

# Jewish Observer

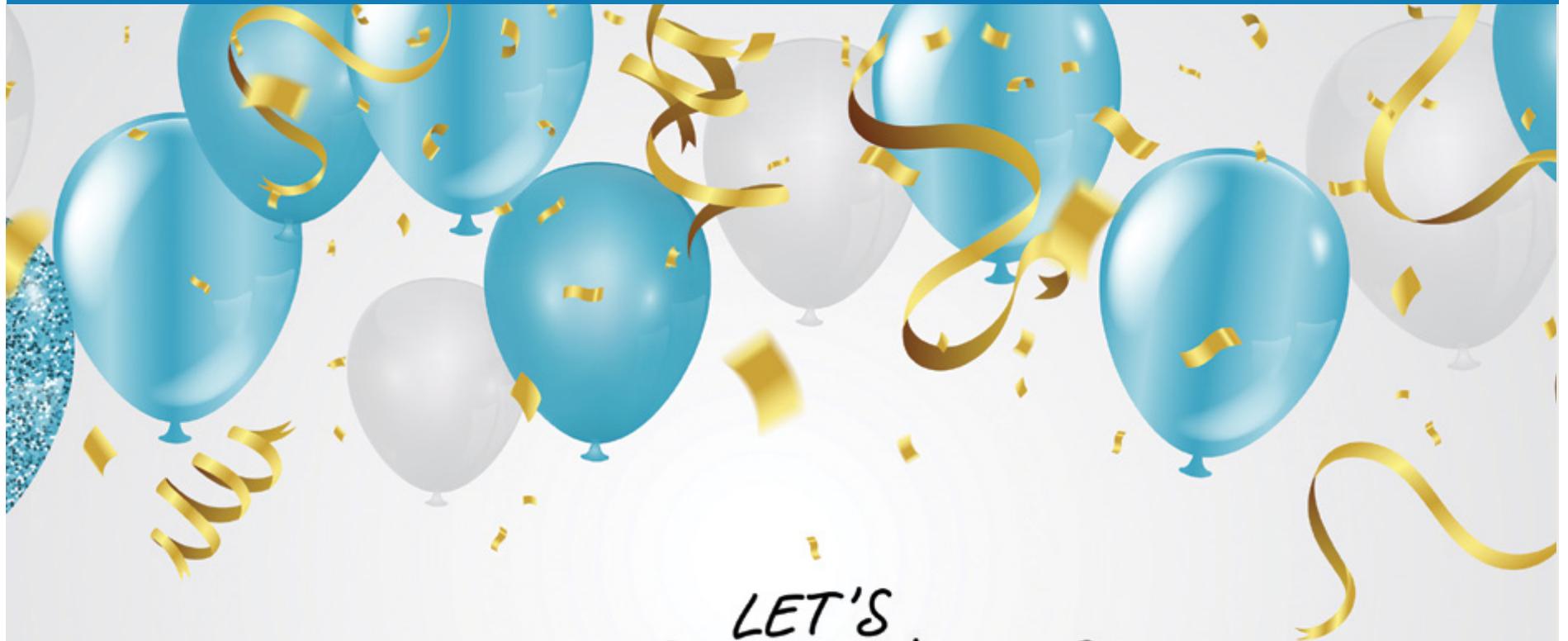
A publication of the Jewish Federation of Central New York

## of Central New York

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JUNE 2023 | SIVAN-TAMMUZ 5783



LET'S

*celebrate*



**INSIDE:**  
6 UNDER 36  
(4-5)



**LOOK:**  
ISRAEL'S DIAMOND  
JUBILEE  
(6-7)



**DON'T MISS:**  
BNAI MITZVAH  
(12-13)

## From the Editor



Barbara Davis

**cele-bra-tion** - the action of marking one's pleasure at an important event or occasion by engaging in enjoyable, typically social, activity.

June is a month without Jewish holidays, but that doesn't mean we don't have many things to celebrate. A celebration is an active, shared experience, a **communal** action. We truly celebrate only when we are with others. This month the *Jewish Observer* is proud and happy to recognize many recent such shared communal experiences and many celebrants as well.

Usually we recognize new communal leadership in our September issue which corresponds to the

beginning of the new Jewish year, but this spring we welcomed two new communal leaders before then. Both Syracuse Hebrew Day School Head of School Michael Ferman and Menorah Park Executive Director Russ D'Amico have already made their marks on our community in very positive and profound ways, and we celebrate their innovations and energy as they make positive change for the future. One of the most difficult challenges a community faces is doing new things in a new way. There is tremendous inertia or even opposition to change. It is not limited to Jewish institutions but is endemic to all organizations. It is not necessarily related to age or longevity, although there is probably a correlation. But we all know people who just won't change, who resist all efforts to do things in a different way. We even joke about it. "Change that lightbulb? No way! My grandfather donated that lightbulb!"

But we all have to have the courage to change. In our community, the coming together of Temple Concord and Temple Adath Yeshurun to share space is an example of courage and commitment. It is a cause for celebration. The communal celebration of *Yom haAtzmaut* this year was another example of communal cooperation and goodwill, as all of the congregations and schools of the community came together to plan and execute a wonderful celebration of 75 years of Israel's existence. There is change that goes on behind the scenes of which most people are unaware, but the courage and commitment of our community's two Conservative rabbis who decided to allow the *Va'ad Ha'ir* into their kitchens to provide supervision for community events is a huge break with local tradition and a very welcome step in the direction of greater community unity.

The inauguration of the Luminary Society this year is another example of positive change and effective new leadership. The Luminary Society, named for those who inspire others, was a new division of giving created to recognize donors whose annual contributions to the Federation were \$6000 or more. We are fortunate, in Central New York, to have people who care so deeply about Jewish continuity and Jewish education. They are luminaries. This Luminary Society recognizes and thanks them. As promised by campaign chair extraordinaire Anick Sinclair, the first Luminary Society evening at the Palace Theater was lively, unusual, magical, inspirational and a night to remember. The 2024 event, scheduled for December 16, will be equally exciting and innovative and will feature mentalist Brad Henderson's "Mind Show," a highly interactive entertainment experience perfect for intelligent audiences and those who are looking to explore something truly unusual.

Just prior to *Yom haShoah*, I had the privilege of assisting Anick Sinclair in another program of which she is the originator: The Yellow Candle Project. We sat at the JCC entrance to give out candles to those who had ordered them. For two hours, we enjoyed a steady stream of visitors, both those who came to get their candles and those who were coming to the JCC to exercise or play pickleball. It was absolutely wonderful to see one another again after two years of Zooming and masking and to catch up on family events,

new jobs and new ventures. I was reminded of how much being together is a very meaningful Jewish experience and one that we need to recapture after several years of pandemic-caused isolation and separation. So much of Jewish life centers around groups – we even need ten people to pray. At every major milestone of our lives, our tradition mandates that one has to be surrounded by community. Our seders are family and communal celebrations. Our holidays are celebrated collectively. Social distancing is not a Jewish thing. Hillel recognized the importance of Jews living in relationship to other Jews when he said, "Do not separate yourself from the community."

The community *Yom haShoah* program this year was one to remember. The teens of the Epstein School read aloud diary entries of young people just like themselves who wrote of their terrible experiences during the Holocaust. They lit 6 candles in memory of the 6 million Jews who were killed. All of our community rabbis and cantors participated, as did hundreds of community members, both in person and on Zoom. Being together, remembering together, being a **community** was so poignant, so important and so profoundly meaningful.

The celebration of Israel's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday that followed a week later was also a triumph of community effort. All of our community's schools and synagogues joining with the Federation and hundreds of celebrants enjoyed a fun-filled, musical and memorable reminder of how much Israel means to the Jewish people and how much, despite any misgivings we might have about some of its policies, we need to cherish and support this miraculous country.

This issue of the *JO* is a collective celebration of many wonderful achievements and milestones taking place in our community, but as I was writing this introduction, I was also working to assist the Federation's Allocations Committee with the paperwork and interviews they use in making decisions about how Federation's campaign achievement is to be used in support of our community. Burrowing through a pile of papers on my desk, I suddenly came upon an old yellowed *Jewish Observer* from 1985. A headline caught my eye: "*The End of Community*." The editor at that time wrote: "Who will make the sacrifices? What will be sacrificed? Can this Jewish community ignore the cries of those whose needs will not be met? Jews helping Jews, taking care of their own, educating their own – it's a tradition that links us to our patriarchs. The link is in danger of being broken right here in Syracuse..."

Thankfully, 38 years later, I was not writing an editorial like that. Our Jewish community is not in danger of dissolution. Our existence is not in question. Our campaign achievement might not be as great as we would wish, but we are buoyed by the fact that our donors overall increased their pledges by 50,000 and that there are over 50 new donors to our campaign this year. This is another cause for celebration. Our entire community deserves a *mazal tov*. May we continue to grow from strength to strength.

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President/CEO.....Michael Balanoff  
Board Chair.....Neil Rosenbaum  
Editor.....Barbara Davis



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## From the Jewish Federation of CNY President/CEO



Michael Balanoff

I am often asked “What does the Jewish Federation of Central New York do?” To answer, I would like to share the words of our campaign chair, Anick Sinclair, from her address to the Luminary Society:

“The answer is simple: **We Help Every Jew. Every Day. In Every Way.**

We support and sustain our Jewish community. We make sure that the Jewish present is meaningful and the Jewish future secure.

The mission of the Jewish Federation of Central New York is to raise and distribute funds to support and enrich the lives of Jews locally, nationally, in Israel and worldwide. Through education and community

building, the Federation’s mission ensures that Jewish values, goals, traditions and connections are preserved for current and future generations.

Our Federation carefully considers local community-building needs and global shared responsibilities and allocates funds accordingly. This funding allows us to constantly and consistently meet the needs of our Jewish family, no matter what they may be, no matter where they may be.

We work to help people in need, as well as inspire, educate and connect people to their Jewish identity. Federation is about caring for those less fortunate and nurturing and improving life for Jews everywhere.

Our Federation has more than a century-old legacy of trust, of raising and distributing funds with full transparency, accountability and integrity.”

Here is a partial list of what your gift to Federation provides for our community:

- 1) Jewish education at the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, the Syracuse Community Hebrew School and the Rabbi Epstein School of Jewish Studies
- 2) Care for those in need: Jewish Family Service, the Food Pantry, Interest Free Loan Program, Kosher Meals on Wheels, JCC Senior Lunch Program, Beit Tikvah Group Home
- 3) Connection to Israel: Teen Taste of Israel, Birthright
- 4) Connection to our community: the *Jewish Observer*, Community Happenings, social media
- 5) The joy of Jewish experience: Klez Fest, Israeli Scouts, *Yom haAtzmaut*, Community Chanukah Party
- 6) Connection to our heritage: *Yom haShoah*, Judaic Heritage Center
- 7) Innovative programming: Holstein Community Program Fund
- 8) Connection to the next generation: NexGen, Hillel, 6 Under 36
- 9) Help for emergencies: Ukraine, Ethiopian Jews, refugee resettlement
- 10) Safety and security: Security liaison with law enforcement; combatting antisemitism

Federation is our community’s convener. It is our champion. It is our sustainer.

Federation is YOU. It is US. Federation is responsive, transparent, open, inclusionary, diverse. We do not all agree with one another. Our board does not consist of people who all agree with one another. But Federation is not about agreement about all issues. It is about concern and caring for one another. The words of the oft-cited Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks aptly describe Federation: “We may not agree on anything, but...I don’t need you to agree with me, I just need you to care about me.”

Recently Temple Concord brought Rabbi Dr. Lawrence Hoffman to Central New York for a program about redefining Judaism for our future. Rabbi Hoffman challenged synagogues and Jewish organizations to come up with a one-sentence definition of our purpose. I propose the following for the Jewish Federation of Central New York: **Federation embraces the ideal that our purpose is our common ability to care for one another.**



## Federation Annual Meeting to be held June 8

The 105th Annual Meeting of the Jewish Federation of Central New York will be held in person and via Zoom on **Thursday, June 8, 2023 at 7:30 pm at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas**. The entire community is invited to attend to join with the Federation Board of Directors to honor and celebrate the leaders and volunteers who do so much for our community.

**WELCOME:** Neil Rosenbaum

**INVOCATION:** Rabbi Evan Shore

**NATIONAL ANTHEM:** Cantor Esa Jaffe

**FEDERATION ANNUAL REPORT:** Michael Balanoff, President/CEO

**CAMPAIGN REPORT:** Anick Sinclair, Campaign Chair

**ELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS OF THE BOARD:**  
Adam Fumarola, Nominating Committee Chair

**INTRODUCTION OF PIERSON 6 UNDER 36 AWARD WINNERS:**  
Neil Rosenbaum

**PRESENTATION OF ROTH AWARD TO FRAN CIARDULLO:**  
Anick Sinclair

**AGENCY END OF YEAR REPORTS**

**HATIKVAH:** Cantor Kari Eglash

**There will be a dessert reception preceding the Annual Meeting at 7:00 pm.**

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# What if?

By Rabbi David Katz,  
Interim Rabbi, Temple Concord

**At the end of this month, I conclude my tenure at Temple Concord. It will have been my ninth position as a professional interim rabbi. Intentional Interim Rabbis are trained to analyze organizational structure, the relationship between communal history and culture and the intertwining of lay leadership, staff, politics and religious life. I have served synagogues from California to New York, from Atlanta to Baltimore and have a wide perspective on long term trends and patterns in Jewish communal life. Let me share my impressions of the Syracuse Jewish community - its strengths, its challenges and above all, the tremendous potential I see.**

The Jewish community of Syracuse has much to be proud of...a strong Federation, warm relations between synagogues, its quality Jewish schools, along with its constituent organizations that run smoothly and provide excellent services. But there are challenges, challenges which are shared by many American Jewish communities - most notably a shrinking Jewish population and the resulting struggle to maintain healthy financial bases and facility upkeep. Unless Syracuse experiences a great influx of Jews, these trends will continue and the problems will become acute. Congregations will merge, staff will be cut, programs and services will decline.

Long-term challenges demand long-term strategies. Leaders must step up to the plate with the will to act. Vision and imagination start with this question: "What if...?"

Knowing that Syracuse University students make close friends during their college days, what if Federation convened Hillel leaders, business professionals, real estate developers and brokers, synagogue presidents and rabbis in order to create intentional communities for graduating students - offering them good jobs, low-cost housing (down payments? reduced rents?), and support to pursue institutional and non-institutional

forms of Jewish expression? What if...?

Knowing that small class sizes are actually considered a PLUS in education, what if Federation and synagogues were to support curriculum transformation, concentrating on the creation of individualized learning tracks for children and adults. What if parents and students could opt for more intensive levels of learning?

Knowing from our common Zoom experience and other social media sites that communities can remain strong even without physical facilities, what if synagogues offered online memberships to new and past members? Teaching could be hybrid and synagogue alumni who live in different parts of the world could gather in virtual spaces. What if...?

Knowing that the wealth of a community is more than bank funds and bonds; what if a new definition of "wealth" took hold - that wealth can mean the treasury of skills, talents, experience, strongly held beliefs and aspirations of its members? A survey could be taken of every Jew in Syracuse to determine how he, she or they could strengthen the community. Temple Concord is experimenting with such a strategy now. Bakers are baking, singers are singing, older, dormant members are being brought out of the woodwork to take their spots as contributors to Temple life. What if...?

Knowing that MICRON is about to invest \$100,000,000,000 in the Syracuse area and that the company develops and produces data storage and computer memory technology, what if the Jewish community spearheaded a proposal (by Interfaith Works?) approaching MICRON with a joint project to gather data on members of churches, mosques and synagogues, parlaying that treasury of knowledge into actions that would benefit each organization? Good business and good politics for building all the religious communities. What if...?

With a strong drive, vision and imagination, commitment and courage, there is no reason the Syracuse Jewish community could not lead the way in America and far beyond.

What if...?

# Fran Ciardullo to Receive 2023 Roth Award

**The Jewish Federation of Central New York is pleased to announce that the Esther and Joseph Roth Award in Recognition of Outstanding Jewish Community Leadership will be presented to Fran Ciardullo at Federation's annual meeting on June 8. The prestigious Roth Award was established in 1979 by the friends and family of Esther and Joseph Roth and is presented in honor of individuals who have demonstrated outstanding Jewish community leadership.**



Originally from Norwalk, CT, Fran Ciardullo graduated from Cornell University and Syracuse University College of Law. She began her legal career at the law firm of Costello, Cooney & Fearon and developed a concentration in healthcare law. She later practiced healthcare law with the firm of Fager Amsler Keller and Schoppmann and then joined the firm of Barclay Damon as a member of the HealthCare and Human Services Practice Group, representing physicians, dentists and other healthcare professionals, behavioral health providers, nursing homes and other healthcare facilities. Throughout her career, Fran has been a frequent speaker at healthcare associations and has authored many articles in the area of liability and risk management for healthcare facilities and professionals.

In 1989, Fran was elected Town Justice for the Town of Schroepel in Oswego County. She was reelected four times and served for 22 years. In 2001, she was appointed by the Chief Judge to the prestigious New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct, the oversight and disciplinary body for judges, where she served as the vice chair. Fran is a past president of the Central New York Women's Bar Association and has taught at many educational institutions including Syracuse University College of Law, the State University of New York Health Science Center, Cazenovia College and the New School for Social Research.

In the local Jewish community, Fran served on the boards of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas and the Rabbi Jacob H. Epstein School of Jewish Studies. She chaired the Epstein School board from 2017 to 2022. In 2016, Fran joined the board of Menorah Park and, in 2022, became its president. Asked what motivates her to serve the community, she says, "The Syracuse Jewish community is my Jewish family."

Fran was born in New York City but moved to Connecticut before she started kindergarten. "I was raised Jewish," she says. "We belonged to a Conservative synagogue, Temple Beth El in Norwalk and I attended Hebrew school there and I was an active member of USY. I never had a bat mitzvah but I was confirmed in 10th grade." Her mother's family came from Russia and Eastern Europe in the early 1900s and settled in Newport, Rhode Island. Her mother, Marion Rudick, was

born there. Fran's great-grandfather was the president of Touro Synagogue. Her grandparents moved to Brooklyn, and her mother graduated from Hunter College.

Then the trajectory changed. "My dad, Michael Ciardullo, came from a large Italian Catholic family in Queens," says Fran. "He was an NCO in the Navy, a Pearl Harbor survivor, and was stationed at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. He went to a synagogue dance in 1949 with a friend and my mom was there. He saw her across the room and said, 'That's the girl for me,' and was able to introduce himself to her. As she later told me, 'The music was so loud that I thought he said his name was Michael SHAPIRO.'"

Fran's parents married in 1950, which, she notes, "was VERY unusual for the time. I think they were both very brave. My Jewish grandparents loved my dad and he was totally accepted. My parents had a long and happy marriage."

Fran has one brother, a professor of astrophysics at Penn State, whose wife (also a professor of astrophysics) is not Jewish, they have no children and they they don't practice any religion. Fran's mother was an only child, so her family, includes "no practicing Jewish siblings, no Jewish cousins, but a boatload of Italian cousins." She married Delos Schueler, who is not Jewish, but they sent their daughter to the Syracuse Hebrew Day School and the Rabbi Epstein School of Jewish Studies. Calle then decided to attend the Albert A. List College Joint Program with Columbia University and the Jewish Theological Seminary and graduated with a B.A. in history from Columbia and a B.A. *magna cum laude* in Ancient Jewish Studies from List. She just graduated from the William Davidson Graduate School of Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary with an M.A. in Jewish education, with a focus in Educational Leadership and will serve as assistant director of family life and learning at Congregation B'nai Jeshurun in New York City. How did Calle become so interested in Jewish Education? Fran says, "We owe it all to Dr. Davis, Rabbi Shore and the Syracuse Hebrew Day School."

# CNY Jewish Community Observes *Yom HaShoah*

*“Thank you to Alan Goldberg and the entire commemoration team for a memorable and powerful memorial. The experience of hearing young people speaking the words and thoughts of same-aged teenagers of an earlier time was deeply moving. The Epstein School students especially are to be commended for their ability to transmit the unspeakable sorrow of young, vibrant youth caught in a death trap from which there was no exit. Few things in life would be sadder than a young person just beginning to enjoy the wonders of life knowing that they probably won’t make it. And, indeed, most of them didn’t. Thank you again for this remembrance and for all the effort that went into this poignant evening.”*

The above words were written by Lois Weiner after the community observance of Yom HaShoah on April 18. They reflect the feelings of most of those in attendance at what was a memorable evening.

“*Yom HaShoah*, Holocaust Remembrance Day, is a day for remembering victims of the Holocaust and reminding society of what can happen to civilized people when bigotry, hatred and indifference reign,” said Michael Balanoff, Federation president/CEO, who emceed the program. He added, “It is important not only to curse the darkness of the past, but to illuminate the future and to acknowledge humanity in all people so that the world can become a better place for posterity. The history of the Holocaust offers an opportunity to reflect on the moral responsibilities of individuals, societies and governments, and to reaffirm the need for the people of Central New York to remain vigilant



against hatred and persecution. In honoring the memory of the victims of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution by remembering the lessons of this atrocity, we can assure that it is never repeated.”

Among the hundreds in attendance in person or virtually were three students whose work was selected from entries from several schools in the 2023 Holocaust Writing and Art Contest as best answering the questions: “Can art and/or culture be a form of protest against injustice? How would you best convey your protest against injustice, and/or resistance to inhumanity through art, poetry, writing or digital media?” Federation saluted the students of Nottingham High School, Tully Middle School and the Expeditionary Learning Middle School of the Syracuse City School and awarded prizes to two poets and one artist for their fine work: Rowan Mosier of Expeditionary Learning Middle School (ELMS) for his poem, “We Stand Together,” Sophia Simmons of Tully Middle School for her poem, “Resistance is a secret waiting to be found” and Selaci Butoto from Nottingham High School for his painting, “Remember the People.” The winning entries are shown here.

## Resistance is a secret waiting to be found

By Sophia Simmons

We shall rise against the winds  
We shall rise against the storms  
We need to rise against ourselves  
We must rise and refuse the others who put us down.

People must decide to rise and defend  
People need to know that they have power  
People can have their own decisions  
It is not up to others to decide for us.

What if we just tried  
What if it is possible to stand against others  
What if we can do things for ourselves  
If we do and if we can, our world will change for the better.

There are many possibilities out in our world  
There are many people to do those things  
If they try their hardest they can achieve their goal for those things  
People can change the world but they can also bring storms.

The world we live in wasn’t always like this  
We have done amazing things in this world but we have also done terrible things  
We cannot change the past but we can hope for the future  
To rise is not to fall, it is to resist.

## We Stand Together

By Rowan Mosier

Over time, we’ve been hurt  
We’ve been pushed around  
We’ve been kicked and shoved  
Discriminated for our race  
For our gender  
For our beliefs  
But we don’t fall  
We rise up  
We stand  
We make a plan  
We don’t let our past affect us  
But we let ourselves learn  
We take those moments  
and we stuff them in our brains  
And we remember them forever

We’ve been bombed  
We’ve been drafted  
We’ve been killed and injured  
We’ve seen our loved ones die  
We’ve watched our world crumble around us  
But we still don’t fall  
These are the moments when we grow  
These are the times when we  
put aside our differences and we  
Work together to make a change  
We stand up against the bullies  
We stand up against our fears and our challenges  
And we don’t stand down  
We don’t let up

We stand against those bullets  
We put on our vests  
We hold our shields strong  
But we don’t set out for war  
We set out for peace  
We set out to make the world right  
And like a diamond that shines brighter than the sun  
We bring the light to the world  
We stand up  
To make our lives different  
We create a resistance



# PIERSON 6 UNDER 36 WINNERS

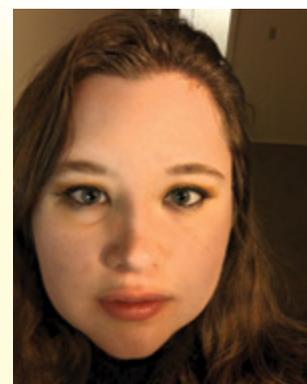


**NICOLE ENGEL** is a senior at Nazareth College studying communication sciences and disorders (speech therapy). She served as a *madricha* in the Temple Concord Sunday School, attended the Epstein High School of Jewish Studies, went to URJ sleepaway camps and was confirmed at Temple Concord. A member of Hillel at Nazareth, she helps plan events, most recently a *Tu b'Shevat* learning seminar, for the campus. She was awarded a Civic Engagement Award by Nazareth for her work with the Rochester School District providing mentorship for kindergarten students as they transitioned to school and giving one-on-one support to struggling students.



In January, Nicole went on a Birthright trip to Israel. After returning home, she decided that she wanted to go back to Israel. She was accepted into Onward Israel's Science and Health Tech program for this summer. While there, she will be working with children with special needs. Working in Israel will give her experience working in a different cultural setting and will improve her Hebrew language skills. She hopes to help the Central New York Jewish community by working with those who need speech therapy. She also hopes to help the wider community, not just in Syracuse, but everywhere.

**LEAH EVE JEZER-NELSON** is a graduate of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School and the Epstein School, where she has taught for six years. She was an officer in USY and vice president and spokesperson of the Teen Funders program for the Jewish Community Foundation and received a Federation scholarship to visit Israel as a high school student with BBYO. At Wells College, she represented the interfaith student community on the President's Council and set up programs which included Jewish holidays. After graduating, she spent a year in Israel teaching underprivileged children as part of the MASA program.



Leah currently works at U.Mass, Amherst as a representative of IACT, Inspired Active Committed Transformed, which engages less-affiliated first and second year students, recruits them to join Birthright Israel trips and stewards their involvement in Jewish campus life. Leah recently led a Birthright group of 52 students to Israel. She is a member of the faculty of the Syracuse Community Hebrew School and teaches there remotely. A talented writer, she has contributed to the *JO* as well as other newspapers, wrote a weekly *parsha* for the Syracuse Community Hebrew School and edited their newsletter.

**ALEC ERLEBACHER** is the founder of SmartAlec Support.com, a business which utilizes his multitalented and multiskilled experiences in all types of photography and other tasks that require support in multiple areas of the complex digital world. Alec went to the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, became *bar mitzvah* at Shaarei Torah Orthodox Congregation of Syracuse, worked at the JCC summer camp and was for many years its head counselor. He still returns to teach the JCC's rocketry and gaming camps and recently taught computer classes for seniors at the J.



Alec has a bachelor's degree from SUNY at Buffalo in media studies and a master of science degree in photography from the Newhouse School at Syracuse University. Alec has done professional portraiture of Jewish clergy. He sits on the Central New York Board of Film Professionals. He assisted and was credited in a major motion picture made in Syracuse by an award-winning Israeli film director. Alec is heavily embedded in helping the Jewish community of Syracuse. He made a video for ECDP parents to see the classrooms during the COVID-19 lockdown. He was here then and is here now and is dedicated to the nourishment of Jewish life in Central New York. He even says that he offers a "tribal discount" in his business.

**ELYSSA ROSENBAUM** has been very active with The Maccabiah, the world's largest Jewish athletic competition, which emphasizes the centrality of the State of Israel in the life of the Jewish people. Elyssa competed in the Maccabi Games in Mexico City in 2019. She raced the triathlon, open water swim, half marathon and cycling time trial and won two gold and two silver medals. In 2020, Elyssa helped to manage the experience for other athletes, helping them get to all of their games and practices, supervising/acting as a counselor for the Israel Connect program and generally troubleshooting to make the experience as successful as possible.



Elyssa serves on the board of the Jewish Federation. As co-chair of the Young Leadership Committee, she has been instrumental in transitioning Young Leadership into NexGen, rebranding and reorganizing Young Leadership to better reflect the realities of today's young adults. Under her leadership, NexGen has been involved in delivering *mishloach manot* for Federation, helping pack dozens of boxes of household goods for new immigrants to Syracuse, working at Reverse *Tashlich* and volunteering at the Everson Museum. She developed a new description for the NexGen group. Her nominator wrote, "Elyssa's love for Israel and the Syracuse Jewish community speaks volumes about how crucial she is to the future growth of the Syracuse Jewish community."

**ROSS GREENKY** is an attorney in Barclay Damon LLP's Labor & Employment Practice Area Group. Ross primarily concentrates on labor and employment matters, assisting employers with issues such as workplace discrimination, harassment and retaliation and FMLA compliance. He was named a Rising Star Attorney by Super Lawyers from 2017 through 2021. His nominator for the 6 Under 36 award said, "Central New York is very fortunate to have someone of Ross's background and caliber. He is a true leader in our Jewish community."



Ross serves as a member of Barclay Damon's Next Generation Committee and participates in the firm's pro bono program which provides free legal assistance to low-income individuals and organizations that assist them, helping to navigate issues related to immigration, housing, women's rights, prisoners' rights, community building and economic development. Ross has been a member of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School's Board of Directors since 2017 and now serves as vice president. Ross recently won a case against Swiss Village for discriminating against people whose native language was not English. He is quoted on the Barclay Damon website as saying, "It's that every now and then when you get to be a part of justice being done—that really is quite a thrill."



**TALIAZAMES** is a senior at the Rochester Institute of Technology, majoring in biomedical sciences. A graduate of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, Talia attended Christian Brothers Academy where she was active in interfaith programming, served as a peer minister, lead retreats for younger students, organized fundraisers and planned events to educate the student body about important issues of social justice. Her most significant accomplishment was erasing \$6.7 million of medical debt through Project Eraser, a program she developed in conjunction with RIP Medical Debt. In 2021, Talia was selected as one of 200 participants from Jewish communities around

the world to take part in the Jewish Federations of North America's Changemakers Fellowship, an online leadership development experience for 20–25-year-olds who want to effect positive change in their community and the world at large.

At RIT, she served on the Biomedical Sciences Mentor Program Committee and as a note taker for students with disabilities. During COVID, she volunteered to bring compassionate attention to isolated seniors in rural areas via the internet. In 2022, she received the New York State Assembly Citation for Community Service. She recently coordinated a campus-wide "Tigers Tackling Medical Debt" program at RIT to erase medical debt on the national level. She received an RIT Outstanding Undergraduate Scholar Award, celebrating the top 1% of undergraduates who achieve academic excellence while also giving back to the community.

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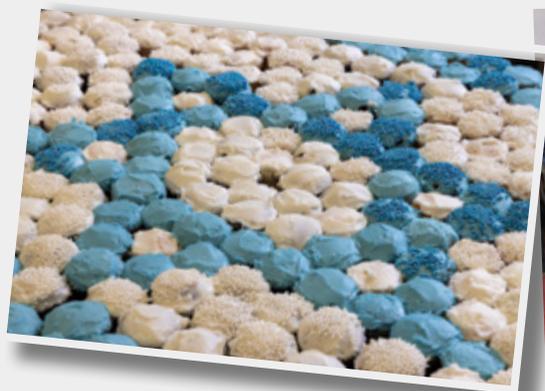
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<b>JOHN ROHDE TRIO</b>	<b>MONK ROWE FIVE FAMILIES ENSEMBLE</b>	<b>JT HALL JAZZ CONSORT</b>	<b>HOT CLUB OF SYRACUSE</b>
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<b>MARK HOFFMANN</b>	<b>LONGWOOD JAZZ PROJECT</b>		

# Celebrating Israel@75





## Cinco de Mayo at Menorah Park



## Noted Jewish Jazz and Music Photographer to Document National Grid Jazz Fest

Famed jazz and music photographer Enid Farber has accepted the National Grid Jazz Festival's invitation to photograph this year's National Grid Jazz Fest in downtown Syracuse. "I am so excited to finally be attending the Syracuse Jazz Festival after so many years of hoping to document what is one of the greatest jazz events in this region," said Farber. "And to have been invited by the legendary impresario, Frank Malfitano, is a very special honor. His respect for my work and my contribution to the visual history of my chosen music fills me with pride and joy!"

Enid Farber has been photographing musicians since 1979. A self-taught photographer who began documenting the world of music in Atlanta, Farber was born in Charlotte, NC and currently resides in New York City, where she focuses primarily on recording the evolving history of the jazz and world music scene for publications and record companies. Farber has been the main New York photographer for *JAZZIZ* Magazine since 1996. In its 20th anniversary issue *JAZZIZ*, said, "If we were to identify a *JAZZIZ* visual historian, her name would no doubt be Enid Farber. For longer than a decade, her photography has taken readers on an odyssey, to experience the most adventurous music and to meet the most interesting personalities, from both the new and traditional worlds of jazz."

The popular long-running music festival, now in its 37th year, boasts a five-day model with free admission jazz performances taking place at 27 venues from June 21 to June 25, 2023. Artists appearing at the clubs, and at the Visit Syracuse Stage in Hanover Square and the Amazon stage in Clinton Square include Herbie Hancock, Gladys Knight, Spyro Gyra, Tower of Power, Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox, Tuba Skinny, Joyce DiCamillo, Nancy Kelly and Marissa Mulder.



The 5-day festival will close on Sunday, June 25th on the campus of Syracuse University at Hendricks Chapel with a Jazz Fest Sunday Morning Gospel Concert and Closing Celebration that will feature a performance by the Dillard University Concert Choir of New Orleans and the Syracuse University Black Celestial Choral Ensemble. Admission to all National Grid Jazz Fest events, concerts and performances is free and open to the public. **For more information: log on to [VisitSyracuse.com](http://VisitSyracuse.com) and [syracusejazzfest.com](http://syracusejazzfest.com).**



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# Simchas

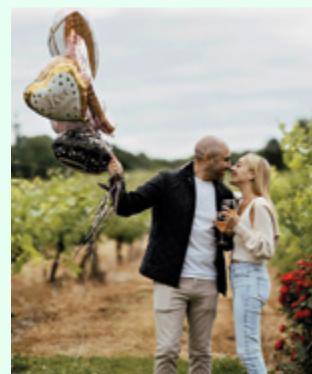
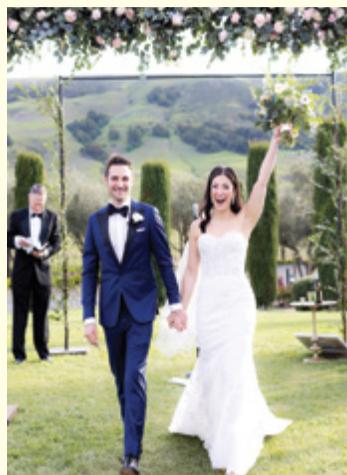
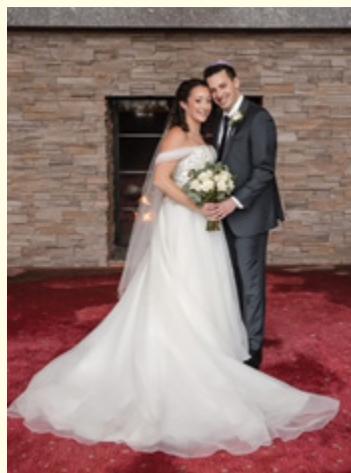
MAZAL TOV

Mazal Tov

Mazal Tov

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov said, *“Mitzvah Gedolah Le’hiyot Besimcha Tamid”* — **“It is a great mitzvah to always be in a state of happiness.”** This page proves the truth of his words.

Natalie Goldberg and Tyler Wiseman were married in September. Elyssa Rosenbaum and Jeremy Becker were married in November. Ari Kanter Kepnes and Ashley Newman were married in April. *Mazal tov!*



Sarah Rosenbaum and Dan Bleeker got engaged as did Kara Goldberg and Steven Levenbrook. *Mazal tov!*



Ona Bregman celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday with her family. *Yom huledet sameach, Ona!*

The **Seidman** family celebrated three *smachot*: Mikayla was inducted into the Junior National Honor Society, Joseph was inducted into the National Honor Society and Stacy celebrated her tenth anniversary of teaching at SHDS. *Kol ha kavod!* **Sarah Weiler** was named to the CNY *Business Journal*'s 40 Under Forty. Weiler is an analyst with the United States Bankruptcy Court. The award write-up describes her as “an energetic and analytical employee with extensive experience in public speaking, performing arts, event coordination, and senior-level office management.” *Mazal tov!*



Wallace Wai Kit Bleier, great-nephew of Brent Bleier, was born March 6 to Evan and Joyce Bleier. *Hatov vehametiv!*





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# Kvelling

## Crouse Health Appoints David Landsberg Chief Medical Officer



**David Landsberg, MD, FACP, FCCP**, has been appointed Chief Medical Officer for Crouse Health. In this senior leadership role, Landsberg will provide clinical leadership for Crouse Health and will work with its medical staff to provide the best in patient care. Landsberg will also oversee the quality improvement department and medical affairs.

Landsberg received his medical degree from Saba University School of Medicine and completed residencies at Mount Sinai School of Medicine and Critical Care Fellowships from Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital and New York Presbyterian Hospital – Cornell Medical College. Landsberg currently serves as Professor of Medicine and Emergency Medicine for Upstate Medical University. He also is director of Adult Critical Care and ECMO Programs at Crouse and is medical director of Finger Lakes Donor Recovery Network. Additionally, Landsberg serves as deputy coordinator for Onondaga County Emergency Management. He most recently has served as chief of medicine, a position he has held since 2012. He currently serves as an intensivist and ICU director at Crouse as well as site director for Upstate's Internal Medicine Residency Program.

"I am proud to appoint Dr. Landsberg to this important leadership position. He is well-respected, a proven leader among his peers and colleagues and is recognized for his strong ethics and professional standards," says Crouse President and Chief Executive Officer Seth Kronenberg, MD.

## Robert Lieberman Appointed to Symphoria Board



**Robert Lieberman**, managing partner of RAV Properties, has been appointed to the Board of Directors of Symphoria. Lieberman is a graduate of both the University of Michigan and the Jewish Theological Seminary. He served three synagogue communities as full-time cantor from 1993 to 2008. In 2008, he formed his first partnership to acquire an investment of apartments and a self-storage facility in Lafayette, NY. He first learned to navigate property management in New York City at the Benenson Investment Company. RAV Properties is deeply committed

to supporting and adding value to the Syracuse community. With keen interest in the arts and an affinity for orchestral music, Lieberman notes that, "Artistic excellence resonates within Symphoria, which is a featured focus of our community support."



## Nan Fechtner Receives RISE Ambassador Award



**Nan Fechtner** was presented with the Community Ambassador Award at the RISE Night of Nations dinner and awards ceremony on April 27. Fechtner was recognized for her work as a board member of this community organization, an acronym for Refugees and Immigrants Self-Empowerment. The Night of Nations is a predominant source of funding to allow RISE to continue and enhance essential services to empower refugees and immigrants in Central New York. Many of the refugees and immigrants who come to Syracuse are met with many obstacles, including language barriers, housing problems, food insecurity, lack of healthcare, cultural differences, raising children in a brand-new culture, prejudice and racism. RISE works to alleviate these problems and help newcomers achieve success in their new homeland.

## Menorah Park Honors Mary Ellen Bloodgood As Its 2023 Shining Star



**Mary Ellen Bloodgood**, former CEO and current chief development officer, was honored at a casually elegant evening at Menorah Park of CNY on May 23. Bloodgood, who recently retired as CEO after 36 years of service at Menorah Park, continues to support Menorah Park as chief development officer, working with Susie Drazen, director of development for the Foundation at Menorah Park.

"After 17 years of recognizing shining stars on our campus, we are so pleased to honor the driving force of Menorah Park! Her dedication, perseverance and acumen have made Menorah Park what it is today," said Robin Sisskind, who, with her husband Steven, have been co-chairs of Shining Stars since its beginning.

## Conference Center Dedicated to Honor the Career of Barry Shulman



On March 24, following its general board meeting, a ceremony was held at the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority facility (Centro) to dedicate the new Barry M. Shulman Conference Center. The dedication of the conference center serves to honor the career of Barry M. Shulman, General Counsel to the Central New York Regional Transportation

Authority. As Associate Counsel for the New York Senate Judiciary Committee, Shulman drafted numerous pieces of legislation, including, notably, the legislation enabling the creation of the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority and its many subsidiary corporations. Surrounded by his family, current and former Centro employees, and the Centro Board of Members, Shulman was honored for his numerous accomplishments to Centro and the local community. The ceremony included heartfelt remarks and accolades from Centro's Chief Executive Officer, Brian M. Schultz as well as Board Chairman, Nicholas F. Laino. Along with the unveiling of the Conference Center dedication wall, Centro's Board of Members and Deputy/Chief Executive Officers presented Shulman with a dedication plaque to thank him for his numerous contributions throughout the years.

# Generous Donation Brings Country Kitchen to Life at Menorah Park

by Judy Schmid



Dr. Mark Levinsohn and his wife Jeannette had made the decision to make a meaningful donation to Menorah Park of CNY. They reached out to Mary Ellen Bloodgood, chief development officer, to discuss where their donation could make a big difference. They determined that their \$36,000 gift could purchase a new DineX hot/cold meal transporter with enough money remaining to refresh the Community Room kitchen, making it feel warmer and more like home.

“We are truly honored by their generous donation,” said Bloodgood. “It was such a hands-on experience, and every step of the way was very deliberate. The Levinsohns, like so many in the

Syracuse community, have visited family and friends here at Menorah Park over the years and they are very aware that in addition to the nursing care residents receive, experiences can be enhanced for residents to truly allow them to thrive.” The DineX cart helps, as dining teams can bring food trays when residents want them, and the meal is as fresh as when it was first plated onto the trays.



The new Country Kitchen in the Community Room is already a hit with residents. Menorah Park dining staff have held “Knife and Fork” seminars, showing residents how to prepare healthier meals. Movie nights, organized by Activities Director Heather Coleman, are more fun with popcorn and even ice cream from the kitchen.

Dr. Levinsohn and his wife and family moved to Syracuse in 1974. Their four children were raised in Syracuse, and one, Dr. Susan Stone, still lives in the area. Dr. Levinsohn was a radiologist at Crouse Hospital and Mrs. Levinsohn was a homemaker, “quite busy,” she chuckles, “with four very active children.”

The Levinsohns encourage others in the community to consider Menorah Park in their financial planning. “We can see how our contribution has positively affected the dining experience for so many seniors, and we love the look of the new Country Kitchen” and the happy stories we hear of its very busy schedule,” said Mrs. Levinsohn.



Photographs in this issue were taken by Alec Erlebacher, Calypso Rae Photography, Ora Jezer, *The Jewish Observer* and community members. We appreciate that everyone shares.

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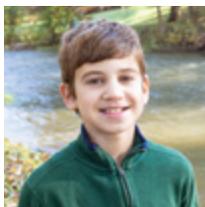
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# Mazal Tov to Our Community's B'nai Mitzvah

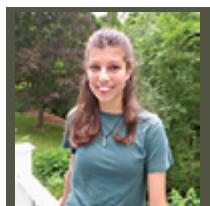


**Lilah Temes was called to the Torah as a bat mitzvah at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevre Shas on July 30.** Lilah is in the eighth grade at Manlius Pebble Hill School and the Epstein School. She is an accomplished ski racer who also enjoys soccer, mountain biking and playing piano. She also loves art, reading, traveling to new countries and spending time with her friends and family.

**Jonah Gadarian celebrated becoming bar mitzvah on August 27.** Jonah attends Jamesville DeWitt Middle School and his hobbies include soccer, rock climbing, track, theater, trumpet, chorus and playing Fortnite. For his mitzvah project, Jonah conducted a virtual food drive for the Food Bank of Central New York.



**Ariella Shever was called to the Torah as a b\* mitzvah at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevre Shas on September 3.** (B\* mitzvah is a non-gendered term. It can be singular or plural and is pronounced like the letter B.) She is an 8th grader at Manlius Pebble Hill, where she is active in the LGBTQ+ and Allies and the environmental clubs. She also attends the Epstein School. She enjoys rock climbing, reading, playing the clarinet, doing handicrafts and art and having fun with her friends. One of her favorite places is Eden Village Camp, a Jewish sleepaway camp with a farm.



**Joshua Levy became bar mitzvah at Temple Adath Yeshurun on September 3.** He is in the 8th grade. Josh lives in Boca Raton, Florida, where he attended Bnai Torah. The reason his bar mitzvah was in Syracuse is that it was important to him to have his almost 102-year-old great-grandmother in attendance. He enjoys playing sports and has been playing basketball since he was 5 years old. He also loves hanging out with friends and playing video games together. For his mitzvah project, he collected gently used and new shoes for "Jacob's Shoes."



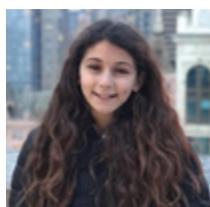
**Brandon Blitz celebrated becoming bar mitzvah at Temple Concord on September 10.** Brandon attends Wellwood Middle School, and his hobbies include basketball, baseball, video games, board games and chess. For his mitzvah project, Brandon set up a scholarship fund for underprivileged youth to participate in basketball.



**Dean Leon Bratslavsky became bar mitzvah at Temple Adath Yeshurun on September 10.** Dean attended the TAY religious school and is a student at Jamesville-DeWitt Middle School. He enjoys playing tennis and video games as well as spending time with his brothers Michael and Mark, and his dog. People who love Dean describe him as kind, smart and generous.



**Charlotte Pinsky celebrated becoming bat mitzvah at Temple Concord on September 24.** Charlotte attends Eagle Hill Middle School, and her hobbies include competitive gymnastics, lacrosse, singing, performing and baking. For her mitzvah project, Charlotte supported the GFYC Foundation to provide funding for cancer research as well as financial and mental health support for cancer patients and caregivers.

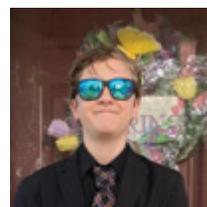


Charlotte believes strongly that now is the time to speak out about human rights, especially LGBTQ and racial justice efforts and a woman's right to control her own body. Charlotte plans to use her voice to advocate on these issues and will encourage others to do so as well.

**Isabella Weinberg became bat mitzvah at Temple Adath Yeshurun on October 8.** Issy is an alum of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, the TAY religious school and the Syracuse Community Hebrew School. She is an 8th grader at Wellwood Middle school and is in her second year at the Epstein School. She enjoys arts and crafts and reading. She loves acting and has participated in many school plays as well as getting leading roles in Syracuse Children's Theater productions. She is currently swimming with the F-M modified swim team. For her mitzvah project, Issy chose to collect and donate socks, gloves, underwear and towels to Vera House because she believes that everyone has the right to feel comfortable and safe in our community. Issy wants to help bring more comfort to people in need. Issy is a madricha at TAY and also enjoys participating in USY activities.



**Levi Williams celebrated becoming bar mitzvah on October 15.** Levi attends Durgee Junior High School and his hobbies include playing percussion in the Baldwinsville marching band and gaming with friends. Levi also has a green belt in karate. For his mitzvah project, Levi assisted in teaching three- and four-year-old karate students at his karate dojo.



**Peter Salzhauer celebrated becoming bar mitzvah on October 29.** Peter attends Skaneateles Middle School where he was recently elected student body president and his hobbies include playing basketball and soccer, skiing and jet skiing.



**Samantha Wheeler celebrated becoming bat mitzvah at Temple Concord on November 5.** Samantha attends Jamesville-DeWitt Middle School and her hobbies include swimming, basketball, softball, volleyball and drawing. For her mitzvah project, Samantha participated in "Sandwich Saturday," during which she made sandwiches for unhoused individuals in Syracuse through the charity organization We Rise Above the Streets.



**Judah Eglash celebrated becoming bar mitzvah at Temple Concord on November 12.** Judah attends Jamesville-DeWitt Middle School and his hobbies include art, music, games and reading. For his mitzvah project, Judah helped to raise funds and collect art supplies for the Interfaith Works Center for New Americans.



**Broden Eisenbies was called to the Torah as a bar mitzvah at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevre Shas on January 7.** Broden attended the Syracuse Community Hebrew School. Broden is in seventh grade at Jamesville-DeWitt Middle School and enjoys 3-D printing, Lego construction, math, science and trivia.





**Mia Grabowsky became a bat mitzvah on March 11.** Mia enjoys art, soccer, and animals. She attended the TAY religious school and the Syracuse Community Hebrew School. For her bat mitzvah project, Mia volunteered to collect and donate items to the East Coast Adoptions Agency to help dogs in need.

**Marissa Spevak became bat mitzvah at Temple Adath Yeshurun on March 18.** A graduate of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, Marissa is enrolled at the Epstein School. She enjoys art, gymnastics and time with friends. She is a madricha at the Syracuse Community Hebrew School.



**Rachel Pettiford was called to the Torah as a bat mitzvah at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas on March 25.** She is in the 7th grade at Jamesville-Dewitt Middle School and attended the Syracuse Community Hebrew School. She enjoys performing in musical theater, dancing and singing and playing with her dog, Cricket. Rachel also likes to spend her time with friends, playing piano, doing crafts and listening to music.

**Lilah Levy became a bat mitzvah at Temple Adath Yeshurun on March 25.** Lilah attended the religious school at Temple Adath Yeshurun and the Syracuse Community Hebrew School. She plans to attend the Epstein School next year, participate in USY, and be a madrich at TAY. For her Mitzvah project, Lilah chose to collect and donate non-perishable food items to the Food Bank of Central New York. Lilah enjoys art, music, softball, and making crepes.



**Sabina Hart celebrated becoming bat mitzvah at Temple Concord on April 1.** Sabina attends Wellwood Middle School and the Syracuse Community Hebrew School. Her hobbies include playing (flute and guitar) and listening to music, drawing, ice skating and hanging out with her friends. She taught herself how to play guitar in her spare time. For her mitzvah project, Sabina wanted to spread joy through one of her favorite interests: art. Therefore, she decided to donate art supplies to the children at Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital.



**Kayla Graber was called to the Torah as a bat mitzvah at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas on April 1.** She is in 7th grade at Fayetteville-Manlius Middle School. She attended the Syracuse Community Hebrew School. She enjoys Girl Scouts, dance, sewing, art and yearbook club. For her mitzvah project, Kayla completed an intergenerational quilt for Menorah Park.



**Jacob Lacirignola celebrated becoming bar mitzvah at Temple Concord on April 15.** Jacob attends Eagle Hill Middle School and his hobbies include sports such as football, track and soccer. He also enjoys camping with his family, cooking, learning about WWII history and playing video games. For his mitzvah project, Jacob worked to keep the earth clean by reducing his carbon footprint and participating in trash cleanups throughout various Central New York neighborhoods.



## A Very Special Bat Mitzvah

by **Alicia Gross**, Executive Director,  
Temple Adath Yeshurun

**This spring will be the 13th anniversary of my becoming Jewish. To celebrate, I am going to have a bat mitzvah ceremony at Temple Adath Yeshurun in June.**

Perhaps the most meaningful Jewish holiday for my family is Passover because it's a reminder of my own exodus and the beginning of my Jewish journey. In 2009, I was living in Los Angeles, working at a Jewish preschool and in a tough relationship — my pharaoh. A couple of weeks before Passover, I connected with Aaron Gross, and before I knew it, I was on a plane to Syracuse with a teeny tiny carryon for the two weeks of Passover break — true exodus from Mizrayim.

During my visit, Aaron and I began a romantic relationship, and I also began the journey to becoming Jewish. Over the next year and a half, we continued our relationship long distance with many conversations about our lives together and our hopes and goals for our future family. We talked about the rituals and traditions of Judaism as a wonderful model for family connectedness as



well as a spiritual guide and moral compass.

Once we were engaged, I decided to officially study and experience Judaism while living separately in LA and knew that it was right for me when the topic of the first class was *tikkun olam*. I had been living my life with the same philosophy for the past ten years of adulthood. The more I learned, and the more I attended services, the more I realized that my soul was Jewish. So like our ancestors before us, I chose to follow and practice Judaism and incorporate it into every aspect of my life.



**Tyler Wladis became a bar mitzvah at Temple Adath Yeshurun on April 22.** He attended the TAY religious school. Tyler is a 7th grader at Manlius Pebble Hill School and has been a stage, television and film actor since the age of six. In 2022 he made his Broadway debut and this year was nominated for a Nickelodeon Kid's Choice Award for Favorite Male TV Star. When he is home in Syracuse, he studies ballet and tap and plays basketball competitively. For his mitzvah project, he worked to raise funds for several local charities that address the high poverty rate in Syracuse's inner city as well as educating himself to be an anti-racism activist.

**Tamara Ziporah Greenblatt was called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas on April 29.** Tammy is a graduate of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School. She loves elephants and enjoys playing the violin and knitting.



**Charlotte Waldman became a bat mitzvah at Temple Concord on April 29.** Charlotte attends Jamesville-Dewitt Middle School. She is a black belt in karate and is working toward her second degree. She has done theater for eight years and will be playing the character "Cogsworth" in the Syracuse Children's Theater production of Disney's "Beauty and the Beast." She also enjoys crocheting and reading. For her mitzvah project, Charlotte used her seven years of karate training to mentor children at her karate dojo—Team Dewitt, by attending their classes and guiding them through drills.

# Temple Concord and Temple Adath Yeshurun Celebrate Earth Day

by Diane Sacks and Alicia Gross

Friends from Temple Concord and Temple Adath Yeshurun got together, despite dreary weather, for an afternoon of prepping, planting seeds in the community vegetable garden, snacking and taking time to chat and laugh together, with thanks to Stonework Play and Brady Farm for their partnership.



## Learning Together with Our Neighbors

by Laurie Ovadia

**Imagine spending an afternoon with a room full of people - you know some of them but the majority, who practice religions other than yours, are strangers. Now imagine that within a few hours, you are no longer sitting amongst strangers; rather, these people have become your neighbors and friends. What makes this group particularly special is that you are encouraged to share your ideas about faith and worship with the group and ask questions about how others experience their faith. This is the community that joined together in the *Learning Together with Our Neighbors* program held at Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas on March 19 from 1-6:30 pm.**

*Learning Together with Our Neighbors*, an interfaith learning program, is a collaboration among Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas, All Saints Church, Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, CNY RISE Center (a Muslim group), Plymouth Congregational Church and St. Lucy's Church. This was the fourth annual opportunity for the group to learn about each other's traditions in the "presence of the other."

This year's program was titled "The Way We Worship: How and Why?" and our "guide" for the event was Professor Richard Pilgrim, Associate Professor Emeritus in Religion at Syracuse University.

In addition to three plenary sessions led by Dr. Pilgrim, there was a panel discussion led by two Jewish, two Christian and two Muslim participants. Each panelist reflected on what they found most meaningful when they worship. Participants in the program also had the opportunity to observe a worship service of each religious group. Several people volunteered to serve as facilitators in two mixed-faith breakout sessions to discuss the panelists' presentations and the worship services. One participant commented, "I am grateful for the small group discussions which were rich in sharing knowledge and provided space to ask questions and explore both religion and culture." There were many opportunities for personal sharing and a homemade Kosher/Halal dinner for all, made by a dedicated group of attendees.

The purpose of this program is to provide opportunities that bring Christians, Jews and Muslims together to study their own and each other's traditions in the presence of each other. During the course of our day together, participants were able to gain real knowledge of other traditions (and their own) by hearing the stories and convictions of those who worship differently. This increases our understanding and allows us to engage with one another on a deeper level. Programs like ours also have the potential to reinforce commitments to one's own faith. Finally, *Learning Together* strengthens our community more broadly, as we form true friendships with one another based on mutual respect.

The Committee, made up of representatives from each of the partner organizations, is looking forward to beginning to plan next year's program, and they hope to expand to include other Syracuse area congregations.

*Learning Together with Our Neighbors* is generously supported by the Rabbi Andrew Pepperstone Interfaith Activities Fund.

## Teen Taste of Israel Through a Chaperone's Eyes

by Jennifer Satterlee

**When I was asked to write an article about the 2023 Teen Taste of Israel trip, I became completely overwhelmed with my thoughts - I could talk for hours about this experience.**

First, I must begin with a heartfelt "THANK YOU!" Thank you to the donors who made this experience possible! The gift that you have given is beyond words! We are forever changed by what we saw, what we learned, what we ate, what we heard and what we felt.

We hope that students' relationships begun on this journey will continue for many years. Chaperones smiled as teens opened up to one another, letting their Jewishness be their mutual interest. This trip allowed all of them to be Jewish together and to be surrounded by other Jews, unlike anywhere else in the world. The bond the students created was amazing to witness. At the Purim celebration at Temple Concord, I noticed that the students who traveled to Israel sat together, which hadn't happened before the trip.

It was fascinating to watch the teens be challenged in different ways. Many felt it was physically challenging, walking miles every day, crawling through narrow tunnels under the City of David and hiking up the side of Masada. The trip was also mentally difficult: students absorbed thousands of years of history, faced the horrors of the Holocaust at Yad Vashem and the immensity of Mt. Herzl. But students also saw and experienced different forms of Judaism, allowing them to begin to figure out what they believe. On our first Shabbat morning, we discussed what Shabbat means to each of us and what we want it to look like. The overwhelming lesson we learned is that the teens yearn for both more downtime and for more time with their families, even if it is just for Shabbat dinner.

Overall, the students felt the trip was too short, and now many are planning their next trip back to Israel, whether through Birthright or a gap year. As a chaperone, it was an honor to be by the teens' side, supporting them as they explored history, had new experiences and thought about their futures as Jewish adults in the world. Thank you again to everyone who supported this trip and to everyone who supports our incredible Epstein School of Jewish Studies. We are truly blessed.

## Volinsky Fund Created at SCHS

by Ora Jezer

“Francy loved life and she loved people. Filled with warmth for everyone she knew and everyone she met, her smile lit up every room she entered,” recalls Steve Volinsky about his wife, Frances, whom friends and family called Francy. Francy was a dedicated prekindergarten teacher in the East Syracuse Minoa School District for over thirty years. After a four-year battle with ALS, she died in December of 2020.



“Little gave Francy more joy than helping students blossom into strong readers.,” notes Steve. “Francy knew better than most the importance of books. Reading opens up worlds to children and can shape their futures. This sort of formative experience is especially important for children, who are just starting their lives. Her students loved listening to her read stories to them, of places and times they could only touch through the magic of books. Her warm voice laid the roadmaps for the books she read, bringing characters off the page and into the room. As a lifelong lover of books herself, Francy was known for purchasing books for the children of family and friends on special occasions. Birthday gifts from her were almost invariably flat, square and thick.”

Jewish education was another subject about which Francy was passionate. Throughout their life together, Francy and Steve attended services regularly and invested in the community they loved and which loved them in return. Francy was a very active member of Temple Concord, serving as president of the Sisterhood. Her love of stories and Judaism combined beautifully, and Francy delighted in the study of Torah.

So it is “with great pride and no small amount of grief” that Steve established the Frances Volinsky Scholarship Fund at the Syracuse Community Hebrew School. The Volinskys were well aware that the life they had the privilege to provide their children was not one to which every child has access. In memory of “the kindest, most generous person” Steve had ever known, the scholarship fund will be used for those children whose families may be unable to afford the costs of a Jewish education, including providing Internet access at home or books and materials. “Francy believed that every child has the right to a Jewish education. A teacher herself, she knew that when there is a need, it is the responsibility of the community to come together as a family, a mishpachah,” said Steve.

Throughout their last years together, Steve kept Francy up to date about the Syracuse Community Hebrew School. The joy only a teacher has shone through

as Steve spoke of the truly inspirational programming at SCHS. Anyone who has ever worked in a school system knows the flaws and does their best to work around it. At the Syracuse Community Hebrew School, however, out of the box thinking is the norm, not the exception. Francy was thrilled to know that there is a place in our community where students from three synagogues can come together to learn Hebrew, explore *t’filah*, and be taught the values of the generations before them in a modern, innovative setting. Steve proudly serves as treasurer of the Syracuse Community Hebrew School.

## Community Hebrew School Better Together Program

by Emily Chelnitsky

The Syracuse Community Hebrew School was selected to participate in the Better Together program, a four-year program designed to encourage meaningful interaction between young and old. Grades 5-7, under the direction of Head of School Ora Jezer, are participating in the program with Menorah Park. Over the past couple of months, students have engaged in leadership lessons, workshops on active listening and simulations to increase awareness on how elders may experience the world. As students Rachel Pettiford and Cara Engel said, upon reflecting on their previous visits, “we got to bond with a different generation and learned how to see the world through other eyes.”



SCHS students recently participated in the national Better Together writing competition, reflecting on their experience with the Better Together program, both what they learned from their senior partners and what they learned about themselves and their involvement within the Jewish community.

The writing contest wraps up almost a year of intergenerational programming that saw students transition from shy conversationalists to involved friends. Essay themes expanded on learning about common interests, comparing and contrasting daily life and highlighting newly gained knowledge about Jewish culture. The impact of the program truly shone in the students’ work:

*“When I started being in the Better Together program, I did not think food meant anything to anyone, I thought that food was just food. Now, after talking to a lot of people, I can see that food is much more than just something to eat. Food is a part of a culture; food gives us wonderful memories and also marvelous times.”*

*“Our interests may have been different but there was so much the same. She liked to garden and I liked to game. I love the snow and she hates it. But the more we got to talking, I came to realize that we had much more in common than I had first thought.”*

*“Together we wondered what the word would look like 50 or 60 or 100 years from now.”*

*“Although we are probably 60 years apart in age, we come from similar backgrounds.”*

The writer of the best student essay will receive a scholarship to attend a Jewish summer camp while the organization of the winning national student will receive additional funding for their school.



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# Cool Off in the Pools at the JCC

by Sara Collins

The JCC has two outdoor heated pools. The small pool is shallow in depth and ideal for small children. The large pool has both a shallow and deep end, a diving area and can be set up for lap swimming. Children under 15 must be accompanied by an adult. In addition to the usual exciting activities, members may notice the big pool got an upgrade – as a new liner was installed before the start of the season. The pool will be open from May 27 to Sept 4. Members and their guests are welcome to take a dip, enjoy the sunshine and relax poolside.

“Each year families eagerly wait for the pool season to begin. It feels like the official start of the summer season. Children and families alike enjoy being at the pool together.” said Amy Bisnett, associate director of children’s programming.

The JCC has become known for having some of the best swimming lessons around and is highly sought after. This year, the JCC is excited to once again offer both private and semi-private swimming lessons. We will have even more staff this year than in past years that have completed an additional Red Cross Water Safety instructor course that instructs the lifeguards in the most effective way to teach swimming lessons. Instructions will be given according to the individual’s swimming ability from beginners to advanced. Lessons are open to both members and non-members of the JCC, although members receive priority and a discounted rate. Families may sign up for a pool membership to take advantage of the discount and use the pool all summer long. For information about our memberships and all the JCC has to offer please reach out to Nick Finlayson, membership director.

Back by popular demand, the JCC will be offering the J-Rays Swim Club for children in kindergarten through 6th grade who have a family membership. The team will practice Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings before the camp day begins. Children on the team will experience what a swim team has to offer and work on stroke



development, endurance and teamwork. The team will have an inner squad meet at the end of the season to demonstrate their growth and hard work.

Both swim lesson and J-Rays Swim Club registrations are available on the JCC website at [www.jccsy.org](http://www.jccsy.org). Completed forms can be emailed directly to the JCC aquatics director at [aquatics@jccsy.org](mailto:aquatics@jccsy.org) or dropped off/mailed to the JCC.

The JCC pool offers great seasonal job opportunities for college and high school students. Both certified and non-certified individuals are welcome to apply. Lifeguard training/certification can be provided by the JCC.

**To learn more about the JCC’s pool schedule and offerings, visit [jccsy.org/pool/](http://jccsy.org/pool/) or reach out to our Aquatics Department at [aquatics@jccsy.org](mailto:aquatics@jccsy.org).**

## » Book Review

# Impossible Takes Longer by David Gordis

Reviewed by Alan Goldberg

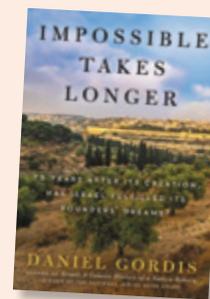
“Is Israel a success? Has it fulfilled its founders’ dreams?” These are the questions that Daniel Gordis asks and attempts to answer in his new book, *Impossible Takes Longer*. Gordis, who made aliyah to Israel in 1998 and is the Koret Distinguished Fellow at Israel’s Shalem College, takes a pragmatic approach to answering these questions. He links his analysis to whether Israel has met the goals its founders set forth in Israel’s Declaration of Independence. In so doing, Gordis’ book is both a historical look at the foundation and evolution of Israel’s values and a commentary on the state of Israel today touching on such fundamental questions as what it means to be at one and the same time a Jewish state, a democratic state and a strong national state.

Gordis sets the stage with a discussion of the background of the initial draft of Israel’s Declaration of Independence which, as he points out, is a unique blend of ideas drawn from the American Declaration of Independence, biblical sources and the accomplishment of the Yishuv

(a fuller discussion entitled *How Israel’s Declaration of Independence was Written* can be found in the Spring 2023 issue of *Jewish Review of Books*). The remainder of the book is organized thematically using relevant sections of the Declaration as the background for understanding the present.

At the outset, Gordis dispels any questions about his conclusion when he writes, “If Zionism was about creating a new Jew, reviving Jewish civilization, and healing the Jewish people, it has succeeded beyond anyone’s wildest dreams.” But beyond survival there is a long list of accomplishment in agriculture, technology, art and literature and it remains at peace with most of its neighbors. At the same time, he acknowledges that “most successes have underbellies, and Zionism is no exception.” The “underbellies” arise from Israel’s efforts to survive in the face of both external and internal threats that remain while remaining both a Jewish and democratic state.

Using the Declaration of Independence as a guide, Gordis explores a range of issues that will challenge Israel in the years ahead. Many of these revolve around the central question of how to balance the competing demands of surviving as a state that is at the same time both Jewish and democratic, both a democracy and a theocracy. Gordis’ answer is that



“Israel was never intended to be a liberal democracy” and a model for the world but rather an “ethnic democracy” that would ensure “the future of the Jewish people.” Thus, it is within the context of this understanding that he examines unresolved

problems such as the roles and rights of minority communities within Israel, Israel’s relationships with Palestinians and neighboring Arab states, as well as its relationship with Diaspora Jews, especially the American Jewish community. As optimistic as he is, he remains fearful that deep societal divisions about the Palestinians are such that “peace between Israelis and Palestinians is unlikely for as far as the eye can see.” He foresees another challenge in that “by 2048, 25 percent of Israeli Jews will be Haredim, and 21 percent of Israelis will be Arabs,” at which point “almost half the country will be, in principle, opposed to Zionism.

As he concludes, Gordis recognizes the challenges posed by the recent elections. However, he remains hopeful that there will be renewed conversations “about judicial independence, individual freedoms and the Jewishness of the state, civil rights and more.” A steadfast Zionist, he has faith that one election will not undermine Israel’s democracy.

While it’s helpful to have some historical background when reading *Impossible Takes Longer*, Gordis’ book remains an important read, especially within the current political climate, as he interweaves historical and contemporary perspectives and presents the complexity of Israel today with insight and clarity.

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# SHDS Casino Night

A Casino Night to benefit the Syracuse Hebrew Day School was held on Sunday, April 30. There were casino games and a silent auction, as well as cocktails and dinner by Laci's Tapas (under the supervision of the Syracuse Vaad Ha'ir). Almost 200 people came together in festive attire for a fun evening. The Syracuse Hebrew Day School also launched a new and exciting promotional video, which can be seen at [www.shds.org](http://www.shds.org).



## JEWISH NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

# JEWISH NEWS FROM ISRAEL

### From Israel's *Declaration of Independence*:

*"The state of Israel will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on precepts of liberty, justice and peace taught by the Hebrew prophets; will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens without distinction of race, creed or sex; will guarantee full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture; will safeguard the sanctity and inviolability of shrines and holy places of all religions; and will dedicate itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.*

*The state of Israel will be ready to cooperate with the organs and representatives of the United Nations in the implementation of the resolution of November 29, 1947, and will take steps to bring about an economic union over the whole of Palestine.*

*We appeal to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building of its state and admit Israel into the family of nations.*

*In the midst of wanton aggression we call upon the Arab inhabitants of the state of Israel to return to the ways of peace and play their part in the development of the state, with full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its bodies and institutions, provisional or permanent.*

*We offer peace and amity to all neighboring states and their peoples and invite them to co-operate with the independent Jewish nation for the common good of all. The state of Israel is ready to contribute its full share to the peaceful progress and reconstitution of the Middle East. Our call goes out to the Jewish people all over the world to rally to our side in the task of immigration and development, and to stand by us in the great struggle for the fulfillment of the dream of generations — the redemption of Israel.*

*With trust in Almighty God, we set our hands to this declaration at this session of the Provisional state Council in the city of Tel Aviv this Sabbath eve, the fifth day of Iyar, 5708, the fourteenth day of May, 1948."*





A community is defined by a shared sense of belonging. The Jewish Observer strives to help members of the Jewish community of Central New York feel connected to one another and to the larger Jewish community. We are deeply grateful to the many readers who have contributed to the 2023 Appeal in support of the paper. In an age when newspapers in general, and Jewish newspapers in particular, are struggling to find support, we are proud, humbled and thrilled that 360 (an auspicious number) of our subscribers have stepped up to demonstrate their belief that the JO is a vital link in our community's chain of connection. We thank you.

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## READER

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**JOSEPH I. PHILLIPS**  
April 5, 2023



Joseph I. Phillips passed away peacefully on April 5, on his 96th birthday. He was predeceased by his wife, Joslyn Phillips, and all of his siblings.

Joe was born in Utica, NY on April 5, 1927, the youngest of five siblings. His family moved to Fall River, MA during the Depression and then to the Syracuse area, where Joe spent most of his life. He was married in 1947 to Joslyn Bernstein. Joe served in the US Navy during WWII and was bugle master at the Pensacola Naval Air Station. Music was an important part of Joe's life as he was concertmaster in his high school orchestra playing the viola. He played the violin up until the last few months of life. He enjoyed attending the Metropolitan Opera in NYC where he and his sister Bertha had season tickets.

After rejoining civilian life in 1946, Joe was employed by O'Brien and Gere Consulting Engineers as a land surveyor, eventually becoming a partner. He earned his associate degree in civil engineering technology from Syracuse University in 1960. He then went on to form his own successful surveying company, Phillips and Associates, in Liverpool, NY. Following his retirement and the sale of the company at the age of 88, he continued on as a consultant until the age of 90.

Joe was an avid outdoorsman, enjoying hiking, camping, skiing, fishing and hunting. He often joined his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren on camping trips in the Adirondacks. He was also an active member of a hunting camp in Lowville, NY.

Joe moved to Borodino, NY in 2001 following the death of his wife Joslyn. He became active with the Borodino Fire Department, volunteering at their monthly pancake breakfasts. He also joined the American Legion Post 239 in Skaneateles. Those two organizations became an important part of his life where he made many friends. In his retirement, Joe took up several hobbies including building elaborate dollhouses, many of which he gave as gifts to family and friends.

Joe's family includes his children Barbara (Dennis Linsner) Davis, Susan Phillips and Steven (Christine Zamora) Phillips; his grandchildren Jeffrey (Heidi) Davis, Shana (Robert) Feissner, Rachael Davis, Evan Zamora Phillips and Sophie Zamora Phillips. He is also survived by his six great-grandsons: Alex, Tyler, Dylan and Zachary Davis, Collin and Logan Feissner, and one great-great granddaughter, Karen Mitchell.

Special thanks to his dear friends the Haines family, Sheri Spooner and members of American Legion Post as well as Michelle and Mark Swing and members of the Borodino Volunteer Fire Department. Special thanks also to his caregivers Sandra Minor and Darlene Minihkheim and to the staff at Westminster Manor for their care and support.

Donations in Joe's memory may be made to The American Legion Post 239 in Skaneateles, NY; The Borodino Fire Department, or The Commons on St. Anthony, 3 St. Anthony St., Auburn, NY 13021.



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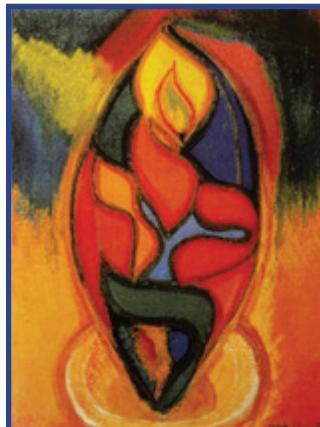
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