” column. It is reprinted by permission of the authors.**

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# Meet our Students

**Introduction to Judaism, a collaboration with the Buffalo Board of Rabbis and Cantors, is one of many learning opportunities offered by LiNK Jewish Buffalo. Meet some of recent students who share their experiences with us.**

## Heidi and Sarah Billittier

Mother and daughter, Heidi and Sarah have a lifelong interest in learning, traveling and exploring. Heidi is the Director of Older Adult Services for Compeer in Buffalo. Sarah works for Marriott in hospitality, and is passionate about creating work cultures of growth and success. Both find peace in music and in nature, the love they have for each other and their family, and find comfort in the memories of those who are no longer with them.

"It has been a tough couple of years for all of us," they shared. "Most recently, we lost our mother (Sarah's Grandmother—her "Dommie"), and as we searched for answers to questions around end of life and death, "I found some peace by attending virtual services at Congregation Shir Shalom, and wanted to take the community's *Introduction to Judaism* course in hopes of creating a stronger connection, and perhaps to find answers to many questions which still remain," reflected Heidi. Sarah wanted to feel a deeper connection to her family, specifically, her grandmother. "The *Introduction to Judaism* class has provided an opportunity through which we have been able to sample all the richness that the Jewish community in Western New York has to offer," she noted.



## Cameron Halbreich and Bethany Sinclair

Cameron is a designer and social entrepreneur and Bethany runs a strategic consulting and design agency, in addition to being founder of *Paint The World*, an international arts-based nonprofit.

Bethany was raised in a multi-faith household in Buffalo, while Cameron grew up between Episcopalian and Methodism in Bath, UK. "Over the years, both of us have worked and traveled the world, allowing us to

interact, understand and experience many faiths," described Cameron. "Our lifelong curiosity of other communities has shaped how we see the world and each other, and eventually, led us to think about how we understand our pasts and how we build a future together."

As their relationship deepened, Cameron and Bethany began to speak at length about the social values that are intrinsically woven within the Jewish faith, the focus on building community and the strength found in supporting the betterment of others. As Bethany has strong ties to the Buffalo community, they agreed to participate in the *Intro to Judaism* course here, which for Cameron was a learning experience and for Bethany, a refresher of sorts. "Bethany and I have greatly enjoyed participating in the course together," Cameron added. "It has been tremendously insightful to hear and learn with other students, many of whom are discovering the faith for the first time."



## Todd Geiss

Todd holds a Master's Degree in adult education and a Bachelor's Degree in French language and literature, both from Buffalo State College. He serves as the Director of Marketing for Jewish Family Services of Western New York (JFS). His career has involved both for- and not-for-profit positions in marketing, sales, and fundraising, and he has had the opportunity to experience different cultures through professional travel to more than 20 countries.

Todd was raised with no religion or deep cultural heritage, but has found a home of sorts at JFS. When offered the opportunity to take the *Intro to Judaism* course, it was an easy decision for him. "Not only would I expand my knowledge about the agency I work for, but I would also be able to learn about Judaism as a religion and culture," he said. Two class sessions within the *Intro to Judaism* program stand out to Todd. The first was a discussion about God and the various ways Judaism allows for self-reflection and personal approach to how God is incorporated into one's life. The second was a discussion about *Tanakh* that provided a guide for its reading and study. "As a result of these two sessions," Todd reflects, "a plan is slowly forming in my mind and in my heart."



## Aster Hathaway

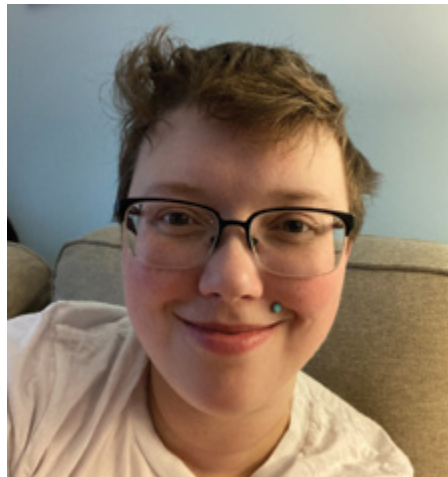
Aster is a Western New York native and a Diversity Equity and Inclusion consultant. A nonbinary ballet dancer, Aster has a B.A. in Dance from Smith College and is a Cecchetti Council of America certified ballet teacher. Currently, Aster works with the Western New York Women's Foundation.

"I have been very fortunate to have several Jewish women in my life," said Aster. "These are the relationships that sustain me, inspire me, and encourage me to grow. In falling in love (romantically and platonically)

with these women, I have also fallen in love with Judaism." The pandemic offered Aster a lot of time to reflect on their burgeoning relationship to Judaism, and this summer they finally began the conversion process. "One of the things that most draws me to Judaism," reflected Aster, "is its emphasis on scholarly pursuit. Becoming a Jew takes work and study, which I find deeply satisfying."

The *Intro to Judaism* class is a methodical overview of Judaism as a spiritual, cultural, and religious practice, and it is also an opportunity to learn about history. "I know that as a Jew by choice, I will never be able to fully understand the shared generational trauma that Jews who are born into the religion all carry together," Aster noted. "However, my time in class has helped me understand how I can hold space for members of my community and the ways we can develop shared experiences together."

**For more information on the new *Introduction to Judaism* class beginning this month, or any other Adult Learning through LiNK register at [BIT.LY/LINKADULTSPRING2022](https://bit.ly/linkadultspring2022), or if you'd like to speak with Susan Schwartz, email her at [susan@buffalojewishfederation.org](mailto:susan@buffalojewishfederation.org).**





# Higgins and Jacobs Sign Letter to Support Security Funding

BY MARA KOVEN-GELMAN, JCRC DIRECTOR

The Jewish Community Relations Council is grateful to Congressman Brian Higgins (NY-26) and Congressman Chris Jacobs (NY-27) for their support in seeking increased funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) in fiscal year 2022. Both Congressmen signed on to U.S. Representatives Bill Pascrell's and John Katko's bipartisan letter to the Committee on Appropriations requesting an increase from \$180 million (2021) to \$360 million (2022.)



Congressman Brian Higgins



Congressman Chris Jacobs

These funds will be awarded to improve physical security of buildings and security activities, security equipment, bulletproof glass, planning, training and hiring security personnel. This strongly demonstrates Higgins and Jacobs' commitment to securing faith-based institutions that are vulnerable to antisemitic and hate attacks like the hostage taking at Congregation Temple Beth Israel January 15. While this attack targeted the Jewish community in Colleyville, Texas, it underscored the rise in extremists posing a threat to the Jewish community and to other religious, racial, and ethnic groups.

Locally, Buffalo Jewish organizations and synagogues have collectively been awarded \$360,000 to date from the NSGP. Other monies for security improvement to buildings have been previously funded by a \$100,000 appropriation from NYS Sen. Tim Kennedy and the Secure Jewish Buffalo initiative.

*Mara Koven-Gelman is the Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council, powered by the Jewish Federation.*

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# 2022 Belonging Conference: Bringing Leaders and Thinkers Together April 24-25

BY KIRSTIE HENRY

Recently I took a trip to Colorado Springs and I came home with a new winter hat. Notwithstanding the profusion of hats this time of year in Buffalo, people *really* noticed my new hat. It's just different from other hats. When something looks different, stands out, or when something about our environment changes, we expect people to notice.

**But what happens when 'different' isn't as distinguishable?**

Jewish Buffalo looks vastly different today than it did fifty years ago; different still than it did even ten years ago. Many of these differences can be visibly seen and felt in the size of our population and the shape of our institutions. What's harder to see clearly is the shifting landscape of the individuals with whom we build and create Jewish life.

Although the majority of Jews in North America come from Ashkenazi (Eastern and Central European) roots, Jews also descend from communities in North

Africa, the Middle East and many other parts of the world. The Jewish community has always been diverse; but our diversity is evolving and expanding in ways that perhaps some of us have not noticed. Nowhere is this shift more dramatic than in those under the age of thirty.

Reflected in this growing diversity of people participating in Jewish spiritual and communal life today are individuals from different ethnic and racial backgrounds, individuals who have chosen Judaism, and individuals who are part of Jewish families. In all parts of Jewish Buffalo, we encounter Jews of various abilities,



Kirstie Henry

initiative of LiNK Jewish Buffalo, which strives to promote the principles of Belonging in Jewish spaces and is geared toward professional and volunteer leaders in Jewish Buffalo, or others who lead or host spaces that celebrate Jewish life and values through relationships and text.

Conference participants will learn from both national and local experts with a focus on a variety of identities (and their intersections): Jews with disabilities, Jews of color, LGBTQ+, families with different faiths, and those exploring Judaism. Designed to provoke and challenge institutionally and culturally ingrained ideas around what a Jew looks like, who is a Jew, and who is accepted in the Jewish community, the conference will encourage

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**GATHER, GROW, LEARN AND BUILD**

There are many people within Jewish Buffalo who've historically been minimized, marginalized, ignored, or even excluded from Jewish spaces.... let's work together to ensure that this no longer occurs.

Gather together in person and hear from thought leaders to develop shared language, skills, and action plans to create a Jewish Buffalo where all can feel a true sense of belonging.

For current volunteer and professional leaders of Jewish agencies and congregations and for individuals who want to lead or create using Jewish values.

**Register at: [bit.ly/belongingconference](https://bit.ly/belongingconference)**

Made possible through the generosity of the Weiss Family Philanthropic Fund and the estate of Ruth Axelrod.

For more information, contact Mike Steklof, [mike@buffalojewishfederation.org](mailto:mike@buffalojewishfederation.org)

**LiNK**  
Jewish Buffalo

## Belonging Conference Sunday, April 24 - Monday, April 25

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**Monday @ Temple Beth Tzedek**  
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**More info: [buffalojewishfederation.org/belongingconference](https://buffalojewishfederation.org/belongingconference)**

sexual, gender and racial identities. And all combinations and permutations of the above, whether we notice it or not.

What does this changing environment mean for our communal institutions – for the Jewish Buffalo we hope to sustain or create together? How can we ensure that our spaces of gathering and the things we do within them reflect these differences? How do we develop empathy for those we do not know or understand and embrace and celebrate diverse Jewish identities? What does it mean to belong? How does the rallying cry “nothing about us without us” inform how we plan for the future?

We invite leaders and thinkers from across the community to explore these questions at the inaugural **Belonging Conference** next month on April 24th and 25th. This two-day conference is an

participants to connect with each other and with the resources available to help them create or reimagine their personal and organizational capacity to serve the evolving landscape of Jewish Buffalo.

We are incredibly grateful to the Belonging Conference Planning Team: Jeff Clark, Lisa Davidson, Sharon Nosenchuck, Corey Auerbach, Margie Bryen, Mark Horowitz, and Michelle Lawson, Kirstie Henry and Mike Steklof and to the Weiss Family Philanthropic Fund and the Estate of Ruth Axelrod, for their generous support of this effort.

*Kirstie Henry is the Chair of the Belonging Conference and Courtroom Deputy Clerk to United States District Judge John L. Sinatra, Jr.*



# Dignity Grows™ Provides Grants, Inspires Teens and New Partnerships

BY STACEY BLOCK

Dignity Grows™ is an initiative that provides individuals in need with essential personal hygiene products so they can attend school and work and participate in community life without interruption. Women's Philanthropy of the Buffalo Jewish Federation is celebrating our one-year anniversary of Dignity Grows™ in Buffalo.



## Jewish Buffalo Chapter receives Generous Grant

We recently received a generous grant of 15,000 menstrual and hygiene products from our partner organization Aunt Flow. We have been recognized for taking the lead in educating the community about period and hygiene poverty, the diverse organizations we collaborate with, and the innovative ways we engage people of all ages and backgrounds. The granted menstrual necessities will be included in Dignity Grows™ Totes to benefit Jewish Family Services of WNY, Haven House, Compass House, RAHAMA and Kosher Meals on Wheels. Each Tote contains a full-month supply of comprehensive hygiene essentials, paired with period products, in a discreet, zipper-topped shoulder bag. *To learn more about Aunt Flow, visit [goauntflow.com](http://goauntflow.com).*



Boxes of menstrual products from Aunt Flow



Teens putting together Dignity Grows™ totes at the JCC

## Local Teens Inspire Change

On January 16, 17 local teens and family members came together to pack 300 Dignity Grows totes. Avery Field, Amanda Ojeda and Sophia McVige, students from Williamsville East High School, worked together on a special project for their Human Rights and Genocide class. They chose Dignity Grows™



Teen project coordinators at Williamsville East High School

as the initiative to work on because of the direct impact it can have on people in their own community and the awareness it brings about hygiene poverty. Through social media, email, speaking at club meetings and word of mouth, they raised over \$2,600 for Dignity Grows™. This project was the first of our High School and B'nai Mitzvah program offering.



Hadassah members gather for a packing party

## New Partnerships in Western New York

We are also excited to announce our new partnership with RAHAMA, a Muslim and women-led not-for-profit that empowers women experiencing domestic abuse through

education, advocacy, support, and housing. While RAHAMA specifically caters to Muslim women, their doors are always open to everyone. *To learn more, visit [rahama.org](http://rahama.org).*

Each month Dignity Grows™ Buffalo supplies up to 150 totes to five local distribution partners. This is made possible through individual donations as well as special funds from angel donors. Sadly, there is no end in sight for hygiene poverty, and we need your help to continue this important work. You can fund one Dignity Grows™ Tote for \$10. *For more information or if you would like to volunteer to help with Dignity Grows™, contact Stacey Block at [stacey@buffalojewishfederation.org](mailto:stacey@buffalojewishfederation.org) or 716-463-5053, or visit [DignityGrows.org](http://DignityGrows.org) where you can learn more. To donate directly to the Buffalo Chapter, go to [bit.ly/DIGNITYGROWSBFLO](http://bit.ly/DIGNITYGROWSBFLO).*

*Stacey Block is the Director of Donor Experience at the Buffalo Jewish Federation.*



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This conference will explore historical and contemporary antisemitism. Educators will learn how to define, recognize, and address antisemitism, while empowering their students to do the same. This conference will feature both virtual and in-person presentations.

**Tuesday, March 15, 2022 | 8am – 3pm ET**  
**Erie 1 BOCES**  
**355 Harlem Road, West Seneca, NY 14224**

This conference is designed for middle and high school teachers in English Language Arts, Media Studies and Social Studies. Attendees will receive six hours of professional development. Lunch will be provided.

The registration fee is \$50 per teacher.

Questions? Email Elizabeth Schram at [elizabeth@hrcbuffalo.org](mailto:elizabeth@hrcbuffalo.org)

**Register Online at [bit.ly/hrcteacherconference2022](https://bit.ly/hrcteacherconference2022)**



## COMMUNITY

# Welcome Robin Kurss: Federation's new Director of Jewish Experience

Meet Robin Kurss, the newest member of the Buffalo Jewish Federation's professional team working for LiNK Jewish Buffalo. A lifelong Buffalonian, Robin has been active in Jewish life for the past 35 years, serving in a variety of volunteer leadership positions and as an active member of many communities and congregations. Professionally, Robin has had an eclectic series of careers as a Physical Therapist, an Executive Pastry Chef, and most recently as a Senior Account Manager for Buffalo Spree Publishing.



Robin Kurss

Robin is looking forward to her new Federation position: "I am very excited to forge new relationships," she reflected, "while at the same time, bring individuals and families together through meaningful Jewish living and learning experiences."

Robin began her role as one of LiNK's Directors of Jewish Experience in December and will be overseeing PJ Library and several Adult Engagement efforts. Miriam Abramovich, Chief Experience Officer at the Buffalo Jewish Federation, shared that "Robin

has a keen understanding of the importance of relationships and the uniqueness of each individual and family. We are eager to integrate Robin into our team and to support her in overseeing PJ Library and other LiNK efforts."

*If you would like to connect with Robin directly, or if you want to learn more about PJ Library in Buffalo, email [robin@buffalojewishfederation.org](mailto:robin@buffalojewishfederation.org).*

## Konnecting with KOT



Rabbi Ori teaching a cooking class

Kehillat Ohr Tzion (KOT) has continued social action projects including collecting food for FeedMore WNY, and holding a packing party for personal care items in conjunction with the Federation for Dignity Grows™ (see page 7).

Rabbi Ori Bergman is also holding several weekly classes on Zoom. In addition, he meets with individual members on the phone or for a one-on-one meeting for *chavruta* learning. Shabbat programming for children is also being scheduled under the direction of Morah Zahava Fried. *If you would like more information about what KOT has to offer, email [oribergman@gmail.com](mailto:oribergman@gmail.com).*



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# Masking Up with JCRC

BY LEAH KRAMER

One should never underestimate the power of building relationships. Here in Western New York, the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), powered by the Buffalo Jewish Federation, has collaborated with several communities to help distribute masks and make our corner of the country safer and healthier. The masks are all WNY-made, manufactured in Dr. Todd Shatkin's manufacturing facility in Amherst.

The facility, named Pure Environments, began making masks in June of 2020, and has produced a staggering total of over two and a half million masks. With news late last year declaring Omicron adverse to cloth masks, the need for N95 in all communities became increasingly apparent. Dr. Shatkin generously donated 3,000 masks and "JCRC reached out to our friends and partners to help distribute N95 masks to their communities," said Mara Koven-Gelman, JCRC Director.

In March of 2020, the Chinese Club of WNY distributed the (then) rare N95 masks to JCRC. Now, in January of 2022, JCRC has given the Chinese Club of WNY 1,000 masks. The masks were also distributed to the NAACP Buffalo Branch and 2nd Baptist Church Food Pantry, the Citywide MLK Jr. Day Event, Borders from Bridges, and Jewish Family Services of WNY.

"We're very appreciative of the donation," said Reverend Mark Blue of 2nd Baptist Church in Lackawanna. Reverend Blue spoke about how important masks are to help curb infection rate, and how the donation gives protection and safety to individuals who may not have been able to afford N95 masks at this time.



Federation CEO Rob Goldberg delivers masks to Jun Wang-Tiedemann, Executive Director of the Chinese Club of WNY.

"This collaboration underscores the importance of these friendships, and how relationship building benefits the entire Buffalo community," said Rob Goldberg, CEO of Federation. "Ultimately, it helps to make Buffalo a more caring and connected community."

*Leah Kramer is a recent graduate of The University of Wisconsin and a freelance writer for Buffalo Jewish Federation.*

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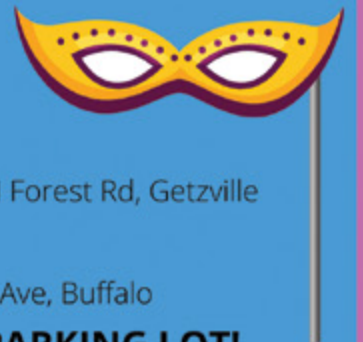
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*\$500 deposit and completed registration is due by April 15, 2022 to guarantee your spot on the trip and group transportation*

## CONTACT

Stacey Block

[stacey@buffalojewishfederation.org](mailto:stacey@buffalojewishfederation.org)

716-463-4053

*\*All days and events are subject to change.*

**BUFFALO JEWISH FEDERATION**

## COMMUNITY



**PARTNERSHIP2GETHER**  
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BUFFALO JEWISH FEDERATION

This month we welcome new Western Galilee Partnership Consortium US Director, Marcy L. Paul, PhD. Marcy succeeds Bracha Zuriel, who has held the position for several years and is retiring this month.

Marcy begins this new role after serving as the Senior Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) for the Jewish Federation of Greater Dayton, where she currently resides. Marcy reignited her passion for work with the Jewish community after spending thirty years in higher education. Her first time in Israel was the summer of 1973 when she was in the first confirmation group to be confirmed near the Kotel. Her second experience in Israel was in 1976 to study abroad at Haifa University. Marcy did not return to Israel until 2015 when she participated in a Jewish Leadership program through the Federation in Fort Worth, where she had lived for 25 years. It was a visit to the Partnership in the Western Galilee on this trip that she found her passion for the Partnership and never looked back.

Since that one short visit, Marcy became a volunteer, attended Summits, Council of Communities, was the U.S. co-chair for the academic committee and most recently served on the Management committee. She has also co-chaired the book club and created the first Partnership academic conference in Budapest. Furthermore, Marcy has used her PhD in Multicultural Women's and Gender Studies to do additional work with the P2G Women Leading a Dialogue program.



Marcy L. Paul

We wish Marcy much success and look forward to working with her in her new role in the Partnership! **For more information or any questions, please contact Mandy Weiss at [mandy@buffalojewishfederation.org](mailto:mandy@buffalojewishfederation.org).**

## UPCOMING P2G PROGRAMS:

**Sunday, March 13  
@ 11:00 a.m.**

**VirtuARTS #3—Professional Lecture Series about Art and Community**—with Milana Gitzin Adiram, Director and Curator, ZUMU Museum (Israel): Museum on the move - a community based mobile museum

*For more information, visit <https://www.westerngalilee.org.il/>*

## Join the JCC to Cycle Away Cancer This Month



Here's a mitzvah you can do for Purim this year: Sign up for Icecycle or donate to a Team JCC rider. Hop on a spinning bike downtown at Riverworks and join Team JCC at 11:00 a.m. Saturday, March 12 for the second annual IceCycle fundraiser for Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer

Center. The Team JCC session (one of 13 overall) has room for 64 spinners and anyone can take part. Registration is \$25 with a fundraising commitment of \$200. Ride with Team JCC or donate to a team member at [www.IceCycleBuffalo.org](http://www.IceCycleBuffalo.org). **For more information on Team JCC, contact Jim Mahjoubian at [JMahjoubian@jccbuffalo.org](mailto:JMahjoubian@jccbuffalo.org).**

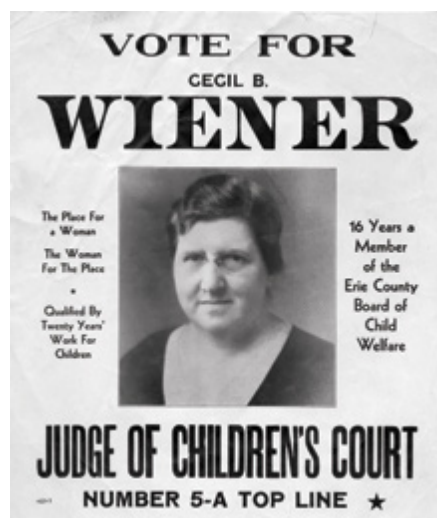


# Making History

BY CHANA R. KOTZIN, PH.D.

This March marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first recorded bat mitzvah in America. On March 18, 1922, Judith Kaplan, the oldest child of Lena Rubin and Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan, made history as she stood in front of the congregation at the Society for the Advancement of Judaism on a Shabbat morning. This service was fashioned by her father, then a rabbi with the Conservative movement, and only later associated with Reconstructionist Judaism. Although the ceremony was not the exact equivalent of a bar mitzvah, as she chanted Torah from a printed *chumash* as opposed to a *Sefer Torah*, it would change conceptions of how girls could participate in religious life going forward.

While Judith Kaplan Eisenstein would also break ground in other spheres as a highly respected musicologist and composer, her name became bound



Judge Cecil Wiener, MS44, Helen Z. M. Rodgers paper, Box 10, University at Buffalo, 1931.

together with the bat mitzvah by subsequent generations who chose to follow in her footsteps, as well as by those who disseminated her story. To remain in history, her act and its intent had to be recorded, remembered, perhaps repeated and certainly recalled. And so in numerous local communities around America and beyond these shores, other girls became their “first” in their own communities.

In Buffalo, this moment was reported in a *Buffalo Evening News* article, clipped and saved in a scrapbook in the Grosvenor Research room of the Buffalo Central Library. The short article recalled how Aileen Juvelier observed her bat mitzvah in April 1940 at Temple Beth El after studying for four years with Cantor Harry Hart Kaufman. A telling proviso hedged the moment as, “First Bas Mitzvah Ritual to be Considered in City.”

One of the challenges of piecing together historical timelines are the uncertainties and incompleteness of records. Many synagogue bulletins and newsletters are

missing from our collections because of relocations, mergers and varying record-keeping practices. Outside of a particular organization, historical gaps can occur in the records of community newspapers that have missing issues. Often, it’s a case of looking in a variety of records to find a lead that sets a baseline which can be used to find other corroborating or conversely conflicting accounts.

This is especially the case for women’s history, which requires the use of multiple and sometimes indirect sources. This is illustrated by the case of Judge Cecil



Cecil B. Wiener, “Miss Federation,” *Jewish Community Service Society News*, 1956.

Weiner who was a long-standing executive in the Jewish community, at the Jewish Federation and the Jewish Community Service Society (a Jewish Family Service forerunner). Significant information about her long and multiple careers in several roles including as a Children’s Court Judge, had to be found in the records of her friend and fellow lawyer, Helen Z. M.

Rodgers. It was with Rodgers that Cecil (Cecilia) Wiener shared the record as the first women to receive law degrees from the University of Buffalo in 1899. You can read more about the life and work of Cecil Weiner in one of the new biographies at the Jewish Buffalo History Center website this month.

There are many more women whose stories need to be told and whose records are scattered or limited. Often it is within family records that the most wide-ranging materials are found. We are currently collecting materials relating to a forthcoming online exhibition about the East Side and are keen to trace biographies of women as organizational leaders, shop proprietors, assistants, clerks, artists, teachers and other roles. If you have any information you’d like to share, please contact [Chana@buffalojewishfederation.org](mailto:Chana@buffalojewishfederation.org). March is Women’s History month and your contributions will help us broaden the historical record that we strive to make available through [jewishbuffalohistory.org](http://jewishbuffalohistory.org)

*Chana Revell Kotzin, Ph.D., is the coordinator of the Jewish Buffalo History Center website, which you can find at [jewishbuffalohistory.org](http://jewishbuffalohistory.org).*

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## Happy Purim from Kadimah Scholars at Park!

BY RENEE LEHNER

The Kadimah Scholars at Park School of Buffalo have been very busy since coming back to campus from winter break, and we're looking forward to Purim and Pesach!



For Tu B'Shvat, we held a program where students learned about the seven special kinds of foods that grow in Israel and were able to taste each one. The lower school students learned about the environment, plants, and how they connect with the holiday. The students planted seeds and ate fruits, including *Shaked* - "almonds" in Hebrew.

Our youngest Kadimah Scholars, the pre-K students, discussed the parts of the tree from seedlings, roots, trees, and branches. They are also learning all the Shabbat prayers for the candles, wine (grape juice) and challah, and why we give *Tzedakah* to help families in need. In our older classes, the students discussed the difference in how Shabbat is celebrated in Israel versus America. Our 6th graders are having a three-

session program about Israel with Ron Lugasi—our virtual *Shlichah* (teacher) from Israel—and our 7<sup>th</sup> graders were honored to present Hebrew dialogues at University at Buffalo's Day of Jewish Learning on Feb. 27.

Since we began this partnership with Park School and the Buffalo Jewish Federation nearly two years ago, we have extended our reach and doubled our enrollment, from 19 Scholars in grades K-9 when we started, to 37 from pre-K to 11<sup>th</sup> grade this year. We have two classrooms for Kadimah classes, with Hebrew adorning the walls. We once again had a *sukkah* on campus this year, celebrated Hanukkah together, and look forward to even more—including a Purim celebration and model seders for Passover.

We are working harder than ever, united in our determination to ensure that Jewish education remains strong in Buffalo. But we need your help to ensure it can succeed and be affordable to all. Donations made to the program help support the multifaceted program we have built, from online learning experiences with Israel to holiday programs. More importantly, they help to provide scholarships so that our community's children can always get a Jewish education. It takes a village to educate a child. And you are part of our village.

**To help support the education of our Jewish youth and be a part of our village, please go to [Kadimah.org/donate](http://Kadimah.org/donate).**



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Sholom M. Rubashkin, who oversaw the largest kosher meatpacking plant in the world, galvanized the Jewish world as the subject of a protracted and headline-grabbing court case. Enduring eight years in prison, he and his family inspired tens of thousands with their spirit, faith, and trust in Hashem, culminating in his miraculous release on the last day of Chanukah. Since President Donald J. Trump pardoned him, Sholom M. and his wife Leah have spent their days traveling across the Jewish world to listen, to teach, and to uplift.

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# Adam Fogel Appointed Co-Chair of JCRC

BY HANNAH GABELNICK

Adam Fogel, the chief of staff for New York State Senator Tim Kennedy, has been appointed new co-chair of the Buffalo Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC). Along with current co-chair Deborah Goldman, Adam will play a critical role in implementing the JCRC goals of combatting antisemitism and hate, advancing social justice, and building relationships.

After joining the JCRC Executive Committee in 2020, Adam took on a key role at the JCRC, serving on the Racial Justice Working Group and Sub-Committee. Additionally, he recently organized a webinar to educate the community on 2022 NYS Legislative Social Justice Bills. "JCRC puts the Jewish value of Tikkun Olam (making the world a better place) into action through policy, legislation,



Adam Fogel

advocacy, and communication strategies," Adam said. "I'm proud of the work JCRC has done in the areas of civil rights, voting rights, racial justice, immigration, and protecting

our environment. As co-chair, I hope to continue moving these important priorities forward."

Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, Adam graduated from Allegheny College with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and English. After obtaining a Master's degree in Political Management at the George Washington University, he worked at FairVote, a non-profit organization that works towards election reform and civic education. Adam went on to manage several Maryland election campaigns and became the chief of staff for several elected officials, including

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Senator Kennedy. He currently lives in Amherst with his wife, Molly, and their two children, Eli and Kennedy.

Hannah Gabelnick is a senior at Amherst Central High School and an intern at the Buffalo Jewish Community Relations Council.

## UB's Gordon and Gretchen Gross Lecture is March 24

On Thursday, March 24 at 1 p.m., UB's Department of Jewish Thought will present the Gordon and Gretchen Gross Lecture by Professor Karma Ben-Johanan of Humboldt University, Berlin. The talk, **CHARGES DROPPED?: Jewish-Christian Relations after Vatican Removed Accusations Against Jews** is based on Ben-Johanan's new book *Jacob's Younger Brother: Jewish Christian Relationships after Vatican II* forthcoming from Harvard University Press.

A new chapter in Jewish-Christian relations opened in the second half of the twentieth century when the Second Vatican Council exonerated Jews from the accusation of deicide and declared that the Jewish people had never been rejected by God. In a few carefully phrased statements, two millennia of deep hostility were swept into the trash heap of history.

But old animosities die hard. While Catholic and Jewish leaders publicly promoted interfaith dialogue, doubts remained behind closed doors. Catholic officials and theologians soon found that changing their attitude toward Jews could threaten the foundations of Christian tradition. For their part, many Jews perceived the new Catholic line as a Church effort to shore up support amid atheist and secular advances.

Drawing on extensive research in contemporary rabbinical literature, Karma Ben-Johanan shows that Jewish leaders welcomed the Catholic condemnation of antisemitism but were less enthusiastic



Karma Ben-Johanan

about the Church's sudden urge to claim their friendship. Catholic theologians hoped Vatican II would turn the page on an embarrassing history, hence the assertion that the Church had not reformed but rather had always loved Jews, or at least should have. Orthodox rabbis, in contrast, believed they were finally free to say what they thought of Christianity.

**The talk is free and open to public. A Zoom link will be distributed by the Department of Jewish Thought e-mail list the day before. Please feel free to subscribe at <https://arts-sciences.buffalo.edu/jewish-thought/news-events/join-mailing-list.html>.**

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## The Girl in the Diary Opens in Honor of International Holocaust Remembrance Day

In honor of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which coincided with the 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz, January 27, the Holocaust Recourse Center led the effort to bring *The Girl in the Diary: Searching for Rywka from the Lodz Ghetto* exhibit at the Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum. This interactive exhibit features the diary of Rywka Lipsyc, an adolescent Orthodox Jewish girl who kept a diary while she was in the Lodz Ghetto from October 1943-April 1944. *The Girl in the Diary* will be on display at the Karpeles Museum (453 Porter Avenue) until May 27<sup>th</sup>.

Visitors to the exhibit find it natural to connect with Rywka because in her diary she describes her friendships, hardships, and her hopes for the future. In the exhibit, her journal entries are accompanied by artifacts and commentaries from expert psychologists, doctors, Rabbis, and historians. Through the exhibit, viewers learn the journey of both Rywka's story and the diary itself, which was discovered in January 1945 during the Liberation of Auschwitz.

Jakub Nowakowski, the Exhibition Curator and Director of the Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow, Poland traveled to Buffalo to train docents to guide school groups and adults through the exhibit. At the opening night in January, Jakub provided insight into how he created this exhibit and emphasized the importance of connecting with Rywka as a human being, who is so much



Scenes from the exhibit opening event

more than a statistic in a textbook.

This exhibit would not have been possible without The Galicia Jewish Museum, Buffalo Jewish Federation, The Permanent Chair of Polish Culture at Canisius College, the Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum, The Koret Foundation, Daemen College's Center for Polish Studies, Sharon Miller, the Polish Arts Club, and the Rose H. and Leonard H. Frank Cultural Arts Fund. HRC is especially grateful to Mary Lou Wyrobek, former HRC Board Member and President of the Permanent Chair of Polish Culture at Canisius College, for her dedication in ensuring this exhibit became a reality for the WNY community.

**For more information about the exhibit and how to book a guided tour, please visit [hrcbuffalo.org/girl-in-the-diary-exhibit](http://hrcbuffalo.org/girl-in-the-diary-exhibit).**

## Misuse of Holocaust Analogies Demeans the Survivors

BY WENDY WEISBROT AND ELIZABETH SCHRAM

**January 27 marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day, coinciding with the 77th anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz, where 1.1 million people, mostly of Jewish descent, were murdered. Every day, but on this day in particular, Holocaust museums and centers around the world work diligently to teach the history of this genocide and honor the legacy of its survivors and victims.**

Therefore, it has been alarming to hear more and more instances of inappropriate comparisons of modern-day issues being made to the Holocaust. This trend is nothing new, but it seems to have escalated recently and must be stopped.

On both the right and on the left, politicians, newscasters, celebrities and our own friends and family members have been making these analogies, perhaps to be provocative or in an attempt to help them win arguments. While it is natural to connect new information with existing knowledge, it is deeply wrong to make these parallels for a number of reasons.

First and foremost, these comparisons are extremely disrespectful and demeaning to Holocaust survivors, their family members and to the 11 million people who were murdered. We must think about the 40 survivors and their descendants who are our Western New York neighbors, as well as the WWII Veterans who fought valiantly for our democracy and who liberated the death

camp. Our community is home to people like Ruth Lansing, who at 103 years old, is one of the last surviving witnesses to Kristallnacht-the Night of Broken Glass and Sophia Veffter, who as a child hid in more than 10 hiding places in Amsterdam, was turned in to the Nazis, and survived Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp. Their horrific experiences become diminished when every modern-day issue is compared to what they experienced in the Holocaust.

Second, when we start equating every bad or controversial situation to the Holocaust, we increase the chances of becoming immune to this global tragedy. As Edna Friedberg, historian at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum puts it, "the nature of Nazi crimes demands that we study the evidence, alert ourselves to warning signs, and wrestle with the world's moral failure. When we reduce it to a flattened morality tale, we forfeit the chance to learn from its horrific specificity. We lose sight of the ordinary human choices that made genocide possible."

Third, making analogies to the Holocaust distracts from the important task of finding solutions to the issues of today. Modern issues do not need to be compared to the Holocaust to be considered negative or important. Friedberg emphasizes that these analogies "shut down productive, thoughtful discourse...especially at a time when our country needs dialogue more than ever."

Please help us remember the history of the Holocaust and honor the experiences of the survivors and victims by rejecting these comparisons whenever you hear them.

The Holocaust Resource Center of Buffalo (HRC) is firmly committed to our mission: to teach the lessons of the Holocaust, remember the survivors and victims, and promote social justice, civic responsibility, and human rights. **For more information, please visit our website at [www.hrcbuffalo.org](http://www.hrcbuffalo.org).**

*Wendy Weisbrot is Chair of the Holocaust Resource Center and Elizabeth Schram is Director of the Holocaust Resource Center. This article appeared as an opinion piece of The Buffalo News January 27, 2022 in the "Another Voice" column. It is reprinted by permission of the authors.*

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# Israeli Musician at BPO March 6

On March 6 at 3 p.m. the *Art of Jazz at the Philharmonic Series* continues at Kleinhans Music Hall with clarinetist Anat Cohen and her frequent collaborators, the celebrated Brazilian group, Anat Cohen Quartetinho.

Born in Tel Aviv, Anat was raised in a musical family. She attended the Tel Aviv School for the Arts, the “Thelma Yellin” High School for the Arts, and the Jaffa Music Conservatory. She started playing clarinet at age 12 and first played jazz in the Jaffa Conservatory’s Dixieland band. At 16, she joined the big band and learned saxophone; it was this same year that she entered Yellin High School, where she majored in jazz. After graduation she fulfilled her mandatory Israeli military service duty, playing tenor saxophone in the Air Force band.

Eventually, she was able to attend the Berklee College of Music in Boston, where she honed her jazz skills and developed a love and facility for Latin music styles. Moving to New York in 1999, she spent a decade touring with an all-woman band, The Diva Jazz Orchestra, and started working with Brazilian groups. People took notice. In 2009, she was the first Israeli to headline at the storied jazz venue, The Village Vanguard.

*The New York Times* writes, “Ms. Cohen on the clarinet was a revelation. Using the clarinet’s upper register, she could evoke infectious joy. In the lower register, her playing could conjure a deep, soulful melancholy. On up-tempo numbers, her improvisations weren’t just bebop fast; they had a clarity and



Anat Cohen Quartetinho

deep intelligence that is really quite rare. She made it look effortless, even as she was playing the most technically difficult of all the reed instruments... she took my breath away.”

The concert takes place in the wonderful acoustic setting of the Mary Seaton Room at Kleinhans Music Hall with Bruce Eaton as producer and Tony Zambito as associate producer, who could not be happier to introduce Buffalo Jazz fans to Anat. **Tickets are available at [kleinhansbuffalo.org](http://kleinhansbuffalo.org) or (716) 885-5000.**

art of jazz  
at the Philharmonic 2022

KLEINHANS ★ MUSIC ★ HALL



## Anat Cohen Quartetinho

Sunday, March 6 | 3pm

Tel-Aviv native Anat Cohen has been voted “Clarinetist of the Year” in numerous polls by jazz critics and fans alike. In her Buffalo debut, the three-time Grammy nominee will feature the celebrated Brazilian group Trio Brasileiro.

TICKETS: \$34 ADULT \$20 STUDENT

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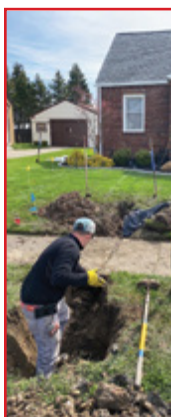
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## COMMUNITY

# JCC of Greater Buffalo Announces a New Endowment

BY ALEXANDER J. EADIE

The Jewish Community Center of Greater Buffalo is proud to announce a new permanent endowment, the Irving and Claire Gareleck Endowment to benefit the Aging Well program at the JCC. This new fund is part of the Life and Legacy initiative, and it will provide program funding in perpetuity for senior adult members of the JCC, the Western New York Community, and their caregivers.

Irving and Claire Gareleck were regulars in the JCC fitness center, exercising and socializing until well into their 90s. Irv, who owned a plumbing business, volunteered as a member of the JCC's facilities committee right before the major renovation of the Benderson Family Building. Diagnosing and solving problems with various equipment, Irv became a close friend of Jim Morgan, the JCC's Senior Director of Facilities Operations. "Irv always knew manufacturer reps or mechanical contractors we could reach out to and was always happy to make the introductions," Jim said. "He was resourceful, kind, and a friend."

After Claire passed away in 2021, their three daughters – Ellyn Stevenson, Betsy Feuerstein, and Nancy Picard – knew they wanted to honor their parents with a tribute for the place they loved so dearly. Unbeknownst to them, Claire had spoken with Patricia Simonson, the JCC's Chief Experience Officer, several times about honoring Irv for his contributions as a volunteer, and a plaque was made for him. Her daughters' desire to create a lasting tribute came at the perfect time, as they decided to create a permanent memorial endowment in Irv and Claire's memory to support the JCC's Aging Well programs.

"Our parents were blessed with good health and longevity and they exercised and worked out regularly at the JCC, never letting their age be anything more than a number," Ellyn said. "When we wanted to honor their legacy of helping others whenever and however they could, this gift seemed like a perfect fit."



Irving and Claire Gareleck (z"l)

The new Irving and Claire Gareleck JCC Endowment will contribute to many more "happy hours within these walls" for all who benefit from the new Aging Well programs. In the spirit of Irving and Claire, this gift is a beautiful example of the JCC working to heal the world and improve lives in our community. **To learn more, visit [www.jccbuffalo.org/adult-programs](http://www.jccbuffalo.org/adult-programs).**

A partnership with the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, Life and Legacy giving will strengthen our Buffalo Jewish community for years to come. It ensures you will be remembered by those who directly benefit from your generosity and inspire future generations.

**To learn more, visit [www.jewishphilanthropies.org/life-and-legacy](http://www.jewishphilanthropies.org/life-and-legacy). For more information on Life and Legacy or giving to the JCC, contact Alexander J. Eadie, Director of Advancement, at 716-929-6258 or [aeadie@jccbuffalo.org](mailto:aeadie@jccbuffalo.org).**

Alexander J. Eadie is Director of Advancement for the JCC of Greater Buffalo.





**“As my forefathers  
planted these carob trees  
for me so I too plant  
these for my children.”**  
— Talmud (Ta'anis 23b)

**Total legacy commitments  
received: 106**

**Total dollar amount:  
\$4,430,350**

*\*through February 28, 2022*



LIFE & LEGACY® is a partnership with the Harold Grinspoon Foundation that promotes after-lifetime giving to benefit Jewish synagogues and organizations. Legacy giving ensures that *you* will be remembered by those who directly benefit from your generosity as well as those who will be inspired by your example for future generations.

In 2021, the Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies, in collaboration with the Buffalo Jewish Federation, was selected to join more than 70 other communities across North America in this Jewish legacy giving initiative. To-date, the initiative has secured **more than 30,000** permanently endowed commitments amounting to more than **\$1 Billion**. The four-year LIFE & LEGACY® program provides coaching, training, and resources to ensure that a culture of philanthropy and legacy giving becomes an integral part of the Buffalo Jewish community. Together, the Foundation and Federation are committed to helping secure the future of Jewish Buffalo. Each month, please visit this *LIFE & LEGACY® @ Buffalo* section to learn about the local agencies and synagogues partnering in this effort.

**For more information, please contact Mandy Weiss, LIFE & LEGACY® Coordinator for the Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies at [legacy@jewishphilanthropies.org](mailto:legacy@jewishphilanthropies.org) or 716-463-5065.**

## ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHT

### JCC OF BUFFALO

This month, we are pleased to highlight the Jewish Community Center of Greater Buffalo (JCC), one of the collaborating partner organizations in the LIFE & LEGACY @ Buffalo initiative.

The JCC is the heart of Buffalo's Jewish community. For more than 70 years, Buffalonians, whether new to the community or with long-time roots, have been at home at the Center.

The JCC is the place where Jewish identity is built on Jewish values—loving kindness, life-long education, diversity, justice, respect and repairing the world. These values impact the entire Western New York Community making it a better place to live and work.

The JCC is also place of belonging, where strong relationships are developed, and lifelong friendships are made. People of all backgrounds connect and create enduring memories at the JCC, health is promoted, and the quality of life is enhanced for all ages. And the JCC is a safe and nurturing place for the youngest members to learn, play and grow.

**For any questions about the JCC and how you can leave your legacy with them, please contact Alex Eadie at [aeadie@jccbuffalo.org](mailto:aeadie@jccbuffalo.org).**

The following organizations are partnering in the LIFE & LEGACY® @ Buffalo collaborative effort:

- Buffalo Jewish Federation
- Center for Jewish Life
- Congregation Shir Shalom
- Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies
- Hillel of Buffalo
- Jewish Community Center of Greater Buffalo
- Jewish Discovery Center
- Jewish Family Services of Western New York
- Kadimah Scholars
- Temple Beth Tzedek
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**Learn more about Life & Legacy® by visiting [jewishphilanthropies.org/life-and-legacy](http://jewishphilanthropies.org/life-and-legacy)**

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# Partnerships Lead to Unexpected Opportunities

BY TODD GEISE

**JFS is pleased to report an exciting new JFS opportunity, the Refugee Sponsorship Program. This program is the result of a \$100,000 grant from The Shapiro Foundation, a Massachusetts-based philanthropic organization.**

Many in the Jewish Community are aware that Jewish Family Services (JFS) has been actively welcoming hundreds of Afghan evacuees, as well as refugees from other countries. Activities that we assist with include securing housing, food, and hygiene items; applying for various social service programs, registering for school, helping to secure

work permits and finding work, and so much more.

So, how did this come about? What is the initiative? And how can the community get involved?

This is first a story about partnerships. Recently, Buffalo Jewish Federation CEO/Executive Director Rob Goldberg learned about Shapiro's focus areas in refugee resettlement during a Zoom info session from the Jewish Federation of North America (JFNA). Goldberg then shared information about JFS's work here in Western New York and the Buffalo United for Afghan Evacuee campaign. Subsequently, introductions happened between the Shapiro Foundation and Dr. Molly S. Carr, CEO of JFS. A bit later, and as one can imagine, we were ecstatic to learn about the funding award.

This first part of the story reflects the strength of the partnership built between our local Federation and JFS. "Our JFS does outstanding work for the community and their leadership with other resettlement agencies to quickly and efficiently welcome so many Afghan evacuees in such a brief period is remarkable," Goldberg said.

The Refugee Sponsorship Program is about engaging the community in a structured way. Sponsorships can be a temple congregation or even a group of friends forming a sponsorship group. Based on an accepted model, the sponsorship involves working with one family for a period of six months. During this time, sponsors will help to create a home and work with them through an array of activities tailored to fit each family's specific needs. There will also be a modest fundraising goal to raise \$5,000 for the family through a variety of ways.

"Welcoming newcomers into a community is an extraordinary gift. Doing so in this moment in American history when we can welcome in Afghan allies is even more special," said Shapiro Foundation Director Larry Tobin, adding, "JFS of Western New York's leadership in the refugee resettlement space and by their partnership with the Federation to mobilize the local Jewish community to help welcome newcomers is inspiring. We are confident that the program will launch, and many will readily participate in the initiative."

Grant funds will support staffing to implement the initiative. As such, JFS is in the process of recruiting a refugee sponsorship coordinator who will serve as the liaison between the sponsor groups and the families. The liaison will help to set up the sponsor partnerships with JFS, pair the sponsor group with the family, and help identify and plan for the specific focus needs.

Dr. Carr is enthusiastic about the initiative. "We look forward to being able to share all the stories that will result from this. So often, we are deep in all the details and processes. This level of one-on-one support for the families will be critical for each family to successfully become part of the community. In fact, we are thrilled to announce that Temple Beth Zion (TBZ) is our first sponsor."

TBZ has decided to sponsor two families and is excited about the opportunity. Although the families they will be sponsoring have not yet been determined, they have been busy preparing through gift card collection and fundraising. TBZ President, David Goldberg and past President miriam treger honig are the co-chairs of the initiative and are already working hard.

At JFS, we live the values of welcoming the stranger and building our community. We are grateful for the partnerships that have been forged and continue to be strengthened. And, most importantly, we are grateful for the Jewish Community, for their unwavering support of the work we do.

***Do you have a group that would like to sponsor a refugee family? If so, please reach out to Sierra Johnston, JFS' Manager of Volunteer Services, [sjohnston@jfswny.org](mailto:sjohnston@jfswny.org). She will be able to explain the program in more depth.***

*Todd Geise is Director of Marketing for Jewish Family Services of WNY*



**jfs.**  
jewish family services | wny

**Are you a Jewish Buffalo Agency, Synagogue or Organization interested in sponsoring families and individuals resettling in Buffalo?**

**Contact Sierra Johnston, JFS' Manager of Volunteer Services**  
[sjohnston@jfswny.org](mailto:sjohnston@jfswny.org) | 716-883-1914  
for more information on how you can help.





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# Hadassah Spring Features Virtual Panel Focused on Newcomers to WNY



Sierra Johnston



Meghann E. Perry



Dr. Molly Carr

## Virtual Panel March 16 at 2:00 p.m.

Greater Buffalo Hadassah invites the public to an informative, timely, and provocative panel discussion to be held on Wednesday March 16 at 2:00 p.m. over Zoom.

Three experts from the Jewish Family Services of Western New York (JFS) will be the guest speakers: Dr. Molly S. Carr, Chief Executive Officer, Meghann E. Perry, M.Ed., Director of Community Services and Sierra Johnston, CVA, Manager of Volunteer Services. Founded in 1867 JFS has helped many waves of newcomers, mostly European Jews in its early days,

to make new homes here in Buffalo. Today the agency provides a wide range of social and psychological services in addition to resettlement help to clients from diverse geographic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. Phyllis Steinberg is moderator.

The media provide glimpses of the newcomers from Afghanistan. There is still much to find out about them and learn what they need from us? **To register, contact Marlene Katzel at [mkatzel@me.com](mailto:mkatzel@me.com) or Maxine Seller [maxine.seller@icloud.com](mailto:maxine.seller@icloud.com) before March 12 to get your Zoom link.**

## Other Hadassah happenings:

The Buffalo Chapter of Hadassah is planning for the second annual Shabbat Zachor celebration across the Hadassah region March 11 and 12. The virtual celebration will begin Friday at 4:30 p.m. in Buffalo with a welcoming speech by Louise Borke, the regional president. It will continue with songs and prayers from women from Kehillat Ohr Tzion.

On Monday, April 4 Rabbi Ori Bergman will be doing a virtual cooking demonstration of his favorite Iraqi Passover foods. **For more information on Hadassah's programs or to receive a link so you can attend a program email [mkatzel@me.com](mailto:mkatzel@me.com)**

**Hadassah Book Club** meets monthly and since we've been meeting virtually, snowbirds are attending as well. In March, Tova Reinhorn will lead the discussion on *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. **For more information about book club, email [phyllismksteinberg@gmail.com](mailto:phyllismksteinberg@gmail.com)**

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# TENTH ANNIVERSARY PURIM SPIEL CELEBRATION

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2022 | 7:00PM  
LIVESTREAM VIA BOXCAST, FACEBOOK, AND YOUTUBE. (VIRTUAL ONLY!)

JOIN US AS WE PAY TRIBUTE TO 10 YEARS OF PURIM SPIELS:  
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ZOOM SPIEL 2021



## Temple Beth Tzedek Marches Forward

Following a brief closing of regular minyan and programming due to the Omicron variant, Temple Beth Tzedek (TBT) is gearing up with a range of activities.



Scene from a past TBT Purim Spiel

**PURIM:** Purim is being finalized with plans for both in-person and virtual attendance. Families and those of all ages will celebrate one of the Jewish calendar's most joyous holidays on

Wednesday, March 16 at 6:30 p.m. A pick-up pasta dinner prepared by Luscious by Lori will be available at Federation Apartments from 4-5:30 p.m. and our USYers will be collecting canned

foods for FeedMore WNY. Full details and **RSVP information is at [btzbuffalo.org/purim](http://btzbuffalo.org/purim).**

**SHABBAT SHAFAMILY:** TBT will be hosting a Shabbat ShaFamily with PJ Library Buffalo. Please join us for a special Tot Shabbat service at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, March 12.

**QUEEN VASHTI BANQUET:** Women's Network will be hosting the Queen Vashti's Banquet on Sunday, March 6 at 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. Registrants will receive some delicious Persian recipes and the day will include a celebration of Purim with special guests for an afternoon full of fun, entertainment, and education. **RSVP to [racheland74@outlook.com](mailto:racheland74@outlook.com).**

**KESHER:** The virtual TBT Keshet Inclusion Outstretched Arm Purim Celebration will be on Sunday morning, March 13, 2022 at 10:30 a.m. on Zoom. **[bit.ly/OA\\_PURIM](https://bit.ly/OA_PURIM)**

**BINAH:** The Binah enrichment program will be held on Thursday evenings at 5:00 p.m. and is open to all Community Religious School students.



Children at Tinok

The spring session began in February and is being taught by Zahava Fried, a talented cantorial student and youth educator.

**TINOK TIME:** A wonderful new program for children ages 6 months to 4 and their parents, this free program will be led by Zahava Fried and offers a special Jewish sing-a-long for little ones and their folks at TBT. There will be meetings on March 3 and March 24 from 10 a.m.-noon.

**As always, please visit [btzbuffalo.org](http://btzbuffalo.org) for the latest information.**

## This month at Congregation Beth Abraham

March 6



On **March 6 at 12:30 p.m.**, Congregation Beth Abraham will present Yochi Rappeport, the Executive Director of Women of the Wall, who joins us from Israel via Zoom. Yochi will speak about the activities of Women of the Wall (WOW) and her own life experiences as an Orthodox Jewish woman who is seeking gender equality and religious pluralism. WOW's central mission is to attain social and legal recognition of the right for women to wear prayer shawls, pray, and read from the Torah, collectively and aloud, at the Western Wall. **Those who wish to attend should check the Congregation Beth Abraham website or email [info@congregationbethabraham.net](mailto:info@congregationbethabraham.net) to get the Zoom link.**

March 24

As part of its Centennial year celebration, Congregation Beth Abraham has invited Joseph G. Rosenstein to speak about *Siddur* and *Machzor Eit Ratzon*, the prayer books used by the congregation, for which he provided new translations, commentaries, meditations, and prayers. **The event will take place on March 24 at 7:00 p.m.** Professor Rosenstein

will be appearing via Zoom, but, if it is possible at that time, the community will be able to access the discussion not only on Zoom, but also in Congregation Beth Abraham, where participants will have access to the *siddurim* and *machzorim* and the synagogue's new big screen. The discussion will be moderated by Cantor Irwin Gelman. All are invited to attend. **Consult Congregation Beth Abraham's website for more information.**

March 27

Is it possible for God and science to co-exist – even thrive together? That is the subject of a multimedia program sponsored by Congregation Beth Abraham, "Can Science Bring One Closer to God." Speakers will include Dr. Irwin Gelman (Professor of Oncology/Director of Research Integration, Roswell Park), Dr. Bernard Weinstein (Professor Emeritus, University of Buffalo Department of Physics) and Dr. Gil Wolfe (Professor/Chair of Neurology, Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences). The program, open to the entire community, will be held on Zoom, **Sunday, March 27 at 2:00 p.m. Please register for the Zoom link by contacting Congregation Beth Abraham at [info@congregationbethabraham.net](mailto:info@congregationbethabraham.net) or visiting the website, [congregationbethabraham.net](http://congregationbethabraham.net).**



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# Using Tax-sensible Strategies for Legacy Giving



BY LORNE STEINHART



Lorne Steinhart

The **LIFE & LEGACY® at Buffalo** program promotes and guides after-lifetime giving to build endowments that will sustain numerous Jewish Buffalo organizations and our vibrant Jewish community for the next generation and beyond. The program guides these organizations to secure legacy gifts, steward donors, and integrate legacy giving into the philanthropic culture of our community.

Since the Life & Legacy® launch last July, participating agencies and organizations are working to establish sustainable endowment programs. Interest in the program is robust and many donors are making commitments using tax-sensible strategies including dedication of retirement assets. For many, a qualified retirement account such as an IRA, 401(k), or 403(b) is the largest asset accumulated during their lifetime, yet many realize they do not need all their retirement assets to maintain a comfortable level of living or to pass on to their heirs.

For individuals who intend to leave a legacy gift or donate to a charitable cause, questions naturally arise about whether individuals and couples may donate their retirement assets and the related tax advantages. Typically, retirement assets may be donated in up to three ways:

**Normal Distributions** involve taking taxable distributions (such as selling appreciated stock), paying income tax and contributing the proceeds to charity.

**Qualified Charitable Distributions** involve donors who are at least 70 ½ years of age. They may contribute up to \$100,000 directly from their IRA to a charity and exclude the distribution from their taxable income thereby avoid paying income taxes on the distribution. This process is known as a qualified charitable distribution and is limited to IRA's.

**Donating After-Life** (or upon death) involves substantial income and estate tax advantages for donating retirement

assets to charitable organizations as part of an estate plan.

When a charitable organization is designated as a beneficiary to receive a donated IRA or other retirement assets upon a donor's death, the benefits multiply:

- The donor, donor's heirs and estate are not subject to income taxes on the distribution of the assets.
- The donor's estate includes the value of the assets as part of the donor's gross estate, but the estate receives a tax deduction for the charitable contribution thereby possibly reducing estate taxes.
- Since charitable organizations are tax exempt, the entire amount of the donor's retirement account directly benefits the beneficiary organizations.
- Donors may divide their retirement assets among charitable organizations and the donor's heirs according to desired and predetermined percentages.
- The donor can support a cause that he/she cares about as part of his/her legacy.

**For more information, contact Irv Levy, Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies Executive Director or Lorne Steinhart, Senior Manager of Client Relations for the Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies, at 716.204.1133 or visit our website at [JewishPhilanthropies.org](http://JewishPhilanthropies.org).**

*Lorne Steinhart is Senior Manager of Client Relations for the Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies.*

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# Camp Centerland Registration is Open for Summer 2022!

Registration for the 2022 season of Camp Centerland at the JCC's Irving M. Shuman Camp Grounds is now open! This year's season runs from June 27 through September 2 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each weekday. The JCC's new Camp & Youth Director, Marie Wixner, will be running Camp Centerland this summer. Marie began her career at the JCC of Greater Buffalo in the 1980s. She held positions in aquatics, after-school program, member services, and Camp Centerland in Elma, and the Center staff is delighted to have her return home to the JCC.

Marie has over 25 years of camping experience, including working at 4-H Wyomoco and Girl Scouts Camp Timbercrest. She is an American Camping Association (ACA) Standards Instructor and earned a Master of Science Degree in Camp Administration and Leadership from Touro University Nevada.



New Centerland Director Marie Wixner

We look forward to the experience and all the new ideas that Marie will bring to our youth and camp programs. Look for announcements about a meet and greet soon to welcome Marie back to the Jewish Community Center of Greater Buffalo!

**To register, go to [campcenterland.org](http://campcenterland.org). For more information, call 716-688-2079. You can reach Marie at [mwixner@jccbuffalo.org](mailto:mwixner@jccbuffalo.org).**

## JCC Spotlight Concert Series – Guitar

The Jewish Community Center in partnership with the Hispanic Heritage Council of Western New York and the HHC Guitar Initiative program present: **Spotlight Concert Series – Guitar**. The HHC Guitar Initiative is a program of the Hispanic Heritage Council of WNY, Inc. that aims to bring quality guitar music to the people of Western New York. The JCC is excited to support their mission in offering free concerts to the broader community.

As the series title suggests, all concerts will feature the guitar and spotlight local musicians! Concerts are from 7-8 pm in the Maxine and Robert Seller Theater at the Benderson Family Building, 2640 North Forest Rd.

### Performances:

**Thursday, March 10:**

Murray-Saeb (flute & guitar)

**Thursday, March 17:**

Brendon Grabowski (solo guitar)

**Thursday, March 24:**

Duo Purla (violin & guitar)

**Thursday, March 31:**

Rosa Boemia

(bandolim, guitar, pandeiro)

Proof of vaccination and masks will be required to attend. Concerts are free and open to everyone. Pre-registration is required with a suggested donation. **For more information and to register visit [www.jccbuffalo.org](http://www.jccbuffalo.org).**



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**Thursday, March 24:** Duo Purla (violin & guitar)

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**FREE FOR ALL | registration required**

Register: <https://bit.ly/spotlightconcertseries>



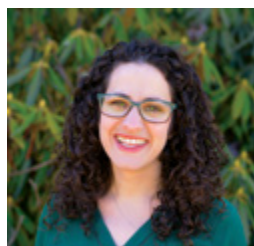
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# The Upside of Upside Down

BY RABBI SARA RICH

A man in a Fred Flintstone costume walking around the plaza at the Kotel, the Western Wall. When I think of the silliness and irony that characterize the upcoming holiday of Purim, I recall this memory. I was studying at a yeshiva in Jerusalem for a semester between graduating college and entering rabbinical school, and this was my first time experiencing Purim in Israel.



Rabbi Sara Rich



Purim at the Kotel: Rabbi Rich in Israel as a student- standing at the far right.

Some friends and I walked to the Kotel for a *megillah* reading (the Book of Esther) and I was not prepared for what I would see! The Kotel is widely considered the holiest site in all of Israel, and strict rules of decorum govern the site. But on Purim, the rules went out the window. People in silly costumes were there to pray and listen to the *megillah*, and kids were running around without their parents in sight.

Jerusalem, while a place to experience spiritual heights, is a place that carries a heaviness. The intensity of conflict there between Israelis and Palestinians, between religious and secular Jews, and between political parties, mixed with the challenges of making a life in a place with such complexity, are all factors that bear down on Jerusalemites. But on Purim, the city feels different. Everyone lets down their hair, forgets the challenges, and just has a good time.

The tradition to act out of character comes from the *megillah* itself. In the story, Haman, advisor to King Ahasverus, is infuriated that Mordechai, a Jew, won't bow to him. He casts lots to determine a day that all the Jews in the kingdom will be destroyed. Queen Esther, who hides her Jewish identity from the king, successfully intervenes so that Haman's plot is reversed, and instead Haman and his sons are killed on the day he had designated for the Jews to be annihilated. This reversal unfolds in the ninth chapter of Esther, which says in the first verse, "And so, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month—that is, the

month of Adar—when the king's command and decree were to be executed, the very day on which the enemies of the Jews had expected to get them in their power, **the opposite happened** (*v'nahafoch hu*), and the Jews got their enemies in their power."

The concept of *v'nahafoch hu*, a reversal of the expected, becomes an important theme in the celebration of the holiday. The synagogue sanctuary, a place of formality, turns into theater, as readers chant the *megillah* in funny voices, while the congregation, in masks and costumes, cheer and boo throughout the reading. We wear masks to appear in new identities, and drunkenness is encouraged. Nothing about this day is normal, and that is the point!

What is the value of doing everything upside down for a day? I would like to suggest two ideas – one about being strong, and one about being vulnerable. First, life can turn upside down unexpectedly at any moment. We have been living this communally for two years, but individually we can all point to moments in our lives when our fortune was reversed in an instant. Many of us live in fear of these moments – that our illusion of safety will disappear, that someone who left in the morning won't come home that night. On Purim, we take control of our destiny. We create the opposite scenario, it doesn't get a chance to happen to us. By purposefully embracing the opposite, we feel a sense of strength and control.

At the same time, by creating a day that departs from the rules, we communally

embrace the absurdity that we typically try to ignore. We open ourselves to the vulnerability that lurks in the shadows each day. As Rabbi Jason Rubenstein, Jewish Chaplain at Yale University teaches, "Every day we put on masks—of self-sufficiency and invulnerability, of comprehension and composure—and only on Purim do we unmask our masks, showing that we know what they've been all along. And we're overcome by joy, realizing that we can, at least for a day, live without our masks, and laugh at our fears—celebrating the holiday's truth that something, or some One, has saved us, can save us, and will save us from the absurdity and horrors of this world."

By accepting our vulnerability, we can better appreciate the miracles in our daily lives. Not only does our fortune have the potential to take a negative turn, but it can go in unexpected positive directions as well. Indeed, we benefit from these blessings in so many ways that we sometimes forget to acknowledge them. This Purim, may we turn our lives upside down, and seek joy in a new perspective.

Rabbi Sara Rich is Director of Hillel of Buffalo.

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Fri Mar 11, 10:30am | Sat Mar 12, 7:30pm  
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### Tchaikovsky & The Mermaid

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JoAnn Falletta, conductor

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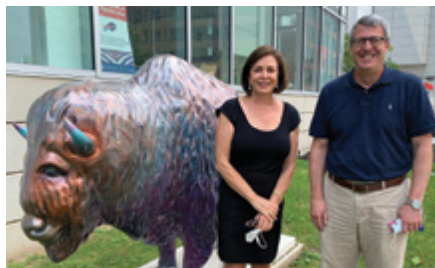
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- 1»** Don't miss the HRC's exhibition *The Girl in the Diary* open through May 27 at the Karpeles Museum on Porter Ave in Buffalo (see page 14). For more info about the exhibit and how to book a guided tour, visit [hrcbuffalo.org/girl-in-the-diary-exhibit](http://hrcbuffalo.org/girl-in-the-diary-exhibit).
- 2»** Have you always wanted to travel to Israel, or can't wait to go back? Join your Buffalo friends and neighbors in the Buffalo Israel Experience (BIE) II taking place this coming October. Read about it on page 10, and reserve your spot NOW at [buffalojewishfederation.org/bie](http://buffalojewishfederation.org/bie). For more information, contact Miriam Abramovich at [miriam@buffalojewishfederation.org](mailto:miriam@buffalojewishfederation.org).
- 3»** Celebrate Purim! Purim begins the evening of March 16 this month. Many synagogues and organizations will be having Purim Spiels via Zoom and some parties may be in person. Look for a few notices in this month's *Journal*, and contact your favorite shul to see what's happening by you! And check out the next two *mitzvot* you can do for Purim below!
- 4»** Purim Mitzvah #1: Platelets are in high demand for cancer patients, because the availability of platelets and whole blood supplies are currently very low, and some cancer patients need platelet infusions all the time (see page 24). You can donate platelets to patients through Roswell Park Cancer Institute's Donor Center this month or any time! Contact the Donor Center at 716-845-8275 or go to [roswellpark.org/donate-blood-roswell-park](http://roswellpark.org/donate-blood-roswell-park)
- 5»** Purim Mitzvah # 2: Hop on a spinning bike downtown at Riverworks and join Team JCC at 11:00 a.m. Saturday, March 12 for the second annual IceCycle fundraiser for Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center (see page 10). The Team JCC session (one of 13 overall) has room for 64 spinners and anyone can take part. Registration is \$25 with a fundraising commitment of \$200. Ride with Team JCC or donate to a team member at [www.IceCycleBuffalo.org](http://www.IceCycleBuffalo.org). Need info? Contact Jim Mahjoubian at [JMahjoubian@jccbuffalo.org](mailto:JMahjoubian@jccbuffalo.org).

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For the January/February issue, **Sheila Bernhard Tucker**, **Cheryl Tobias**, and **Sharon Krebs** correctly identified the sculptural shofar on the wall of Congregation Shir Shalom.

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Shelly Yellen - President

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buffalo@yahoo.com, bvkkosher@gmail.com  
Rabbi Eliezer Marcus - Rabbinic Administrator  
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## Center for Jewish Life

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jewishbuffalo.com  
Rabbi Laizer & Chani Labkovski  
*Downtown:* 1016 Lafayette Avenue  
Buffalo, NY 14209  
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Rabbi Mendy & Chaya Mushka Labkovski

## Chabad House of Buffalo

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Getzville, NY 14068  
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info@congregationhavurah.org  
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President - Joe Gerstel (716-665-2118)  
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# Gretchen Gross - 1946-2021

Gretchen Shaw Gross, philanthropist, educator, civic leader and role model for so many died suddenly on December 18, 2021 in Charleston, South Carolina. Beloved wife of the late Gordon Gross for 39 years. Devoted step-mother of Debra (Dr. Kenneth M. Weiner) Gross-Weiner and Sandra (Wayne) Wolchok. Loving grandmother of Micki, Jordan and Kyle Weiner, Jessica (Nicolas) Dohy and Rebecca Wolchok. Aunt of Yale (Cassandra) Shaw, Charles Gross, and Susan Gross. Great-grandmother of Easton and Emery Dohy. Adored Niece of Dorothy Shaw, Sister of Craig (Rachele) Shaw. Sister-in-Law of Nancy Gross Dispenza.

The following remarks are excerpted from eulogies given at her funeral held privately and streamed at Temple Beth Zion.

## Craig Shaw, brother

As younger brother, I didn't always think of her as the incredible human being she has become. I won't tell how she and her high school friends once emptied a box of laundry detergent into the water of the fountain at Gates Circle. It wasn't until after meeting and marrying Gordy Gross, that her remarkable inner strength and caring for humanity really started to manifest itself. Together, she and Gordy became a super couple for sharing their good fortunes with humanity.

Above all, they always placed family

first—often finding time to travel anywhere to support their grandchildren and nephews, at concerts, performances, graduations. Gret was totally committed to Gordy's children and grandchildren. As Deb puts it, "Gretchen is my super-special mom—my everything."

Gret was just as comfortable when leading board meetings, sprucing up the garden in front of the JCC, planning and preparing family dinners or fundraising events, or being the moving force behind the creation of Camp Centerland. She was 100% accommodating, and really fun to be with.



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Gretchen Gross at the opening of the Gretchen S. Gross Omanut Center at Camp Centerland. Photo by Ellen Goldstein.

We all wonder—why she has been taken from us like this? I think Gordy needed her, and she replied, "Yes Gordy... coming."

## Micki Weiner, granddaughter

Gretchen, or to me: Gram, was not only my grandmother, she was also my close friend and confidante. In the recent years, our relationship deepened beyond any expectations I could have ever dreamed of. This past year, due to the pandemic, the theatre industry went dark. My long-distance boyfriend and I hadn't seen each other in months and we were trying to figure out a way to safely come together. My grandmother opened her house up to us, and we wound up living with her for four months in Kiawah.

Almost every night during that time, our pandemic pod came together for dinner. We'd sit around the table with a drink, some good music—Gram loved asking "Alexa" to play Michael Bublé—and share stories. In our four months together, my grandmother and I saw

dolphins feeding along the river bank at Captain Sam's Spitt—something she hadn't yet seen in all her years in Kiawah.

We celebrated her 76<sup>th</sup> birthday with a giant surprise balloon installation right outside her bedroom door. We watched the first female Vice President get sworn in, while my grandmother and I wore her pearls; had many heart-to-heart talks, and so much more. I often told my grandmother I didn't know how I'd ever repay her for all the generosity she shared in those four months. Her response back was that she didn't know how she'd ever repay me.

That time together we had was special beyond words—for both of us. To quote my grandmother, "death is part of life, but it doesn't have to be the end of something." I cannot pretend that these past few days have been anything but unbearably difficult. Yet I have been constantly supported, uplifted, and loved by all the amazing people in my grandmother's life. And as Rabbi Alex reminded me yesterday, my grandmother's legacy is not



only cemented in our hearts, her legacy is a concrete part of this community. My grandmother, like my grandfather, was larger than life. Mourning a loss that great is next to impossible, but celebrating a life like Gretchen's will always be possible.

**Rob Goldberg,  
CEO of Buffalo Jewish Federation**

When someone combines generosity, insight and bravery to provide something before we know that's what we need, it's a special form of leadership. And, it's a perfect description of Gretchen Gross the leader. In her many volunteer roles, she was generous, insightful and brave.

I spoke with dozens of individuals who worked shoulder to shoulder with Gretchen, and to a person, they underscored these three elements. Each one spoke of Gretchen's enthusiasm, and what I would describe as radical positivity.

Hillel of Buffalo director Rabbi Sara Rich told me that she experienced Gretchen as one of the most alive people that she had ever met, and reminded me how often Gretchen used the word "awesome," and when something was spectacular, that it was "awesome sauce."

Perhaps her most significant leadership passion in Jewish Buffalo was the JCC, and in particular, Camp Centerland. Gretchen's love for children and education was embodied in her devotion to the Center, culminating as Board president, even taking on a third term when asked. Just 18 months ago, the JCC leadership bestowed upon Gretchen the Ralph Kushner Volunteer Service Award, their highest honor. Still, when she was thrust into challenging roles at critical times she bravely embraced the responsibility before her with zeal and that patented gentle fierceness.

In an interview about leaving a legacy recorded shortly before her death, and speaking directly into the camera, proudly wearing her Lion of Judah pin, Gretchen says:

"So often we get caught up in negativity and it pulls us down. But if you have a dream—and I'm a real positive person and you have to do that to make things happen—hopefully the positivity will be contagious and others will go "Hmm, you know, I haven't thought about that..."

May we all honor the brave, insightful and generous Gretchen by following her lead. Let us all be a Gretchen, by practicing radical positivity and working together to make things happen!

**Betsy Abramson,  
JCC Director of Early Childhood**

She was known as the director of one of the best early childhood programs in Buffalo—Audubon—and someone who worked tirelessly as a champion for children. Later I would learn what a huge understatement that was.

Gretchen loved children, I mean really loved children. She was always present—to hug a child, dry a tear, to listen to a special story about their day. She worked tirelessly to make sure children had what they needed and supported each child's developmentally appropriate journey. Everyone mattered. As a teacher at that time, I had a child with very unique needs. Sometimes more than I could handle. Gretchen made sure her bond with this child allowed her to be a successful step-in if and when I needed to step out.

She was a strong advocate for the field of early childhood. Spoke when needed to impact regulations and policy statements, and was always willing to help other centers when needed. She was fiercely protective of all of us at school but more importantly, the field of

Early Childhood Education. We may have lost our champion cheerleader but her lessons will remain with all of us as we take on where she left off.

**Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein,  
Congregation Shir Shalom and  
Community Religious School**

The best two words to describe Gretchen Gross come from the book of Proverbs, and describe the ideal woman. She is called an *Eshet Chayi* or a "Woman Warrior."

Gretchen lived everyday as if it were her first, every day as if it was her last. That is what makes this day all the more painful. When we lose someone like Gretchen we lose an irreplaceable presence in this world.

There was nothing she didn't seem capable of accomplishing. Therefore, when we were looking to start a community religious school and needed chairs for the project. I knew she would be perfect for it. Over the past year, a team of lay and professionals, led by Gretchen and Evie Weinstein met almost every other week to make our current program come to life. Before the end of one meeting, Gretchen and Evie already had the next one planned. It was not easy, but it was very worthwhile and very important. Her stamp is on every smiling child, happy family and happy community at the school this year, just as it is on every child at Camp Centerland, Park School, and dozens of other institutions in our community and beyond.

When a person like Gretchen dies, the whole world is sadder because of it. She was, as Craig said at our family meeting, our Rock. All of our Rocks. May her spirit continue to shine upon us, guiding us, helping us seek what is hard, may it be with us even now as we mourn. May her memory always be for a blessing.

**In Remembrance**

The following individuals in our community passed away during the period from December 20- February 20, 2022\*. May their memories forever be a blessing, and may their loved ones be comforted among the mourners of Zion.

- Edith Block
- Gary Blumberg
- Jennie Broder
- Marvin M. Cohan
- Gary Michael Cohen
- Dr. Kenneth Condrell, Ph. D.
- Harold Cooperman
- Mildred Daniels
- Eric R. DuVall
- Joan Factor
- Herbert Falk
- Sonya Sara Foigelman
- Milton Freudenheim
- Thomas J. Gordon
- Judy Goodyear
- Thomas Gordon
- Sylvia Hershfield
- Herta Kane
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- Sally Rubin
- Sylvia Rosen
- Jack Rosenbaum
- Hyman Scheff
- Robert R. Schlein
- Arthur Sitcov
- Howard Smallen
- Jonathan Snitzer
- Theodora Cowen Speser
- Lynda M. Steinhart
- Rose Weisbrot
- Ray Wolkind



*"If we inadvertently missed printing the listing of your loved one, please write to [ellen@buffalojewishfederation.org](mailto:ellen@buffalojewishfederation.org) and we will include the name next month.*



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## (NOT) THE LAST WORD

# Remembering Peter Simon

*Editor's Note: Peter Simon (1949-2021), a former journalist with The Buffalo News, was a passionate member of Congregation Shir Shalom, as well as one of its past presidents. He was a frequent contributor to the JJWNY and might have written something inspirational about living through the Pandemic for this month's "Not The Last Word," if he were still with us. In tribute to Pete, we are reprinting one of the last pieces he penned for The Journal, which appeared in the summer of 2021, as well as a eulogy by Rabbi Alex Lazarus Klein of Congregation Shir Shalom at Pete's Funeral this past winter. May his memory always be for a blessing.*

## My Hopes and Dreams for Summer 2021

BY PETE SIMON

I'm not asking for the world.

On second thought, that's exactly what I'm doing: striving, hoping and longing to get the world back. My world. The one I knew before anyone heard of Covid-19.

That's when it was safe and comfortable having dinner with friends, enjoying live music with Elaine Ablove, going to a Bisons baseball game with my buddies. visiting my 93-year-old cousin, leading tours at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site or simply -- without fear or hesitation -- greeting a neighbor face-to-face.

We took those things for granted, then had them snatched away. Fear, illness and death, the lethal weapons of an invisible virus, drove the world to its knees.

Yes, there are now new forms of the virus to deal with. A possible new wave of cases is looming, just as our patience and resolve are waning. But this nightmare is coming to an end. That may or may not be the consensus of experts at Johns Hopkins, Harvard or Stanford, but I felt it the moment the

pharmacist at Tops Market placed a needle in my arm. After more than a year of worry, doubt and fear, we have, with seemingly miraculous speed and precision, found a way to respond.

I knew I was getting my world back when my two Williamsville grandchildren began coming over for Sunday breakfast rather than waving to me from the driveway. It's the highlight of my week, and keeps me strong and positive.

Now, ecstatic and grateful, I'm planning to fly to Denver to spend time with my three grandchildren there. I used to visit three or four times a year, but haven't been to Denver since the virus took hold.

So this trip means the most. Sometimes, despite darkness and fear, dreams do come true.

### Who was Peter Simon?

*By Rabbi Alex Lazarus Klein*

He was kind, compassionate, outgoing, quiet, mischievous, witty, reliable, dependable, serious, funny, empathetic, hard-working, community minded, family centered. Pete Simon was all those and more.



Peter Simon

First and foremost, he was - as I told his daughters - someone who believed passionately in bringing people together. He was a connector. Why? Because he loved us and he loved his Buffalo community.

Everything he did was done with the utmost seriousness and respect for the activity, but also with a sense of playfulness and humor.

The first time I met Pete was in the courtyard of the former Kadimah School on a sunny April day right before Passover, when the Jewish community was celebrating an event called *Birchat Hachomah* that occurs only once every 28 years, when the sun is supposed to return to its original place in the sky. Pete was happy to be there. Happy to be reporting. But, unlike other reporters I've met over the years, he was not just there for the story at hand. He wanted to know about the event at a deeper level, which included learning more about me.



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coppenheimer@jewishjournalwny.com



A few years later, as Temple Beth Am and Temple Sinai were merging, we got to know each other on a deeper level. This was hard work, requiring lots of negotiations. Not only did Pete not shy away, he loved it.

That Spring when we said goodbye to Barbara (Pete's late wife), we already had a deep relationship. I knew what type of person he was. I got to know his wonderful children, Becky and Jesse, his grandchildren, and his extended family.

Over the years, we have been in regular contact. He was a key part of our board, and when his time was up on the board, he continued to write articles for us for *The Jewish Journal*. He would write anything we asked him, as long as it

*He was kind, compassionate,  
outgoing, quiet, mischievous,  
witty, reliable, dependable,  
serious, funny, empathetic,  
hard-working, community  
minded, family centered*

wasn't a fluff piece. It had to matter. We talked about our "My Views" from *The Buffalo News*, and we kibbitzed (he was a good kibbitzer).

On my last visit with him at Millard Fillmore Suburban hospital, he was in the room, his eyes with their normal sparkle. Friends of his from *The News* were there beside him. He was holding court. The love was palpable.

Who was Peter Simon? He was a friend. He was my friend.

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