

» SHANA TOVA 5786!

# Jewish Observer

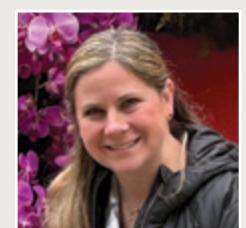
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A publication of the Jewish Federation of Central New York

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# September 2025

## From the Editor



Barbara Davis

For generations, being a well-educated Jew meant knowing the contents of Jewish texts and methods for interpreting them, being able to read and understand Hebrew for the sake of prayer and scholarship and having a sense of the Jewish past. Formal Jewish learning in schools and youth activities served to augment or reinforce Jewish observance and Jewish life in the home, community, and synagogue.

Over the course of the past century, however, particularly in the United States, it is increasingly less likely that most Jews adhere to the dictates of Jewish law, live observant Jewish lives, attend synagogue regularly, live in identifiably Jewish communities, or learn the traditional Jewish canon. Synagogue affiliation and membership have dropped precipitously, supplementary education is more than ever an elementary enterprise terminating at bar/bat mitzvah, and intermarriage rates have soared to well over 50%. Bifurcation of Jewish communities into Orthodox and non-Orthodox (United States) or Orthodox and secular (Israel) has grown, which has led to increased disparities between Jewishly educated/engaged and Jewishly uneducated/unengaged Jews.

In this month's Back to School issue, the *Jewish Observer* examines the state of Jewish education nationally and locally as we celebrate Rosh HaShanah 5786. Distinctive aspects of the 21st century exert a powerful influence on the contemporary American Jewish community. Technology, AI, social media, pluralism, globalism, openness to new ideas and new experiences, and the total mainstreaming of American Jews have all altered the fabric of Jewish life. "In the 21st century," writes Benjamin M. Jacobs, "Judaism, Jewish life, Jewish peoplehood, the Jewish state, Jewish identity—indeed, almost all facets of the Jewish experience—are in a postmodern, post-denominational, post-ethnic, post-Zionist, post-diaspora, or what we may simply call a 'post-everything' age. In the post-everything age, Jewish identity is fluid, contested, and complicated, while the outlook for Jewish continuity is unsettled at best. Longstanding conceptions of what it means to be Jewish, let alone a 'good Jew,' are being challenged by new emphases on individualism alongside a declining sense of collective identity."

Can Jewish education address, alter or reverse this situation in any meaningful way? How do we engage rising generations of young American Jews in the post-October 7th 21st century, especially after they become bar/bat or b/mitzvah? What can we do to ensure that Judaism is an important part of their lives, so that they participate in the Jewish community in the future? What Jewish educational frameworks and delivery systems will be effective in this as yet uncharted millennium?

The charge we give to Jewish educators is to provide the fundamental knowledge and the spiritual foundation that will allow all Jewish learners to say, "This is who I am and this is what my Jewish commitments are." This is a tall order. Our Central New York Jewish community is extremely fortunate to have Jewish educational leaders and teachers who take this charge very seriously. This issue of the *Jewish Observer* describes in both theoretical and practical terms the curricula, programs and practices that our local educators and synagogues are using to address the needs of diverse learning populations in our community.

Jewish families in Central New York are blessed to have a full spectrum of Jewish educational resources for their children, from

the ICC's Early Childhood Program to the Syracuse Hebrew Day School's immersive Jewish education, the Syracuse Community Hebrew School's distinctive supplementary curriculum and the Sunday Schools of Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas, Temple Adath Yeshurun and Temple Concord. The icing on the cake is the Rabbi Jacob Epstein School of Jewish Studies, a vibrant learning community which provides a launching pad for Jewish identity and leadership, keeping teens connected to their heritage and empowering them to make Jewish choices in their lives.

Very few Jewish communities have this wealth of Jewish communal educational opportunities. Jewish day schools are available in 40 U.S. states, but most are located in just cities with large Jewish populations and most are Hasidic and Haredi. The fact that the major funders of our community — the Federation, philanthropists and the Pomeranz, Shankman, Martin Trust — recognize and support Jewish education is a tribute to their understanding that, as the Talmud states (Shabbat 119a): "A village without a school should be abolished." Thankfully, that is not a fate ordained for our community.

Other articles in this issue of the *JO* celebrate new leadership and new arrivals we begin a new year. We are proud to introduce a new rabbi, a new synagogue president and the winner of this year's NCJW Hannah Solomon award. We also are delighted to share a review of a new book by a local author and news of a delightful day of Jewish music that will make the month of September memorable.

As we look forward to 5786 and the celebration of *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur*, a time of reflection, renewal, and hope, let us be grateful that a new year brings with it the opportunity to heal, to listen more deeply, and to act more compassionately. The world today is divided and in need of healing. Let us hope that the themes of the High Holidays — introspection, forgiveness, and community — can remind us that each new year the Book of Life is open for change and that we can commit ourselves in the new year to lives of purpose, kindness, and justice. To all our *JO* readers: May 5786 be a year of good health, peace, and blessings for you and those you love.



# Jewish Observer

of Central New York

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## MESSAGE FROM MARK SEGEL

### Federation President & CEO

# Bringing Us Together in 5786



**"Two Jews, three opinions" is a joke, but "Two Jews, two very opposite opinions" is a very real description of American Jewry at the present time. Throughout Jewish history, disagreements have been part and parcel of Jewish life. The Talmud itself is built upon centuries of spirited debate, reflecting the Jewish tradition of questioning, challenging, and wrestling with big ideas. Yet, despite these differences, the Jewish people have always found strength in coming together as a community.**

I recently attended a Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) fly-in in Washington, DC, about current security concerns, at which I was surprised

to learn how much division and tension characterize our Jewish people in today's world. Differences of opinion can lead to disagreement, but they also represent the richness of Jewish life. The challenge is not to eliminate disagreement, but to ensure that it does not fracture the Jewish community beyond repair.

As we begin a new year, 5786, I would like to declare as my guiding principle, Bringing Us Together. When the Jewish community gathers together around shared values — a commitment to Torah, to *tikkun olam*, to supporting Israel and to sustaining Jewish continuity — we build a foundation of solidarity and a sense of belonging which strengthens us against external threats and ensures that Jewish institutions — schools, synagogues, cultural organizations — remain strong and relevant.

In my report to the community at the Federation Annual Meeting, I set forth a five-point plan for my first year in my new position. All of these ideas fall under the rubric of Bringing Us Together.

**1. Youth Engagement and Leadership Development:** We intend to introduce new programs to inspire and empower the next generation of Jewish leaders. Through mentorship, service opportunities, and immersive experiences, we can help our youth and Jewish young adults find their voice and their place in our community.

**2. Community Resilience and Preparedness:** Building on our security efforts, we will continue to revise our comprehensive community resilience plan to ensure we are prepared for future challenges — be they natural disasters, public health crises, or acts of hate.

**3. Interfaith and Civic Engagement:** I am personally committed to strengthening our ties with other faith communities and civic organizations like the chambers, other foundations, and government agencies promoting understanding, cooperation, and shared values. In a world that is too often divided, we will be a force for unity and justice and greater Syracuse will know it!

**4. Fundraising and Financial Assistance:** We sadly must recognize that many of our local Jewish organizations are struggling financially. These challenges are the result of declining engagement from our members, increased costs of operations — including keeping kosher and inflation in general, as well as difficulties in fundraising as a whole.

**5. Support for Israel must remain as strong as ever.** We will continue to explore how we can best support the Jewish homeland. Emergency fundraising campaigns will be organized as the need calls for it. We'll explore how to take advantage of sister city relationships. We are currently having conversations around bringing high tech Israeli companies to Central New York to set up US operations. When's it's possible and safe to do so, Federation will continue to support and lead missions that will connect our local Jewish community with Israel. We also intend to continue providing Israel Updates via email providing the community with the most timely and accurate information available so you can confidently defend our Israeli friends when having challenging conversations on the subject. Knowledge is power!

Ultimately, the strength of our Jewish community lies in its ability to hold paradox: to embrace unity and diversity, to argue fiercely and to love fiercely, and to build a future

together even when the path is rocky. When I came to Syracuse from Tampa, I knew that I would find a very different Jewish community here. Greater Tampa has about 25-30,000 Jews, two JCCs, a day school, three preschools, one kosher market, senior services and a Holocaust Museum in St. Petersburg. And no snow. Clearly Syracuse is different. But I love Syracuse and I love our Central New York Jewish community. I have yet to see much snow, but I intend to love it too.

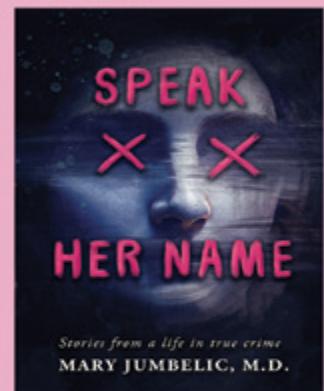
In the roughly five months since my arrival, I have seen a community with tremendous potential for growth. I see a need to rejuvenate older ways of doing things. I feel a new energy coming from our young people. I sense a desire for

change, innovation, recommitment and coming together to make things happen. As we begin the new year, as we initiate a strategic planning process, as we continue the programs that people love, and improve the things we could do better, I am filled with optimism. Our task is not easy, but the vibrant Jewish community of Central New York is deeply engaged with its identity, values, and destiny and by coming together — perhaps ultimately physically in one location — we can assure that, both here and across the globe, *Am Yisrael Chai*.

I wish all the members of our Central New York Jewish family a good and sweet new year.

## BOOK READING AND SIGNING of SPEAK HER NAME

By Author  
Mary Jumbelic



Seen through her lens as a woman and forensic pathologist, Mary's new book, *Speak Her Name*, shares the stories of women lost to the world by violent crimes—uncovered with forensics.

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## Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur Are not Jewish Holidays

by Rabbi Daniel Jezer, Rabbi Emeritus,  
Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas



Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur are not Jewish holidays. This may strike you as a very odd statement as we all know that these holidays stand in central importance to our Jewish year. Many consider Yom Kippur to be the most important and holy day of the year (according to others, its importance is superseded by Shabbat.) Our synagogues expand their seating to accommodate the many who come only on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. And yet, I maintain that these two most significant holidays are not Jewish holidays, while being of the extreme importance to our Jewish life.

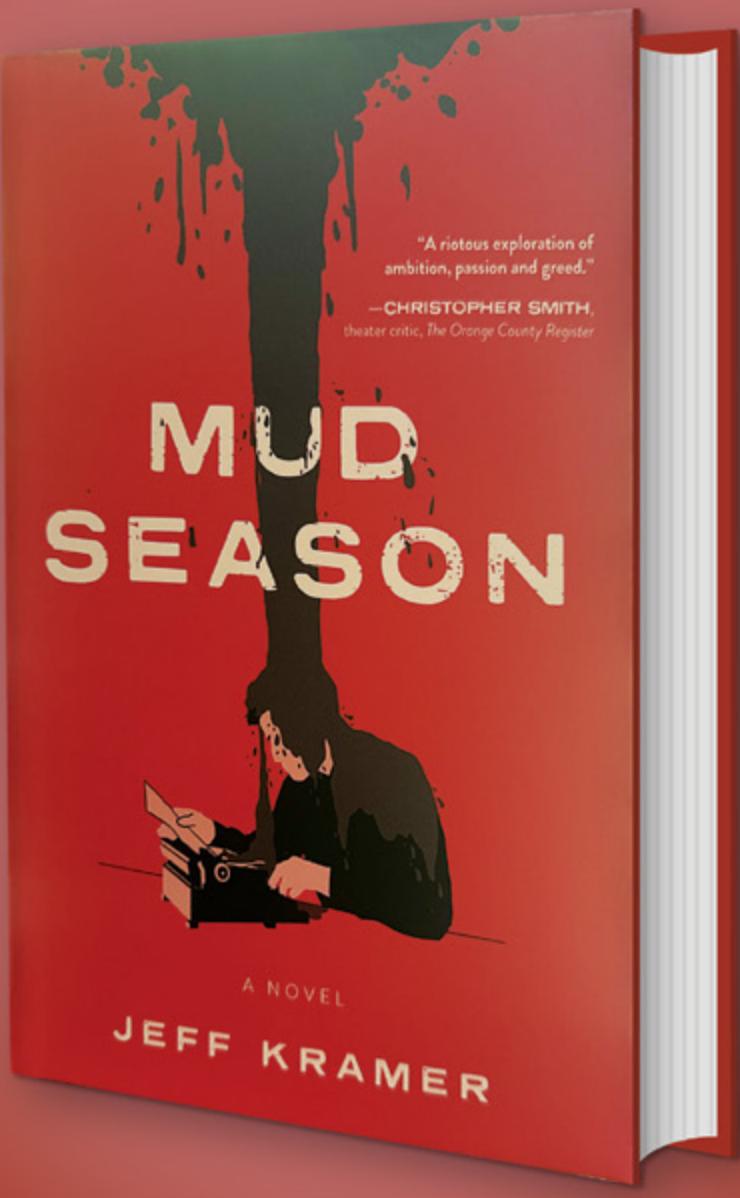
An aphorism often used to describe Jewish holidays is “they tried to kill us, we won, let’s eat.” There is truth in that. Each of the three biblically prescribed festivals has this component as well as an agricultural component. Passover is the story of the exodus, and the barley festival; Shavuot the story of the revelation at Mt. Sinai while in the desert escaping from Egypt; and the wheat festival, Sukkot, the forty years in the wilderness and the harvest festival. Hannukah and Purim are feasts recounting the victories of those who attempted to kill us.

As Judaism is more than a religion with certain doctrines, these holidays tap into the broadness of Judaism as an entire civilization, or as others term it, “a people.”

Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur do not tap into any history, nor do they have the cloak of peoplehood. In that lies their significance. They stand alone in all of their Jewish nakedness, without the cover of history and peoplehood. They command us to confront ourselves without our Jewish trappings and demand from each of us an accounting. “You have lived a Jewish life this year, you have celebrated Jewish holidays, Shabbat, read Jewish books, participated in Jewish communal events, attended services, given money to protect and further Jewish life and communities. You have done all of this. So what??!! How has this Jewish life affected your soul? Are you more genuine, as a result? Do you have a greater sensitivity to this world that God created? Can you find the strength and courage to work on deficiencies? Can you strengthen your strengths?”

This process of deep introspection begins on Rosh HaShanah and culminates with the momentous day Yom Kippur. I do not know of any religion that has a day comparable to Yom Kippur. We have the luxury to spend the entire day on ourselves. Distractions are not present. It is just us responding to God’s command to take stock of ourselves.

The day is framed with an optimism that we can successfully complete our task. The very first line after *Kol Nidre* is the quote from the Torah when God says to Moses, after he pleads for his people, “I have forgiven as you requested.” If we take these days seriously and do our work, we will conclude the day with a sense of joy and optimism, in that our Jewish life has done well for us.



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# Speak Her Name

## by Mary Jumbelic, M.D.

Reviewed by Rabbi Vicki Lieberman

In the 1970s popular show "Quincy, M.E." we are treated to an idealized, sterilized and fictionalized account of the work and responsibilities of a coroner solving murders through forensic pathology and investigation. Mary Jumbelic, M.D. (Dr. J) is the real deal.

In her latest book, *Speak Her Name*, Dr. J educates us to the alarming rate of crimes against women — most of whom knew their attacker as it was likely to be a male from her inner circle. The decedents on Dr. J's autopsy table, the nameless, the children, the teens, the middle aged and the elderly all have one thing in common: An empathetic practitioner who tenderly touches them and receives their telepathic message: *See me. Hear me.* Dr. J. notes: *The violence...can be seen on their bodies.* They are a mystery she is determined to solve and to bring them a modicum of justice.

*Speak Her Name* takes us through many of Dr. J's uphill battles; from those thinking she could not get into medical school, to the legal field wanting to curtail her testimony. Dr. J. breaks down barriers and forges ahead to achieve the career she wants, and society is all the better for it. She writes with an intelligence and wit, in language not burdened with medical jargon but pertinent to understanding the complexities that she encounters at each death. The questions she brings to each case are fascinating and while we don't always know if all her questions are answered — we are enriched by her sharing her thought process. Through various cases, she clearly gives us insights into her methodology.

With charm and humor, she unabashedly shares with us the balance and juxtaposition of creating a cozy home life with her family while spending her days (and beyond) witnessing the depravity of violence. She regales us with her first encounter with Leslie London Neulander, z"l. It may come as no surprise to Central New Yorkers that this book includes information about the State vs. Robert Neulander. Many of us remember where we were when we heard of Leslie Neulander's premature and tragic death on September 17, 2012. For Dr. J., this case was personal. She was integral in the re-examining of the forensic evidence. The chapters devoted to this subject are a fascinating study of where the legal system, science and friendship intersect. And if this book was just about that — I would have been satisfied.

It is a tribute to Dr. J's sense of justice to know that she could have written a book about just one murder of just one woman by just one husband. But she did not. Because it's never about just one murder of just one woman by just one husband. It's about so much more. And that is the gift of this book — to understand each story, each case, on its own but also in the overwhelming history of such violence that should never exist.

*Speak Her Name*, for me, harkens back to the Book of Judges 11:34 where Jephthah returns from a victorious battle and is greeted by his daughter and rends his clothes (a sign of mourning), for he had vowed to God that whatever greets him upon his return he will sacrifice. Jephthah did to her as he vowed. Whereas God sent an angel to intervene and stop Abraham from sacrificing his son Isaac (we have the son's name), there is no angel coming to stave off Jephthah's hand. His daughter is never named; she is never heard from again. In the ensuing thousands of years between the time of Judges, Leslie London Neulander's murder and today, tens of thousands of women have been murdered — mostly by men who professed eternal love to them.

Following her lecture about murder and sexual abuse at the FBI Agency at Quantico to future FBI agents, Dr. J's colleague complemented her lecture, and she nodded thinking, *I wished it wasn't necessary.* Dr. J., we all do. But until then, we are indebted to the stalwart professionals who ardently work to Speak Her Name, giving voice to the silenced, bringing answers to families and bringing perpetrators to trial.



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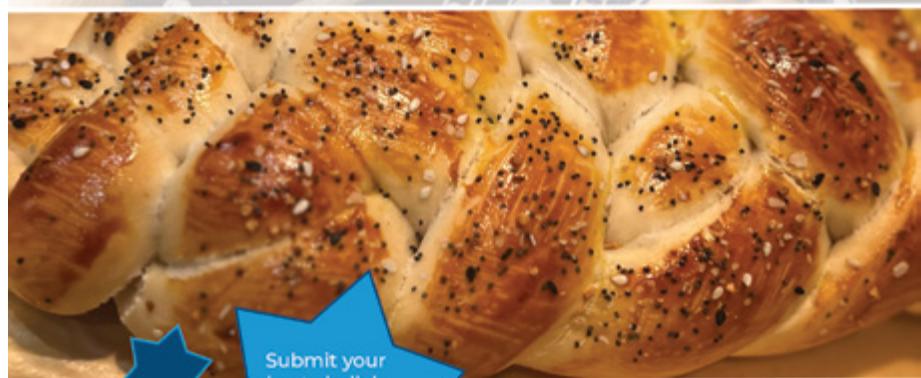
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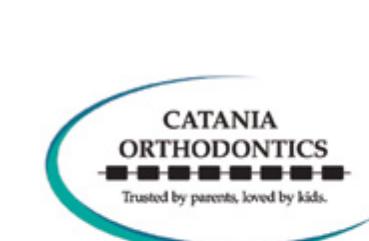
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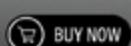
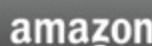


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## COMMUNITY

# 18 Jewish Things a Young Jew Should Know, Care About, and Be Able to Do By Age 18

The chart below is the result of a Jewish educational initiative known as the 18×18 Framework, developed by Benjamin M. Jacobs (George Washington University) and Barry Chazan (Spertus Institute) and published under the auspices of the Jewish Paideia Project. The project attempted to answer the following key existential questions: “How do we foster Jewish life in an open society, and how can education serve this purpose? What initiates Jewish youth on a Jewish educational journey nowadays, and what can keep them on that journey? How can we prepare Jewish children for effective citizenship and participation in an ever-changing American Jewish community and civilization? Jewish education for whom, by whom, where, when, with what, how, and, above all, for what?”

All those who care about the Jewish future should find this framework of interest. According to its authors, the framework “does not purport to determine who the ideal Jew is, nor does adherence to the 18 dimensions guarantee a certain set of educational outcomes. Rather, its purpose is to provide an exemplary platform for planning and supporting effective efforts in Jewish education rooted in the translation of clear visioning into strategic implementation. It also makes a statement about the kinds of qualities we imagine can undergird active and effective participation in a thriving, vibrant American Jewish community in the future.”

1. Feel a part of a chain of Jewish tradition, as both recipients and co-creators
2. Feel connected to Jews around the world
3. Have Jewish friends
4. Engage with Jewish role models and personalities
5. Participate in the *kehilla* (Jewish community)
6. Regard Judaism as a relevant source of wisdom for their questions about life and its meaning
7. Appreciate *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) as a core Jewish value and perform acts of *gemilut chasadim* (giving of loving-kindness)
8. Care about and connect with Israel
9. Read and interpret sacred and historical texts and be able to discern Jewish core narratives (stories, sagas, events) and values within them
10. Recognize the role wrestling with God has played in Jewish life
11. Open themselves up to divinity through theology, prayer, study, or other spiritual practices
12. Understand the mutual influence of Jewish and broader culture on each other and on contemporary Jews
13. Be able to identify critical issues facing American Jewry and be motivated to act on them
14. Understand the meanings and performance of Jewish mitzvot
15. Participate in various Jewish rituals, customs, holidays, and lifecycle events, and appreciate their history and meaning
16. Comprehend and utilize Hebrew words and other Jewish terminology
17. Partake in Jewish culinary traditions
18. Experience Jewish arts and culture

# Teaching Teachers About the Holocaust

Teaching teachers about the Holocaust is essential to ensuring that this dark chapter in human history is accurately preserved and responsibly conveyed to future generations. As survivors age and misinformation spreads, the responsibility to uphold historical truth increasingly rests with educators. Properly equipping teachers with the knowledge and sensitivity required to navigate the complexities of Holocaust history is critically important in a time of rising antisemitism. Without this knowledge and understanding, teachers may inadvertently oversimplify, distort, or present the subject in ways that do not honor the victims or convey the gravity of the events.

To address this issue, the Jewish Federation, through a grant from the Philip L. Holstein Community Program Fund, partnered with Onondaga-Madison-Cortland BOCES and 3GNY to present a weeklong seminar for teachers entitled "Purposeful Pedagogy: A Toolkit For Teaching The Holocaust in Grades 7-12." The course was taught by 3GNY Upstate Regional Coordinator Eileen Angelini. This seminar provided a pedagogical foundation on the Holocaust from which teachers could implement the New York State Holocaust Mandate into their teaching. The text for the course, *Becoming a Holocaust Educator: Purposeful Pedagogy through Inquiry*, featured stories from middle school, high school, and university classrooms that addressed the reasons that teachers engage students in deep, emotional, and challenging inquiry, the struggles they encounter when broaching difficult content from the past and present, and what can happen when students have opportunities to raise their voices about issues of inequality, persecution, and remembrance. As part of their studies, the members of the seminar travelled to Ft. Ontario in Oswego to visit the Safe Haven Holocaust Museum, at the site of the first and only refugee center established in the United States during World War II to shelter refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe.

The teachers who participated in the seminar, from a variety of school districts, were universally enthusiastic about the experience. Jess Dapson, global history teacher at Charles W. Baker High School in the Baldwinsville Central School District said, "I believe that this is an extremely valuable/worthwhile experience/program to continue. We teachers know a great, many things and



I think we all were surprised at how much more we learned thanks to Eileen and this program." Carrie-Ann Ronalds, a social studies teacher at Chittenango High School, noted, "I think this type of offering is so worthwhile. The resources we learned about and worked with were ones that I have largely been unaware of, even after having taught for close to two decades. The conversations that we had were deep and thoughtful and really made me think about how we incorporate Holocaust education in our schools."

Syracuse City School District teacher Susan Duncan elaborated, "I am so thankful to have been a part of this group. I have actually been to *Yad Vashem*, which was very difficult to deal with emotionally, so I thought Safe Haven would be easier. It could have been, until I encountered one of the exhibits which talked about Nazi nationalism combined with economic insecurity giving rise to antisemitism. From that moment I could only consider the same thing happening here and the disturbing and horrific antisemitism that is currently rising to upsetting levels right here in mainstream

America. The trend is highly disturbing and we can't keep quiet about it. That's exactly why seminars and classes like this one are key to bringing light to an unbearably dark and disturbing trend. The truth must be taught without exception."

Former Deputy County Executive Ed Kochian, who serves as Special Advisor at Onondaga County, reported, "I was enlightened and encouraged by participating in the program. I was enlightened by the seminar content, the relevant information shared and knowledge gained despite having read many volumes about WW II and the Holocaust. I was encouraged by the attentiveness and enthusiasm for the subject matter by the teachers present. They made me hopeful. The word history is derived from the Greek word *Istoria*, which means, knowledge gained through inquiry. The Purposeful Pedagogy seminar was a dramatic offering of that definition. Finally, Dr. Angelini is a treasure. Thank you for such a valuable program that is more relevant than ever in 2025."

Venessa Atkinson, a social studies teacher in the Homer Central School

District, said, "I plan on keeping in touch with Eileen and attending any professional development she offers, because this was beyond valuable and exceptionally well-planned and thoughtful. Filled with actual resources I can use. I am hoping to have Eileen help me develop a Holocaust elective study to present to our Board of Education in Homer, with the goal of running it next school year. Thank you for this opportunity to grow and learn as an educator. I look forward to future opportunities to expand my learning and community of practice for Homer Central Schools and myself."

Federation President & CEO Mark Segel noted, "Federation is very proud of our ability to partner with Onondaga-Madison-Cortland BOCES to make this extremely valuable program available to the teachers in their school districts. Holocaust education is a vital tool in the global effort to combat antisemitism, hatred, and bigotry. Holocaust education humanizes history. It tells the stories of individuals—men, women, and children—whose lives were destroyed simply because of their identity. This helps people see the real consequences of antisemitism and racist ideology. Holocaust education reinforces the importance of democratic values, critical thinking, and civic responsibility. It encourages learners to question propaganda, resist peer pressure, and speak out against injustice in all forms. In a time of rising intolerance, when misinformation spreads rapidly online and extremist ideologies reemerge in public discourse, Holocaust education remains not just relevant, but essential. When we offer professional development about teaching the Holocaust to dedicated teachers, we are helping them to in their crucial role of shaping how future generations understand history, morality, and the consequences of hatred."

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# Why the Syracuse Hebrew Jewish Day School?

by Melissa Klemperer, SHDS Head of School



As we begin a new school year and welcome 5786, the American Jewish community finds itself at an important crossroads. While many young Jews continue to engage meaningfully with their heritage, national trends show that a growing number of young adults are exploring Jewish identity in more individualized ways. According to the Pew Research Center (2021), about 40 percent of American Jews aged 18 to 29 identify as "Jews of no religion," compared with just 16 percent of those aged 65 and older. Many younger Jews describe themselves as secular or unaffiliated, while others seek new forms of Jewish expression that differ from traditional models. Some express discomfort with organized religion or aspects of Israeli policy.

Prizmah: Center for Jewish Day School's 2025 report, Jewish Day School Alumni on Campus, found that only 16 percent of young Jews without a day school background felt a strong connection to Israel, and fewer than one in five reported feeling very close to the Jewish community. These trends, while often rooted in sincere and thoughtful personal exploration, highlight important challenges and opportunities for ensuring the continuity of Jewish life, culture, and identity.

One of the most impactful ways to foster a strong, resilient Jewish identity is through Jewish day school education. Day schools do more than teach about holidays or history; they create immersive environments where Jewish life is woven into the daily experience. According to Prizmah's Jewish Day School Alumni on Campus study, 81 percent of Jewish day school alumni describe their Jewish identity as "very important," and 61 percent feel a strong connection to Israel. Among peers who did not attend day school, those numbers drop to 35 percent and 16 percent, respectively. Day school alumni are also more likely to be active in Jewish campus life and to maintain strong connections to Jewish community well into adulthood.

At the Syracuse Hebrew Day School (SHDS), now celebrating its 65th anniversary, students experience a dynamic dual curriculum that integrates rigorous secular academics with rich Jewish learning. From mastering Hebrew and studying sacred texts, to engaging deeply with history, science, and literature, SHDS students are encouraged to think critically, ask meaningful questions, and find personal relevance in their learning. This integrated approach nurtures a deep sense of Jewish identity and pride, while empowering students to navigate a complex and ever-changing world with perspective, compassion, integrity, and confidence.

SHDS is more than a school; it is a vibrant and joyful community where Jewish life is central — and celebrated. Students build lifelong friendships, form strong communal ties, and discover their place within the broader Jewish story. For some, SHDS is the spark that ignites a lifelong journey of Jewish involvement. For others, it strengthens an already meaningful connection. For all, it is a place where Jewish identity is nurtured and Jewish values are instilled into every aspect of daily life.

In a time when Jewish identity is evolving and external threats to the Jewish community persist, SHDS is a safe and powerful anchor. Our graduates carry with them not only critical knowledge and skills, but also a deep sense of belonging and purpose that helps ensure a vibrant Jewish future.

Since its founding in 1960, the Syracuse Hebrew Day School has graduated hundreds of students and touched the lives of countless more. Our alumni include doctors, educators, social workers, business leaders, clergy, engineers, artists, and community builders. Nearly 100 SHDS alumni currently live and work in Central New York, contributing meaningfully to every facet of our local community.

SHDS is committed to sustaining a strong Jewish future by offering daily, immersive Jewish education in the heart of Central New York. We nurture meaningful connections to tradition, Hebrew language, and Jewish values, while preparing our students to become proud, thoughtful, and active members of both the Jewish and wider world. No matter where life takes them, our graduates carry the legacy of SHDS—and the tools to help Judaism thrive for generations to come.

# 5786: Why Jewish Day Schools Matter More Than Ever



The recent passage of the Educational Choice for Children Act could expand access to Jewish day schools and open new doors for philanthropic investment. The bill introduces a federal incentive for donors to support school access for families earning up to three times their community's median income, beginning in 2027. It may now be possible for more families to enroll their children in the immersive environment of a Jewish day school.

While some people, including Jews, fear that this change will drain resources from the public school system, which has long served the Jewish community well, others believe that, in today's world, Jewish identity cannot be left to chance. A Jewish day school provides an immersive environment in which Jewish history, tradition, language, and practice are not electives; they are woven into the fabric of daily life.

Day school supporters make the following supportive arguments: In too many public schools today, Jewish kids are not okay. They're asked to explain Israel. They're told to hide their Star of David. They're confronted with ignorance, bias, and sometimes outright hate. Teachers often don't know how—or don't care—to address antisemitism in the classroom. Worse, the system may silence or sideline Jewish voices for fear of "offending others."

For many Jewish families, especially those deeply committed to Israel and alarmed by the growing normalization of antisemitism, this climate has prompted a pressing question: How do we prepare our children to navigate this world—safely, confidently, and proudly as Jews? More and more, the answer leads them to the doors of Jewish day schools. Day schools offer a rare and vital alternative: a space where Jewish identity isn't something to defend, but something to celebrate.

"I want my kids to walk into school knowing who they are—and never having to apologize for it," said one local parent. "Here, they can learn without fear. They're not the only Jewish kids in the room. They're part of something bigger."

Jewish day schools offer more than just protection. They offer empowerment. At a time when public schools often struggle to handle topics like Israel and Jewish identity with nuance or accuracy, Jewish day schools provide students with historical knowledge, moral clarity, and cultural fluency. Students learn not just how to spot antisemitism—they learn how to respond.

Day schools immerse students in Jewish texts, traditions, and values from an early age. Hebrew isn't just a second language—it's a bridge to history and homeland. Jewish holidays aren't footnotes—they're the calendar. The result is an education rooted in pride. "Kids who graduate from day schools tend to have a much deeper connection to Israel, to Jewish peoplehood, and to the responsibilities that come with that," said a former head of school from Central New York. "They're not just prepared for college. They're prepared to lead."

In times of global or local tension—whether it's conflict in the Middle East or acts of hate closer to home—the school community becomes a critical support network. Families can talk openly. Teachers can answer hard questions. And students don't feel isolated. In fact, for many families, the community aspect is just as vital as the academics. "We were looking for education," said another parent. "But what we found was a village."

In a moment when Jewish identity is under fire, Jewish day schools offer a path forward: not by retreating, but by strengthening. Not by blending in, but by standing tall.

# 5786: Supplementary Jewish Education at a Crossroads

Balancing the weight of tradition with the need for innovation, supplementary Jewish education is in a period of reassessment and reinvention. Families are asking for less emphasis on rote Hebrew decoding and more on meaningful Jewish life skills. They want programs that emphasize community, belonging, identity, values and ethics. Schools such as the Syracuse Jewish Community Hebrew School have adapted to the way Jewish families live today and emphasize Jewish community, meaningful prayer and why Judaism matters.

An overview of the field of supplementary Jewish education, the model for past decades, reveals that many synagogue-based Hebrew schools are experiencing shrinking enrollment, as a result of declining synagogue affiliation and changing family priorities. Some families are opting out of Jewish education altogether, questioning its value and place in their busy lives. The traditional model of 2–3 days per week of after-school classes plus Sunday School is increasingly seen as overly burdensome. Afternoon Hebrew School competes with sports, tutoring, and screen fatigue. The ability to recruit and retain qualified and skilled Jewish educators is a critical challenge.

The bright spot in this picture are new pedagogical models that better meet the needs of today's families, including project-based learning, experiential education and online and hybrid learning. The Syracuse Community Hebrew School is in the forefront of this trend. Its instruction is flexible and personalized, with a growing emphasis on serving interfaith, LGBTQ+, racially diverse, and neurodiverse families. Its curriculum has expanded to reflect Sephardi, Mizrahi, and global Jewish traditions and to include significant intergenerational activities.

Speaking at the SCHS 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration last spring, Ora Jezer, the school's founding head, explained that "the core of our mission is to nurture confident, curious, and connected young Jews—grounded in Jewish values, inspired by Jewish learning, and proud to take their place within the Jewish people." She described the school's unique emphasis: "Each week at SCHS begins with *kavanah*—intentionality. Our students gather for T'filah, guided by the compassionate and dedicated clergy of Temple Adath, Temple Concord, and CBS-CS. Our multi-talented clergy help shape our curriculum and nurture our students' deep connection to Judaism.

students deep connection to Judaism. Together, we help our students understand that *tefillah* is not just ritual; it is connection. *T'filah* becomes a shared language of tradition that links generations, communities, and Jews.



around the world.” Going further, Jezer noted that “One of the most powerful aspects of SCHS is that learning doesn’t end when class does. It continues through relationships, storytelling,

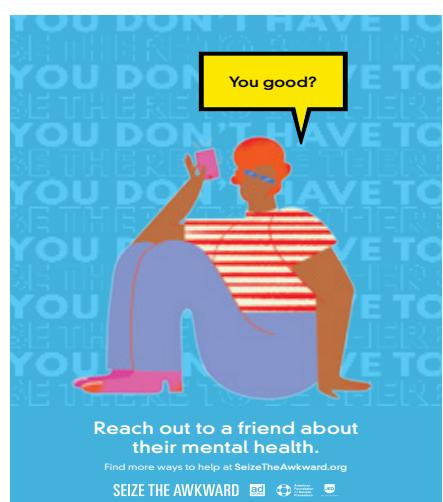
and real-life experiences that bridge generations and continents.”

Connecting to the larger community is a core value of the Community Hebrew School. "At SCHS we live by the teaching



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# Syracuse Community Hebrew School Launches Year of Engaging, Inclusive Jewish Learning

Fresh off its tenth anniversary, Syracuse Community Hebrew School (SCHS) is preparing for an engaging and packed new academic year filled with immersive Jewish learning, cherished traditions, and strong community ties. Serving students in grades 3 through 7, SCHS welcomes families from across Central New York to a nurturing environment where Jewish values come alive through study and experience.

At the heart of SCHS's mission is a commitment to middot, Jewish ethical values that shape character, guide behavior, and strengthen community. These values are integrated throughout the curriculum and culture, fostering meaningful intergenerational connections and nurturing Jewish identity and pride.

"Our goal is for every student to develop a deep and lasting connection to Judaism and their community," says Ora Jezer, the head of school. "Through meaningful learning, guided reflection, and active participation in Jewish life, students are empowered to embrace their heritage with confidence, pride, and joy."

At SCHS, third and fourth grade students begin their journey with a strong foundation in Hebrew reading through a personalized tutoring program. Students work in small *chevrutah* groups, pairs or trios, with trained



teen mentors who guide them through individualized Hebrew lessons. This one-on-one attention fosters confidence and connection, helping students develop essential Hebrew skills at their own pace.

SCHS provides a grade-specific curriculum that nurtures Jewish identity. Third and fourth graders focus on Hebrew decoding and Shabbat traditions, participating in bi-monthly community Shabbat dinners. Fourth grader Ariel said, "I love the Shabbat dinners most. We sing Shabbat songs, share stories about our families, and even debate who makes the best matzah balls. And by the way, our family's matzah balls are definitely the best!" Her mother adds, "We are deeply grateful to Syracuse Community Hebrew School for creating such a dynamic and engaging environment. SCHS

welcomes families exactly where they are and nurtures each child's unique Jewish journey with warmth and respect."

Fifth graders join bi-monthly programs with guest speakers exploring Jewish diversity. Sixth graders deepen their connection to Jewish prayer, tradition, and Israel through the Tefillah, Tradition & Israel curriculum. Seventh graders engage with contemporary challenges and Jewish values through Torah Aura's What If program, while honing Hebrew skills and leading prayer services.

Each week begins with Tefillah, a prayer experience tailored to students' ages and led by dedicated clergy from Temple

Adath Yeshurun, Temple Concord, and Congregation Beth Shalom-Chevra Shas. These sessions introduce students to Jewish prayer in a welcoming environment that fosters spiritual growth and community connection. After Tefillah, students continue Hebrew learning in small groups with teen mentors, encouraging steady progress and friendships.

Outside the classroom, fifth through seventh graders participate in the Better Together Program, which strengthens intergenerational learning and reflection. This program includes a national essay contest offering up to \$5,000 in scholarships for Jewish summer camps or Israel travel.

While sixth and seventh graders visit Menorah Park monthly, they alternate weekly between The Oaks and The Inn, building meaningful relationships through storytelling and creative activities. In partnership with Syracuse Jewish Family Service, SCHS offers experiential festival programs that bring the Jewish calendar to life through art, music, and culture. Community members are warmly invited to join these monthly programs and share in the richness of Jewish learning and celebration. Throughout the year, Syracuse Hebrew Day School students join select SCHS programs, fostering collaboration among local Jewish institutions and expanding learning opportunities for all.

Enrollment for 2026 is now open. Families with children entering grades 3 through 7 are invited to discover how SCHS fosters a love of Judaism through thoughtful learning, real-world engagement, and meaningful community life. **For more information or to schedule a visit, contact [schs.syracuse@gmail.com](mailto:schs.syracuse@gmail.com).**



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# Teen Education and the Epstein School of Jewish Studies

**Remarks by Roth Award winner, Aaron Spitzer, at the Federation Annual Meeting**

Jewish continuity is built not only on memory, but on action, especially in moments of crisis. The search for meaning—our “why”—isn’t theoretical. Jewish texts focus on “how” we live—but it’s our “why” that gives our actions weight, connecting them to a story larger than ourselves—one that stretches across generations.

Jewish life is, at its core, a family project—not just by blood, but by choice and commitment. We do this work together, as one people. *Kol Yisrael areivim zeh ba-zeh—all Jews are responsible for one another*. The work of *l'dor v'dor*, passing Jewish life from one generation to the next, requires more than good intentions. It demands action.

It requires *chinuch*—the kind of education that shapes identity—at the **Syracuse Hebrew Day School**, the **Syracuse Community Hebrew School**, and in our **congregational schools**.

It embodies a living *knesset*—the institutions that make our community such a *haimische* one: **Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas, Sha'arei Torah Orthodox Congregation, Temple Adath Yeshurun, and Temple Concord**; the daily care of **Menorah Park** and the vibrant programs and friendships nurtured at the **JCC**.

And—crucially—it depends on the steady connective tissue of the **Jewish Federation**, linking and sustaining every one of these agencies so none of us has to do this sacred work alone.

And nothing carries that mission forward quite like the Epstein School. The day school and community Hebrew school lay the foundation, bringing students from across our community together. Epstein picks up the thread as they enter their teen years, breaking down silos and reconnecting them across congregations and backgrounds.

On any Tuesday night, you’ll find Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox teens swapping Shabbaton stories, debating Israeli snacks, and shaping a shared space to question and grow. They may begin that journey as kids, but at Epstein, they’re old enough to make it their own—at a stage when peers shape so much of who they’re becoming.

For teens who are often the only Jews in their schools, having a space where being Jewish is a source of pride is essential. If we want them to carry Jewish life forward, we have to give

them a place where it feels like it’s theirs.

The Gen Z Now study—the largest study of American Jewish teens ever undertaken—backs this up: teens who feel genuinely engaged in these years are more than twice as likely to stay active in Jewish life as adults—leading, giving, and raising Jewish families of their own.

One of the most powerful ways we help teens make that connection is through the **Teen Taste of Israel program**. It’s more than a trip; it’s a yearlong journey that includes learning, service, and a transformative Israel experience. It meets teens where they are—in that messy, questioning, becoming stage of life—and gives them real encounters with Jewish

peoplehood, with complexity, with Israel, and with themselves. They don’t come home with easy answers, but with better questions and a clearer sense of where they stand.

**The teen years matter because so much is at stake—identity is being formed, tested, and reshaped in real time.** And this generation of Jewish teens is coming of age in a world that asks a lot of them. They are juggling rising antisemitism, social media storms, and—right now—wars in Gaza and Iran streaming in HD to every phone. Soon, many will step onto college campuses where Jewish identity is scrutinized—and where support can feel painfully hard to find.

And still, after all that, they show up. Tuesday after Tuesday. We owe it to them to offer experiences that are honest, grounded, and meaningful—experiences that help them build a Jewish identity strong enough to face criticism, grounded enough to wrestle with complexity, and

deep enough to sustain connection.

One student reflected on Israel this way: “I didn’t expect to feel anything. But by the end, I felt like I belonged to something—and like it belonged to me.” That’s the moment we’re trying to create. Not a checkbox or a passport stamp, but an opening. A turning point. A deeper sense of connection that sticks.

But that moment only lasts if there’s something here to come home to—a community that listens, that welcomes, that encourages teens to keep pushing beyond their comfort zones. *L'dor v'dor* isn’t a hand-off; it’s an invitation. It’s us saying: We’ve made space for you—now take your place in the story.

**Together, let’s build the next chapter—stronger, louder, prouder. AM YISRAEL CHAI.**

## Torah, Tzedakah, and Teen Leadership: Epstein's 2025/6 School Year Begins

*by Aaron Spitzer*

This month, the Rabbi Jacob H. Epstein School of Jewish Studies launches another exciting year for students in grades 7–12. Classes will be held at 450 Kimber Road, as the school resumes its biannual rotation among local congregations for the first time in seven years.

Rooted in Jewish texts, tradition, and community, Epstein brings together teens from across Central New York to study, question, and grow as Jewish leaders. Core classes are taught by Rabbis Emanuel, Saks, Shore, and Steinitz. Electives are led by outstanding educators including Ora Jezer, Maura Koenig, Diana Koester, Nate Schloss, and others.

This year, Epstein welcomes a new Syracuse University Project Advance Hebrew 101 instructor, Dr. Ohad Shem Toy, a native Hebrew speaker with a Ph.D. from Binghamton University. Students in grades 10–12 can earn four Syracuse University credits through this college-level course, which meets during both Tuesday hours as well as most Thursday evenings.

Beyond SUPA, Epstein is expanding opportunities: new Epstein *Shabbatot* at each of the four local congregations, a *Shalshelet madrichim* skills course taught by Ora Jezer, and a New York City trip in November for 9th–12th graders. New Hillel campus visits and community volunteer opportunities are also planned.

The Epstein curriculum is also growing. 7th/8th graders begin with *Teen Funders*, exploring Jewish values and awarding real grant dollars to Jewish and Israeli nonprofits. In winter, *Life in Motion* explores Jewish lifecycle rituals, and in spring, *Torah in the Real World* connects *parshiot* to modern ethical dilemmas.



9th graders study *Jewish Roots & Foundations of Texts*, exploring identity and sacred texts. In winter, they take *Spiritual Beats*, a hands-on course in Jewish prayer and practice across the spectrum of Jewish life. 10th graders begin with *History Unfiltered*, then examine the Holocaust in *Studying the Shoah* with Ryan Howlett. 11th graders take *Advanced Topics in Antisemitism* with Diana Koester, followed by *Halacha & Political Engagement*. Seniors will engage in *Living Your Values*, a capstone ethics course taught by Rabbi Shore. Opening night is Tuesday, September 9 at 450 Kimber Road.

*Learn more and register at [epsteincny.org](http://epsteincny.org) or email [epsteincny@gmail.com](mailto:epsteincny@gmail.com).*

## L'dor V'dorm Room

by Eli Goldstein

I am a rising junior at American University in Washington, DC, majoring in political science with minors in history and Jewish studies. Although I grew up over an hour away from Syracuse, my Jewish identity was deeply shaped by the Syracuse Jewish community.

Attending the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, continuing with the Rabbi Jacob Epstein School for Jewish Studies, and being a proud member of Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Chas, I was surrounded by a vibrant Jewish environment. My grandparents were key to that journey—driving me daily, and even on weekends, for classes and services. In 2023, I travelled to Israel with the Epstein School, deepening my connection to Judaism and forming lasting relationships with community members and clergy, many of whom I still keep in touch with.

Now, as a college student, I continue to live a full Jewish life. I'm an active member of Washington Hebrew Congregation and active in my university's Hillel. This summer, I'll be a counselor at Camp Ramah Day Camp in Germantown, Maryland.

Living Jewishly beyond high school has given me purpose and inspired my commitment to Tikkun Olam—repairing the world. It's also helped me make friends, feel grounded, and yes, enjoy some truly great food. But I also know that for many, figuring out how to live Jewishly once you're no longer in your parents' house can be intimidating.

So here are a few tips to get started:

- Reach out to a Jewish center near your school—whether it's Hillel, Chabad, or another community space—and ask when the next Shabbat service or holiday event is. Just go. I promise it's worth it.
- Explore local synagogues. Attend a few services and see what feels right. It might take time, but finding a spiritual home is rewarding.
- Stay connected to your roots. Don't be afraid to reach out to familiar faces from the Syracuse community. The rabbis who shaped my journey—Rabbi Shore, Rabbi Steinitz, Rabbi Saks, Rabbi Emanuel and Rabbi Rapoport—are great resources. And I'm happy to connect too (eli.sam.goldstein@gmail.com), if you want advice, perspective, or just a friendly connection.

If you're still in Syracuse, now's the time to get involved: join a local synagogue, enroll in the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, Community Hebrew School, or the Rabbi Jacob Epstein School of Jewish Studies. Jewish life doesn't end with high school—it evolves with you. And it's always waiting to welcome you back.

## Top 10 Reasons CBS-CS Shul School Is the Best Way to Spend Sunday Mornings

by Kelly Klapper, Director of Youth and Education

Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas's Shul School, which meets Sunday mornings from 9 am to noon provides educational experiences that are warm, inviting, thought-provoking, creative, flexible, and interactive. It helps connect students to their Jewish heritage, culture, and community for students from Pre-K through 7th grade.

Here are the top 10 reasons students and their families look forward to Sunday mornings at CBS-CS:

- 10) **A welcoming snack break for all.** Each Sunday includes an allergy-friendly snack curated by CBS-CS's Chef Nate. Snack time is planned for the entire school together, giving students an opportunity to socialize with siblings and friends from other grade levels.
- 9) **Meaningful traditions and memorable events.** From the biannual Chocolate Seder to the annual Mothers & Others Day Brunch, Shul School offers special programs that bring families together and make Jewish life come alive.
- 8) **Opportunities to shine.** Students take center stage in community events such as the annual Purim Play, where they engage with Jewish stories in creative and dynamic ways.
- 7) **Exceptional attention through small class sizes.** With a strong student-teacher ratio and dedicated teen madrichim, each child receives the support and connection they need to thrive.
- 6) **Teen role models who make a difference.** Madrichim are energetic, compassionate, and trained to support a variety of learning styles, helping each student feel seen and included.
- 5) **Learning that is active and hands-on.** Shul School emphasizes project-based learning, ensuring students are not just listening but actively participating—building Jewish memories through action and creativity.
- 4) **A curriculum crafted with care.** The in-house CBS-CS curriculum is designed specifically to meet the needs of the community's learners, weaving together Jewish holidays, values, and traditions in meaningful ways.
- 3) **Lifelong friendships begin here.** Students from Pre-K 4 through 7th grade build strong, supportive Jewish friendships that extend beyond the classroom.
- 2) **A program rooted in community.** Families are warmly invited to participate in weekly tefillah (prayer), creating a shared spiritual experience and reinforcing the connection between home, school, and synagogue life.
- 1) **A joyful foundation for Jewish life.** The ultimate goal of Shul School is to nurture a deep love for Judaism. When children experience joy in Jewish learning, they are more likely to grow into engaged, knowledgeable, and connected Jewish adults.

To learn more about Shul School, visit [www.cbscs.org](http://www.cbscs.org) or contact the Director of Youth and Education, Kelly Klapper at [kelly.klapper@cbscs.org](mailto:kelly.klapper@cbscs.org).



## Temple Concord Religious School Launches with Selichot Family Night

by Aaron Spitzer

Temple Concord Religious School is kicking off a new year of joyful learning, community building, and hands-on Jewish experiences—starting with a Family Selichot Program on September 13. This interactive evening helps prepare for the High Holy Days with activities for all ages. A highlight of the night: new families will add their handprints to our communal Religious School tallit, a growing tradition that celebrates the strength of our kehillah (community).

Religious School begins on Sunday, September 21 for Pre-K through 7th grade. Classroom learning is enriched weekly by rotating specials like art, music, library, and Israeli dancing. Students in grades 3–7 also participate in *chugim* (electives) that change each year—past favorites include drama and improv, games, *Mitzvah chug*, and Israel.

Each Sunday begins with Family *Tefilah*—a joyful, musical prayer experience filled with movement and *ruach* (spirit), led in part by our talented music *madrichim*. Students in grades 3 and up are also invited to join the Shirat Shalom Singers, Temple Concord's youth choir. This spirited group brings the joy of Jewish music to our community through uplifting performances throughout the year.

Older students continue their Jewish journeys through:

- Confirmation for 10th grade, led by Rabbi Emanuel
- The Teen *Madrichim* Program for grades 8–12, where teens serve as helpers and role models. *Madrichim* may earn volunteer hours or, beginning in 10th grade, get paid for their work.

In addition to Religious School, Temple Concord offers engaging family services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, along with thoughtfully planned youth programming during High Holiday services.

Throughout the year, Temple Concord is committed to helping families create meaningful Jewish moments together. Our calendar is filled with interactive family programs and holiday celebrations, including Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Chanukah, Tu BiShvat, Purim, Pesach, and more. Whether you're shaking the lulav, lighting the chanukiah, or making matzah crafts, you'll find opportunities to learn, celebrate, and grow as a family.

To learn more or get involved, contact Cantor Siegel Eglash at [cantoreglash@templeconcord.org](mailto:cantoreglash@templeconcord.org).

# A Joyous Day of Jewish Music

**KLEZFEST 2025 – September 14**  
**12 to 4 pm**

Two spectacular Jewish music festivals will fill Sunday, September 14, with joyful music. From noon to 4 pm, the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center will transform into a vibrant celebration of Jewish culture, welcoming the entire community for an afternoon of music, food, and connection. Building on last year's successful reimagining, the 2025 festival continues to evolve beyond its traditional klezmer roots into something even more special. "We're taking everything that worked beautifully last year and turning up the volume," says Festival Coordinator Alec Erlebacher. "This isn't just about preserving tradition. It's about making Jewish culture accessible, exciting, and irresistible to everyone who walks through our doors."



Emmy award-winning songwriter and music producer Hughie Stone-Fish returns as master of ceremonies, bringing his signature energy to the afternoon's festivities. "KlezFest is one of my favorite days of the year," Stone-Fish shares. "It's not just about the music. It's about connection, joy, and proudly celebrating Jewish culture with everyone who shows up hungry for something meaningful...and maybe a little rugelach too."

This year's musical lineup promises to keep feet tapping and hearts soaring with the return of last year's headliners Daniella Rabbini and Dan Nadel, the beloved Keyna Hora Band and the Sound of Unity, a Hughie Stone Fish band!

The sounds of celebration will fill the JCC grounds with carefully curated acts that honor klezmer's rich history while embracing contemporary Jewish musical expression.

Interactive elements return with fresh twists. An expanded culinary lineup reads like a love



letter to Jewish cuisine, with fresh, authentic Jewish dishes, all kosher, all Va'ad supervised, all delicious. This year there will be a challah bake-off; amateur and experienced bakers interested in participating will need to pre-register by Sunday, September 8 and should arrive by 12:30 pm to submit their creations. Judging will begin at 1 pm and the winner will be announced on stage at 2:45 pm. New competitions and activities are planned throughout the afternoon, ensuring there's something engaging for every age and interest level.

KlezFest represents something deeper than entertainment. In a time of rising tensions and misinformation, the festival stands as a beacon of unity and education. "Food is the gateway to understanding any culture," Erlebacher explains. "It is the best way to introduce people to a culture they may not be familiar with, and now more than ever I believe it is important to open up our doors to people unfamiliar with our wonderful community here in Syracuse."



The transformation from a traditional klezmer music festival to this broader cultural celebration has resonated powerfully with the community. Last year's expanded format drew record crowds and overwhelmingly positive feedback, inspiring organizers to think even bigger for 2025.

Rain or shine, the festival will spill onto the JCC's outdoor spaces, creating a street-fair atmosphere where neighbors can mingle, children can play, and the curious can explore Jewish culture in a welcoming environment. Local organizations and businesses will have booths, adding to the community marketplace feel while supporting important causes.

For those new to Jewish culture, KlezFest offers a perfect introduction: no prior knowledge required, just an appetite for discovery. For Jewish community members, it's a chance to share their heritage with pride and joy, creating connections that extend far beyond the festival grounds.

"Success isn't measured in attendance numbers," Erlebacher notes. "It's in the smiles, the new friendships, the 'aha' moments when someone tastes their first proper latke or hears klezmer music live for the first time. That's when we know we've done something meaningful."

For more information, visit [jccsyr.org/klezfest](http://jccsyr.org/klezfest) or follow updates at [facebook.com/KlezfestCNY](http://facebook.com/KlezfestCNY). Sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Central New York, the Pomeranz, Shankman Martin Trust and the Pomeranz Jewish Community Center, KlezFest remains a testament to the enduring spirit and unity of the Jewish community of Central New York.

## Music of Jewish Experience

**7 to 9 pm**

A concert of the "Music of the Jewish Experience," uniting global artistry and centuries of Jewish resilience, creativity, and spirit, will be presented at 7 pm in the social hall of Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas. The concert will feature the internationally acclaimed trio of Julian Schwarz (cello), Marika Bournaki (piano), and Giora Schmidt (violin), artists renowned for their expressive depth and technical mastery.



This musical journey across time and geography begins in the darkest chapters of the 20th century and crescendos into vibrant expressions of contemporary Jewish life. The program opens with compositions born out of the Holocaust, music composed by prisoners at Terezín (Theresienstadt), many of whom perished at Auschwitz. These works are not only haunting testaments to suffering but also radiant beacons of the indomitable human spirit. Robert Dauber's "Serenata" is believed to have been performed to lift the spirits of fellow inmates. In Victor Ullmann's "Variations and Fugue on 'Rachel,'" themes from Lutheran hymns, Czech folk music, Jewish melodies and the classical Bach motif intertwine in a fugue that wrestles with the composer's layered identity. Gideon Klein's "Duo for Violin and Cello," written just before his deportation to Auschwitz, closes this segment with a poignantly unfinished second movement.



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 wish the entire Jewish community of  
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## Annual Memorial Service

Congregation  
Ahavath Achim Cemetery

Sunday, September 28, 2025

11:15 a.m.

Rabbi Evan Shore  
Officiating

# Jennifer Satterlee: Leading with Heart at Temple Concord



Jennifer Satterlee doesn't seek the spotlight, but as the new president of Temple Concord, she steps into leadership with the quiet determination of someone who's already been doing the work behind the scenes for decades. Satterlee is an occupational therapist at Upstate University Hospital. She and her family joined Temple Concord 21 years ago, when their oldest son Jack was an infant. "At our first service, there was a bar mitzvah named Jack," she remembers. "Looking down at our Jack, we felt like it was meant to be—and we never looked back."

From those early years, Satterlee threw herself into congregational life, from co-leading the Temple Sisterhood and launching the Concord Kids' Sale to updating the babysitting room and serving on the board and the Visioning and Transition Location committees. "I've always just helped wherever needed," she says. "Whether it's organizing, painting a room, or chairing a committee."

Her passion for service isn't limited to Temple Concord. She's co-chaired the Patient Family Advisory Council at Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital since 2017, advocating for families navigating complex medical systems. Her own sons' medical needs have taken the family to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia countless times. "Through that, I learned how hard it can be for medically complex families. We were lucky to be able to travel—but not everyone is. That's why I try to make healthcare better here in Syracuse."

Satterlee's advocacy encompasses education as well. She served on the Spartan Academy Steering Committee at East Syracuse-Minoa and on the board of the Epstein School. Despite her packed schedule, she finds time for joy—crocheting Tunisian-style blankets, diving into historical fiction novels and hiking the Adirondacks. "We completed the 46 Adirondack High Peaks together in 2022," she says proudly. "It was a real family achievement."

Jewish identity and continuity remain central to Jennifer. She celebrated her bat mitzvah and was confirmed at Temple B'nai Israel in Elmira. "It was a small congregation that eventually merged, but my friends and I stayed connected through confirmation. Jewish friendships have always mattered to me." At Utica College, she joined the Jewish Student Union and recently experienced a powerful Taste of Israel trip with the Epstein School.

As Temple Concord board president, Jen's goals are both practical and heartfelt. "We've been through a lot—COVID, a rabbinic transition, and selling our building. I want to help us come back strong, to rebuild community." That includes finding a permanent home for Temple Concord, increasing member engagement, and creating welcoming spaces for children and families. "I took on this role because I believe deeply in having a Jewish space not just for prayer, but for culture, connection, and support," she says. "I want our children and grandchildren to grow up knowing they're not alone in the secular world. We may not always have a lot of money to give, but we can give our time. And I believe that's just as valuable."

# Syracuse Hillel's New Rabbi: Natan Levy

Syracuse Hillel has a new rabbi for the new year: Rabbi Natan Levy. Born and educated in the United States, Rabbi Levy will be returning after years spent in the United Kingdom. Ordained in 2006, Levy

holds a master's degree in Jewish Studies from King's College London and a doctorate in environmental theology from the University of Bristol. He recently served as head of operations at the Faiths Forum for London, coordinating civic and interfaith partnerships across religious lines, tackling everything from climate justice to community cohesion. He also served as interfaith and social action consultant to the Board of Deputies of British Jews and as environmental liaison to the late Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks.

In 2014, Rabbi Levy made headlines by fasting during the month of Ramadan in solidarity with Muslim neighbors. "I wanted to show that our spiritual paths can support one another," Levy said. The act sparked national conversations about hunger, empathy, and shared religious values. As chaplain at the University of Bristol, he co-founded the Salaam-Shalom radio project, bringing Muslim and Jewish voices together. "We amplify each other when we speak together," he said. A lifelong environmentalist, Levy is the author of *The Rise of Agriculture and the Earliest States in Genesis 1-11* and co-author of *Sharing Eden: Green Teachings from Jews, Christians and Muslims*.

Jillian Juni, executive director of Syracuse Hillel, said "We are thrilled to welcome Rabbi Levy as our new campus rabbi. At Syracuse Hillel, our staff team works hard every day to provide care for our students and Rabbi Levy will no doubt only strengthen our offerings. I am confident that he will support our efforts in building robust Jewish life, deepening community partnerships, and strengthening our interfaith work."

## Zeke 2025 was a Fun-Filled Shabbaton

The third annual Family Camp at Camp Zeke was a fun-filled and sun-filled Shabbaton. For the very first time, the skies were blue and the weather was perfect for swimming and boating, as well as the myriad other activities that make Zeke such a special experience for the 20 families,

"This was my first time attending Camp Zeke with the family," reported a newcomer to the retreat who had previously been skeptical of the "rustic" experience. "I was pleasantly surprised. The food was outstanding, the staff were kind, and the variety of activities gave us freedom to participate as much—or as little—as we wanted." Another parent praised the environment as both relaxing and safe, noting the emphasis on supervision, the opportunity for multigenerational family time, and the meaningful incorporation of Jewish rituals like Havdalah with s'mores under the stars.

For others, Camp Zeke was a joyful homecoming. A parent who has attended for the past three years, said their family plans to return again next year. "We've made friends, encouraged others to join us, and really value this annual tradition," they

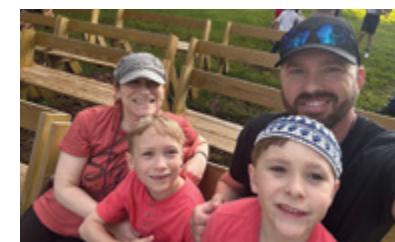
said. Several participants emphasized how the retreat helped build and deepen community bonds. "To be able to be with our community outside of our usual setting helped us form deeper relationships," said one father. "My kids loved the experience, the food was superb, and I felt truly safe with my children running around and building great memories."

For another father, the Shabbaton sparked memories of sleepaway camp. "It's 4-star nostalgia," he said. "It's a chance to see friends you haven't connected with since the High Holidays, and to do so without any of the usual stress. I've made new

friends each year and look forward to it as a highlight of my calendar." Families delighted in the robust schedule, which included everything from pickleball to circus arts, boating, art projects, and sushi-making workshops. "The weekend felt like a true getaway," said a mother who appreciated the vegetarian options, flexible programming, and sense of shared purpose. "There were so many opportunities to connect—with other families and with our own."

Several attendees expressed deep gratitude to the Jewish Federation for subsidizing the experience, which allowed many more families to attend. "We're grateful the Federation made this weekend affordable," said one participant. "It's something our family wouldn't want to miss."

Whether it was their first visit or their third, families left the 2025 Camp Zeke Shabbaton with full hearts, new friends, and strong Jewish memories.



## InterFaith Works Leadership Award Dinner to honor Marci Erlebacher



On October 23, InterFaith Works of Central New York will honor Marci Erlebacher at its annual Interfaith Leadership Award Dinner (ILAD), celebrating her legacy of service, leadership, and bridge-building. As the longtime executive director of the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center, Erlebacher helped shape the JCC into a welcoming hub for families of all backgrounds, expanding programs for children, seniors, and underserved populations. Her impact extends well beyond the Jewish community, with decades of board service to organizations such as InterFaith Works, the

Jewish Federation of CNY, and Vera House. A multimedia tribute will showcase Erlebacher's career and the lives she has touched, followed by personal remarks from colleagues, friends, and family. The evening will raise funds for InterFaith Works' critical programs in refugee resettlement, senior support, interfaith dialogue, and mental health. Erlebacher was selected as an honoree because she exemplifies this year's theme, "A Legacy of Leadership."

## Three New Books for the New Year



As we begin a new year filled with possibility, three new Jewish-themed books stand out for their creativity and cultural resonance: *Brave Volodymyr*, *Tali and the Timeless Time*, and *NOSH*. Each offers a unique window into values of courage, tradition, celebration, and identity.

*Brave Volodymyr* introduces young readers to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy through a narrative both accessible and moving. Author Linda Elovitz Marshall traces Zelenskyy's journey from a boy with a passion for acting and comedy to a leader facing war with unflinching courage. While the book emphasizes bravery in the face of adversity, it also touches gently on themes of Jewish heritage, perseverance, and the power of words. Rich, emotive illustrations by Ukrainian artists bring a real-life superhero to life on the page, giving young readers a tangible example of moral leadership.

In *Tali and the Timeless Time*, author Sigal Adler blends magical realism with Jewish tradition to explore a child's relationship with Shabbat. Tali is a curious and playful girl who always wishes for more time to play. But when she gets her wish, time begins to unravel—especially Shabbat, which threatens to disappear entirely. Told in rhyming verse and accompanied by colorful, energetic illustrations by Miki Seltzer, the story invites children to reflect on the sacred rhythm of Jewish time. Tali's emotional journey leads her to appreciate the unique beauty of slowing down and creating space for reflection.

*NOSH: Plant-Forward Recipes Celebrating Modern Jewish Cuisine* by Micah Siva is a contemporary Jewish cookbook that reimagines traditional favorites with a fresh, plant-based approach. With over 80 recipes, from cauliflower schnitzel to vegan kugel, *NOSH* is both accessible and adventurous. Beautiful photography and personal anecdotes throughout the book invite readers of all ages to connect with Jewish culinary heritage in a modern, sustainable way.

## NCJW to present Hannah Solomon Award to Susan Case DeMari

The Greater Syracuse section of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) will present the 50th annual Hannah G. Solomon Award to Susan Case DeMari on Monday, October 27 at a luncheon being held at the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center. The Hannah G. Solomon Award, named for the founder of NCJW, is a national award presented to women who have demonstrated exceptional service to both the Jewish community and the community at large.



Susan DeMari has served as Community Security Director for the Jewish Federation of Central New York for almost 25 years. In 2006, Susan partnered with the Secure Community Network on behalf of the Federation and was only one of 18 Security Directors across the country at that time. Four years ago, that number had grown to 25 and today there are over 100. Not only did Susan start at the very beginning, but the robust program she developed for Central New York served as a model for the others who followed.

A Buffalo native, Susan has lived in Syracuse since 1990. She has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice with a minor in social work from Brockport State University

and a Juris Doctorate for the Syracuse University College of Law. She and her husband, attorney Joseph DeMari, have two children, both graduates of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School and the Rabbi Epstein School of Jewish Studies: Joseph DeMari, M.D. is a board-certified partner at Colorado University's Gynecologic Oncology Department and Shayna DeMari, PharmD., is an emergency room pharmacist at Maine Medical Center in Portland.

Susan worked for the Social Security Administration, Office of Hearings Operations as a Senior Attorney adjudicator/advisor for more than 24 years before accepting a position as a Chief Deputy for the Onondaga County Sheriff's Office. Susan became the first female Department Chief appointed to the Sheriff's Office since it was established in 1794. In addition to her work with the Jewish Federation of Central New York, Susan replicated the security program for the Buffalo Jewish Federation and served as their first director of community security. In that capacity, she was the designated community contact for federal, state, county, local and university law enforcement agencies on behalf of the two Jewish communities. She worked to foster and improve relationships between law enforcement and the public, coordinated reciprocal information-sharing within the community and among law enforcement agencies and assisted in the creation and maintenance of a safer, more secure community, in partnership with the Secure Community Network.

The Greater Syracuse Section is, once again, the recipient of a \$3000 challenge grant from the Pomeranz Shankman Martin Trust. The purpose of the grant is to purchase children's winter clothing for the Onondaga County Child Protection Services' Foster Care Program. The Trust has committed an additional \$1000 to purchase diapers for the CNY Diaper Bank. To receive the grant, the Greater Syracuse Section has been challenged to raise \$1500, which is met by tribute donations in honor of Susan. The funds raised will be used in addition to the grant funding toward the section's Mitzvah Projects. The Children's Division has been the Greater Syracuse Section's Mitzvah Project for over 10 years. The McCarthy@ Beard School program, which is run by the Syracuse City School District, is another funding recipient. Last year, the section purchased winter jackets for needy students in this specialized school. In addition, the Syracuse Section also purchased diapers for the CNY Diaper Bank.

**For more information or to make a reservation and/or send a tribute card honoring Susan, contact Marlene Holstein at 315-446-7648.**

# JCC's 162<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting & Gala

by Erin Hart

On June 22, 2025, more than 250 community members gathered at the pristine Palladian Hall at the Treasury to support the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center of Syracuse's 162<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting & Gala. This year's event made its much-anticipated return to Palladian Hall, where guests had the opportunity to take in the outstanding architecture and elaborate sights of the historical building.

"We were beyond thrilled to return to Palladian Hall this year," said Executive Director, Marci Erlebacher. "Last year was the first year at this new venue and we couldn't be happier with the space and their amazing team. The elegance this venue provides is like no other."

Guests were greeted upon entrance and ushered upstairs to mingle while they enjoyed an assortment of appetizers served by the famous Essen New York Deli of Brooklyn, NY. The JCC has used Essen Deli as the caterer for this annual event since 2018.

Annual Meeting & Gala Committee Chair Debbie Goldwein welcomed guests prior to brunch and Rabbi Shore of Sha'arei Torah Orthodox Congregation of Syracuse led everyone in a prayer for Israel and the safe return of the remaining hostages. "It was a moving experience to witness the entire room bow their heads in prayer; you could have heard a pin drop," said JCC Immediate Past President Steven Sisskind. "I still have chills thinking about how moving that was to experience."

Marci Erlebacher made her way to the podium and reminded the community of why it's important for us all to come together. Her uplifting speech was a powerful reminder of what is possible when we work and band together as one in this fight against hate and antisemitism.

The JCC presented four awards as part of this year's program and in lieu of speeches, video presentations were made for each honoree. Jessica Malzman began the awards presentation as she received this year's Kovod Award. She reminisced on her recent experiences in the local Jewish Community since October 7<sup>th</sup> and stressed the importance of "showing up" and supporting those around you.

Sara Temes received this year's Kovod Gadol award, which means highest honor. She was recognized for her many years of service to the JCC as a volunteer and a member of the Board. She stressed the importance of volunteering and giving the time you have to the community, as a role model to both her children and younger generations.

There wasn't a dry eye in the room as Neil Bronstein accepted this year's Hall of Fame Award. It was apparent that he was extremely moved not only to receive this year's award but also humbled to be recognized by the community of which he has been such a large part for so many years.

The program closed with the presentation of this year's Leslie award to Brian Raphael. Brian has demonstrated in these last few years a dedication and compassion for Judaism that is unparalleled. After the October 7<sup>th</sup> attacks, he started the non-profit End Antisemitism Now which focuses on combatting antisemitism locally. Brian strongly feels that the JCC is a part of the larger community and a strong JCC creates a strong Jewish community. He



urged all to get involved and to be part of the bigger picture.

The JCC's Annual Meeting & Gala is its largest fundraising event of the year and brings in well over \$100,000. Proceeds from this essential fundraiser go toward the many scholarships awarded annually, allowing children to attend the JCC's Jerome & Phyllis Charney Early Childhood Development Program, After

School Program, Joe & Lynne Romano summer camp program, youth athletics programming and helping to mainstream children with special needs within these programs. The JCC awarded \$50,000 in scholarships this past year alone. *To learn more about this year's Annual Meeting & Gala or to make a donation towards scholarships at the JCC, please visit [www.jccsyr.org](http://www.jccsyr.org), or call 315-445-2360.*



## An Amazing School Year at the JCC

by Shane Tepper

The JCC is excited to welcome students back for another incredible year of learning, growth, and fun. Its comprehensive School Age Programming offers something special for every child, from kindergarteners taking their first big steps to sixth graders preparing for middle school adventures. Whether a family needs Before School Care starting at 7 am, After School Programming until 6 pm, or engaging activities during school breaks, the JCC supports a child's journey. With homework assistance, gym games, arts and crafts, enrichment classes, and so much more, children can explore their interests while building lasting friendships in a safe, nurturing environment.

"We are excited for another school year in our Before and After School Program!" says Amy Bisnett, associate director of children's programming. "It's always a special time when we get to welcome our new kindergartners into the school-age program. We hope the children enjoy some much-needed recreation time with their peers after a full day at school."

*To learn more, visit [jccsyr.org](http://jccsyr.org) or call 315-445-2360 to learn more about programming options.*



GLORIA WELT SAGE  
JULY 9, 2025

Gloria Welt Sage died peacefully at home on July 9, 2025. Born and raised in Brooklyn, Gloria earned her undergraduate degree from Cornell University in 1957. She then obtained a master of arts in chemistry in 1958 at Radcliffe College and completed her PhD in physical chemistry at Harvard University in 1963, the first year that Harvard awarded graduate degrees to women.

Gloria retired as a Senior scientist from SRC, Inc. after 28 years of service. Prior to her employment at SRC, Inc. she served as an assistant professor in clinical pathology from 1972-1976 and a research associate in biochemistry (1971) and pediatrics (1977) at SUNY Upstate Medical University.

Gloria was involved with many organizations, especially in the environmental, conservation, and civic areas. She reactivated the then defunct Outer Comstock Neighborhood Association in 1979 (OCNA Foundation, Inc.) and served as president for fifteen years. She was one of the founders of the Iroquois Chapter of the Sierra Club. She served on the Community Development Advisory Committee for Syracuse from 1980 to 1990 and the Syracuse Citizens Cabinet from 2012 to 2014. She served on the Eastern Lake Ontario Dunes Coalition, the board of the Syracuse Friends of Chamber Music and volunteered as a Community Tree Steward.

She enjoyed tennis, hiking, cross country and downhill skiing, travel, kayaking, birding and mushrooming.

She is survived by her son and daughter-in-law, Daniel and Marla and her grandson Eli of Buffalo, NY, her brother Martin (Ruth) Welt of Del Ray Beach, FL and brother-in-law Samuel Sage of Otavalo, Ecuador.

Contributions may be made to Temple Concord, the Nature Conservancy or the National Parks Conservation Association.

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SANDY DIAMOND  
JULY 10, 2025

Sandy Diamond, 80, loving wife, mother, grandmother and friend, passed away on July 10, 2025 in Delray Beach, Florida. Sandy was born on July 23, 1944 in Buffalo, NY to Arthur and Esther (Pocklowitz) Cohn. They settled in Syracuse where Sandy graduated from Nottingham High School. For many years Sandy was the secretary for the Syracuse Hebrew Day School where she had wonderful friendships with the faculty and students.

She and Shelly retired to Delray Beach, FL in 2003 and enjoyed their life there, with many old friends from Syracuse and many new friends were made as well. They enjoyed exciting vacations over the years and had an extremely active social life. Anyone that knows her, also knows how much she loved playing Mah-Jongg with the ladies.

Her family includes her husband Shelly, their son Arthur (Lisa Thiel), their daughter Tracy and grandchildren Rachel (Jake Fekete), Eli and Sam Diamond, Jake and Max Tanenbaum, and former daughter-in-law Meg.

Contributions to perpetuate her memory may be made to ALS Association @ALS.org or a charity of your choice.

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JANET KEETER KASS  
JULY 15, 2025

Janet Keeter Kass, 73, was born in Athens, GA. Her family moved to the Syracuse area when she was five years old. In high school, Janet was president of The Thespians and active in the Russian Club. During a visit to Temple Concord with a friend, Janet found her faith in Judaism.

Janet met Richard Kass when they were undergraduates at SUNY Albany. They have been together ever since and celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 2023. They lived in Davis, CA, Ithaca, NY, Chicago, IL, Columbus, OH, Santa Cruz, CA, and Syracuse.

Janet was a graduate of The Ohio State University with a masters degree in social work and UC Davis with a bachelor's degree in anthropology. She worked in museums, social service nonprofits, and as a teacher of young children. After earning her MSW, she dedicated her social work career to inpatient pediatric psychiatry.

In retirement, Janet helped New Americans in Columbus, OH, and families with children through the CASA program in Santa Cruz, CA. Janet and Richard enjoyed travelling the world. They loved the ocean and redwoods of northern California. Janet was an excellent cook, devoted mother, supportive wife and sister, and a loyal friend. She collected cookbooks and loved international cuisine; she gave her children unconditional love and nurtured their passion for education.

Janet was predeceased by her parents, Edward Keeter and Carolyn Heery Berry. She is survived by her husband Richard Kass; their children Jesse Kass, PhD (Louisa McClintok, PhD) of Santa Cruz, CA, and Amanda Kass, PhD (Kyle Lyman, MD/PhD) of New Haven, CT, grandson Henry Kass Lyman, sister Susan Keeter (Seth Tucker), half-sister Kathy Miller (Donald), sister-in-law Ilana Kass, brother-in-law Allan Kass, nieces and nephews Sara Tucker, Emma Tucker, Stephanie (Earle) Schweizer, Stuart (Monika) Kass, Tristan Kass and Lauren Kass.

To perpetuate her memory please consider a donation to a charity that supports children and/or New Americans.

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ELAINE RUTH LYON  
JULY 29, 2025



Elaine Ruth Lyon, 85, passed away on July 29, 2025 at SUNY Upstate. Born on October 30, 1939 in Wilkes Barre, PA to Laverne and Cecilia Lyon, she had been a resident of Syracuse for most of her life. She was a graduate of Nottingham High School and Syracuse University. After raising her two sons she returned to the work force as a librarian for the Liverpool Public Library where she remained until retiring.

She was a former board member of the National Council of Jewish Women and a member of Temple Adath Yeshurun. She was intrigued with genealogy and was active with the Syracuse Jewish Genealogy group, as well as many other groups. Through those groups she was able to connect with many family members and friends. Elaine was proud to be the chairwoman of her Nottingham High School Reunion Committee. She also taught English as a second language for many years. She enjoyed needlepoint and quilting, was a voracious reader and an avid Syracuse basketball fan.

She was predeceased by her husband Marty Goldberg in 1990. Her family includes her sons Stephen (Kristen) Heller and David Heller, her stepdaughters Michelle (Matt) Ehrlich and Elaine (Jon) DeSimone and her grandchildren Laben, Kieran, Dylan and Rowan.

Contributions to perpetuate her memory may be made to the Liverpool Library.

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