

Jewish Observer of Central New York

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APRIL 2026 | NISSAN-IYAR 5786



WITNESS JUDAISM'S REFUSAL TO SURRENDER

DEFIANT REQUIEM VERDI AT TEREZIN

In a place built to destroy hope, music became an act of rebellion. Jewish prisoners of Terezín sang Verdi's Requiem as a defiant cry against tyranny, risking everything to preserve humanity.

Witness a program that transcends time—a haunting, heart-shattering testament to courage, resistance, and the unbreakable human spirit—performed by the Syracuse Orchestra and the Syracuse University Oratorio Society.

THURSDAY, APRIL 16TH, 7 PM

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From the Editor



Barbara Davis

April 2026 captures a wide arc of Jewish history and memory. Three significant observances—*Pesach*, *Yom HaShoah*, and *Yom HaAtzmaut*—all fall within the same month, creating a concentrated period of remembrance, mourning, and celebration. While these observances regularly align on the Hebrew calendar, their convergence in a single Gregorian month offers a unique lens through which to view the Jewish narrative of persecution, resilience, and renewal.

Passover begins on April 1st; two weeks later, on April 14th, *Yom HaShoah* is observed as Holocaust Remembrance Day; the month concludes with *Yom HaAtzmaut* on April 22nd, celebrating Israel’s declaration of independence in 1948. The proximity of these observances offers a through-line in Jewish history: the journey from oppression to freedom, from destruction to rebuilding, from mourning to joy. April this year offers not just a calendar coincidence, but a concentrated opportunity for reflection on resilience, the burdens of history, the costs of conflict, and the possibilities of renewal.

Another especially unique and meaningful aspect of this month is our community’s presentation of “Defiant Requiem: Verdi at Terezin.” “Defiant Requiem” has been performed at some of the world’s most prestigious stages—Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, the Sydney Opera House, and concert halls across Europe and beyond. That Central New York will host this production—that this story will be told here, in our community’s own venue, for our own people and neighbors—is itself a small act of defiance against the assumption that major Jewish cultural experiences belong only to major cities. “Defiant Requiem” is a gift, and an affirmation that the Jewish people matter, that history matters, and that bearing witness matters. The *Jewish Observer* urges our community to attend this once in a lifetime performance. You will never forget it.

Also in this issue of the *JO* are announcements of two other significant community events: our communal commemoration of *Yom haShoah* and our celebration of *Yom HaAtzmaut*. Months of planning and preparation by very dedicated community members have gone into both observances. We urge everyone to attend both programs and to register in advance for security purposes.

All these happenings remind us of what a wonderful Jewish community we have in Central New York. People are committed, involved, caring, concerned and active. Involvement is multigenerational, with grandparents, parents, and children all finding meaningful ways to participate and contribute. We see young families attending Shabbat services alongside longtime members, teenagers volunteering for social action projects while their parents serve on committees, and seniors sharing

their wisdom as teachers and mentors to the next generation. This intergenerational engagement creates a vibrant, living community where traditions are passed down organically, relationships deepen across age groups, and everyone—from the youngest children to the most seasoned elders—has a valued role to play. The energy of youth combines with the experience of age, creating a dynamic environment where innovation and tradition coexist harmoniously.

What makes our community particularly special is that this involvement isn’t just about showing up—it’s about genuinely caring for one another, celebrating together in times of joy, supporting each other through challenges, and actively working to ensure that our community remains strong, welcoming, and spiritually nourishing for generations to come. This commitment to collective responsibility and mutual care is the bedrock of Jewish life, and seeing it flourish across all ages reminds us that we are not just building programs or filling calendars, but nurturing a *kehillah kedoshah*—a sacred community—that truly embodies the values we hold dear.

In this issue, we are pleased to include reflections by Jef Sneider on his and Gwen Kay’s recent trip to Israel, a thoughtful article by Makayla Seidman, a junior at CNS high school, who is critical of the lack of Holocaust education in our public school systems and a touching remembrance of a Holocaust survivor by Susan Sloane. And in our RAV Properties column, we introduce another local Jewish business that is focused on the film industry. Lastly, in addition to our regular pages of community news, we are including a list of Passover themed mystery novels for your reading pleasure as well as a report on the latest trends in Passover observances.

Passover is a holiday that continually lends itself to reinvention. We are commanded to retell the story of the Exodus so that “in every generation, one must see oneself as having personally gone forth from Egypt.” This isn’t merely historical reenactment but an invitation to radical presence—to collapse the distance between ancient exodus and contemporary table. Each generation must therefore reimagine the ritual in ways that make liberation immediate and visceral, whether through new songs, updated interpretations, or fresh connections to current struggles for freedom. The seder resists ossification because its very purpose is experiential transformation, not preservation of static tradition. We don’t just remember the story; we’re commanded to inhabit it, and that imperative demands constant creative reinvention to bridge the centuries and make the exodus feel as urgent tonight as it did millennia ago.

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ERRATA: In our March issue, Rabbi Vicki Lieberman’s name was misspelled. Rabbi Angela Buchdahl was raised in Tacoma, Washington, not Wisconsin. The *JO* regrets the errors.

MESSAGE FROM MARK SEGEL Federation President & CEO



Stewardship and the Power of Your Impact

As we move through 2026, I am often asked what makes the Jewish Federation of Central New York unique. My answer is always the same: it is the sacred trust you place in us when you make a gift to our Annual Campaign. You aren't just giving to an organization; you are investing in a collective vision for a thriving, secure, and vibrant Jewish Syracuse. This is why we ask that you help us realize our vision by making a pledge to 2026 Annual Campaign.

Central to that trust is our **allocations process**. While "allocations" might sound like a technical term found in a budget spreadsheet, it is actually the heartbeat of our communal work. It is the rigorous, volunteer-led system that ensures your hard-earned dollars are directed where they are most needed and can do the most good.

A Process Rooted in Transparency and Strategy

The allocation of funds is a multi-month endeavor driven by a dedicated committee of community volunteers. These individuals—your neighbors, friends, and colleagues—bring professional expertise in finance, social work, education, and law to the table. Federation allocates resources to entities as a whole, working jointly with the professional and lay leaders of these institutions to use the funds for budgetary items and programs where the community's support will have the most impact.

Our process is not a simple "rubber stamp." It involves:

- **Comprehensive Discussion of Agency Needs:** Partner agencies make allocation requests based on their goals, budgets and the services that they offer to the community.
- **Collaborative Planning:** We meet with agency leadership to understand emerging needs, ensuring that we aren't just funding programs for today, but planning for the challenges of tomorrow.
- **Fiscal Accountability:** We analyze financial statements to ensure that every dollar is used efficiently, with a focus on maximizing direct impact.

By the time the Federation Board of Directors approves the final allocations, many hours of deliberation have ensured that our resources are aligned with our core values: Torah (learning), Tzedakah (justice), and Tikkun Olam (repairing the world).

Where Your Campaign Dollars Go

The beauty of the Federation model (federated giving) is that one gift supports an entire ecosystem of Jewish life. Because of the allocations process, your single donation becomes a lifeline for a wide range of local beneficiaries, including:

- **Jewish Education:** Supporting the **Syracuse Hebrew Day School**, **Syracuse Community Hebrew School**, and the **Epstein School**, ensuring our children have a strong foundation of Jewish identity.
- **Social Services and Seniors:** Contributing to the **JCC Senior Lunch Program**, **Kosher Meals on Wheels**, and providing vital support to **Beit Tikvah Group Residence** through Menorah Park.
- **Youth and Campus Life:** Contributing to **PJ Library** through the Jewish Community Center for our youngest families and supporting **Hillel at Syracuse University** to keep our college students connected to their heritage.
- **Community Security:** In an era of rising concerns, a portion of our allocations is dedicated to the safety of our institutions through the work of our Security Director. This includes funding 50% of our local synagogues' High Holy Days security expense annually.
- **Israel:** As part of the allocations process, Federation contributes part of your annual campaign dollars overseas to institutions within or supporting Israel or Jewish people worldwide, including through the Jewish Federations of North America.

- **Other Programs and Services:** In addition, we also provide financial support for the community Mikvah, the Chabad Matzoh Bakery, the Syracuse Jewish Cemeteries Association, and the Yom HaShoah and Yom Ha'Atzmaut community programs.

Strengthening the Fabric of Jewish CNY

Beyond the numbers, these allocations represent "moments of meaning." They are the reason a senior citizen doesn't have to eat alone, the reason a teen can attend a Jewish summer camp, and the reason our community can stand proud and secure in Central New York.

When we give together, we achieve more than any of us could alone. This federated approach prevents the duplication of services and ensures that even the smallest organizations have the resources they need to thrive.

As we look toward the remainder of 2026, I want to thank you for your continued support. Whether you are a long-time donor or new to our community, know that the Federation remains committed to being a transparent and effective steward of your generosity. If you haven't already, please make your pledge to the Federation's Annual Campaign today by visiting <https://jewishfederationcny.org/campaign-pledge/> or calling the Federation office at 315-445-0161.

Together, we are ensuring that the flame of Jewish life in Syracuse continues to burn bright for generations to come—*L'Dor V'Dor*.

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We engage

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Remembering the Exodus

by Rabbi Dr. Oren Steinitz, Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas

It would be hard to overestimate the importance of remembering *yetziat mitzrayim*, the Exodus, in Jewish tradition. It is mentioned every morning and evening in the recitation of the *Sh'ma*, every Friday Night during Kiddush, and of course at Passover.

Why? Why do we put so much emphasis on the Exodus and not, for instance, the giving of the Torah at Sinai? Would it not make more sense to recite the Ten Commandments every morning and evening rather than mention the Exodus? Why are we focusing on a singular event?

One answer came from my friend and colleague, Rabbi Dr. Laura Duhan-Kaplan. Rabbi Duhan-Kaplan taught for many years Judaism classes in a Christian Divinity school. Oftentimes she would talk about how the two religions do not only differ on theology and practice, but have a completely different vocabulary as well. “When you talk about ‘salvation,’” she would tell her students, “Jews have *no clue* what you are talking about.” While Christianity seems to be preoccupied with salvation and being “saved,” Judaism has a completely different focus. “If I could summarize Judaism in one sentence,” says Rabbi Duhan-Kaplan, “it would be the following: The Exodus happened, and the Exodus is happening.”

The story of the Exodus is often read as the birth of the Jewish People: we were enslaved, released from slavery by Divine intervention, received the Torah – our constitution, if you will – and started a journey towards our Land. But its importance is greater than that. The Hebrew



name for Egypt, *mitzrayim*, is often read as “the narrow places.” Not only a geographical reference, it becomes a powerful metaphor. *Mitzrayim* represents any reality in which freedom is constrained, and life feels painfully tight.

Political theorist Michael Walzer captured this idea beautifully in his book *Exodus and Revolution*. He wrote that the Exodus teaches three main lessons: “First, wherever you live, it is probably Egypt; second, that there is a better place, a more attractive promised land; and third, that the way to the land is through the wilderness. And there is no way to get from here to there except by joining together and marching.”

We have gone through many Egypts in the past, both as a people and as individuals. And each year, when we sit down at our Passover table, we are probably in the midst of one Egypt or another. Still, the promise of the Exodus carries us forward. No matter how narrow life may feel, we hold on to the hope that a promised land lies ahead. The Exodus happened, and the Exodus keeps happening.

Popular Passover Fiction



Dying for Chametz & Other Mystery Stories for Passover

by Agatha Krinsky

This delightful collection features Jewish detectives solving holiday-themed crimes with an Agatha Christie-inspired flair, including the intriguing murder in a chametz closet. The novellas blend humor with classic mystery elements, making them perfect for Passover reading.

The Curious Case of the Pot Roast: A Passover Mystery

by Jamie Kiffel-Alchek

This charming recent release weaves Passover traditions directly into its mystery plot, offering readers a fun and engaging holiday-themed whodunit. The story promises both entertainment and a celebration of Passover customs throughout the investigation.

Murder in Another Inn

by Barbara Fox

Set against the backdrop of a Passover Seder in Miami Beach, this novel combines murder, kosher catering, and rabbinical intrigue for an authentic holiday atmosphere. The story delivers a full Passover experience while keeping readers guessing about the killer's identity.

Mrs. Kaplan and the Matza Ball of Death

by Mark Reutlinger

Mrs. Kaplan, a feisty Jewish grandmother and amateur sleuth, finds herself investigating a suspicious death at a Passover seder when a guest chokes on a matza ball. This cozy mystery combines Jewish humor, family dynamics, and a

clever whodunit set against the backdrop of the holiday.

The Passover Murder: A Christine Bennett Mystery

by Lee Harris

This is a classic “cozy mystery” where an ex-nun, married to a NYC cop, investigates a 20-year-old murder that took place during a Passover seder. Christine Bennett uses her investigative skills to uncover long-buried secrets and bring justice to a cold case.

Unleavened Dead

by Ilene Schneider

Rabbi Aviva Cohen has her hands full with Passover preparations, so she certainly has no time to deal with anything else. Yet tragedy soon changes her plans when two members of the congregation are found dead, forcing her to balance holiday duties with solving a mystery.

Never Nosh a Matzo Ball

by Sharon Kahn

A humorous mystery featuring amateur sleuth Ruby Rothman in a Jewish community setting. Ruby must solve a puzzling crime while navigating the quirks and traditions of her tight-knit community.

The Dinner Party

by Brenda Janowitz

A novel focused on a dramatic and often funny family Passover Seder. The story explores family secrets, generational conflicts, and the complexities of modern Jewish family life during the holiday celebration.



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WE MUST BEAR WITNESS

Why the Jewish Community Needs to See “Defiant Requiem”

There are moments in our collective history that we cannot afford to let fade into obscurity. There are stories of resilience, defiance, and unbreakable spirit that demand to be remembered, retold, and honored. “Defiant Requiem: Verdi at Terezín” is one such story—and it is a story that calls out to every member of the Jewish community with urgent intensity.

This is not simply a performance to attend if you happen to have a free evening. This is an obligation. A sacred duty to bear witness.

“Defiant Requiem” tells the extraordinary true story of the prisoners at the Terezín (Theresienstadt) concentration camp who, in the face of unspeakable horror, chose to sing. Under the direction of conductor Rafael Schächter, these brave souls learned and performed Verdi’s “Requiem”—a Catholic mass for the dead—sixteen times between 1943 and 1944. They sang it as an act of spiritual resistance. They sang it as a declaration that the Nazis could imprison their bodies but never their souls. They sang it knowing that many in the chorus would soon be transported to Auschwitz, yet they sang anyway.

Think about that for a moment. Imagine the courage it took to stand before their captors and sing a requiem—a prayer for the dead—when they themselves were marked for death. Imagine the defiance required to create beauty in a place designed for degradation and despair.

This performance is more than a concert. It is a memorial service for those who refused to be silenced. It is a testament to the enduring power of Jewish resilience. It is proof that even in humanity’s darkest hour, the light of our spirit cannot be extinguished.

We owe it to them to be there.

We owe it to Rafael Schächter, who conducted his final performance and was then sent to his death at Auschwitz. We owe it to the singers who poured their hearts into every note, many of whom never returned. We owe it to the survivors who carried this story forward so that we would know what transpired in that camp.

And we owe it to ourselves and our children to remember that Jewish resistance took many forms during the Holocaust. Resistance was not only found in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising or in the partisan fighters hiding in the forests. Resistance was also found in the voices that sang Verdi’s Requiem in Terezín. Resistance was culture. Resistance was art. Resistance was the refusal to let the Nazis strip away our humanity.

In an era when Holocaust denial persists, when antisemitism is rising around the world, when survivors are becoming fewer each year—we



cannot be passive observers of our own history. We must actively engage with it. We must fill the seats at performances like “Defiant Requiem.” We must show up, not just to remember the dead, but to honor their extraordinary courage and to declare that their legacy lives on through us.

This performance offers something profoundly sacred: the opportunity to hear the music that gave prisoners hope when hope seemed impossible. To feel the power of their defiance echo across the decades. To sit in communal remembrance with our fellow Jews and say, together, “We have not forgotten. We will never forget.”

Bring your family. Bring your friends. Bring your children and your parents. Let them witness this remarkable story. Let them understand that Jewish strength is not only measured in survival but in the refusal to surrender our souls, our culture, our music, even when surrounded by evil.

The prisoners of Terezín sang in defiance. Now it falls to us to listen in remembrance, in solidarity, and in commitment to ensuring that their voices—and the voices of the six million—are never silenced by time or indifference.

**“Defiant Requiem”
is not just a performance.
It is a call. Answer it.**

**The program will take place at 7 pm on
Thursday, April 16 in the Crouse Hinds auditorium
of the Onondaga County Civic Center.**

Sponsored by the Federation, it will be performed by the Syracuse Orchestra and the Syracuse University Oratorio Society.

Tickets are \$36; under 18 are free when accompanied by an adult. Use the QR code to order tickets.

**For further information, contact
bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org.**



HAGGADOT for PASSOVER 2026

New *haggadot* offer diverse perspectives on the ancient story of the Exodus from Egypt. From cutting-edge AI commentary to political reimaginings and artistic collaborations, new offerings reflect the full spectrum of contemporary Jewish thought and creativity.



Haggadah Shel Erev Rav: The Mixed Multitude Haggadah, copublished by CCAR Press and Central Synagogue in celebration of Rabbi Angela W. Buchdahl's twentieth anniversary at the congregation, celebrates the sacred multivocality of the Jewish people, reflecting the words of the Torah that the Exodus from Egypt took place as a "mixed multitude," a diverse assembly of Israelites and fellow travelers. This new haggadah offers four unique pathways into the story—centering children, women, the call for social justice, and God's presence in liberation. The inclusive translation and commentary are enhanced by original color illustrations by Indian Jewish artist Siona Benjamin.



The **Asufa Haggadah** each year brings together the best of Israel's illustrators and graphic designers to take part in a unique production, which relates those days to our time. Participants are granted a two-page spread and, befitting the holiday spirit, complete freedom to shape the traditional text in any way that pleases their spirit, imagination, pencil, computer-mouse or their hearts.



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrahi's **Vehigadt Pesah Haggada: Inspirational Reflections for the Seder Night**, published by Koren Publishers, brings much-needed attention to women's perspectives on the Passover narrative. The haggadah thoughtfully explores the domestic labor and emotional work that makes the seder possible, honoring the often-invisible contributions that create meaningful holiday experiences.



The **Haggadah for Believers and Heretics** offers a fascinating glimpse into Jewish political thought from the Soviet era. This new translation resurrects a biting political reimagining originally published in 1927, allowing contemporary readers to engage with how earlier generations wrestled with questions of faith, politics, and liberation under radically different circumstances.



The **HAGGADAH-AI: English and Ladino Edition** represents a bold experiment in bringing artificial intelligence to ancient texts. Featuring AI-generated commentary alongside new illustrations, the haggadah includes interactive music accessible via QR codes and improved phonetic transcriptions. This innovative approach may intrigue tech-savvy families looking to bridge traditional observance with contemporary tools.



For those seeking a more playful approach, Martin Bodek's **The Dad Jokes Haggadah** promises to add laughter to the seder table as does the **The Office Haggadah, An Unofficial Scranton Seder**, for fans of the sitcom.



A Haggadah for Swifties

Yes, it really exists. Written by Na'ama Ben-David and illustrated by Shelley Atlas Serber, this fully functional Haggadah is packed with clever Swift-inspired details. The table of contents is called a "setlist," and the book is priced at \$19.89—Swift's birth year and name of her 2014 album. Design elements include paper plane motifs (referencing a necklace in "Out of the Woods"), page numbers hidden in friendship bracelets (from "You're on Your Own, Kid"), and hot pink cowgirl hats from Swift's early country days. The Haggadah connects the story of the Four Sons to four characters whose romantic stories appear in Swift's 2020 album "Folklore." The description notes that Moses is "the Man" and Pharaoh sees "Red" before having to "Shake it Off" and let the Jewish people go after some "Bad Blood." Reviews on Amazon have been enthusiastic, with readers praising how it makes the seder more engaging for young Swifties while maintaining all the traditional liturgical elements.

Passover Seders in 2026



The Passover seder, one of Judaism's most enduring rituals, is experiencing a renaissance as contemporary families reimagine this 3,000-year-old tradition. While the core narrative of liberation from Egyptian bondage remains unchanged, how families observe this holiday is transforming in ways that would have been unimaginable to previous generations.

Perhaps the most dramatic shift in recent years has been the rise of destination seders. Families are increasingly choosing to observe Passover away from home, with resort destinations, Jewish retreat centers, and even cruise ships offering all-inclusive Passover programs. These experiences handle the considerable burden of kosher-for-Passover food preparation while providing professionally led seders that blend tradition with vacation. The programs are comprehensive, with three kosher-for-Passover meals daily, snacks, kids' clubs, shiurim, daily minyanim, and evening entertainment. Program organizers manage every detail from pre-arrival preparation to post-Yom Tov logistics, with many offering customizable elements like private Seder arrangements or specialized menus. For families scattered across the country, destination seders offer a neutral meeting ground where everyone can gather without placing the hosting burden on any single household.

The landscape of destination seders is evolving beyond traditional hotspots. While Florida, Arizona, and Israel remain popular, new European destinations like Malta, Montenegro, and Albania emerged on the Passover map in 2025, offering stunning natural landscapes and rich cultural history. Popular programs now include luxury locations in Lithuania's Vilnius Grand Resort, Guatemala's Pacific coast at Oceana Resort, and destinations across Mexico. Some travelers have chosen coastal resorts in Greece for evening seders under the stars, while others found inspiration in Japanese retreats where cultural immersion met Jewish ritual.

The trend also reflects a shift toward more personalized experiences. Many travelers opt for villa stays with private chefs or smaller boutique programs emphasizing local engagement over large-scale entertainment. Programs include guided hikes during Chol Hamoed, yoga and wellness components, and excursions connecting Jewish history with local culture. This evolution addresses several concerns—the extensive cleaning required to remove *hametz* from homes and the challenge of preparing elaborate meals, and spiritual desires for meaningful, immersive holiday experiences.

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Guest Speaker

Dr. Murry Sidlin, President, The Defiant Requiem Foundation

Dr. Sidlin is a conductor, music educator, and advocate best known for his work preserving and performing music from the Holocaust, particularly through his creation of "Defiant Requiem."

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COMMUNITY

A Student's Perspective: The Gaps in Holocaust Education in America

by Makayla Seidman



Throughout my years in public school, Holocaust education was taught only briefly, and the curriculum falls short of what I, a Jewish American student, believe is necessary. The Holocaust stands as one of the most devastating events in human history—a genocide in which six million Jews and millions of others were systematically murdered under Nazi rule. Despite the profound impact this tragedy has had on our world, a crucial question persists: *Why isn't the Holocaust taught in all states across America?*

The lack of a standardized curriculum means that Holocaust education is not universally required in American schools. Some states, including California and Florida, have enacted laws mandating instruction on this topic; many others do not address it at all. This inconsistency creates a troubling reality: countless students graduate without ever learning about the Holocaust in any meaningful depth, resulting in significant gaps in historical knowledge and leaving them vulnerable to misinformation. Educators point to time constraints and competing academic requirements, arguing that it's difficult to include Holocaust studies in already overcrowded history courses. However, given the rise in antisemitism and Holocaust denial today, many experts emphasize that this education must be prioritized. Experienced Holocaust educators say that it doesn't much matter which class teaches students about the Holocaust. What matters most is that young people gain an understanding of the circumstances that led to the Holocaust. Holocaust education extends far beyond memorizing dates and facts. It's fundamentally about learning critical lessons in human rights, developing empathy, and understanding the catastrophic dangers of unchecked hatred.

For many Jewish American high school students, there exists a profound sense of frustration regarding how the Holocaust is taught—or in too many cases, not taught at all. Many express that the curriculum barely scratches the surface of such a pivotal event in history, leaving them feeling unheard and unrepresented in their own classrooms. These students recognize that a deeper, more thorough exploration of the Holocaust is essential not only for them but for all their peers, regardless of background.

When the Holocaust receives such minimal coverage, it becomes far too easy for people, particularly those without personal connections to the events, to

forget or dismiss its significance. The deeper concern is that when we neglect Holocaust education, we create conditions that allow denial, distortion, and dangerous indifference to take root.

Government action to promote Holocaust education across the United States is crucial to ensuring that future generations understand the horrific consequences of hatred and intolerance. Learning about this history serves a dual purpose: it honors the memory of the millions who suffered unimaginable pain, and it stands as a powerful reminder that we must actively oppose antisemitism and all forms of prejudice. The bipartisan HEAL Act (Holocaust Education Antisemitism Lessons Act) would direct the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to conduct a nationwide study on Holocaust education efforts in public schools, examining current curricula, requirements, and educational standards. As Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick stated, "The HEAL Act will ensure that our children receive a comprehensive education on the Holocaust, empowering them to stand up to antisemitism and bigotry." While not yet passed, the act's reintroduction in January 2025 demonstrates renewed commitment to making comprehensive Holocaust education a reality nationwide.

The lack of mandatory Holocaust education in all U.S. states creates dangerous inconsistencies in understanding and significantly increases the risk of misinformation spreading among young people. Expanding Holocaust education to every state is not merely an academic concern—it's crucial to preventing the resurgence of antisemitism and promoting a culture of tolerance and respect. Ultimately, we must strive together to build a society grounded in justice, empathy, and equality for everyone.

Makayla Seidman is a junior at Cicero-North Syracuse High School who is a graduate of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School.



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If You Care, You Should Go

by Jef Sneider

They were dancing by the beach in Tel Aviv. Music was playing and a group of random people were dancing in a circle; a leader calling out moves. They looked happy.

We were visiting Tel Aviv and it was Shabbat, January 17, 2026. On the beach the sun was out and the temperature was 70 degrees. People were walking their dogs, playing beach volleyball, riding bikes and scooters. On the water there were windsurfers, sailboats, kayaks and people on standup paddle boards. The crowd was diverse with people of all ages, lots of children and dogs and quite a few robust-looking older men (which made me feel right at home). It felt safe on the streets and on the beach.



During our weeklong stay, we visited memorials to the victims of October 7 including the site of the Nova Festival, the “car wall” of vehicles destroyed during the fighting, and the town of Sderot where a battle took place at the police station. On a different day, our guide brought us to wineries in the Judean Hills, a part of Israel that neither of us had visited before. We bought wine to bring home, hoping to get past the 15% tariff requirement by packing bottles in our luggage.



We visited the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. The best part of that visit was a video, “Observation/The Field Observers of the Gaza Sector: A Video Installation” by Tanya Lavine. We watched interviews with 10 different female soldiers who had been at the observation post near Gaza from 2018 to 2024. Their stories were moving and powerful. Despite that excellent video presentation, we left the museum with the impression that Jewish art is depressing.

Then we went to the Anu Museum of the Jewish People on the campus of Tel Aviv University. We went through security to get on campus, showing ID and allowing them to inspect our bags. From there the campus was wide open, modern and busy. The museum is recently renovated with interactive exhibits, from life size talking images of modern Jewish people and images of families, videos and a whole exhibit of model synagogues from all over the world. We particularly enjoyed a running video of Jewish humor, with clips from Israeli films and American movies, sit-coms like Seinfeld and a Hanukkah song from Adam Sandler. What a hoot! The exhibits celebrated Jewish diversity, focusing on the people and events that have informed Jewish history. If you are in Tel Aviv, do not miss it. It is not depressing, it is uplifting.

If you are like many of my friends, you would love to visit Israel, but it just doesn't ever seem like the right time. When you mention a trip to Israel to your friends, they question your sanity. When you look online, the US government suggests caution. You don't really support the current Israeli government, anyway, do you? Would your visit seem like a sign of support? Maybe you should go to Paris or London, Turkey or Morocco. They love Jews there, and it is safe, right?

I must disagree with the nay sayers and skeptics. Whether you support the current Israeli government or not, now is a great time to visit. First, the economy depends on tourism. Your dollars will contribute to the income of ordinary Israelis in their restaurants and shops. More importantly, the people of Israel need to see you there. Your presence tells them that they still have friends in the world, people who care. If you care, you should go, soon.

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Every year, beginning in January, the Federation asks our community to do something that might seem puzzling at first: make your pledge now, even though you have until December 31st to write the check.

One might reasonably ask: If the deadline for payment is months away, why do you need my pledge now?

The answer lies at the heart of how transformative community philanthropy works, and understanding it may be the most compelling reason you'll ever have to make your pledge today.

The agencies we fund—the ones providing meals for seniors, counseling to people in crisis, Jewish education to the next generation nowhere else to turn—do not operate on a calendar year. They operate on a fiscal year that begins July 1st. That means that right now, today, the leaders of these organizations are sitting at their desks trying to answer one of the most consequential questions in nonprofit management: **What can we afford to do next year?**

Can they hire a teacher for children



with special needs? Can they expand the after-school program that has a waiting list? Can they provide kosher meals on wheels to shut-ins? Every single one of these decisions hinges on one number: how much money the Federation can allocate to them for FY27. **And the**

Federation cannot responsibly commit that number until it knows what our community has pledged.

When you make your pledge—weeks or months before you plan to pay it—you are giving our community agencies the gift of certainty. You are allowing them to plan boldly rather than fearfully. You are freeing them to say “yes” to the people who need them most.

Here is what makes our community so extraordinary: **we keep our word.** Year after year, the Federation has learned that when our donors make a pledge, they honor it. Our fulfillment rate is a testament to the integrity woven into the fabric of who we are as a community. Because of that trust, our Allocations Committee feels confident making funding commitments based on pledges received, not just dollars in the bank.

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Some people wait to pledge because

life is busy, because they want to think about the amount, or simply because they haven't gotten around to it. We understand. But consider this: every week of delay is a week in which agency directors are hedging their plans, holding off on decisions, and serving their communities with one hand tied behind their backs.

You have the power to untie that hand with a phone call or a click on the website that takes less than five minutes. The beauty of a pledge is its simplicity. You are not being asked to give more than you can afford. You are not being asked to pay early. You are simply being asked to **say yes now** so that our community can move forward together with confidence and compassion. Here's how to make it happen: <https://tinyurl.com/jfcnypledge>. And thank you.

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READING THE NAMES OF THOSE LOST IN THE HOLOCAUST



The memory of the Holocaust grows more distant for each new generation. Only by remembering can the repetition of history be prevented. On Tuesday, April 14 from 7 to 8:30 pm, the annual community Yom HaShoah Memorial Observance will be held at Congregation Beth Shalom-Chevra Shas.

Federation's Community Book of Remembrance contains the names of those who were lost during the Shoah, submitted by their families and friends in Central New York. These names are read by our community's rabbis, teens and grandchildren of survivors as part of the program, at which we light candles for all the six million slaughtered.

If anyone in the Central New York Jewish community wants the names of family members who were lost during the Holocaust recorded in the Book of Remembrance and read each year, please send them to bdavis@jewishfederationcny.org.

Derech Manhigut: How Syracuse Teens are Redefining Jewish Leadership

by Ora Jezer

When Epstein School student Cara Engel stepped into the 3rd/4th grade Hebrew classroom while teacher Marian Spitzer spent a semester in Israel, the room buzzed with energy. Cara designed an interactive lesson that had students reading, singing, and exploring letters in new ways, immediately engaging the class. Across the room, Epstein student Asher Moodie guided students through a hands-on, color-coded system for learning Hebrew vowels, turning abstract symbols into a playful, memorable experience. These moments showcase the innovation and leadership at the heart of *Derech Manhigut: The Jewish Teen Leadership Pipeline*, a 95-hour professional fellowship funded by the Federation's Philip L. Holstein Community Program Fund.



This collaborative program, uniting the Syracuse Community Hebrew School (SCHS), the Rabbi Jacob H. Epstein School, and Syracuse University Hillel, prepares teens to lead with confidence through training, mentorship, and service. At Epstein, teens study educational theory, curriculum development, and classroom management, participate in workshops on public speaking and conflict resolution, and practice co-teaching under supervision, reflecting their growth in a professional portfolio.



At SCHS, teens tutor students, manage small groups and design lessons, applying what they've learned. *Madrichim* director Shayna Myshrall supervises them on Wednesdays, coaching them to support students at different skill levels. "The *madrichim* are more confident and organized, and they're working more effectively with students as the year has progressed," she notes. Jeanette Myshrall adds,

"I saw one of our youngest *madrichim* step in to prepare a tutoring session while the team leader was absent. Moments like that show how leadership grows through responsibility to others."

Hillel mentors provide near-peer guidance, showing teens how to sustain Jewish identity and leadership on campus. Teens feel the impact personally. Asher Moodie said, "*Derech Manhigut* has given me the skills and confidence to lead students and create meaningful learning experiences." Cara Engel added, "This program has given me the confidence to speak up, lead, and support my fellow students in meaningful ways."

Parents notice the growth too. Yolanda Febles said, "Through weekly practice, mentoring, and responsibility to others, these young leaders are gaining skills that will carry them confidently into the next chapter of their Jewish lives." Beth Engel observed, "My daughter is truly finding her voice and living Judaism in a meaningful way."

Derech Manhigut is creating a sustainable pipeline of trained teen leaders. The collaboration between SCHS, Epstein, and Hillel strengthens the Syracuse Jewish community today while preparing teens like Cara and Asher to carry Jewish life forward into the future.



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The Number on His Arm

by Susan Sloane, RPh, CDE, CPT



As a pharmacist, I have witnessed many changes in medicine throughout the years. A visit to the doctor today is vastly different than in years past. Certainly, technology and newer medications and diagnostic techniques have improved our medical care immensely. But as I recall a local doctor who served countless patients in Central

New York, I can't help but wonder if compassion and personal care are forever lost.

The doctor's name was David Jakubowski, and his office was part of a house on Salt Springs Road in Syracuse. From the moment my father first took me to "Dr. Jake" as he was affectionately known, I was immediately put at ease by his kind piercing blue eyes and genuine concern. He spoke to me as if I were the only patient he had to care for and carefully looking down my throat. As he put the stethoscope on my chest, he asked me to "breeze deeply" in a heavy Polish accent. I would leave with a hug and a prescription for penicillin, as I was quite prone to strep throat back in the day. Yes, penicillin. Remember that wonder drug?

Dr. Jake's waiting room was always filled to capacity with a variety of people of all different ages. Many of the people patiently waiting did not have appointments, but that was never a problem in this office. Every patient was important, and no one was ever sent home because the doctor was too busy to see them. As he sifted through the patients, he would scurry back and forth, frequently smiling and waving to his adoring fans.

In the waiting room, people exchanged stories about how the doctor had helped them or their loved ones and many even brought snacks and drinks which were shared among the waiting. It was a simpler time; a time when kindness and caring reigned supreme, at least in this office which was more like a friend's home than a sterile physician's office. This was a doctor who had seen his share of times when hatred and cruelty were at the forefront of his life. You see, Dr. Jake had a number prominently tattooed on his arm that was visible under his short sleeved white jacket. It was from a concentration camp where he was once held.

Although that experience could have made him bitter, he never was. There was never a time when he didn't show the compassion and caring for his patients that he was known for. There were times that I saw something beneath those deep blue eyes that I perceived as pain, pain from what he experienced and pain for what he must have seen that was forever etched in his memory.

I will never forget this amazing man who taught me so much about humanity and how we should all act towards one another. Yes, medicine has evolved and changed; treatments are more sophisticated, but I often wonder what we have sacrificed for this "efficiency." To take things one step further, what have we sacrificed for the ease of texting, emails and cell phones? Our very humanity seems to be endangered by the sterility of our new environments.

I love you forever, Dr. Jake and will never forget how you made me feel when I walked into your office, often frightened and feeling helpless, and walked out knowing that someone truly cared. Thank you.

"Cure sometimes, treat often, and comfort always." — Hippocrates

CBS-CS Upgraded PrayGround

by Kelly Klapper, CBS-CS Director of Youth and Education

Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas meets every member where they are, demonstrated through spaces created for children during Saturday Shabbat services. Four spaces serve children's different needs. A teen lounge provides post b'nai mitzvah teens a place to gather and deepen bonds. A sensory room in the school wing offers a quiet space for children needing a break. A babysitting room allows active kids to move freely and play.

The fourth space, the CBS-CS PrayGround, recently received an amazing upgrade. Unlike other children's spaces available only on Saturdays, the PrayGround is open during both Friday night and Saturday Shabbat services. This space keeps kids integrated into the sanctuary, not away from prayers, songs, and the shared community experience of Shabbat. Parents remain in the service with their children, who can

learn, play, and absorb the magic of Shabbat as they grow. It helps make the sanctuary a place children want to visit and ensures CBS-CS's children have room to grow into Jewish adults in a place of joy. CBS-CS revealed the beautifully updated and upgraded PrayGround in December. The sanctuary space was reimagined with a play kitchen stocked with stuffed "quiet" food, a three-in-one Duplo table, train table, and play table, and soft blocks for the youngest congregants to climb and play.

The upgrade was made possible through the generosity of Harvey and Dottie Pearl. Their kindness and care for CBS-CS children allowed the congregation to dedicate the space to children of the past, present, and especially the future. **For more information, contact admin@cbscs.org, call the office at 315-446-9570, or visit cbscs.org.**



When Caesar Was King

by Karen J. Docter, TAY Adult Education Committee chair

David Margolick, author of *When Caesar Was King: How Sid Caesar Reinvented American Comedy*, spoke at Temple Adath Yeshurun on January 25. The event, open to the entire Jewish community, was to be held in-person. Margolick was scheduled to come from New York City through arrangements with TAY's Executive Director, Alicia Gross. TAY's chef, Andrée Finkelstein, had prepared the brunch.

All was well. Then, "Winter Storm Fern" hit.

TAY did not cancel the program but in the space of an hour pivoted to Zoom. Co-president Lauren Thirer managed the technical details, and Margolick and twenty-three attendees celebrated the life work of Sid Caesar, the man who unified a nation through comedy that was actually Jewish humor.



Margolick already had a strong connection to Syracuse through Syracuse residents John and Susan Edwards Harvith, his friends for over fifty years. He combed the Syracuse University Library Special Collections and reviewed the Edwards Harvith Interview Collection for interviews the Harviths had conducted between 1998 and 2000 with Sid Caesar himself and the actors and writers who worked on "Your Show of Shows." These interviews are the cornerstones of Margolick's book.

Jason Klaiber, staff writer for The Eagle Bulletin, also attended the presentation. His article can be found on pages 2 and 9 of the February 2026 edition. *When Caesar Was King: How Sid Caesar Reinvented American Comedy* is available at bookstores.

Being A Mensch

by Susie Drazen

Jacob Gnacik is 8 years old. He loves music, dance, and art. Jacob received some new markers and “how-to-draw” books for Hanukkah. He decided that he wanted to draw as much as possible and then display the pictures at his family’s home “like a museum.” Jacob’s mother told him that he could invite people to come and look at his artwork. Then he got an idea and asked his parents if the artwork could be for sale, because he wanted to raise money “for a good cause.”



Jacob and his cousins, along with other students from the Syracuse Community Hebrew School, went to Menorah Park just before Thanksgiving to work on seasonal craft projects with the residents. He is looking forward to returning to create more crafts and to play music for the residents. Volunteering at Menorah Park made a real impression on him, and Jacob decided that any money raised should go to Menorah Park, “so they can get more craft activities for the people who live there.” When his grandparents learned of the destination for the art sale proceeds, all four attended and became patrons. There was even a bidding war for a few pieces. A family friend matched Jacob’s donation, doubling the total.

Three times each day, in the *Shema*, the liturgy includes *v’shinantem l’vanecha*, teach them diligently to your children. Menorah Park thanks the Gnacik and Sisskind Families and the Syracuse Community Hebrew School for teaching their children diligently about *menschlichkeit*, and the *mitzvah* of *mipnei seyvah takum* (respect and care for our elders) that guides our work each day.

Learning About Community Responsibility at SHDS

by Melissa Klemperer



Danya Boschan, SHD Student Council president and vice president Eliana Adcock presented Federation president & CEO Mark Segel with SHDS students’ donation to the Federation 2026 campaign.

The Syracuse Hebrew Day School Student Council has been encouraging students to give tzedakah each day, reinforcing the Jewish value of responsibility to our community and the world around us. Through these daily contributions, students proudly raised \$267. After thoughtful discussion and consideration, the Council voted to allocate the funds in a way that reflects compassion, community support, and Jewish values. Donations were made to a variety of meaningful causes: \$50 to the SPCA to support the care of animals in need; \$50 to the Rescue Mission of Syracuse, helping individuals and families experiencing homelessness; \$50 to the Syracuse Memory Café, which provides a supportive space for individuals living with memory loss and their caregivers; \$100 to the 2026 Jewish Federation Annual Campaign, supporting Jewish life and services locally and beyond; and \$17 back to Syracuse Hebrew Day School, reinvesting in the very community that made this act of giving possible. This experience gave students the opportunity not only to give, but also to engage in meaningful conversations about values, priorities, and the impact even small daily actions can have when we work together.

SU Men’s Rugby Team Coaches JCC Youth Program

Photo by Leonardo Eriman



Members of the Syracuse University men’s rugby team completed a five week youth rugby program for children ages 8 to 11 at the Pomeranz Jewish Community Center, expanding a volunteer partnership that began last fall.

Eleven SU rugby players coached the free program through the JCC’s youth athletics department, introducing most participants to rugby for the first time. “It starts by cultivating the image of playing rugby and just holding a ball in your hands from the youngest age,” said team captain Patrick Hefrigh. “That’s how you increase exposure to the sport in the U.S.”

The partnership began when Jayden Kass, then a junior at SU’s Whitman School of Management, volunteered at the JCC for required community service hours. He invited teammates to join him at the Senior Lunch program, and their involvement expanded to the Jewish Film Festival and KlezFest. During KlezFest, a JCC board member suggested the youth rugby program.

Donough Lawlor, an SU graduate student who coached youth rugby in Ireland, noted American children face unique challenges with the unfamiliar sport. “Everything is new to them, but they’re enthusiastic and eager to learn,” he said. Sherri Lamanna, director of youth athletics at the JCC, praised the players’ mentorship. “They walk in excited, give high fives, and engage with them. In my 28 years here, you don’t always see that with young men.” Parent Sonali McIntyre said her son Levi became deeply engaged, and the family later attended an SU rugby game. “It shows we’re making an impact,” Kass said.

The players continue volunteering weekly at Senior Lunch, where seniors have formed relationships with them. “Being here isn’t just another place to volunteer,” Hefrigh said. “There’s something special about it.”

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JCC Celebrates 163rd Annual Meeting and Gala on June 7

by Erin Hart and Ashley Schmitz

The Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center of Syracuse is preparing for one of its most anticipated traditions: the Annual Meeting and Gala. This year marks the 163rd celebration, set for Sunday, June 7, 2026, presented by naming sponsor The Wladis Family.



This annual event is the JCC's largest fundraiser of the year, generating critical support for scholarships across its Early Childhood, After School, Summer Camp, and Senior programs. Proceeds also sustain the JCC's Yachad program, which promotes inclusion by helping children with special needs fully participate alongside their peers.

The annual celebration will again take place at Palladian Hall at The Treasury, a highly anticipated return to the elegant downtown venue. Known for its striking architecture and timeless charm, the space lends added sophistication to the day's festivities. The afternoon will open with a cocktail hour on the upper mezzanine, before guests gather on the main floor for a kosher brunch catered by Essen New York Deli.

The afternoon's program will usher in the next chapter of leadership at the JCC, welcoming newly appointed officers and members to the Board of Directors while expressing appreciation to outgoing board members and committee chairs for their commitment and countless hours of service. The JCC will then present four awards recognizing this year's distinguished honorees followed by a thoughtfully produced video tribute. "Each year I continue to be amazed at the honorees selected by our Annual Meeting and Gala Committee," says JCC Executive Director, Marci Erlebacher. "Each and every honoree selected has dedicated their time and energy to the JCC and local Jewish community, and I am beyond thrilled that I will have the opportunity to honor them at our event this June."



The Kovod Award, honoring leadership and service, will be presented to longtime Board Member, Michael Klein. A graduate of the University of Rochester and Duke Law, Michael began practicing law in New York State in 1977 where he dedicated over 40 years of service before retiring in 2020. Michael has served on the Boards for both Jewish Family Services and The Jewish Community Center of Syracuse. Michael spends his winter months enjoying the warmer weather in Florida, but while he summers in Syracuse, he enjoys playing pickleball at the JCC and spending time with his grandchildren.



Phillip Rubenstein, JCC Board member and current Board President, finishing his third year as President, will receive this year's Kovod Gadol Award, recognizing extraordinary dedication and long-standing service to the JCC and the greater community. A third-generation leader of United Radio, Phillip became president in 2005 after founding the company's Home Office Repair Division. A University of Rochester graduate, he has remained deeply involved in civic life, serving on numerous nonprofit boards including Jewish Family Service, Menorah Park, the Jewish Community Foundation of Central New York, and the JCC, where he continues to lead with commitment and care.



Cheryl Schotz will receive the JCC's Hall of Fame Award, honoring her lifelong dedication to the Syracuse Jewish community and the JCC. Since moving to Syracuse in 1968, she has held leadership roles with Women's American ORT, earned her real estate broker's license, and built an active and memorable career in real estate. Cheryl sits on the board of the Jewish Federation of CNY and the Jewish Community Foundation of CNY, and received the Jewish Federation's Esther and Joseph Roth Award in 2022. Among her most meaningful contributions is founding the Michelle Schotz Memorial Fund, supporting literacy for local elementary students. Her daughter's memory is perpetuated yearly at the JCC as this fund supports the after school tutoring program.



Ross Greenky, a Syracuse native, will receive this year's Leslie Award, which honors a rising up-and-coming professional within the local Jewish community for their outstanding commitment and service, qualities which the award's namesake, Leslie London Neulander, personified through her many volunteer pursuits. A graduate of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School, George Washington University, and Duke Law, Ross returned home to become a partner at Barclay Damon LLP and has been recognized as a Super Lawyers Rising Star. He serves on the Syracuse Hebrew Day School Board, including as President, and was a 2023 Pierson Six under 36 honoree, a program endorsed by the Jewish Federation of Central New York.

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Invitations for the 2026 Annual Meeting and Gala will be mailed in April. To support the JCC of Syracuse or place a congratulatory message to a deserving honoree, corporate and individual sponsorships and advertisement opportunities are available in the 2026 Gala Program Book.

For more information on sponsorship, advertising, and tickets, please visit jccsy.org/gala or contact JCC Assistant Director, Erin Hart 315-445-2360 x112.

Make a Splash with Swim Lessons at the JCC

by Ashley Schmitz

With summer just around the corner, the Sam Pomeranz Jewish Community Center of Syracuse is making waves with swim lessons designed to help swimmers of every age jump in, build skills, and have fun.



The JCC offers two class styles led by Red Cross certified instructors so families can choose the format that fits them best. Private lessons offer personalized, 30-minute one-on-one instruction, while small group lessons, capped at six swimmers, combine individualized attention with the energy and fun of learning alongside peers. Group sessions run in three four-week blocks throughout the summer: May 31 through June 27, June 28 through July 25, and July 26 through August 21.

When it comes to signing up, timing matters. Registration opens online for JCC fitness and non-fitness members on May 1 at 10 am, with non-member enrollment beginning May 4 at 10 am. Spots filled on a first-come, first-served basis and no paper applications are accepted, so families are encouraged to log on early and secure their place before lanes fill.

For more information or to register, visit jccsy.org/pool, email aquatics@jccsy.org, or call 315-445-2360.



This column features businesses owned by members of our community, as well as artists and musical programs and is generously sponsored by RAV Properties.

Syracuse Siblings Turn Pandemic Pause into Thriving Film Production Company

When the pandemic brought the entertainment industry to a standstill in 2020, dancer and actor Jake Casey found himself back home in Syracuse, uncertain about his next move. What started as an unexpected return from New York City evolved into The Dazey Phase, a production company that's making waves in the independent film world while keeping its roots firmly planted in Central New York.



Founded by Jake and his sister Eva Casey in 2021, with Danielle Benedict joining the team in 2022, The Dazey Phase carved out a distinctive niche in the competitive landscape of independent filmmaking. The company focuses on inclusive and responsible storytelling, developing and packaging projects in both scripted and non-fiction formats. "I feel like I'm always in a daze," Jake Casey has said of the company's playful name, a reflection of the whirlwind journey from performing artist to film producer.

But there's nothing dazed about the company's focused mission. The Dazey Phase works specifically with creators from prestigious industry programs including The Indigenous List, The CAPE List, The Black List, and Sundance Fellowships. This commitment to diverse voices isn't just good ethics—it's good business, allowing the company to discover and champion fresh perspectives in an industry hungry for authentic stories.

The company's approach centers on films that balance humor with heart, a philosophy that's already bearing fruit. In a co-production entitled *Written in the Stars*, a skeptical Sri Lankan-Australian woman concedes to her superstitious mother and agrees to meet 90 suitors in 90 days. Their project *Egghead and Twinkie*, a coming-of-age comedy in which an Asian American teenage girl takes off on a road trip to meet her online crush with the help of her nerdy best friend, has earned five awards on the film festival circuit.

Beyond simply producing content, The Dazey Phase provides crucial services that many independent filmmakers struggle to secure on their own: financing and distribution. In an industry where getting a film made is only half the battle, the company



helps ensure that the stories they believe in actually reach audiences.

Operating from Syracuse rather than the traditional entertainment hubs of Los Angeles or New York City might seem like a disadvantage, but The Dazey Phase is proving that location matters less than vision and execution. The company demonstrates that meaningful work in film production can happen anywhere, bringing opportunities and attention to the Central New York creative community.

For Casey, who became bar mitzvah at Temple Concord, the journey from Lincoln Center to Syracuse boardrooms represents more than a career pivot—it's a homecoming with purpose. What began as an uncertain pause has become a platform for amplifying diverse voices in cinema, all while contributing to the local creative economy.

As The Dazey Phase continues to grow, it stands as an inspiring example of how local entrepreneurs can build national—even international—impact from right here in Syracuse. In an industry often criticized for its lack of diversity and its concentration of power in a few coastal cities, this homegrown company is quietly working to change both narratives, one film at a time. For Central New York's creative community, The Dazey Phase offers both inspiration and proof: you don't have to leave home to make your mark on the world.



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INA MENTER
January 25, 2026



Ina Helene Menter (née Wallace), age 105, passed gently on January 25, 2026, in Germantown, Maryland. Born in Syracuse, New York, Ina's life was defined not merely by longevity, but by purpose, generosity, and a deep commitment to others.

At her core, Ina was a mother—by devotion, by instinct, and by passion. She was also a devoted grandmother and great-grandmother, taking great joy in the generations that followed her. Her family was the center of her world. Everyone in her family always knew one thing for certain: Ina was in your corner, steadfast and unwavering, always cheering you on. Her love and support were constant, her loyalty absolute.

That same spirit extended outward to friends, neighbors, and the many communities in which she was involved throughout her life. Ina was known for her caring nature, her leadership, and her intellectual engagement. A Silver Life Master bridge player, she brought focus, strategy, and enthusiasm to the game, much as she did to life itself.

She was generous with her time and deeply interested in others, always eager to encourage people in her own distinctive way. Those who listened to her—whether family, friends, or acquaintances—gained something lasting. Ina had a thoughtful, engaged approach to life that inspired others to live more fully and remain curious at every stage.

Ina was predeceased by her husband, Sidney Menter, and her two brothers, Stuart Wallace and Lawrence Wallace. She is survived by her children Jeffery (Shelly) Menter, Eric (Karina) Menter, and Pamela (Michael Buck) Menter; four grandchildren (Shane, Blake, Bretton, and Alejandro); six

great-grandchildren, sisters-in-law Joyce Wallace and Elaine Katzman, and extended family.

Services, if any, are to be determined. In lieu of flowers, charitable donations in memory of Ina may be made to the Alzheimer's Foundation, <https://alzfdn.org/donate/> and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; access via Charity Navigator at <https://www.charitynavigator.org/ein/521309391>.

Ina will be remembered not only for the remarkable length of her life, but for the love, encouragement, and unwavering presence she brought to every generation of her family and those whose lives she has touched. And, as Ina herself said, "life goes on, doesn't it?"

"Those we love do not leave us when they pass; they live on in the kindness they shared, the lives they touched, and the love that remains in our hearts."

MARTIN FRIED
January 30, 2026

Martin Fried, 91, passed away peacefully on January 30, 2026 in Sarasota, FL. Born on February 11, 1934, to Henry and Mildred Levine Fried in Brooklyn, he had been a resident of Syracuse for many years before retiring to Sarasota.

Martin was a practicing attorney and professor of law at The Syracuse University College of Law. After retiring from teaching, he was an associate with the law firm Hancock and Estabrook. He was a previous member of Temple Adath Yeshurun.

He was pre-deceased by his wife Daisy on August 11, 2013. His family includes his daughters Dr. Linda (Dr. Todd Hertzberg) Fried and Marjorie (Carlos) Samper, his stepdaughter Michelle (Alan Bernstein), Goldstein, his sister Sandra Fried, and his grandchildren Sarah Small and Colyer Samper.

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JOSHUA PHILLIP SMITH
January 31, 2026

Joshua Phillip Smith, 54, of New City, NY, passed away on January 31, 2026. He was raised in Syracuse, NY, and graduated from Nottingham High School. He earned his BA in psychology from SUNY Buffalo in 1993, where he was active in the Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity, serving as social committee chair. He maintained strong, lifelong friendships with his fraternity brothers, who visited him frequently during his long battle with ALS.

After college, Josh worked as a stockbroker and later transitioned to the insurance industry. In January 2010, he founded Vanguard Benefit Solutions, which became one of the most successful independent brokerages in the Tri-State area.

Josh loved music, especially the Grateful

CAMILLE JOHANNA GOLDSMAN
February 6, 2026



Camille Johanna Goldsman, 96, formerly of Liverpool, New York, passed away on February 6, 2026 in Atlanta, Georgia, where she resided for the past six years.

Camille was born Camilla Johanna Jagusch on May 29, 1929, in Osterode, East Prussia, Germany. In 1936, after their mother's death, Camille and her brother Siggy were able to escape Germany due to the tireless efforts of their uncle, George Cohn. He connected with the German Jewish Children's Aid Society, led by Cecelia Razovsky, who worked miracles to save Jewish children from the Nazis. The undercover operation they led later became known as the "One Thousand Children" program. Camille's father, grandmother, and much of her extended family subsequently died in the Holocaust. Camille was raised by her Uncle George and Great Aunt Elise in Buffalo, New York.

Dead, and attended many concerts at Bethel Woods, near his family's summer home in the Catskills. He was his musician brother Jonah's biggest fan, hosting a concert at his home every summer featuring Jonah and his band. Above all, Josh was an avid sports fan, especially of the Buffalo Bills and the New York Mets. For many years, he held season tickets to the Mets. He was also a lifelong Syracuse Orange fan.

Josh is survived by his beloved wife, Sherri Feldman Smith; his son, Benjamin, 20; and his daughter, Madeline, 18. He is also survived by his brother, Jonah; sister-in-law, Elizabeth; nephew, Isaiah; and his parents, Sandra and Malcolm Smith.

Contributions in Josh's memory may be made to Everything ALS everythingals.org, Bridging Voice (bridgingvoice.org), and Compassionate Care ALS.

Camille attended The Park School in Buffalo, and the University of Buffalo. She and her husband Sam moved to Liverpool and raised six children. As an adult, Camille enjoyed horseback riding, photographing nature, and outdoor activities. But mostly she loved being a mother, and later a grandmother. Camille was a member of Congregation Ner Tamid and later Congregation Beth Sholom-Chevra Shas and was a lifetime member of Hadassah.

Camille was preceded in death by her parents Paul and Helene Cohn Jagusch, her uncle and guardian George Cohn, her husband of 52 years Samuel, and her brother Siegbert Jagusch. She is survived by her children and their spouses/partners: David (Gamze Tokol), Helene (Walter Deskins), Paul (Britta Serog), Lynne (Andy Dean), Susan, and Michael (Laura McCarty), ten grandchildren: Denis and Mina Goldsman, Leah, Daniel, and Jonathan Deskins, Benjamin (Samantha Chiang), Samantha, and Emily Dean, Michaela Cohen, and William Goldsman; and two great grandchildren: Luca and Eden Chiang-Dean. She is also survived by cousins Caroline Guttman and Helen Rothchild, and nieces and nephews Gail Golden and Mark Goldsman, and Holly and Geoffrey Golden.

The family extends sincerest appreciation to Camille's caregivers, Patricia Thompson and Gabrielle Thompson, who were devoted friends and who will forever be a part of the Goldsman family, and to Camille's physician in Atlanta, Dr. Hogai Nassery.

The family requests that memorial donations be made to the Holocaust Survivors Program at the Jewish and Family Career Services of Atlanta, <https://jfcSATL.org/services/aviv-older-adults/holocaust-survivor-services>.

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ALAN SAUL VOLINSKY
February 16, 2026

Alan Saul Volinsky, 71, of Pittsford, passed away peacefully on February 16, 2026. Alan was born in Syracuse to Seymour and Ruth Volinsky. He built a successful career in the furniture industry that spanned nearly 50 years, working as a manufacturer's representative. He was widely respected for his professionalism, integrity, and deep relationships throughout the industry. His work ethic and commitment to doing things the right way defined his career and earned him lasting friendships.

Alan was married to his beloved wife, Sherry Volinsky, for over 47 years. Together they built a strong and loving family, raising three successful sons: Joshua, Peter, and Jason. Nothing meant more to Alan than his family. He was proud of his boys and the men they became, and he cherished his role as husband, father, and grandfather.

He loved being active and enjoying life's simple pleasures. Whether he was golfing, playing pickleball, spending time on his boat, or negotiating a great deal on a new car, Alan brought enthusiasm and energy to everything he did. He had a sharp sense of humor, a competitive spirit, and a natural ability to connect with people.

Alan will be remembered most for his kindness, his unwavering work ethic, and the way he consistently showed up for the people he cared about. If you needed him, he was there, steady, dependable, and generous with his time and advice.

He is survived by his loving wife, Sherry, his sons Joshua (Allison), Peter (Marisa), and Jason (Victoria), his cherished grandchildren Zachary, Matthew, Madelyn, Adelaide, Wyatt, and Oliver his sister, Lynn (Steve) Bronstein, several nieces and nephews and a multitude of close friends. He was preceded in death by his parents, Seymour and Ruth Volinsky of Syracuse.

Funeral services will be held Thursday, February 19, at 11 am at Temple Beth El, 139 Winton Road, Rochester, followed by a burial at Britton Road Cemetery. His service will be available for livestream at <https://www.tberoc.org/live-stream/>. Shiva will be observed on Thursday at Midvale Country Club from 1-3 pm; Thursday evening 7-9 pm and Friday 1-4 pm at Alan & Sherry's home.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Wilmot Cancer Center or Dean Michael Clarizio Cancer Foundation, 1 Pleasant Valley Road, Denville, NJ 07834 in Alan's memory. He leaves behind a legacy of love, strength, and quiet leadership that will continue through his family for generations.

WARREN SETH ABRAHAMS
February 22, 2026

Warren Seth Abrahams passed away Sunday morning, February 22, 2026, at Emory St. Joseph's Hospital in Atlanta. Warren was born on December 5, 1953 to Jack and Lois Schwartzberg Abrahams in Syracuse. He was a graduate of Jamesville Dewitt High School, earned his bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Rochester, and his master's degree in public health from the University of Miami.

Most recently in his professional career he was an environmental specialist for the State of Georgia in Marietta. He was especially proud to have authored the Georgia State drinking water rules and regulations. Warren was a past member of Temple Adath Yeshurun, and Ahavath Achim Synagogue in Atlanta.

His family includes his son Marc (Melanie); grandchildren Emilia, Collins, Hudson, and identical twins Miller and Wyatt, his companion of many years Fern Schorr, his former wife Judy Abrahams and many cousins and friends.

Contributions in Warren's memory may be made to a charity of one's choice.
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Contact Foundation Executive Director Mark Segel at msegel@jewishfoundationcny.org or 315-445-0270 to learn more.