



JEWISH COMMUNITY SERVICES

A nonprofit agency serving the Hawaii Jewish Community

Summer 2021

Our Amazing Program Director is Hard at Work for the Jewish Community!

Jodie E. Gerson, MA, MS, is originally from New York and moved to Hawai'i in 2018. Shortly after moving to the island of Oahu, Jodie was offered the role as Program Director for Jewish Community Services (JCS) in August 2018. "Out of all the jobs I've had, this is by far the most rewarding. I love giving back to the Jewish population; it's like giving back to family."



Jodie E. Gerson

JCS anticipates serving over 100 people this year alone. "Over half of the cases that we serve are senior citizens, three of them being Holocaust survivors residing on three different islands", Jodie stated.

Due to the unique and delicate nature of serving the holocaust survivors, Jodie worked to connect them with the Bluecard program. "Bluecard is a fantastic agency that helps Holocaust survivors with additional resources like financial assistance, in-home care, medical alert buttons, outreach, and education. Through Bluecard, JCS has been able to assist a holocaust survivor in obtaining a medical alert button to help if they need immediate assistance. The Medical alert notifies local authorities. Bluecard works together with JCS to evaluate what additional services are available to the recipients."

Having limited time and in-person capabilities brought about by the pandemic, Jodie is very resourceful at providing services and meeting the variety of needs of our clients. For example, the pandemic created opportunities to connect clients with families through zoom and use online shopping to provide groceries and save time. Occasionally we receive requests that are outside of the scope of what JCS can directly provide, so Jodie will leverage our partnerships within the community to cover the full range of the need.

For example, Jodi works closely with leaders and rabbis at congregations to leverage efforts and split support services to ensure that all needs of each case are taken care of. We receive a lot of calls to assist with home care, so Jodie will connect these clients with trusted home care agencies.

"We also connect clients to congregations, wedding and funeral planning, social events within the community, Kosher foods, and more", Jodie offered. The JCS website (<https://www.JCS-HI.org>) is where you can find information and resources by clicking on the 'Jewish Life in Hawaii' page.

In the scenario that a client's need is not within the breadth of what JCS or our community partners can provide, Jodie works directly with the client to find an alternative solution. For example, transportation is one of our top requests so a client may ask for a vehicle. Although we are unable to purchase a new vehicle for a client, Jodie will offer another solution such as ride assistance, bus passes, a new bicycle, or in one case food cards to save additional monies spent on groceries to go towards a vehicle.

"Many people come to us for help as a last resort. They may be embarrassed or ashamed. We do our best to give them the dignity and respect they deserve and help in a way that doesn't add to their stress. It's hard asking for help, especially in such a small community", Jodie pointed out.

"Jodie, thank you for always being there when I need someone on the other side of the phone"

Marketplace Survey Provides Informative Feedback for JCS

The Community Needs Assessment Survey was a project that was undertaken for Jewish Community Services from January-March 2021, (during pandemic period) with funding from the Jeanette and Harry Weinberg Foundation. The goal was to discover the top Health and Human Services needs of Jews statewide. One of the surprising findings was that the perception of needs is consistent statewide, from urban Honolulu to rural neighbor islands, both in the qualitative and quantitative phases.



For the qualitative phase of the need’s assessment, 34 stakeholders and key informants participated in focus groups and interviews conducted by contractors, Carolann Biederman and Ward Research. For the quantitative phase, an online survey was sent out to statewide Jewish Households and 384 responses were received by Ward Research.

Respondents were asked what they, or someone they knew, needed from the Jewish community within the past 5 years.

Here are the top 7 types of assistance needed by Jewish people in Hawaii:

1. *Opportunities to meet and have social interaction with other Jewish people.*
2. *Transportation to/from grocery stores, medical appointments, and other necessary errands.*
3. *Transportation to/from religious services.*
4. *Dealing with isolation and opportunities for socialization.*
5. *Access to kosher food.*
6. *Housing for aging seniors.*
7. *Food assistance, including cooked meals and foodbank services.*

It was interesting to see that the top need is for more social interaction opportunities with other Jewish people, yet over half of the survey participants are members of a congregation and 29% participate with a congregation. To accommodate this need we are partnering with Jewish meet-up groups that are in the planning stages of upcoming social events. We will continue to add Jewish social events to the *Community Calendar* page on the JCS website.

We were pleased to find that 75% of the respondents were familiar with JCS. Of the one in eight that received assistance from us, 83% were extremely satisfied and an additional 14% were satisfied. We also learned that we need to do a better job of letting people know about the JCS website. To build on this need we are developing a strategy to improve communications with our community partners that will increase the frequency of posting new content to the *Jewish Life in Hawaii* and *Community Calendar* pages on the JCS website. We also plan to implement new online platforms to extend our audience demographic reach.

The Community Needs Assessment Survey findings are only a beginning that leads us to many important conversations on how we can reach, connect, and serve the Jewish community in Hawaii. A Summary of findings will be posted on the JCS website at www.jcs-hi.org.

Client's Comments About JCS Services

“My needs were met immediately, competently, and with understanding and compassion.”

“We needed rent assistance years ago. Everyone was very kind and professional.”

“Caring, quick assistance when needed.”

“It was important to my family and it filled a need.”



Jenna Weissman

New Marketing and Communications Director Joins the JCS Team!

JCS welcomes our new Marketing and Communications Director, Jenna Weissman. Jenna moved to Oahu in early 2017. She graduated from the University of California, Santa Barbara with a Communications degree. During her first few years in Hawaii, Jenna worked with KHON-TV, Honolulu, as a Multi-Platform Account Executive for the local sales and advertising team where she independently developed custom campaign strategies for local businesses using a combination of broadcast and digital platforms. During the pandemic, Jenna transitioned out of corporate and into the non-profit field with a desire to support the smaller organizations that make the biggest difference for our community. For JCS, Jenna will support the distribution and flow of communications between our congregations/partners and our Jewish community members, as well as recommend and implement new campaign strategies that will expand our audience reach across the State.

Shaloha to Rabbi Jennifer Weiner who will join Temple Emanu-El as Interim Rabbi from August 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022. For more information visit <https://www.shaloha.com>.



5 Recipients Receive Scholarship to Attend a Jewish Summer Camp



Five Jewish youth, four from Oahu and one from Big Island, attended a Jewish summer camp in California (2), Washington, Indiana and New York. The five Jewish youth applied and received the Alexander Ben Abraham Singer Scholarship, a scholarship that subsidizes Jewish children to experience a Jewish camp over the summer. The next deadline to apply for this scholarship is April 1, 2022. Applicants must be between the ages of 12 to 18 and/or not yet a high school graduate.

Do You Have a Story for Us?



We would like to add content to the JCS newsletter that would be of interest to our Jewish Community. So, we would like to hear from you. As long as the content would be of general interest to our community we will consider running it in one of our next newsletters. We may suggest where it might also appear such as our JCS web page. Your submission allows us to review and edit the content and the right to include or not include in the newsletter.

What Have We Learned From the New Marketplace Survey & What are We Going To Do With The Information?

The JCS Board of Directors has undertaken the task of analyzing the marketplace survey information and when we have compiled the lessons learned from this document then we are going to set a path to further increase the presence of JCS and how much more we can do to not only have a stronger Jewish community presence, but learn what more we can do as a service organization to hopefully further aid our community.

Over the next couple months, we will be laying out a plan to address all the lessons learned and be sharing that plan with our Jewish community members. We look forward to enhancing the JCS reach and assistance to all those that may be of need of our current and future services.



Amazon Smile is a simple and automatic way for you to support JCS - HAWAII every time you shop. Go to smile.amazon.com, search for 'Jewish Community Services - Honolulu' and then select Jewish Community Services - Honolulu as the charity you wish to support. Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to JCS HAWAII, as your favorite charitable organization.

Leave a Legacy

Please support JCS now and into the future
Remember us in your will
FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL
Mel Hertz at (808) 522-0100

A New Program to Deliver Positive Change to the Jewish Community

Article content provided by The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation



We are honored to share that Jewish Community Services was selected to participate in Nitzavim Hawai'i, a new initiative designed to turn leadership into collective action, delivering positive change within the local Jewish community and Hawaii at large.

Starting this month, Nitzavim Hawai'i will convene 26 leaders from 13 Jewish incorporated nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations throughout Hawai'i – including ours – for a two-year program to strengthen relationships, build organizational and collective capacity, and explore collaboration in service to the community.

The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation is supporting this first-of-its kind Jewish leadership program in Hawaii that is rooted in the interpretations of Nitzavim – a section of the Torah that includes some of the most fundamental principles of the Jewish faith - all of us participating in Nitzavim Hawai'i are dedicated to standing up and standing together to deliver positive change.

Respected community leader and nonprofit consultant Josh Levinson, who has addressed community health and wellbeing issues throughout Hawai'i, will serve as the program lead. Board members Mark Fridovich, a member of Sof Ma'arav and an experienced clinical psychologist and administrator who has lived in Hawai'i for 14 years and Lorraine Gershun, an innovative 30 year resident and member of Aloha Jewish Chapel who has worked in public and private educational institutions, will represent JCS. "There's much more that we can learn and continue to do better by means of communicating and understanding the Jewish community on neighbor islands. We look forward to understanding the needs of the Jewish community on a more personal level," Marc pointed out. "The Nitzavim project is a great opportunity to bring us [JCS] to the next level of collaboration and communication with other Jewish organizations across the state," Lorraine shared.



Mark Fridovich



Lorraine Gershun & Family

As part of the first Nitzavim Hawai'i cohort, Jewish Community Services is committed to helping make every community in Hawai'i – both within Hawai'i's Jewish community and beyond – safe, healthy and just. We will keep you informed as our organization embarks on this journey.



The Harry and Jeanette
Weinberg Foundation



Jewish Community Services

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JEWISH COMMUNITY SERVICES

Our mission is to support and enhance Jewish life in Hawaii through communication, coordination and provision of appropriate social services to those in need.

To learn more about the important work that JCS does in our community or to make a donation online visit

<https://www.jcs-hi.org>

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