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The Newsletter of Jewish Family Services  
of Northeastern New York

**TWO MEN OF COMMITMENT AND COMPASSION TO BE HONORED  
BY JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES**

Rabbi Michael Szenes and Mark Koblenz will be recognized for their outstanding service to the Jewish community at Jewish Family Services' annual awards dinner on Tuesday, June 10 at Congregation Ohav Shalom in Albany.

"Both men have offered decades of services to the Jewish community," said Jeff Finkle, JFS President. "Rabbi Szenes has served as Rabbi, an educator, friend and a man of commitment and compassion for over 40 years, while Mark has been an outstanding volunteer in the Jewish community for over 25 years." Koblenz will receive the agency's Volunteer of the Year award and Rabbi Szenes will receive its Community Service Award.

Born in Budapest in 1916, Rabbi Szenes was ordained on May 12, 1942 at the Jewish Theological Seminary of Hungary. (He was the last group of rabbis ordained before the Nazi takeover of the country.) Despite the occupation, Rabbi Szenes continued to provide spiritual leadership for his congregation. He emigrated to the United States in 1947 and came to Congregation Gates of Heaven as rabbi in 1959. During his 25 years at Gates of Heaven, Rabbi Szenes led not only his congregation, but the community as well. He was one of the founders of the Schenectady Commission on Human Rights and was involved with the transformation of the Protestant Minister Organization into the Schenectady Clergy Professional Association and served on the committee that transformed the local church council into the Interfaith Community of Schenectady. "Rabbi Szenes built

bridges between the Jewish and Christian communities at a time when it wasn't easy to do so," said Anshel Weiss, Executive Director of JFS.

In a 1981 tribute to Rabbi Szenes celebrating his 20th anniversary at Congregation Gates of Heaven, he was noted as a psychologist and counselor, a Judaic scholar and teacher, a hospital visitor, a Neo-mayor, and a spiritual leader. Rabbi Szenes is "a Jewish magician, covering almost everything of the moment: our surrogate in relation to Judaism, to God, to commitment to Temple. He must inspire us religiously and at the same time understand when we do not act upon inspiration," said Hester Shapiro who delivered the Sisterhood tribute at the 20th event. "Clearly, no human being—even a spiritual leader—can do all these things. Not in eight or ten hours. Michael Szenes does them—in a 16 to 18 hour day."

In February of 2003, Rabbi Szenes celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination. He has been congratulated for his leadership at Congregation Gates of Heaven and has been an inspiration to other congregations. "He has touched the lives of many and his leadership will continue to inspire the people and the programs that have been initiated under his direction," said Katherine H. Raycroft of Human Services Planning Council of Schenectady County, Inc.

Mark Koblenz, husband and



Rabbi Michael Szenes

Mark Koblenz

father of two is an Albany native and graduate of Union College. He received a juris doctor degree from Albany Law School and was admitted to the state bar in 1978. He is now a partner in the law firm of Roland, Fogel, Koblenz & Petroccione. He has served as counsel to the State Senate Labor Committee and offers pro bono legal services to the Albany County Legal Aid Society.

Mark has served as a member of the board of directors of Temple Israel as well as chairperson of TI's legal, finance, garage sale, and endowment committees. He is currently executive vice president of the synagogue as well as serving as co-advisor to the Temple's United Synagogue Youth Program alongside his wife, Marta.

"Mark's energy and commitment to the Jewish community is tremendous," said Finkle. "Not only is he being feted by JFS, but B'nai B'rith singled him out this year as well with its Covenant Award."

Further accomplishments of Mark's include serving as president of the Daughters of Sarah Nursing

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# FAMILY MATTERS

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We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Please contact us at:

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's hard to believe that my two years as President of the Jewish Family Services Board of Directors have come and gone so quickly. Serving on the board has been both exciting and challenging.

While we struggle every day to manage our shrinking resources to minimize the impact on our clients, we continue to look for new ways to reach the people who need us. For example, we expanded our SeniorOptions program to include a very successful in-home counseling service; and we are

now in the process of exploring a collaborative effort to bring a NORC (Naturally Occurring Retirement Community) Program of supportive services to Albany. (see page 3 for more details).

We are very fortunate that our community has supported this agency for 150 years, making it one of the oldest in the country. Over the past two years, we've been very excited about celebrating this landmark year, which will open with the upcoming 2003 Annual Dinner and end with a gala celebration in 2004.

I'm very proud of what we've accomplished and where we're headed. I wish Ian Arcus the best of luck as he takes the reins and helps guide the agency for the next two years.

## BOARD SPOTLIGHT: PETER ROSENFELD

After supporting Jewish Family Services for over two decades, Peter Rosenfeld decided to give us his time and talent as well as his treasure. Joining the board in 1999, Peter has been the agency's treasurer for the past three years.

"Our family has a long standing tradition of giving to Jewish agencies. For over twenty years we were friends of JFS. We strongly supported the Russian Resettlement program," said Peter, who owns a string of convenience stores as well as a number of Ben and Jerry's ice cream shops. "I finally had the time to seriously get involved and become more active,"

After growing up in New York City, Peter migrated north to Albany as a college freshman to attend the University at Albany. After graduation, he settled in the area to teach 8th grade Science in Bethlehem, where he remained for ten years. In 1980, Peter opened the first computer store in the Capital Region called the "Computer Room." In 1990, he said good-bye to the computer world

and began purchasing convenience stores.

His penchant for keeping busy opened the door for his tenure as president of Beth Shalom in Clifton Park and co-chairman of the building fund for the synagogue during the 1990's. In addition to JFS, Peter also serves on the board of The Daughters of Sarah Nursing Center.

Outside of volunteering and his professional life, Peter is a devoted husband to a successful freelance writer and retired teacher. They have raised two sons--one who is a researcher at the American Museum of Natural History and the other who is married and studying in Israel. Together, as a family, the foursome has supported JFS.

"I feel that there is a demand in the community for JFS as part of a safety net for people who need assistance in the capital region," said Peter. "I am honored that I get to be part of such an outstanding organization."

# AGING IN PLACE MAKES IT EASIER TO FIND SENIORS!

A new service concept and delivery model for getting seniors the services they need is being explored by Jewish Family Services.

NORC—Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities—are areas where seniors have naturally come together in a living situation.



These are places where seniors are "aging in place." NORC Supportive Service programs work to put a supportive structure in place that is by nature proactive, preventive and already familiar to seniors when they need services.

"We're looking at the NORC model of support services so that JFS can bring innovative senior programs to where the seniors live in a more comprehensive manner," said Anshel Weiss, JFS Executive Director. "For the past school year, a number of students from the University at Albany Hillel chapter have been working with us to survey our community. There is a need for a NORC model in our community."

The NORC model JFS is looking to pursue is a collaborative endeavor that involves agencies, providers, senior NORC residents, volunteers and other interested parties from the state or local senior service network.

"Our goal would be to coordinate a range of health and supportive services to improve the residents' health and quality of life as they age in place," said Miriam Adler, the agency's Assistant Executive Director who oversees the senior programs. "We want to meet their needs and desires as they move across the continuum of the later part of their lives."

Through census data, JFS has identified a one and a half square mile area of Albany bounded by Marwill Street/ Academy Road on the east, and Whitehall Road/New Scotland Avenue on the west. This area of Albany contains the largest number of older residents living independently.

The area's housing stock is primarily one and two-family dwellings and many of these older residents have lived in their homes for 30 to 40 years. The general area has remained stable with little shifting of populations or institutions. A

large number of these elderly residents have been the mainstay of their religious and neighborhood institutions.

"A NORC program for this neighborhood will ensure its stability as the elderly population grows older and frail," said Adler.

The JFS NORC model recognizes that these elderly have needs unique to being a homeowner—needs such as basic

home repair, snow removal, mowing the lawn, etc.) Additionally as a small city, Albany has a limited public transportation system as most residents have traditionally relied on cars. One of the critical services that this NORC would incorporate would be transportation services appropriate for those who no longer drive.

Other services JFS hope to coordinate with its partners are:

- Chore and repair services to maintain property and ensure residents' safety.
- Transportation services for medical, shopping, educational, social and community activities
- Shared aide services to assist people with personal care and other daily living activities
- Basic housekeeping
- Follow up and support system for residents who have been discharged from a medical facility
- Community nurse program
- Team of community outreach workers to monitor status of vulnerable residents
- Educational programming to promote wellness and provide support groups
- In-home mental health services to improve residents' abilities to cope with depression and other psychological problems
- Information, referral and advocacy

"The discussion around the NORC concept has been exciting," said Weiss. "Our community partners are excited and recognize how this type of program can really make a difference in the lives of our seniors."

## Senior Update

### Cap Rep

170 of Jewish Family Services' supporters spent the evening together on Sunday, March 7th to see Capital Repertory Theatre's staging of **Driving Miss Daisy**. The story, known to many from the movie of the same name, chronicles the life Daisy Werthan of Atlanta, "fine, rich, Jewish lady," according to her black chauffeur, Hoke Coburn. *Driving Miss Daisy* is the bitter-sweet drama about the unspoken friendship between this unlikely pair over a quarter of a century, from 1948 to 1973. Monies raised by the event help to underwrite JFS' SeniorOptions—the full range of senior programming that the agency offers. Special thanks go to The Finkle Family for underwriting the event and to JFS board member Peter Rosenfeld and Administrative Secretary Hilary Schrauf for coordinating our very successful raffle.

### In-Home Counseling

One of the most successful senior programs is our In-Home Counseling Program. JFS counselors and social workers visit home bound elderly who still live in their own homes. The majority of clients are women between the ages of 62 and 95 from both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities. The program has grown substantially since it began in 2001. In 2002, JFS saw a total of 53 clients in their homes. In just the first five months of 2003, the agency has already seen 34 people and is confident that many more will be seen before the year's end. Half of the clients are native Albanians while the other half have been moved to the Capital District to be closer to their adult children. The visits are often covered by Medicare which enables seniors of all income levels to take advantage of the service.

### Arthritis Program

Last year, JFS was awarded a grant from the Arthritis Foundation, the New York State Office for the Aging and the New York State Department of Health to train people in both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities how to conduct support groups for people living with arthritis. To date, 6 trainees have gone through the 8 hour training and are now teaching the series of six two-hour classes. Trainees came from JFS volunteers as well as the Albany-Colonie Chamber of Commerce's Capital Leadership Class of 2003. Each year, the Capital Leadership class takes on community projects—this year, JFS and the Arthritis Training was one of the projects. The Arthritis Self-Help Course is presently being given at both the Ohav Apartments and the Beltrone Living Center. The classes have been full and JFS will make more training and classes available for anyone else who wants to get involved.

## INCLUSION PROJECT TO EXPLORE BIAS WITH TEENS AND PARENTS

ALBANY—How should adults respond when their teens talk to them about anti-Semitism and other bias related incidents? Who do teens turn to when they witness or hear anti-Semitic remarks?

These questions and more will be explored at an upcoming workshop—**Where Does It Hurt: A Dialogue and Workshop for Teens and The Grown-Ups in their Lives**. Sponsored by the Inclusion Project of Jewish Family Services, the workshop will take place on Sunday, June 8, from 1 p.m.-3:30 p.m. at Congregation Ohav Shalom on New Krumkill Road in Albany.

"With reports of anti-Semitism and other bias-related incidents on the rise, it is vitally important to understand how our children are affected and to give them the tools they need to respond positively," said Michael Weisberg, a board member of JFS and co-chair of the Inclusion Project. "We need to keep safe, honest lines of communication open within our families and our communities. This dialogue and workshop will provide a Jewish space for adults and teens to discuss how it feels to be Jewish in a non-Jewish environment."

All participants will be invited to share their thoughts and experiences and will be joined in discussion by Ohav Shalom's Rabbi Dan Ornstein and Linda Bakst from the Anti-Defamation League's World of Difference® Institute. Bakst will also be showing a film produced by the ADL on

these issues. The panel will also include the voices of teens from the Jewish community. There will be facilitated small group discussions where teens and adults will be afforded the opportunity to speak with their peers candidly and constructively about these issues.

Bakst is New York State Project Director of *A World of Difference® Institute* of the Anti-Defamation League which provides hands-on training to help children and adults challenge prejudice and discrimination. The training also helps people to learn to live and work successfully and civilly in an increasingly diverse world. The Institute is a leading provider of diversity and anti-bias training and resources.

The Inclusion Project is Jewish Family Services' outreach program for lesbian and gay Jews as well as those families in the Jewish community with lesbian and gay family members. This program will examine the issues of anti-Semitism and the various biases individuals face in our society and how to mediate differences.


For more information or to pre-register, call Jewish Family Services at 482-8856.

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Center for three years. During his term, he oversaw the expansion project development steering committee and headed the Memory Enhancement Center and nursing home renovations. In 2000, the New York Association of Homes and Services for the Aging named him Trustee of the Year. Since 1989, Mark has served as treasurer, vice

president and president of the Hebrew Academy of the Capital District. He is also a former board member for Jewish Family Services and serves as volunteer counsel to the Va'ad Ha'Kashruth of the Capital District and was named the Va'ad's 2000 Volunteer of the Year.

Tickets to the dinner are \$65 per person. An honorary committee for

the event has also been established at a cost of \$125 per person and \$225 per couple. As a member of the Honorary Committee, your name will appear in the souvenir journal, a Thank You ad to be published in the Jewish World and in JFS's fall *Family Matters* newsletter. For more information, call JFS at 482-8856.

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