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Jewish Observer

A publication of the Jewish Federation of Central New York

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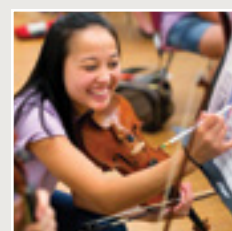
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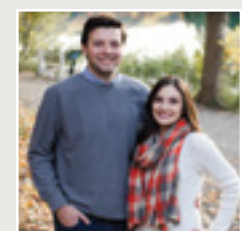
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May 2020

From the Acting Editor



Barbara Davis

The video of a dog being walked by a drone down an empty street in Italy is an image that will stay with me forever as a symbol of so much that characterizes the age of the novel coronavirus. Even as we isolate ourselves within our homes, even as we use technology in the most unexpected and extraordinary ways, even as we mourn the deaths that mount up and the bravery of those who are

fighting the pandemic on so many fronts – life goes on. Dogs need to be walked; children need to be fed and taught and loved; we need to reach out to our friends and neighbors; we must help those who need food and connection and financial support. Despite all the bad, much good has also come from this modern plague. We use 3D printers to make masks; we can order things online; students are taught virtually; we stream programs on our computers; we Zoom one another for business, for fun, for religious services, for celebrations. Even as life is completely disrupted, it goes on.

The *Jewish Observer* is cognizant of both the disruption and the continuity of Jewish life in Central New York. We celebrate Jewish American Heritage Month with a shoutout to the Judaic Heritage Center and a book review of Jewish life in the Catskills. We celebrate the Syracuse Hebrew Day School's 60th anniversary – although no one ever thought they would be teaching their students remotely in this milestone year. Mother's Day occurs in May, so we are honoring Jewish mothers in this month's *JO*. We also celebrate the holiday of *Shavuot* and read from one of the two biblical narratives titled after women. Megillat Ruth is named for its younger protagonist, but it is the older Naomi who is the dominant figure. A caring and altruistic mother-in-law, Naomi is also, in the words of biblical scholar Phyllis Trible, "a profound figure of faith who experiences God as enemy but then wrestles blessing from adversity." *Shavuot* is a holiday that honors Jews by choice, echoing Ruth's words to Naomi, "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God." This issue of the *JO* contains the fascinating stories of three people who chose to become Jewish.

In 1978, the Federation board voted to support the creation of an "Anglo-Jewish newspaper in Syracuse." Its purpose was to "help surface the potential of our community" through information, education and entertainment. "In performing these basic functions," the board stated, "the *Jewish Observer* adds a vital element of cohesion to our community. It will give groups and organizations a better understanding of each other, and demonstrate how separate pieces fit together to form a larger picture."

Forty-two years later, the *JO* continues to help our community be cohesive and understanding and supportive of one other. We are currently living in a completely unanticipated state, for which we were, in most cases, unprepared – certainly on an emotional level. But as Jews, we always strive to be positive, recalling the words from *parashat Nitzavim*: "I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that you and your children may live." As we shelter in place, reach out virtually, and try to live our values in new and unexpected ways, the Jewish community of Central New York has much to be proud of. The *Jewish Observer* will continue to surface not only the potential but the actuality of all that is good in our community and in the Jewish world, following the example of Naomi and wresting blessing from adversity.

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Reflections

by Richard D. Wilkins

"The Torah that Moses commanded us is the heritage of the Congregation of Israel" (Deut. 33:4)

Though commemorating the most momentous event in human history, *Shavuot* has become the least celebrated of Jewish holidays. Bereft of any special symbols, it is observed for but one day, two in the Diaspora. Though the Exodus's culmination, falling seven weeks thereafter, it is overshadowed by Passover. Its entire focus on Torah is reflected in a number of traditional practices. A rabbinic legend that the Israelites slept late that morning led to a special reparative text, *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*, intended for all-night study, containing excerpts from all fifty-four weekly Torah readings, with selections from Prophets and *Midrash*. Despite the unraveling of beliefs and practices, over the last two centuries, Torah, however conceived, remains central in Jewish thought. Over millennia, commentators have subjected its chapters, verses, words, even textual anomalies, to the most exhaustive examination, producing an enormous literature.

On the first day of *Shavuot*, after the first Torah verse, *Akdamus*, a 90-line poem in tongue-twisting Aramaic, is recited by reader and congregation. On the second day, a comparable 15-line Aramaic poem, *Yitziv Pisgam*, is inserted after the first line of the *haftarah*. Those poems, and both days' *haftarot*, are replete with mystical allusions. The first (Ezekiel 1:1-28,3:1), known as *Ma'aseh HaMerkavah* (Work of the Chariot), presents an extraordinary vision of Heavenly Hosts. A contrasting reading is the idyllic *Book of Ruth*. *Shavuot* is also called *Yom HaBikkurim*, initiating the season for bringing First Fruits to the Temple. Setting the standard for future converts, Ruth the Moabitess, great-grandmother of David, accepts the Torah: "Your people are my people and your God is my God" (Ruth 1:16).

"Honor thy father and mother," the Decalogue's fifth commandment, bridges the first and second tablets: the first, duties owed God, the second, prohibitions towards others. Due to a mother's profound religious influence on the child, Jewish descent traditionally has been through the mother. It is she who prepares the home for Sabbath and holidays and is more attuned to Judaism's emotional elements. Mercifulness (*rachamim*) is particularly associated with motherhood (*rechem*, womb). Thus, when praying for the ill, the mother's Hebrew name, not the father's, is used. Specially burdened, women are exempt from time-dependent positive commandments. Over the ages, Jewish mothers have greatly earned and merited much gratitude.

The Jewish historical experience has been unique. Massively dispersed twice, scattered across the globe, with faith their only succor, Jews have outlasted far stronger physical and spiritual enemies, overcoming persecution and pogroms, confiscations and expulsions. Sadly today, far too many highly educated Jews are functionally Jewishly illiterate. American Jewish success has led to attenuated connections to Jewish heritage. To assure a Jewish future, Jews must feel fully part of the Jewish people, emotionally engaged to their triumphs and tragedies, and conversant with Judaism's theology, liturgy and history. Jewry has survived solely due to those in successive generations over three and a half millennia who heeded Moses's admonition in *Shmot* to "make known to your children and children's children, the day you stood before *Hashem*, your God, at Sinai."

COVID-19 EMERGENCY FUND

With a pandemic threatening our lives, everyone needs assistance. Those served by our local Jewish beneficiary agencies, synagogues and senior facilities are suffering in this time of crisis. The loss of income, canceled fundraising events and stretched resources have greatly impacted the ability of organizations to meet exigent needs and will continue to impact their ability to fulfill their respective missions in the future. The Federation is working with our partners to coordinate community efforts to anticipate needs that may arise as the pandemic progresses. A Covid-19 Emergency Fund has been set up to help organizations meet current and evolving needs. Your help is crucial and your contribution, in any amount, is needed now more than ever. Donations to the Federation for this designated fund may be made online at www.jewishfederationcny.org. Your dollars will enable us to provide the maximum amount of assistance at a time when the needs are greater than ever.

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Ellen Weinstein

Board Chair



As you read this message, it is my hope and prayer that the worst is over and the world will soon return to some semblance of “normalcy.” But we must also recognize that this new normal will be different from that that was before. In any case, I am confident we will go forward together with renewed vigor and determination to meet the challenges ahead.

Unprecedented. That’s the best word to use to describe the changes that have taken place, seemingly overnight, in our world and our community. We never, even in our darkest moments, thought we would contemplate taking an 11th drop of wine from our Passover cups because of a 21st century plague.

An unprecedented crisis demands an unprecedented response. We at Federation are doing all that we can, in this time of tremendous uncertainty, to assure that the impact of Covid-19 on our community is mitigated to the greatest extent possible. While the world has changed, Federation’s commitment to our community has not. In this time of extraordinary uncertainty, we are working with our communal partners to understand and respond to the needs of the community not only for today but for the days, weeks and months ahead.

This month we celebrate both Mother’s Day and *Shavuot*. At first blush, these are two seemingly different observances with little commonality. Yet, if we go beyond the secular nature of the former and the deeply religious significance of the latter, we can see that they both mark and honor the forces that guide our moral compasses and ties to humanity. Our Mothers from the day we are born and the Torah given to our people at Mount Sinai, teach us, guide us, and challenge us to do the right thing, with our hearts and with our heads, with love, compassion, justice and righteousness. Our Mothers and Torah teach us about communal responsibility, that *kol yis-*

rael arevim zeh bazeh. And so, it is noteworthy but not surprising that because of these firm foundations upon which we are raised, we see wonderful things happening even in the midst of this pandemic. We are deeply appreciative of the incredible courage and dedication of members of the medical profession and other first responders, who are stressed to the limit but keep working to save lives, even at risk to their own. We are grateful to people we normally don’t acknowledge as front-line defenders – store clerks, security guards, postal workers, food delivery people – who are also courageous – providing some semblance of normalcy to our world.

And then there are the generous people who are opening their hearts to others, doing favors for their neighbors, calling upon those in isolation, collecting food, offering free services – the list goes on and on. In a time when a bar mitzvah takes place in a kitchen over Zoom, when a friend dies and there is no formal funeral or shiva, when a wedding or a bris is postponed, or at best, limited to only the participants, it is good to know that we can still reach out to others, sharing the joys and the sadness and all striving together for better days ahead.

The need to connect is far greater than any existential threat. We are so fortunate in that technology affords us the opportunities to “be there” and we have responded with imagination and innovation. But I so long, as I am sure all of us do, for the day, if it has not already come, when we can really be there with a kind touch, a warm hug and more than a smile or a tear from 6 feet away.

In ordinary times, Federation’s work is ongoing. But in these extraordinary times, when our most vulnerable become even more so, we need you even more. Many people have asked how they can help. At this moment, the most effective way is for you to donate to meet the vast and growing needs. It will take the generosity of all of us to confront the aftermath of the current situation. Please consider making a donation to the Emergency Fund today and please consider making a pledge to the Federation’s 2020 campaign. You can do both at www.jewishfederationcny.org. No amount is too big or too small to be meaningful. You can make a real difference when it matters most. Thank you.

Michael Balanoff

President/CEO



“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”

Charles Dickens’ words in *A Tale of Two Cities* seem almost prophetic, though written more than two hundred years ago. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic that is sweeping through the world, we have seen people act selfishly and thoughtlessly, and we have seen great acts of *chesed* and generosity. We are all indebted to the front-line defenders, those in the health care professions, who have shown incredible fortitude and courage in these most challenging times. We are also indebted to teachers, who have found ways to keep children involved, challenged and engaged in structured and enjoyable lessons taught remotely, using all the benefits that technology provides. And we are indebted to our community’s rabbis and congregations, who have shown us that we can still worship via Zoom and Facebook, learn via online classes, and reach out to one another to share and care, even as we distance ourselves physically for the sake of everyone’s health.

The Jewish Federation of Central New York’s response to the coronavirus crisis is manifold. First and foremost is community connection, whether through online meetings, the *Jewish Observer*, Community Happenings or Constant Contact. Federation continues to work to ensure that people are informed about what is happening locally and aware of where to turn if they want to take action, get help or simply stay in touch with others at a time of mandatory isolation.

Secondly, the Federation is gearing up to deal with the aftermath of the pandemic, particularly its fiscal after-effects. We know that people and insti-

tutions will be hurting, and we are working to develop ways to help them recover when the crisis eventually comes to an end.

Our overall goal, as the community’s umbrella, is for all members of our community to have a feeling of belonging in Judaism and Jewish life. We are working collaboratively with the synagogues, agencies and Jewish organizations of Central New York to engage the energy and commitment of the members of our diverse community.

The pandemic has shown us that we can do old things in new ways, that we can work together to overcome obstacles, that we can harness technology to bring us together instead of isolating us. Covid-19 has shown us that we can attend services online at different synagogues, learn from different rabbis, and sing new songs. We have known for some time that in the 21st century, Jews and their families will likely not claim allegiance to any one institution or organization but will seek to belong to and participate in many spaces. The pandemic has accelerated this phenomenon. Federation welcomes multiple entry points into Jewish life. We recognize that today Judaism can be a source of identity, pride, family ties and communal affiliation through many diverse linkages.

Another of the lessons we learned this month is that, in the words of Ari Mofic, founder of CoHere Chicago, “When brave Jewish organizations and funders meet the needs of the people, Judaism will authentically and organically be thought about, learned about, practiced, and allowed to shape the world in positive ways.” The Federation believes that in the truth of his words lies the future of Jewish Central New York. Working together, we can and will accomplish many wonderful things.

Let's Give It Up to Chants

Maggid Jim Brulé, Lisa Levens, and Cantor Paula Pepperstone have started a Jewish chant circle called **Let's Give It Up to Chants!** They sing *niggunim* or wordless melodies, and songs with simple or limited text. They chant them over and over, partly as a meditation, and also to pull from them all they have to offer - the words, the music, the harmony, singing and being with others. Rabbi Shefa Gold, who has been at the forefront of the Jewish chant movements, writes that "the magic of chant is that just a few short words, simply repeated with sweet passion, deliberate intention, and refined beauty, can unlock treasure upon treasure of healing, wisdom, and love."



"Everyone is welcome to join the group," says Cantor Pepperstone. "The quality of one's voice is irrelevant. The *kavannah*/intention that one brings is what's important." There is a small core of regular participants, and others who come when they can. The difference between chanting and singing is crucial. Chanting is primarily a meditative process which requires both an inward focus and a sensitivity to the energy of the group. "As with any type of meditation, effort is required, and yet at some point one must simply surrender to the power of the chant, the presence that has been invited in, and the transformation that

is working through you," notes Maggid Brulé.

Lisa Levens explains that "We learn by repetition and ultimately, once we get it into our *kishkes*, the results are so rewarding because that's when the harmony breaks out and we begin to soar." Cantor Pepperstone adds, "We all deeply value the silence after a chant is over. Breathing into the new space the group has created together is powerful." All are welcome to attend the group's sessions in the Community Room at Menorah Park when they resume, generally on the fourth Sunday of the month.

Jayde Martin

Jayde Martin has been playing the violin since she was five years old. Playing violin has been a way for her to connect to her local community as well as communities around the world. Growing up in Syracuse, Jayde was given many opportunities to perform in the Jewish community, including playing at the Jewish Music and Cultural Festival, playing with The Keyna Hora Klezmer Band, and at Kol Nidre services at Temple Concord.

Jayde always wanted to teach music, as it blended her love of playing violin with her love of helping others. She attended the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam and majored in violin performance and music education. Through her college, Jayde was able to acquire a multitude of experience in teaching music. Her first placement as a student teacher was in Clifton Park, where she taught general music to first through fifth graders and conducted two choruses. Her second was in Saratoga Springs, where she worked with the high school orchestra and helped teach music theory. She gave instruction in violin, viola, cello and bass. "Knowing the foundations of each of those instruments and basic techniques is really important for teaching your students," she explains.

Her other major teaching opportunity came as part of the Jamaica Field Service Project. She taught children in small primary schools in rural Jamaica, took daily lessons in Afro-Caribbean drumming, and sang traditional songs with the local children. She was so successful that she was invited back twice as a supervisor, overseeing other music education students. "I loved seeing a different culture and being able to immerse



myself in music," she explains. Later, as a student teacher, she designed a bucket-drumming curriculum, using some of the techniques used in Jamaica. Martin worked as a counselor for Crane Youth Music, a summer program for middle school and high school musicians from all over the country, which helped her connect with young musicians. She coached a quartet, conducted a small chamber orchestra, and played along with campers in the orchestra.

In 2018, Jayde became an orchestra teacher in the Liverpool Central School District. She teaches strings to students in grades four through eight at Liverpool Middle and Liverpool Elementary Schools, instructing small groups in addition to rehearsing two orchestras. Teaching five grade levels truly allows Jayde to see the progression her students go through as well as the joy that music brings to their lives.



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Joe Eglash

It is no understatement to say that Joe Eglash is a man of many talents. The lead guitarist in several live bands, he is also a songwriter, musical director and arranger. Primarily a guitarist, he also plays drums, bass, mandolin and other instruments, performing all of the instrumentals on his five (soon to be six) solo albums.

When he was young, Joe wanted to be a rabbi. His family was Orthodox; his mother is a survivor. "I loved studying and davening, and I especially loved the singing" says Joe, adding "the music stirred me, it gets me in the *kishkes*." But then he realized that, as a rabbi, "I would have to pontificate, and I don't like to speak in front of people." With that career path derailed, Joe looked elsewhere. He studied classical guitar at the University of Minnesota and taught guitar professionally for many years. He also played with a successful touring band, The Flood, and he met Kari Siegel there when his sister brought her to a concert. Their joint love of music and Judaism led him to follow her to Israel, where she was enrolled in seminary. They then moved to New York and got married. While Kari studied at the Hebrew Union College cantorial school, Joe earned a B.A. in Judaic Studies from Brooklyn College.

Joe then had an epiphany. "I'd been in a family business, and I loved Judaism, and I'd been a musician for a long time. It suddenly occurred to me that there must be a Jewish business related to that." He became the director of Transcontinental Music Publications (TMP), the oldest and largest Jewish music publisher in the world, a job that combined his business sense, love and knowledge of Judaism, and the music business. He edited or contributed to some of the most widely-used songbooks and anthologies in the Jewish music world.

Today, Joe is a recognized authority in the Jewish music industry. His *T'filah Band* songbook series contains arrangements of liturgical music for synagogue band and choir. At TMP, he created the first Jewish music licensing agency, JLicense, which helps congregations legally and ethically use copyrighted music and be copyright compliant, and encourages the creation of new Jewish music and the development of Jewish music songwriters and composers through the channeling of royalties. Joe loves his work. "When we introduce a new melody and synagogues adopt it, it can go all over the world. It can become an individual community's melody or you could go to a synagogue in Israel or Singapore, and there is a chance they got a melody from something that we published."

Joe accompanies Cantor Kari at Friday



night services at Temple Concord. He does this as a gift. "It's my way of volunteering for the community; I don't want to be paid by my religious community. Playing the guitar is my profession and the way I give; it's all my expertise rolled into one. I'm here to support Rabbi Fellman and Cantor Kari and help the *ruach* of the service." He doesn't mind being in front of the congregation ("I am I fully confident when I have a guitar strapped to me.") and is very happy living in Jamesville with his family. "We love living here and I love the Temple Concord community and the Jewish community," Joe says. "Central New York is a place where you can slow down and be happy, enjoy good friends. People here are the salt of the earth; it's a *heimish* community, not a rat race."

Adam Fine

"Classically Jewish" is our local public radio station's exploration of Jewish cultural influences in classical music. As WCNY explains, "Music has been central to the Jewish cultural and religious identity for thousands of years. This rich heritage has been a source of inspiration for composers and performers." Featured topics on the show with host Adam Fine include Jewish composers, music composed in concentration camps during the Holocaust, Jewish composers of Hollywood, Jewish violinists, and more.

Adam Fine grew up in Queensbury, New York. In his elementary school, students had to audition for the school choir. Perhaps fortuitously, Adam was not accepted. So instead he started singing in the choir of his synagogue, Temple Beth El. By the time he was in middle and high school he was regularly working as the cantorial soloist for Shabbat services. At Northwestern University, he majored in choral music education and minored in composition, served as co-president of the Reform minyan at Hillel and as music director of the Jewish *a cappella* group and klezmer band. After graduation, he was the High Holiday cantorial soloist at Temple Beth El for a year and also spent three years as the cantorial soloist at B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation in Albany, leading all music for High Holiday services and select Shabbat services.

Adam has performed in almost thirty operas, including several in Central New York. He has sung with Oswego Opera (Pooh-Bah in *The Mikado*, Frank in *Die Fledermaus*, and Noah in *Noah's Flood*) and the Syracuse Opera (Cockney Quartet in *My Fair Lady*, Baron Douphol in *La Traviata*, and The Imperial Commissioner in *Madama Butterfly*.)

Adam came to Syracuse for graduate school at Syracuse University. He was singing with the Syracuse Opera when Bruce Paulsen, the morning host at WCNY Classic FM, asked if he would be interested in a job at the radio station.



It wasn't something he had thought about, but it seemed like an interesting opportunity. "I'm happy to say that I've worked here for three and a half years now," he says, "and it's been the best job of my life."

Adam's program, "Classically Jewish," developed from his lifelong interest in music, Judaism, and Jewish music. "There is no other weekly radio program out there exploring Jewish influences in classical music," he points out. "It seemed like an avenue I could explore and share something new with my listeners." What he likes best about hosting the show is that "I learn something new every week, and I get to listen to great music. I know a good deal about Jewish music, but I wouldn't call myself an expert. I like to learn, and I'm fortunate to be able to share my research with other people."

"Classically Jewish" is sponsored by the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center of Syracuse. New episodes premiere on Sundays at 3 pm with an encore presentation the following Saturday at 7 pm. The program can be heard at 91.3 FM in Syracuse, 89.5 in Utica/Rome and 90.9 in Watertown, streaming online at wcny.org/radio, or with the TuneIn app. Episodes to date have included Musicians in Exile, Jewish Women Composers, Richard Tucker, Jewish Influences in Theater and a Chanukah special. Many more intriguing programs are planned for the weeks and months ahead.



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Getting Through Covid-19

Tips From Syracuse Jewish Family Service

by Judith S. Huober

While we cannot change much about the external Covid-19 situation, we *can* choose our own course of action and how we focus our minds and spirits. Agency means feeling yourself as an active, impactful agent in your own life and circumstances. It is the counterweight to the decimating helplessness we feel reduced to by coronavirus. Here are some ideas for concrete actions, linked to some of the typical human needs which people are having a hard time satisfying right now.

Assert agency by focusing on things within your control. How you feel isn't always a choice, but what you do is. Maybe it doesn't feel like there's much you can assert control over, but *start somewhere*. Find one thing to concentrate on and set a goal, make a plan, and

track your results. Even better, share your plan and your progress with someone else. Keep the scope reasonable and don't let the perfect grow into the enemy of the good.

Take practical and higher-level steps to care for yourself. Set a schedule and some routines for yourself. Be sure to get dressed every day, even if it's in sweatpants. Don't spend the day in bed unless you're sick. Routines give you a sense of control. Go to bed and wake up at regular times. Eat meals on a schedule.

Give yourself permission for some exceptions to those routines and plan for some special treats – and change it up. Our need for safety and certainty is balanced by our need for variety. Overplaying our need for certainty and control may feel like it reduces fear, but it feeds an anxiety backlash when our certainties inevitably fail at some point. Make room for both.

Move your body. The JCC is posting great workout videos on its website. You can take a walk if you don't get close to others. Exercise decreases stress, boosts your mood, and increases your energy.

Limit your media exposure. An unending stream of depressing news can undermine your mental health. Watch comedies or funny videos. Binge-watch the series you never had time for until now.

Do things that tap into your creative side. Maybe it's baking and decorating a cake; it might be playing or listening to music or drawing. Creativity is both calming and stimulating and plays roles in deep communication with others,



self-esteem and a sense of meaning.

Maintain your sense of relatedness. Social distancing makes social relationships more difficult, so be creative and focus on success. Call people, don't just text them. You want real-time connections. Facetime is also great and Zoom works well (free for up to three people.) Social distance doesn't have to mean social isolation. Have cocktails with friends on your phone.

Figure out the corollary of social interaction: boundaries. Find ways to get enough space, even if you are cooped up with others in small quarters. Take turns deciding on TV programs or which videos to watch. Develop a plan for cooking and cleaning. Come up with a Time Out signal to use when tempers fray. Remember that this *will* end.

Tune into your need to feel unique, individual and special, but keep in mind that what is on your mind is not necessarily what is on others'. Be curious and supportive of others' thoughts and feelings in this unprecedented situation.

Be thoughtful and kind to yourself and others. Stress isn't just a word: assume that both your reactions and

theirs are more extreme under this kind of pressure. Now is *not* the time to make big decisions. Try to remember that this will all pass and it's nobody's fault – including yours.

Find ways to celebrate the collective sense of taking care of one another. Read stories of people helping others. Remember the tremendous efforts of our health care professionals. Maybe write letters of appreciation and support or post them online. Remind yourself that the sacrifices you make are because you are part of a community that is protecting its most vulnerable members. Give yourself full credit for the supreme act of lovingkindness that you are performing: depriving yourself in order to keep others safe.

Continue to learn, grow, adapt and evolve. Seek out and celebrate meaning. Take an online class with one of our community's rabbis. Suggest podcasts to others and try out a new one yourself. Find a Facebook "Live" event to try out. Develop an "attitude of gratitude." Make lemonade from life's lemons -- optimism feeds resilience. Seek out and celebrate the "silver linings," the good things that are happening now that wouldn't have occurred if events had run their usual course.

Get outside. Spring is coming. Watch for things to grow. Daily. Enjoy the sun, whenever it appears. Look up at the sky – it will help you feel less claustrophobic and antsy. Steady attention to the burgeoning of spring will connect you with universality and spirituality. Attend services virtually daily or on Shabbat. (See *Community Happenings* for dates and times.) Think about what really matters.

Acknowledge the deeply disturbing anxiety and uncertainty we're feeling. Accept that it is real, and then know that you must and can ride it out. Our heat and electricity are working; we have enough food; we are not being bombed or attacked; our mail is being delivered and our trash picked up. Maybe we don't know how long this will last or how it will impact us financially, but most of us will survive and we'll figure out what to do when the time comes.

Consider reaching out to SJFS at 315-446-9111 x234, or info@sjfs.org, or to another source of therapeutic support. Even if you're the very icon of a self-helper, a list like this one is good only as far as it goes. Working through typical stress reactions goes faster and is often more complete with the support of a trained professional – and you deserve it.



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Temple Concord Community Staying in Touch

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Learning and Worship in the Era of Covid-19

A recent book by Nathan Englander, *Kaddish.com*, described the development of a fictional app where you can pay someone to say *kaddish* for you. Little did readers guess that there would soon be a worldwide crisis that would ban funerals and *shivahs*, *b'nai mitzvah* ceremonies, *auf rufs*, weddings, and religious services and push everyone online. But the Jewish community of Central New York is nothing if not resourceful, and within a few days of prohibitions being established, rabbis and congregations developed study and prayer alternatives that assured the distancing and health of participants, while allowing all to experience the joy of learning and worshipping together. Following is a listing of local worship and learning opportunities. Links to these and other classes and services are sent weekly via *Community Happenings*. (If you are not receiving *Community Happenings*, go to the Federation website, www.jewishfederationcny.org to subscribe.)

The community Conservative minyan is held weekday mornings at 7:30 am and evenings at 5:30 pm. Shaarei Torah Orthodox Congregation of Syracuse hold *Mincha*

services Sunday through Thursday at 7 pm. Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas holds *Kabbalat Shabbat* services on Fridays at 6 pm and *Ma'ariv & Havdalah* on Saturdays at 8:15 pm. Temple Adath Yeshurun holds *Kabbalat Shabbat* services on Fridays at 5:30 pm via Zoom and *Havdalah* on Saturdays via Facebook Live. Temple Concord holds Shabbat evening services at 6:00 pm on Fridays and Shabbat morning services at 11:00 am preceded by Torah study at 10:00 am. Contact the synagogues for Zoom meeting IDs and passwords and dial-in information.

Chabad offers Zoom classes on *Pirkei Avot: A fresh look at an ancient text* on Wednesdays at 7:30 pm and *The Psychology of the Soul* on Thursdays at noon. Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas sponsors a class on the weekly Torah portion with Rabbi Pepperstone on Thursdays at 1:30 pm and a *Talmud* class with the rabbi on Mondays at noon and 7 pm. Shaarei Torah Orthodox Congregation of Syracuse offers an interactive online class on contemporary issues on Mondays at 7:30 pm, a *Talmud* class on Sundays at 7:30 am, a *Chumash* class on Thursdays at 7:30 am and a Friday *haftarah* class at 2 pm. Temple Adath Yeshurun is offering a class entitled *Foundations for Jewish Life* on Sundays at 10:30 am. Temple Concord's *Talmud* class with Rabbi Fellman meets on Tuesdays at 12:30 pm through May 5.

Keep Moving During Covid-19

The JCC has a full schedule of online classes on its YouTube channel that can help everyone stay in good shape despite confinement and quarantine. There are classes in basic and advanced Pilates, line dancing for beginners and improvers, body sculpting, WERQ fitness, senior strength and fitness and Zumba Gold. **Descriptions for all of these classes can be found at www.jccsy.org/docs/group-exercise-sched-2020-01-30-web.pdf.**

PJ Library® Resources for Quarantined Families

As Central New York families stay home to flatten the curve of COVID-19, many are finding it challenging to keep their children entertained without access to playgrounds, the public library and friends. PJ Library® offers virtual story times, podcasts, activities, recipes, and Jewish links and resources. There is even a page on *How to Talk to Your Kids About Scary Situations*. “As a parent, I know we have been thrown an overwhelming amount of work and responsibilities,” says PJ Library® coordinator Carolyn Weinberg. “If there is anything I can do to help maintain a connection, please let me know. I am happy to pick up the phone, record a video, host teleconference calls, lead a parent’s night in, whatever I can do to help relieve some stress.” PJ Library® sends free, award-winning books that celebrate Jewish values and culture to families with children 6 months through 12 years old. **For more information, contact Carolyn Weinberg at pjcnj@jccsy.org.**

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Winners

Dr. Joseph Goldberg, English teacher at Jamesville-DeWitt High School, is the latest recipient of the **Master Teacher of Honor Award from Kappa Delta Pi, International Honor Society in Education**. Goldberg joins a select group of remarkable educators who have been recognized with this honor. Goldberg achieved National Board Certification for Professional Teaching Standards in 2013 and was selected as a teacher leader for the American Federation of Teachers in 2016-2017. He holds a M.S.T. in Secondary English Education, a M.S. in Instructional Design, Development and Evaluation, a C.A.S. in Designing Digital Instruction, and a Ph.D. in Teaching and Curriculum. Dr. Goldberg also works as an adjunct professor at Le Moyne College and Syracuse University, and is developing curriculum for the Media Education program at Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications.



Dr. Joseph Goldberg, Emily Jones, and Eric Lichtblau

Emily Jones' *Color Book* was a **first-place gold winner in the 14th Annual International Design Awards competition**. The International Design Awards exists to recognize, celebrate and promote legendary design visionaries and to uncover emerging talent in architecture, interior, product, graphic, and fashion design. IDA aspires to draw attention to the iconoclasm of design world-wide, conceptualizing and producing great work. *Color Book* was designed to show off a variety of papers offered by Mohawk Fine Papers, Inc. It covers a wide range of information all about color, utilizing different skills such as foiling, die-cuts, fold outs and

other interactive elements. Emily is a recent graduate of the Savannah College of Art and Design; she is a designer for Newport News Shipping in Virginia.

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Eric Lichtblau's latest book is *Return to the Reich: A Holocaust Refugee's Secret Mission to Defeat the Nazis*. Lichtblau is a two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and the best-selling author of *Bush's Law: The Remaking of American Justice* and *The Nazis Next Door*. His new book tells the story of Fred Mayer, a German-born Jew who escaped Nazi Germany only to return as an American commando on a secret mission behind enemy lines.

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JCC Letter to the Community

**From Marci Erlebacher,
Executive Director and Steven
Sisskind, Board President**

Thank you for your patience, understanding and working with us through the coronavirus situation for the health and safety of our community. We have all done an amazing job of coming together while being apart for the greater good. We hope that while isolating at home you were able to maintain your connection with the JCC through social media and our free online exercise and early childhood program videos.

Having to temporarily close the JCC in mid-March was very painful. The revenue that we lost was nearly \$250,000 per month. This does not account for the “human” costs to our employees, many of whom had to go without a paycheck. Although one very bright spot did emerge. Our sincerest gratitude goes out to the many generous members and families who stepped up and continued supporting us with their early childhood program fees or membership dues during this difficult time. Thanks to your kindness, we were able to extend the pay of our early childhood teachers a little longer which helped them during this difficult time.

Now comes the part where we can still use your help. If you are in a position to make a donation to the JCC, become a new member or prepay your existing membership a few months or a year in advance, we will be forever grateful. No pressure, though. We know finances are tight and this is something that not everyone can do. But if you are able to help us get back on our feet again, we cannot thank you enough.

To make a donation, join the JCC or prepay your membership, please contact Erin Hart at 315-445-2040, ext. 112, or ehart@jccsyr.org. If you wish to support the JCC with a one-time or recurring donation, we will provide a receipt for tax purposes.

Thank you very much for standing with our community and for your thoughtful consideration of helping us continue to weather this unprecedented situation. Be well and stay safe.

JCC Summer Camp Fun Coming Soon

While Central New York and the world have been battling the coronavirus pandemic, the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center has been working hard to still hold summer camp this year as planned. After all, as long as we're all in the clear, many children can probably use a much-needed release after isolating for so long.

The JCC's Camp Joe & Lynne Romano summer day camp will run weekdays for eight weeks from June 29 through August 21. Once again this year there will be plenty of non-stop excitement, fun and adventure for children and teens to experience. Each week campers will have a blast making new friends and participating in enriching activities. There's nothing boring about summer camp at the JCC as campers go swimming and are kept active every day.



JCC early childhood camper Nathan Rosenberg takes a wild ride down the slip and slide last summer.

Camp Romano serves three different age groups. The early childhood camp is for children 6 weeks old through entering kindergarten, school-age camp is open to children entering grades 1–6 and the SyraCruisin' teen travel camp is for young teens entering grades 7–10. Each camp day will begin and end at the JCC on



JCC school-age campers show off some of their pirate garb during “pirate day” last July. Pictured, from left, is Mya Burgmeier, Zoe Van Beveren, Edith Rothman, Caleigh Hampel, Josh Davis and Derek Charsky.



JCC school-age campers getting creative and having fun during Painting Camp. Pictured, from left, is Ella Kanfer, Shayna Nellis, Anna Congelli and Ayesha Aslam, counselor in training.

5655 Thompson Road in DeWitt. Depending on the camp, some campers may go off-site for scheduled field trips and specialty camp activities. Early and late care options are available for all campers.

The JCC's more than thirty Specialty Camps for school-age children allow kids to explore a specific interest area for an entire week. In addition to staples such as gymnastics, art, rocketry and fishing, this year's new Specialty Camps are Bricks 4 Kidz CSI—Whodunnit, Bricks 4 Kidz Magic Tricks & LEGO Bricks, Pickleball and Pokémon Camp.

Young teens ages 14 and 15 looking to take on some responsibility should check out the Camp Aide and Counselor in Training (CIT) programs. They offer many opportunities to hone teamwork and leadership skills.

Camp Romano registration is happening now. Children can be registered anytime right up until the start of camp on June 29 and throughout the summer prior to the start of each camp session. Spots go quickly and some school-age specialty camp sessions closeout early. Except for the Camp Aide and Counselor in Training teen programs, current JCC membership is not necessary for Camp Romano registration, but JCC members receive discounted camp rates. A discount for siblings is also available.

For more information about the JCC's summer camp, and to request the camp program guide, call 315-445-2360 or visit www.jccsyr.org.

JCC Pools to Open May 23

“After the way this year started, I think everyone is excited to get summer started and enjoy some time in the pool,” said Pamela Ranieri, JCC director of children's programming. “The JCC's pools are such a focal point each summer for children attending camp, families spending time together and those taking swim lessons. It will be great to see everyone getting out in the sun and making a splash.”

Although the coronavirus situation is probably still on everyone's minds, the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center is looking forward to opening its outdoor heated pools as planned on May 23 at 10 am. The JCC's learn-to-swim group swimming lessons will begin on June 1 and continue through August 28. The pools will remain open through Labor Day.

The JCC has two outdoor heated pools. The small pool is shallow and ideal for small children who are non-swimmers. The large pool features both shallow and deep ends and a designated diving area and lap swim section.

The JCC will offer group swimming lessons for children and semi-private and private lessons for both children and adults seven days a week. Taught by certified instructors, swimmers of all skill levels are welcome. Infants as young as six months old, older children and adults can get started on learning to swim. There are also lessons geared toward advanced swimmers. JCC membership is not required to take swimming lessons, but members receive a discount.

Exercising in the JCC pool is great way to get the body moving and heart pumping.

The JCC's Neulander Family Sports & Fitness Center is looking to offer its Aqua Fitness class. This fun group exercise class is set to music and designed to improve overall cardiovascular fitness and flexibility. All ages are welcome. The class is free for JCC Fitness members and \$10 per drop-in for non-fitness members. Look for details on class times to be announced shortly.

The JCC of Syracuse pools are a members-only benefit featuring open free-swim and lap-swim times. Guests are welcome to purchase a pool pass and swim when accompanied by a member. The JCC pools also may be booked by both members and non-members for pool parties to celebrate birthdays and other special occasions.

For more information about the JCC of Syracuse pools, including swimming lesson and other schedules, call 315-445-2360 or visit www.jccsyr.org.

Epstein School Appoints New Head

The Rabbi Jacob H. Epstein School of Jewish Studies is pleased to announce that it has appointed a new Head of School for the 2020-2021 school year. Aaron Spitzer, a Board member at Temple Concord, has accepted the position and will officially start on May 1st working with Cantor Paula Pepperstone. Aaron is a graduate of Binghamton University with a B.A. in history and a master's degree in American History. He was a PhD Candidate in American history when he and his wife, Amy, decided to homeschool their children.

Aaron comes to the Epstein School with a wealth of experience in general education and deep involvement in Jewish education. For the past several years, he has served as the co-president of the Home Learners Association of CNY. In that role, he was responsible for the organization's administration and curriculum, and the association witnessed a dramatic increase in family enrollment during his tenure. But his first love and professional home is as a Jewish educator. Aaron teaches fifth grade at Temple Concord's religious school, as well as fourth grade at the Syracuse Community Hebrew School. He is committed to the



future of Jewish education in Central New York. In his words, "As a parent to three future Jewish leaders, nothing brings me more joy than helping young people engage with our tradition. I am committed to the Epstein School's continued growth and engagement with our teens. Robust programs like Epstein, and the friendships nurtured there, help teens cement their Jewish identity during these critical years."

Aaron is married to Amy Spitzer, a teacher in the Jamesville Dewitt school district, and they have three children – Judah, Marian, and Arthur. The Epstein School is delighted to welcome Mr. Spitzer to its leadership team.

The Day School Turns 60 In the Midst of a Pandemic

Jewish education in Syracuse was once in the hands of *melammedim*, itinerate teachers who taught children at home. In a completely unexpected turn of events, sixty years later, students of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School are also being taught at home, although by their regular teachers, through the wonders of technology, and as a result of a worldwide pandemic.

As this is Jewish American History Month, it is interesting to retell the trajectory of Jewish education in Syracuse. The first Jewish school, founded in 1897, was the afternoon Hebrew Free School. Parents paid what they could afford, and because many were newly-arrived immigrants without money, they paid nothing. The school lasted for twenty-five years until financial insolvency finally shut its doors. In the early 1950s, a day school was created but faced opposition from community members committed to public education. After suffering a fire, it too shut down. Then, in 1960, the Syracuse Hebrew Day School was established.

Sixty years later, the Syracuse Hebrew Day School proudly celebrates its standing as one of the Central New York Jewish community's finest institutions.

Hundreds of students have attended SHDS (or Max Gilbert Hebrew Academy as it was formerly known) and over five hundred are graduates. The Day School has provided a superior program of general and Judaic studies, unique in the area and unparalleled in its influence, as evidenced by the many successes of its alumni.

A 60th birthday has traditionally been an important milestone for Jews, for it signifies the avoidance of *karet*, or premature death, which is said to occur before the age of 60. But having a 60th anniversary in the midst of a worldwide pandemic is only one of many challenges the Day School has successfully met in its six decades. In this case, SHDS was fortunate that its current head of school, Laura Lavine, was the first administrator in New York State to lead a public virtual school and as a result, SHDS teachers were trained and ready to start online instruction as soon as the school closed due to the corona virus. Classes, books, hardware and software were available for students, and prayer and learning – even physical education and music lessons – began on time.

The Jewish Federation of Central New York recognized the value of the day school as an anchor of the Jewish community in establishing its tuition incentive program (see sidebar), citing "the critical importance to our community of maintaining a vibrant Jewish day school. The immersive environment provides each child with the elementary foundation of Jewish values that we have treasured and developed as a people for thousands of years." The Syracuse Rabbinical Council stated, "Only at the Syracuse Hebrew Day School can a child receive a top-notch secular primary education while also receiving a level of Jewish education that even the finest synagogue or afternoon school cannot match." But perhaps the most meaningful comment is by physician Mara Semel Kenger, SHDS '92, who said, "SHDS is almost more of a family than a school. It's a place where academic excellence is expected and encouraged. It is a testament to the idea that children are sponges who can learn as much as we throw at them if the environment is loving, supportive and nurturing."

Federation Tuition Incentive Program for the Syracuse Hebrew Day School

The Jewish Federation of Central New York recognizes the critical importance to our community of maintaining a vibrant Jewish day school. The immersive environment provides each child with the elementary foundation of Jewish values that we have treasured and developed as a people for thousands of years. Through a gift from the estate of Claire D. Selzer, the Federation has committed up to \$200,000 to fund the Jewish Federation Tuition Incentive Program to assist families attending the Syracuse Hebrew Day School (SHDS). The goal is to help more of our community's children to take advantage of this unparalleled educational experience.

Incentives are not need-based and are determined after SHDS tuition and financial aid is established. Incentives are limited to the total tuition actually paid by recipient families.

- The program is open to current and new SHDS families who make an annual donation to the Jewish Federation of Central New York.
- A family will be reimbursed up to \$7,500 for their first child enrolled in SHDS.
- A family will be reimbursed up to \$1,800 for each additional child enrolled in SHDS.
- An enrolled SHDS family who refers a new family that enrolls a child in SHDS will be reimbursed up to \$1,800.

The Tuition Incentive Program application may be downloaded from the Federation website www.jewishfederationcny.org and from the Day School website www.shds.org. For more information, contact Don Cronin at 315-445-2040 x 118 or dcronin@jewishfederationcny.org.

» SHDS Alumni Profiles

Sophie Marmor, SHDS '99

Schuyler County Assistant District Attorney graduated from the Syracuse Hebrew Day School in 1999. She earned a B.A. in history with a minor in political science from Yeshiva University, and a J.D. from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law.

Sophie was always interested in history, politics, and writing, so law was a natural fit. Her greatest professional accomplishment to date is arguing cases in front of the Appellate Division in Albany. "The judges on the panel ask you questions about the case in a fast-paced, rapid-fire fashion so you have to think on your feet quickly," she says. "I'm not sure if it's bragging to say I won all three times, but I'll take my chances and put that out there!" Sophie defines her prosecutorial role as a search for justice, not just convictions. "That's the best part of my job -- having absolutely no other mission than to seek justice. Sometimes justice does mean seeking a maximum sentence, but lots of times, it also means giving someone who has had a rough life a break."

Sophie's education at the Day School nurtured her affinity for history and writing. "The teachers there noticed that I had a very strong interest in history and encouraged me to pursue it by giving me extra reading. I remember that in the fifth grade I made a paper mâché Liberty Tree when we were studying about the American Revolution (a special interest of mine). I still have it at my mom's house." Still friends with many of her fellow day schoolers on social media, Sophie says, "It's great to see that they're accomplished and happy. I'm sure that like me, they'd attribute much of their current success to their early years at the Day School." One unique aspect of her SHDS education was her participation on the school's Drug Quiz Team. "Lots of the information that was drilled into me during that experience stays with me today. It comes in handy sometimes when I'm prosecuting drug cases."

Sophie also serves as a Hebrew teacher at a syna-



gogue's Sunday school in Elmira. "I feel deeply honored to pass on such an important part of our heritage to the next generation," she explains. "There is a part of me that feels humbled each time I teach. I definitely don't compare to the heroes I learned from at SHDS. Still, I consider my teaching a tribute to them."

Asked what she would say to a family who is considering SHDS for their children, Sophie replies, "Go for it! Aside from the individualized attention that the school provides, the values that the students learn are timeless. Any local school can produce a scholar, but only SHDS will make a *mensh*. Similarly, SHDS imparts a sense of community that stays with me to this day. I'm not only a member of my local community, but I know that I'm also a part of the Jewish People. Knowing that provides an incredible sense of comfort and confidence."

How do you feel about being virtually-schooled?

"One word: Awesome." - Remy S.

"It's going pretty smoothly. Sometimes the computer glitches. I love to sleep in!"

- Walden O.

"It is a challenge, but it is interesting and good to try something new." Tammy G.

"I like it because the school day is shorter and I get to hang out with my friends!"

- Sam E.



"It's good, because I never have to worry about being late." - Lucy S.

"I like learning online because we get to see everyone in their house, including our teachers!" - Benjamin B.

"I like online learning! It's hard sometimes, like when the computers shut off."

- Yetta W.

"It's really good! I like that we can turn on the computer and we're at school!"

We get extra time in our day because we don't need to get in the car to go to school or get in the car to come home!" - Takeshi S.

"Overall, I think online learning is ok, but being in a classroom with my classmates and teachers seems a much better way for me to learn."

- Makayla S.

"I'm disappointed that I'm missing out on my lab courses, which can't be done online. But this is a small price to pay and, as a STEM major, I understand and support the precautions that need to be taken for public health in order to flatten the curve of COVID-19. My school is doing all that it can. I even had a Zoom call last week with the dean of my college to choose courses for next semester."

- Rachel E.

"Another day in Paradise." - Jack W.

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» Book Review

Catskill Culture: A Mountain Rat's Memories of the Great Jewish Resort Area by Phil Brown

Review by Laura Feldman



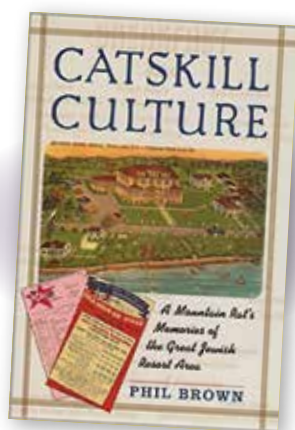
Laura Feldman

In the late 1800s, the Catskills were a place where refugees who were not allowed to be landowners in Europe were able to buy land. The mountains were beautiful, a perfect escape from factory and manual labor jobs. However, gentiles would not accept Jews in their hotels. The solution was the advent of the “Jewish” Catskills where wealthy Jews began to build their own hotels. So begins Brown’s tale of what ultimately led to “The Catskills” as we knew it in towns like Ellenville, South Fallsburg and Kiamesha Lake.

Brown takes the reader from farmland to Jewish Catskills to the Catskills of today. He combines a keen sense of humor and sensitivity with a professor’s quest for factual history. In this most informative and enjoyable book, he writes about how the Catskills became a summer haven. He describes what made it special to so many summer inhabitants of the kuchalaysns (“cook for yourself”) rooms and bungalow colonies, family hotels like the Seven Gables in Greenfield Park and luxury hotels like The Nevele and Grossinger’s. Some of the earlier hotels catered to political groups like the Workman’s Circle. Bungalow colonies catered to couples with young children, sometimes all from the same Brooklyn or Bronx neighborhood, who needed to escape the hot city.

Brown writes from personal experience of trips up north from Florida each year as a young child and then as a teenager. His parents originally owned their own small family hotel and later worked at other hotels in various

The Catskill Mountains played a large part in the lives of many of those of a certain age who lived in New York City and its environs during the ‘30s, ‘40s, and ‘50s. The experience was shared by rich and poor, by native New Yorkers, and by immigrants forced to escape the untenable conditions in Europe.



capacities. He exhibits an obvious and personal love of the culture, as well as a sociologist’s objectivity. In his tale he includes photographs, mouth-watering menus and lists of hotel casino events. He incorporates anecdotes about famous entertainers and how they got their start in the Catskills. Who doesn’t recall *Marjorie Morningstar*, Herman Wouk’s best seller, that took place in a fictional Catskill Hotel? Storyteller and comedian Sam Levinson, a teacher at Tilden High School in Brooklyn, got his start at one hotel, and was such a hit he began traveling throughout the mountains entertaining the guests. Jackie Mason, Danny Kaye, Eddie Fisher and many others got their start in the Catskills. Jewish farmers became hotel owners. Antisemitism morphed into gradual acceptance. The Borscht Belt was born.

Catskill Culture is an engrossing portrayal of a crucial era of American Jewish heritage.

NOTE: The Jewish Observer welcomes the book reviews by members of the Jewish community. Please send your 300 word submission of a book by a Jewish author or on a Jewish topic to bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org for consideration for publication.

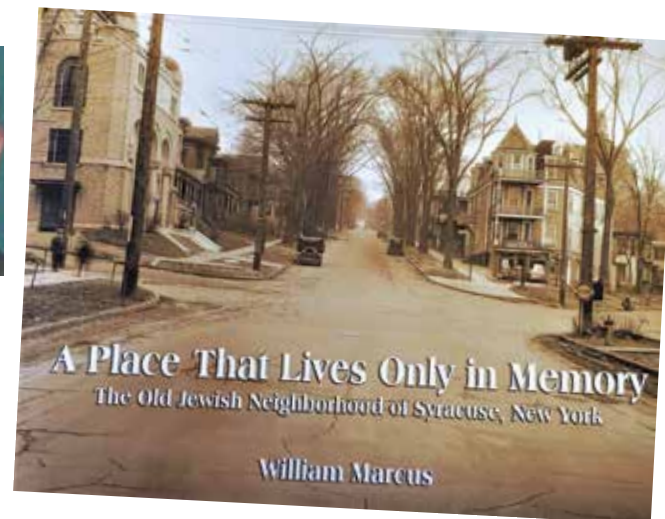
» Heritage

May is Jewish-American Heritage Month

In 2006, President George W. Bush proclaimed May as Jewish-American Heritage Month, a national month of recognition of the 360+ year history of Jewish contributions to American culture, in fields ranging from business, medicine, science, the arts, sports, and entertainment to government, military service, music, and more.



Howard Port



“Jewish-American Heritage Month is a good time to remember that we all come from immigrants to this country. We are here for freedom to practice our religion, freedom to pursue educational opportunities for our children and ourselves, and freedom to earn a living and provide a good life for our families,” says Howard Port, president of the Judaic Heritage Center of Central New York.

The Jewish community in Central New York dates back to the mid-1800s, although the major influx of immigrants arrived just prior to World War I. Many of these Jewish immigrants made their home in the 15th Ward, where they gathered to build a vibrant neighborhood and make major contributions to the economic, social, and cultural growth of the then-thriving city of Syracuse.

The story of this old Jewish neighborhood is memorialized, in words and photographs, in *A Place That Lives Only in Memory*, a book written by William Marcus and published by the Judaic Heritage Center. This book—as well as two videos: *Stories from the Syracuse Jewish Community* and *People and Places of the Syracuse Jewish Community*—are available for purchase at the Onondaga Historical Association bookstore and from the Judaic Heritage Center (5730 Commons Park Drive, East Syracuse, NY 13057).

“The Judaic Heritage Center, in cooperation with the Onondaga Historical Association, is working to preserve the story of our immigrant past so it can be passed on to future generations,” says Port. “We invite everyone to visit the Jewish Exhibit at the OHA’s downtown museum at 321 Montgomery Street to learn about the institutions and people who had a pivotal role in founding our community.”

In addition to the Judaic Heritage Center, there are several Facebook groups devoted to preserving the history of the community in its earlier days. Besides the Jewish Community of the 15th Ward, there are pages devoted to Camp Bradley Brook, Snowflake Pastry Memories, and Sharing Syracuse Jewish Ancestry.

Preservation of local history provides a sense of continuity and connection. That is why the Judaic Heritage Center, the Onondaga Historical Association, and the local Facebook groups matter. “But these repositories are only as good as the content they contain,” says Port. “So when you look at your accumulation of old pictures and family items, please think about donating them to the Judaic Heritage Center. In this way, your story, too, can be told to future generations.”

Local Acts of *Chesed* During the Pandemic

A pandemic can bring out the worst in some – hoarding, Zoom-trolling, conspiracy theorizing, scapegoating. But it can also bring out the best in others. *The Jewish Observer* is proud to highlight some things that community members are doing to help others in this difficult time. We know this is only a sample of acts of lovingkindness that exemplify our shared humanity and compassion. Please let us know of others at jewishobservercny@gmail.com.



JEREMY GARELICK: Movie writer, director and producer Jeremy Garelick founded American High in Syracuse in 2017 as a full-service production company specializing in heartfelt teen comedies. Little did he think that three years later, he would be teaming with Budmen Industries to mass-produce and distribute as many face shields as possible to CNY health care workers. Volunteers work four-hour shifts running 3D printers and assembling the masks at the Greater Syracuse Soundstage in DeWitt.



PAMELA WELLS: A communication consultant and public-speaking coach, Pamela Wells wanted to do something to help small businesses impacted by the pandemic. “Business is about relationships, and even if we can’t do business, we can still have relationships.” She posted a series of videos on her Facebook page (Pamela Wells Communication Coach) to teach people how to create short videos they can use to share advice and stay connected when they can no longer provide their services in person.

CANTOR ROBERT LIEBERMAN: RAV Properties offered 53,000 square feet of warehouse space, up to six months rent-free,

to any company or institution with a bona fide response to the current health crisis. “Abundant Life Church found us, and their volunteers set up shop and assembled 4,700 food package kits to help families through the weekend. They are realizing the advantages of our loading docks, ample parking (50-60 volunteer shifts) and wide-open spaces. To witness the hive of activity is just awe-inspiring.”

RUTH STEIN: “Israel Connect is a project that uses volunteer mentors to help Israeli students prepare for Israel’s university entrance exams that are heavily focused on English proficiency. I just signed up to be a volunteer and will start next week. I have a student assigned to me, and we will meet weekly, one-on-one, via Zoom for 45 minutes to practice English conversation, reading comprehension, and vocabulary development. Israel Connect provides the curriculum and trains each volunteer to use the video platform. I am so excited about doing this and want to tell everyone about it!”

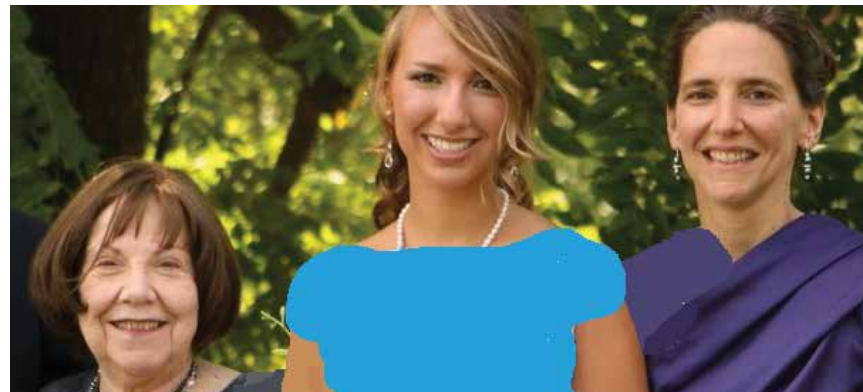


BRAD SEIDMAN: Brad Seidman is a teacher in the Syracuse City School District. His students come from low-income or refugee families and he wanted to do something to help. “We are working with our Office of Family Engagement, social work staff, contact staff, and others to make sure all of our students and families have enough food during the Covid-19 crisis. We are collecting non-perishable food items as well as health and beauty items. We can arrange for pick up at your residence. If you would like to help, please contact me at simbaherc@msn.com.”

LYNN GREENKY: Lynn Greenky, an assistant teaching professor in the SU College of Visual and Performing Arts, saw that a local firm had posted 3D-printing plans for a face shield on its website. She asked if the University’s 3D-printing facilities could make the masks. Within days, several departments began to collaborate printing pieces of the face shields at the School of Architecture and the College of Engineering and Computer Science and bringing them to VPA’s production facilities for assembly. The initiative produces 60 to 90 face shields per day, which are then distributed to hospital emergency departments by Syracuse Orthopedic Surgeons.

Like Mother, Like Daughter, Like Granddaughter

After receiving her master’s degree in social work from Syracuse University in 1990, Randi Bregman began her career at Vera House. The human service agency prevents, responds to and partners to end domestic and sexual violence and other forms of abuse. Ten years later, she became its executive director. Randi’s daughter, Sonja Gottbrecht, is the chief performance officer of Catholic Charities. Sonja has led the successful expansion of services to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable populations in Onondaga County. She too has a master’s degree in social work from Syracuse University.



It is easy to see parallels between Randi’s professional life and her daughter’s. But a pattern becomes even more apparent when one realizes that Randi’s mother and Sonja’s grandmother is Ona Cohn Bregman. Ona is also a social worker, who worked at the Onondaga County Mental Health Department for many years before opening a private practice in family systems psychotherapy. She later became associate professor of social work at Syracuse University, retiring only to devote herself to writing and research projects related to Bowen family systems theory.

What is the secret that ties these three women so closely together? Is a shared love of social work an example of nature or nurture? Or is something else involved?

When asked to describe her mother, Sonja responded, “She’s a friend, she’s a mentor and she’s the most generous person I know. Everyone I’ve met that knows her always tells me how lucky I am.” She describes her mother as her best friend and says that they are both “passionate about changing systems and improving lives. We both work at non-profits and are dedicated to our work. We are also very family focused, and put our kids first.” Sonja is not, however, a carbon copy of her mother. “My mom is very outgoing,” she relates, “whereas I am an introvert. She is confident in front of a big room of people and is an excellent speaker.

I’m jealous!”

Randi Bregman describes a similar pattern between herself and her mother. “My mother is a force of life,” she says. “She is passionate about social justice, an outstanding social worker and the matriarch of our family. I tend to be a little bit more laid back than my mother, which might be because she had to fight harder for things she wanted than I ever did.” It is interesting to contrast Randi’s and Sonja’s relationships with their mothers with Ona’s relationship with *her* mother, which she described as “a mixed bag.” “She had high expectations and could be highly critical if one disappointed or chose differently,” she recalls. Nonetheless Ona credits her mother with being “supportive in a thoughtful and open way” and being “always there for me if I was troubled.”

Both Randi and Sonja say that the most important thing their mothers gave them was unconditional love. “I always knew that she was there for me no matter what. That is a tremendous foundation upon which to build,” says Randi. “My mom taught me at an early age that despite any mistakes, her love is unwavering. This has made me a very forgiving person and is a gift I give to my own children,” says Sonja. Ona likewise recognizes that her mother gave her “a stable, loving home where I was encouraged to develop as my own person, get educated and contribute to the world.” There is a Jewish proverb that says, “What the daughter does, the mother did.” The truth of that adage is evidenced in the three generations of Bregmans.

Jewish Mothers

A man calls his mother in Florida. “Mom, how are you?” “Not too good,” says the mother. “I’ve been very weak.” The son says, “Why are you so weak?” She says, “Because I haven’t eaten in 5 days.” The man says, “That’s terrible! Why haven’t you eaten in 5 days? The mother answers, “Because I didn’t want my mouth to be full if you should call.”

The Jewish mother is a beloved stereotype, the subject of jokes, protagonist of books and plays, source of infinite guilt. The Jewish mother has been portrayed as smothering, too involved in her children’s lives, overprotective, self-sacrificing, interfering, overbearing, extremely proud of her children (especially if they become physicians) and constantly offering food. There’s even a book entitled *The Portable Jewish Mother: Guilt, Food, and... When Are You Giving Me Grandchildren?*

Many of the characteristics ascribed to the Jewish mother have diminished as Jews have assimilated into the larger society, and many are no longer applicable solely to Jewish mothers in an age of helicopter parenting. In many ways, the much-maligned Jewish mother has now become the ideal parent: madly in love with her children, eager to feed them nourishing food, to protect them from all harm and to give them as much attention as possible. Jewish mothers have come into their own. We laugh at their foibles, while recognizing that they’re smart and involved and, generally, their hearts are in the right place.

The JO asked two people in our community to share what they love about their Jewish mothers.

Dr. Kate Van Orden is a psychiatrist in private practice in Syracuse. She did her undergraduate work at the University of Pennsylvania and received her medical degree from St. George’s University School of Medicine. She is also the single parent of six, and the grandmother of two.

“My mother is a pillar of strength,” says her daughter Mookey, a theater educator, director and performer. “Raising six children by herself. Adopting five of those children. Getting us all through high school and putting us through college. She’s a master of tough love but also has a soft heart full of love and pride for her children.” Mookey describes her relationship with her mother as one “of reverence and restitution. I owe her for many of my successes and I thank her for helping me out when I needed it. I am also in awe of all that she’s accomplished and the values she taught us as children that she still adheres to today.”



They talk all the time and share a love of music. “I can’t count the number of musicals she’s listened to me obsess over and perform in. I’m pretty sure I’m the only one of her children that enjoys classical music but I got that from her. We both love our Jewish history and culture and bond through that a lot of the time. We both enjoy the beach as well, which makes sense seeing as we spend every summer on the coast of Massachusetts. And reading! We are both voracious

readers.” Which is not to say that mother and daughter are alike in every way. “My mother is a doctor, but I was never very interested in science or medicine like she was. My mother is also very organized and neat and unfortunately, I am not so much. We like very different types of food, even though my mom will always try anything I make.”

“I think the most important thing my mother ever gave me was my name,” says Mookey. “It is unusual. Like me. It is recognizable. Like me. I cannot hide behind it. Something my mother taught me never to do. It’s a conversation starter which I think has contributed to my gregarious personality. It has taught me to be assertive, whether I’m instructing someone to correct the spelling or making sure the pronunciation isn’t whitewashed. My Hebrew name *Simcha* means happiness, a word that I think defines my journey in life. I am constantly searching for happiness, spreading happiness, cherishing happiness and trying to embody that joyous feeling.”

It’s hard to know how to describe Dr. Zulma Tovar-Spinoza. She has many titles: Associate Professor of Neurosurgery, Associate Professor of Neurology, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Director of Pediatric Neurosurgery, Director of Pediatric Epilepsy Surgery and Director of the Laser Ablation Program at Upstate Medical University. The list of ailments for which she offers surgical treatment is equally impressive: brachial plexopathy, brain abscess, brain and spine tumors, brain aneurysm, cervical radiculopathy, congenital and developmental malformations of the nervous system, curved spine or scoliosis, epilepsy, hydrocephalus, kyphosis, lumbar stenosis, lumbosacral radiculopathy, myelopathy – and that’s just the first half of the alphabet.

Meeting this petit and charming surgeon, one is immediately drawn to her warmth and deep humanity. Dr. Tovar-



Spinoza came to Syracuse in 2009 with her husband Yosef and her three sons, Ari, Itai and Eitan. Born in Bogotá, Colombia and raised in San Cristóbal, Venezuela, she obtained her medical degree cum laude from the Universidad de los Andes Medical School. She then became the first female resident accepted to the Rabin Medical Center Neurosurgery Training Program at the University of Tel Aviv. She speaks fluent Hebrew, English and Spanish. At Upstate, she made headlines by operating on the first patient in the world, a five-year-old girl, using laser technology to destroy a rare type of brain tumor that causes seizures, disruptive behavior and other problems.

But she wouldn’t be where she is today without the help of her mother, Julia Romero. “My mother is my hero, the strongest, kindest and most selfless person I ever have known,” says Tovar-Spinoza. “She taught me to be strong and to follow my dreams, to be resourceful and find solutions for the difficult circumstances in life,” the surgeon explains, “My mother is great at providing advice and she is a living example of how to age gracefully and happily.” The most important gift her mother gave her, she says, is “always seeing the good and positive in people and circumstances.” She then adds, “And being physically there to support me and my family while I accomplished all my dreams. I would not be able to be who I am without her.”

Federation’s Hebrew Interest-free Loan Program lends money interest free to any Jewish person from Central New York who is in need of temporary financial assistance. Zero interest personal loans, up to \$4,000, can be obtained for many purposes, including medical and dental bills, debt consolidation, small business loans, lifecycle events, family emergencies, car and home repair, camp fees, school tuition and fees, adoption and fertility services. Monthly payments begin one month after the loan funds are disbursed until the loan is paid in full. Terms and payments are determined for each loan by the Loan Committee in consultation with the borrower. All information is kept in the strictest confidence. As loans are repaid, funds are recycled to make new loans. **For more information about the Hebrew Interest-free Loan Program, contact Federation CFO Don Cronin at 315-445-2040 x118 or scronin@jewishfederationcnny.org.**

Honoring Jews By Choice On *Shavuot*

Whenever Jewish sages wanted a model of Jewish womanhood, of devotion to the higher things in life, of loyalty and excellence of character, they spoke of Ruth. Yet this woman, whose *megilla* is read on the festival of *Shavuot*, was not a Jew by birth, but a Moabite. Ruth left her family's heritage and became the most famous female "Jew by choice," despite the many hardships involved in following a faith unlike her own. Because of her commitment to living a Jewish life, Ruth is seen as the paradigm of the righteous convert, and was rewarded by seeing her great-grandson David become king of Israel.

It's not easy to convert to Judaism. It's not a proselytizing religion. Tradition says that prospective converts must be rebuffed three times to test their true commitment before conversion can be commenced. The *Jewish Observer* asked three members of our community who made the decision to become Jewish to tell readers about their experiences.



REBECCA GREENBLATT

Dr. Rebecca Greenblatt, assistant professor of microbiology and immunology at Upstate, decided to convert very early in her relationship with her now-husband, and completed the process while they were engaged. "I had an unusual process because I started while in college at Cornell," reports Rebecca. "I took the opportunity to do a Near Eastern Studies minor, with classes in Hebrew and Jewish history. There were so many candidates for conversion in Ithaca that decade, and only one synagogue, that Rabbi Glass ran an every-Tuesday-evening conversion class year-round. I attended that while I was in graduate school."

Rebecca told her prospective in-laws that while she really appreciated the gift of Rabbi Glass's time, she wanted to do more spiritual work than his class included. "They asked their rabbi, Dan Ornstein at Beth Sholom in Albany, to help me, and he kindly designed four additional tutoring sessions for me, and set up my *mikvah* at the Albany JCC location. The minor mismatch between Rabbi Glass's class and my needs was really the only obstacle I faced. (That and learning the *alef-bet*!)"

Rebecca's in-laws were also very accepting of, and interested in, her conversion process. "I know a couple

of people who abandoned conversion, and their relationships, for lack of that support," she says. "My parents were okay with my conversion, and excited to attend a Jewish wedding." Once she and Ben had a family, they found that, "for the most part, it has helped us that the grandparents celebrate two different sets of holidays. We can spend the holidays with Ben's parents, Christmas with my parents, and host Thanksgiving at our house. One of the books that Rabbi Orenstein recommended to me, *Your people, My people*, by Lena Romanoff, suggested explaining Christmas to the Jewish grandchildren as being like attending someone else's birthday party. That has worked really well for us."



CAROLINA AND CARLOS GOULART

Beshert is a Yiddish word that means "destiny," used to express the seeming fate of an auspicious happening. Listening to Dr. Carlos and Carolina Goulart discuss their conversion to Judaism with Rabbi Evan Shore is to truly comprehend the meaning of *beshert*. "I was seven years old when I started to think about becoming Jewish," says Carolina, who grew up in Brazil. "My grandparents had

lived in Israel, where my grandfather worked in the Brazilian embassy. I liked the things I heard about Israel and as I grew older, I read a lot about it." Her grandfather had many Israeli objects in his home and Carolina found them intriguing. Carlos was influenced by his grandmother, who had many teachings and sayings and values that he suspected were linked to a past connection to Judaism. He felt drawn to the Jewish faith, saying that somehow "You always come back to it. It makes sense to you. It's who you are."

When Carolina and Carlos began dating and discussing a future together, with marriage and a family, the issue of wanting to be Jewish connected them. In addition to the parallelism of their grandparents' influence, they both believed that Judaism needed to be a part of their lives. Carlos first went into a synagogue the week he and Carolina were to be wed, in a civil ceremony. He was so affected by the experience that he wore a *kippa* to his wedding. The young couple's families were initially shocked by their decision to convert, but were ultimately supportive and understanding.

The Goularts began studying with Rabbi Shore two and a half years ago, when they moved to Syracuse so Carlos could do a residency in neurosurgery at Upstate Medical Center and Carolina could go to nursing school. They entered what they call "the universe of Judaism" knowing that the process was a long one. They read books every week, answer questions and attend services regularly, in addition to observing *kashrut* and *Shabbos*. "The more you dig,

the more questions you have," Carolina says. "Judaism is so deep and has so many layers." "Judaism is not just a religion, it's an identity," adds Carlos. "To become Jewish, you just don't take a test; it's a lifelong process." Carolina chimes in, "We're at the beginning. We're at the tip of the iceberg. There's always something new to learn and understand. But it draws you into it."

Some of the challenges of the conversion process involved friends who did not understand why they wanted to be religious. "In our generation, people aren't drawn to religion," Carlos says, "As you change, people don't understand." Despite the challenges, the Goularts have persisted. "When we kept a whole *Shabbos* for the first time, from Friday to Saturday, reading, resting and experiencing the peacefulness – it felt like a cleansing, a spiritual endeavor with which the other weekdays do not compare," said Carolina. Carlos agreed: "We couldn't wait 'til the next week to do it again!"

The sense of community that Carolina feels, not just at Shaarei Torah, but with the entire Jewish community, is very meaningful to her. She also appreciates that Judaism is a religion of inquiry, a constant questioning and trying to understand. Carlos, with a scientific and medical background, paradoxically appreciates that not everything is based on fact. "It humbles you," he says. "Sometimes you just have to stop questioning and take a step and do it. And it is wonderful."

THE CHERYL SCHOTZ TEAM of Howard Hanna

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Jewish Cook of the Month

Yolanda Febles

Yolanda Febles is a health coach who is currently a full-time mom, children's book author, and foodie who lives in Jamesville with her amazing husband, Arel, and two energetic boys.

Where did you learn to cook?

The internet taught me almost everything I know. I don't consider myself a natural cook. I need direction and ideas so I love how I can look up ingredients online and a recipe will pop up or if I want to learn how to make a type of food from a specific country, it's all there. I'm becoming more confident in the kitchen to experiment without a recipe but I consider myself more of a recipe curator. Right now, I'm especially into plant-based recipes. I recently completed a plant-based nutrition course, and it just makes sense that we need to eat more fruits and vegetables and less meat, if any. The science is there proving over and over again that people who eat a primarily plant-based diet are healthier and live longer. I get excited when I find a whole food plant-based recipe that meat-eaters and my boys will eat and enjoy.

Why do you like to cook?

Cooking represents connection to me. I feel more connected to people when I share a home-cooked meal. My mother is from South Korea and my father is Puerto Rican, so we ate really different types of food. I loved it because I felt I was learning



something about their cultures. When I married my husband, who is Jamaican and Eastern European (Jewish), and we had our very mixed kids, I wanted our boys to be exposed to all of our cultures through food. I love that I can cook seaweed soup, *arroz con gandules* (rice with pigeon peas), and curries for them. They are just as comfortable eating herring and lox as they are eating mac and cheese. I love that I can teach them that there is more than one way to put ingredients together and that every country and person has their own spin on it. I want them to be open-minded and cooking is one way to teach them that. Besides connection, there is something so gratifying about taking ingredients and turning them into something you can eat. I love to eat! Cooking is also therapeutic for me. I like to light a candle and put some *bossa nova* or jazz on as I cook.

What is your favorite dish to prepare?

I love preparing kimchi chigage (kimchi stew). It's one of my comfort foods and I love the spiciness, the crunch of the cabbage, and the softness of the tofu. There are so many textures and it's got the right amount of heat; it makes your nose drip a little because it's so hot...ah so good! I literally start salivating when I smell the kimchi cooking. It's an easy dish to make but it has so much flavor.

What is your favorite cooking secret/trick/hack/shortcut?

1. Have a 'trash' bowl right next to your cutting board. Whenever you're peeling or

chopping and there's bits or peels that you are going to throw away, just throw them in the trash bowl. This is a time-saver because you don't have to go back and forth to the trash can.

2. One thing I've learned with plant-based soups or chilis is when you want to increase the thickness or give it more body, you take some of the soup out and blend it till smooth and add that back to the soup, you'll have instantly thicker soup.

3. Umami is a wonderful flavor. Add a bit of soy sauce to soups, dressings, and anything you think needs a bit more depth.

Could you please share a favorite kosher recipe that isn't terribly complicated?

Easy Three-Ingredient Tomato Soup

(from *inspiredtaste.com*)

PREP 5mins, COOK 40mins = TOTAL 45mins

Makes 2 generous servings

INGREDIENTS

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter (or vegan butter or olive oil) *
- 1/2 large onion, cut into large wedges
- 1 (28-ounce) can tomatoes, we prefer whole peeled or crushed
- 1 1/2 cups water or low sodium vegetable stock
- 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt, or more to taste

DIRECTIONS

Melt butter (or oil) over medium heat in a Dutch oven or large saucepan.

Add onion wedges, water, can of tomatoes with their juices, and 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Bring to a simmer. Cook, uncovered, for about 40 minutes. Stir occasionally and add additional salt as needed.

Blend the soup, and season to taste. The easiest way to blend is to pour the soup into a blender or use an immersion blender.

*to reduce the fat content, use 2 tablespoons of butter or olive oil; you will still have a delicious soup.

Kosher Catering by The Oaks

"Our Jewish community members shouldn't have to cook for themselves seven nights a week because there are no local kosher restaurants," says Kristen Oja, Sodexo Catering Manager at The Oaks of Menorah Park, with a smile. "We offer our four-course meals Monday through Saturday. Each evening of the week we offer a different soup selection, several salad selections, five entrée choices with complementing sides and dessert for only \$25." For major Jewish holidays, The Oaks has special menus featuring traditional foods. "There are also times when we create menus just for a change of pace. We do a mac-and-cheese with all the fixin's, and we had a 'Chinese Take-Out' night."

Creativity plays a strong role in The Oaks menu-planning. "We do it all!" Kristen exclaims. "If *kashrut* doesn't restrict us, we will do it. We love to cook what's in season and products we can get locally. Our chefs prepare what they think people will like. We have a great team of chefs who create a very diverse selection of menus." The majority of The Oaks menus are created by Chef Keith LeBlanc, who has more than fifteen years of cooking and catering experience and is responsible for the entire Menorah Park campus. Chef Keith is assisted by The Oaks' executive chef, Dwight Bailey.

"Our largest customer base is the local Jewish community," Kristen notes. "We often provide catered meals for the synagogues, schools and families. But we also

travel. We've catered events in Clinton, Verona, Cortland, Skaneateles, Binghamton and more." People who keep *kashrut* and who are in town for work or leisure often request that The Oaks deliver food to local hotels for them. "We want out-of-towners to have meal options when they travel here and to know that the Syracuse area is diverse and inclusive, with a strong and welcoming Jewish community," says Oja.

"We offer all service levels; we are not limited to to-go meals," she adds. "We can host events in several different spaces across our campus or we can come to the customer. We do everything from a simple week-night meal delivery to a full-service wedding, and everything in between. We have catering options for all different budget and event types. Of course, we are unique because we are one of the few kosher caterers in Central New York, but

our menu-creation process is also different from many catering companies. Instead of working with a selection of standard menus, we create a menu for each client based on their individual wants and needs. No two event visions are the same and we don't feel as though our clients should have to fit within the constraints of choosing between Package A, B or C."

The Oaks is making a special effort to help the community during the Covid-19 pandemic. "We understand that this is a trying time for many and we want the Jewish community to have access to hot Kosher meals," says Oja. "Meals are available from The Bistro by calling 315-446-9111 ext. 116 or through GrubHub. They are available from The Oaks by calling 315-446-9111 ext. 255. We offer curb-side delivery right to your car to stay in compliance with recent restrictions."



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(315) 445-2040 x130
mbalanoff@jewishfoundationcny.org

Leaving the *Jewish Observer*

Dear Readers,

Best wishes and keep healthy. I am sad to report this will be my final column in the JO as editor. It seems like almost yesterday when, in the spring of 2000, I was approached to see if I would be interested in applying for the position of *Jewish Observer* editor. I believe I was asked to edit the *JO*, in part, because of the old adage – “if you want to get something done, you should ask a busy person.” And so, I became *JO* editor on July 1, 2000.

I have viewed my job as the “go to” person with knowledge of the Jewish community – someone who makes sure people stay connected with the CNY Jewish community through the *JO*, a task that involved continually updating addresses, disseminating information about various Jewish community events, and making sure all the information, grammar and language in the paper were correct and consistent with journalism practices. I had lived in Paris and taught English as a second language. I loved using my English skills again on behalf of the Syracuse Jewish community.

I have not done the editorship alone, and am indebted to all those who have contributed *d’vei* Torah, synagogue and organizational news, information about personal life events and new contact information. I was the person hiding behind the headlines. It was a labor of love.

With the reformatting of the *JO* to a different kind of journalism, my tenure has come to an end. And so, as the longest-serving *JO* editor, I say, *l’hitraot* and best of luck to the new *JO*.

Bette Siegel

EZKERA / REMEMBERING

HELLA (FREDRICH) STEINBERG

March 26, 2020

Hella (Fredrich) Steinberg of Syracuse passed away Thursday, March 26, 2020. She was born October 25, 1931 in Germany, and emigrated to the US in 1940 by way of Panama. She previously resided in Batavia, NY and retired from the city’s Department of Public Works. On the passing of Seymour, her beloved husband of 65 years in 2019, she moved to Syracuse where she joined the JCC and made many friends.

She is survived by her children Dr. Mark (Joan) Steinberg of Bethlehem, PA and Shari (Steve) Fauer of Manlius; grandchildren Andrew, Elizabeth and Daniel Steinberg, Allie Fauer and Erin (Kevin) Williamson; and several nieces and nephews including Dr. Paul (Suzanne) Schulman of San Diego, CA. She was predeceased by her brother Bernie.

The family wishes to give a special thanks to the nurses and staff at Upstate Hospital who became her extended family over these past many weeks. Contributions in Hella’s memory may be made to The Support of Upstate Employees Fund: www.upstatefoundation.org/careforcaregiver.

Sisskind Funeral Service

MINNIE ROSSOFF

April 2, 2020

Minnie Rossoff, 97, died peacefully at her home in Clay on Thursday morning. She was born in Montreal, Quebec, Canada on November 11, 1922 to Samuel and Dora Albert. After WWII, Minnie and Isaac settled in Massena where they raised their family and had their interior decorating business until retiring in 1981. They moved to Liverpool in 1986, then to The Oaks of Dewitt in 2011, and in 2014, they moved to Clay.

Together they raised four children while working side by side every day for more than 40 years. They were active members of Adath Israel Synagogue in Massena. Minnie was an integral part of the success of Hadassah and the Women’s Auxiliary.

Her kindness and generosity of spirit will be greatly missed. She was a gentle, kind soul who was loved by everyone who was privileged to have known her. She was predeceased by their son, Gerald Philip Rossoff, in 1979.

Her family includes her husband Isaac of more than 76 years; their daughters Harriet (Irving) Zucker, Norma (Jason) Searns, and Judith Rossoff; grandchildren Danielle, Sean, Adam (Claire), Stuart (Ashley), and Gregory (Amanda); and great-grandsons Abraham and Everett.

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EDITH BONIN

April 11, 2020

Edith Bonin, 85, of DeWitt, died Saturday, April 11, 2020 at Crouse Hospital.

During the 1950s Edith was a registered nurse at Crouse Irving Memorial Hospital. She put her career on hold to take a position of full-time loving mother to her growing family. Edith was a fastidious homemaker, devoted wife and mother, avid reader, and loyal SU sports fan for many years. She was also a member of the Crouse Irving Nurses Alumni Association and Congregation Beth Shalom-Chevra Shas.

She is survived by her husband Victor Bonin, her children, Eric Bonin, Sheri (Paul) Caja and Scott (Crista) Bonin; her cousin Lois Belavsky, and several nieces and nephews.

Private services and burial were conducted in Syracuse. Contributions should be made to the local ASPCA or your charity of choice.

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KENNETH RICHTAND LERMAN, "WILDMAN"

April 2, 2020

Kenneth Richtand Lerman, "Wildman," 63, of Los Angeles, CA passed away April 2, 2020.

After graduating from Jamesville DeWitt High School, Ken moved to Florida, where he worked with race horses. Then he joined the navy, serving on the aircraft carrier USS Saratoga. He moved to California in 1985 to work in the music industry, his greatest passion. Wildman was one of a kind, anyone he met was touched by his warmth, humor, gentleness & sincerity.

Ken was predeceased by his father Fred, his brother Nathan and his sister Nancy. He is survived by his mother Marilyn, his brother Stephen (Rebecca), his sister Caryn (Randy), nephews Tyler and Josh and niece Alexis, along with lots of cousins.

A celebration of Ken's life will be later this summer. Contributions in Ken's memory can be made to The Vet Hunters Project: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme2/vethuntersproject>

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RICHARD RAPP

March 25, 2020

Richard Rapp was born April 26, 1928 and raised in Brooklyn, New York. He died March 25 in Syracuse. He lived in the New York City area his entire life, and worked in the entertainment industry and Democratic politics. He was a world traveler who loved opera and spirited conversation.

As a young man, Richard's father wanted him to join his accounting firm, but Richard had other ideas. He loved music. He played piano, taught piano, and worked for Frank Sinatra's publishing company and in concert advertising. Rapp wrote two popular songs that were recorded by Barry Sadler and the Green Berets and Ed Ames.

Rapp was active in the Queens Democratic party, was involved in many successful election campaigns, and worked for New York State Assemblywoman Ann Carrozza for ten years. He was a devoted member of The Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island in Garden City, NY, and served as its president for many years. He was the author of several books

including Friends and Illusions and A Box of Sand. The novels are based on his family's roots as Austrian Jews who immigrated to New York.

Rapp was predeceased by his first wife, artist Paula Rapp, to whom he was married from 1951 until her death in 1973. They shared a love of music, modern dance, art, and political activism. He will forever be remembered for his big personality, humor, charm, and honest opinions which he never hesitated to share...he was a character!

Richard's loving family includes his wife of 40 years, Sybil Wanderman-Rapp; his children Sue Ellen Rapp and Lorraine Rapp (Dr. Jeffrey Kirshner); Sybil's children Brooke, Todd and Drew; his grandchildren David, Laine (Brian), Garrett, Skye, Reed and Cayla; and his great-granddaughter Averi.

Donations in his memory may be made to The Ethical Humanist Society, 38 Old Country Road, Garden City, NY 11530.

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