

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES TO CELEBRATE 150TH ANNIVERSARY

What started as a group of dedicated volunteers in 1854 has grown into the agency the Capital District now knows as Jewish Family Services of Northeastern New York. That's right – JFS will be celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2004.

To celebrate this historic marker, the Board of Directors and staff have been planning a slate of events that will take place from Chanukah of this year to Chanukah of next culminating with the 150th Anniversary Celebration Gala. Live performances, panel discussions, and community forums, as well as the Gala, are just some of the events the Capital District community can participate in to help JFS celebrate its 150th anniversary.

"With a rich history that spans a century and a half, JFS has become a watermark on the life experience of Jews in the Capital District," said Ian Arcus, President of the agency's Board of Directors. "We're going to celebrate this history and give people activities they can think about, laugh about, cry about and maybe even sing along with!"

The kick-off "Rededication" event will take place at Congregation Beth Emeth during the Chanukah season. "Our first event will be a time to 'rededicate' Jewish Family Services,"

said Michael Weisberg, JFS board member and Chair of the 150th Anniversary Events Committee. "We think Chanukah-time is a perfect time to kick off an anniversary year since the holiday itself is a time of rededication and that's what an anniversary is.

"We are very excited that Rabbi Scott Shpeen and Congregation Beth Emeth will be participating in this event. JFS was founded at Beth Emeth and it's wonderful that 150 years later both institutions are still here to celebrate this anniversary together."

While the plans for the rededication are still in the works, Weisberg revealed that there would be a number of activities taking place at the rededication and that a speaker on local Jewish history, particularly with respect to Jewish Family Services, will be at the event. "We hope to have some music and traditional dancing, a piece on the significance of the history of JFS in our community, and a commemorative candle-lighting, followed by a reception. This is an event that will bring people together to celebrate the 'unity' in our community."

The 150th Anniversary Committee is comprised of Weisberg and JFS board members Zvi Gellis, Dorothy

Jacobson and Judy Rettig. In addition, JFS staff person Hilary Schrauf serves on the committee.

"All of us on the committee feel strongly that our events should take place in the Albany, Schenectady and Troy areas to involve and celebrate the people and the communities we serve," said Weisberg. "Looking further ahead to 2004, our plans are still taking shape."

On the docket of proposed events are:

- A fun, intergenerational spring-time event for families, featuring an "Indoor Picnic", in which the whole family can participate
- The Capital Rep Theatre Party on January 25, 2004 featuring "Jacques Brell"
- live musical and stage performances
- the JFS Annual Dinner on Sunday, June 13, 2004 at Temple Israel, and
- community forums and workshops, specifically one on the future of senior services in the Capital District

"This is an exciting year, lending itself to many opportunities for unique events. Look for more details to come soon," said Weisberg.

JFS CONNECTION WITH HEBREW ACADEMY STRONG AND GROWING

This coming school year, Jewish Family Services' Sharon Rosenblum, a certified social worker, will bring sixth grade students from the Hebrew Academy to the Daughters of Sarah Nursing Center for one hour every other week to visit with the residents as part of their academic curriculum.

The Daughters of Sarah visits have proven to be of great benefit to both students and residents.

With the support of Jewish Family Services, Sharon initiated the Daughters of Sarah visits last year to foster understanding and companionship between generations. Based on

the success of last year's program, as well as feedback from the students and her own observations, Sharon is revamping the program to make it an even more meaningful experience for this year's crop of Hebrew Academy sixth graders.

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FAMILY MATTERS

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We welcome your comments and suggestions.

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Ian Arcus

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear friends,

It's amazing to think that JFS will be celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2004. It's even more amazing to see how our programs have grown in complexity and expanded to meet the challenges that face us. JFS programs impact many in our community, from our children to our seniors, and everyone in between. Jewish Family Services has a 150-year history of tikkun olam, healing the world.

Within these pages are many success stories.

I encourage you to read about the meaningful interactions taking place between Hebrew Academy students and Daughters of Sarah residents, the urgent needs of the Supervised Visitation Program, JFS' leadership in the Falls Prevention Initiative, and our extensive resettlement work. These programs not only touch lives, but they also help to build bridges between JFS and the community. Because of our excellent reputation, Jewish Family Services has been selected by BlueShield of Northeastern New York to be a site for informational seminars on Medicare health care alternatives.

JFS' programs receive substantial support from our Friends Campaign, which will begin shortly. This year's Campaign goal is \$60,000, which will help fill the gaps left by decreasing federal, state and community funding. Your pledge to the Friends Campaign is critical in maintaining the programs on which so many in our community depend. We hope we can count on your support.

Lastly, I encourage you to take advantage of the many celebratory events that are being planned over the coming months in honor of our 150th. And, if you'd like to become more involved in the planning process, we'd love to hear from you. Our goal is to make this year of celebration a truly memorable one.

It is an honor and a privilege to follow in the footsteps of Immediate Past President Jeff Finkle, who has distinguished himself these past two years for his hard work and dedication to the missions and goals of Jewish Family Services. I hope to continue his example and provide effective leadership at this momentous time in JFS' history.

As we approach the Days of Awe, my family and I wish you a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year.

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JFS: A PARTNER IN NEW FALLS PREVENTION INITIATIVE

Jewish Family Services is one of several agencies and institutions around the Capital Region actively involved in developing programs that promote wellness for seniors. One



example of this involvement is JFS' participation in the Senior Forum, an organization established by seniors for

seniors, to address issues affecting older people.

Anschel Weiss serves as Co-Chair of the Advocacy Team, a subcommittee of the Senior Forum, whose present initiative is falls prevention. "Injury as a result of a fall is a major problem facing older people, often with serious debilitating effects," said Weiss. The culprit could be a medication prescribed without a clear understanding of how the patient will respond to the dosage given-- dizziness or disorientation from the medication could lead to a fall. Barriers around the home or apartment are another overlooked or ignored hazard for the older person. Something as simple as a loose railing, slippery rug, or even an unlighted staircase could lead to serious injury if a fall results. Studies have shown that the mortality rate for an older people who experiences a fall is significantly higher than for the general population.

The Advocacy Team is hard at work to develop a brochure that provides basic falls prevention information for older people. The plan is to distribute this brochure through the existing network of caregivers and organizations already providing services to seniors. In addition, the Team is developing falls prevention information for the Senior Forum website geared to health care and other providers who work with seniors.

"It is our hope that this aggressive falls prevention campaign will increase awareness in our older population as well as those who provide care for them, thus reducing the incidence of life threatening falls," said Weiss.

Jewish Family Services' involvement in this campaign is just one more example of how JFS is meeting the needs of older citizens within our community.

SUPERVISED VISITATION PROGRAM NEEDS COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Over the past few years, JFS' Supervised Visitation Program has become a beacon of hope for scores of families in Albany and Rensselaer Counties. By providing court-ordered supervised visitation for non-custodial parents in a supportive, respectful and family-friendly atmosphere, the program helps non-custodial parents eventually gain unsupervised visitation with their children.

"We have an 80 percent success rate," said Tina Tronetti-Hotvet, the program's coordinator "and our presence in Albany and Rensselaer Counties has been a tremendous asset for the Family Courts. But, we've suffered some funding cuts this year and we need to turn to the community for support."

To help support the program, a committee of dedicated volunteers, including JFS President Ian Arcus, is organizing a fund raising event at Franklin Plaza in Troy on Wednesday, October 8th from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

"We're hoping to raise \$10,000 to help underwrite the costs of this



important program," said Arcus. "As a lawyer and a professional who works with families, I've seen first hand how difficult a supervised visitation situation can be. The parents can't see eye to eye. The family is disrupted. Ultimately, the children are the ones who suffer the most. The JFS Supervised Visitation Program works closely with the parents in a therapeutic setting to help them become better mothers and fathers."

The program is staffed by human service professionals who help the non-custodial parent with their parenting skills and other issues related

to their status. The staff also works with the custodial parent to help them appreciate the importance of their children maintaining a healthy, loving relationship with the non-custodial parent.

"We can't imagine what would happen if the program wasn't in place," said Arcus. "That's why it is so important for people to come out and support it."

An honorary committee is being organized for the event. The honorary committee will appear in the event invitation, the evening's souvenir journal and in a thank you ad in The Jewish World. The cost for being a member of the honorary committee is \$125 per person or \$225 per couple and includes entrance to the event.

The cost for attending the event will range from \$50 to \$250 depending on the giving level of the individual donor.

For more information or to make sure you receive an invitation, please call JFS at 482-8856.

JFS HISTORY RICH IN *Settlement* Work

After fleeing from Nazi Germany, this family of five took refuge in England until they got passage in 1940 on the last passenger ship from Great Britain to the United

States during WWII. Through the largess of a family member who had been in the U.S. for decades, the family found themselves in Scarsdale for a short time until they were eventually resettled in Albany.



A family party pre-Nazi, 1933 Germany. Bert is on the far left. The two boys to the far right were lost to the Holocaust.

the age of 14 – the middle of three children. His brother, Gerhard, was 12; his sister, Lore, 16. Mrs. Freund and JFS helped them and their parents, Max and Kate, resettle into their newly rented home at 127 N. Pine Avenue in Albany, with a rent of \$50 per month. The family was given free memberships at the Albany JCC and at Congregation Beth Emeth, where Mrs.

Freund was also a congregant.

“The Albany Jewish community was making a concerted effort to resettle German Jewish families,” said Bert Weinberg, who was this family’s middle child. “There was a lady, Mrs. Freund, from Jewish Family Services at that time who helped my parent resettle here. I don’t know how my parents would have managed without her.”

Weinberg, now a familiar face and name in the Capital District Jewish community, came to Albany in 1940 at

JCC, which at that time was located on Washington Avenue near the Albany Institute of History and Art. He and his siblings also went to the Beth Emeth Religious School when the synagogue was located on Jay St., now the home to the Wilborn Temple.

A year later in 1941, Weinberg’s paternal grandmother, Frieda, came from Germany at age 78.

“That’s when they were still letting elderly Jews out of Germany,” said Weinberg. “She lived with us for a year until she died in December of 1942. She lost four siblings in the Holocaust, but fortunately never learned of this.

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Soon after settling in Albany, Weinberg enrolled at Albany High School. He spent time swimming at the Albany

JCC, which at that time was located on Washington Avenue near the Albany Institute of History and Art. He and his siblings also went to the Beth Emeth Religious School when the synagogue was located on Jay St., now the home to the Wilborn Temple.

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Bert and his paternal grandmother, Frieda Weinberg

“As Weinberg grew, Mrs. Freund gave him letters of introduction for jobs at the Playdium Bowling Alley, still located on Ontario St., and the Colonie Country Club, then located where Colonie Center presently stands.”

“When Grandma died, Mrs. Freund came to the house. She arranged for a funeral director – I remember her telling him not to charge a lot. And, she arranged for Beth Emeth to donate a grave site. She’s the person my parents turned to whenever there was a problem.”

As Weinberg grew, Mrs. Freund gave him letters of introduction for jobs at the Playdium Bowling Alley, still located on Ontario St., and the Colonie Country Club, then located where Colonie Center presently stands. “I was paid 5 cents for each game during the winter. In the summer, I caddied at the Country Club for 45 cents a game.” Weinberg soon found himself caddying at the Albany Country Club, located where the University at Albany’s uptown campus presently is, for 90 cents a game. “They had an 18 hole course. The Colonie Country Club had only 9 holes.”

Mrs. Freund was also helpful in finding gainful employment for Weinberg’s father, Max. A junior Judge in Germany before WWI and a tax administrator after that war until the Nazi takeover, his father was well-versed in accounting. After working some small jobs, his father went to work for the Boocheever CPA firm. After the war, he helped many German

refugees receive restitution from the German government.

Once Bert turned 18, he was drafted in October of 1944. At that point, he was halfway through his junior year at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI). Once he got through basic training, Weinberg was sent briefly to engineering school in N. Carolina – what is now N.C. State. Then, he was assigned to an engineering unit that was headed to the Pacific but before he could leave both Germany and Japan surrendered. He did a year in Japan and Korea during the occupation but in the fall of 1946 came back to Albany, picking up his RPI studies on the GI Bill. He graduated in 1948 at the age of 21 and began a professional life that spanned 43 years and found him in New York City, Chicago and ultimately back in



Max and Kate Weinberg flank Grandma Freida.

Albany. He spent 28 years in state service, first with the State University Construction Fund and then with the Dormitory Authority. When he turned 65 in 1991, Weinberg retired.

During those years he met his wife, Irma, a teacher who, in fact, still teaches at Hudson Valley Community

College. They have a daughter, Wendy, and a son, Dan. Both are married and have given the Weinbergs a total of six grandchildren.

Bert Weinberg’s story is certainly one of triumph over tragedy. During his years in England, he saw his father interned in a camp for three months because he was German – this came 18 months after Kristallnacht. After this night of horror, Weinberg’s father was jailed for ten days. He lost many relatives in the Holocaust. And, he and his family narrowly made it to the U.S. But, make it they did – with the help of Mrs. Freund and the agency she represented, Jewish Family Services.

“The commitment of the Albany Jewish community to resettle German Jewish families in the 1940’s is much like the effort we made in the 1980’s and 90’s to resettle Russian Jewish families here from the Soviet Union,” observed Weinberg, who is active in the Jewish Federation as well as other community and professional organizations.

Jewish Family Services was at the forefront of both those resettlement efforts. What started in 1854 as a committee to assist new Jewish arrivals to Albany, 150 years later has become a major community asset that strives to help anyone in the Jewish community. While the influx of New Americans has tapered off, the agency is still vital in providing cutting edge programs and services to the Jewish community.

When the Weinberg family arrived here in 1940, the hand of JFS and the Albany Jewish community was extended. Little did anyone realize how much solid groundwork had already been laid to build a caring community.

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Your help is needed this year more than ever. Our goal is \$60,000 –
to help fill budget gaps created by funding cutbacks.

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Shirley Temple joins Daughters Of Sarah resident Eleanor Murphy.

One of the challenges that students faced last year was going directly to visit the residents without having a clear understanding of the workings of the nursing home. This year, students coming to Daughters of Sarah for the first time will be given an orientation and a tour of the facility. On each subsequent visit, students will spend about ten minutes meeting with various departments at Daughters of Sarah from maintenance to senior management to get a better overview of the facility and the services available to residents. They will talk with Rabbi Magidson about the chaplaincy program. They will meet

with the Food Service Manager to find out how meals are planned and dietary requirements met. They will visit with nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy and recreation therapy staff to better understand what's involved in providing care to the residents.

"Although the intergenerational experience is still the primary focus of this program, we have several other goals in mind," said Sharon. "It's important for the students to have a comprehensive view of the



Dora Gittleman (right) whoops it up for Purim with Hebrew Academy visitors

nursing home. We want them to understand that residents do have

choices regarding their care and their recreational activities, to realize that decisions are often not black and white, and to develop an appreciation for all the layers involved in providing care to residents. We also hope this experience will make students more



Students from Hebrew Academy show their sense of style at The Time Traveler Fashion Show they produced for Daughters of Sarah residents.

aware of career and/or volunteer opportunities in human services and the healthcare field, particularly working with older populations."



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