



Federation for Jewish Philanthropy
OF UPPER FAIRFIELD COUNTY



A STATEMENT FROM FJP ON WELCOMING THE STRANGER

The Federation for Jewish Philanthropy of Upper Fairfield County believes that welcoming the stranger is an unbendable Jewish value. As Jews, we have a long history as immigrants and refugees, and our own tragic experience of being turned away by nations, including the United States, who responded with fearful eyes rather than open arms. As an organization, we stand steadfastly with other Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, locally and nationally, who believe we are our best as a community and as a country when we welcome those who seek shelter and freedom, and protect those who seek refuge from persecution. With prudent security precautions always in mind, we hope the United States will continue to be a beacon of light and hope for all those in need.

from our
executive
director

DAVID WEISBERG



from our
board
chair

BONNIE SLYN



Dear Friends,

I write this column from Kibbutz Yizreel, just south of Afula in the northern part of Israel.

I have been spending the week making connections and visiting projects and programs as part of FJP's participation in our Southern New England Jewish Federation consortium's partnership with the Afula-Gilboa region in Israel.

I've been to Israel a dozen or more times, but I can't recall ever having spent time in Afula before. If I did, it was likely brief...and not memorable; and yet in the past 72 hours I have amassed memories, understandings, and friendships that I will not soon forget, as I have had the opportunity to experience the impacts that our Federation campaign dollars have on our extended Jewish family here in the region.

While it's easy to think of Israel as being far away and of our extended Israeli family as facing challenges much different than ours, what has been most striking to me is the

So much to do, so little time.

Our days are filled with responsibilities, work and errands, so who wants to fill their nights with meetings? Even the enticement of a great speaker or an interesting discussion topic is often not enough to send an anticipatory thrill down the spine of a tired, expected attendee.

If you were unable to attend the recent FJP Annual Meeting, then you really did miss out. Bookended by a meaningful D'var Torah by Rabbi Ita Paskind of Congregation Beth El-Norwalk, and a beautiful blessing of our new board members by Rabbi Evan Schultz of Congregation B'nai Israel in Bridgeport, the night was filled with community conversation and dedication.

Highlighting the evening was a deeply moving presentation by our guest speaker, Riva Silverman, VP for External Affairs at HIAS – an organization originally created to assist Jews fleeing pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe in the late 1800s. Given the current environment, her comments and insights about our Jewish history and the plight of refugees couldn't have been more timely.

extent to which the programs I have visited in the Afula-Gilboa region could just as easily be programs in our own community.

Just over the past few days I have visited:

- a residential program for young people from troubled backgrounds
- a therapeutic clowning program in a regional hospital
- a movement to help create greater understanding between neighbors of varying cultures and religion
- a crisis center for victims of sexual assault
- an organization focused on developing Jewish identity for disengaged young adults
- a home for people of all ages living with severe developmental disabilities
- a community center serving a distressed neighborhood
- a budding program for the Afula LGBTQ community

At each of these programs, while different, I have met similarly inspiring leaders, Israeli young and old, natives, Russians, Ethiopians, Arab citizens of Israel, and more who, faced with incredible challenges, have used ingenuity, passion, and determination to make a difference in their region; and who often just need a meaningful infusion of support for us to have an impact that is exponentially greater than our financial support.

When I return home, it is my hope that we can begin developing new partnership structures that go beyond campaign allocations, developing person-to-person and program-to-program relationships between our family here at home and our extended family in Afula-Gilboa to exchange ideas and share experiences regarding our many and amazingly similar challenges, from how we help support increased literacy in our neighborhoods to how we promote greater harmony and tolerance with our neighbors, facilitating conversations and exchanges in fields from social work to medicine.

With a focus on fully realizing the living bridge potential of our partnership, not only can we make an increasingly more meaningful impact, but we can develop the kind of relationships that will make our extended Jewish family in Israel feel a little bit closer to home.

Best Always,
David

Wedged between these incredible speakers, I gave a quick update on FJP's progress this past year in strengthening our community partnerships, with examples like the creation of the cross-synagogue Jewish Early Educators Network (JEEN) and Jewish Educators Council, the expansion of our PJ Library program, and the creation of the FJP Community Outreach & Engagement Taskforce to engage new, younger members in our local Jewish community.

I spoke about the enthusiastic growth of our volunteer base, our financial stability (reflecting our solid annual campaign and continued cost savings), and the impact of our efforts in our sister regions of Afula-Gilboa in Israel and the Volga region in the former Soviet Union.

Finally, I recognized (our no-longer "new" ED) David Weisberg, our fabulous staff and our Israeli Young Emissaries for their ongoing dedication and successful achievements, particularly in a year filled with transitions.

Our goal for 2017 is to build on this strong foundation by increasing our value to our local and global Jewish community.

Our priorities fall into four key buckets:

- 1) Community outreach & engagement (stay tuned for our Visioning efforts, Jewish Food Festival and much more!)
- 2) Resource development via a campaign overhaul, expanded corporate-sponsorship effort and improved allocations process
- 3) Improved communication, including an exciting partnership with the *Connecticut Jewish Ledger*
- 4) Internal capacity-building to maximize the value of our work in the most efficient and effective ways.

So much to do, so little time. Join us on this exciting and important journey, even if that means attending a meeting or two. As tiring as you think it might be, there's really nothing more energizing than sitting around a table with others who share your values and goals, working together to make our world a better place.

As I often like to say, that's the Power of Community.

Hope to see you soon.
Bonnie

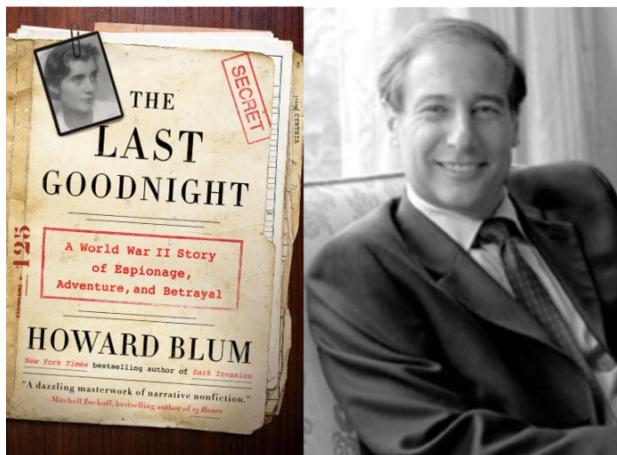


David Weisberg [R] with a member of the therapeutic clowning program in Afula



New and returning FJP board members receive a bracha from Rabbi Evan Shultz.

featured community events



meet *New York Times* bestselling author **Howard Blum**

Thursday, March 2
12 noon—2 PM

Congregation Shir Shalom
46 Peaceable St., Ridgefield

[click for details](#)



Screening & Talkback
Wednesday, March 29, 7 PM

FJP Offices
4200 Park Ave., Suite 300
Bridgeport
Free & open to the community

Co-sponsored by Merkaz Community High School for Judaic Studies and FJP

[more info coming](#)



Honoring community leaders
Amy & Neil Katz
Mindy & Jeff Siegel

MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2017
Westport Country Playhouse

6:45 cocktails & light supper

7:30

tribute to our honorees
and

Jewish Broadway Musicals
Past, Present & Future
with

[\(click for music\)](#)

Jewish Music Superstar
Neshama Carlebach

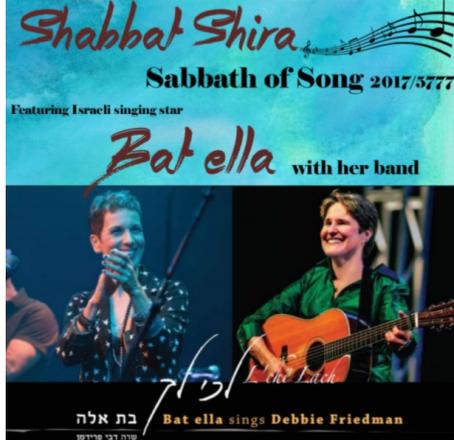
Acclaimed Singer-Songwriter

Jill Sobule

Two-time Tony-Award Nominee

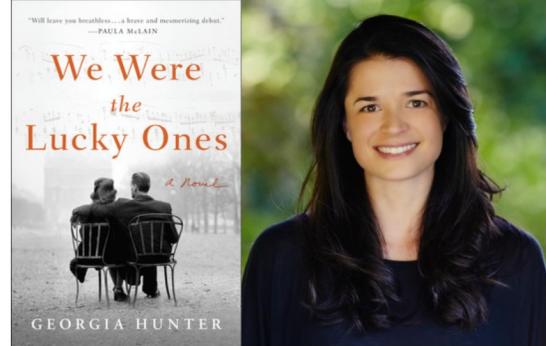
Mary Testa

[click for tickets & journal ad opportunities](#)



Friday, Feb. 10, 6 PM
Congregation B'nai Israel
2710 Park Ave., Bridgeport

[click for details](#)



meet the author
Monday, Feb. 27, 7 PM
Fairfield University Bookstore
1499 Post Road, Fairfield

[click for details](#)



Guest Columnist
Ariella Torv, FJP Intern



Hello! It's nice to meet you via this newsletter. For many of you, I am a new face! My name is Ariella Torv and I was raised in Fairfield County. I have been volunteering with the Federation for the last few weeks and assisting with social-media marketing techniques. It has been so fun working with everyone.

I bet you're wondering why I'm in the newsletter this week. Well, I returned from my Birthright trip to Israel almost a month ago and had such a beautiful experience that I wanted to be more involved with the Jewish communities surrounding me.

I also wanted to return to Israel for an extended period of time so I applied to various Masa programs. I was accepted into a 5-month program called Destination Israel where I'll be living in Tel Aviv, interning at an Israeli company, as well as volunteering throughout the country.

To be able to give back to the Israeli community in such a unique way is a dream come true. However, Masa has a tuition cost which covers air fare, rent & utilities, Ulpan classes, transportation, etc.

I have started fundraising through GoFundMe in an attempt to cover some of the fee. Should you want to read more of my story, please visit [GoFundMe.com/DestinationIsrael](https://www.gofundme.com/DestinationIsrael).

One of my goals when I return is to be able to inspire other young folks into wanting to explore Israel as well as their Jewish heritage. I want to be a voice for those who are unsure of their personal identity and Jewish identity. If you would like any additional information, please feel more than free to [contact me](#).



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