

Happy Purim!

# Jewish Observer

A publication of the Jewish Federation of Central New York

## of Central New York

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MARCH 2022 | ADAR I - ADAR II 5782



## SIX UNDER 36 AWARD WINNERS



**LOOK:**  
MEGILLAH, MASKS  
AND PIKUACH  
NEFESH  
(6)



**INSIDE:**  
THE MYSTERIES  
OF HAMANTASCHEN  
(7)



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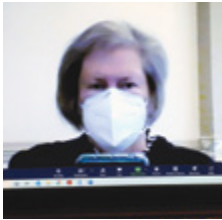
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# March 2022

## From the Editor



Barbara Davis

**Masks. We've all grown to hate them.** Even though we know we need them. Even though we know they save lives. We are sick of them. They are uncomfortable. They are a constant reminder of lost freedom. They have become political symbols, and whether you wear them and how you wear them can indicate whether you are left-leaning or right-leaning, a rule-follower or a risk-taker, a liberal or a libertarian. Masks provoke fights in bars, restaurants, stores and airplanes, although seeing a mask when you go into a bank no longer signals that a robbery is imminent.

Purim is all about masks. The custom of wearing masks (masquerading) and costumes probably originated with Italian Jews at the end of the 15th century, likely in imitation of Roman carnivals. Masks are an integral part of the Purim story. Esther wears the mask of the obedient queen, but in truth she's brave and bold. Esther's mask also hides her origins. Even the king doesn't know she is Jewish until she reveals her true identity to save her people. Others are also unmasked: Ahasuerus is revealed as a misogynistic and weak-willed man rather than a strong and wise king. Haman is exposed as a murderous antisemite. Even Mordechai is outed as not being above deception and scheming.

Sometimes masks signify heroism. We have only to think of the Lone Ranger, Zorro, Batman, Spiderman and the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. And health care workers. And teachers and store clerks and anyone else in a forward-facing job. Masks can also signify villainy. Think The Joker, Hannibal Lector, Jason Voorheis or Darth Vader. So what does it mean when we cover our mouths and noses for COVID and the rest of our faces for Purim 5782?

In an article entitled "Masks as a Badge of Honor," Eric Klopfer, head of the Comparative Media Studies/Writing Department at MIT wrote: "In this pandemic era, what a mask really says is, 'I care about you.' That is an important and powerful message. It is one that we should champion and commend.... [D]uring a pandemic, the mask is a badge of honor, indicating the important role that you are playing in protecting the health of others during a crisis."

I think his statement is spot on. Purim is a time to make mask-wearing an act of commitment to our immediate community, to the entire community with whom we share the air we breathe and to our Jewish faith. It is also a time to look beneath our masks to see who we really are. Last month, as the second film in our Sunday Cinema Series, many of us watched "Little White Lie," a documentary about a Jewish girl who was Black but who was never told the truth of her racial heritage. It was a fascinating examination of identity and family secrets and generated lots of interesting discussion. Our March feature, "Sand Storm," takes place behind the closed doors of a Bedouin village in the Negev Desert and explores the ways men in a tradition-bound Arab culture enjoy the benefits of a way of life that oppresses women, who in turn oppress each other. Looking beneath the masks of this culture from the perspective of an Israeli is a different way of invoking the Purim spirit.

Also in this issue of the Observer are several articles about the Jewish cemeteries of our community and Jewish funeral and mourning customs. Even in the midst of celebration, Purim is a festival of remembering, so it seemed appropriate to juxtapose these more serious articles with those relating to the festivities of Purim. Sadly,

in part due to the pandemic and in part due to the aging of our community, many of us have found ourselves visiting cemeteries of late. Jewish cemeteries are very special places and our local cemeteries have interesting histories.

But another question arises from this juxtaposition. How many of us hide our Judaism and do nothing Jewish until the end of our lives, when being buried in a Jewish cemetery suddenly and unexpectedly becomes important? How much are we missing by keeping our religion under wraps? Why do we mask this part of ourselves, even as we live in a country founded on the ideal of religious freedom and live in an age of tremendous openness about ethnic and gender identity?

Perhaps Purim will help us recognize the importance and value of celebrating our Judaism. Our People of the Book review this month is of Why Do Jewish? Historically, many American Jews have answered this question by saying that being Jewish and doing Jewish doesn't matter. But it does matter, and one of the goals of the Jewish Federation of Central New York is to help everyone in our community see why it matters and how being Jewish and doing Jewish can make life more meaningful.

Maybe if we all do one more Jewish thing this month, we will see how wonderful the experience can be. Maybe next month, we will want to do more. There are so many opportunities in our community to "do Jewish." One can join a Jewish book club, try the new kosher restaurant in DeWitt, see a Jewish-themed movie on the Sunday Cinema Series, put some food in the Jewish community's food pantry, go to a service at a synagogue in person or virtually or participate in a program at the JCC, at Moishe Pod or with NexGen.

Finally, if you have an idea about something newish and Jewish that you would like to see happen in Central New York, please share it by emailing jo@jewishfederationcny.org. We will try to make it happen. Let's be as bold and brave as Esther, taking pride in who we are and having a very happy Purim, wearing masks to protect us more than to disguise us.

### In The Doghouse



The *JO* sincerely regrets that some wonderful dogs were left out of the last issue. (Lyla, Olive and Isaac's dog have assured us that here are no hard feelings.)

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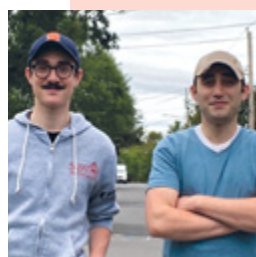
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# Six Under 36 Award Winners

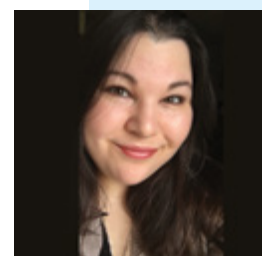
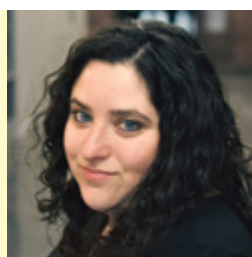
The Marjorie Oberdorfer Bronner Pierson and Theodore Pierson Family Endowment for the Jewish Future “Six Under 36” program celebrates six noteworthy Jewish Central New Yorkers, all 36 years old or younger, who make Jewish Central New York and the larger community better by bringing remarkable energy and new ideas to religion, philanthropy, the arts, learning, social action and inclusion. These talented young adults are changing our community for good by building a more just society and creating community in innovative ways.

The six award recipients were chosen by a panel of community members from nominations made by the community to receive a donor advised fund of \$1,000 at the Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York, to be used to support an organization with which they have worked or a cause they support. The “Six Under 36 Program” is run under the auspices of the Jewish Federation of Central New York. The Federation is honored to introduce the inaugural class of Pierson Award winners to the community and thanks the Pierson family for their generous contribution for this program.

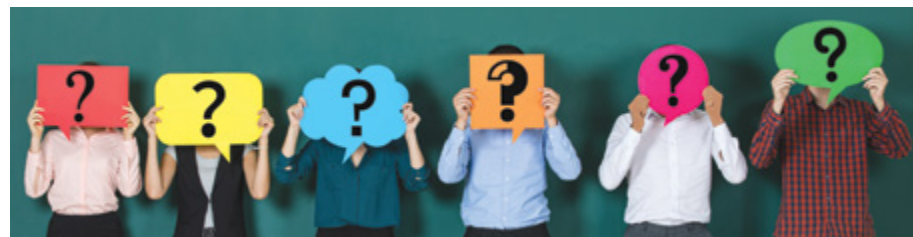


**ALAN CHELNITSKY AND ALEXANDER GABRIEL** met in Israel when Alex was discharging from the IDF just as Alan was enlisting. Although Alex moved back to Central New York and Alan moved to Brooklyn, they stayed in touch over the years. Learning about Moishe House, the two friends asked each other, “How come we don’t open one in Syracuse?” The answer was, “Why not?” So they joined forces, submitted an application and were approved to open a Moishe Pod in downtown Syracuse. They reached out to the Central New York Jewish community to identify young Jewish adults aged 22-32 who are interested in building and leading their dream Jewish community with their friends. Their motivation for starting Moishe Pod Syracuse was to bring Jewish young professionals and graduate students from all backgrounds within the community together for social gatherings, parties and events. They wanted to make sure whatever they planted would stay within the community for the future. To date, they have hosted over 60 individuals and look forward to meeting many more as they grow and expand.

**MELISSA HARKAVY**’s creative problem-solving and “let’s find a way to make that work” attitude was put to the test when faced with managing the Congregation Beth Shalom-Chevra Shas response to COVID, a rabbinic transition, new staff positions and ongoing security upgrades. Her quick learning, training skills and determination allowed CBS-CS to maintain strong connections with members during COVID through the use of Zoom and other technologies directly impacting their lives. Melissa relates to and cares about people of all ages and backgrounds. She obtained a Scientists and Synagogues grant linking professional scientists as mentors to students, partnering with Syracuse University Hillel. She reached across congregational boundaries to create one Syracuse area United Synagogue Youth chapter to better serve local teens and has served as Zoom master for Federation’s Super Sundays for two years.

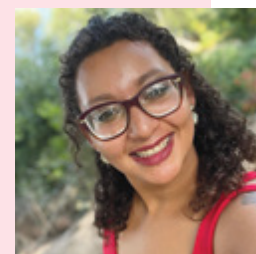


**DIANA KOESTER** is passionate about teaching the next generation. As soon as she relocated to the Syracuse area she dove into teaching 7th grade at Temple Concord, taking on the difficult task of untangling Jewish history from the Holocaust to present day. She studies antisemitism and its causes with them and helps them process what it means to be Jewish in today’s world. When the opportunity arose to join the faculty of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, she jumped at the chance and also taught Jewish art electives at the Epstein School. Diana is currently serving on the team overseeing the year-one projects of Temple Concord’s five-year strategic plan. The specific projects she is overseeing are developing intergenerational dialogues around issues of *tikun olam* and social activities for adult Temple members. Our Jewish world is a better place because Diana is making it a better place. She is instilling pride and a love of Judaism in our young people.



**HUGHIE AND AVERY STONE FISH** are co-founders of Stone Fish Studios. Hughie Stone Fish wrote and produced a city-wide project called “Welcome to Syracuse,” which showcased Syracuse businesses, organizations, choirs and citizens to draw positive attention to the city and bring everyone together in song. The brothers founded The Arts Project Syracuse to benefit those less fortunate. Hughie received an Emmy award for outstanding original song for a video that used historical cartoon drawings of racist and antisemitic stereotypes to educate viewers on how images may have helped normalize the idea of Jewish people as villains. They are both deeply rooted in their Jewish identities, having grown up in Central New York, attended the Day School and the JCC summer camp. While in high school, Avery studied in Israel. He attended Northwestern University where he was very involved in Hillel and was a member of ShireiNU, the Jewish a cappella group.

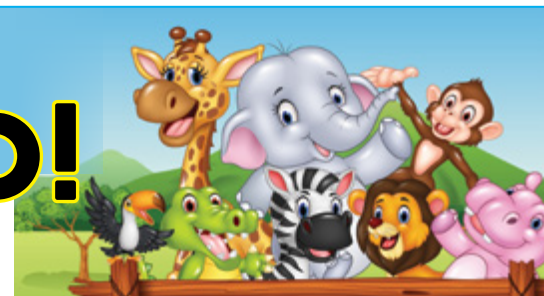
**MOOKEY VAN ORDEN** is an educator, writer, actress, director, teacher and artist. She works in a school as an engagement specialist and is also involved in many theatre and performing arts companies. Black stories, female stories, stories of mental illness and the inclusion of marginalized voices are paramount to Mookey’s process and artistic works. She is working on a filmed production of a new work, “Kill Move Paradise” for the Paul Robeson Performing Arts Company and is about to direct the Central New York Playhouse’s spring presentation of “Jesus Christ Superstar.” Perhaps most intriguing about Mookey’s vision is that she herself is Jewish, a graduate of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School and the Epstein School of Jewish Studies, where she recently co-taught a class on “How to Be a Jewish Antiracist.” As a person of color and a person with a strong Jewish identity, Mookey has had to work out her own pathway. She supported a volunteer committee which is now at work on its third Learning Together with Our Neighbors program that brings together Muslims, Jews and Christians to better understand their own and each other’s faith.



**SARA WEILER** contributes to the local Jewish community and beyond through the selfless donation of her time and talent to many local arts organizations and charities by fundraising and facilitating valuable civic programs. As the adjudication coordinator of the prestigious Syracuse High School Theatre Awards, she spearheaded the creation of the official handbook and grading rubric used to encourage the achievements and growth of hundreds of high school theatre students from 2015-2020. Through charity partnerships with local performing arts companies, Sara has actively raised thousands of dollars for non-profit organizations. As performing is Sara’s passion, she has created, produced and performed in musical theatre cabarets at The Oaks at Menorah Park and at Temple Concord, emceed musical theatre nights and performed with numerous local companies in starring and supporting roles. Her performance in the title role of the popular children’s musical “Pinkalicious” has been enjoyed at The Landmark Theatre, Upstate Golisano Children’s Hospital, Jazz Central, Appleseed Productions and Sackett’s Harbor. Sara has served as a board member for both Syracuse Opera and Rarely Done Productions, contributing to the sustained success of these local performing arts companies.



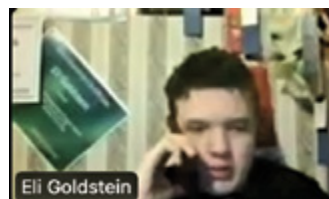
# ZOO-PER SUNDAY ROCKED!



There is no job more vital to the wellbeing of our Jewish community than being a solicitor for Federation campaigns. The willingness of Zoo-per Sunday solicitors to take on this challenge is deeply valued and appreciated, not only by those who know what the solicitors are doing, but by the hundreds of others who benefit from their work, even as they are unaware of how it comes about.

Against a background of colorful artwork done by the children of our community, solicitors raised over \$25,000 in commitments to the 2022 campaign in under two hours. Notably, they were able to generate almost 10% in pledge increases over last year. The Federation applauds and appreciates the commitment and dedication of Zoo-per solicitors **Anick and Jay Sinclair, Joan and Phil Shuls, Beth and Jim MacCrindle, Colleen Cicotta, Bob Tornberg, Steve Sisskind, Laura Lavine, Mike Kalet, Brett Kuppermann, Donna Lipton, Jillian Juni, Sid Manes, Paula Trief, Ora Jezer, Sharon Slosberg, Joan Lowenstein, Deb Sikora and teen solicitors Milo Sinclair and Eli Goldstein.**

What special quality motivates people to do what is arguably one of the most challenging aspects of fundraising: asking people for money? Many, perhaps most, people shy away when asked to solicit, but some rise to the challenge. The *JO* asked our oldest and youngest solicitors what motivates them. Eighty years separate 95-year-old Sid Manes and 15-year-old Eli Goldstein, but one thing they have in common is their willingness to help the community on Super Sunday. “Why do I do it?” responded Sid. “Simple. If not me, then who? I support my Jewish community, have the time and can, so why not me? I touch base with people and do something worthwhile.”



“The reason I solicit for the Federation is because I see the importance of donating to the Federation. The places that the Federation funds have deeply changed my life. So I want to make sure the Federation has enough money to help fund these places so others’ lives can be changed too,” said Eli, who has been a solicitor for two years. “For example, when I first started being able to read, my parents got me PJ Library® books. Both the Syracuse Hebrew Day School and The Epstein School of Jewish Studies changed my life in many ways. SHDS taught me the values of Judaism, but also the values of being a good person at a

very young age, and I will be forever grateful for that. The Epstein School has continued teaching me those values and has been preparing me for college. Also, every Friday I went to the JCC for a few hours before I was picked up. This allowed me to spend time with people I went to school with and people who I didn’t. It also allowed me to take karate classes. And if I get accepted to Syracuse University someday, Hillel will also be funded by the Federation. You could say that my whole life has been affected by these organizations, so the least I can do is help make sure these organizations are fully funded so they can impact other people’s lives.”

Super Sunday, which last year was titled Superhero Super Sunday and this year Zoo-per Sunday, is an annual tradition that has morphed into a fun community event as much as a fundraiser. People who came to the Rosamond Gifford Zoo this year, despite the frigid weather and the ubiquity of COVID, nonetheless experienced the pleasure of making new acquaintances and enjoying the outdoor venue. Danielle and Nathanael Finkelstein came to the Zoo with their family to complete the Zoo-per Sunday Scavenger Hunt in celebration of Nathanael’s 9<sup>th</sup> birthday. Others who came offered to get more involved with the community and help at future events.

SuperStar Super Sunday is already on the books for January 8, 2023 and is sure to be another fun-filled and rewarding experience.



## Many Thanks to Our Corporate Sponsors

Our Zoo-per Sunday program enjoyed tremendous support from local businesses, which were featured throughout the program. Federation is very appreciative of these twelve wonderful companies, an all-time high number. We invite *JO* readers to return the favor by patronizing our sponsors and letting them know that we are grateful for their support.





# D'var Torah

by Rabbi Evan Shore, Shaarei Torah  
Orthodox Congregation of Syracuse



The observance of Purim is more than listening to the story of Esther read from the Megillah (Scroll of Esther) or masquerading. The fulfillment of a ritual of a holiday must leave a lasting impression upon the individual. Purim is no exception to this rule. Purim includes both observance and experience.

Due to the destruction of the first Holy Temple 2500 years ago in Jerusalem, Jews were forced to live in Persia. With Haman's rise to power, the Jews become his favorite scapegoat. To receive support from King Achashverosh to destroy the nation, Haman refers to the Jewish people as "a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the provinces of your realm." This observation on Haman's part was quite astute. He identified the weakness of the Jewish people: lack of unity. The Talmud tells us there is strength in numbers. However, the "numbers" must bond together in a common cause to achieve true unity. Without unity, the Jewish people become weak and may fall prey to others.

To instill the importance of unity to his fellow Americans, Patrick Henry recited the now famous words: united

we stand, divided we fall. In 1799 he was warning the new country saying, "Let us not split into factions which must destroy that union upon which our existence hangs."

Thankfully, Queen Esther also perceived the same weakness in the Jewish people and offered the antidote: unity. Prior to going to King Achashverosh to plead her case Esther instructs Mordechai: "Go and assemble all the Jews in Shushan (Capital of Persia)." Without Jewish unity, Esther's mission was doomed to fail. Thankfully, the Jewish people heard the message and came together in unity for a common purpose. This harmony not only empowered Esther but was one of the many catalysts necessary for the Jewish people to overcome Haman and his followers.

We remember the unity exhibited by the Jewish people on Purim by performing the beautiful mitzvah of Mishloach Manot (sending food gifts) to one another. This is based upon a sentence in Megillat Esther: "The 14th day of the (Hebrew) month of Adar as an occasion of gladness and for sending gifts of food to one another."

Sending food gifts encourages Ahavas Yisroel the love of one person to another. Additionally, it brings people closer together under the banner of unity. This Purim let us all come together! Assemble mishloach manot with your family and together share with others. Please G-d, let the spirit of Purim unity permeate our lives daily and continue to be a driving force for us, our families and our friends throughout the year.

## Three Synagogues Celebrate Purim Together

by Cantor Esa Jaffe

Once again, Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas, Temple Concord and Temple Adath Yeshurun will be celebrating Purim together. The celebration will be on Zoom on Wednesday, March 16. As the pandemic has limited in-person gatherings, an effort is being made to use technology and Zoom capabilities creatively to experience the meaning and fun of the holiday in new and innovative ways.

At 5:30 pm there will be a Family Celebration where portions of *Megillat Esther* will be read in both Hebrew and English, interspersed with online activities, general silliness and lots of fun for all ages. Participants are encouraged to join wearing costumes and bring noisemakers and groggers. Following the Family Celebration, at 7:30 pm, the full *Megillah* will be chanted for adults and older children. The full reading will also include songs, skits and jokes to add to the joy of the holiday.

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## Megillah, Masks and *Pikuach Nefesh*

by Jarrod Bagatell

This month, as the story of Purim is told in the words of *Megillat Esther*, the Scroll of Esther, that literally “reveals the hidden,” the Jewish people are saved when Esther removes her mask and reveals herself to the king as the Jew she is. It is her brave act of exposing her real identity to King Ahasuerus, who had fallen in love with her, that leads him to reverse the misfortunes of the lot that he’d cast upon the Jews of the time.

Recently, I have been reflecting on how confusing this story must seem to our children today. The Jewish people were *saved* when Esther *removed* her mask? “Isn’t the wearing of facemasks when we cannot keep socially distanced from others supposed to keep us all safe from COVID?” they might ask.

In response, we might distinguish for our children a plague of hatred, as exemplified by Haman’s disdain for the Jews in the Purim story, from a plague of infectious disease, as manifested by the ominous presence of the COVID-19 pandemic that first revealed itself to our world as the SARS-CoV-2 virus in December 2019.

We remind ourselves, and our children, that we share a common core of Jewish values that emphasize learning (Torah), contributions to just causes (*tzedakah*) and efforts to repair the world (*tikun olam*) in a collective desire to leave a better world for future generations.

The Torah teaches us the significance of *pikuach nefesh* as the principle in Jewish law that the preservation of life takes precedence over all other mitzvot, such that when the life of a specific person is in danger, almost any negative commandment of the Torah becomes irrelevant. By helping prevent death, we preserve life.

Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the culmination of germ theory which scientifically codified the relationship between hidden microbes and disease, we have witnessed the significant impact that effective public health measures can have on preserving life. From quarantining practices to the breakthrough discovery of disease-preventing vaccinations, the past century has seen remarkable advancements in the fields of science and medicine.

The practice of wearing facemasks to prevent disease can be dated back several years before the Great Influenza of 1918-19 which was estimated to have infected one-third of the world’s population and killed 50 million people worldwide. For perspective, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Research



Center, there have been 5.59 million people worldwide who have died from COVID-19 since the beginning of the 2019-22 pandemic.

Science teaches us that adherence to basic standard hygiene practices, including frequent handwashing, attention to physical spacing and the use of certain facemasks that adequately cover the nose and mouth have been proven to be effective means to help decrease the probability and number of people who can be infected by a person who has a communicable respiratory disease. These collective measures work by limiting the virus’ capacity to spread and hijack human hosts, subsequently impeding its ability to reproduce and thrive.

Had it not been for these practices, as well as for the development, production and distribution of effective vaccines, we would have been witness to even more unimaginable rates of death and human devastation in the wake of this modern plague.

As a Jewish community during this season of Purim, in the spirit of *pikuach nefesh*, we have the opportunity to reveal our collective identity to the larger community and the world by continuing to follow scientifically-proven disease mitigating practices. As we celebrate the reversal of past misfortunes, we can look forward to the near future when we too can remove our masks and comfortably gather together again.

*Dr. Jarrod Bagatell is a board-certified family physician and director of Employee and Student Health at Upstate Medical University.*



# The Mysteries of Hamantaschen



As with so many aspects of Purim, there is much that is unknown and hidden, including the origins and etymology of one of its classic foods, the triangular filled dough called hamantaschen. The JO will here attempt to unmask some of this treat's mysteries.

**Where does the word “hamantaschen” come from?** Many believe that hamantaschen comes from the Yiddish or German *mohn-taschen*, meaning “poppy seed pocket,” which was a common German pastry. The word *tash* means “pouch” or “pocket” in Yiddish, and thus hamantaschen may also refer to Haman’s pockets, symbolizing the money that Haman offered to Ahasuerus in exchange for permission to destroy the Jews. Archeologist Simcha Jacobovici, however, claims that the triangular shape of hamantaschen resembles a type of dice that was used in ancient Persia and thus represents the lots (*purim*) that Haman cast to decide the fate of the Jews. Finally, in Hebrew, *tash* means “weaken” and hamantaschen may celebrate the weakening of Haman that allowed the Jews to survive.

**Why are hamantaschen triangular?** Supposedly, the three corners of the triangular hamantaschen represent Haman’s favorite three-cornered hat. Taking a bite out of the cookie is in defiance of bowing down to Haman and preventing him from carrying out his evil plan.

**But why are hamantaschen called “oznei Haman” (“Haman’s ears”) in Israel?** There are several erroneous explanations for this nomenclature but, in general, the idea of naming a pastry after someone wicked is to turn it into something sweet. Sephardic Jews likewise refer to the pastries as *orejas de Haman*. Comedian Perry Block described the consumption of hamantaschen as “the Eating our Enemy custom.”

**Is hamantaschen singular or plural?** In Yiddish, it is plural, and the singular is “hamantasch.” But people confuse the two, and nobody makes an issue of it.

**Why do we put fillings in hamantaschen?** In the days before text messages and Instagram, it is said that Mordechai warned the Persian Jews of their impending doom by sending letters hidden inside pastries. In commemoration of this pre-social media communication modality, we eat pastries with a filling.

**What kind of fillings can be put in hamantaschen?** Purists will insist on prune or poppyseed, and kids like chocolate and jelly, but the possibilities are endless. The “My Jewish Learning” website includes recipes for the following: Cannoli Hamantaschen, Rocky Road Hamantaschen, Chocolate and Sprinkles Dipped Hamantaschen, Milk and Cereal Hamantaschen, Triple Chocolate Hamantaschen, Rosewater and Pistachio Hamantaschen, Tagalog Hamantaschen, Rice Krispies Treats Hamantaschen, Speculoos Hamantaschen, Coconut Cheesecake Hamantaschen and Chocolate Hamantaschen with Irish Creme Filling. Savory hamantaschen have become a thing of late, and one can find many recipes online for such delicacies as savory Persian herb and cheese hamantaschen, tatertoshen, cheesy jalapeno hamantaschen, bageltaschen, pulled pastrami hamantaschen, pizzataschen and bbq meatball hamantaschen.

**What is the Latke-Hamantasch Debate?** This is a real thing and has been ongoing since 1946 at the University of Chicago where scholars vigorously debate the merits of two Jewish holiday foods: the Chanukah latke and the Purim hamantash. The debate was established after World War II by a University of Chicago historian, an anthropologist and a rabbi. It has since expanded to include Harvard and Brandeis. The topics explored range from the foods’ metaphysical implications to their carbon footprints. Participants have included Nobel Prize winners and university presidents. In the latest disputation, which marked the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the debate, the scholars argued about which dish was better for the environment. There has never been a winner of the debate.

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# Fun Facts About Purim

- **Esther was a vegetarian.** According to legend, when Esther was queen to King Ahasuerus, she ate only legumes so as not to break the laws of kashrut. For this reason, there is a tradition of eating peas and beans on Purim.
- **The *Book of Esther* is one of only two biblical books that do not include God's name.** The other is the *Song of Songs*.
- **Purim is celebrated one day later inside walled cities than it is everywhere else.** The Book of Esther differentiates between Jews who lived and fought their enemies for two days within the walled city of Shushan and those who lived in unwalled towns, where only one day was needed to subdue the enemy. Accordingly, if a person lives in a city that has been walled since the days of Joshua as Shushan was, Purim is celebrated on the fifteenth of the month of Adar, a day referred to as "Shushan Purim."



## Purim Humor

Levity is prized on Purim. Here are some samples:

### 9 Reasons To Love Purim

1. Making noise in shul is a mitzvah.
2. Levity is not reserved for the Levites.
3. If you're having a bad hair day, you can always wear a mask.
4. Purim is easier to spell than Khanuka/Chanukah/Hannuka.
5. You don't have to change all the pots and dishes.
6. You don't have to build a sukkah and eat outside in the rain.
7. It's a mitzvah to get drunk.
8. You won't get hit in the eye by a lulav.
9. You can't eat hamentaschen on Yom Kippur.



## A Purim Story

The first Jewish President of the United States has been inaugurated, and the first Jewish holiday that follows is Purim. So he calls up his mother to invite her to the White House for Purim. Their conversation goes like this:

**President:** Mom, with Purim being the first holiday after my inauguration, I want you to celebrate it with us at the White House.

**Mom:** Oh, I don't know. I'd have to get a taxi to go to the airport and it's so expensive.

**President:** Mom! I'm the President of the United States! I'll send a limo for you to take you right to the airport!

**Mom:** OK, but when I get to the airport, I'll have to stand on the line to check my baggage. Oy, it will be so difficult for me.

**President:** Mom, don't worry about standing on lines or any of that. I'm the President. I'll send Air Force One for you!

**Mom:** Well, OK. But when I get to Washington, I'll have to find a cab and...

**President:** Mama, please! I'll have a helicopter waiting for you. It will bring right to the White House lawn!



**Mom:** Well, all right. But where will I stay? Can I get a hotel room?

**President:** Mama, we have this whole big White House! There will be plenty of room! Please join us for Purim?

**Mom:** Ok, I'll be there. (Two minutes later, she calls her friend.)

**Mom:** Hello, Sadie? Guess what? I'm spending Purim at my son's house!!

**Sadie:** Oh, the doctor?

**Mom:** No, the other one.





# PURIM PAST





## » Book Review

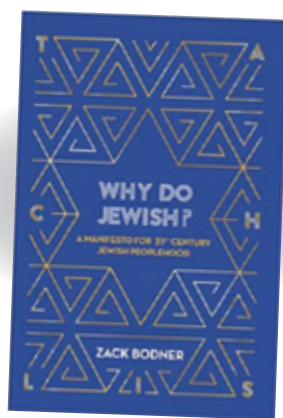
# Why Do Jewish? A Manifesto for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish Peoplehood by Zack Bodner

Reviewed by Rabbi David Katz, Temple Concord

Zack Bodner is the CEO of the Oshman Family Jewish Community Center in Palo Alto, California and, as I was reading his book, *Why Do Jewish?*, I wondered who would benefit by purchasing it. If you are reading this review in a Jewish periodical, you are probably not a candidate because you are interested enough in Jewish life to subscribe to a Jewish periodical. This book is directed towards Jews who have not yet made a serious connection to their Jewishness. His book is in the line of literature encouraging Jews to become *ba'alei teshuvah*, those who return to their Jewish roots and to a more profound Jewish way of thinking and living.

Bodner writes in an informal, conversational style which is alternately inviting and irritating, a style more suitable for the podium than the page. He casually summarizes great Jewish ideas in a few paragraphs, though one subheading entitled “The Meaning of Life” gets a full ten pages. Too often the reader is left wanting more than a taste of Judaism.

Most of Bodner’s observations come



from his personal experience or from secondary sources. Seldom is a primary Jewish text cited. Mostly, we hear about the wisdom of Jewish writing without experiencing it firsthand. And there are far too many errors and inaccuracies in the book. Hillel was not a “rabbi.” He lived before the title was used. God did not punish Miriam and Aaron for speaking ill of Moses. Only Miriam was punished. David was not Ruth’s grandson. He was Ruth’s great-grandson. The Talmud was not written 1,800 years ago. It was compiled 1,500-1,600 years ago. Moses did not part the Red Sea. It was God who was responsible -- a point the writers of the Haggadah emphasized by cutting Moses out of the Passover story altogether.

Nor does the author’s use of acronyms, (a near fetish in Jewish organizational life) lend coherence to or impose logic on his ideas. He proposes ‘TACHLIS,’ as “a new framework for Jewish living.” ‘TACHLIS’ stands for ‘Tikkun Olam,’ ‘Arts and Culture,’ ‘Community,’ ‘Holidays and Rituals,’ ‘Learning’ and ‘Shabbat.’ How are these aspects of Jewish living considered to be new?

What Zack Bodner does offer is one very important proposal: a “LEAP” year for teens whose Jewish identity is not

yet formed or who are questioning the value of living a Jewish life. Where Orthodox teens often go to Israel to study in yeshivahs before entering college, Bodner envisions a gap year for teens who have yet to make decisions regarding how or if Judaism will play a part in their lives. This LEAP year would include Learning, Experiencing, Acting and connecting to the Jewish People: “Learning” from both traditional and modern texts, “Experiencing” Jewish living by celebrating Shabbat and other holidays, taking part in social “Action” projects and connecting to the Jewish “People” by spending time in Israel and other places in the world.

Actually, Zack Bodner’s book could serve as a fine resource to ignite interest in the possibility of a LEAP year. Young people who are 16 or 17 appreciate a friendly style of writing, more often than not care little about logic and order if what they are reading is appealing, are highly impressionable and would likely be open to the idea of being free for a year before entering college. I think they would love this book.

With a good teacher and guide who is knowledgeable enough to catch the book’s mistakes and correct them in a forgiving way, this could be the perfect text for parents to read along with their teens. By its nature, *Why Do Jewish?* is a conversation starter and could be utilized in religious school classes, in JCCs that have a fair number of unaffiliated Jews or in Zoom rooms that could bring together a worldwide audience. Zack Bodner says his JCC is currently piloting the LEAP program with BINA, an Israeli organization with similar goals. Let’s wish him success.

## » Book Review

## You’re Leaving When? Adventures in Downward Mobility

by Annabelle Gurwitch

Reviewed by Jackie Miron

We could all use a bit more humor, especially during the years of COVID-19. Annabelle Gurwitch has served up another of her funny and witty chronicles, with recent publication of *You’re Leaving When? Adventures in Downward Mobility*.

Before I attended a Jewish Book Festival appearance by this author giving a presentation on her latest book, I looked back at her work, only to be reminded of the volume of her successes through the years. Gurwitch is an American author, comedian, television host and theater actor. She was born in 1961 to Jewish parents in Mobile, Alabama, and grew up in Florida. Always involved in acting projects, she next attended NYU and studied theater. Her Southern roots are part of her humor, while describing life through this lens. She has been active for more than 40 years in everything from off-Broadway and soap operas to hosting on television, movies, comedy routines and various writing projects both solo and with others.

Gurwitch is sharp, quick-witted, self-deprecating, sarcastic, laugh-out-loud funny and can bring humor to anything and everything. Who else could write a book about her marriage, divorce and cancer diagnosis and still display resilience and poignancy? Every attendee at the event had known her from more than one of her areas of performance and writing. There were young and old, mostly women and a few men. It was a happy group, willing to laugh and reflect on some of her funnier works.

In *You’re Leaving When?*, she deals with such topics as home sharing, gender fluidity and failing at tidying up in chapters with titles like “If You Lived With Me, You’d Be Home By Now” and “In a Muted Zoom, No One Can Hear You Scream.” If you are the slightest bit shy about some true but embarrassing personal “things,” you might find yourself blushing. But her wit and compassion more than bring you back from hiding your eyes.

Gurwitch reminds us that you can find a silver lining in everything, make lemonade from most lemons and approach the worst with an attitude of reflection and insight. Then you can dry your eyes, hug your friends and go home and find another title of hers to read.



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# Bluebird Music Together

Rebecca Oppedisano is the owner, director and a teacher at Bluebird Music Together, an early childhood music program in Central New York. Bluebird Music Together currently has seven class locations around the area and multiple teachers and serves hundreds of young families each year with the mission of making the community a better place through music-making.

The Music Together program was first offered to the public in 1987 and pioneered the concept of a research-based, developmentally appropriate early childhood music curriculum. Today, classes are offered all over the world including a lab school in Princeton, NJ. Ongoing research at the lab school, as well as the research of others, continually informs Music Together's work on program content and development, varied applications of the program and teacher training. Everything they do in class has an educational purpose.

Rebecca began her career as an elementary school music teacher and enjoyed doing that for several years. But when she and her husband Lenny started their family, Rebecca decided to stay at home with their children. After being a stay-at-home mom for a while, she was ready to teach music again but wasn't ready to go back to work full time. So she began teaching Music Together part-time while her children were small. As her children grew, Rebecca was able to grow her business and is thrilled that she was able to make it a full-time job and successful business over the years! She's been teaching the program for 14 years and has been the sole business owner for ten years. What Rebecca loves most about her work is bringing people together, supporting young families in their parenting journey and seeing the learning and joy that children receive from active music-making.

Bluebird Music Together uses a different song collection each semester. There are nine different song collections, so participants can expand their repertoire with a variety of new songs and chants. The curriculum is designed so that families can continue classes for three years before revisiting a song collection. In three years, over 375 songs are learned. There are several different offerings for children from birth through eight years: Babies (under eight months), Mixed Ages (birth to five years), and Rhythm Kids (four to eight years). Their Babies and Mixed Age classes involve parent or caregiver participation. Rhythm Kids classes are parent-optional but they love it when parents stay and join in.

Bluebird Music Together runs classes



online and in Dewitt, Camillus, Clay, Cazenovia, Fayetteville, Liverpool and Skaneateles at convenient sites. Babies and toddlers sing, dance and play a variety of instruments like bells, egg shakers and drums. Every family gets a music book, CD and digital downloads, so families can enjoy the music at home between classes. Music Together provides a warm, supportive environment where everyone feels comfortable singing, dancing and jamming. Creating lasting family and community bonds through music is a huge part of the program.

Rebecca has a B.A. in music education (Crane School of Music) and an M.A. in education (Lemoyne College). She is a member of Temple



Concord and enjoys teaching their monthly preschool Gan program. She has sung with the Syracuse Choral and is currently a member of the Syracuse Opera Chorus where she has performed in over 20 productions. Rebecca loves being a part of the active arts community in Central New York and looks forward to helping it grow back after the past two challenging years.

## Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion

Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month, observed in February, is a time when Jewish organizations and communities work to raise awareness and foster inclusion of people with disabilities and those who love them. In Central New York, Federation helps to support several programs that promote inclusion, such as the Syracuse Jewish Family Services's *Tachlis* of Inclusion and the JCC's *Yachad* (Together) summer camp for children with special needs.

The Yiddish word *tachlis* means purpose. The mission of the *Tachlis* of Inclusion program is to reach out to Jewish clients with special



needs and their natural supports in the community, bringing Jewish holiday and cultural experiences to them as well as training staff and administrators in the professional disability community on Jewish inclusion. The program provides personal outreach to Jewish clients with exceptional needs and who are aging, including assembling holiday-related



## Jewish Overnight Summer Camperships

Jewish overnight summer camp is a place where being Jewish is easy and fun. Camps are reopening, after having had to close because of the coronavirus, once again offering opportunities to create and experience a joyful Jewish life that is personal and intense, regardless of observance or affiliation.

The Jewish Federation of Central New York believes in the value of a Jewish overnight summer camp experience, which helps to strengthen Jewish identity and build a strong and thriving Jewish community for our future. Federation further recognizes that the costs of Jewish camping can be significant. That's why it partners with the One Happy Camper Program to offer incentive grants to first-time overnight campers.

Funding is available for Jewish children who reside in Central New York. Children must be first-time enrollees in an approved Jewish overnight summer camp. Children who do not attend day school are eligible for awards of \$700 for a 12-day session and \$1,000 for a 19-day session. Local day school campers are eligible to apply for 50% of the 19-day or 12-day incentive. The grants are NOT based on financial need.

A camper must be enrolled in a Jewish overnight summer camp sponsored by the Conservative, Reform, Orthodox or Reconstructionist movements or by Jewish organizations such as the JCCA, BBYO, NFTY, USY or Young Judea/Hadassah prior to applying.

***The Federation also has limited locally-funded scholarships based on financial need. More information can be found on the Federation website: <https://jewishfederationcny.org/jewish-summer-camperships/>.***

gift bags with personal home delivery by teens, college students, and volunteers. It also disseminates a resource manual for Jewish inclusion in the context of the developmental disabilities and aging services networks. The manual contains modules on the holidays and core values and practices of the faith and culture.

Menorah Park's *Beit Tikvah* residence for women provides a comfortable environment that meets the diverse emotional, social and physical requirements of four women with developmental disabilities. Menorah Park's director of development, Susie Drazen, leads the *Beit Tikvah* residents in song, candle lighting, kiddush and hamotzi every Friday afternoon over Zoom. To celebrate Purim, Susie and the residents will be making hamentashen and groggers.



# Jewish News From Israel and Around The World

**Lupus treatment is right on target.** Current treatments for lupus nephritis shut down much of the immune system, with many adverse side effects. A new therapy developed by researchers, including Israel's Professor Chaim Putterman, targets only the relevant T-cells and is therefore much safer. <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/319884>

**How we adapt to our environment.** Researchers at Tel Aviv University have discovered that our physical bodies react to electrical voltage changes within nerve cells in the brain. So, if we encounter strong smell, a voltage change tells our G-protein voltage-sensitive receptors to reduce sensitivity to the smell. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-021-27593-x>

**Diet can slow brain aging.** A green Mediterranean diet, high in polyphenols and low in red and processed meat, seems to slow age-related brain atrophy. Ben Gurion University researchers led an 18-month international randomized control trial on 300 participants - one of the world's longest and largest brain MRI trials. [https://in.bgu.ac.il/en/pages/news/green\\_med.aspx](https://in.bgu.ac.il/en/pages/news/green_med.aspx)

**Diagnosing autism in infants.** Researchers from Bar-Ilan University have been able to diagnose symptoms of autism spectrum disorder in babies up to 15 months old. They then treated those symptoms using Bar-Ilan's pioneer Mifne Approach to avert severe deviations in the neurodevelopment of the infants identified. <https://www.jpost.com/health-and-wellness/mind-and-spirit/article-689985>

**Global award for best kids' space.** Israel's Sarit Shani Hay Studio has won the Dezeen reader award for outstanding projects and exhibitions that foster child-centric experiences. It includes the desert-themed playroom at the new Six Senses Shoham hotel and a Jerusalem-themed playroom at the David Citadel. <https://www.israel21c.org/award-for-cool-kids-spaces-in-hospitals-hotels-museums/>

**Arab MKs become Knesset deputy speakers.** Deputy Speakers of Israel's parliament include Arabs Ghaida Rinawie Zoabi, Mansour Abbas and Ahmad Tibi. <https://main.knesset.gov.il/EN/News/PressReleases/Pages/press4121q.aspx>

**Millions access National Library in Arabic.** In 2021 there were over 2 million

online visits to the National Library of Israel in Arabic - 125% more than in 2020. Over half of those visits were from outside of Israel. <https://www.jns.org/doubled-in-2021-online-visits-to-national-library-of-israel-in-arabic-top-2-million-globally/>

**Israeli women win EU research grants.** Two Hebrew University of Jerusalem female researchers have won €1.5 million European Research Council Starting Grants. Dr. Yonit Hochberg (Project: Light Dark Matter: New Directions) and Dr. Mor Nitzan (Decoding the Multi-facets of Cellular Identity from Single-Cell Data). <https://www.ehu.org/index.php/news/awards/613-promising-hebrew-university-researchers-awarded-prestigious-erc-starting-grants>

**Israeli female doctors fly out to help Indian women.** A group of female Israeli doctors spent eight days in India helping women with health issues as part of a special delegation organized by Israel's Foreign Ministry. They examined approximately 1,000 women, providing services such as pap smears, ultrasounds and breast exams. <https://www.jns.org/delegation-of-female-israeli-doctors-visit-india-to-assist-with-womens-health-issues/>

**\$500,000 for Afghan refugees.** Israel has donated \$500,000 to the United Nations for food, medical aid and other assistance for Afghan refugees in Tajikistan. Alon Ushpiz, director general of Israel's Foreign ministry, said the aid was part of Israel's commitment to the international community. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-donates-500000-for-afghan-refugees-in-tajikistan/>

**Going out with a bang.** Professor Avishay Gal-Yam and colleagues at Israel's Weizmann Institute have just published their findings of their 2019 discovery of a supernova that had never been observed before. A Wolf-Rayet Star exploded nearly one billion light years from Earth, emitting cosmic radiation and heavy elements. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-021-04155-1>

**41 new wind turbines.** Israel's Energix Renewable Energies is to build 41 wind turbines in the Golan Heights. Each turbine will be 200 meters tall, creating

the largest and most advanced wind farm in Israel to date. The project will enable the supply of clean energy to tens of thousands of Israeli homes. <https://www.jns.org/defense-ministry-teams-up-with-renewable-energy-company-to-build-41-wind-turbines-in-the-golan/>

**Fighting fire with technology.** TeleFire is Israel's largest manufacturer of fire safety systems. It provides the hardware and software needed to help prevent, detect and extinguish fires. It enables fast building evacuation with voice, horns and firefighter support. It features fire suppression, smoke management and cybersecurity. <https://telefire.com/en/>

**Superfood from discarded milk.** Israel's Maolac is the first company in the world to produce a nutrient-rich food supplement from bovine pre-milk colostrum, a by-product of the dairy industry, of which five billion liters are currently dumped down the drain at dairies every year. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/spotlight/israeli-startup-creates-superfood-from-discarded-cows-milk-byproduct/>

**Can a goldfish drive a car?** A goldfish has successfully navigated a robotic car in new research from Israel's Ben-Gurion University. The goldfish in a water tank was able to steer a robotic vehicle across a room to obtain a reward. It was even able to maneuver a vehicle on a public road. [https://in.bgu.ac.il/en/pages/news/goldfish\\_drive.aspx](https://in.bgu.ac.il/en/pages/news/goldfish_drive.aspx)

**Japanese investment triples.** Japanese firms invested some \$2.9 billion across 85 deals in Israeli companies last year, almost triple that in 2020. Japan now accounts for 15.8% of all foreign investment in Israeli high-tech, compared to just 1.8% in 2016. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/japan-israel-ties-strengthen-as-2021-investments-nearly-triple-to-record-2-9b/>

## Why Do Jews Put Stones on Graves?



The practice of burying the dead with flowers is very ancient but has never been customary in Jewish practice. Many reasons are advanced for this, including that the practice is associated with paganism and is considered frivolous at a time of sadness. Instead, Jews use stones to mark a grave.

Marking a grave with stones was traditional before the advent of gravestones. The oldest graves in the Old Cemetery of Safed are piles of rocks with a more prominent rock bearing an inscription. Jewish funeral customs are different in different places. In Israel, for example, in most funerals, the body is buried in a shroud directly in the earth. The gravesite is then marked with stones.

Stones have a special place in Jewish tradition. Altars made of stones were used to make offerings to God. The stone upon which Abraham placed Isaac to be sacrificed was called *hashityah*, the foundation stone of the world. The permanence of stones resembles the permanence of the soul which, unlike the body (or flowers), does not die.

The Hebrew word for 'pebble' is *tz'ror*, a word that also means "bond." The memorial prayer, *El Maleh Rahamim*, asks that the deceased be "bound up in the bond of life." Placing a stone at a gravesite shows that a person is still loved and thought about and that they live on in the memory of others. While flowers are a metaphor for the brevity of life, stones represent the permanence of memory. Stones do not die.





## A Guide to Jewish Funeral Practices

A *Guide to Jewish Funeral and Mourning Customs* is a 16-page booklet produced by the Syracuse Rabbinical Council with a grant from the Jewish Federation of Central New York. This booklet is intended to provide basic information for mourners. It is not an exhaustive description of traditional customs or an explanation of customs as they may be observed in all the synagogues in Syracuse, but it is a very useful and practical resource. Copies are available at the Federation office as well as at synagogues and local funeral services.



The *Guide* begins by explaining that “because we love, when a loved one dies, we feel sorrow and grief. These reactions are both normal and healthy. When a loved one dies, life seems empty and the future dark. Jews have guidance at sad times in our lives, because our tradition has outlined ways to deal with death and its grief. Modern psychology has recognized the therapeutic value of the Jewish grieving and mourning rituals and practices which help us express our grief rather than repress it, to talk about our loss with friends and to move step-by-step from inactivity to normal living.”

This booklet was written to provide an understanding of the range of customs as observed in the Syracuse Jewish community. It includes such topics as what to do when a death occurs, burial, *kriah*, the funeral service, *shiva*, saying *kaddish*, unveiling, *yahrzeit*, *yizkor* and dealing with grief.

## Restoring a 114 year old Grave Marker

by Ruth Ginsberg Stein

When my grandmother Rachel Vittick Slive died in 1908, my mother was only four years old. I am named after my grandmother. Whenever we visited my grandmother’s grave, my mother Mildred Slive Ginsberg would tell me the story of how her father Morris Slive, a carpenter, transported all the materials to the cemetery after hand carving the wooden marker. It has been standing for over a century.



My grandparents had seven children, and my mother told me that the younger ones, including her, were sent to an orphanage until my grandfather remarried. She described being locked in a closet at the orphanage for misbehaving. When my grandfather remarried, his new wife had two children from a prior marriage and then two children were born from this second marriage. So there were 11 siblings in all. They lived on Almond Street in the 15th Ward across from the shul.

I moved from Syracuse in 1979 when my son David was two years old. My parents, Mildred and Morris Ginsberg, moved with us and David always listened to my mother’s stories of Syracuse. In September 2020, David took his children on a fishing trip. As he was passing Syracuse, he made a spur of the moment decision to visit the family graves.

When he sent me the photo of my grandmother Rachel’s marker, I could not believe its condition. I knew I had to try to restore it to honor my mother. I found the Wood Cutters Association of Central New York and one of their members undertook the restoration, restoring the letters and repainting the stone. The Hebrew lettering was weathered, and my son-in-law, Aaron Kleinman, an Orthodox rabbi, took on the re-creation of the letters.

The restoration of my grandmother’s grave marker has been a wonderfully satisfying experience. My children and grandchildren became interested and knowledgeable about their family history. I have reconnected with family in Syracuse. I have preserved a part of the immigrant Jewish history of Syracuse. The marker was carved much as we see grave markers in the Jewish shtetls of Russia. But most importantly, knowing that I have been able to have this family story and heirloom which meant so much to my mother last for many years has brought me great joy.



## The Jewish Cemeteries of Central New York

One of the first priorities for a new Jewish community is the creation of a cemetery, usually with the land purchased and supported with communal funds. The land of a Jewish cemetery is considered holy and a special ceremony takes place when a cemetery is created. Jewish burial grounds are regarded as sacred sites which must remain undisturbed in perpetuity.

The first Jewish cemetery in Syracuse was established by the Society of Concord in 1841. Soon other synagogues established their own burial places. Today there are fourteen cemeteries in Syracuse, including the Rosenbloom, Beth Israel, Beth El, Poiley Tzedek and Linas Hatzedek cemeteries, the cemeteries of Young Israel-Shaarei Torah, Beth Sholom-Chevre Shas and Temple Adath Yeshurun, the Frumah Packard, Workmen’s Circle and Anshe Sfard cemeteries and the Chevre Shas and Ahavath Achim cemeteries and the Temple Concord cemetery, which is part of Woodlawn Cemetery.

Most of the cemeteries are located between East Colvin Street and Jamesville Avenue, part of the Jamesville Gate Cemetery complex. “Mount Sinai” is a Jewish cemetery complex containing the Rosenbloom, Beth Israel, Beth El, Poiley Tzedek and Linas Hatzedek (aka Zedeck Va’emes Society) cemeteries. Further south along Jamesville Avenue are the Adath Yeshurun, Frumah Packard, Workmen’s Circle, Anshe Sfard, Ahavath Achim and Chevre Shas cemeteries. The Shaarei Torah Orthodox Congregation of Syracuse, Beth Sholom and Temple Concord cemeteries are located within larger non-sectarian cemeteries. Frumah Packard is the only unaffiliated Jewish cemetery in Syracuse.

The Syracuse Jewish Cemeteries Association, Inc. was established in 1978 as a privately held company responsible for the care and maintenance of the Jewish cemeteries in Syracuse. Representatives from each of the member cemeteries form a governing board. Member cemeteries are Adath Yeshurun, Ahavath Achim, Anshe Sfard, Beth Israel, Beth El, Chevre Shas, Frumah Packard, Linas Hatzedek, Poiley Tzedek, Rosenbloom and Workman’s Circle.

The Association is building websites for local Jewish cemeteries. The Frumah Packard website is nearly complete. The Temple Adath and Linas Hatzedek cemeteries’ sites are nearing completion. The Cemeteries Association is seeking



photos and biographical information of those resting there for inclusion on the websites. William Berinstein serves as president of the Cemeteries Association.

Architectural historian Samuel D. Gruber’s blog about Syracuse Jewish sites contains photographs and the history of one of Syracuse’s oldest and most ornate cemeteries, The Rosenbloom Cemetery. *It can be found at <http://samgrubersjewishartmonuments.blogspot.com/2020/05/usa-syracuse-jewish-sites-v-rosenbloom.html>*



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# Isaac Tenenbaum Memorial Scholarship Fund at Syracuse Hebrew Day School

Isaac Tenenbaum was loved. He was the sweetest of children as a little boy. His smile, his kindness, the little bit of mischief in his eyes endeared him to all who knew him. Isaac was a wonderful son and a wonderful big brother. He was a good friend. Isaac met all challenges in his life with good humor and fighting spirit. He loved sports, especially wrestling.

Isaac was loved, for the boy he was, for the man he became, for the precious son he will always be. His memory will be a blessing for those who knew him.

When Isaac died in September of 2021, those who loved him contributed *tzedakah* in his memory, as is Jewish custom. Donations were made to the Syracuse Hebrew Day School to create a scholarship fund in his memory. His mother, former SHDS Head of School and teacher Lori Tenenbaum explained the decision to create an endowed fund for the Day School in Isaac's name: "Isaac had such a positive experience as a student at SHDS. In his sixth grade year, Isaac was awarded the Conrad J. Dahlstrom Award in recognition of his positive attitude, perseverance through challenges and kindness to others. The qualities embodied in that award can be directly attributed to Isaac's experiences at the Day School. We felt that the best way to honor Isaac's



memory would be to ensure that each year a child would receive the gift of a scholarship toward an outstanding education at SHDS."

The scholarship application process will open in March 2022 and continue yearly in perpetuity. Isaac's legacy will be carried forth through those who benefit from the Isaac Tenenbaum Memorial Scholarship Fund.

***The Fund is endowed at the Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York. Anyone who might wish to contribute to it may send donations to the Day School at 5655 Thompson Road, DeWitt, NY 13214.***

## Film Historian Noah Isenberg to Discuss "Billy Wilder on Assignment" at Temple Concord

by Chana Meir

On March 21st at 7:30 pm, Noah Isenberg will discuss his book *Billy Wilder on Assignment* as part of Temple Concord's Regina F. Goldenberg Cultural Series.

Before becoming the screenwriter and director of such iconic films as *Sunset Boulevard* and *Some Like It Hot*, Billy Wilder worked as a freelance reporter in Vienna and Weimar Berlin. Isenberg's book brings together more than fifty of Wilder's articles, published between September 1925 and November 1930, translated into English for the first time.

Fans of Wilder's movies will notice, in this collection of cultural essays, interviews and reviews, the same combination of humor and intelligence that characterized his screenplays. While some of the pieces – like that describing Wilder's stint as a paid dancing companion in a posh Berlin hotel – are comical, others reflect the dark atmosphere of Vienna and Berlin between the wars. He also wrote about some of the most prominent figures of the day, including Charlie Chaplin, the Prince of Wales and director Erich von Stroheim.

Isenberg, a film historian and professor and chair of the Department of Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas at Austin, provides insight into Wilder's writing with historical and biographical context. The book also contains rare photos of Wilder and his circle at the time and was chosen by Tom Stoppard as a *Times Literary Supplement* Book of the Year.

***The event is virtual and free. To receive the Zoom link, register by clicking the link on the Events Calendar at [templeconcord.org](http://templeconcord.org).***

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# Two Women of Valor

*March is Jewish Women's History Month. The Jewish Observer celebrates the achievements of two women who made their mark on our community.*

**They were always front and center. For decades, they were leaders not followers, strong not demure. Their commitment, integrity, intelligence and strength were put to work for the benefit of others. Our community lost two wonderful women in 5782: Corinne Smith and Helen Marcum.**

In addition to her work for the Jewish community, Corinne was Dean of the School of Education at Syracuse University Department, co-author of the groundbreaking book *Learning Disabilities: A to Z* and a fierce advocate for children with learning challenges. The list of awards Corinne received from a grateful community is long: Syracuse Jewish Community Center Kovod Award, Big Chalk Awardee, Na'amat/Pioneer Women Citizen of the Year, Temple Adath Yeshurun Citizen of the Year Award, Syracuse Jewish Community Center Generations Award, NCJW Hannah G. Solomon Leadership Award, Syracuse Jewish Federation Roth Award and Jewish Family Service Humanitarian Award. She was appointed to the New York State Council for Youth and named a *Syracuse Post Standard* Woman of Achievement in Education.

"As the first woman president of the Jewish Community Center, Corinne was a true trailblazer," said Marci Erlebacher, the JCC's executive director. "More importantly, Corrine mentored those of us who came after her. She was the consummate teacher, always available to lend an ear and to give valuable counsel. She didn't just tell you what to do, she taught and shared her experience. When I think of Corrine I think of a mentor and one of the strongest women I have ever had the pleasure to learn from. To me she was a giant with a gentle voice."

There were few organizations that Helen Marcum did not lead and few honors that she did not receive. She served as president of the National Council of Jewish Women Syracuse section and was a member of the National Board of NCJW. She was president of the Jewish Community Center, the Syracuse Jewish Federation and the Syracuse Federation of Women's Clubs. She sat on the Board of Directors of the New York State Federation of Women's Clubs, chaired the Syracuse Commission for Women and was an officer of Advocates for Girls, Inc., the Ida J. Butcher Scholarship Fund and the Syracuse Federation Formers. A recipient of the NCJW Hannah G. Solomon award, she was also recognized by the *Syracuse Post-Standard* as a Woman of Achievement in Volunteerism. The Syracuse Jewish Federation presented her with the Esther and Joseph Roth award for outstanding leadership and she was named Club Woman of the Year by the New York State Federation of Women's Clubs. The senior adults of the Jewish Community Center honored her for her dedication, Advocates for Girls presented



Front: Helen Marcum; Right: Corinne Smith

her with the Voice for Girls Award and she received the Caring Friend to Others Award from the Salvation Army Auxiliary.

Reflecting on Helen's many accomplishments, Mark Field noted, "Helen was a senior statesman in the community and solved problems. If you proposed an idea and Helen said, 'That's right,' you were on solid ground. But if she said, 'Well...', you were sinking fast. She had that kind of authority and respect. She was one of the great women of our community who helped us get where we are today." Marci Erlebacher recalled a recent conversation with Helen: "Helen told me a story of being in a meeting during her JCC presidency with all men. They decided to take a break, and all went into the men's room, but Helen noticed that they kept talking about the issue on the table. Helen would have none of that. She followed them into the men's room and declared, 'Listen, gentlemen, if you are going to keep the meeting going, then I am going to be here with you.'"

"Both Helen and Corinne were trailblazers as women in key leadership positions," said Neil Bronstein, Jewish Community Foundation Board chair. "Their monumental accomplishments have been well documented and they did so with contrasting styles. Helen was low-key but very adept at convincing those around her in a quiet way to follow her lead. Corinne let you know exactly what she desired and people just knew that she exuded the confidence and intelligence to make things happen. Both of them will be missed for their deeds as well as their kind and friendly nature."



# JCC Keeps Purim Spirit While Keeping Safe

Purim celebrates inventiveness and fun, even in the midst of a pandemic. In that spirit, the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center will again safely celebrate Purim with fun, food and goodies for the children—albeit with masks and social distancing.

The JCC Purim Carnival is arguably Central New York's oldest community celebration. For decades, children and their families have



flocked to the JCC to take part in this festival of games, contests, prizes and treats.

This year, out of an abundance of caution due to the Omicron surge, the festivities will take the form of a drive-thru Purim Car-nival on Sunday, March 13 from 12 noon to 2 pm at the JCC at 5655 Thompson Road in DeWitt. The community is invited to register online for a time slot to drive through and pick up, at no charge, a free grogger, craft bag and prizes for every child in the car.

Esther's Café will be open for takeout with curbside pickup for orders placed online before the March 1 deadline. In addition, Jeff the Magic Man will put on a virtual magic show at 2:30 p.m. The YouTube link will be given out at the Car-nival.

**Forget COVID for a couple of hours, put on a costume, decorate your car and celebrate this favorite Jewish holiday in a new and creative way. To sign up, go to [www.jccsy.org/purim2022](http://www.jccsy.org/purim2022).**



## Menorah Park Commemorates 110th Anniversary with Capital Campaign



Menorah Park of Central New York, established in 1912 as the Jewish Home for the Aged, is celebrating its 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an 18-month fundraising campaign that will help meet vital needs for the present and the future. The *Strengthening Our Home's Foundation* Fund for the Future's goal is \$3.6 million, with \$1.5 million in donations already committed. The campaign goes into high gear this spring.

"Any facility ages," said Menorah Park CEO Mary Ellen Bloodgood. "The capital campaign will address numerous typical capital improvements – roof repair, window replacement, parking lot repair and resurfacing. Some elevators desperately need an upgrade, many of our carpets are worn, and our Ahavath Achim Apartments need renovation."

"Funds raised," Bloodgood said, "will also pay for maintaining and enhancing

programs such as Kosher Meals on Wheels, the Magen Center for Elder Justice and staff development."

Susie Drazen, Menorah Park's Director of Development, said naming opportunities are available for improvements and programs, and campaign chairs will be announced this spring.

"This campaign aligns with our mission of assuring maximum independence and dignity while staying committed to maintaining Jewish values and traditions," Drazen said. "*Hiddur p'nei zaken* means 'enhancing the mitzvah' and by updating and freshening our residents' home and all its sundry pieces, from carpeting to furniture to tableware, we show the highest respect to our cherished elders."

More details on the *Strengthening Our Home's Foundation* Fund for the Future campaign will be shared as they become available.

## Adult Education Series led by Rabbi Carl Wolkin

by Sonali McIntyre



Temple Adath Yeshurun is pleased to announce a five-course Adult Education series led by Rabbi Carl Wolkin, running through March, on a variety of topics. In honor of MLK Day, Rabbi presented *A Tour of the South*, a recount of a civil rights trip to the south that he took in February 2020. Rabbi walked participants through the places he visited, people he met and emotions this trip evoked. In February, he presented two programs: *Israel: The Long and Winding Road - Where Were We*

*and Where Are We Now?* and *Duck & Cover: Backyard Nuclear Shelters*. For *Israel*, Rabbi posed several questions to get participants thinking, wondering, and discussing their relationships with Israel. In *Duck & Cover*, Rabbi discussed the 1950s, where saving the world meant hiding under your school desk or building a shelter in your backyard against an atomic bomb and the worries we should still have about nuclear weapons.

In March, Rabbi will present two programs: *Worship: How My Life Changed My Prayers and My Prayers Changed My Life* on March 10 and *The Pandemic and...* on March 24. Both sessions will begin at

7:30 pm via Zoom. *Worship* will focus on Rabbi's experience of a 13-hour surgery to remove a benign brain tumor, how that changed his life abruptly and, coupled with the pandemic, how that changed the way he prays. The *Pandemic* will look at what the post-COVID world will look like if/when it happens, the difficulties and struggles people have faced and the sources of comfort and survival they've found.

**Registration is required for these programs, and a Zoom link will be provided to registrants leading up to the program. To register, please email Sonali McIntyre at [sonali@adath.org](mailto:sonali@adath.org).**

## Epic Anniversary Sing-Along at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas

by Joanne Villegas

**Warm up your vocal cords, because Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas is hosting a *Fiddler on the Roof* sing-along on Saturday, March 12.**

*Fiddler on the Roof*, an Oscar-winning film based on the stories of Sholem Aleichem, centers on Tevye, a Jewish milkman living in Anatevka, who is trying to marry off his five daughters at a time of great tension in his village.

"We're celebrating 60 years of CBS-CS and 50 years of *Fiddler on the Roof*. We're inviting everyone to join us for the movie and we won't judge anyone on their singing ability (or, in my case, inability)," said Gwen Kay, co-chair of the 60th Anniversary planning committee.

The *Fiddler on the Roof* Sing-Along will be held in the CBS-CS social hall starting after sundown at 7 pm, COVID-permitting. Movie-themed munchies and beverages will be provided to attendees. As an intergenerational event, families are encouraged to attend with the knowledge that it is a long movie, with some violence, so parents' discretion is advised.

"Instead of practicing 'diddle, diddle, diddle diddle dum' in the shower, we invite you to join us at 7 pm on Saturday evening, March 12, and sing along to your favorites," added Robin Young, co-chair of the planning committee. Copies of the lyrics will be distributed in advance for in-person and Zoom attendees to print, if desired.

**Registration is required. Contact the CBS-CS office at (315) 446-9570 or by email at [admin@cbscs.org](mailto:admin@cbscs.org) for more information and registration form links.**



**ISAAC ROSSOFF**

January 13, 2022

Isaac Rossoff, 99, passed away peacefully at home on Thursday, January 13. Born in Massena, he had lived there until moving with his beloved wife Minnie, of blessed memory, to Syracuse in 1986. They had worked side by side in their family businesses, Isaac's Department Store and then Isaac's Interior Design, for more than 40 years.

He was a past president of Congregation Adath Israel of Massena, a member of Rotary and a Mason. Isaac was a proud veteran of the US Army, having served during WWII in the European Theatre.

Isaac was pre-deceased by his wife Minnie in 2020, their son Gerald in 1979, his brothers Clarence and Louis and his sister Roz Fahn.

His family includes his daughters Harriett (Irving) Zucker, Judith Rossoff and Norma (Jason) Searns, grandchildren Danielle, Sean, Adam (Claire), Stuart (Ashley) and Gregory (Amanda) and great-grandchildren Abraham, Everett and Hudson and his sister Doris Rosenzweig.

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**PHYLLIS ZALEON**

January 14, 2022

Phyllis Zaleon, 98, of Torrance, CA, passed away on January 14 at her residence. She was born in Brooklyn, NY to the late Ida Gussow and Philip Schaber.

She received an English degree from Brooklyn College and a master's degree in education from Columbia University. She loved her long-time job as a reading specialist in North Syracuse where she lived for over 60 years. She moved to Torrance 12 years ago to be closer to her daughters.

She was devoted to her family and loved traveling with them. She also loved music and singing and would burst into song at the mere mention of a familiar lyric. She was preceded in death by her husband Irving and her children Marion (Bob) Pearl and Robert Zaleon.

Phyllis is survived by her devoted daughters Alice (Larry) Zaleon and Linda (Brook) Russon and her many loving grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Donations may be sent to the American Cancer Society.

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**ETHEL BLATT**

January 15, 2022

Ethel Blatt, born in Brooklyn on April 29, 1932 to Isadore and Yetta Draizen, passed away in Albany, NY on January 15. Along with her two sisters, Ina and Eleanor, Ethel attended Camp Mohaph where she met the love of her life, Burton Blatt. At Mohaph, Ina met her future husband Stewart Wein and Elly met her future husband, Stephen Hammerman. The three couples were not just in-laws, but close lifelong friends. Throughout her life, Ina and Elly were Ethel's closest friends and confidants.

After graduating Adelphi College as a teacher, Ethel's career was put on hold so she could care for her three children. Eventually she earned a master's degree in education from Syracuse University. Her favorite course was required for all special education undergraduates and was taught by the dean of the school, her husband Burt, who had the pleasure of signing her diploma. She began her career as a special education teacher teaching elementary school students while training undergraduate students at SU's Skytop Psychoeducational Clinic, a collaborative program with the Syracuse City School District. She later worked in the Syracuse City School District. After she moved to Albany, she taught at Albany Hebrew Academy.

Ethel and Burt had a wonderful marriage and were great partners. Ethel was Burt's most trusted advisor, especially when it came to editing his manuscripts. She was a devoted mother to her three sons. In addition to her expertise in knitting, needle point and cooking, Ethel was an avid reader. She loved most sports, especially Boston sports teams, Tiger Woods, and most of all, SU football and basketball.

Ethel was predeceased by her husband Burton, her parents Yetta and Isadore Draizen and her in-laws Abraham and Jennie Blatt, Marvin and Gloria Blatt and Eleanor Citron. She is survived by her sons Edward (Loureen), Steven (Elizabeth) and Michael and her grandchildren Bryan, Michael, Daniel (Meredith), Ethan, Eliana (Riley) Jorgensen, Mia, Zachary and the most recent joy in her life, her great-grandson Andrew Henry Jorgensen, her sisters Ina Wein and Eleanor (Stephen) Hammerman and her 14 nieces and nephews.

Contributions in Ethel's memory may be made to the Burton Blatt Scholarship at Syracuse University School of Education or to the charity of your choice.

May her memory be a blessing.

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**MARY PEPPER**

January 16, 2022

Mary Pepper, 85, passed away peacefully on January 16 with her family by her side. Mary was born May 15, 1936 to Stephen and Ethel Adams. She was a life resident of Syracuse. For many years she worked side by side with her husband Max of blessed memory in their family business, Maxton Carpet Company of Syracuse. She also worked for Onondaga County as a clerk reviewing applications for the HEAP program. She was a member of Temple Adath Yeshurun and the sisterhood of the Temple. Mary enjoyed spending time with Max, socializing with friends and attending events at the Lions Club.

Her family includes her daughter Phyllis (Ken) Mowers, her grandson Noah, Max's children Melinda Lerner, Dani (Hal) Lancer, and Rick (Pat Hartley) Spiegelman from previous marriages and a large and loving extended family.

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**LYNNE SALOP****HAWES**

January 24, 2022



It is with enormous sadness that Lynne Salop Hawes, at age 90, left this world on January 24.

A graduate of New York University at the age of 19, Lynne later earned a master's degree in communications. She was the author and co-author of books, poems and articles and was an editor for a major corporation. Lynne was known to read The New York Times daily from cover to cover. Having a father who was a professional cellist from a family of professional musicians, Lynne loved classical music as well as many other music genres. She was often asked to play the "Boogy Woogy" on the piano to the delight of her family when visiting in Syracuse.

After having lived in Westchester County for decades, in 2016 Lynne moved to Syracuse to live at The Oaks. She later moved to Menorah Park where she made a name for herself as one of the three "Golden Girls." She and the other Golden Girls sang songs from a broad range of Broadway shows and movies, as well as to the "Classic Crooner," Frank Sinatra and the Andrews Sisters. To the joy of her family when visiting her, she liked to sing "Chattanooga Choo-Choo" with gusto, as they played the Andrews Sisters' music video on their phones.

Her family is deeply grateful for the wonderful people at Menorah Park and the Syracuse Jewish Family Service who helped this beautiful lady flourish there. One staff member said that Lynne "did a 180" after arriving there. She loved the meals, her friends, the activities and the socialization. She also loved being

in the fresh air and sunshine whenever she could.

Last summer, her great-granddaughter Charlotte, age 2, nicknamed Lynne "Gigi" when she and her family came to visit. Lynne's grandchildren brought her great joy, as numerous videos and photos on refrigerators can attest. Whether helping grandchildren with piano lessons, playing Monopoly, answering questions about family history, dancing, enjoying good food, eating chocolate, celebrating holidays and so much more, she was an integral part of our lives. Although this beautiful woman will be missed on earth, our memories of our experiences together with her will be cherished always. We are grateful for the time we were blessed to have had together.

Lynne was predeceased by her daughter Andrea Ellen Terdiman. She is survived by her daughter Holly Salop Wallace and husband Michael F. Cadin, who loved Lynne dearly; son Evan (Barbara) Salop, grandchildren Lauren (Francisco) Linares, Leslie (David) Sarraf, Jamie Terdiman, Benjamin Salop Wallace, Jeremy Salop Wallace and Jennifer Salop and great-grandchildren Michael Andrew Sarraf, Penelope Blake Sarraf and Charlotte Rose Saraff.

Donations to perpetuate Lynne's memory may be made to Menorah Park, Syracuse Jewish Family Service or Shaarei Torah Orthodox Congregation of Syracuse.

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**GEORGE KOWITT**  
**January 29, 2022**

George Kowitt, 96, of Syracuse, NY, passed away on January 29 at Menorah Park of CNY. He was born in Brooklyn, NY.

George served with distinction in the infantry during WWII, then attended Long Island University, where he received his bachelor's degree in accounting. He worked as a field agent for the Internal Revenue Service for 24 years.

**LOIS B. SCHAFFER**  
**February 2, 2022**


Lois B. Schaffer, born on November 7, 1937 to Esther and Allan Brown in Camden, NJ, passed away on February 2 after a three-year battle with pancreatic cancer.

Lois grew up in Camden. She graduated from Camden High School, salutatorian of her class. She attended the University of Pennsylvania, majoring in speech therapy. It was in college that she met the love of her life, Mike Schaffer. They were married on August 31, 1958, then moved to Manchester, CT where Mike was stationed in the Army, and Lois got a job teaching sixth grade.

In 1961, their first child, Scott was born. Lois moved to Syracuse over 60 years ago as Mike began his dental practice. In 1962, she gave birth to their second child, Rick. Along with ten other families, Lois and Mike established Congregation Beth Sholom, a new synagogue in Syracuse. Lois served as sisterhood president and eventually was a teacher in the religious school. In addition, Lois became an adult bat mitzvah in the synagogue's first adult bat mitzvah class. Lois felt that having a role in the creation of CBS-CS was one of her life's greatest accomplishments.

In 1967, their third child, Ellen, was born. At 35, Lois was diagnosed with breast cancer. She turned a very difficult life event into something positive that would benefit others: the creation of the program "Reach to Recovery," which was designed to help other women dealing with breast cancer. The program led her to work for the American Cancer Society and another cancer program, "Cansurmount." Her goal was always to empower and provide support to others.

Lois decided that adult education was her passion. She received a master's degree in adult education from Syracuse University. Lois then embarked on several civic projects: Displaced Homemaker Program, the Syracuse International Center and The

He was predeceased by his loving wife, Shirley, after 54 years of marriage, and survived by his two children: Mark (Judy) Kowitt and Laurie (Steven) Berkowitz, seven grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Donations may be sent to Ronald McDonald House of CNY or Make-a-Wish of Central New York.

*birnbaum funeral service, inc.*

Humane Society, traveling to local schools with her family dog, Schotzie, to help teach children about kindness to animals.

Lois's last career stop was at the CNY Community Foundation. Initially her focus was on a Childcare Initiative. She then served as the program chair.

Lois and Mike loved traveling to dozens of countries around the globe. She was very proud of the work that they did when traveling to Bolivia and Peru to establish three dental clinics for orphaned children. Lois was awarded the Woman of Valor Award. She had an energy for life that was unmatched. Lois was a devoted, caring and loving wife, daughter, mother and grandmother. Lois touched the lives of everyone she came into contact with and will be deeply missed.

She is survived by her loving husband of 63 years, Mike Schaffer, their children Scott (Sarah) Schaffer of Middlebury, VT, Rick (Angela) Schaffer of Bridgewater, NJ and Ellen (Jon) Broder of Rochester, NY, grandchildren Eli, Jared, Elyse, Mitchell and Dylan, nieces Harriet (Jamie) Brown, Kasey (Norma) Brown and great-nieces Anna and Soleil.

Contributions to perpetuate her memory may be made to Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas or The American Cancer Society.

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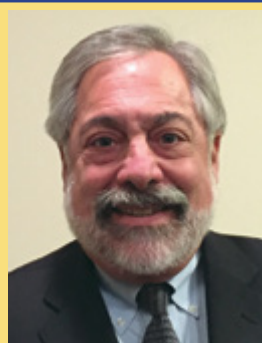
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SID MANES AND AMY ZANKOFF  
RECENTLY ESTABLISHED A PACE FUND  
WITH THE JEWISH COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF CENTRAL NEW YORK



Sid explained the reason they did so:

*"PACE covers a lot of space (pace) within the community, much more than I could reach on my own. I do not, at age 95, buy green bananas, so I am assured that PACE will continue to support activities that are important to me and to the community."*

*"I want our Jewish community to grow and the Jewish Community Center to thrive and survive so PACE assures me that my donation and fund will be available long after I am gone."*

*"Who knows, I am having so much fun I may do it again next year. Sidney and Amy will go on and on and we are having a great time."*

TAKING CARE OF EACH OTHER  
IS WHAT COMMUNITY IS ALL ABOUT.

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