Great Joy as County Celebrates Israel @ 69

BY STEPHEN E. LIPKEN

An overflow crowd of approximately 400 people from Scarsdale and outlying communities poured into the Jewish Community Center of Mid-Westchester on Monday, May 1 to celebrate Israel @69, beginning with a solemn Yom Hazikaron Memorial Ceremony. It was then followed by a triumphant Yom Ha’atzmaut Israel Independence Day Celebration, sponsored by JCC-Mid Westchester; Jewish Education Project; UJA-Federation of NY and Westchester Jewish Council, coordinated by Community Shlichah Oshra Rosenberg.

Some 1,000 gathered in the Hilton Westchester, Lowey’s opening ceremony at the Westchester Torah Academy, New Rochelle.

Support, Education and Engagement Forum at Beth El Synagogue Center

BY STEPHEN E. LIPKEN

An Israel forum, Support, Education, Engagement (SEE) was held at Beth El Synagogue Center, New Rochelle on Sunday, May 7, featuring a Keynote Speaker and series of Panel Discussions including Alexander Muss High School in Israel (AMHS); Friends of Israel Defense Force Lone Soldiers Panel; Religious Inclusion and Israel Activism on Campus by StandWithUs (SWU) plus Students and Parents Against Campus Anti-Semitism (SPA-CA).

About 200 community members attended, including children who were treated to a Krav Maga (Israeli self-defense) demonstration in the Youth Lounge.

Other organizations showcased were: AJC Global Jewish Advocacy; Association of Reform Zionists of America (ARZA); Friends of United Hatzalah of Israel (FUHI); Israel Bonds; Israel Cancer Research Fund; Jewish National Fund (JNF); Masorti and Untold News.

Ammunition Hill National Heritage Memorial Events and Marketing manager Alon Wald disseminated JNF’s partnering with Muss High School and Ammunition Hill Site, recontinued on page 4

Congresswoman Lowey Opens Exhibition on Leonard Cohen’s Life and Roots

BY STEPHEN E. LIPKEN

Some 1,000 gathered in May for Limmud FSU New York, the biggest event geared towards the Russian-speaking Jewish community in the Tri-State area. On May 12, Congresswoman Nita Lowey, D-N.Y., opened an exhibition on Leonard Cohen’s life and Jewish roots.

Speaking at the conference’s opening ceremony at the Hilton Westchester, Lowey expressed her support for the State of Israel.

“I sit on the House Appropriations Committee, and I’m a member of the subcommittee that oversees foreign aid,” said Lowey. “We’re just starting the bill for 2018, and the only thing I can be sure of is that the money for Israel – foreign aid and military assistance will be secure because there’s strong bipartisan support and I’m proud of that.”

There are currently an estimated 200,000 Russian Jews in the Tri-State area and 700,000 in the United States. Limmud FSU New York is a dynamic and pluralistic Jewish festival of culture, creativity and learning featuring more than 80 inspiring speakers and 120 panels, workshops and discussions on subjects ranging...

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Great Joy as County Celebrates Israel @ 69

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omies between Yom Ha Zikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut; doing what is easy and what is right. “Between the comforting waters of the Mediterranean are tunnels and rockets waiting down the coast; the dichotomy is unsettling.”

Andrew H. Gross, Director of Political Affairs, Advisor to the Deputy Consul General, Consulate General of Israel pointed out that Israel lost 1% of its population in the War of Independence.

“We have done incredible things, launched satellites and cured diseases...Our sacrifices have led to an absolutely... wonderful country...,” Gross stated.

A joyous Yom Ha'atzmaut followed, featuring unbridled dancing to “Capaim” (Hebrew, “applause”) wine-tasting plus Israeli cheeses, hummus, falafel and “shakshuka” (Arabic, “mixture”), poached eggs in tomato sauce.

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Jewish History and Heritage Month Celebrated with Westchester County Board of Legislators

On May 8, The Westchester County Board of Legislators celebrated Jewish History and Heritage Month in Chambers at the Michaelian Office Building, 148 Martine Avenue, White Plains with Rabbi Gordon Tucker of Temple Israel of White Plains giving the invocation. Michael B. Kaplowitz, Chairman of the County Board of Legislators welcomed the crowd that included Westchester Jewish Council Executive Director Elliot Forchheimer and many Council members.

Legislator Ben Boykin presented a proclamation to Scarsdale resident Donald Fleishaker, Honorary Director of Westchester Jewish Council and Past Campaign Chair of UJA Federation of New York in Westchester. Legislator Alfreda Williams presented a proclamation to Frank Hassid, outgoing Executive Director of the Harold and Elaine Shames Jewish Community Center on the Hudson. Martine Fleishman of Harrison, the outgoing Regional Chair of UJA Federation of New York in Westchester was presented her proclamation by Legislator David B. Gelfarb.

As this year is UJA Federation’s 100th Anniversary, the County Board issued a proclamation to the organization for its service to the community with Mrs. Fleishman accepting. The world’s leading local philanthropy, UJA’s reach extends from New York to Israel to nearly 70 other countries around the world, touching 4.5 million people each year.

A lively hora celebrating Yom Ha'atzmaut

I-r, Lisa Roberts, President-elect Westchester Jewish Council; Donald Fleishaker; Martine Fleishman; Sue Baer, Westchester Jewish Council Board member and event chairperson; Frank Hassid; Richard Spitz, Executive Director, UJA-Federation of NY in Westchester.

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May 1 - Israeli Memorial and Independence Days Featuring Israeli Ambassador Danon
May 15 - A Taste of the Global Forum Featuring Ambassador Ford on Syria
May 29 - Yossi Klein Halevi on the 50th Anniversary of the 6-Day War
The 53rd Annual Salute to Israel Parade

The Jewish Community Relations Council of New York (JCRC-NY) has announced that Rabbi Haskel Lookstein will lead the 2017 Celebrate Israel Parade as Grand Marshal up Fifth Avenue in New York City on Sunday, June 4 in front of hundreds of thousands of spectators. Joining him as Honorary Grand Marshals will be former New York Giants running back Tiki Barber, celebrity chef and Jewish lifestyle expert Jamie Geller, mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter Chaim Gozali and the Mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barkat.

The Parade is the largest public event celebrating Israel in the world highlighting Israel’s rich heritage, vibrant culture, and the positive impact the Jewish and democratic state of Israel has on the lives of people around the world.

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, now Emeritus, has been the Rabbi of Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun since 1958 and Principal of the Ramaz School since 1966. He is the Joseph H. Lookstein Professor of Homiletics at Yeshiva University and serves as a Vice President of the Beth Din of America. He is a past-President of the New York Board of Rabbis, Chairman of the National Rabbinic Cabinet of UJA-Federation of New York and President of the Synagogue Council of America and a past Commissioner of the New York City Human Rights Commission.

Tiki Barber, a 1997 graduate of the University of Virginia’s McIntire School of Commerce (Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society), with a concentration in Management Information Systems. At UVA, Tiki excelled both academically and athletically - football and track and field. He left the Cavaliers as their all-time leading rusher and began a 10-year NFL career with the New York Football Giants.

Barber joined Marshall Faulk and Marcus Allen as the only players in NFL history with at least 10,000 yards rushing and 5,000 yards receiving in a career. In January of 2011, Barber was inducted into the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame, located in Portsmouth, VA. He serves as co-host of CBS Sports Radio’s national afternoon show, Tiki & Tierney, which is also simulcast on CBS Sports Network. He is also an entrepreneur, co-founding Thuzio, Inc, the world’s most comprehensive software and service solution for talent procurement.

Nir Barkat, has served as Mayor of Jerusalem since 2008, inspiring Jerusalemites with his vision to leverage the city’s cultural landscape all served as the basis for his re-election for a second term in 2013. Mayor Barkat’s marked successes in his public service are rooted in his previous work as a tech entrepreneur. In 1988, Mayor Barkat co-founded BRM Technologies, a pioneering software technology company and later venture capital firm that developed and marketed groundbreaking antivirus software now standard on personal computers throughout the world. He has brought his business acumen and entrepreneurial approach to City Hall, fostering a municipal culture dedicated to constant innovation and swift execution.

Jamie Geller, known as the “Jewish Rachael Ray,” is the Founder and CEO of Kosher Network International (KNI), publisher of JBoyKOSHER.com and the award-winning Jamie Geller’s JOY of KOSHER magazine. She is also host of the Chanukah Cooking Special with Jamie Geller on PBS and Create TV.

Chaim Gozali, is an Israeli born and raised MMA fighter, who started his Martial Arts training at the age of 6 with Karate until he enrolled in the IDF for his military service in Israel. After completing his service he trained Muay Thai for a few years and in 1997 he discovered BJJ in NYC where he started training under the legendary Renzo Gracie. He ultimately got his black belt from Renzo in 2004 and is currently a 3rd-degree BJJ Black Belt, the highest ranked Israeli in the world. His MMA career began in 1998 and holds a 7-3 record facing standout opponents such as Carlos Newton and current UFC Middleweight contender Ronaldo “Jacare” Souza. On June 24th, 2017, Gozali will be the first Israeli to ever fight MMA in the most famous arena in the world - Madison Square Garden. He’ll be facing Ryan Couture, son of the legendary Randy Couture.

Also marching in this year’s parade will be members of the Maccabi USA team set to compete in the 20th World Maccabiah Games in July who will also be joined by US swimming gold medalist Lenny Krayzelburg and Israeli judoka bronze medalist Arik Ze’evi.

Performing at this year’s parade are: Milk & Honey; Yarden Klaym Six13; Avram Pen & The Noga Group; Golem and Soul Farm.

In honor of the Celebrate Israel Parade and the state of Israel, the Empire State Building will shine its world-famous tower lights blue and white on Saturday, June 3.

The parade is produced in partnership with the UJA-Federation of New York and the State of Israel.
Support, Education and Engagement
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Calling how JNF evolved from purchasing land in Israel to planting “210 million trees, the most in any country” and attempting to settle 1 million people from the center of Israel to the Negev. Wald’s father Captain Rami Wald was killed in 1967 at Ammunition Hill.

Keynote Speaker, IDF Colonel Kobi Marom (ret.) spoke about Russian control of Syrian airspace, constructing air and naval bases along the Syrian coast. He delineated three main challenges: 1) Syria; 2) Refugees and 3) ISIS. “Syria is a tremendous battlefield, giving Iran the opportunity to construct an infrastructure on Golan Heights against Israel.”

Marom stressed that Hamas is developing cyber-technology and using human shields.

“I am very proud that Beth El organized this program for the entire Westchester Community,” Beth El Synagogue Center Rabbi David Schuck stated. “We need to find ways to engage as many people in our communities with Israel. The panels challenged people to deepen their perspectives on what is happening in Israel and I hope that we introduced people to organizations that are working to strengthen Israeli society in ways that reflect their values and interests...”

In addition to Beth El Synagogue Center, other community sponsors of the event included The JCC of Harrison; Scarsdale Synagogues Tremont and Emanu-El; Temple Israel Center, White Plains; Temple Israel of New Rochelle and Westchester Jewish Council.

Congresswoman Lowey Opens Exhibition on Leonard Cohen’s Life and Roots
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Congresswoman Lowey Opens Exhibition on Leonard Cohen’s Life and Roots
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Sponsored by the Koret Foundation and Blavatnik Family Foundation, Limmud FSU New York explored a broad array of topics including Israel in the era of Trump, Jewish views of astrology and superstition, raising children in a diverse world, demystifying Shabbat, and religious Zionism. Top Israeli singer Ninet Tayeb gave a special performance during the tribute to Leonard Cohen.

“Aside from his remarkable musical achievements, Leonard was very much connected to his Jewish identity and roots, making him a role model for Jews across the world,” said Limmud FSU founder Chaim Chesler.

Among the featured presenters were Consul General of Israel in New York Dani Dayan; Member of Knesset Yoel Hasson; UJA-Federation of New York Director of Learning and Development and Jewish Parent Co-Founder Yelena Kutikova; American rabbi and bestselling author Joseph Telushkin; Muslim interfaith activist Nadiya Al-Noor; Abby Stein, the first openly transgender woman raised in the Hasidic community; acclaimed Russian animator Oleg Kuvaev, and many others.

“This inspiring gathering contributes to the incredible vitality of Russian-Jewish life in New York,” said Limmud FSU Co-Founder Sandy Cahn.
Scarsdale Family Envisions Skate Park, Changing the Face of Mitzpe Ramon, Israel

BY MEGAN E. TURNER

“Mitzpe Ramon is in the house!” exclaimed the emcee at the opening ceremony of Mitzpe Ramon’s first skate park in mid-April.

The air was buzzing with excited chatter and the ‘swooshing’ sounds of professional skater demonstrators and novices testing out the new curves and ramps of this unique and beautiful park. What sets this park apart is that it’s the only one of its kind, not only in this dusty development town, but anywhere else, too.

In this park deep in the heart of Israel’s Negev Desert, children and teens, both boys and girls, religious and secular, could be seen gliding around on their skateboards and roller blades, catching air and laughing with excitement. One girl rolled up yelling, “I love to skate!” before grabbing her friend’s hand to run off and perform her next trick.

Six months ago, this patch of land was nothing more than dry, desert sand in the middle of a town home to just over 5,000 residents. “It’s very different now,” said Norman Weiss of Scarsdale, who together with his wife, Bonnie, donated the funds, vision, and motivation to make this project come to fruition. It all began when the Weiss’ were approached by Russell F. Robinson, Jewish National Fund’s (JNF) CEO, with an idea of creating a skate park deep in the heart of Israel’s Negev Desert. “I instantly knew we had to get involved,” Weiss said.

The Weiss’ wanted to make a difference in Southern Israel, and this was made possible thanks to JNF’s groundbreaking Blueprint Negev initiative, that seeks to settle and strengthen Israel’s Negev region and to draw 300,00 new residents to the area. Mitzpe Ramon Mayor Ronen Marom told the gathered crowd at the opening ceremony that the park’s addition will add much depth and value to the town and the region. “If it’s not here in Mitzpe Ramon, it wouldn’t exist anywhere else,” Marom said, driving home the message of how extraordinary the creation of this park is to the town. “Even though you are not residents, you are a part of Mitzpe Ramon, and that excites me,” Mayor Marom told the Weiss family.

According to Marom, the park will address three main goals for the town and the surrounding area: to provide a place for local youth that allows greater involvement in Mitzpe Ramon’s city life; provide a common meeting place for Mitzpe Ramon’s heterogeneous community, which consists of a wide range of ages and social and religious backgrounds; and to instill a sense of social responsibility in residents who use the park.

In addition to Norman and Bonnie, three generations of the Weiss family were present to take part in the opening ceremony. In his address to the crowd—in flawless Hebrew—Norman said, “All of you deserve thanks for building up this wonderful community and for being part of the miracle of miracles that is the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel.”

The Weiss’ are another example of the unbreakable connection between the State of Israel and JNF’s generous partners and donors. “This is a high-class park.” the emcee shouted out to the crowd as international skating stars flipped and performed tricks around the park. And by the cheers and smiles that accompanied this statement, it’s safe to say that the residents of Mitzpe Ramon wholeheartedly agree.

Rabbi Jaymee Alpert Chosen for Rabbis Without Borders National Fellowship Program

Rabbis Without Borders (RWB), Clal’s landmark initiative that helps rabbis innovate using Jewish wisdom as a source for wellbeing for anyone anywhere, selected its seventh class for its competitive rabbinic fellowship program. From those who applied, Rabbi Jaymee Alpert of Congregation Kneses Tifereth Israel, Port Chester, was selected for this prestigious program.

“Interest in the program has only increased over the years,” said Rabbi Rebecca W. Sirbu, RWB Director. “Rabbis recognize that the religious environment has changed from family make up to spiritual practice. To reach people where they are and how they are, rabbis need to apply their skills in new ways. RWB offers that kind of support. Rabbis Without Borders helps rabbis better communicate in both familiar and new venues, and makes Jewish wisdom an accessible resource for the American public to help all people flourish in their lives.”

Rabbis Without Borders is the first Rabbinic Network in America that spans denominations, geography and experience. Serving over 2 million people in the United States to date, RWB is uniquely poised to serve the needs of today’s increasingly diverse American population. By envisioning a world where Jewish wisdom is a source for wellbeing for anyone anywhere, the rabbis in the RWB Network are committed to serving people wherever they may be: affiliated or not, Jewishly educated or not, with Jewish connections or none. These rabbis share their Torah in pluralistic, innovative ways grounded by a sense of service to all.

Founded in 2008, the impact of Rabbis Without Borders is being experienced across the country. By adopting a “Beyond borders” approach to their rabbinites, the rabbis report that: 96% of RWB Fellows have strengthened and increased their comfort crossing denominational and institutional boundaries; 91% of RWB Fellows have created new programs in their synagogues/organizations; and 81% of RWB Fellows have seen an increase in participation in programs and use of services in their synagogue or organization.

Consciously adopting a pluralistic approach and looking to serve all people anywhere, has significantly increased these rabbis’ ability to share Jewish wisdom and practices. They are no longer bound by whatever they saw as the traditional boarders of their communities, and this in turn is growing the impact of Jewish wisdom on the world.

Since 1974, when Clal founded by Rabbi Irving Greenberg and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, its mission has been to help prepare the Jewish people for the unprecedented freedom and openness of America. RWB is an extension of that work. Rabbis Without Borders is transforming the rabbinate in America into a highly skilled innovative class of American religious leaders who use Judaism to help American Jews and all Americans flourish.
On June 4, 11am to 4pm, The Celebrate Israel Parade, one of the largest parades in NYC, returns under the banner of “Talmud and the Ethics of our Sages” on Thursdays, from 10:30-12Noon in the Social Hall. New participants are welcome. For additional information visit info@yorktownjewishcenter.org or call 917-774-4076.

The Hadassah Westchester 2017 Jewish Film Festival will screen the following at the Greenburgh Library, 300 Tarrytown Road, Elmsford: On July 11 at 2pm, Take to a Wife; On July 20 at 2pm, 7 days; and on July 25, Get: The Trial of Viviane Amsalem. For more information, contact Hadassah at 937-3151.

On July 10, Global Jewish Giving Day will be held. Nonprofit organizations can sign-up, or you can volunteer or donate. To learn more, go to Jewishgivingday.org.

On July 13 at 7pm, join for a Sunday tour of the Bialystoker Synagogue and learn about the largest congregation on the Lower East Side of NYC today. Meet in front of the synagogue, 711 Wiltel-Bialystoker Place, between Grand and Delancy Streets, NYC. Call 212-374-4100 x 1, 2 to register.

Bingo will be played at the Yorktown Jewish Center, 2966 Comrond Road, Yorktown Heights, June 25, July 9 and 23, and August 6 and 20. Call 245-2324 for details.

June

2 The New Connect Initiative reaches out to interfaith families in a program supported through Bedford’s Michael Douglas, The Genesis Prize Foundation, and the Jewish Funders Network. To learn more, visit connectandengage.com.

At 2:30pm, celebrate Shavout with the Westchester Community for Humanistic Judaism at the Community Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 468 Rosendale Avenue, White Plains. There is no charge but donations are welcomed. Visit info@wcuj.org for details.

2 From 2-6pm, join the Celebrate Israel Festival New York at Terminal 5, 610 West 56th Street, NYC. This year’s theme is Jerusalem – 50 Years of Reunification. Celebrate Israel’s mission is to bridge between communities by celebrating the State of Israel and educating through music, arts and culture. View israelamerican.org/new-york/celebrate-israel to learn more.

5 From 7:30-9pm, the WJCS Jewish Spiritual Healing Center will present the talk “Holding Ground through the Ups and Downs of Life”, at JCC Harrison, 130 Union Avenue, Harrison. Judaism offers many practices to help one stay centered and focused for the long haul, holding expectations, sorrows, and disappointments in proper perspective. The use of spiritual tools will be discussed and put to practice. For more information or to register, contact Rabbi Pamela Wax at 761-0600 ext. 149.

6 Ping Pong will be played at the Yorktown Jewish Center, 2966 Comrond Road, Yorktown Heights, June 25, July 9 and 23, and August 6 and 20. Call 245-2324 for details.

The JCC of Mid-Westchester, 999 Wilmot Road, Scarsdale, is hosting an Israel Film Festival screening Hummus! The Movie, June 8 at 7:30pm; On the Map, June 11 at 5pm; and Aida’s Secret, June 13 at 10:30am. Call 472-3300 for tickets.

On June 11, the JCC of Harrison, 120 Union Avenue, will host a Gala Fundraiser honoring Leo and Joan Gilberg, Martin and Tobi Rogowsky, and Rick and Marcia Caplan. To attend or for more information, call 835-2850.

On June 11 at 2pm, Westchester Jewish Center, 175 Rockland Avenue, Mamaroneck, will feature journalist Jodi Kantor speaking about her experience covering Syrian Refugee Resettlement in Canada in a program sponsored by Neighbors for Refugees and Westchester Jewish Center. For more information, call 917-774-4076.

On June 19, 11am to 4pm, at the Westchester Chordsman, 2100 x 1, 2 to register. (Intended for all ages)

On June 20, 1-3pm, the JCC of Westchester, a program of Volunteer New York! will hold their 20th Anniversary Celebration at Zuppa Restaurant and Lounge, 56-61 Main Street, Yonkers. To attend contact Allison Chader at 227-9307.

On June 24, 1-3pm, meet at Panera Bread, 875 Pelham Parkway, Pelham Manor at 875 Pelham Parkway, Pelham Manor. Visit jbusinesseventnetwork.net/events/westchester for details.

On June 25, 10am to 1pm, the JCC of Mid-Westchester Men’s Club, 999 Wilmot Road, Scarsdale, will present the international movie and romantic comedy by Val Franco called, My Old Lady. Call 472-3300 or visit JCMWW.org for more details.

On June 29 at 7:30pm, a special movie night of Star Wars will be held at the Yorktown Jewish Center, 2966 Comrond Road, Yorktown Heights. RSVP by June 15 to events@yorktownjewishcenter.org with name, telephone, email, and number of attendees.

Upcoming

Yorktown Jewish Center, 2966 Comrond Road, Yorktown Heights, resumes their class on “Talmud and the Ethics of our Sages” on Thursdays, from 10:30-12Noon in the Social Hall. New participants are welcome. For additional information visit info@yorktownjewishcenter.org or call 245-2324.

Every Monday from 9:30-10:45am, WICS offers Jewish Mindfulness Meditation at Temple Israel Center, 280 Old Mamaroneck Road, White Plains. Call 761-0600 to learn more.

Every Thursday from 9:30-10:45am, WICS offers Jewish Mindfulness Meditation at Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester, 220 South Bedford Road, Chappaqua. Call 761-0600 to register.

At 2:30pm, celebrate Shavout with the Westchester Community for Humanistic Judaism at the Community Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 468 Rosanale Avenue, White Plains. There is no charge but donations are welcomed. Visit info@wcuj.org for details.

At 7:30pm, a community conversation on end of life issues called Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Jewish Funerals but Never Dared to Ask, will be held at The Temple Israel Center, Yorktown Heights. For additional information visit info@yorktownjewishcenter.org or call 245-2324.

From 7:30-9am, network with other Westchester County Jewish professionals for a special presentation called Don’t Wait Until April, to review the CPA’s role in smart financial planning beyond filing tax returns. Meet at Panera Bread, 875 Pelham Parkway, Pelham Manor at 875 Pelham Parkway, Pelham Manor. Visit jbusinesseventnetwork.net/events/westchester for more details.

From 10:30am to 12pm, Pulitzer Campfire Readings with Dr. Eleanor Ehrenkranz, 1230-130pm, Yiddish Conversations with Bea Friedman. Call 472-3300 or visit JCMWW.org for more details.
Join us. Let’s celebrate Israel together.
ujafedny.org/celebrateisrael
Senator Klein Hosts Jewish American Heritage Month Celebration

Senator Jeff Klein hosted his 3rd annual Riverdale Jewish American Heritage Month Celebration on May 21 at the Riverdale YM-YWHA. During the event, Senator Klein honored local Jewish American leaders for their many accomplishments and contributions to the community.

“Jewish American Heritage Month is an important time of the year where we honor the countless contributions Jewish Americans have made throughout our nation’s storied history. Right here in Riverdale, we have many local Jewish American leaders who lead by example and improve the quality of life for their fellow citizens. I’m proud to recognize and salute not just our local honorees, but all Jewish Americans across the country,” said Senator Klein.

Together by over one hundred community members and Congressman Elliot Engel, Senator Klein celebrated and honored local Jewish Americans including: Judith Sonnett, community activist; Hector Goldman, World War II Veteran; Michael Heller, Bronx Community Board #8 District Manager; Ken and Cochava Dubin, Owners of The Corner Cafe.

“I want to thank Senator Klein. I have been part of this community for 30 years or longer, I love the community. I love being Jewish. I love being a New Yorker. I love being an American and I will continue to work as hard as I can,” said Judith Sonnett, community activist.

“Thank you, Senator Klein. I came to this country and a year later I was back in Europe fighting the Germans. I am very proud of that,” said Hector Goldman, World War II Veteran.

Following the awards ceremony, attendees enjoyed a complimentary lunch while listening to Klezmer music, which was performed by members of Shlomo Hativ Music.

Local Residents Joined UJA-Federation of NY Centennial Mission

You’re never too old to try something new. That’s why nearly 50 Baby Boomers from across greater New York City and some Westchester County residents from New Rochelle, Larchmont and Rye Brook, travelled to Israel for the very first time, April 29-May 5, to celebrate the Jewish state’s 69th Independence Day and to mark the UJA-Federation of New York’s century of supporting the Jewish community and Israel.

The Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964 during the post-war years of America’s economic surge, embarked on their maiden journey to Israel as part of the largest UJA-Federation mission to Israel in years, the William Rosenwald Mission, featuring 300 visitors on a multi-track trip (http://uja100trip.org).

“The Baby Boomer’s Overview of Israel” saw historic places like Jerusalem’s Old City, Safed and Ceasarea, cultural sites like the Museum for the History of Society and Democracy in Israel at Tel Aviv’s Yitzhak Rabin Center and the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv’s trendy neighborhoods Neve Tzedek and Nachalat Binyamin.

Among the Baby Boomers were Sharon Elwin, 57, and Sandra Hellman, 74.

Hellman, who has suffered from serious respiratory ailments and lung cancer, among other challenges, said: “I am so happy to have lived to realize the one thing I’d always wanted to do my whole life – visit Israel.”

“This mission was an experience I will never forget,” added Elwin. “Over the jam-packed week we learned so much from the excellent speakers and knowledgeable tour guides – and I met plenty of wonderful like-minded people from back home. I’m glad I came to Israel with UJA-Federation.”

Day after day, season after season, year after year people come to us because they know we will be there for them.
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Guest Speaker: Lior Raz
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For more information please contact Anat Chavkin at 646-274-9669 or anat.chavkin@fidf.org

Their job is to look after Israel. Ours is to look after them.
Yeshiva University Inducts Local Resident to Athletics Hall of Fame

The inaugural Yeshiva University Athletics Hall of Fame induction ceremony was held on May 8, 2017. With iconic YU coaches and all-time leading scorers for both men and women's basketball among the inaugural class of honorees, the event paid homage to the rich and vibrant history of Yeshiva University's Athletic program. Honorees included Yeshiva coaching legends like Bernard “Red” Sarachek, Arthur Tauber, Henry Wittenberg and more who have distinguished themselves in the National Collegiate Athletic Association competition and who best exemplify the University's highest ideals and mission.

The inaugural Hall of Fame class included New Rochelle resident, Abe Sodden, who ranks 16th all-time in YU basketball scoring history. He played from 1952 to 1956, serving as captain during the 1955-1956 season. Sodden broke the record at the time for most points in a season, with 384 points, by averaging the highest individual points per game (20.2) in school history.

“We are thrilled to gather some of Yeshiva's most accomplished alumni and honor them at our inaugural Hall of Fame induction ceremony,” said Joe Bednarsh, YU’s athletic director. “The establishment of the Hall of Fame is both a testament to and reflection of the contributions YU's athletes and coaches have made to not only the world of sports but to the University for more than a century.”

In May, UJA-Federation of New York’s Rivertowns Women’s Philanthropy came together to raise funds for The Sally & Anthony Mann Center, a residential treatment facility in Hawthorne for teenage girls with psychiatric conditions run by UA partner, The Jewish Board. During the evening, guests made bath salt packages for the young women at The Mann Center and brought new or gently used young adult books to donate to the residents. A professional make-up demonstration was also featured.

This event was part of the community's larger philanthropic initiative to fund a new recreation room for the residents, who work with center staff to turn their lives around by through professional counseling, job training, and a safe haven in a compassionate environment.

New Survey Finds Solidarity Across Generations is Critical for Building Stronger Communities

The report highlights this year's Eisner Prize for Intergenerational Excellence-winner DOROT and others as national examples of pioneers reuniting the generations and making their communities better places to live. For four decades, DOROT has provided services to seniors in New York City to combat isolation and the associated health consequences. With a name meaning "generations" in Hebrew, DOROT's creative intergenerational programs activate younger generations to ensure that their clients have access to the resources they need to age with dignity, independence, and grace.

"The Eisner Prize for Intergenerational Excellence allows us to shine a light on exceptional organizations that bring together the older and younger generations," said Michael Eisner, founder of The Eisner Foundation. "DOROT's intergenerational programs designed to alleviate social isolation in older adults are compassionate and commendable and so worthy of national recognition.

The full report is available at https://goo.gl/N5givE.

Rivertowns Girls Night Out Supports Local RTF

Hair and Makeup Artist Heather Gerchberg of New York City (center) with Beth Pocius of Hastings On Hudson (left) and Dr. Stacy Rosenkrantz of Irvington (right)

In May, UJA-Federation of New York's Rivertowns Women's Philanthropy came together to raise funds for The Sally & Anthony Mann Center, a residential treatment facility in Hawthorne for teenage girls with psychiatric conditions run by UA partner, The Jewish Board. During the evening, guests made bath salt packages for the young women at The Mann Center and brought new or gently used young adult books to donate to the residents. A professional make-up demonstration was also featured.

This event was part of the community's larger philanthropic initiative to fund a new recreation room for the residents, who work with center staff to turn their lives around by through professional counseling, job training, and a safe haven in a compassionate environment.

Westchester Business and Professional Group Honors Leaders During Centennial Year

UJA-Federation of New York's Westchester Business and Professional Division honored Barry J. Effron of White Plains and Budd Wiesenberg of Mamaroneck at its 2017 Annual Luncheon on Thursday, May 11th, at Brae Burn Country Club in Purchase. Next Bank

This year's luncheon celebrated UJAs 100th anniversary. "Our centennial doesn't just provide an opportunity to celebrate our achievements; it's a platform from which to look forward," said Gary Sastow of Scarsdale, who chaired the event with Geri Pell of Tarrytown. "Some of the problems we've faced over a century still persist: hunger, homelessness, the needs of new immigrants, the resurgence of anti-Semitism, a thirst for spiritual guidance.

"Because our world is so complicated, we need to work together to get the best results and avoid redundancy," he continued. "We do this through collaboration — and that's where UJA steps in. With more than 80 core partners and hundreds of other nonprofit agencies, we are able to act as convener, bringing people to the table for the best possible solutions to today's problems."

The founder of the Westchester Business and Professional Division, Effron established Effron Enterprises, Inc. and Plan Sponsor Network, Inc., firms that developed analytical software for the investment community. After selling his business in 1998, he continues to be active in the investment community as a board member of Pension Group East, a consortium of 60 top U.S. pension funds.

As vice president at CBRE, the world's largest advisory and transaction real estate firm, Wiesenber is an advisor and broker in leasing, acquisitions, and sales of commercial space and properties throughout the tri-state region, with a special emphasis on Westchester and Fairfield counties. The recipient of corporate awards at CBRE, he also has been recognized with a number of industry awards.

Susan Taxin Baer of Scarsdale and Ben Blumberg of Larchmont are chairs of the Westchester Business and Professional Division. Judith Stern Rosen of Purchase served as journal chair.
The Sunrise Association Honors Joy and Steve Zelin at 4TH Annual Dare to Dream Benefit

On June 8, 2017 at 6:30 pm, The Sunrise Association will honor Larchmont residents Joy and Steve Zelin with the Sunrise Champion Award at The Pierre, 2 East 61st St at 5th Avenue, New York, during the 4th Annual Dare to Dream Benefit. This event benefits the Sunrise Association, based in Oceanside, NY, whose mission is to bring back the joys of childhood to children with cancer and their siblings world-wide, through the creation of Day Camps, Year-Round Programs and In-Hospital Recreational Activities, all offered free of charge.

Sunrise Association Day Camps are the world's only dedicated day camps for children with cancer and their siblings, provided completely free of charge. Offering memorable summers since 2006 for children ages 3-12, Sunrise Association Day Camps bring the simple pleasures of childhood back to children struggling with cancer, changing months of loneliness and isolation into summers filled with sunshine, laughter and happiness. And because they are day camps, it allows children to continue their medical treatment and enjoy the comfort and safety of their own homes at night.

The Zelins were first introduced to Sunrise Day Camp six years ago by their friend and Sunrise Association Board Member, Laurie Girskey and her husband Stephen. From the first visit to the flagship camp on Long Island, Joy was hooked! In 2013, in anticipation of the opening of Sunrise Day Camp Pearl River, the Zelins named "Joy’s Art Shack," where Joy can be found, behind the tattoo station, during the Arts and Crafts Days that she co-chairs. Steve participates in Men's Day and the entire family has helped beautify the camp at Spring Clean-Up Days. Their daughter, Danielle, was even a counselor one summer.

Joy is a member of the Sunrise Association Board of Directors, and together, Joy and Steve were the first Co-Chairs of the Dare to Dream Benefit. They have remained active committee members ever since, leading up to their being honored at this event. Additionally, Joy and Steve have chaired and sponsored benefit events for many local institutions, including The Emelin Theatre and Fields for Kids. The Zelins sponsor academic scholarships at both New York University and the University at Albany that provide financial support for deserving students in need.

Neighbors for Refugees Sponsors Discussion in Mamaroneck

Larchmont and Mamaroneck neighbors will be gathering together at Westchester Jewish Center on Sunday, June 11 from 2-5pm, to speak out on behalf of refugees and engage in ways to help. This event will give members of the community a chance to learn more about the situation of refugees, hear from a New York Times journalist who covered the Canadian refugee experience last year, discover how to assist refugee resettlement in this area and tell NY State Delegates what the local priorities are. This event is sponsored by Neighbors for Refugees, formerly Hearts and Homes for Refugees of Larchmont/Mamaroneck and co-sponsored by Westchester Jewish Center, Larchmont Temple, Larchmont Avenue Church, St. Augustine Church, St. John's Episcopal Church, and St. Thomas Episcopal Church.

The keynote speaker, New York Times writer Jodi Kantor, spent much of last year in Canada, watching a story unfold. It's a story of compassion, of a community coming together for a cause greater than anything they had ever known. While much of the world was expressing ambivalence about the refugee issue, thousands of Canadian citizens were essentially adopting Syrians who not only spoke little English but also had barely heard much about their adopted country.

Kantor is a best-selling author, and a contributor to CBS This Morning. Her investigations into working conditions at Starbucks and Amazon prompted policy changes at both companies, and Kantor is now writing a book on labor and working conditions at Starbucks. Her investigations also prompted policy changes at both companies, and Kantor is now writing a book on labor and working conditions at Starbucks. Her investigations also prompted policy changes at both companies, and she has written about Harvard Business School's attempt to change its climate for women and the Stanford Class of 1994. Before becoming a reporter, Kantor was the New York editor of Slate magazine and The Times's Arts & Leisure editor.

For six years, Kantor wrote about Barack and Michelle Obama, delving into their ideas, biographies, family, marriage, faith and approach to the White House, and covering the 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns. Kantor's book The Obamas chronicles their behind-the-scenes adjustment to the jobs of president and first lady.

Joining the discussion will be local politicians and clergy along with representatives from sponsoring agencies HIAS and Catholic Charities. Planned topics will include the state of refugees currently arriving in the United States, the vetting process, what happens after refugees arrive, see what kind of help they need and talk about what you can do to help. The group will also provide information on education and grassroots efforts around refugees and real, actionable activities to help change the lives of refugees who are here and those in refugee camps.

Neighborhoods for Refugees (formerly Hearts And Homes for Refugees Larchmont Mamaroneck), is a grassroots organization made up of individuals from congregations, civic groups and student groups in southern Westchester. The organization is focused on refugee resettlement using a co-sponsorship model in cooperation with the State Department and affiliated organizations. To get involved, sign up through the registration database https://www.sunset.org/.

To attend the event or for more information go to sunriseassociation.org, daretodream.org.
Kitchen & Bath Insider: Evil Ne'er-Do-Wells Hack Designs

BY PAUL BOOKBINDER, M.I.D., C.R.

Don’t be surprised if you find an empty dumpster of your present (or future) kitchen or bath replicated in such foreign places as North Korea, China or even New Jersey! Even where food is scarce and life is cheap, people still dream about a breathtaking kitchen, and they will not be denied, even if it means using illicit techniques to hack into the interweb or darknet. There they can steal your most secret design concepts or selfies! Is nothing safe today? Not really, just watch the news or look on the web if you dare. If you want to ensure a unique solution to your kitchen or bathroom project, and have it executed properly, look for a secure, licensed, accredited firm that has been around for a while and knows what they are doing.

Beware especially of the “sleeper contractor” who remains dormant until there’s mischief to be made. (See: video.foxnews.com/wvideo/s-v/52950849001?sp=showc) These reprehensible operators operate under the radar, off the grid, in the shadows, until it’s time to strike. They have no license, they have no insurance, they don’t even have a website! They would steal a design, or cut a corner, without giving it a second thought and install cabinets infused with arsenic and lead, from countries that pay their workers pennies a day! Just wait until something goes wrong or you need a replacement part, or the cabinets start to warp. If you’re lucky enough to find them, just as their name connotes, they’ll probably be “sleeping” on the next job and unable and unwilling to help you.

Unfortunately legitimate design/build firms don’t come cheap and I’ll explain why. Licensing fees alone for a lawful home improvement business in our area runs over a thousand dollars. They include Westchester County fees; separate fees for Yonkers; Connecticut license fees and New York City, too. And in New York City you can’t actually do home improvements even if you have a Home Improvement License unless you also get a “Home Improvement Salesman License” too! (Also add Rockland and Putnam license fees for firms that work there). Then there are the feeds, God bless ‘em. In order to be a legitimate home improvement contractor you must pay to be trained and certified by the EPA for the “Lead Renovation, Repair and Painting Program.” This training cost a couple of hundred dollars every few years, not to mention the time involved for classes. In addition, you also have to pay $200 to the EPA every so often, just to be registered. On the other hand, you have to weigh all that against being taught never to leave stuff lying around that can be inhaled, stolen or copied by another, less reliable contractor.

And let’s not forget insurance, as if anyone with 15 minutes could ever forget insurance. The “sleeper contractor” doesn’t need “no stinkin’ insurance.” However, the properly trained and licensed home remodeling firm is required to have many types of insurance. They need liability insurance. They need disability insurance. They need Worker’s Compensation insurance. They need auto insurance. And those with permanent locations like a showroom need even more insurance. And insurance isn’t free!

So when you hear that someone got an all new kitchen with installation for $5,995, you can only guess who did it. Wake up! They made a conscious choice to give up the piece of mind that comes from using a real American contractor who plays by the rules. Of course this type of security doesn’t come cheap, but you get what you pay for. And, if you need warranty service years after the job has been completed, who do you think will not be sleeping on the job and be willing to take care any problems that may arise?

Paul Bookbinder, M.I.D., C.R., is president of DreamWork Kitchens, Inc. located in Mahopac, New York. A Master of Design (Pratt Institute), and E.P.A. Certified Remodeler, he serves on the Advisory Panel of Remodeling Magazine. A member of the National Kitchen & Bath Assoc., he is also a contributor to eZine and Do It Yourself magazine. He can be reached for questions at 914-777-0437 or www.dreamworkkitchens.com.

Legal Fees Deplete Funds in Special Needs Trust

With any trust, there are often questions about what kinds of payments may, or should, be made for a special needs trust, these issues can be exacerbated since the primary purpose of a special needs trust is to improve the quality of life of an individual with special needs, while maintaining eligibility for means-tested government benefits. It is not uncommon for trustees to be asked to question about whom expenditures are appropriate.

These matters can be complicated if the trustees are related to the individual with special needs as was the situation in a recent case.

Charlotte Smith (not her real name) suffered terrible injuries during the birth of her children. While she and her husband were blessed with the delivery of triplets, Charlotte suffered catastrophic injuries. She is not able to walk, talk or otherwise communicate. Charlotte’s husband and parents sued the hospital and a settlement was reached. The net proceeds of the settlement (approximately $1 million) were placed into a special needs trust. In addition, the trust was to receive monthly annuity payments in excess of $30,000. Charlotte’s mother and father were named as trustees of her special needs trust and as her legal guardians.

After the trust was established, Charlotte’s husband decided he wanted a divorce. Charlotte’s parents sought visitation rights with respect to the triplets, who were being cared for by their father. All of the legal proceedings took place in South Dakota, where the couple had lived together when the triplets were born. Initially, Charlotte’s parents moved to South Dakota to help take care of her, and to have her remain close to her family. Ultimately, however, Charlotte was moved back to her parents’ home state of Illinois. Charlotte’s parents requested visitation rights. With respect to their grandchildren was challenged in court by Charlotte’s ex-husband, resulting in significant legal fees for both sides. Charlotte’s ex-husband eventually filed an action in Illinois to try to prevent Charlotte’s parents from paying those costs from the special needs trust. He brought his action against them as trustees and argued that the triplets’ interest in the trust were being compromised by the legal expenses.

In response, Charlotte’s parents asked the Illinois court to expressly approve legal fees they had paid totaling almost $500,000. They also asked that the trust be modified to make it clear that they could pay legal fees without prior court approval. The court appointed three different lawyers in the case: one as guardian ad litem to represent the triplets’ interests in the trust; another as Charlotte’s guardian ad litem, and a third as attorney for Charlotte.

While the central dispute in the case involving legal fees was not uncommon, there were several complicating factors, including a dispute being litigated in two states, the different attorneys appointed to be involved in the case, and a multi-day trial. Nevertheless, it seems as though this is a classic case of the amount of legal fees not being justified in relation to the value of the trust and assets and the benefit of the proceedings to the trust beneficiaries.

While we understand that the facts of this case present a very complex and difficult situation for all parties involved, perhaps with better trust drafting some of these expenses could have been avoided. If the trust terms were clear as to what expenses (including legal) could be paid from the trust, and in what amounts, that would have gone a long way towards minimizing expenses. For example, if the trust provided that all legal fees must be court approved before they can be paid by the trust, then the parties would have been on notice that they would be personally responsible for any fees that were not approved by the court.

Serving as a trustee of a special needs trust (or any trust) is not an easy job. It is a complex job that involves important decisions regarding the use of trust assets. That’s why there are professional trustees out there who do this for a living (or fee, for course). Selecting the proper trustee for your trust is one of the most important decisions you can make, and is the key to having your trust administered properly.

Birthright Israel Celebrates Biggest Season in History

Birthright Israel, the world’s largest provider of free cultural experience trips, announced that a record 33,000 participants will join in Israel this summer. The program currently has a waiting list due to overwhelming demand and the organization will surpass the 600,000 participant mark this summer.

“We are proud to have dramatically increased the number of Jewish young adults visiting Israel every year – from a mere 1,500 prior to the founding of Birthright Israel,” Birthright Israel CEO Gidi Mark said. “We remain committed to strengthening ties with the diaspora and creating experiences that have a lifelong impact on our participant’s Jewish identity and connection with Israel.”

This summer, Birthright Israel will continue to offer two unique 10-week fellowship programs for top-performing participants, Excel and Ventures. Birthright Israel Excel is an internship for those interested in the business and technology industries in Israel and Birthright Israel Ventures is an accelerator program for aspiring entrepreneurs. A number of notable companies have participated in the programs, including Ernst & Young Israel, Check Point Software Technologies and Genesis Partners. The program is supported by The Steinhardt Family Foundation, The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, The Paul E. Singer Foundation and the Government of Israel.

Birthright Israel aims to strengthen Jewish identity, facilitate cultural understanding and foster solidarity with Israel and its people. Birthright Israel is open to Jewish young adults worldwide between 18 and 26 years old.

Over the past 17 years, the organization has rapidly grown and diversified its programming and partnerships. Most recently, Birthright Israel launched Birthright Israel Plus, allowing participants to extend their stay in Israel for an additional four or five days. Recent alumni can also partake in the program, which is available for an additional subsidized fee of $250. Summer Birthright Israel participants can subsidize the trip through their $250 trip deposit. The trips offer specialized itineraries on topics such as social action and diversity, fashion, food, sexuality and gender, as well as activism and coexistence. For more information, visit: www.birthrightisraelplus.com.
Real Estate Matters: Downsizing in Retirement, the Pros and Cons

BY JOHN E. BAER, SRES, SRS

Westchester County is clearly one of the most expensive areas of the country to maintain a single family home. And, for retirees with limited annual income, it becomes a major consideration how much sense it makes to pay for maintenance which according to US News and World Report is between 1% and 4% of the home’s value annually. And, which tends to increase as you home ages. Consequently, if the value of your home is $600,000, that is at least $6,000 annually. Why so expensive? Well, as part of this annual expense homeowners are paying for homeowners insurance, the rates of which according to CNN Money, have climbed 69% over the past decade. Also included in these expenses are heating costs and cooling costs, household furnishings such as textiles, furniture and home appliances – big and small, appliance repairs, HVAC repairs, law care and services, housekeeping services, pest control services, plumbing and electrician expenses, roof repair and replacement as your home ages.

Another major expense of homeownership in Westchester County is the property taxes. According to Zillow, in 2015 the median residential property tax bill in Westchester County was $13,842, the highest in the nation. The amount that one pays obviously differs from community to community. In Scarsdale and Rye taxes can be as much as 10 times what up-County Westchester taxes are.

Given these considerable expenses, retirees should ask themselves such questions as how much of the home in which they live do they actually use? For example, in a four or five bedroom home, how many of those bedrooms do they really use?

Often there is a desire to hold on to a large home where children were raised so that the children and grandchildren can come back and visit. But is this truly a good reason to hold on to your home if those visits are only once or twice a year? Many people today are going into retirement without enough money saved. To avoid being caught in a future housing crisis, selling while the market is healthy might be wise.

There are, of course, plenty of reasons for delaying the sale of your home emotionally, it’s hard to let go of a home filled with memories. Decluttering in preparation for a sale can be a major hassle. And there are a few cases, but not many, where the financial savings of moving to a smaller home may be very insignificant.

The financial benefit of downsizing is not the only consideration retirees should make. By moving to a condo, co-op, or a rental retirees will eliminate the burden of maintaining and repairing the home.

Retirees planning to downsize need to be cautious of the following: 1) Overestimating what your current home is. 2) Underestimating what a new home will cost you. 3) Ignoring the tax implications. Currently IRS allows most couples to exclude up to $500,000 in gains from the sale of your home from their taxable income. A single individual can generally exclude up to $250,000. The rules also take into account how long you owned and lived in the home.

To better understand all of the ins and outs, I suggest you read the IRS publication 552, “Selling Your Home.” 4) Forgetting about closing costs. These include legal fees, recording fees, title insurance and a long list of miscellaneous other charges. And in Westchester a seller should anticipate paying real estate commissions as high as 5%, and sometimes higher.

Report on Synagogues Adopting Voluntary Dues Finds Trend Now Growing Among Diverse Group of Congregations

On May 16, two years after issuing a report on 26 synagogues that adopted a non-traditional voluntary dues model in response to changing social and financial realities, UJA-Federation of New York presented findings of a follow-up report, Connection, Cultivation, and Commitment: New Insights on Voluntary Dues, that found the trend is growing among a diverse group of congregations around the nation. With UJA’s backing, report authors Lianna Levine Reisner and Rabbi Dan Judson revisited 19 of the 26 synagogues identified in the first report and contacted 30 additional synagogues that were since found to have eliminated dues.

The report provides data, case studies, and information to help synagogues considering adopting the voluntary commitment model and answers questions related to the model’s sustainability. The voluntary dues model is defined as synagogues that allow members and prospective members to pledge a financial commitment of their own choosing (with guidance from the synagogue) rather than paying a fixed amount. Prior to 2009, only five of the nation’s synagogues were using this model; that number is projected to be well above 60 by the end of 2017.

In just two years, voluntary dues no longer feel like a novel and almost revolutionary model, and instead is becoming a significant part of the synagogue landscape. Many congregations are finding that in contrast to so called ‘pay to pray’ financial structures, the voluntary commitment model is a more viable alternative – reinvigorating current membership and encouraging prospective families to join,” said Cantor Adina Frydman, executive director of SYNERGY, a division of UJA-Federation of New York focused on helping synagogues thrive, which funded the research.

All Synagogues found that after going to a voluntary commitment model, congregations reported a 3.6% annual increase in membership and a 1.8% annual increase in pledge revenue. Congregations are almost uniformly pleased with the change, and no congregation reports an interest in returning to traditional dues models.

Many congregations report that the positive cultural impact of the change is as important as the financial ramifications.

Nearly 60% of congregations reported an increase in congregational engagement after instituting voluntary dues and Congregations report positive membership and revenue growth after three years, but say the most significant growth typically occurs in the second year after the switch.

Congregations are concerned that new members are pledging at lower rates than existing members, but an average 38% of congregants give at or above the sustaining level. Congregations that have used the model for more than three years report a need to continue promoting and reintroducing the model to membership. Congregations struggle to adequately track financial data. Better tracking and more data could allow them to more effectively sustain a change.

Reform congregations made up the majority synagogues in the original report, but the new group includes more Conservative congregations than Reform, as well as some Reconstructionist congregations.

No congregation reported a decline in its financial stability as a result of the dues model change, a significant departure from the findings in the previous report. This suggests it may be possible for synagogues in more challenging financial circumstances to benefit from – or, at a minimum, hold steady financially – when changing to the voluntary commitment model.

The report presents in-depth case histories of three geographically diverse congregations. Currently IRS allows most couples to exclude up to $500,000 in gains from the sale of their home from their taxable income. A single individual can generally exclude up to $250,000. The rules also take into account how long you owned and lived in the home.

To better understand all of the ins and outs, I suggest you read the IRS publication 552, “Selling Your Home.” 4) Forgetting about closing costs. These include legal fees, recording fees, title insurance and a long list of miscellaneous other charges. And in Westchester a seller should anticipate paying real estate commissions as high as 5%, and sometimes higher.

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Why I Care About Climate Justice

BY CANTOR JILL ABRAMSON

Climates shape identity. The harsh Minnesota winters and high-altitude Colorado summers of my youth, the heat of my college semester in West Africa, and the transitions from season to season in my current home in Westchester each played a role forming my identity. I am a confident driver in snowy conditions, a lover of hiking above the tree line, and a person aware of scarcity who cannot tolerate the water running while brushing my teeth. And just as I am aware that each climate I’ve experienced has informed my identity, I also see how each ecosystem I’ve lived in is now being threatened by the effects of climate change.

Last month, concerned citizens assembled in Washington, D.C., for the People’s Climate March. An organization close to my heart, American Jewish World Service (AJWS), was there with many of its supporters to march for the more than 100 indigenous communities that AJWS supports in 13 countries. As one of AJWS’s Global Justice Fellows, I have seen firsthand how these groups are facing the devastating effects of climate change, including rising seas, more frequent storms; and policies that threaten to destroy homes and foods supplies.

These issues threaten the relationship between people and their lands throughout the world. As Jews, a people whose religious life was born in the agrarian experiences of celebrating harvests, praying for rains and dew, and practicing rituals of water drawing, we ought to be especially attuned to this truth.

Our concern is rooted in the Book of Genesis, in which human beings are placed in the Garden of Eden to be stewards of the earth. That is, we are meant to be responsible for the land and its inhabitants. We are instructed (Gen 2:15) “to till and to tend” and to become our planet’s keepers.

Are we living up to the demands of stewardship when our emissions contribute to global climate change? Are we tending to the earth when our industries displace indigenous peoples from their land and deprive them of their water rights? How should we respond when each of the last three decades has been successively warmer than any preceding decade since 1850, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the leading international authority for the assessment of climate change?

AJWS seeks to respond to these critical questions by supporting grantee organizations in Burma, Nicaragua, Kenya, Mexico and other countries to combat the effects of climate change. By partnering with local organizations in-country, AJWS supports those most closely touched by the effects of climate change and empowers them to respond in ways that benefit local communities.

We can also respond by making sure our homes and buildings are constructed with practices that minimize impact to the climate. I am proud to serve a synagogue in Scarsdale, whose main building is LEED-certified—the highest endorsement of environmental responsibility. As a small practical gesture with great symbolic significance, the ner tamid (eternal light) above our ark is powered by solar energy collected outside our sanctuary.

I am further proud to note that this past year, we became a zero-waste facility. This means we minimize landfill waste and work closely with families, caterers and staff to use exclusively compostable serving ware and funnel all food waste into composting programs. While these steps are just a “small drop in the bucket,” they raise awareness in our congregation of our values—and the ways in which they may be implemented in practice.

My early experiences on snow, atop mountains and in the tropics shaped my worldview. That’s why I know what a valuable opportunity we have at our synagogue in Scarsdale. By articulating our environmental values and raising consciousness about use and waste of resources, we raise awareness around climate change and instill into the next generation the Jewish commitment to being stewards of the earth.

Jill Abramson is Senior Cantor of Westchester Reform Temple in Scarsdale. She is also a Global Justice Fellow of American Jewish World Service.

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JIMMY’S CUSTOM FLOORING
WJCS Annual Gala Attracts 300 Supporters; Honors Board Members Bruce Freyer, Froma Benerofe

The WJCS 2017 Gala with 300 attendees honored Board Members Bruce Freyer from Scarsdale and Froma Benerofe from Purchase for their long-standing support of the agency and the Westchester community. The event was held at the Brae Burn Country Club in Purchase in April.

Froma Benerofe has a decades-long relationship with WJCS. She joined the WJCS Treatment Center for Trauma and Abuse as a clinician in 1998. As a member of the WJCS Board of Directors since 1983 and as past President, Benerofe has been a force in ensuring that innovative and essential programs are accessible to all Westchester residents. She has served on almost every board committee and contributed to the agency’s foundation and everyday work as an advisor to staff in mental health and early childhood and to the Jewish community.

Benerofe is known as a pillar of the Westchester and New York communities for her dedication to the human services, for the philanthropy to which she and her husband Andrew have committed themselves, and as an active supporter of the visual and performing arts and an advocate for Holocaust education and human rights. She is a graduate of Vassar College, holds an MSW from Columbia University’s School of Social Work and is currently a clinician in private practice.

Dedicated to the social welfare of his local community, Bruce Freyer became involved with WJCS in 1997. He has chaired several committees and given generous donations of time and talent to staff events. He’s also been a thought-partner for strategic initiatives and has advocated for children at County budget hearings.

Freyer is known for his commitment to making the world a better place for all people. This passion has been extended near and far – from service to other local non-profits to overseas. He and his wife Dana founded the Global Partnership for Afghanistan, a non-profit devoted to working with rural Afghans to create viable and sustainable farm businesses that alleviate poverty, build sustainable livelihoods and promote economic development.

Freyer had a distinguished career as a pulpit Rabbi, military chaplain in Vietnam and Chaplain at Manhattanville College. His military service earned him the Army Commendation Medal and Bronze Star. He’s also had a second career in the business world.

The 300 guests in attendance heard compelling stories from clients who have benefited from the agency’s array of mental health, trauma, disability, youth, home care and geriatric services.

WJCS is one of the largest non-profit, non-sectarian human services agencies in Westchester, serving 20,000 people annually at 70 clinics, school, community and home-based locations throughout the county. The agency’s integrated network of services includes mental health treatment and counseling, child and youth development programs, residential and non-residential programs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, home health and geriatric services.

The highest level of professional development and training is offered through the WJCS Educational Institute. For more information on WJCS, go to www.wjcs.com.
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