



Shalom03|25

The Journal of the Reading Jewish Community published by the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks

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Yashek lecture to focus on Holocaust education

By Vicki Haller Graff
Program Director

The community is invited to attend the 2025 Richard J. Yashek Memorial Lecture on Thursday, March 27, at 7 p.m., at the Freedman Gallery at Albright College. Parking is available in the lot at the corner of 13th and Bern streets. The lecture is free and open to the public, including interested teens, college students and adults. A reception will follow.

This year's speaker is Boaz Dvir, the founding director of Penn State's Hammel Family Human Rights Initiative and the Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Education Initiative.

His lecture, titled 80 Years Later: Fulfilling Holocaust Education's Great Promise, examines how and why traditional Holocaust education has failed, what we can do to uproot antisemitism and other forms of hate and how we can strengthen democracy. He discusses a new, innovative way to deliver on Holocaust education's great promise.

Dvir has a history of innovative storytelling and deep examination. A Donald P. Bellisario Career Advancement Professor in Penn State's Journalism Department, Dvir is an award-winning filmmaker and writer. He tells the stories of ordinary people who, under extraordinary circumstances, transform into trailblazers who change the world around them. Our community may remember his film



Boaz Dvir

"Cojot," screened in the Reading Jewish Film Series in November 2019, about a French business consultant who sets out to kill former Nazi officer Klaus Barbie and ends up playing a pivotal role in one of history's most daring hostage-rescue operations.

Dvir's films have been distributed by PBS, *The New York Times*, Hulu, Amazon Prime and other outlets and have received coverage by such media as the Huffington Post, *The Guardian* and *Forbes*. He's written for many publications, including New York's *Newsday*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, the South Florida *Sun-Sentinel*, and *TIME*. Dvir's

critically acclaimed nonfiction book "Saving Israel" (Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), follows the World War II aviators who risked their lives and freedom in 1947-49 to prevent what they viewed as a second Holocaust.

Dvir wrote a syllabus on multimedia journalism ethics for Harvard University's Kennedy School. He taught journalism and documentary filmmaking at the University of Florida. Dvir wrote a chapter for "Homegrown in Florida" (University Press of Florida, 2012), an anthology edited by William McKeen that includes childhood stories by Carl Hiaasen, Zora Neale Hurston and Tom Petty. He served as editor of the *Jacksonville Business Journal* and managing editor of the *South Florida Business Journal*. For several years, he appeared on "Week in Review" and wrote commentaries for WJCT, Jacksonville's NPR/PBS station. Dvir created a documentary short about PALS, which helped the nonprofit that aids troubled teens receive an official nomination for a Nobel Peace. Dvir received a Lilly Endowment grant from the Religion News Service to research spiritual aspects of the Holocaust.

We are thrilled to welcome such a prestigious speaker to our community and thank the Yashek family and Vic and Dena Hammel for their support and commitment to this annual lecture. We hope you will join us at this year's Richard J. Yashek Memorial Lecture.

Reflections on Anne Frank exhibition

By Vicki Haller Graff

On Monday, Feb. 3, with a dusting of snow on the ground, the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks led a bus trip to Anne Frank: The Exhibition at the Center for Jewish History in New York City. We were pleased that in addition to adult community members, several young people and their parents or caregivers were able to join us as well as some of our non-Jewish friends. The exhibit made a powerful impact on each person in attendance.

If you aren't familiar, for the first time in history, the Anne Frank House is presenting a pioneering experience outside of Amsterdam to immerse visitors in a full-scale recreation of the Annex, where Anne Frank, her parents and sister and four other Jewish inhabitants spent two years hiding to evade Nazi capture. In addition, before and after the re-creation of the Annex is an excellent exhibit of life in Germany and Holland

under Nazi occupation and following liberation.

Though I've been to the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, read her diary, and studied history before and after World War II, I was struck by how much more there is to learn and understand. For instance, this exhibit really highlighted the humanity of the Franks and others who lived and died under Nazi rule.

We invited those who joined us on the trip to share their reflections:

- "The Holocaust and its effect on people can be difficult to grasp, because of its enormity. Personalizing it through a single individual, Anne Frank, hurts, but it is helpful." — Cantor Ted Prosnitz
- "It was definitely an exhibit that everyone should visit, if possible. Seeing many of the real artifacts of Anne, her family and friends made their suffering even more authentic." — Sue Farrara

Continued on Page 2



Participants in a Federation trip view the Anne Frank exhibition in New York.

Win or lose, every day should be like today

By Laurie Waxler

As I write this article, our Philadelphia Eagles are headed to the Super Bowl to play against the Kansas City Chiefs. I'm currently wearing my DaVonta Smith (#6) jersey and in my other role as a cardiac rehab nurse, we played the Eagles fight song every hour on the hour throughout the day on Friday and offered some heart-healthy snacks at our mini tailgate. Such a fun day. It's so great to see the energy brought on by our team heading to the big game, by ardent fans and even for those who barely know the game.

Sports brings people of all races, genders and even political parties together, all rooting for the same



team with a singular chant heard throughout eastern PA ...E-A-G-L-E-S ... unless you're the mayor of Philadelphia who had her own way of spelling it. To her credit, she said she never promised perfection, to which the crowd just chuckled and moved on. There is nothing but love and Kelly green in the city of Philadelphia and surrounding areas right now.

You could say our Jewish community has that same bond. You know when you're on vacation and you meet another Jewish family, you immediately have something in common. Whether you're wearing an Eagles jersey or a Star of David necklace, we manage to find our people amongst the crowd.

If only every day was the weekend of the Super Bowl and our team was lucky enough to



play! The energy and positivity is contagious; may it never leave. Let's not forget this feeling, and let's continue to be kind and inclusive and always looking for the positives in life.

Win or lose, thank you to the Philadelphia Eagles for making the season so much fun and for bringing everyone together. We all needed this, it's been a great ride. Go Birds!!

ANNE FRANK

Continued from Page 1

- "The JCC trip was a gift! Our church book club recently read "My Friend, Anne Frank", by Hannah Pick-Goslar, an account of a Holocaust survivor who had a personal relationship with Anne & her family (Hannah's name was mentioned in the exhibit). We appreciate that we were able to join in your trip." — Kathy Joffred

- The exhibit unveils the depth of human compassion and kindness, even in the most dehumanizing conditions. The Franks were assisted by individuals who risked their lives to protect them. This says that kindness and compassion can endure even in the face of extreme adversity, offering hope for a better world. The exhibit, by outlining the history of the family and the environment they lived in, underscored the devastating impact of prejudice, discrimination, and unchecked hatred through the manipulation of politics within a country." Jon Avins

We will continue to plan bus trips through our Federation, to create shared experiences and connections with the wider Jewish community and our history. There are so many resources within driving distance of Reading/Berks, and I hope that, in the future, you can come along for the ride.



Participants in Federation's trip to Anne Frank: The Exhibition in New York.

Development

- Annual Campaign
- Women's Philanthropy
- Maimonides Society
- Your Jewish Legacy
- Chai Circle
- L'Chaim Society
- Book of Life
- Letter of Intent



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The Jewish people, Israel and Purim

By Brian Chartock
CEO

Purim, one of the most joyous holidays, celebrates the survival of the Jewish people against a near-genocidal plot in ancient Shushan (ancient Persia and modern-day Iran), as told in the Megillah (Book of Esther). While Purim is a story of triumph, it also contains deep lessons about resilience, courage, and the complex dynamics of power, identity, and survival — lessons that resonate with us today, as the Jewish people, especially as we witness the ongoing tensions between Israel and Iran.

The Purim story takes place during the reign of King Ahashveros (King Xerxes I of Persia), when a high-ranking official, Haman, plots to murder the Jews across the empire. His hatred for Mordechai, a Jewish man who refuses to bow down to him, leads to a decree that would result in the mass slaughter of Jews; however, through the intervention of Queen Esther, who reveals her true Jewish identity to the king, and her uncle Mordechai, the plot is thwarted, and Haman is the one executed. The Jewish people are saved, and our survival is celebrated each year during Purim.

The Purim story, while centered on a particular historical moment, transcends time and culture, speaking to universal themes of oppression, identity, and justice.

Fast-forward to the present day, and the Middle East continues to remain a complex and volatile region, with tensions between Israel and Iran being particularly significant. Iran, a mostly Shia Muslim country, has long been opposed to Israel's very existence, and the two nations find themselves in a state of deepening rivalry, exacerbated by issues such as Iran's nuclear ambitions, proxy wars, and ideological differences. This conflict is often framed as a struggle between existential forces, where both sides perceive each other as a threat to their survival.

Israel sees Iran as a direct threat to its security, especially given Iran's support for militant groups like Hezbollah and Hamas, which aim to undermine Israeli

sovereignty. Iran, on the other hand, views Israel as an illegitimate state and a symbol of Western imperialism in the region. The geopolitical, religious and ideological dimensions of the conflict remind us of many of the same themes of persecution and survival found in the Purim story.

Just as Haman posed an existential threat to the Jewish people in the Purim story, Iran's rhetoric toward Israel often involves calling for the destruction of the Jewish state. Both situations highlight the fragility of life for the Jewish people in the face of powerful enemies who seek their annihilation. In both contexts, survival is a central concern — whether it is the Jewish people of ancient Shushan or the modern state of Israel.

In the Purim story, Queen Esther's bravery in revealing her Jewish identity to King Ahashveros and her decisive actions save her people. Similarly, in today's context, Israel's leadership plays a crucial role in navigating the complex geopolitical tensions with Iran. Strong leadership, as seen in Esther's time, is essential in moments of crises, providing direction, hope, and the ability to rally people around a common cause.

One of the most significant moments in the Purim story is the fasting and prayer of the Jewish people, which precedes Esther's intervention. This sense of solidarity and communal action is a key lesson for us today, as Israel and the Jewish people continue to face external threats. The importance of unity — whether among Jews globally or in the broader Middle East — is vital in the face of great challenges. In the context of the Israel-Iran conflict today, solidarity with Israel from its allies can be seen as essential in maintaining security and peace.

Purim is a story of dramatic reversal, where the Jewish people go from the point of annihilation to celebrating their victory over their oppressors. Similarly, Israel's history has been marked by dramatic turnarounds, from the early days of statehood when its existence was threatened by surrounding Arab nations, to its current position as a powerful, albeit embattled, state in the Middle East. The Purim story reminds us that even in the darkest moments, the tides can change, and survival is

possible against overwhelming odds.

Esther's success in saving her people was not just due to her courage but also her intelligence and strategic thinking. She knew when to speak, whom to approach and how to turn the tables on her enemies. In the modern Middle East, Israel has often relied on a combination of military strength, intelligence, and diplomacy to navigate threats — especially from Iran. The Purim story highlights the importance of not only fighting for survival but also doing so with wisdom and strategy.

The story of Purim, though ancient, offers lessons that are profoundly relevant in the context of today's political landscape in the Middle East:

Purim teaches us that despite the most severe threats, perseverance and determination can lead to victory. In the face of threats that seeks to delegitimize or destroy Israel, the Jewish people are reminded to stand firm in our identity and our commitment to survival.

Esther's decision to risk her life for her people is a powerful example of moral courage. In modern times, moral clarity and courage are needed in our leaders who must confront and challenge those who wish to threaten us or wipe out entire peoples, just as Esther did in her time.

Just as the Purim story demonstrates, the fate of nations and peoples can change quickly. In today's Middle East, the political landscape is unpredictable.

Nations that were once at odds with Israel, such as some Arab states, have begun to recognize the importance of regional cooperation, as evidenced by the Abraham Accords.

The Jewish people of Shushan were saved because they rallied together and acted in solidarity. Today, Israel continues to rely on international allies who share its interests and values. The power of solidarity — whether through diplomatic alliances or shared values — remains a critical force in countering threats like those posed by Iran.

The Jewish story of Purim is one of courage, faith, and survival in the face of extreme danger. In the context of the current tensions between Israel and Iran, the Purim narrative speaks to the enduring strength of the Jewish people and the ongoing struggle for survival against existential threats. The lessons of unity, leadership, strategy, and moral courage are enduring and offer guidance, not just for Israel, but for all those who seek peace and justice in a region marked by conflict and uncertainty.

As we celebrate Purim, the holiday serves as both a reminder of the power of hope and resilience and a call to action for our leaders and civilians to confront challenges with wisdom, courage, and a commitment to the values of justice and survival.


L'Shalom and happy Purim,
-Brian

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	March 1/1 Adar Terumar (Exodus 25:1-27:19)
	March 8/ 8 Adar Tetzaveh (Exodus 27:20-30:10)
	March 15/15 Adar Ki Tisa (Exodus 30:11-34:35)
	March 22/22 Adar Vayak'hel (Exodus 35:1-38:20)
	March 29/29 Adar Pekudei (Exodus 38:21-40:38)
March 7 5:43 p.m.	
March 14 6:50 p.m.	
March 21 6:57 p.m.	
March 28 7:05 p.m.	

Shalom

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Jewish Federation
of Reading/Berks

Join us for Noontime Knowledge in March

By Vicki Haller Graff
Program Director

Wednesday, March 12: Unleashing Your Inner Opera Fan

In Berks County, we have access to some of the best opera in the world, through Met Opera Live in HD presented at local cinemas. We also have the fantastic Berks Opera Company, which presents live performances locally. But if you are like me, opera may feel intimidating at times: How do you find the story and relevance in so much language, music, and spectacle?

We are lucky to have David Richie, the president of the Berks Opera Company board of directors and chair of education and outreach, present at Noontime Knowledge. Join him on Wednesday, March 12 at noon for a multimedia presentation about watching opera and some highlights of Mozart's "Don Giovanni."

David Richie, a retired lawyer, also has a Masters of Music and pursued a career as an opera singer before taking to the law. He has been an active arts volunteer ever since. He is a founder and president of the Berks Opera Workshop, now Berks Opera Company, and serves as its director of education and outreach.

Don't miss this opportunity to learn more about opera. No singing required.

Tuesday, March 25: Connecting to Israel Through Nature

Nature Israel is the American branch for the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI). Founded in 1953, SPNI is Israel's oldest and largest environmental organization and part of Israel's history, providing nature conservation, environmental advocacy, ecotourism and education, and today also nature-based solutions to climate change.

Rachel Canar, the Executive Director of Nature Israel, will join us on Tuesday, March 25, at noon, for a visually stunning presentation of why Israel is so important ecologically, and its relevance globally. She will describe the many environmental achievements of SPNI for the past 72 years. The presentation will open with the organization's emergency response on October 7th and how it evolved into the Nature Heals program that is

helping hundreds of thousands of Israelis, especially young people. Moreover, this program will teach about the nature and ecology of Israel, and what is being done to protect nature and combat climate change.

Canar became executive director of Nature Israel, the American branch of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI) in 2023. Both American and Israeli, Rachel serves as a bridge to American audiences, sharing the extraordinary work being done in Israel to protect birds and wildlife, develop nature-based solutions to climate change, and share them across borders. A lifelong nature lover and environmentalist, Rachel is a huge fan of SPNI and she has enjoyed countless hikes and camping trips throughout Israel.

Rachel has 30 years of professional nonprofit management experience, including 15 years in Israel. She worked for several Jewish and Israeli nonprofits as well as ran her own consulting firm NGO Catalyst. Rachel holds a BA in Language Studies from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and an MA in Jewish Nonprofit Leadership from Brandeis University.

Rachel seeks to introduce the American Jewish community to SPNI, one of Israel's most beloved organizations. She is excited to share more about the positive impact SPNI has made over 70+ years. Since October 7, SPNI also provides eco-therapy for traumatized and displaced Israelis through its program, Nature Heals. Rachel's presentation will inspire you with the power and beauty of nature in Israel, and its ability to foster resilience and community.

If you are unable to attend Noontime Knowledge due to work or school but are interested in meeting Rachel and learning more about Nature Israel, please reach out to Vicki Graff at vickig@jfreading.org or 610-921-0624.

About Noontime Knowledge

Noontime Knowledge is a free, life-long learning program that fulfills our mission to build our Jewish community through social, cultural, and educational programs. These presentations are offered twice a month on weekdays at noon by the Jewish Federation of Reading to educate and engage our

community on a variety of topics, some of Jewish content, and some not. All are welcome to join. February's programs will be held at the JCC (Jewish Federation office, 1100 Berkshire Blvd., Ste. 125, Wyomissing). There is ample parking, and the building is accessible.

Planning to attend the programs below? Please let us know by emailing info@jfreading.org or calling 610-921-0624.

Would you like to present or recommend a presenter? Please contact Vicki Graff, Program Director, at vickig@jfreading.org or 610-921-0624.

'Last Ships from Hamburg'



"The Last Ships from Hamburg" author Steven Ujifusa signs books for attendees at Noontime Knowledge on Feb. 12

NOONTIME KNOWLEDGE

at the JCC, 1100 Berkshire Blvd., Ste. 125, Wyomissing

Unleashing Your Inner Opera Fan
with David Richie, President of Berks Opera
Wednesday, March 12, 2025, at noon



Join David Richie, President of the board of director of Berks Opera Company, for a multimedia presentation about how to watch opera and Mozart's classic Don Giovanni.

To RSVP call the JCC at 610-921-0624
or email info@jfreading.org

Noontime Knowledge is a free program, held twice monthly, provided by the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks to educate our community on a variety of topics.



Jewish Federation
of Reading/Berks

NOONTIME KNOWLEDGE

at the JCC, 1100 Berkshire Blvd., Ste. 125, Wyomissing

Connecting to Israel Through Nature
presented by Rachel Canar,
the Executive Director of Nature Israel
Tuesday, March 25, 2025, at noon



Rachel Canar, the Executive Director of Nature Israel, provides a visually stunning presentation of why Israel is so important ecologically, and its relevance globally.

To RSVP call the JCC at 610-921-0624
or email info@jfreading.org

Noontime Knowledge is a free program, held twice monthly, provided by the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks to educate our community on a variety of topics.



Jewish Federation
of Reading/Berks



ASPNI
Nature Israel

Join a programming committee— Have a voice in what we do

By Vicki Haller Graff
Program Director

Programs at the JCC and Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks can't happen in a vacuum. If I only developed programs to my exact interests, it would be a combination of Jewish theater, art, books, and snacks. Now, some of you may also enjoy those things, but I know that our communal interests are wide-ranging. I want to develop programs for all of us.

I would personally like to invite you (yes, if you are reading this, I mean you!) to join a Programming Committee. I'm recruiting for three committees:

one with a focus on youth and family programming, one with a focus on adult programming, and one called "Bubbies and Zeydes" which I hope will be a group of Bubbies and Zeydes who can volunteer with PJ Library programming.

Before you tell yourself that you are too busy, let me tell you what I'm looking for: I'd like to meet four to six times per year, probably in the evenings over Zoom (though I prefer in person, Zoom makes it easier for everyone). I'll ask you to bring your ideas and interests to the table: share what kind of programs would make you leave your house and come to the

JCC as well as ideas that you see in other communities (we are all connected to other Jewish communities, and no sense reinventing the wheel for each program). I hope the committee members will weigh in on timing and location of events (I know the balance between daytime and evening/weekend programming needs to be righted), and possibly volunteer at programs as they happen.

You don't need to be an expert in Judaism or event planning. You need an open mind and an interest in bringing people together. My background in theater and improvisation have taught

me to say "yes, and" to ideas — I want to try new things and build on what we are already doing well!

I'm especially interested in hearing and bringing new voices to the Federation, whether you are new to the community or someone who hasn't been particularly engaged. Joining a committee can be a great way to meet others and create positive changes while contributing to programming that makes you excited to attend!

If you are interested in learning more or in joining, please contact me directly: vickig@jfreading.org or 610-921-0624.

Federations aid support for Holocaust survivors and others

Jewish Federations of North America

JFNA officials have announced \$3.3 million in grants from the Center on Aging, Trauma, and Holocaust Survivor Care (Center). The grants are to support Jewish and non-Jewish agencies delivering social services to thousands of Holocaust survivors, diverse older adults with a history of trauma, and their family caregivers.

The announcement coincided with International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which fell on Monday, Jan. 27 — the 80th anniversary of the liberation

of Auschwitz and a time to remember the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust and to recognize that the days of antisemitism are far from over.

"Holocaust survivors are true heroes who survived a form of antisemitism unlike anything ever seen. Now they are enduring a different, but global antisemitic crisis," said Karen Edell Yoskowitz, granddaughter of Holocaust survivors and Director, Partnerships and Grants of the Center. "Many have become re-traumatized, so we must help them in any way that we can.

Thanks to generous philanthropists and our government partners, we can provide care that recognizes this trauma history."

Experts estimate as many as 90% of Americans will experience at least one traumatic event in their lifetime. Acknowledging Jewish Federations' profound impact, the federal government has empowered Federations through funding to be the national resource center on aging and trauma.

Jewish Federations launched this initiative in 2015. Since then, Federations have supported through this program approximately 47,207 Holocaust survivors; 16,346 other older adults with a history of trauma; 23,018 professional caregivers, and 8,390 family caregivers.

The allocations support local human service agencies, Jewish Federations, and national groups that scale our Person-Centered Trauma-Informed approach throughout their networks. Federations are supporting organizations that serve both Jewish and non-Jewish older adults and their family caregivers with a combination of one-year and two-year grants. In addition to direct services, Jewish Federations of North America supports intensive education and training to all grantees.

Federations receiving a total grant amount of \$1.75 million for 2025 include:

- Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta
- Jewish Federation of Broward County

- The Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago
- Jewish Federation of Detroit
- Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles
- Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ
- Greater Miami Jewish Federation
- UJA-Federation of New York

Additionally, the Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies was awarded \$633,000 to address social isolation by connecting older adults to technology, while KAVOD was given a \$1 million grant to provide emergency homeware for Holocaust survivors in need.

To learn more about how Jewish Federations advance care for Holocaust survivors and other older adults, visit www.AgingandTrauma.org.

Federations applaud antisemitism bill

The key to combating the record levels of antisemitism across the nation lies in clearly and accurately defining it.

Jewish Federations are grateful to Rep. Mike Lawler (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ) for introducing the Antisemitism Awareness Act — a bill that offers the U.S. Department of Education concrete examples of antisemitism and a clear distinction of legitimate First Amendment rights and hateful attacks targeting Jewish people.

We can no longer stand by while antisemitism festers and grows. We must send a clear message that hate has no place in our society.


Submission deadline April 12!


Jewish Summer Camp

Scholarship Applications

WWW.READINGJEWISHCOMMUNITY.ORG

 Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks


 PJ Library

 Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks

BOOK SWAP

SUNDAY, MARCH 30
3PM - 4:30PM
AT THE JCC

Families with children ages 0 to 8 are invited to come play, read, and nosh together. Bring your old PJ library books to trade with friends for new-to-you books! RSVP to info@jfreading.org



readingjewishcommunity.org

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Shalom

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 Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks

‘Profiles in Mental Health Courage’

By Sari Incledon

On Jan. 28 at a Noontime Knowledge Literatour Program, best-selling author Stephen Fried presented an enlightening talk about his new book featuring stories about people struggling with mental health illness and addiction.



Fried wrote “Profiles in Mental Health Courage” with former congressman Patrick Kennedy, who sponsored the landmark Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act. In 2011 Kennedy left Congress to devote himself to mental health advocacy, founding the Kennedy Forum — seeking systemic transformation for mental health and substance use prevention, treatment, and care.

Kennedy, son of the late Sen. Ted Kennedy, chose a title that echoes the 1956 Pulitzer Prize winning book by his uncle John F. Kennedy — “Profiles in Courage,” which showcased the biographies of eight U.S. senators who demonstrated exceptional courage in the face of opposition from their constituents and political parties. Kennedy and Fried feature the stories of 12 individuals who bravely share their stories of illness, treatments and struggles with the hope that caregivers, family members, policymakers and the general public better understand these illnesses.

In 2015 Kennedy and Fried joined to write “A Common Struggle: A Personal Journey Through the Past and Future of Mental Illness and Addiction.” The bestseller was the first time Kennedy had publicly disclosed his addiction to prescription painkillers and the true extent of his struggle with bipolar disorder. In their new collaboration, “Profiles in Mental Health Courage,” the authors hope to inspire mental health courage and increase understanding of these complex issues.

In their prologue, the authors share some statistics that highlight just how common it is for individuals and their families to be facing these challenges. I will share just a few that seemed especially relevant. Among Americans 18 and older:



Award-winning medical journalist Stephen Fried delivers a presentation on mental health at the Jewish Federation of Reading on Jan. 28 as part of the Noontime Knowledge program.

- One in four (84 million) had one or more mental disorders
- One in 12 (28 million) had two or more mental disorders
- One in 10 (34 million) had one or more substance use disorders
- One in fifty (6 million) had 2 or more substance use disorders
- 11 million had at least one mental disorder and at least one concurring substance use disorders.
- Only 60.8% of those with any mental disorder received treatment in the past year.
- Only 12.2% of those with any substance use disorder received treatment in the past year.

Clearly these numbers show a very large number of Americans are touched by the challenges posed by brain illnesses.

Kennedy and Fried attribute their interest in exploring this subject to the public’s reaction to gymnast Simone Biles’ withdrawal from Olympic competition in 2021 to preserve her mental health. People wanted to know why she couldn’t “snap out of it.” The authors were motivated to normalize the struggles that those with mental illness and addiction face by finding untold stories from all over our country. The courageous people who agreed to participate in this project were diverse in many ways — age, race, gender, socioeconomic class and diagnoses. Also included in this collection are the stories of two people who lost their struggle. One took his own life, and one had an accidental overdose. Family members told those stories posthumously. Kennedy and Fried hope that telling these stories in a more nuanced and honest way could help people see and appreciate these profiles in courage.

Volunteers work to feed community





Cindy Balchunas assists walk-up pantry recipients at our JFS food pantry on Feb. 5. At right, Sid Lempiner loads cars with cereal and juic

Many thanks to our Food Pantry volunteers who distributed food to over 500 households in February.

Mary Anne Avins
Cindy Balchunas
Sam Flamholz
Sarah Flamholz
Patty Hartman
John Incledon
Pete Jacobson
Sid Lempiner

Annette Peppard
Jenn Reilly
Mike Robinson
Mike Schein
Ellen Schwartz
Russ Shanahan
Oleg Umanov



JewishFamilyService

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- Referral
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Jewish-Black relations in America: A complex history of solidarity and tension

By Margo Levin

The relationship between Jewish and Black communities in the United States has been multifaceted, shaped by both solidarity and tension. Since the time of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at its helm, the nature of this relationship has evolved and has been marked by moments of cooperation and collaboration as well as periods of discord and division. Understanding this dynamic is essential to grasp the broader scope of American social and political movements and their impact on these communities.

In the 1950s and 1960s, when Dr. King and other leaders of the CRM were fighting for racial justice, there was considerable Jewish involvement. Many Jews, particularly from the middle class, saw the fight for Black civil rights as an extension of their own historical struggle against oppression. Jews, whose ancestors had experienced discrimination and pogroms in Eastern Europe, were often at the forefront of the battle for equality, offering both moral and material support to the movement.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965 were landmark pieces of civil rights legislation in the fight for racial equality, and Jewish Americans were active participants in

these victories. Organizations like the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) were staunch supporters of civil rights legislation, and Jewish activists like Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, whose murders in Mississippi in 1964 contributed to congressional passage of the VRA, worked on behalf of voter registration for Black Americans.

Dr. King acknowledged the importance of Jewish support. In fact, Jewish participation was critical to the success of key campaigns such as the 1963 March on Washington, where King delivered his iconic “I Have a Dream” speech. A notable moment in this period took place when Dr. King and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel marched side by side in Selma, Ala., in 1965, symbolizing the unity of the two communities in their common fight for justice.

However, by the 1970s and 1980s, tensions began to emerge, influenced by a variety of social, political, and economic factors. These tensions were exacerbated by incidents that raised difficult questions about the nature of their alliance.

By the 1990s and into the 21st century, relations between Jewish and Black communities had evolved once again. While tensions remained, efforts at reconciliation and cooperation were



Leaders of the Jewish and Black communities have a long history of working together for civil rights.

made. Jewish leaders acknowledged the need for greater understanding of Black issues and concerns. In turn, Black leaders and activists recognized the shared history of discrimination between the two groups, and many worked to build bridges of mutual respect.

One area of focus has been education. Jewish and Black communities have invested time and resources into creating programs aimed at promoting greater understanding and cooperation, especially among younger generations. These efforts have been seen in dialogues between Jewish and Black community organizations, in joint initiatives on issues like criminal justice reform and in efforts to address economic inequality.

Despite moments of discord, many Black and Jewish leaders continue to call for dialogue and mutual understanding. The focus on shared experiences of suffering and the fight for justice has led to initiatives aimed at improving

relations between the two communities. Jewish organizations have become more active in addressing issues of racial inequality, and Black leaders have often reiterated the importance of Jewish support in the fight for civil rights and social justice.

Prejudice and discrimination are a fact of life for Blacks and Jews alike. Working together has always been a way for both communities to not only get to know and appreciate each other but to stand together with dignity in the face of forces that want to put them down.

As MLK eloquently stated: “My people were brought to America in chains. Your people were driven here to escape the chains fashioned for them in Europe. Our unity is born of our common struggle for centuries, not only to rid ourselves of bondage, but to make oppression of any people by others an impossibility.” Those words ring true to this day.

Warming up at Friendship Circle



New Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks Program Director Vicki Graff leads theater warm-ups with Friendship Circle on Jan. 30. Friendship Circle offers fellowship, fun and education along with an optional lunch twice a month.

JFS hospital, outpatient visits

By Carole Robinson and Sari Incledon

Jewish Family Service social workers visit Jewish patients at local hospitals, senior communities, nursing homes and rehab centers.

Our goal in these visits is both to be friendly and supportive at a difficult time, and to provide access to social services that supplement and complement the case managers at these locations.

If you or a loved one is at a local hospital or nursing home and would like

a visit, please call us.

If you or a loved one are treated at a hospital out of our area we are also available for follow-up visits upon discharge.

At times of ill health, stress or crisis, families are often looking for information about home care, transportation services, senior communities, nursing homes and rehabs. This is what we’re here for.

Please call Jewish Family Service social workers for help at 610-921-0624.

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

Mar 6- “Purim Party”
Enjoy hamentashen and celebrate Purim with Vicki Graff, creator of “Spiel on the Roof,” a “Fiddler on the Roof “inspired Purim Spiel.

Mar 20 - “Won’t You Be My Neighbor”
Cultivate kindness with your Friendship Circle “neighbors” on “Won’t You Be My Neighbor Day.” We will be spreading kindness by painting Kindness Rocks.



Friendship Circle is held twice a month on Thursday afternoons at 1:00 p.m at the JCC. An optional lunch is served, followed by an entertaining or educational program or holiday celebration.

Programs are free; optional lunch is \$7. Contact Carole at 610-921-0624 to make lunch reservations.

Promoting kindness, learning and fun at Lakin Preschool

By Wendy Bright & Judy Lefante

Shalom! Lakin Preschool has some new happenings here! Toddler Time began on Jan. 29! There was an overwhelming turnout with new families for this weekly program led by Sheina Missan. The purpose of this program is to provide socialization, cognitive growth, emotional skills and gross-motor development that can last a lifetime. This is a good opportunity for families and children to be introduced to Lakin Preschool and all it has to offer. Thank you to one of our teachers, Gretchen Platt, for revamping the indoor playground. Parents raved about the play space for their children.

Lakin celebrates many themes throughout our Jewish calendar year. Kindness is an ongoing theme throughout the year. We highlighted some of the kind deeds we can do for others on snowflakes displayed on one of our bulletin boards here at Lakin. It serves as a daily reminder of the

little things we can do each day to be kind to one another. In addition, Lakin Preschool is collecting items for shelter animals in our community for our January service project. Our Tzedakah contributions have been amazing each Friday at Shabbat. We are grateful for all of the families who have demonstrated the importance of giving to those in need. Carole Robinson will lead a special program for the children in February.

Please mark your calendars for the Lakin Preschool second annual Art Show on Wednesday April 9. Elyse Horowitz has been working with the children creating outstanding art pieces to be admired by friends and family.

Please reach out to us via email at lakinpreschool@jfreading.org or by phone or text at 610-223-8058. We look forward to meeting new families at our Open House on Wednesday, March 5, from 5:30 to 7 p.m.





Lakin Preschool
Spring Open House

Wednesday, March 5th 2025
5:30pm-7pm

555 Warwick Dr
Wyomissing

For all new families looking to enroll. Take a tour of the preschool and have your questions answered by the directors.

For more information call 610-223-8058 or email lakinpreschool@jfreading.org

RCOS Choir seeking members

By Marj Shearer

Reform Congregation Oheb Shalom

If you enjoy many styles of music RCOS Choir has sung American folk songs, Israeli dance tunes and national anthem, Yiddish melancholy tunes, Broadway musical songs, and even a wonderful piece written for our congregation, Mah Tov, which we have performed at many Rosh Hashanah services.

Research has shown music therapies are effective tools for serious conditions like recovering from brain injuries and

mobility disorders.

We really need a few more members in our choir. Singing in a group can benefit you psychologically, cognitively, and physically. Group singing boosts your self confidence, helps you focus learning songs that lift everyone's spirits. When we learn a new song, we are having a good time, while benefiting our posture, stamina, voice, and breathing.

The choir's ext performance will be in April. Pplease give it a try. Send me an email at libmarj@gmail.com. Cantor Stuart Binder will help us.

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International Holocaust Remembrance Day in Pa.

By Leah Leisawitz

Jan. 27, 2025, was the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. This year Pennsylvania recognized the date as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, a solemn occasion dedicated to remembering the 6 million Jews, along with millions of others, who perished during the Holocaust. In the evening, buildings and landmarks across Pennsylvania were lit up yellow to commemorate the day. I was able to spend the day in Harrisburg and had the opportunity to meet Pennsylvania state representatives who drafted the legislation making International Holocaust Remembrance Day in Pennsylvania a reality.

We started our day off with a briefing of the current situation in Israel, and we were lucky enough to meet with Berks County’s own Sen. Judy Schwank. Soon after we met with Reps. Kristen Marcel, Ben Waxman and Jared Solomon. Each of their commitment to combating antisemitism was inspiring. Rep. Marcel said, “As long as survivors continue to share their stories, we will ensure

that their memories live on, and future generations understand the gravity of these events.” After meeting with Sen. Schwank and the representatives, we were able to attend a session in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives as 3G Philly, a group of grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, was recognized for its role in keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive through their education programs, community events and more. I got to be a part of this meaningful experience with my aunt, president of 3G Philly, and my cousin, mom, and brother.

Our day ended with a tour of the state Capitol. We were able to see the Pennsylvania Senate in progress, the governor’s office, and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

This day was made possible by the participation of several influential people including Sens. Schwank and. Santarsiero, Reps. Marcel, Solomon, Waxman and Sanchez and more. Their efforts served as a powerful reminder of the importance of remembering the atrocities of the Holocaust and honoring the lives lost.



Gabi and Stacey Seltzer and Michele, Adam and Leah Leisawitz at the Pa. Capitol on Holocaust Remembrance Day.

A powerful day in Pennsylvania’s capital

By Cindy Chronister

At 3G Philly, we are more than just a collective — we are grandchildren of Holocaust survivors bound by a shared history and a deep commitment to honor our grandparents’ legacies. Through education, advocacy, and mutual support, we strive every day to keep the memory of their experiences alive and to ensure the pledge of “Never Again” resonates with every generation. This year on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we came together in a multitude of ways that reaffirmed our mission, raised awareness, and commemorated our loved ones.

A Historic Shabbat Dinner at the Governor’s Residence

3G Philly members and their families gathered for an unforgettable Shabbat dinner with Gov. Josh Shapiro, First Lady Lori Shapiro, and several state legislators at the Governor’s Residence in Harrisburg. The evening was deeply meaningful both as a testament to the mission of 3G Philly and to commemorate our families’ stories.

During the cocktail hour, Gov. Shapiro captured our very own Esther Bratt’s testimony, which is available on YouTube and can be used as an educational tool for future generations. Dinner began with Shabbat blessings led by Gov. Shapiro and the first lady. The governor then recognized the important work of the organization, and we presented him with a personalized challah cover.

The power of that night was captured in heartfelt reflections from the 3G community:

“When you come from an immigrant family and you are a minority, you don’t feel like the high stations of government are for you. But lighting Shabbat candles with the first lady and saying Kiddush with the governor, seeing mezuzahs on every doorpost — these moments made me feel like my family’s story was worthy. Like we could be Americans too.”

“Being in the People’s House, saying the Shabbat blessings alongside a survivor and the living legacies of so many survivors, was nothing short of awe-inspiring. It reminded me of the heavy promise I carry as a granddaughter of Holocaust survivors — to ensure that what happened never happens again.”

“What an honor it was to be invited for Shabbat dinner and to share

this experience with families who understand the value of our heritage. We are incredibly fortunate to live in a country that celebrates diversity and all religions. Our grandparents survived unimaginable hardships with the hope that their children would build a brighter future. That hope lives on in us, and we must strive every day to repair the world for our communities and our children.”

“It was an honor to have Shabbat dinner alongside our 3G Philly community and the governor and first lady! The idea that people born out of the ashes of the worst government led genocide could be celebrated at the governor’s residence, a commonwealth-owned home, is a remarkable testament to the enduring legacy of the survivors, our grandparents.”

Event #2 - Legislative

On Jan. 27, the Pennsylvania General Assembly passed a resolution declaring it International Holocaust Remembrance Day. This resolution was sponsored by Sens. Judy Schwank and Steven Santarsiero as well as Reps. Kristin Marcell and Jared Solomon. The resolution reaffirms the commonwealth’s steadfast commitment to Holocaust education and honors the lives lost. In attendance were Esther Bratt’s grandchildren and great-grandchildren: Michele, Adam, and Leah Leisawitz and 3G Philly’s founder and President Stacy Seltzer and her three children, Gabrielle, Avi, and Jordana.

Event #3 - Light It Up Yellow

3G Philly joined groups from 10 other states in lighting up various landmarks and buildings in yellow. Iconic sites such as Philadelphia’s Boathouse Row, Avenue of the Arts, City Hall, Lincoln Financial Field and the Benjamin Franklin Bridge shone brightly alongside Pittsburgh’s PPG Plaza and Gulf Tower. Even the Capitol and Capitol Fountain in Harrisburg joined the radiant tribute, made possible through a collaborative effort with the governor’s office.

Illuminating major landmarks in yellow is far more than just a tribute to the lives lost during the Holocaust. We hope it sparks conversation, education, and an open dialogue. We hope it raises awareness about the Holocaust and the events that led to the atrocities so that history does not repeat itself.

May the yellow glow against the dark Pennsylvania sky serve as a reminder that light triumphs over darkness and that



Top, Brett, Cindy and Alexa Chronister with Gov. Josh Shapiro. Above, Esther Bratt with the governor and other dignitaries at International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

when communities come together it can be a beautiful sight to behold.

Event #4 - Candle Lighting Event at Horwitz-Wasserman Holocaust Memorial Plaza

3G Philly co-hosted an intimate and meaningful candle lighting ceremony at the Horwitz-Wasserman Holocaust Memorial Plaza in Philadelphia on Jan. 27. The event brought together survivors, descendants, community

leaders, and local officials in a collective act of remembrance. Speeches by Associate Deputy Mayor Jessica Shapiro, Rabbi Chana Leslie Glazer and Council Member Rue Landau reminded all in attendance of the significance of memory, resilience, and the unyielding duty to stand against hatred. The yellow glow of the Philadelphia landmark buildings served as a backdrop to this event.

CENTERPIECE

Jewish Community Calendar – March 2025

Upcoming events offered by the Jewish Federation of Reading (listed as JCC, JFS, JFR), Keshet Zion Synagogue (KZ), Reform Congregation Oheb Shalom (RCOS), and Chabad-Lubavitch of Berks (Chabad). To learn more about any event below, read articles throughout the Shalom or see our online calendar at readingjewishcommunity.org/calendar.

Questions? Contact Amanda at 610-921-0624 or info@jfreading.org.

Chabad Eli Lipsker Musical

Monday, Mar. 3, 7pm–9pm

Join Chabad of Reading/Berks for **The Eli Lipsker Musical Tu B'Shvat Evening** with special arrangements presented by Dan Pardo.

JCC Romeo Club

Tuesday Mar. 4, 12pm–2pm

Retired Old Men Eating Out will meet at **Paolo's** (2480 Lancaster Pike, Reading) for conversation and camaraderie. New members always welcome. Meets the first Tuesday of every month.

Lakin Preschool Open House

Wednesday, Mar. 5, 5:30pm–7pm

Join us for our **spring open house** to tour and become familiar with Lakin Preschool. Plus, you will have a chance to have your questions answered by the co-directors. Lakin Preschool is located at RCOS, 555 Warwick Drive, Wyomissing.

JFS Friendship Circle

Thursday, Mar. 6, 1pm–3pm

Enjoy some **hamentaschen and celebrate Purim** with Vicki Graff, writer of "Spiel on the Roof", a "Fiddler on The Roof" inspired Purim Spiel. Optional lunch is \$7 at 1pm, free program at 2pm.

Chabad Pre-Purim Celebration

Sunday, Mar. 9, 7pm–9pm

A women's event to Discover The Queen In You in time for Purim. Come enjoy a delicious **Starbucks style buffet, an inspirational program and makeup & beauty tips** from Amy Garrison.

RCOS Purim Carnival

Sunday, Mar. 9, 11:30am – 1pm

Come celebrate the festive holiday of Purim at the **Purim Carnival** with a costume contest, carnival games, face painting, and more. A hot dog lunch is included with your ticket purchase.

JCC Arts, Culture, Ideas

Monday, Mar. 10, 1:30pm–3pm

Watch **Neil deGrasse Tyson in conversation with 60 Minutes' Lesley Stahl** as they delve into the mysteries of our planet and space. A monthly series hosted by the JCC at The Highlands in Wyomissing.

JCC Noontime Knowledge

Wednesday, Mar. 12, 12pm–1pm

David Richie, President of Berks Opera presents **Unleashing Your Inner Opera Fan**, a multimedia presentation on how to watch opera and the history and plot of Mozart's Don Giovanni.



For more event information visit
www.ReadingJewishCommunity.org/calendar

CENTERPIECE

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Questions? Contact Amanda at 610-921-0624 or info@jfreading.org.

KZ Megillah Reading

Thursday, Mar. 13, Time TBD

Celebrate Purim and come hear the **gantse megilla (the whole megilla)** read in the shortest amount of time.

RCOS Purim Spiel

Thursday, Mar. 13, 7pm-8pm

The **annual musical Purim Spiel** tradition continues with A Spiel on the Roof, inspired by “Fiddler on the Roof.” the spiel is performed by congregants in the sanctuary.

Chabad Purim Party

Friday, Mar. 14, 5:30pm-8pm

Join us for a fun filled night that will include a **Megillah reading**, a delicious meal and some family fun. RSVP required. Sponsored by Dr. Jerry Marcus.

JFS Friendship Circle

Thursday, Mar. 20, 1pm-3pm

Cultivate kindness with your Friendship Circle “neighbors” on “**Won’t You Be My Neighbor Day**” by **painting Kindness Rocks**. Optional lunch is \$7 at 1pm, free program at 2pm.

JCC Noontime Knowledge

Tuesday, Mar. 25, 12pm-1pm

Rachel Canar, the Executive Director of Nature Israel presents **Connecting to Israel Through Nature**, a visually stunning presentation of why Israel is so important ecologically and its relevance globally.

JFR Richard J. Yashek Lecture

Thursday, Mar. 27, 7pm-9pm

Boaz Dvir, the director of Penn State’s Hammel Family Human Rights Initiative will lecture on **Fulfilling Holocaust Education’s Great Promise**. The annual lecture is open to the public and will take place at the Freedman Gallery at Albright College.

JCC PJ Library Book Swap

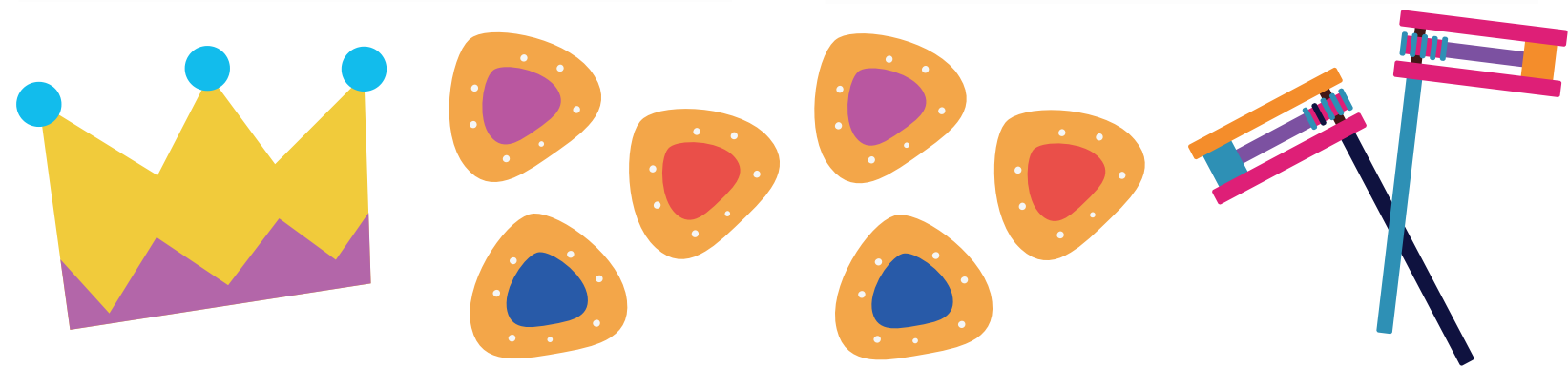
Sunday, Mar. 30, 3pm - 4:30pm

Families with children ages 0 to 8 are invited to **come play, read, and nosh together**. Bring your PJ library books to trade with friends for new-to-you books!

JCC Movie Monday

Monday, Mar. 31, 1pm-3pm

Come watch “**Between the Temples**” at the JCC. A cantor in a crisis of faith finds his world turned upside down when his grade school music teacher re-enters his life as his new adult Bat Mitzvah student.



For more event information visit
www.ReadingJewishCommunity.org/calendar

Enjoy food, fun at RCOS ‘Mediterranean Nights’

Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom
“Mediterranean Nights,” an evening of great food and fun, will be held Saturday, April 5, at 6:30 p.m. The event is open to RCOS members, friends and the entire community.

This revamped version of a popular RCOS spring event features the following:

- Mediterranean cuisine provided by Eric Shocket and his team
- Music with DJ Leif Levering, who hosted our Chanukah Party
- Presentation of the Balis Volunteer Appreciation Award to volunteer extraordinaire Carol Cohn

The entire evening will be held in the RCOS Social Hall. The timeline and activities are as follows:

6:30 p.m. - Cocktails, mocktails, and hors d’oeuvres

7:15 - Speeches by the master of ceremonies and Carol Cohn.

7:30 - dinner buffet

Balis honoree
Carol Cohn was selected for the Balis Award due to her years-long commitment to RCOS and its Sisterhood. A member of the congregation since birth, she is a past president of Sisterhood and has served on the RCOS Board of Trustees. Her leadership facilitated special events such as auction fundraisers and Sisterhood dinner-dances. For many years she assumed the responsibilities for the Tree of Life established by her parents’ legacy and served on the Liefte-Fein Scholarship Committee, partially named for her parents.

Though her leadership roles have decreased over time, she has never diminished her commitment to RCOS,



Carol Cohn

volunteering whenever and wherever she is needed. She continues to be a familiar face at the annual Jewish

Food and Cultural Festival, and the cake-baking weekends leading up to it. Whether she is serving as a captain or a soldier, Carol promotes a warm and welcoming atmosphere that encourages others to volunteer. She personifies the spirit that the Balis Award seeks to recognize.

Reservation details
Thanks to the donors who support this fun and festive annual event, helping make attendance affordable, the ticket price this year is \$40 per person. If you need financial assistance to attend, please contact Rabbi Brian Michelson.

The deadline to RSVP is Friday, March 21, at www.ohebsholom.org or by check made out to and mailed to RCOS, 555 Warwick Drive, Wyomissing, PA 19610.

Israeli wine makes Top 100 list in major magazine

Israel21c.org
Wine Spectator, an eminent American publication focused on the consumption and review of the grape’s finest applications, has selected an Israeli wine for inclusion on its Top 100 Wines of 2024 list.

The wine, White Label Judean Hills 2021, is a product of Flam, an Israeli winery located in the Judean Hills near Jerusalem.

The magazine praised Flam’s White Label for its “full-throated core of red currant, blackberry, dried flower and dusty earth flavors.”

“Shows a spine of graphite that brings focus and drive to the round, lush palate,” the review reads. “Delivers details of black licorice, grilled apple wood, anise and smoke that play out on the finish, framed by fine-grained tannins.”

Flam’s White Label comes in at number 95 on *Wine Spectator’s* Top 100.

At \$69 per bottle, the wine certainly isn’t the kind you’d dump into a chili base, but it would certainly make for a lovely addition to a nice meal with friends and family.

In 2023, the wine market in Israel was valued at \$1.6 million. It is projected to reach an estimated value of \$2.5 million by 2093.

“It’s thrilling to see your name next to the big names of wineries worldwide that I’ve always admired,” Gilad Flam, one of the winery’s owners, told Ynet.

“As a wine enthusiast, I’m a subscriber to this magazine and now I’m on the list of the world’s best wines. I used to follow these lists and dream of tasting some of the wines on them my whole life,” he said.

“But the truly remarkable thing is that these lists always include wines from Burgundy, Piedmont and Napa Valley — major wine regions that the entire world looks to. ... It’s not a given to see



an Israeli wine on this list.”

The winery released a statement explaining that “White Label 2021 embodies the winemaking philosophy of winemaker Golan Flam, which emphasizes finesse and precision while honoring the fruit and terroir. Its clean and minimalist label allows the wine to speak for itself, with its quality achieved

through uncompromising dedication to excellence at every stage of the creation process.”

Flam Winery joined the boutique winemaking game in 1998, operating as an Italian-style family estate. During the weekdays and on Fridays, the winery is open for tastings, training and professional wine workshops.

Mediterranean Nights

Join your friends at RCOS for an evening of music, fun, and great Mediterranean cuisine!

SATURDAY, APRIL 5
6:30 PM

Cocktails, Dinner, Music
& Balis Volunteer Appreciation Award
Presentation to Carol Cohn

\$40 per person

Smart Casual Attire

RSVP by March 21 by visiting www.ohebsholom.org or mail your check to Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom
555 Warwick Drive, Wyomissing, PA 19610

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Fun and learning continue at Chabad



Above, Chabad Hebrew School held a bake sale to enhance their study unit on Tzedakah (charity). The students were involved from A to Z. From baking to packaging and then to setting up and selling, and keeping track of the money. The money raised will go to California to help people who lost everything..

Center, Cteenjrs Tu B'Shvat edition: Students made wood burning boards and then filled them with fruits and goodies.

Right, CHS Tu B'Shvat Havdalah. Students braided their own Havdalah candles and assembled spice packets, creating a Havdalah kit.



Group seeks to increase educational travel to Israel

Jewish Federations of North America

In their first-ever convening in Israel, members of the Israel Educational Travel Alliance’s (IETA) set a goal of increasing the number or participants in educational Israel travel in 2025 by over 50%.

“At a time when Israel is facing unprecedented challenges, the commitment to bringing tens of thousands of young Jewish leaders to experience Israel firsthand is more critical than ever,”

said Jewish Federations of North America President and CEO Eric D. Fingerhut. “The Jewish Federations of North America are proud to support programs that we know strengthen the bond between North American Jewry and Israel, instill a deep sense of shared responsibility, and empower young people to stand by Israel as ambassadors of truth and resilience.”

IETA is a consortium of over 100 Israel educational travel organizations, programs,



and philanthropies housed at Jewish Federations of North America, and includes groups such as Birthright Israel, RootOne, Masa, and Passages. These programs are critical to Israel-Diaspora relations, and the decisions made at this convening could have significant implications for those ties going forward.

The group kicked off its first-ever convening in Israel Monday in Jerusalem to discuss the future of educational Israel

travel programs in the aftermath of October 7th and the field’s significant impact on Israel’s economic recovery.

The educational travel sector played a pivotal role in Israel’s economy throughout the war, growing from a 5% share of tourism before October 7th to a 15% share during the war. At the convening, the groups laid out a goal of increasing participation to 53,700 participants, up from 35,500 in 2024.

Baseball Mitzvah Project



Uriah's project will be working with Baseballtown Charities, which was established by the Reading Fightin Phils in 2002 to keep baseball alive in Reading, PA so youngsters can benefit from the many life lessons the game teaches. Uriah will be collecting equipment, volunteering at Dream League games, and raising funds to support this worthy cause.

Who will this benefit?
Children in and around Berks County!

What can you donate?
Gently used baseball and softball equipment: fielding gloves, batting gloves, bats, helmets, catching equipment, pants, belts, equipment bags, monetary donations and time with the Dream League!

How to donate?
Want to help? Please contact: Elizabeth Merin @ lizziemerin@gmail.com

TRADITION!

WYOMISSING AREA HIGH SCHOOL DRAMA CLUB

PRESENTS


FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

April 4, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.
April 5, 2025 at 1:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m.

Wyomissing Area High School Auditorium - 630 Evans Ave. Wyomissing, PA

Tickets on Sale March 1
WyoDrama.Eventbrite.com

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Living in Israel brings constant inspiration

By Hudi Lipsker

As I continue to be privileged to live in Israel, I'm continually inspired by the resilience of our land and our people. Israel, a place where history is written into every stone, every street, every soul. A land where miracles happen — not just in the past, but every single day.

Chanukah this year was an unforgettable experience. Walking through the streets of Jerusalem, I was surrounded by hundreds of flickering lights, their glow reflecting off the ancient Jerusalem stone. And in those moments, I couldn't help but think of the way these very walls have witnessed countless struggles, triumphs, and miracles.

The lights that shine this year are not just commemorating a past victory; they are alive with the energy of today. The very ground beneath my feet was the same ground where the Maccabees first fought bravely for our right to live freely. The Kotel, where I prayed and thanked G-d for the miracles of today, was once part of the Beit HaMikdash, our Holy Temple, where G-d preserved a small jug of oil for the Jewish people, ensuring our Chanukah miracle. The energy in the air was alive, fun, and exciting — an undeniable sense of joy and hope.

But what struck me most was how the people of Israel today embody the spirit of the Maccabees. Just as the Maccabees fought for the survival of our people and our way of life, so too do the people of Israel fight today.

From the brave soldiers on the frontlines in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria, to the valiant wives who stay behind, raising their children alone, while their heroic husbands are away at war, the resilience here is palpable.

It's in the children whose parents are fighting in a war they can barely

understand, yet who stand strong and proud every day. It's in the yeshiva students and people around the world who study Torah or do a good deed in the merit of the soldiers' safe return and the safety of Israel.

It's in the everyday civilians who support one another — whether through small acts of kindness or by standing together in times of crisis. Each of them is a hero in their own way, and together, we fight for what's right, protecting our land and our people, even when it feels like the world turns a blind eye. Just like the Maccabees of old.

And just like the Maccabees we look forward to and hope for a better tomorrow for our children; and just like the Maccabees we place all our trust in G-d's ability to protect and save us. We are a nation who believes in miracles big and small just as the Maccabees of old did.

The miracle of a missile not hitting its target. The miracle of people remaining calm during emergencies. The miracle of our hostages returning home. And the miracle of a nation with different opinions coming together in unity.

One evening, while waiting at a train station, an announcement suddenly urged us to move to a safe space. A suspicious backpack had been left behind, and the bomb squad was on their way to investigate. As the situation unfolded, what struck me was the calm in the air. People were checking in on each other, offering reassuring smiles, sharing their experiences. It was a high-pressure moment, but the people stood together. And once the threat was cleared, we resumed our day, but with a renewed sense of connection and safety. We left that moment with something deeper — a bond and a shared trust in one another, in our collective strength.

The recent return of hostages



also highlighted the miracles that are unfolding in real time. Whether one agreed with the terms of the deal or not, there were tears of joy when we saw our brothers and sisters stepping onto Israeli soil once again. These individuals are living miracles—heroes who survived unimaginable horrors and came home, stronger than ever.

Among these heroes is Agam Berger, a 19-year-old girl who was violently taken from her army base, still in her pajamas, and dragged into Gaza. She was paraded before terrorists, beaten, and humiliated. Yet, she refused to give in. When the terrorists demanded that she cook for them, she steadfastly refused, saying that her values would not allow her to break Shabbat, even in captivity. Her strength and courage in the face of such brutality were nothing short of miraculous. Throughout her captivity, she felt the presence of G-d, a strength she drew upon, refusing to compromise her faith, just as G-d never abandoned her.

Agam's story is just one of many. The hostages who came home, those who we expect and pray to see soon, and the men and women who fought bravely for their freedom, are modern-day Maccabees. They embody the same courage, the same resolve to fight for what's right, and the same trust in G-d that has defined our people for generations. And their resilience, like that of the people of Israel, gives us all hope for the future.

So, as I continue my time in Israel, I am reminded daily of the strength, hope, and faith that define this place. A place where miracles happen, where we stand together as a nation, and where we continue to fight for our right to live freely, to protect our land, and to believe in the promise of G-d to Abraham thousands of years ago, of a brighter tomorrow. Just like the Maccabees of old, we rise, we fight, and we believe. May we merit to witness the safe and healthy return of all the hostages soon, and the continued safety of the land and people of Israel.

Kesher Zion's March Events

6		Minyan Thursday March 6 7:00PM
8		Shabbat March 8 Birthday/Anniversary Shabbat 9:30AM
13		Purim Thursday March 13 Time to be announced
15		Jr. Congregation Shabbat March 15 10:30AM
20		Minyan Thursday March 20 7:00PM
21		Friday Services March 21 6:30PM

Movie Monday at the JCC

March 31, 2025, 1pm

Between the Temples

starring Jason Schwartzman
and Carol Kane

a comedy about what it means
to be a real mensch

A forty-something cantor losing his voice and possibly his faith finds his world turned upside down when his grade school music teacher re-enters his life as an adult bat mitzvah student.

Grab a seat for a Jewish themed movie each month at the JCC (1100 Berkshire Blvd., Ste. 125, Wyomissing). It is usually held on the 4th Monday of the month, and the popcorn and the movie are both free!

Purim is about much more than its fun celebration

By Rabbi Brian Michelson
Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom

What is the central message of Purim? We ask this question as we read of one of history's first documented cases of antisemitism in the ancient Book of Esther. Indeed, this remarkable text doesn't mention God directly, yet it powerfully demonstrates human courage in the face of oppression.

Of course, we are meant to celebrate, be silly and hear the story of the Megillah. The meaning of Purim extends beyond its joyous celebrations and colorful costumes. The story resonates deeply in today's world as we witness a rise in hate crimes worldwide. Through its four sacred commandments — hearing the Megillah, sending food gifts, giving



to the poor and enjoying a festive meal — we learn timeless lessons about community strength and standing up against oppression.

The story of Esther, or Hadassah if you prefer her Hebrew name, offers insights into effective leadership during a crisis. She transforms from a humble Jewish woman to an influential queen and demonstrates key leadership principles that resonate today.

Esther's leadership emerged in her ability to exercise influence without formal authority. Furthermore, her approach centered on humility, strategic thinking, and earning favor through careful listening and wise counsel. Her leadership style was compelling as she navigated complex political dynamics while maintaining her values. Moreover, Esther highlights the importance of situational awareness and adaptability. She showed decisiveness when faced with life-threatening challenges while

demonstrating the wisdom to wait for the right moment to act. She carefully crafted her messages, understood her audience, and chose the appropriate timing for critical conversations. Nevertheless, her greatest strength is her ability to build trust through consistent ethical behavior and genuine concern for others' welfare.

This ancient narrative teaches us that effective leadership transcends formal authority. Esther's example teaches us that influence can create lasting positive change when coupled

with integrity and strategic thinking. Rabbi Brad Greenstein of Moishe House notes that young Jews are drawn to Purim's women's rights and social justice themes. If we look, we find a timeless story.

Esther's leadership legacy resonates today, teaching us that courage and strategic thinking transcend time. Purim is a powerful reminder of community resiliency. The story that began in ancient Persia continues to have meaning for our modern world.

Chag Purim Samayach!

ה"ב

Pre-Purim Women's Evening
DISCOVER THE QUEEN IN YOU



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Style Buffet

 Inspirational
Program

 Makeup & Beauty
Tips by Amy
Garrison

 Sunday, March 9


 7 PM


 Chabad of Berks



RSVP ONLINE
www.ChabadofBerks.org/RSVP

Spiel
on the Roof






Thursday, March 13, 2025, 7:00 p.m.
Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom
555 Warwick Drive, Wyomissing

A spiel on the roof. Sounds crazy, no? But here, in our little village of Wyomissing, you might say every one of us is a fiddler on the roof trying to scratch out a pleasant, simple spiel without breaking his neck.

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A sweet event at RCOS



Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom Sisterhood held a cookie decorating event for the community on Feb. 2 in the RCOS Social Hall.



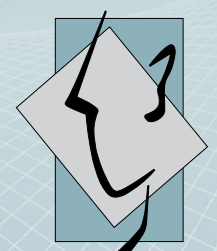
23: The Aftermath of Gun Violence

March 28-29 at 7pm
Alvernia University, Francis Hall

An event inspired by local stories of gun violence, grief, and hope, RIZE Program, JCWK Dance Lab and Berks4Peace join forces for an evening of contemporary dance, new music, visual art, and story telling.

www.jcwkdancelab.org/23theaftermathofgunviolence

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Majority of U.S. Jews changing behavior due to fear

American Jewish Committee

For the first time in the history of American Jewish Committee’s State of Antisemitism in America Report, a majority (56%) of American Jews report changing their behavior out of fear of antisemitism. The 2024 report, released in February, is the first analysis of American Jews and U.S. adults to look at the impact of antisemitism during the full year following Oct. 7, 2023, and the Hamas-launched war against Israel.

With roughly three-quarters (77%) of American Jews saying they feel less safe as a Jewish person in the U.S. because of the Oct. 7 attacks, it is no surprise that nearly six in 10 (56%) American Jews report changing their behavior out of concern for their safety. This is a jump from 38% in 2022 to 46% in 2023 to 56% in 2024.

“Antisemitism has reached a tipping point in America, threatening the freedoms of American Jews and casting an ominous shadow across our society,” AJC CEO Ted Deutch said. “This is an all-hands-on-deck moment for leaders across the U.S. We must act now to protect Jews —, and America — from rising antisemitism.”

Safety and Security

The vast majority (90%) of American Jews say antisemitism has increased either a lot (61%) or somewhat (29%) since the Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, and one-third (33%) of American Jews say they have been the personal target of antisemitism — in person or virtually — at least once over the last year:

- 23% report being the target of an antisemitic remark in person
- 17% say they were the target of an antisemitism online
- 6% say they were the victim of antisemitic vandalism to, or messaging (such as flyers or pamphlets) left on their personal property

- 2% say they were the target of an antisemitic attack in person, during which the attacker physically touched them
- 10% report being targeted by any other kind of antisemitism, not already asked about

Nearly three-quarters of Jewish adults (73%) say Jews in the U.S. are less secure than a year ago. By comparison, 63% said the status of Jews was less secure in 2023, up from 41% who said the same in 2022, and 31% who said the same in 2021.

For the first time in the six-year history of the survey, a majority (60%) of Jewish respondents say antisemitism has increased a lot in the past five years, up from 50% in 2023.

A quarter (25%) of Jewish adults report that a local business has been targeted with antisemitism and one-third (30%) say their Jewish institutions have been the target of antisemitism in the past five years, an increase from the previous years in which roughly a quarter said the same.

The 2024 survey asked Jewish adults whether they have considered, in the past five years, leaving the United States for another country due to antisemitism: 13% say they have considered it. In AJC’s 2024 Survey of American Jewish Opinion, released in June 2024, Jewish adults were asked, “Have you considered leaving the United States due to antisemitism to move to another country in the past five years prior to Oct. 7?” Only 6% of respondents said yes.

Changing Behaviors

For the first time in the six-year history of the survey of American Jews, a majority (56%) say they changed their behavior over the last year because of fears of antisemitism.

- 40% say they have avoided publicly wearing or displaying things that might identify them as a Jew, up

from 26% in 2023

- 37% say they have avoided posting content online that would identify them as a Jew or reveal their views on Jewish issues, compared with 30% in 2023
- 31% say they have avoided certain places, events, or situations out of concern for their safety or comfort as a Jew, up from 26% in 2023

More than four in 10 (43%) American Jews say they are very (7%) or somewhat (37%) worried that they will be a victim of antisemitism in the next year. This fear increases when asked about loved ones, with roughly half of American Jews (52%) saying they are very (14%) or somewhat (39%) worried that a family member, such as parents, a spouse or partner, or children will be a victim of antisemitism.

The data also point to an important uptick in institutional affiliation. The 2024 survey found that 31% of American Jews say they are not affiliated with any Jewish institutions, down 7 percentage points from 2023 (38%). This suggests American Jews may be seeking community and spaces in which they can express their full identities.

Israel

At a time when the Jewish community’s historical connection to Israel is being called into question, 81% of American Jews say that caring about Israel is very (51%) or somewhat (30%) important to what being Jewish means to them. U.S. adults recognize and understand the connection between Jewish identity and Israel, with 85% saying the statement “Israel has no right to exist” is antisemitic. This is in line with American Jews, with 85% saying the same.

While 23% of U.S. adults believe it is either completely (8%) or somewhat (15%) acceptable to protest against Israel by boycotting American Jewish individuals or events, a large majority of the public is showing an awareness of the link between antisemitism and demonization of Israel. Nearly eight in 10 (77%) U.S. adults say it is unacceptable (completely (52%) or


somewhat (25%)) to protest against Israel by boycotting American Jewish individuals or events. When asked which places are acceptable to conduct protests against the Israeli government, fewer than one in 10 U.S. adults say it is acceptable to protest at an Israeli business (6%), a Jewish business (5%), a synagogue (5%), or a Jewish day school (4%).

Young Americans


AJC’s 2024 survey found younger American Jews are more likely to have experienced antisemitism than their older counterparts. In the past 12 months, four in 10 (41%) young American Jews (ages 18-29) say they have been the target of antisemitism at least once, compared with 31% of U.S. Jews who are 30 and older. Critically, their peers — U.S. adults of the same ages — are less likely to know what antisemitism is. About four in 10 (41%) young Americans are unfamiliar with the term “antisemitism.”

More than one-third (35%) of Jewish college students report experiencing antisemitism at least once during their time on campus with roughly half (48%) saying that they have felt uncomfortable or unsafe at a campus event because they are Jewish; avoided wearing, carrying or displaying things that could identify them as Jewish; or avoided expressing views on Israel on campus or with classmates because of fears of antisemitism.

One-third (33%) of current and recent students say that student life and/or student activities promoted antisemitism at least once; 32% say the same about faculty on campus, and 24% share that sentiment regarding class curricula. Jewish students were asked whether they had noticed any anti-Israel protests or demonstrations or pro-Palestinian encampments. Half say they noticed such protests or demonstrations, and 42% noticed pro-Palestinian encampments. For those who had noticed demonstrations, 51% said they made them feel very (25%) or somewhat (26%) unsafe.




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




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1. “Fauda”

2. “Soda”

3. “A Body That Works”

4. “Gladiator 2”

5. “Hit & Run”

6. "Operation Finale"

7. “The Crowded Room”

Raz, bringing his “Fauda energy” to the small screen yet again, plays Yitzhak Safdie, Danny’s mysterious landlord who is trying to protect the young man. Despite enjoying impressive reviews from the audience, critics lamented the “frustrating” plotline.

More Info: R4TL.Reading.PA@gmail.com

Federation Honorarium-Memorial Card Information

Please mail your payment with complete information to the Jewish Federation, PO Box 14925, Reading, PA, 19612-4925 or bring to the Jewish Cultural Center, 1100 Berkshire Blvd., Suite 125, Wyomissing. You may set up a “savings account” for the purpose of sending cards. Please contact the Federation at 610-921-0624 for further information.

Contributions as of Feb. 7

Jewish Family Service
In honor of:
Bernie Fromm’s special birthday - Debbie Goodman

Get well
Haia Mazuz - Helene and Henry Singer

Honorariums and Memorials

Contributions may be made to the following Funds:
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Leo Camp Lecture Fund
JFS Food Bank
JFS Taxi Transportation Program
Holocaust Library & Resource Center
Doris Levin Fund
Sue B. Viener Memorial Fund for PJ Library
Harry & Rose Sack Adult Education Fund
Evelyn Thompson Fund

Obituary

Sorrell “Saul” Eisenberg, 86, passed away at Berks Heim on Jan. 28. Born in Philadelphia, Saul earned a pharmacy degree from Temple University in 1960 and served in the Army. He worked as a buyer in the cosmetics, health and beauty department for Boscov’s. He was a devoted member of Congregation Shomrei Habrith and an avid card player. He especially enjoyed watching his son play tennis and his grandchildren participate in extracurricular activities. Saul was predeceased by his wife of 60 years, Donna, and survived by his son Neil of Shillington and grandchildren Brittany of Wyomissing and Matthew of Sinking Spring.

All Around the Town

Molly Nemirow, daughter of **Geri and Mark Nemirow**, is receiving the Next Generation Award at the Wagner College Holocaust Center Advisory Board Mitzvah Awards Dinner this month. The honor recognizes her work promoting Jewish life at the college in Staten Island, N.Y., where she is a senior.
Send good news to Marknem@aol.com or call 610-921-0624.
Until next time: Shalom

JFS TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

This program provides transportation to members of the Jewish community, age 60 and over or those with disabilities, who have no other way of getting around. It allows participants to retain their independence and keeps them from becoming homebound and isolated. It can be used for medical appointments, synagogue attendance, shopping and other errands.

It is easy to participate. Purchase a book of 25 taxi tickets from the Federation at a cost of \$25. Each coupon is worth \$3. The phone number for Reading Metro Taxi is printed on the ticket book. Call the company and arrange your ride. At the end of the ride, sign your coupon(s) before giving them to the driver. Tipping is left to the passenger’s discretion. Coupon does not include cost of tipping.

This program is subsidized by the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Jewish Family Service is grateful to our committed volunteers!

Here are some ways that you can help:

Help Fight Hunger
Join us at a JFS Food Pantry to distribute food to our hungry neighbors.

Share your Professional Expertise
Present a program on travel, photography, or your unique interests or hobbies to our seniors.

Share your time
A small investment of your personal time can make a profound difference in someone’s life. Visit a shut-in, shop for a homebound senior, or take someone to a doctor’s appointment.

Donate your vehicle to JFS or donate clothing to CommunityAid
Enjoy tax benefits of donating a car or help our clients through our partnership with CommunityAid.



Contact Us
Carole Robinson at
610-921-0624

 **Jewish Federation**
of Reading/Berks

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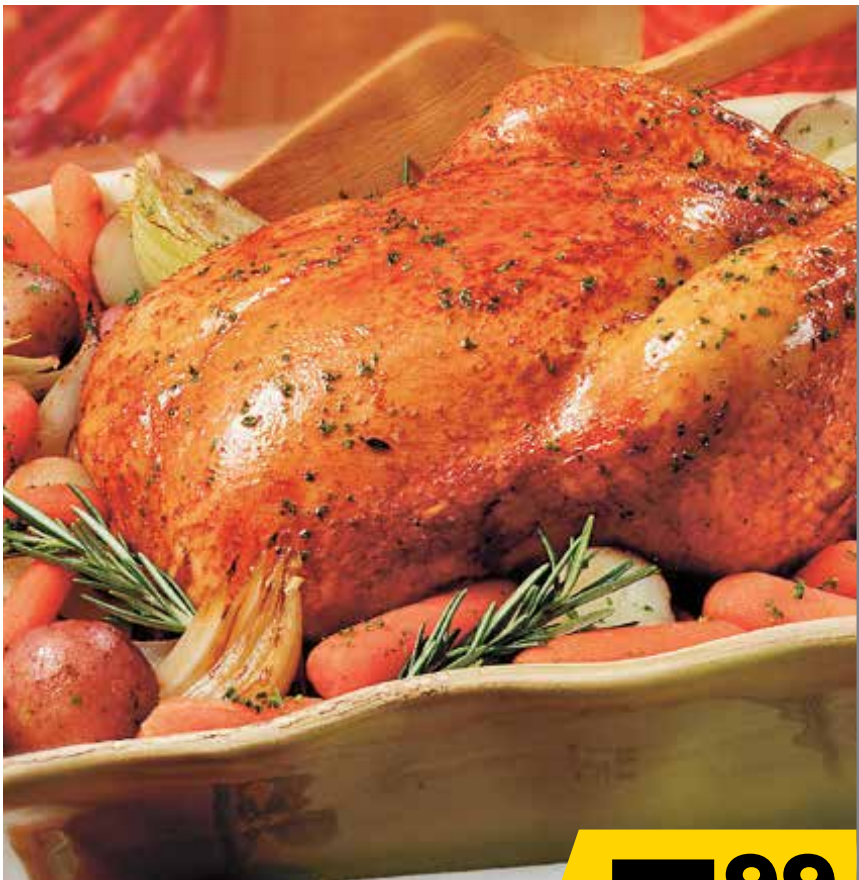
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 **Jewish Federation**
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