



The Chronicle

The Community Newspaper of the Jewish Council of North Central Florida

Issue #10, Summer 2020

Sivan - Tammuz 5780

We Are Stronger Together

When we started planning the summer (June/July) edition of *The Chronicle*, our intent was to fill this space with one last push for giving to the Jewish Council's 2020 Annual Campaign, which will close on June 30th. And while our Annual Campaign is important and necessary for the Jewish Council's existence, there are more urgent matters in our world that must be addressed right now.

The events surrounding the murder of George Floyd at the hands of law enforcement in Minneapolis on May 25 have ignited a world-wide protest movement. We at the Jewish Council are heartbroken and angered by this senseless and tragic loss of life. We stand with the African American community and all communities in mourning the deaths of Mr. Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and far too many others who have lost their lives because of the persistent racism that afflicts our nation.

In May 2016, the Jewish Council partnered with African American leaders to plan and host a Freedom Seder, which was attended by over 60 people. In the four years since that powerful and moving Seder, representatives from the Jewish and African American communities have been meeting regularly to further develop those friendships. Our mission has been to learn about and from each other to have a better understanding of the history, the goals and the challenges of our respective peoples. And now, more than ever, the urgency and necessity of those relationships are crystal clear. As Jews, we know personally and painfully the dangers of unchecked hatred, particularly when it becomes institutionalized within the structures of society. Our tradition compels us to not stand idly by and we share in the responsibility of crying out against injustice and forging together a constructive and peaceful path forward. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with, listen to and learn from our partners in the African American community to make our nation a more equitable, safe and inclusive place for all.

The Jewish Council of North Central Florida
embraces inclusivity, kindness and community.

Jewish values transcend all faiths, culture,
abilities, and gender. We believe in and practice
Tikkun Olam (repairing the world),
Kavod (respect), and Kehillah (community).

We stand with our African American brothers
and sisters, who are our friends, family,
and community leaders, as we strive to make the
world kinder, stronger and more accepting.

Don't miss Comedian Benji Lovitt on Zoom!

BENJI LOVITT
Comedian-Educator
Thursday, June 11th
8:00pm EDT
Zoom Show

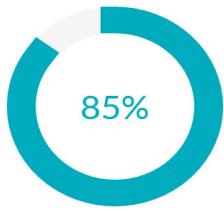


Jewish Quarantine

Through a mix of his insights into Israel combined with a look at "Zoom Seders" and "streaming t'filah," Benji brings his hilarious standup straight to your living room. A great distraction from the "new normal."



**This program is hosted by the
Institute of Southern Jewish Life
and Sponsored by the
Jewish Council of North Central Florida.
The Zoom link will be sent the
week of the event.**



Together we can do extraordinary things!

JCNCF's Annual Campaign goal for 2019/2020 is \$200,000, and so far we have raised over \$170,000. That's 85% of our goal. Visit www.jcncf.org to make your secure donation online now, or contact us at 352.371.3846 or office@jcncf.org.

The Jewish Council of North Central Florida operates entirely on the contributions of generous community members like YOU! With that in mind, the JCNCF events that you see listed in this newsletter each month are made possible by those donations. Please consider making a gift to the Annual Campaign or to any of our special funds. Your donation supports Jewish causes locally and globally and means so much to so many.

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JCNCF Mission Statement

As set forth in the Articles of Incorporation, the JCNCF has been formed to operate and engage in philanthropic, cultural, and other group activities for charitable and educational purposes that shall contribute to the welfare of the Jewish community of North Central Florida and other Jewish communities around the world.

The Chronicle

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Submissions Policy

News and announcements of events that are of interest and open to the entire Jewish community will be included as space allows. The times and places of regular and special Jewish religious events, as well as Jewish organizational events, will be placed in the Chronicle's monthly community calendar.

Please submit original material of 500 words or less, not published or to be published elsewhere, along with photos of interest to the community. Submissions may be e-mailed in Word document format to chronicle@jcncf.org; or dropped off at the Jewish Council of North Central Florida office. Please submit photos in high resolution with a caption identifying the subject and all people depicted. JCNCF reserves the right to edit all submissions. *The Chronicle* does not publish letters to the editor.

The Chronicle and the Jewish Council do not endorse the goods and services advertised in these pages, and make no representation as to the kashrut of the food, products, and services in such advertising.

If you have any questions, email chronicle@jcncf.org or call 352.371.3846.

***All submissions are due on or before
the 10th of the month prior to publication.***

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Why Study Yiddish, or: The Crisis in Hebrew Studies

By Dr. Dror Abend-David, Lecturer
The University of Florida

About a year ago, a group of students petitioned the department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures at the University of Florida to begin teaching Korean. The students filled three new sections (75 people!), and the department hired a faculty member to teach Korean. A new study program was born.

When it comes to Jewish students, who compose a large minority at UF, the situation is very different. Few of them sign up for courses in Hebrew language and culture that have been offered for many years by the university. Questions about the decline in enrollment in Hebrew courses should first and foremost be addressed to the relevant faculty members, myself included. But there are a number of causes that are beyond our control. First, it has to be admitted that Hebrew is difficult for speakers of American English. It belongs to a different family of languages, and it is an ancient language that preserves many different temporal and geographical layers.

There is also an issue of social class. Unlike the aforementioned Korean students, Jewish students don't consider themselves a minority. Like many American Jews, they see themselves as White and privileged. And, as in the case of many White Americans, they often feel that "English is Enough". Finally, there is an issue that many prefer not to raise: Because Hebrew has been adopted as the language of Zionism and of the State of Israel – it has been increasingly identified with right-wing politics. And while this should not necessarily create a problem in Florida, this certainly has an adverse effect on some people.

These are also some of the reason that I took the initiative of introducing courses in Yiddish at the University of Florida, with a new beginner's course in the coming fall. Over the past two decades, Yiddish, the language of European Jews, has regained popularity and interest in institutions such as Columbia, Harvard, Penn State, and Ohio State, and overseas at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, Oxford, Trier, Düsseldorf, and Bar Ilan and Tel Aviv University in Israel. Among other venues, Yiddish has been introduced as a vital means for studying and reevaluating the life of European Jews in Eastern Europe before the Holocaust, and a vital – sometime radical – means for studying Jewish secular culture, literature, music, theater, drama and even a vibrant Jewish film industry in the beginning of the twentieth-century.

In addition, since Yiddish is a European language, it is much easier to study for speakers of American English than Hebrew. And, for those who do not want to be tied to a particular political agenda, Yiddish is the language of Jewish Diaspora rather than Jewish Nationalism – spoken by and written as part of Enlightenment as well as religious life, Socialism, Modernism, Hasidic legends, and the Yiddish press, literature, textbooks, grammar book, medical books, the theater, and every walk of life of European Jewry.

Most importantly, while many Jewish communities in the United States adopted Hebrew over Yiddish in the 1940s – Hebrew is still the language of Hebrew Schools and synagogues. For most American Jews, whose grandparents and great grandparents came from Eastern-Europe, Yiddish is the language of dreams and legends, food and anecdotes, family secrets, and cherished memories of the *Bobi*, the *Mame*, the *Kinderlakh* and the *Eynklakh*.

In short, Yiddish offers an emotional venue for rediscovering the roots of American Jewry and finding a personal connection to a rich culture, as well as an exciting scholarly venue, not only for Jewish Studies, but to almost any aspect of European Studies, Immigration, and Diaspora Studies.

Come and study Yiddish. Non-Jews are also very welcome in class!





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Board Members Reflect on Olivia Berger's

By Dr. Ken Wald

In less than two months, our small tribe has lost a pair of matriarchs. After saying goodbye to Estelle Aden in late March, we now bid farewell to Olivia Berger who died on May 2nd in Peekskill, New York. She was 92 years old.

She was a presence and it's hard to imagine the world without Olivia Berger in it. At her Shiva minyan, one guest succinctly captured her essence as "a strong woman without a filter." When I checked the thesaurus to find a more delicate synonym for such a no-nonsense person, I half expected to see Olivia's photograph.

As tough as she was, she was beloved and returned that love ten-fold to Herb, her husband, their children (Joel, Bob, and Fran), her five grandchildren, and other relatives and friends.

Her love also extended to the Jewish people. That was the role I knew most about because of her years as Executive Secretary of the Gainesville Jewish Appeal which became JCNCF. This was one in a long line of positions she occupied in Jewish organizations.

Olivia never quite understood that this was meant to be a part-time job. She threw herself into it at a time when the organization had problems. She set up an office in her home and took on any responsibility that was suggested to her—and more. She was extraordinary conscientious about her job, about the future of the organization, and about keeping the officers' and Board's mind on priorities.

When I was president of the organization, I made countless trips to her house in Forest Ridge. We would discuss pressing issues of business and then ponder the fate of the world. After these meetings, I'd exchange a few words with Herb in the living room where he was usually watching baseball. More than once, I sat with him to enjoy a few innings of a televised game. Those were work trips but with a heavy dose of pleasure mixed in.

Olivia believed deeply in the mission of Jews to support our brethren and worked tirelessly toward that end. She took a deep personal interest in our annual campaign and pressed upon me our responsibility to spend every dollar wisely. Our donors deserved that much, she insisted.

I recall one conversation about the purchase of some piece of computer equipment. She had checked out the options and reduced them to two possibilities. She told me frankly that the cheaper of the two options would do the job adequately but she preferred the more expensive choice because it offered additional functions. It pained her to admit that she wanted to pay more than was absolutely necessary. When I asked how much more the better option would cost us, she told me the price difference was something like three dollars. I authorized the purchase, struggling to keep a grin off my face.

I admired her strength, her straightforwardness, and her doggedness—all of which were put into service for the Jewish people in our corner in the world and elsewhere.



By Sharon Hirshik

Olivia Berger passed away and many of our newer community members may not know how special Olivia was to the JCNCF Board. Olivia was the JCNCF executive secretary for many years. She was passionate about JCNCF. We had no office at the time and Olivia designated her home as the JCNCF office. She had boxes and boxes of files and worked diligently on all aspects of the organization. I had the privilege of working with Olivia when I joined the board 13 years ago until she moved to New York in 2010 to be closer to her son and his family. Many board members worked closely with Olivia for far longer than I. I kept in touch with Olivia over the years and she sounded happy there. She, of course, got involved with volunteering in her independent living community.



Olivia Berger in her home office, aka the JCNCF office.

By Stuart Cohn

About 10 years ago Olivia moved to upstate New York to be closer to family. Yet, she remained in touch with her Gainesville community and continued to support the Jewish Council. A wonderful human being, true to her ideals in every sense, she will always be dear to our hearts.



From right: Olivia Berger, her sons Joel, Bob, and daughter Fran.



Olivia and her family enjoying wine in Israel.

I'll admit when I first met Olivia, she was pretty intimidating. She was fierce about paperwork, timeliness and accuracy. Over time, I learned from working with her as the Program Director for the Jewish Community Center Without Walls back in early 2000, I realized her fierceness was really the manifestation of her dedication to the JCNCF and its mission to enhance our community. She was very committed to Jewish Gainesville and the JCNCF. I have thought about Olivia many times over the years and hope that I can make her proud carrying on her dedication to our Jewish community and the JCNCF. She was a wonderful person, kind and passionate about Judaism. May her memory be a blessing to others. I know it is to me.

Through Crisis Lays Opportunity

**By Emma Eytan, Grants and Development Coordinator
The Jaffa Institute**

Nearly 40 years ago, the Jaffa Institute was founded with the mission to provide Israel's most vulnerable communities with the educational, nutritional, therapeutic, and social enrichment they need to escape the cycle of intergenerational poverty. In recent months, COVID-19 has caused a global public health and economic crisis that impacts people from all over the world. In addition to the tragic human toll, over a million Israelis have lost their livelihood.

Amid the devastating crisis, the Jaffa Institute remained committed to our Passover Food Project. Each year, this project delivers essential holiday foods and cleaning items to help thousands of impoverished families and elderly individuals, including Holocaust survivors, to celebrate the holiday in health and dignity.

This year, we faced unprecedented challenges, ranging from limitations on volunteer gatherings for food packaging to the universal economic crisis affecting many of our donors. During this precarious time, our program participants are at an increased risk, with widespread unemployment leading large families to spend long hours in cramped, dilapidated apartments, with added stress and bleak resources. Conversely, Holocaust survivors and other elderly individuals find themselves spending hours, days, weeks, and even months in total isolation.



A volunteer prepares food packages as part of the Passover Food Project.



A Jaffa Institute staff member delivers a food package to an elderly program participant in selfisolation.

Naturally, we feared that the situation would compound the preexisting difficulties within the communities we serve. To our amazement, we were not alone in our concerns. Connecting with friends old and new, we were humbled to learn that our donors were devoted to supporting the Jaffa Institute's work during this difficult period. In fact, at a time when many nonprofits, sadly, have ceased activities, our supporters enabled us to expand Passover food deliveries to 500 additional families in response to the increased need in our service area. As the sun set on leil ha'seder, all 5,000 of the food package recipients celebrated Passover with full plates, joyous spirits, and a hopeful message of better days to come.

Looking forward, our regular nutritional security work continues as we deliver meals directly to the homes of the children who would usually receive hot lunches at our After-School Educational Enrichment Centers. This guarantees that the children have eaten a filling meal before they begin their remote learning activities with our staff.

Likewise, our therapeutic programming has also continued, and even grown, as we have begun to provide the Holocaust survivors in our care with weekly virtual therapy sessions to treat their heightened depression and anxiety.

In maintaining the founding essence of the Jaffa Institute, even as the

An Update from the Jaffa Institute



Zoom lesson at the Bet Metsuba After-School Educational Enrichment Center for Children with Special Needs.

communicate. Maintaining a sense of routine and instilling students with a sense of security, the staff use these groups to present the participants with the daily schedule of activities. From one-on-one video chat tutoring sessions, to daily challenges, including creating face masks, and engaging “Science Mobile” video lessons, the Jaffa Institute maintained our daily commitment to uplift the at-risk children in our care.

To support parents, the social workers at our Parent-Child Center are creating videos containing lectures, stories, songs, and activities for young children. Typically, the Center supports low-income residents of Jaffa and South Tel Aviv. However, the indiscriminate coronavirus does not care if you are impoverished or affluent. Now, transcending the confines of geography, parents from all over the country who are stuck at home are tuning in to get ideas and tips.

After seven long weeks of stay-at-home order in Israel, the government approved the partial reopening of our After-School Educational Enrichment Centers for at-risk youth at the beginning of May. Carefully following the government’s social distancing and hygiene laws, these at-risk children are elated to be back with their peers, learning, sharing, creating, and playing together again. We are deeply moved by the renewed positive energy in these Centers and look forward to the ability to re-open the rest of our activity sites.

While we know that the social and emotional effects of this time period will be with us for the months ahead, we are nonetheless eternally grateful for your support as we navigated through this challenging and unknown territory. Through your various gestures of support, our program participants were assured through every step of the way that they are not alone. Indeed, despite unprecedented levels of isolation, we are also seeing people around the world come together in innovative and inspiring ways. In fact, although the Parent-Child Center videos are in Hebrew, we invite you to enjoy some of the songs and dances together with your children: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/MERKAZGEFEN/>.

The Jaffa Institute has enjoyed a long-standing friendship with JCNCF and we look forward to the time when we can meet in person once again! In the meanwhile, please contact mitch@jaffainst.co.il with any questions.

physical doors to our centers closed, our educational programming has never stopped. Given that all of our program participants were referred to us by the municipal social welfare authorities as a result of their “at-risk” status, it is imperative that our staff continue to support their educational and emotional progress. With the support of donors around the world, we are purchasing laptops to enable our program participants to continue learning remotely, just like students in Gainesville. We know these technological devices will benefit the students immediately and in the long-run.

Adapting to remote learning, each Jaffa Institute program coordinator created text messaging groups to allow staff, students, and parents to



Program participants at the Jaffa Daled After-School Educational Enrichment Center practice social distancing as they reunite after two months of self-isolation.

Transitions: Community Life Events

Mazel Tov!



Alisha and Nadav Katz are excited to announce the arrival of their daughter Eleanor Yael Katz, 7 lbs., 4 oz. Granddaughter to Debra Kinman-Ford and Michael Kinman, and Dr. Yossi and Tova Katz. Niece to Rebekah Ford, Michal Katz and Yoni Katz.




Mazel tov to Dr. Desmond Schatz, Interim Chair of Pediatrics and UFDI Pediatric Medical Director on receiving the UF College of Medicine Lifetime Achievement Award!



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Transitions: Community Life Events

Do you have a life cycle event you would like to share with our JCNCF community? Please submit items to chronicle@jcncf.org. Submissions may be edited as space allows. Pictures are welcome and encouraged! Transitions may include birth, engagement and wedding announcements, bar and bat mitzvah, graduations, promotions and honors, and memorials.

In Memoriam: Our community mourns the passing of these beloved friends and family members:

Carole Goldfarb,
Aunt of Jesse and Corinne Lipnick

Jason Howard Rothstein,
Brother of Paul Rothstein and Suzanne Colvin

Eric Meyerhoff,
Husband of Harriet,
Father of Mark and Margo,
Brother of Gertrude z'l,
Uncle of Steven and Linda,
Ben and Ashley, Sarah and Rachel

May their loved ones find solace in their memory.

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Helping Hands Clinic Dinner Has Re-Opened

The Jewish Council needs your help to provide a meal for the Helping Hands Clinic. Due to COVID-19, the clinic has been closed for the past couple of months and will be re-opening in June. JCNCF will be partnering with DB's Rolling Dough, a local Jewish owned pizza truck to provide a special meal for the clinic's patients and volunteers. To donate now in support of this project, please contact the JCNCF office at 352.371.3846 or office@jcnf.org



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