

Chaplaincy: Seniors at Home Year in Review

November 1, 2019 - October 31, 2020

Seniors at Home

An initiative of **Federation's Chaplaincy** program that helps home-bound seniors feel connected to their community.

CHAPLAINS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

COVID-19 made it difficult for Chaplains to make in-person visits. During June 2020 to October 2020, Chaplains were able to make some inside and outside in-person visits .



284

visits to seniors

643

calls to seniors

54

unique clients



Chaplains usually speaks with each senior about 2-3 times a month

and



during the first few months of COVID-19, Chaplains spoke with each senior about once a week.

15

Referrals to Seniors at Home



6

GMW CARES Partners



5

Other Agencies



3

Community Members



1

Chaplain Referrals & Other

Visiting was **discontinued with 11 seniors**. In the majority of these cases the senior had **passed away or the health and living situation changed**.

CHAPLAINS GO ABOVE AND BEYOND

Chaplains Bring Holiday Tradition to the Seniors

High Holidays

In preparation for the High Holidays, Federation provided Chaplains with honey sticks and a card from chaplaincy to distribute to clients.



Each Chaplain **upgraded the bags** to make them more special and personal. They included:

- bear shaped bottles of honey.
- Jewish calendars since most Jewish organizations did not send one this year.
- Shana Tova cards with a personal note reflecting briefly on an aspect of their relationship with the client.
- A mahzor for one client who was in deep despair because she was isolated from her family.

The Chaplain dropped the bags at the homes of clients who have not been able to have in-person visits.

"A client was **put on hold** due to a complicated family situation which included having my cell phone blocked. I decided to **drop a holiday bag** at her home as a way of saying goodbye. The client asked me to come and she did not understand why I stopped calling. I explained the situation, as I understood it, and she said she would like to **remain in contact** with me."

-our Chaplain

"It was especially sweet that I was able to **wave and speak from the doorway** into a room where my client is living and has been physically **isolated** and not allowed any kind of visit from me since the pandemic began."

-our Chaplain

CHAPLAINS GO ABOVE AND BEYOND

Chaplains Bring Holiday Tradition to the Seniors



Chocolate gelt for Hanukkah



Purim baskets



Sukkot: our Chaplain brought a few clients a Lulav & Etrog during the week of Sukkot and the week after.

(During COVID-19, the Chaplains were not able to visit clients with a Lulav & Etrog during Sukkot.)

"During **Passover**, one client felt very **isolated and anxious**. I made a **number of calls each week** to help her calm down. My client made me a Passover poster. As I set my table for the Seder, I sent her a picture to show her that I had given her Passover poster a place of honor at my Seder".

-our Chaplain

"One woman **began to cry when she held the Lulav & Etrog and said the bracha**."-our Chaplain

"I took a few clients on a **FaceTime tour of my personal sukkah** which they enjoyed."-our Chaplain

CHAPLAINS GO ABOVE AND BEYOND

Our Chaplains share:

"I could not visit when her facility locked down, instead I called her every week. She is not allowed to leave her room. She **values our weekly calls** and the opportunity to feel heard and cared for, and to talk about Jewish issues as well as what is happening outside her four walls."

"Many clients experienced the loss of extended family members and friends. They were not able to engage in the usual rituals of mourning their own sense of loss, or to offer comfort to adult children and others. My work has involved a **virtual Shiva visit** and the opportunity to reminisce in the weeks following a death."

"A Client who has MS for 30 years and is wheelchair bound, was talking about latkes. She **shared her mother's recipe** which was intriguing to me. When I told her, in the next visit, that I tried her recipe and my family had enjoyed it, she was **so pleased.**"

"One client, who has severe dementia, with the assistance of both her son and the Home Health Aid, was able to have FaceTime calls with me. She **knows me when I sing to her.**"

"I purchased a mask with a **clear plastic panel over my mouth** to be helpful to some of my clients who were reading lips to **understand my speech better.**"

CHAPLAINS GO ABOVE AND BEYOND

Chaplains also support the families:

"While my client was in-patient, his **son was distraught** about not being with his father. I was in **regular contact** with him to comfort him."

"I **spoke regularly** with my **client's daughter**, who has mental illness, until her father got home from in-patient."

"I provided spiritual **bereavement support** to the sibling of a client."

"A client passed away. His **widow was grateful** that I continued to follow up with her as she is isolated and grieving by the shutdown."

What families are saying:



"I understand why my **brother loves you**. Your presence emanated comfort. I am so grateful your found each other."



"She is **grateful** you call her weekly and tells everyone that she is lucky to have "her rabbi" who talks to her every week on the phone."

CHAPLAINS GO ABOVE AND BEYOND

Clients reach out to our Chaplains

"When a client and I were in person during Elul, he sang the most beautiful Avinu Malkeynu for me. He **called me Erev Rosh Hashanah** and was pleased when **I asked him if he would sing it** for me again to help me start my holiday."

"**A client called me**, for the first time ever, during Aseret Yemai Tshuva to **ask my forgiveness** for anything she had done. I believe it means that she finally accepts me as part of her caring community."

"A client called me on a Sunday, **scared and in pain**. She broke her arm but had been sent home, from the ER, without a plan for personal care. **I reached out to the JFS** social worker who contacted the JFS nurse on call."

CHAPLAINS NOURISH MINDS



CHAPLAINS CONSULTS WITH OTHER AGENCIES

-  Regular contact with social workers and nurses at Jewish Family Service Central and Jewish Family Service MetroWest about clients.
-  Developed relationships with Jewish Family Service's Home Health Aides.
-  Notified Jewish Family Service's nurses about clients that need more attention.
-  Shared clients needs, such as additional food supplies and deliveries, to Jewish Family Service's social workers.
-  Reached out to professional staff of a Rehabilitation Facility to help them understand their clients.

"I was visiting a client at HIS Home when he was having some concern about his immediate health. I was able help explain what was happening to the Jewish Family Service's social worker and a nurse on the phone, so they could guide him and avoid an ER trip which the client did not want."-our Chaplain

WHAT SENIORS AT HOME IS ALL ABOUT

Decrease feeling of isolation among home-bound seniors



By making frequent calls and visits to homebound seniors in Greater MetroWest NJ, our Chaplains establish positive relationships with the seniors. The Chaplains serve as a supportive presence, actively listen to the seniors, and provide opportunities for meaningful conversations.

Create and deepen a sense of belonging to a caring Jewish community



When visiting, our Chaplains create a sacred space in which the senior feels safe and cared about. When appropriate, our Chaplains act as a resource about Jewish ritual, tradition, spirituality, and values. Seniors want to deepen their connection to Jewish tradition and spirituality, and engage in life review.

Inform and inspire the community



The Chaplains and Federation colleagues make Greater MetroWest agencies, congregational rabbis and other synagogue staff, as well as members of the community, aware of the service provided by this program in order to encourage as many seniors as possible to take advantage of this resource.

HOW MUCH DOES THIS PROGRAM COST?

About \$35,000 per year

- 2 Chaplains

WHO ARE THE KEY PLAYERS?

Seniors at Home Partners:

GMW Synagogues

Jewish Family Service of Central NJ

Jewish Family Service of MetroWest NJ

GMW CARES and ABLE (departments of Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ)

LOOKING AHEAD

Areas in which Seniors at Home plans further work in the year ahead:

- ★ **Increase number of Chaplains in order to visit more isolated seniors in more places (after COVID-19).**