



# Shalom 05|26

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

**Your Federation Supports:**

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- Community Shabbat
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- Israel Trips
- Noontime Knowledge
- Young Adults Division
- Emergency Support
- Richard J. Yashek Lecture
- Transportation
- Maimonides Society
- Joint Distribution Committee
- Meir Panim
- Annual Campaign
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- Yemin Orde
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- Israel Advocacy
- Youth Events
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- Community Holiday Programs
- Women's Philanthropy
- Counseling Services
- Leo Camp Lecture
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- & Resource Center
- Jewish Community
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- Jewish Federations
- of North America

## Federation events promote learning, community and faith



Activities abound thanks to Federation: Clockwise from top left, Christopher Gorham delivers the Richard J. Yashek Lecture, a Yom HaShoah tribute to Holocaust survivors; Shirley Boscov, Pat Frankel and Carol Perlmutter celebrate Passover at the Highlands; and a talk by IDF Reservist Moran Shalev.

## ImpactIsrael: A legacy of transforming lives

**Federation staff**

ImpactIsrael is an American nonprofit organization with roots stretching back more than seven decades to the founding of Yemin Orde Youth Village in 1953 on Mount Carmel, Israel. Established as a sanctuary for orphaned youth after the Holocaust, the Village became a lifeline for generations of vulnerable children.

In 1991, the U.S. fundraising arm was created, and in 1996 it formally became Friends of Yemin Orde in response to significant government funding cuts.

A major evolution came in 2006 with the launch of Village Way Educational Initiatives (VWEI). This effort expanded the Village Way methodology, developed at Yemin Orde as a way to work with youth at-risk, to be implemented at schools across Israel. In 2019, the organization rebranded as



ImpactIsrael to reflect its broader mission and growing national reach.

At the heart of ImpactIsrael's work is Yemin Orde Youth Village, a 24/7 residential school and home for 400 at-risk teens from Israel and around the world. The student body reflects a diverse cross-section of Israeli society, with youth from the former Soviet Union (40%), Ethiopia (25%), France (21%), Israel (9%), the Bnei Menashe community of India (3%), and other backgrounds (2%). Many arrive through aliyah organizations or government referrals, often carrying significant trauma.

At Yemin Orde, they receive far more

than an education. They are surrounded by consistent, caring adults, access to trauma-informed therapy, intensive Hebrew and English language support, and opportunities to discover their strengths through programs in music, technology, and agriculture.

Through Village Way Educational Initiatives, ImpactIsrael is also scaling this proven model across the country, working in 97 communities and training educators to better support at-risk youth and create environments where young people can thrive. VWEI currently impacts 60,000 youth at schools across Israel's diverse society.

Today, this work is more urgent than ever. Throughout Israel, young people are navigating deep uncertainty, displacement, and trauma. ImpactIsrael meets them in these moments with stability, care, and a path forward.

# Activities flower in May

**By Richard Bradbury**  
*Director of Development*

*“Tra-La, It’s May! The lusty month of May. That lovely month when everyone goes blissfully astray.”*



Happy May! Being a confirmed musical theatre geek, when May arrives my mind invariably jumps to Julie Andrews singing Lerner & Loewe’s “lusty” song from “Camelot.” Revisit the song and the lyrics sometime; rereading it I found it a bit shocking for 1960! Amongst other things (wink, wink), the song does foretell the advance of warmer weather — despite our midsummer weather we experienced in April!

Jewish Federation hopes that with the onset of warmer weather and sunlight deep into the evening, you’ll be making plans to join us for all our May activities and events.

### Jewish American Heritage Month

In 2026, following unanimous congressional approval (imagine that happening today!), May was proclaimed Jewish-American Heritage Month, thereby recognizing 350+ years of Jewish-American impact on the arts, science, government & civil rights while combating antisemitism. I understand from my officemate and our Jewish Community Relations Council representative, Margo Levin, Reading City Council will pay tribute to the Jewish Federation in an official commendation May 11. I hope you were able to attend the historic raising of the Israeli Flag in Reading’s City Park to commemorate Yom HaAtzmaut on April 22! What a proud moment to experience.

### Richard J. Yashek Memorial Lecture

March’s highlight was our 20th annual Richard J. Yashek Memorial Lecture featuring author Christopher Gorham at Albright College. Jewish Federation and our honored guests were thrilled to have 140 guests attend the lecture. Gorham’s presentation was extremely well received and here I quote him saying, “This was the best book line since the release of ‘Matisse at War’ in fall 2025.” I hope you were able to attend!

Many thanks to Albright College for their continued partnership and to their catering staff for creating scrumptious receptions! A special thank you to Albright President Debra Townsley for opening her beautiful home. Jewish Federation extends our deep gratitude to Kimberly Yashek Lockhart, her family’s foundation and her parents for their commitment to the lecture series by bringing 20 years of thought-provoking, exhilarating, and educational evenings to our community and the Reading/Berks area.

### 2026 Jewish Federation Annual Campaign

Before Passover, everyone should have received Jewish Federation’s appeal for our 2026 Annual Campaign. Federation was delighted to surpass our campaign goal for 2025, and we are confident that, with your support and generosity, we will meet and surpass this year’s goal of \$443,000. As I write, JFR staff is busy at work:

- Modifying existing programs and planning new programming for youth, teens, NextGen and seniors regardless of religious affiliation.
- Expanding outreach to your neighbors, students, community and civic leaders to end the astonishing rise of antisemitism.
- Meeting the needs of our growing senior population, as well as the needs of our neighbors struggling, yet again, to place food on their family table.
- Supporting humanitarian organizations in Israel such as ImpactIsrael, Yemin Orde and Meir Panim, especially now during the widening crisis in the Middle East.

The urgent needs of many, here at home and across the world, may be the greatest we of a certain generation have ever witnessed. Given our new and continuing initiatives for 2026, Jewish Federation is asking you to again open your hands wide — and give what you are able, with a glad heart. Remember,

your tzedakah is considered a fundamental Jewish act of kindness.

Maybe you’re not ready to make your full contribution today? Consider splitting your gift across the calendar year. A \$36 monthly gift spread across 12 months quickly becomes \$432. Or consider making a pledge, a promise, to give your gift at a later date. Federation will invoice you in November for your 2026 annual gift. Want to talk through options for giving (there are many other ways!), please call me at 610-921-0624 or drop me a line at richardb@jfreeding.org.

### Temple Israel Emergency Campaign

In the one little year I’ve been with Jewish Federation, I’ve had an unwanted, front-row and very safe, seat as we witness atrocious acts of terror against the Jewish-American community: the murder of two young people in our nation’s capital, the Passover firebombing of Gov. Josh Shapiro’s residence and other acts of terror experienced by our brothers and sisters in Boulder, Colo.; Jackson, Miss., and most recently West Bloomfield, Mich. Sadly and shockingly, we have experienced a 344% increase in acts of terror, oppression and intimidation against Jewish-Americans since 2021 (Anti-Defamation League report). I am honored to report that our community raised \$1,184 to provide financial support to Temple Israel in West Bloomfield after the attack on their temple and pre-school on March 12. Thank you to Debbie Goldberg, Federation’s Committee chair for Jewish Community Relations Council, for bringing the challenge to your Federation. Recently I spoke with Temple Israel’s Strategic Development Director, and it humbles me to extend their sincere thanks to our community for our concern, support and generosity.

### 2026 Annual Meeting, Sunday May 31

May means it’s time to register for our 2026 Annual Meeting! Details are emerging daily, and the big surprise this year is our “fun and artistic” location: Yocum Institute of Arts Education (3000 Penn Ave. in West Lawn.) Our other big news for the 2026 meeting is that we want you to bring the kids (5 years and older) to the meeting! Kids LOVE meetings, right? Just kidding. Have a look at our schedule for the day:

**10 – 11 a.m.:** Enjoy a scrumptious Kosher-style bagel brunch with kid-friendly options in Yocum’s Holleran Gallery, surrounded by the fascinating and unique artwork of community member, Jill Henry! Her installation opens that afternoon, so experience it before the general

public! Coffee, tea, juice and soft drinks will be available.

**11 a.m. – noon:** The Annual Meeting features the Annual Report, installation of new board members, thank yous to members exiting the Board, and the State of the Federation with comments from our CEO, Cindy Gerber Tomlinson and Board Chair, Jon Avins.

**Kids activities:** During the meeting the kiddos will be having a great time hanging with two Yocum artist/educators. Kids ages 5 and older will participate in a 25-minute theatre and movement class, followed by a 25-minute, hands-on art class. Please dress kids appropriately for movement and, possibly, a messy art activity. Think sneakers and T-shirts. If time and weather permits, kids can burn off some energy in Yocum’s outdoor, enclosed playground!

**Noon – 1 p.m.:** We’re planning a secret and unique surprise for our final hour! Get ready to have a blast with your kids (and grandkids) with an instructor-led, intergenerational activity. Feel free to dress casually — it’s summer after all and you may be moving, scavenging or having a, possibly, messy time!!

Yocum Institute has ample parking, and the facility is completely accessible.

### I’ll be seeing you – in all the old familiar places

I apologize for ending on a bittersweet note, but I feel a need to mention community members we have lost recently: Gordon Perlmutter, Jane Polonski and Sylvia Wenger. We all mourn the loss of these friends and family members. Gordon, Jane and Sylvia made a lasting impression on me as they were some of the very first people I met upon joining the Federation. I’ll always see Gordon’s smile every time our paths crossed; I’ll remember Jane’s warm hugs and sharing lunch together at Friendship Circle; I’ll remember Sylvia’s 99th Birthday Party (at my first Friendship Circle) and the way her face would light up when we saw each other.

What kind, welcoming and warm people. I will miss seeing them — but I still see them — in all our familiar places. May their memory be a blessing.

Thank you to everyone who honored all our friends and community members we have lost with your generous honorariums. What a lovely and lasting gift to honor their memories.

# Development

Annual Campaign

Women’s Philanthropy

Maimonides Society

Your Jewish Legacy

Chai Circle

L’Chaim Society

Book of Life

Letter of Intent



**DONATE NOW TO OUR JEWISH COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN**

Please visit [ReadingJewishCommunity.org](http://ReadingJewishCommunity.org)

**Make your gift today!**

## Annual Campaign 2026



**Jewish Federation**  
of Reading/Berks

**Make your pledge or donate today!**

**Two ways to make your pledge:**

- 1) Complete the form in this ad and mail it.
- 2) Email your Development Director, Richard Bradbury, at richardb@jfreeding.org with “pledge” in the subject line.

**Mail this form to: Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks  
1100 Berkshire Blvd., Suite 125  
Wyomissing, PA 19610**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State/Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Pledge Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

A Message from the CEO

# Events say a lot about community's growth

**By Cindy Gerber Tomlinson**  
*Chief Executive Officer*



I hope this finds everyone well in the merry month of May! I want to focus on four important events this month — three that happened in the past, and one that is coming at the end of the month.

First, I want to thank the community for the warm welcome that we gave our honored guests from Israel. Now, more than ever, it is critical that we support our brothers and sisters in Israel. Our guests have been injured — physically and emotionally, with scars that will be with them for the rest of their lives. Part of their healing process was to spend quality time with us in Reading, knowing that we are behind them. They took home with them a sense that we care — about them, their families, and all those who are fighting their way through every day. Whether actually fighting in the war, running from danger, or healing themselves and their loved ones, every day is a struggle, and every day an opportunity for resilience.

Second, I want to highlight the historic event that happened on April 22. The first ever Israeli Independence Day Flag Raising Ceremony in the history of Reading. Following are the remarks that I gave to the crowd which gathered in City Park.

“Thank you to Mayor Eddie Morran, and the city of Reading, for joining with the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks, to host this first-ever Israeli Independence Day Flag Raising Ceremony in the history of Reading.

“As we recognize the 78th anniversary of Israel’s founding, we celebrate the nation’s history, people, culture and achievements. Israel, a national home

for the Jewish people, is a democracy, and has a diverse population, an active civil society, independent courts and competitive elections. Jewish values, such as democracy, freedom and innovation, are common ideals and shared values of Israel, the United States, and Canada. Israel has made many significant global contributions. It is a leader in technology, biotech, medicine, and agriculture, often driven by its “Start-up Nation” ecosystem. Key innovations include drip irrigation, the PillCam, Waze, USB flash drives, and the Iron Dome defense system. These advancements address water scarcity, medical diagnostics, traffic management and security.

“Marking this holiday strengthens the concept of Jewish peoplehood and identity, encompassing our shared history, culture, and sense of collective responsibility. Jews in North America and around the world celebrate the birth of the State of Israel as the manifestation of our historic longing for a homeland. By celebrating Israel’s Independence Day, we are reminded that despite geographic distance or political complexity, Jews have a deep and enduring sense of collective belonging, uniting with each other and with those of all religions and cultures. When we bind together, we underscore the resilience of the Jewish people, and all those who have been the target of discrimination and hate, especially during periods of tumult. At a time when antisemites seek to isolate or intimidate Jews, coming together publicly and proudly takes on added significance.

“Thank you very much for being here to celebrate this day, together.”

Another first was the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks and Alvernia University receiving the Common Ground Spirit of Civility Award. This award was given

to us as a result of our joint program, The Interfaith Dialogue. Common Ground, formed this year. It traveled to several cities across Pennsylvania to recognize citizens and institutions strengthening their communities through civility, cooperation, and constructive dialogue. As Common Ground USA — Pennsylvania President Jeff Coleman noted, “At this critical inflection point in our culture — when division and misunderstanding too often dominate public life — the work of bringing people of different faiths and backgrounds together in respectful conversation is especially important. The leadership shown through this initiative reflects exactly the spirit of bridge-building and civic leadership that this award seeks to recognize.” Following are my remarks from that very special day:

“Thank you so very much to Jeff Coleman of Common Ground USA, Glynis Fitzgerald, president of Alvernia University, and most importantly, Kevin Murphy, president and CEO of the Berks County Community Foundation, for partnering with the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks, and recognizing our joint program with Alvernia University on the Interfaith Dialogue Initiative. The Interfaith Dialogue has been in place since the early '90s, when Susan and Michael Fromm came back to the area with a view to build bridges between the Jewish community and the greater Berks County community. As Michael, a Jew, developed a strong relationship with Alvernia, a Catholic institution, and eventually became board chair there, the concept of interfaith dialogue became a reality, with Alvernia poignantly demonstrating the Franciscan value of inclusivity.

“Since that time, the Federation has

partnered with Alvernia to continue this important initiative, and many professionals and volunteers have stepped forward to expand this work with great success. We highly value, and seek to amplify, the diversity of insights, perspectives, and experiences brought by those from every denomination and tradition.

“Our work together carries on, as antisemitism has risen 300% over the last five years, and now, more than ever, we are grateful for the bonds we share. We must continue to strengthen the relationship between ethnic and religious groups throughout Berks County, and the city of Reading, in order to continue to enjoy our cultural and religious freedoms, celebrate the commonalities we share, and to keep each other safe.

“We are pleased and honored to accept the Common Ground USA Spirit of Civility Award. Thank you!

Finally, I want to encourage everyone — of every age — to join us at our Annual Meeting and Family Fun Event on May 31 @ 10am – 1pm at the Yocum Institute for the Arts! This year will not be the boring and nova-filled drab meeting of the past — it will be the fun and creative, unique and interesting nova-filled meeting of today! We will start with a delicious bagel breakfast with kid-friendly choices, and then the adults will proceed to the meeting — which will be interactive and fun — and the children will proceed to arts, theatre and music activities with Yocum staff. We will then gather everyone together for a fun surprise at the end. New location, new format, lots of fun for all! Stay tuned for details! You don’t want to miss it!!!

As always, please feel free to reach out to me anytime with your suggestions, ideas, or just to say hello. Cindy 610-223-3983 cindygt@jfreading.org

**REGISTER TODAY!**

*Jewish Federation Annual Meeting*

**Sunday May 31<sup>st</sup> 10 AM to 1 PM**  
*Yocum Institute for Arts Education*  
 3000 Penn Ave. West Lawn, PA

**NOSH! MEET! PLAY!**  
 Bring the kids!! Kid-friendly food and activities!

Register Here!

## Shalom

A newspaper serving the Jewish community of Berks County, Pennsylvania, and published monthly, September through June, under the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks. Funded by the Annual Jewish Community Campaign.

**General Offices:** 1100 Berkshire Blvd., Suite 125  
 Wyomissing, PA 19610  
**Phone:** 610-921-0624 **FAX:** 610-929-0886  
**Web site:** www.ReadingJewishCommunity.org

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*The opinions expressed in Shalom are of the writers and not the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks*





Adam Levin and Jacob Reuwen of Duo Mantar perform in "Rachel's Mandolin" at the WCR Center for the Arts and greet Adi Shalev-Smitheman and Cindy Gerber-Tomlinson.

# Musician grateful for time in Reading

The following letter was sent to Federation President Cindy Gerber-Tomlinson by Adam Levin, who performed in "Rachel's Mandolin," a concert presented by Federation in April.

Dear Cindy,

I just wanted to send you a brief note to thank you for the

extraordinary experience performing at the WCR Performing Arts Center a couple of nights ago. Yaki and I made it home after 7.5 hours on the road yesterday, and we were reminiscing about what a glorious experience it was performing that program for you all in perhaps the best concert hall for mandolin and

guitar that we've ever played in.

Thank you for allowing us to explore this program further and for giving us the opportunity to engage the Jewish community.

Let us know how we can help you in your mission to expand your programming and get the word out to your Jewish community

members. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and felt the love from all of you.

Thanks for taking such good care of us, and we look forward to staying in touch.

Best,

Adam

Adam Levin

# Literatour event is moving tale set in wartime Italy

By Nancy Russo

Filled with heartache and romance, "The Forgotten Italian Restaurant" by author Barbara Josselsohn tells the wartime story of Emilia, a heroic young girl living in Caccipulia, Italy who decides, despite her terror, to believe in the future.

Caught in the crosshairs of the Nazi occupation during World War II, the villagers face restrictions and food shortages, but they are resilient, trading on the black market, finding ways to hide and feed Jews, and secretly helping them escape.

Author Josselsohn adeptly moves the multigenerational story between past and present as modern-day Callie travels from the United States to Italy, where she unravels her Nonna's (grandmother's) wartime secrets.

Barbara Josselsohn is a best-selling author known for her captivating contemporary and historical novels.

With a talent for blending history and human drama, Josselsohn's novels explore complex themes of love, loss, resilience, and the enduring power of secrets.



Her storytelling often spans generations, drawing readers into a tapestry of personal and historical struggles.

Known for her lush descriptions

and evocative prose, Josselsohn will make you feel as if you were transported to Italy.

I hope you will join us for our upcoming Literatour event on Monday, May 4, at 6 p.m. at the Exeter Community Library when Barbara Josselsohn will be leading a discussion of "The Forgotten Italian Restaurant" as well as selling and signing copies of her book following the event.

Copies of the featured novel are also available to borrow through the Berks County Public Library system.

**LITERATOUR BERKS BOOK CLUB**  
@ THE EXETER COMMUNITY LIBRARY  
MONDAY, MAY 4<sup>TH</sup>  
6:00 PM AT THE EXETER COMMUNITY LIBRARY  
**BARBARA JOSSELSOHN**  
AUTHOR OF:  
**THE FORGOTTEN ITALIAN RESTAURANT**  
A heartbreaking love story that will sweep you away to sun-drenched Italian vineyards in 1943 and the present day to watch hope and bravery prevail in the darkest days of war.

Join us for an evening with Barbara Josselsohn, author of *The Forgotten Italian Restaurant*! Barbara will be leading a discussion of her novel as well as signing & selling copies during the event.

QR code: VISIT THE FEDERATION WEBSITE

Logos: Jewish Book Council, Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks, DoubleTree by Hilton

EXETER COMMUNITY LIBRARY • 4569 PRESTWICK DRIVE • READING, PA 19606  
Call 610-406-9431 to RSVP or visit [www.berkslibraries.org/exeter](http://www.berkslibraries.org/exeter)

**LITERATOUR BERKS**  
CELEBRATING AUTHORS AND BOOKS  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 13<sup>TH</sup>  
12:00 PM AT THE JEWISH FEDERATION  
**CYNTHIA HANDLER**  
SEASON 7 FINALE PROGRAM

**A German Jew's Triumph**  
FRITZ OPPENHEIMER and the Denazification of Germany  
Cindy Schweich Handler  
Foreword by Harry H. Handler

**AUTHOR OF: A GERMAN JEW'S TRIUMPH; FRITZ OPPENHEIMER AND THE DENAZIFICATION OF GERMANY**  
Drawing on uncovered letters and documents, this book tells the courageous true story of Fritz Oppenheimer, a Prussian soldier and lawyer who fled the Nazis, joined the U.S. Army, and played a crucial role in shaping post-war justice.

Join us for an afternoon with Cynthia Handler, author of *A German Jew's Triumph: Fritz Oppenheimer and the Denazification of Germany*! Cynthia will be leading a discussion of her novel as well as signing & selling copies during the event.

NOONTIME KNOWLEDGE PROGRAM

QR code: VISIT THE FEDERATION WEBSITE

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JEWISH FEDERATION OF READING/BERKS • 1100 BERKSHIRE BLVD, SUITE 125 • WYOMISSING, PA 19610  
Call 610-921-0624 to RSVP or visit [www.readingjewishcommunity.org](http://www.readingjewishcommunity.org) for information!

# Tile and error: Lessons from the Mah Jongg table

**By Amanda Wertz**  
*Administrative Assistant*

Our Monday Mahjongg group has become a time to gather, unwind, and enjoy both friendly competition and great company. We meet every Monday at the JCC, 1100 Berkshire Blvd. Wyomissing, from 1 to 3 p.m., setting aside a couple of hours to relax, connect and share in the fun of the game.

Each week, the room fills with the familiar sounds of tiles clicking and conversations


flowing. Everyone contributes to the welcoming and supportive atmosphere that makes the group so special.

Beyond the game itself, our Monday gatherings have created friendships and a strong sense of community, and we look forward to many more Mondays filled with fun, camaraderie, and of course a great game and hope you will choose to be a part of it!

For more information please contact Amanda Wertz at [info@jfreeding.org](mailto:info@jfreeding.org).





**HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL PROGRAM** | **MONDAY MAY 11 6:30PM**  
*at Exeter Community Library*



**SPEAKER**  
*Jeff Gernsheimer*

In this educational Holocaust memorial program, Jeff Gernsheimer will speak about his late mother Hilde's experiences escaping Nazi Germany. Jeff's family's story touches on Kristallnacht, the Kindertransport, Sobibor Death Camp, and the SS St. Louis. The program offers an opportunity for children and their parents/guardians to learn and reflect together. Appropriate for ages 10 and up.

**REGISTER ON EXETER EVENTS CALENDAR OR AT THE CODE BELOW**

Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks presents:  
**VIP kick-off event with the comedian Benji Lovitt**

**NextGen HAPPY HOUR**



**Followed by Benji Lovitt comedy show!**  
**Sunday, May 3 5:00-6:30 PM**  
First drinks and refreshments on us  
Ages 25-45 are welcome  
RSVP at <https://www.readingjewishcommunity.org/>




**THE HIGHLANDS AT WYOMISSING**

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Our approach to memory support emphasizes connection, engagement and joy. Residents thrive in a nature-connected neighborhood where they're supported by life-enriching activities tailored to personal interests and abilities. It's all about purposeful living for your loved one, and peace of mind for you.



See for yourself — scan to learn more or call 610.775.2300 to schedule your tour.



**JEWISH FEDERATION OF READING PRESENTS:**

**IT'S OK TO LAUGH**  
**COPING THROUGH DARK HUMOR**

**BENJI LOVITT** | **SUNDAY 3RD MAY 7 PM**

**TICKETS ON SALE**  
**\$36** NON-MEMBERS | **\$18** JCC MEMBERS

GOGGLEWORKS CENTER FOR THE ARTS, 201 WASHINGTON ST., READING, PA. 19601  
PURCHASE TICKETS AT <https://www.readingjewishcommunity.org/>

Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks | <https://www.readingjewishcommunity.org/> | +610-921-0624



# Preschool and kindergarten students learn about Passover at Yocum

By Vicki Haller Graff  
Executive Director,  
Yocum Institute for Arts Education

Toward the end of March, as we were cleaning our homes for Pesach and setting our seder tables, the children of the Yocum Institute for Arts Education preschool were learning about Passover, many for the first time, thanks to our partnership with the Jewish Federation of Reading.

Each class enjoyed hearing the story "Sammy Spider's First Passover" by Sylvia A. Rouss. They love the little spider character, Sammy, and identify with his curiosity. In the stories, Sammy always wants to learn about and celebrate the Jewish holidays with the family of the home, the Shapiros. Sammy's mother tries to keep him in line with the recurring line "Silly Sammy, spiders don't ..., Spiders spin webs!" The children chant that line along with the preschool director, Mrs. Elsa Mierzejewski, and remind Sammy what to do.

The Sammy Spider book series has been a wonderful support for our teachers,

most of whom are not Jewish, to introduce Jewish holidays in an preschool appropriate way, and it's a delightful educational tool for our students, who engage with the beautifully artistic illustrations and well crafted stories.

In addition to the book, to extend their learning and give students a literal taste of the holiday, Mrs. Elyse Horowitz made charoset for the students to eat with matzah. Results were mixed: one child gobbled both up but most of the others picked at each. But they tried it! Surprisingly, the matzah was more appealing to our young learners!

We are looking forward to hosting the Jewish Federation for the Annual Meeting on May 31. We will have preschool staff on site to tour the classrooms and talk about our overall philosophy. Any interested families can contact us at any time, but the Annual Meeting will give our whole Jewish community the opportunity to see the school in person!

If you'd like to learn more or get involved, please contact me at Yocum: [vgraff@yocuminstitute.org](mailto:vgraff@yocuminstitute.org) or 610-376-1576 x 203.



**It's Simcha Supplement time**

If you had or are having a bar/bat mitzvah or graduation (high school or higher) in your family this Jewish year, please submit a few sentences about the person and their accomplishment, along with a photo.

Send text and photo to [Marknem@aol.com](mailto:Marknem@aol.com).

**DEADLINE IS APRIL 30, SUBMIT ASAP.**

## Obituary

**Sylvia Wenger**, 99, of Reading, passed away on April 7. She grew up in Paterson, N.J. and attended Paterson State College. She became a legal assistant and worked at Marcus and Levy on Fifth Avenue in New York. Decades later she resumed this work in Reading at Liever, Hyman and Potter, and Mendelsohn and Mendelsohn. In 1950 she met her husband, Bennett, at a resort in the Poconos, and they married and settled in his hometown of Reading. Sylvia was a devoted and longtime member of Keshet Zion Synagogue and was active in its sisterhood, eventually serving as its president. She was a successful fundraiser for the Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks and a regular participant at Friendship Circle. Sylvia enjoyed attending chamber music and orchestra concerts and opera and was a reader of *The New York Times*. She is survived by her children Dr. Jeffrey Wenger and Janet (Arthur) Werner, granddaughter Tara (Tal) Singer and great-grandchildren Tali, Ori, and Shiri.

—

**David Shefter Sr.**, 62, of Windsor Township, passed away on April 14. He graduated from Mt. Penn High in 1982 and earned a B.A. in Hotel and Restaurant Management from Penn State. He was the Hamburg Area School District director of food services for 30 years. He and his wife owned and operated various area restaurants. He is survived by his wife, Kim, and sons David Jr., Nathan and Darren and two grandchildren. He is also survived by siblings Renee Pinkard of Shillington, Aaron and Linda, both of Florida, and Debra of Georgia.

**Pediatric and Adult Patients**  
**Treating Ear, Nose, Throat Problems**  
**Thyroid Nodules, Neck Masses & Sinusitis**

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**Nurse Practitioner:**

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**Congregation Shaarai Shomayim Presents:**  
**Bearing Witness, Building Hope**

# ISRAEL

Led by Rabbi Jack Paskoff

**August 2-10, 2026**

Join Rabbi Jack Paskoff and fellow members of Congregation Shaarai Shomayim engaging in Israel not as observers, but as participants—through presence, service and deep listening. Traveling from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, we will encounter communities living with the realities of conflict and resilience, volunteering alongside local partners and learning directly from grassroots leaders working toward dignity, security and coexistence. Through hands-on service, courageous conversations and shared Jewish practice, this Journey creates space to bear witness, wrestle with complexity and affirm our responsibility to one another.

**ON THIS JOURNEY, WE WILL:**

- Engage with Israel's stories of resilience through shared moments, in-depth discussion and humanitarian outreach from the Gaza Envelope and beyond.
- Explore Jerusalem's spiritual and civic heart through panoramic views, Shabbat reflection and meaningful community encounters.
- Engage diverse Israeli and Palestinian voices through meaningful dialogue with grassroots leaders and peacebuilders.

...and SO much more!

| PRICING CHART                         | CHECK/CASH PRICE | CREDIT CARD PRICE |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| LAND TOUR (BASED ON DOUBLE OCCUPANCY) | \$4,850          | \$4,995           |
| ADD FOR SINGLE OCCUPANCY              | \$845            | \$870             |

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# Thank you all for a successful Great Decisions program

By **Amanda Wertz**  
*Administrative Assistant*

This year's Great Decisions group sessions were a true success. A heartfelt thank you to the professionals who generously gave their time, expertise, and energy to help moderate the sessions. Your guidance fostered meaningful conversations, encouraged diverse perspectives, and created an environment where ideas could truly flourish. Your contributions were invaluable, and the quality of each session reflected your dedication and skill.

I would also like to thank all the attendees who participated so thoughtfully and enthusiastically. Your engagement, curiosity, and willingness to share insights made each discussion dynamic and rewarding. It was your presence and participation that brought these sessions to life. Together, you created a collaborative and inspiring experience. Thank you all for helping make this year's sessions such a memorable success and until next year stay engaged and make "great decisions."



## Movie Monday at the JCC

May 18, 2026, 1pm



*Sketches of Frank Gehry*  
Documentary



An intimate portrait of the most acclaimed and controversial architect in modern history, directed by his longtime friend and supporter Sydney Pollack.



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!



Jewish Federation of Reading Celebrates Jewish Heritage Month with a

# Bus Trip

TO WASHINGTON, DC  
TWO EXHIBITS AT THE CAPITAL JEWISH MUSEUM, LUNCH, AND TIME TO EXPLORE THE NATIONAL MALL

RSVP BY MAY 13

JCC members \$100  
Non-members \$118



**THURSDAY, MAY 28**  
BUS LEAVE AT 7:30 AM FROM THE JCC

PLEASE RESERVE YOUR SPOT AT [HTTPS://WWW.READINGJEWISHCOMMUNITY.ORG/](https://www.readingjewishcommunity.org/).  
CHECK THE JFR WEBSITE/EMAIL OR CALL 610-921-0624

## "ART, CULTURE & IDEAS"

THE HIGHLANDS AT WYOMISSING

MON MAY 9  
1:30PM



CULTURAL CENTER AT THE HIGHLANDS AT WYOMISSING  
2000 CAMBRIDGE AVE.

BLACK AND JEWISH AMERICA: AN INTERWOVEN HISTORY  
HENRY LOUIS GATES JR IN CONVERSATION  
WITH SEN. CORY BOOKER  
PRE-RECORDED PROGRAM




Art, Culture & Ideas is a monthly series. Upcoming dates:  
Jun 8

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# IYAR - SIVAN, 5786

| WED  | THU   | FRI  | SAT                                  |
|--|---|--|--------------------------------------|
|  |   | 01   | 02                                   |
| 06   | 07<br>JFS Friendship Circle -<br>1 PM at JCC  | 08   | 09<br>Tot Shabbat - 10 AM<br>at RCOS |
| 13<br>Literatour Berks<br>"A German Jew's<br>Triumph" - 12 PM at JCC | 14  | 15 Yom Yerushalayim  | 16                                   |
| 20   | 21 Erev Shavuot<br>Tikkun Leil Shavuot - 7 PM<br>at RCOS/KZ                                 | 22 Shavuot<br>JCC closed<br>Ice Cream Party- 5 PM<br>at Chabad | 23 Shavuot<br>JCC closed             |
| 27   | 28<br>Bus Trip to DC - 7:30 AM<br>at JCC<br>-----<br>JCC Friendship Circle -<br>1 PM at JCC | 29   | 30                                   |

# Good, better, best

**By Carole Robinson**  
*Jewish Family Service*

In a community shaped by tradition and memory, I would like to honor someone whose life spanned almost a full century, Sylvia Wenger. Her 99+ years were deeply woven into the fabric of our Reading Jewish community.



Sylvia was born on May 19, 1926 to Gertrude Williams and Hyman Kriss. She and her siblings, Lillian, Ruth, and Morris were raised in Paterson, N.J. Growing up, Sylvia enjoyed dressing up in fur coats in her father's shop, the Hyman Kriss Tailor Shop, and going to movies at the Fabian Theatre.

Sylvia attended Paterson State College and then became a legal assistant at the law firm of Marcus and Levy on Fifth Avenue, commuting daily on the Staten Island Ferry. She met her future husband, Bennett Wenger, in 1950 while on vacation at the Tamiment Resort in the Poconos.

After their marriage on Sept. 17, 1950, Sylvia and Bennett moved to Reading, Bennett's hometown, where they met Louise and Phillip Zeidman, the first of many lifelong friends. Sylvia and Bennett soon became parents. Sylvia deeply loved and admired her two children, Jeffrey and Janet. She adored each new addition to the family, son-in-law Arthur,

granddaughter Tara, Tara's husband Tal, and later her great-grandchildren Tali, Ori and Shiri.

Sylvia was a dedicated member of Keshet Zion Synagogue. She served as Sisterhood president and also worked on the Sisterhood Ad Journal Committee for many years. Sylvia was a one-woman welcoming committee! She made a point of personally welcoming newcomers to Reading, turning strangers into friends with genuine warmth. Sylvia was well-known for her thoughtful notes, sending many messages of congratulations and sympathy to KZ members.

Sylvia was deeply involved with the Jewish Federation, where she received special recognition for single-handedly raising \$200,000. In later years, Sylvia became a regular Friendship Circle attendee. Our get-togethers were so "meaningful" to her. She never failed to thank us for the "wonderful" programs and meals we offered and always followed up with beautiful handwritten notes of appreciation.

Sylvia enjoyed attending chamber music and opera concerts, as well as performances by the Philadelphia Orchestra. She was an avid reader of *The New York Times*.

Sylvia worked as a legal secretary at both Mendelsohn and Mendelsohn and Liever, Hyman, and Potter for over 20 years until she was 75. She took a bus on College Avenue to go to the office on Penn Street. According to Sylvia's daughter Janet, Sylvia probably would have worked until she was 85 if they hadn't gotten rid of typewriters.



*Sylvia Wenger*

Even after retirement, Sylvia maintained her friendships with her co-workers.

After her husband's death in February 1991, Sylvia remained active. She traveled to Hong Kong and Singapore with friends. She enjoyed spending time with Janet every summer at the Jersey shore. Sylvia spent her 89th birthday in Israel at her granddaughter Tara's wedding to Tal. Tara and Tal both smiled when they remembered her questions about Israel prior to the trip, "Do they drive cars in Israel? Do they use cellphones in Israel? Do they have banks in Israel?"

*Continued on Page 9*

## Giving back to the community at pantry



*At left, JFS volunteers Mike Schein and Mike Robinson working with food pantry recipients, who jumped in to help pack food because there weren't enough volunteers at the April 1 pantry. At right, Paula Bub, Richard Bradbury, and Pete Jacobson carrying food to cars.*

Many thanks to our April Food Pantry volunteers who distributed food to over 575 households.

Mary Anne Avins  
Paula Bub  
Sam Flamholz  
Sarah Flamholz  
Patty Hartman  
John Inledon  
Pete Jacobson  
Annette Peppard

Mike Robinson  
Mike Schein  
Ellen Schwartz  
Russ Shanahan  
Oleg Umanov



# Jewish Family Service

- Food Pantry
- Friendship Circle
- Counseling Services
- Transportation
- Financial Assistance
- Hospital and Home Visitations
- Living with Loss
- Information and Referral
- Case Management
- Holiday Programs

# SYLVIA WENGER

**Continued from Page 8**

Sylvia's son Jeff eulogized: "I have long identified my mother's secrets to longevity. She was raised in an Orthodox Jewish family and therefore we ate kosher meat only, which was delivered weekly from Northeast Philadelphia. Pepperoni pizza was strictly forbidden. She never smoked a cigarette, to my knowledge. I never observed her having a cocktail until my cousin's Bat Mitzvah, which dehydrated her and she had to be rushed to Cornell Medical Center.

"She learned to drive in 1964, and her car was the classic 1964 turquoise blue Mustang. She never used inappropriate language. Her one vice was sunbathing in Coney Island at her sister's bungalow, fortunately this resulted in barely a skin

wrinkle. "Although no one could type faster than my mom, she was basically technologically disabled. Her flip phone, answering machine and stereo record player remained quite enigmatic to her. When I scolded her for not having a computer, she told me that Princess Lee Radziwell didn't use email either."

Despite her technological limitations, Sylvia was fiercely independent, remaining in her home on North 16th Street until her death on April 7. She left behind diverse friends of all ages, including her hairdresser Travis who shared Sylvia's favorite quote on Instagram, "Good, better, best. Never let it rest. Til the good is better, and the better is the best."

Sylvia touched many of us with her many acts of kindness, her commitment

to community, and her indomitable spirit. Sylvia was undeniably "the best."

## Spring at Friendship Circle



Top, Ellen Schwickrath, Lila Shapiro, Bret Miller, Matthew Dodd, Art Resnick and Louise Zeidman at "Songs and Stories of the American Revolution" on April 16. Above, Sharon Brown, Judy Synnaron, and Gloria Isman enjoying the pre-Passover Seder on March 26.

Friendship Circle meets twice a month with fun and educational programs and great fellowship. See the upcoming schedule below.

## " BERKS ENCORE "



**MAY 28, 2:00 P.M.**

**at the JCC, 1100 Berkshire Blvd Wyomissing**

LuAnn Oatman, CEO of Berks Encore and Mindy McIntosh Director of Development will talk about their beCurious learning program and evidence based health and wellness classes.

To RSVP call 610-921-0624

[info@jfreading.org](mailto:info@jfreading.org)

## FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

### May 7- "Off to the Races "

Join your Friendship Circle friends for Kentucky Derby contests and races. Fancy hats welcome but not required.

### May 28- "Berks Encore"

LuAnn Oatman CEO of Berks Encore and Mindy McIntosh Director of Development will talk about their beCurious learning program and evidence based health and wellness classes.

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.



# Local kids excel at Chabad youth event

## Chabad Global Networks

At a moment when Jewish families are choosing pride over fear and turning to tradition, education and identity to anchor their children, public school students from 25 countries competed for the “Scripps Spelling Bee of Jewish knowledge” as the 2026 JewQ International Jewish Knowledge Championship brought the CKids Summit weekend to its grand finale. Over 1,200 people filled the theater with thousands more watching live from communities around the world, many of them gathered in their local Chabad Hebrew schools to cheer on their regional champions.

“These young scholars embody the key to our people’s resilience,” said Rabbi Mendy Kotlarsky, chairman of Chabad’s Global Networks, including CKids International. “The foundation of Jewish knowledge they now possess

will stay with them for life. Building the next generation of strong Jewish leaders will only happen when we pivot from defense to offense, celebrating who we are more than fighting what we are against.”

The championship is the centerpiece of the CKids International Shabbaton, the largest summit for Hebrew school families in the world. CKids is Chabad’s global children’s network, reaching over 200,000 children who do not attend Jewish day schools.

Alongside the competition, parents gathered for a parallel summit on raising confident Jewish children today. Sessions led by world-renowned presenters focused on making Jewish traditions relevant and engaging for their children and on building resilience in kids who are often the only Jewish students in their public school class.



Chabad of Berks was joined by seven families at this unforgettable weekend, earning two Gold medals (Mara Musso and

Ari Bloom), one Silver (Avi Karchevsky) and Bronze (Ziggy Cohen, Izzy Gurwitz, Eliana Gurwitz and Aaron Wolf).



## Busy time at Chabad



Teen kids at Chabad have been learning about the Holocaust in connection to Judaism and Jewish holidays, wrapping up the curriculum with a trip to the Holocaust Museum in DC the day before Holocaust Remembrance Day. At right, at a recent event at Chabad participants enjoyed a beautiful and elegant evening creating perfumes in connection with Purim and Queen Esther.

# Shabbat and Sinai

**By Rabbi Ted Prosnitz**

*Keshar Zion Synagogue*

“And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the day of rest, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the waving; seven weeks shall there be complete” (Lev. 23:15). The “day of rest/HaShabbat” is understood to be the first day of Passover. So, starting with the second night of Passover, we start counting.

Why? Were the Israelites not brought out *Meiavdut l’cherut*/from slavery unto freedom (Haggadah)? Could not they all have scattered, like people imprisoned suddenly freed, and run off in all directions? For example, after the Holocaust, survivors migrated to Palestine, the United States, Canada, South Africa, Australia, South America, while some even stayed in Europe. But this was different. For, “Adoshem took you out from Egypt ... to be His ...” (Deut. 4:20).



On the seventh day of the Exodus, trapped with the sea in front of them and the Egyptian army chasing them from behind, Hashem parted the waters and the Israelites walked through on dry land. After they witnessed their pursuers dispatched, covered by the returning waters, they all recognized Hashem and declared, “The Lord will reign forever and ever” (Exod. 15:18).

Together, as some sort of confederation of tribes, these descendants of the Patriarchs stood at Sinai. A riddle: what is too heavy for 600,000, but one may lift? The Israelites (customarily numbered as 600,000) were forbidden to approach the mountain because it was “too heavy”/too holy to touch. But “one”, Moses, was able to ascend the mountain, “lift” and carry the Tablets of the Law.

It was at Sinai that God revealed Himself to all and pronounced the Aseret Hadibrot/The Ten Commandments. This theophany occurred on the seventh day of the week, Shabbat. We learn this in the Talmud (Shabbat 86b): And everyone agrees that the Torah was given to the Jewish people on Shabbat, as it is

written here in the Ten Commandments: “Remember the Shabbat day to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). This is what we

celebrate at the end of counting seven weeks — Matan Torah/the giving of Torah on the holiday of Shavuot.

## TIKKUN LEIL SHAVUOT



**WHEN: THURSDAY, MAY 21, 7-9 PM**

**WHERE: KESHER ZION SYNAGOGUE**

**WHY: NIGHT OF STUDY TO CELEBRATE THE FESTIVAL OF WEEKS AND TO ENJOY ICE CREAM, LEARNING, AND COMMUNITY**



Sunday, May 3rd, 2026  
12:00 noon - 3:00 pm

Hosted by  
**REFORM CONGREGATION  
OHEB SHOLOM**

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Parking Lot  
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\$10 Quarter Apple Cake  
\$13 Kauffman's Chicken BBQ Platter  
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or call (610) 374-1763

## 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 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.

*Program subsidized by The Jewish Federation of Reading/Berks*

# Passover around the community



*Passover celebrations were held at the Highlands and the JCC thanks to Jewish Family Service.*

*Clockwise from top left: Paulo Kuczer and Eddie Kazin enjoying the Seder; Jake Mendelsohn, Joan Walden and Herb Karasin; cleaning the kitchen at 555 Warwick Drive with Keshet Zion Synagogue and Reform Congregation Oheb Shalom; Rabbi Prosnitz, breaking the matza.*

A BIG thank you to:

- Rabbi Michelson for leading the Passover program at the Highlands
- Rabbi Prosnitz for leading the JFS Friendship Circle Seder
- Sheila Bornstein, Judy Copeland, Sharon Syret, and Gail Tomrell for setting up for the Friendship Circle Seder and serving the meal
- Sheila Bornstein for baking delicious Passover desserts for the JFS Seder
- Pete Jacobson, Robert Schneier, Judy Synnamon, and Amanda Wertz for Passover meal deliveries
- Jill Skaist, advisor to the Isadore and Anna Oritsky – Gladys and Eli Skaist Philanthropic Fund for sponsoring our JFS Passover Seder and meal deliveries



### Federation Honorarium-Memorial Card Information

Please mail your payment with complete information to the Jewish Federation, 1100 Berkshire Blvd., Suite 125, Wyomissing 19610, or bring to the Jewish Cultural Center at the same address. 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 April 17

#### Jewish Federation

In memory of:

**Gordon Perlmutter** -Paul and Solange Mintz, Alan and Marjorie Leisawitz, Alexander and Naomi Knoll, Ann and Tom Connolly, Regina Connolly, Rev. Thomas and Amy Reinsel, Alan and Lisa Levine, Esther Strauss

**Jane Polonski** - Alan and Lisa Levine

**Barry W. Kerchner** - Vic and Dena Hammel, Debbie and David Goldberg, Bob and Beth Caster

#### Jewish Family Service Food Pantry

In honor of:

**Karen Kabakoff's Bat Mitzvah** - Debbie and David Goldberg

#### Jewish Family Service Friendship Circle

In memory of:

**Marilyn Orlin** - Jan and Jonathan Simon

**Sylvia Wenger** - Jan and Jonathan Simon

## JFS Hospital and Outpatient Visits

- Friendly and supportive visits
- Provide access to social services in conjunction with hospital case workers
- Information about home care, rehabs, and nursing homes
- Information about our taxi transportation services program

If you or a loved one are being treated at a local hospital or nursing home and would like a visit, please call JFS social workers Carole or Sari at 610-921-0624.

### Honorariums and Memorials

Contributions may be made to the following Funds:

**Federation Jewish Community Campaign**

**Jewish Family Service**

**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 Fund for Adult Programming**

**Evelyn Thompson Fund**

**Yvonne Frey Oppenheimer Fund for Community Engagement**

#### Yvonne Oppenheimer Fund for Community Engagement

In memory of:

**Gordon Perlmutter** - Jeff and Lynn Driben

#### Jewish Family Service

In celebration of:

**Jonathan and Jan Simon's new granddaughter** - Beth and Bob Caster

**A wonderful Passover program** - Paulo Kuczer, David Kay, Sylvia Wenger, Sharon Brown

In memory of:

**Gordon Perlmutter** - Beth and Bob Caster

**Chris Kraras** - Beth and Bob Caster

**Leonard Primack** - Carol and Bernie Gerber

**Sylvia Wenger** - Vicki Graff, Corinne and Andy Wernick, Evelyn and Jay Lipschutz, Esther Bratt, Marsha and Joel Adelman, Lila and Jannine Shapiro, Julia Swan

#### Holocaust Library & Resource Center

In memory of:

**Gordon Perlmutter** - Lori Armstrong

#### Harry and Rose Sack Fund for Adult Programming

In memory of:

**Chris Kraras** - Albert and Nancy Sack

FOR ALL HUMANKIND

**YOUR JUDAISM HOLDS A MESSAGE THE WORLD WANTS TO HEAR. IT'S TIME TO UNLOCK IT.**

#### Four Lessons



**01 The Message of Abraham**



**03 Educating Children**



**02 Is Morality Obvious?**



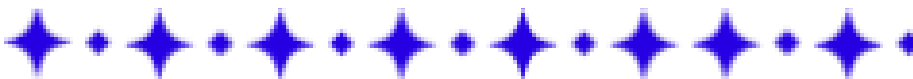
**04 It Will Get Better**

Join us for a four-session course with Rabbi Yosef Lipsker Beginning Sunday, May 3, 2026 at 10:00AM



May 7  
Berks County Evening  
Minyan  
All are welcome!  
7:00PM - 7:20PM

DAVEN WITH A MINYAN!



Friday May 15  
Kabbalat Shabbat  
6:30PM

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save the date  Friday May 15th at 7PM 

May 15th **TEACHER APPRECIATION & NEW MEMBER SHABBAT**

Join us for an ice cream oneg immediately following the service.

QHEB SHOLOM

# Powerful Yom Hashoah observance in Pa. Capitol

By Margo Levin  
JCRC Coordinator

During the recent observance of Yom HaShoah, Jewish communities around the world came together to remember the 6 million Jews murdered during the Holocaust and to reflect on the enduring responsibility to preserve their memory.

As part of this commemoration, the Federation had the distinct honor of attending the 2026 Civic Commemoration of the Holocaust at the Pennsylvania State Capitol. The ceremony brought together leaders, community members, and survivors' families from across the Commonwealth in a deeply moving tribute to those who perished.

A particularly poignant moment came when Jeff Gernsheimer honored the memory of his mother, Hildegard Hana Simon, ensuring that her legacy and the legacy of so many other continue to be remembered. Personal testimonies such as these served as powerful reminders of the human stories behind history.

The program featured remarks from distinguished Pennsylvania leaders, including state Rep. Tarik Khan, state Sen. Chris Dush, Attorney General David Sunday and state Rep. Dan Frankel. Their participation underscored the importance of Holocaust remembrance not only within the Jewish community,

but across all sectors of society.

The commemoration was organized by the Pennsylvania Jewish Coalition, with dedicated leadership from our own Judith Kraines, who served as chair. Their efforts ensured a meaningful and dignified observance befitting the gravity of the day.

As we reflect on Yom HaShoah, we are reminded that remembering is something we carry with us every day. By honoring the past, we strengthen our community and continue to stand together against hatred and antisemitism.

May the memory of those we lost be a blessing, and may we continue to uphold the sacred promise: Never Again Is Now.



Margo Levin, Jeff Gernsheimer and Judith Kraines at the Yom HaShoah commemoration Harrisburg.

## Reading leaders, Federation celebrate Israel

Federation staff

The City of Reading hosted its first-ever Israeli Independence Day Flag Raising Ceremony in partnership with the Jewish Federation.

Together, we commemorated the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 and recognized the significance of this day for members of our community. It was a meaningful and historic moment to come together in reflection and celebration.

Federation JCRC Coordinator Margo Levin delivered the following remarks:

"We are gathered here today in recognition of the United States' special relationship with Israel by honoring the flag of Israel, a symbol of that nation's history, culture, and ideals. Today, we will raise the flag of Israel in celebration of Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day.

"First, I would like to express my gratitude to Eddie Moran and Donna Reed for making this ceremony possible and for being here with us as we commemorate Israel's Independence Day. We also thank Judy Schwank and Johanny Cepeda-Freytiz. Thank you all for being with us today on Israel's 78th birthday.

"This moment is not only a time to celebrate, but also a time to reflect — to look to the past and to the future. It is a celebration of the resilience, courage, and hope of a people that led to the founding of the State of Israel, and a reflection on the enduring values of freedom, perseverance, and community that connect us all.

"Here in Reading and in Berks County, the Jewish community has been part of the fabric of this city and county for generations. We are your neighbors,



your colleagues, your friends. We have built lives here, raised families here and worked side by side with people of all backgrounds and from every walk of life to strengthen and uplift this community we proudly call home.

"Our story in Reading is one of true partnership. Together with local leaders, organizations, and fellow residents, we have stood united in times of challenge and celebration alike. We are grateful for the spirit of collaboration and mutual respect that defines this city, and we thank each of you for being part of that shared journey.

At the same time, today reminds us of our deep and enduring connection to the land and people of Israel. That connection is rooted in history, faith,

culture, and identity—but it also reflects universal values: the pursuit of peace, the importance of community, and the hope for a better future for all.

"As we raise the Israeli flag today, we do so with pride in who we are, gratitude for where we live, and appreciation for the many friendships and partnerships that make Reading such a special place.

"On behalf of the Jewish Federation of Reading-Berks, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to all the local leaders, community partners, and friends who have joined us today. Your presence is a meaningful reminder that our strength lies in standing together.

"May this moment inspire continued unity, understanding, and cooperation among all who call this city home."

## Opportunities to learn thanks to Federation



At left, thank you to Moran, Adi's sister; for taking the time to come to Reading while visiting from Israel to give some firsthand insights about her role in the Reserves during the war. She played a key role in the distribution of humanitarian aid in Gaza. Right, poet and psychologist Dr. Phillip Tietbohl delivers a Noontime Knowledge program on using rhyme to enhance memory and bring joy.

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CELEBRATE SHAVUOT

HEAR THE TEN COMMANDMENTS & ENJOY A DAIRY BUFFET

FREE ADMISSION

FRIDAY MAY 22<sup>ND</sup> 5:00 PM

FEATURING SHAVUOT ACTIVITIES, ICE CREAM PARTY, AND A CHEESECAKE BAR!

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