

FAMILY matters

The Newsletter Of Jewish Family Services



Strengthening Families.



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CHANGING OF THE GUARD: Miriam Adler Named New Executive Director of JFS!



Jewish Family Services of Northeastern New York is happy to announce the promotion of Miriam Adler, ACSW, LCSW, to Executive Director!

After nearly two decades as Executive Director, Ansel O. Weiss, Ph.D., retired as head of the agency at the end of 2006. Weiss' wealth of accomplishments as head of JFS will be celebrated at the JFS Celebration on June 10th at Temple Israel in Albany (*see back page of Family Matters for more information*). Weiss will still remain involved with

JFS as a consultant and advisor, and will assist with Adler's transition from Assistant Executive Director to head of the agency.

"There is no one more appropriate than Miriam to lead JFS," said Weiss. "I've worked with Miriam for many years. She knows this community inside and out, and understands what JFS can and should do to respond to community needs, concerns, and challenges."

Adler is looking forward to continuing Weiss' work, and leading JFS through its' next stage of growth. "We're looking forward to developing educational programs to reach all segments of our community," she said. "We're also going to continue our work in developing community and interfaith collaborations. Building a supportive community in our area is something our agency feels very strongly about."

Adler grew up in the Albany area, and feels that her upbringing has left her with a unique perspective on the area in which she now works. "I've seen the changes in the community. I understand that different groups have different levels of expectations. I hope this agency can help make this an inviting area to live, both for those who already live here, and for those looking to make the area their new home."

Her deep understanding and appreciation of the Capital District and its' growth over the years is rooted in her own history. Having grown up in East Schodack as a descendent of one of the original farm families settled in the area by Baron Maurice de Hersch (a Belgian nobleman who established a fund to help Jews emigrate to America in the 1890's), she has a great sensitivity to the emerging needs of the people in the area.

Prior to assuming the role of Executive Director, Adler served as the clinical director and as assistant director of the agency. Adler received her master's degree in social work from Case Western Reserve University's School of Applied Social Sciences in Cleveland. She and husband Joseph live in Albany, and have two grown sons, Michael and Jonathan.

"Miriam is very highly regarded for her clinical skills, as well as for her ability to critically analyze problems," said Weiss. "I know that she will continue to build the agency, and forge new collaboratives with the Capital District community."

Inclusion Project Brings Heralded Film and Producer to Area March 11th

Join the Inclusion Project of Jewish Family Services for two special screenings of the critically-praised 2005 film *Hineini: Coming Out in a Jewish High School* on Sunday, March 11th at Congregation Beth Emeth in Albany.

Hineini, Hebrew for 'here I am,' tells the true story of one girl's journey towards creating a gay-straight alliance at her Jewish high school in Boston. Called "an engaging portrait of a pioneering teen activist" by *Variety*, *Hineini* captures Shulamit Izen's work at The New Jewish High School (now Gann Academy) as she moves towards connecting more deeply with her faith and her community.

Screenings of *Hineini: Coming Out in a Jewish High School* will take place at 1 p.m. for teens (free admission), and a 7 p.m. screening for adults (\$8). Each screening will be followed by a panel discussion featuring Idit Klein, one of the producers of *Hineini*, and Ariel Wortzman, one of the students featured in the film.

"We're very excited to have Idit Klein and Ariel Wortzman here for both screenings," said Libby Post, coordinator of the Inclusion Project, which works to create an inclusive atmosphere for the Jewish GLBT community through social and synagogue programming. "*Hineini* is a film that inspires

discussion. It will be wonderful to have Idit and Ariel here to give us their personal insight."

In the film, directed by Irena Fayngold, Izen enters school in 9th grade as an out lesbian. Through interviews with family, students and faculty, the film paints a poignant portrait of the complexity of Jewish tradition and social change. According to the *Boston Globe*, "[*Hineini*] examines how one community balanced its members' profound and conflicting needs... Fayngold captures [the] tension... [and] the emotional stakes."

More than just the story of one girl making a difference at her school, *Hineini* addresses the topic of diversity within the Jewish community and resistance in the face of change with refreshing honesty. The film has been screened at more than 35 film festivals worldwide, including the New York Jewish Film Festival and the World Pride Jerusalem Film Festival.

"It's great to see how the Inclusion Project has grown," said Judith Rettig, member of JFS' board of directors. "In just a few short years, the Inclusion Project has grown into something that is supported by the area synagogues and the community. It's helping to bring a new level of discussion and learning to our area, and it's adding value to the Jewish experience here."

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We welcome your comments and
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Henry Skoburn

Dear Friends:

I'm sure many of you, when asked to express your feelings in writing about an issue or a person, find that experience both difficult and daunting. Perhaps it's the concern that what you put down on paper will not come across as you had intended.

In this issue of *Family Matters*, we're talking about something that's very important to me, both personally and as Board President of Jewish Family Services, so I'm going to do my best. I'm referring, of course, to the passing of the torch from Anschel O. Weiss to JFS' new Executive Director Miriam Adler.

New leadership can usher in major changes for an organization, particularly for one that has been so strongly shaped by a leader as JFS was shaped by Anschel. Fortunately, Anschel and Miriam have worked as a team for many years, and JFS has grown immeasurably because of their combined efforts.

I have great faith in Miriam taking over as our new Executive Director. She has the strength and foresight to be able to make the smart decisions that keep JFS growing, expanding and improving. She also has the analytical skills needed to guide the development of new and existing JFS programs, with the future growth of the agency always in mind.

As you can tell by reading this issue of *Family Matters*, JFS is in a period of rapid expansion and evolution. Every day, we are working to improve life and strengthen families in the Capital Region and beyond. Every day, we serve more families, individuals and older adults. Every day, we meet with new communities, and work on the development of vital new programs and services. Anschel Weiss' leadership brought us to this point, and I have complete confidence in Miriam to maximize JFS' current period of growth, and to lead the agency to the next level.

In closing, I'd like to take this opportunity to express my deepest appreciation on behalf of the entire JFS Board of Directors to thank and commend Anschel Weiss for his many years of tireless effort and exemplary work as JFS Executive Director. The impact of his work will continue for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Henry Skoburn
President, JFS Board of Directors

PROJECT FIVE Expanding to Troy and Albany!

Jewish Family Services of Northeastern New York's highly-successful senior transportation program, PROJECT FIVE, is extending services to Albany and Troy, and we need your help to make it happen.

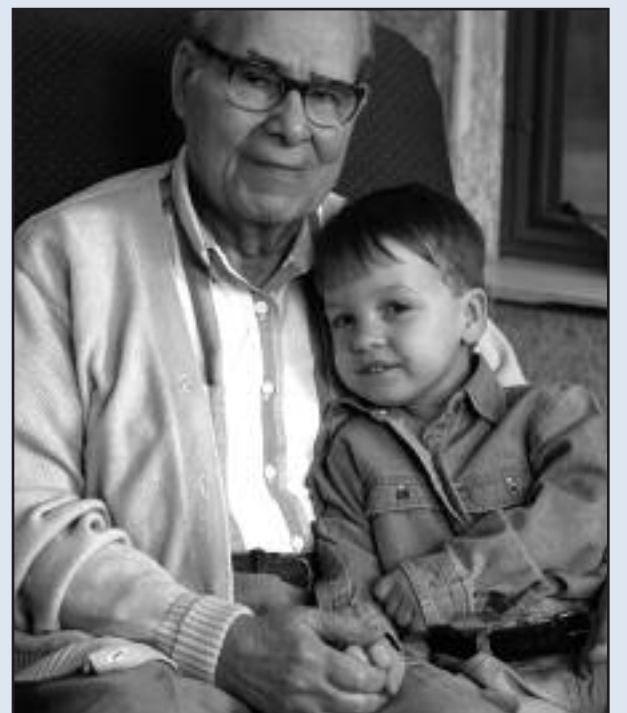
"This is a unique transportation program for the Capital District's Jewish Community," said Sally Bratspis, project coordinator. "PROJECT FIVE trains volunteers to recognize and care for the normal signs of aging, and address any changes in passengers so that we can meet their needs."

Over the past eight months, PROJECT FIVE volunteers have provided much-needed transportation and companionship for older adults in Schenectady. PROJECT FIVE, which has been funded by the United Jewish Federation of NENY's Committee on Aging, provides affordable, safe, reliable, round-trip transportation for Jewish adults aged 60 and above for medical and dental appointments, shopping and errands, as well as religious services, cultural events and social get-togethers.

Sisters Beverly Eisenstadt and Shirley Levey serve as volunteer drivers. "We pick people up at their homes and take them wherever they need to go," said Eisenstadt. "A man was dying in the hospital," continued Levey. "PROJECT FIVE brought his friends there to say goodbye."

Octogenarian volunteer driver and program promoter Sadie Schneider finds her work with PROJECT FIVE to be very gratifying and hopes that one day the program's volunteers can assist her. "I'm counting on it," she said. "When the day comes that I can't drive, PROJECT FIVE will be a godsend to me."

PROJECT FIVE invites all in the Capital Region, and especially those in Albany and Troy, to get involved! PROJECT FIVE is looking for volunteers to serve as drivers (mileage cost will be reimbursed), non-driver support persons, dispatchers and administrative aides. For more information on PROJECT FIVE, the three-part training program or to volunteer, please call (518) 482-8856 or email Sally Bratspis at sbratspis@jfsneny.org.



NOTES FROM THE NNORC

Jewish Family Services is proud to report that our Neighborhood Naturally-Occurring Retirement Community (NNORC) has had a very successful first year! In just one year, our staff has provided referrals, advocacy, and intensive transportation services; answered calls for information, and facilitated enrollment in Medicare part D and Expanded In-Home Service for the Elderly (EISEP), a New York State in-home care program for frail seniors.

In addition to our work with individuals, we have also organized a number of education and health screening programs to benefit the entire NNORC region. Some of our 2006 program topics included: Medicare changes, financial management, care giving, nutrition, and home safety. We have also organized blood pressure screenings, and flu shot clinics in the fall.

A large focus in our first year of operations was making the community aware of our presence. To do that, we have held programs at such venues as Maria College (our Red Hat program), Sage College Albany (where we held our volunteer recognition luncheon), and the Albany Academy for Girls (which hosted meetings for our picnic planning committee, and several intergenerational programs with seniors). Several residents have even begun calling our program a virtual senior center!

Seniors in the NNORC have shared their ideas and suggestions with us, leading to great programs for all! "Seasonings for Your Heart" at St. Sophia's Church was a very popular social event that had good nutritional information and samples of food for seniors. The Red Hat program at Maria College promoted mental health and the necessity of maintaining a positive attitude while having a wonderful time.

Our neighborhood volunteers have been invaluable! By July, our volunteers included Neighborhood Council members, picnic planning committee members, and volunteers inviting residents to monthly programs and assisting with the monthly newsletter mailings. In August, we had our first annual picnic in the NNORC that included an army of volunteers before during and after the event, and students from the Albany Academy for Boys have helped clean up yards for seniors in both spring and fall.

Our volunteers have also been engaged in friendly visiting and phone calls, taking residents to doctor's appointments, beauty salon visits, and food and

NNORC BY THE NUMBERS

In 2006, NNORC:

- Responded to information requests from 521 area residents.
- Program volunteers logged almost 500 hours of service.
- Volunteers served 144 seniors.
- Held 29 programs at area synagogues and churches.
- Held 16 educational sessions at locations throughout the area, which were attended by nearly 230 people total.
- Served more than 280 older adults through programs and health promotion groups.
- Held 2 outings: an October day trip to the Culinary Institute of America and FDR Library & Museum, and a summer visit to Saratoga Performing Arts Center for a performance by the New York City Ballet, with a gourmet lunch at the Gideon Putnam Hotel.

clothing shopping. Volunteers also call residents on a regular basis to remind them about upcoming events, and make sure they're doing well with bad weather. Our volunteers also call residents to find out what they think about NNORC services, and to get ideas for new activities. In December, we had a volunteer recognition lunch that included a brainstorming session for small get-togethers in the neighborhood.

In August, we launched our website at www.nurturingneighborhoods.org. The site has been helpful for adult children living far from their parents in the NNORC, giving them a way to request assistance for their family. The site also contains information about our partners, and a volunteer interest form. For more information on the NNORC, or to get information on becoming a volunteer, just go to www.nurturingneighborhoods.org!

Hundreds Gather for December Inclusion Project Event!

On December 3, a capacity crowd (close to 400 people) gathered at Congregation Ohav Shalom in Albany to hear Rabbi Steve Greenberg, the first openly-gay Orthodox rabbi, speak on the role of homosexuality in modern Judaism.

Rabbi Greenberg, who was featured in the highly-acclaimed 2001 documentary "Trembling Before G-d," is the author of *Wrestling with G-d and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition*. He is a fellow at the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, a leadership training institute and resource center in New York City, and is a founder of Jerusalem Open House, Jerusalem's GLBT community center.

The event was organized by Jewish Family Services' Inclusion Project, which works to create an inclusive atmosphere for the Jewish GLBT community through social and synagogue programming. Prior to Rabbi Greenberg's entertaining and thought-provoking discussion, an honorary reception and book-signing took place in the synagogue's social hall for sponsors and guests of Rabbi Greenberg.





THE INCLUSION PROJECT
OF JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES presents

הנני Hineini

COMING OUT IN A JEWISH HIGH SCHOOL

A documentary which chronicles the story of one student's courageous fight to establish a gay-straight alliance at a Jewish high school in the Boston area and the transformative impact of her campaign on everyone involved.

Sunday, March 11th

1pm screening for teens – FREE • 7pm screening for adults – \$8
Congregation Beth Emeth, 100 Academy Road, Albany

Each screening will be followed by a panel discussion featuring Idit Klein, the film's producer, and Ariel Wortzman, one of the students featured in the film, as well as voices from our local Jewish community.

For more information, contact Libby Post at lpst@jfsneny.org or 482-8856

Save the Date!

Join Jewish Family Services
as we honor

Anschel O. Weiss
Executive Director Emeritus

At the JFS Celebration
Sunday, June 10th

6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Temple Israel in Albany

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