



JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE

*supporting our community one child,
one adult, one family at a time*

News from the Heart

Serving Those Devastated by the March Tornado

When family homes were destroyed by the March 2020 tornado, JFS was ready to help. JFS served as the lead agency to distribute money raised by The Federation for disaster relief. Each family was given an amount of emergency cash based on how many people in the family. A few months later, families could apply for a second round of financial assistance for rebuilding. Each family had a horrifying account of how their home was destroyed in minutes. Below is one family's story.

I remember being woken up at 1:00am on March 3 by the severe weather alarm on Eddie's phone. I remember him telling me that there was a tornado. Because he is from Massachusetts and I'm from Georgia, my response was, "you're in the South, this always happens, go back to sleep." He looked at the radar and saw a rotation to which I responded, "what are you a meteorologist now?" There was a lot of lightning and thunder. When Eddie saw nickel sized hail he said we should get in the closet. I said, "I'm not getting in the closet, let's turn on the news." But as we turned on the TV, the power went out. Eddie insisted we get in the closet, but I still resisted. But then the second time he screamed, "get in the closet" I agreed. In the last moment before getting into the closet, I turned around and grabbed my wedding band from its spot on the nightstand. We closed the closet door behind us as we got into the small space. A few minutes later I got a text from my friend in Bellevue telling me there was a tornado coming our way and to take cover. Seconds after that text, I heard glass shattering, windows blowing in. Eddie said, "it's just the windows, don't worry, we'll fix them" and then we felt this tremendous pressure in our ears like being on an airplane at 10,000 feet. I



Eddie and Lauren Driscoll



Mezuzah still intact

remember looking at him and saying, "it's here". I remember him holding onto the doorknob while leaning over to say, "You know I love you right?" And I replied, "I love you too." When he speaks about this moment, he says that he believed he was going to die and had come to terms with that. I don't remember hearing anything, but Eddie remembers it sounding like thousands of trees falling in the forest—wood cracking and the house falling apart. Only 30 seconds later it was gone. The door had sucked in on us, past the door frame. I remember kicking it open and seeing our bathroom floor scattered in glass. When we walked into our bedroom, the bed had flipped against the wall, there was mud ALL over the floors and walls. I called my mom, waking her up, and she began to panic. As I kept her on the phone, Eddie and I walked

Tornado continued on page 11



Executive Committee:

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Danielle Mendelson
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Toni Jacobsen, LCSW
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Ashley Franklin, LMSW
Social Worker

Anna Sir
Helping Hands Coordinator

Janet Parr
Senior Administrative Coordinator

Nancy Reed-Nevin
Controller

Dear Friends,

2020 has turned into an interesting year for all of us. For an agency whose mission is to serve people, Jewish Family Service made a 180 degree turn in March with the onset of the pandemic.

Strength in our community, in our Board and in our staff and volunteers is what we have leaned on since March. As the days grew into weeks and then months, we understood that we needed to work together to ensure those who depend on JFS would know we were there for them - as our staff always are. Regardless of a communal crisis, this is the way in which JFS operates every day. A stellar work ethic, compassion, flexibility, can-do and will-do attitude assures we continue to meet the needs of our current and new clients.

Our existing 18 programs grew with 8 additional new programs added to service our clientele and the community. These programs were added seamlessly to respond to the pandemic.

Before the pandemic, Nashville experienced another devastating tornado. JFS responded to the needs of the community as we always do, with ease and compassion.

Our dedicated and creative staff deserves all the kudos we can muster - they have addressed every issue and every client with dignity, style and grace. On behalf of the board and the community, I would like to thank Pam, Toni, Ashley, Anna, Janet and Nancy- JFS would not be the agency it is without any of them. As a footnote, Nancy, our controller, joined us at the end of February - what a welcome!!

It has been said that deep within any crisis is an opportunity for friends and strangers to step up and help. We are fortunate to live in a community



Nan Speller at the JFS Annual Meeting

where tikkun olam, or “repairing the world,” is a part of the fabric of our identity. Because of you, our clients have the support they need to care for themselves and their families. Our community is always extremely supportive of JFS, but the generosity of our supporters has been inspiring, both with stepping up as volunteers and monetary support since the start of the pandemic.

My thoughts are with those who have experienced challenges during these trying times, whether they be financial, physical or mental health related. JFS is here to serve you.

Nan Speller
JFS Board President





Our Honorees of the Year



Leslye Lapidus, Chaver award recipient, with her family



Chessed 2020 was postponed until 2021 when we will honor Nancy Flexer (upper left) and Howard Safer (lower right). Also pictured are Pam Kelner, Danielle Mendelson and Alyssa Trachtman Chessed co-chairs.



JFS Staff, Ruach Award recipient 2020

Jewish Family Service's core services and programs:

(statistics are July 2019-June 2020)

In total - over 1600 clients were served by JFS

- Adoption** 24 people served
- Case Management** 2 people served
- Counseling** 107 people served
- Cyber Seniors** 10 people served
- Emergency Financial Assistance** 30 people served
- Family Life Education** 143 people served
- Golden Lunch Bunch** 32 seniors served
- Hanukkah Gift Program** 115 individuals served
- Healthy Skills for Healthy Kids** 22 children served
- Helping Hands Volunteer Initiative** 309 seniors served
- Helping Hands Music Program** 9 people served
- Information and Referral** 507 people served
- Jewish Job Network** 35 job seekers served
- Kosher Food Boxes** 39 individuals served
- Low-vision Program** 5 individuals served
- Opening Minds Through Art** 3 people served
- Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!** 9 tween and teen girls served
- Senior Seder** 37 seniors served
- School Supplies** 14 people served
- Support Groups** 25 individuals served

Highlights of 2019-20

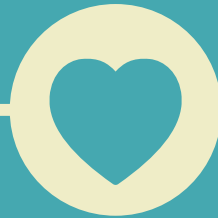
Senior Technology Program (44 seniors) - educational program for seniors to teach them the power of technology. Demonstrations included shopping, social media, streaming services from their congregation. This program took place in January, not too long before the lockdown. Those who wanted further training on their own devices were served through our new Cyber Seniors program. The timing of both programs could not have been better.

Triple header **educating our community about LGBTQ+ identities** and how to create caring, connected and supportive communities. Audiences were: teens, parents and Jewish professionals **(80 individuals)**

Jewish members of the community who **suffered catastrophic damage from the March 2020 tornadoes** were assisted in multiple ways: financial grants, free counseling sessions and coordinating for replacement of items in the home (appliances, beds) **(25 individuals)**



IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 JFS HAS ADDED 8 PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS UNCOVERED NEEDS IN THE COMMUNITY



Mental Health Support



Anxiety Support Group



Covid Conversations



From Surviving to Thriving:
4-part workshop

Programs Supporting Older Adults



Bi-monthly Zoom
get-togethers to combat
isolation



Porch visits, conducted
from a safe distance



Delivery of essential items
including masks, toilet
paper, gloves



Expanded telephone
reassurance calls



Pen Pal Program

WE WAITED, WE WATCHED, WE RESPONDED.

801 Percy Warner Blvd, Suite 103
Nashville, TN 37205
jfsnashville.org



Jewish Family Service



Shawn Reilly conducting an activity with parents



Jewish Family Service CEO Pam Kelner, Shawn Reilly, Galia Godel, Jewish Family Service Social Worker Ashley Franklin



Teens participating in workshop

Helping Teens and Parents Navigate the LGBTQI Space

By BARBARA DAB

Using the Jewish values of being welcoming, creating connected communities, fighting for justice and saving a life, local teens and their parents learned principles and developed skills to navigate the evolving LGBTQI space. The program, helped participants understand how to define LGBTQI identities, how to support peers and children and how to promote wellness in LGBTQI youth, among other things. Teens and parents were in separate groups, with each group receiving similar materials.

Galia Godel, Program Manager of LGBTQI Initiatives with JFS of Philadelphia, was the presenter for the teen group. There was role playing and discussion designed to help the teens understand proper definitions of terms like sex, gender identity and sexual orientation. The group of about 30 teens asked questions, shared ideas and helped each other problem solve some potential issues that may arise with their friends.

Education professionals also participated in a workshop led by Godel. The focus for that program was on making changes in the classroom to make the space more

inclusive. That also includes making the language more inclusive. “I encourage organizations to update their paperwork to say things like ‘parent one or parent two.’ To say ‘guardian,’ instead of ‘mother and father.’ Don’t assume the gender of someone’s parents. Those little changes that take some practice can make a big difference for students.”

The parent’s presentation was given by Shawn Reilly, Trans Buddy Program Coordinator for LGBTQ Health at Vanderbilt. They say that for the parents, a big challenge is keeping up with the dynamic nature of the LGBTQI community. As people are moving to redefine themselves using new terms, it can be difficult for parents to keep up, particularly if they don’t have access to the new information. Shawn says education is key to bridging the gap that can arise between parents and their young people, “Learning terminology and identities is important, and can help build common language so that we all can have deeper and more fulfilling conversations. More important than specific rhetoric though, is practicing affirmation without expertise. You are never going to completely understand the experiences of another person, but

you can affirm them in their identity and support them.” Abbie Wolf, both a parent and a teacher at West End Synagogue Religious School, said the discussion did just that. “I felt like my understanding of how people define themselves was outdated. I really wanted to understand the terms, the concepts so that I can be as supportive as possible and to know a little bit more about what I was talking about. I felt there were just these huge gaps of knowledge,” she said. As for her 12-year-old daughter, Abbie said she felt very positive and learned a lot from it. And while this issue has not been very central in her life just yet, she will have this experience to draw from as she matures. “I also think for her generation, these kinds of discussions are less extraordinary.”

Shawn also talked about what they call, “Systems of Inequality.” These include barriers to education, low or no income, inadequate or no health care and risk of homelessness. They shared that forty percent of homeless youth are LGBTQ and Nashville has just six beds for trans teens. They cited reasons such as lack of funding and an LGBTQI community center or space. But they said that there

LGBTQI continued on page 11

“It was amazing to hear Galia have meaningful conversations with the kids and watch them be engaged and interested.”

Jewish Family Service is grateful to the families and individuals who participate in our ongoing Tribute program. It is a wonderful way to honor special people in your life and, at the same time, help fund the vital programs of JFS.

IN HONOR

Dr. Daniel Bregman
Rebecca & Marshall Millman

Rabbi Howard Cohen
Thank you for serving as Rabbi at the bris of Sullivan Leo Mirowitz!
Hilary & Eric Mirowitz

Lauren & Mike Cooper
Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!
Karen & Howie Weil

Abby Sparks and Challah for a Cause

Laura Baker
Tamara Baker
Jessica Banish
Katherine Cannon
Kelly Cortesi
Krisann Hodges
The Hoffman Family
The Isaacs Family
The Jover Family
Kim Kaplan
Melissa McGee
The Meadows Family
Ellen & Steve Potash
Marsha Raimi & Elliott Garrett
Ashely Robinson
Dave Rosenberg
Elizabeth Sitgreaves
Michelle Smith
Anne Warner

Barbara & Tom Davis
Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!
Karen & Howie Weil

NCJW Past Presidents
NCJW – Nashville Section

Nancy Flexer
Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!
Karen & Howie Weil

Nancy Flexer
Congratulations on receiving the 2020 JFS Chesed Award!
Sherrie & Alan Eisenman
Rae & Bruce Hirsch
Mindy & Kenny Hirt
Carol Katz
Pam & Saul Kelner
Leslye & Steve Lapidus
Jan Liff
Debi & Charles Robin
Carolyn & Barrett Rosen
Cathy & Howard Rosenblum
Carol & Roy Smith
Shirley & Stuart Speyer
Barbara S. Turner
Bruce Zeitlin

Mimi & Frank Friedman
Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!
Karen & Howie Weil

Cindee & Michael Gold
Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!
Karen & Howie Weil

Julie & Bob Gordon
Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!
Karen & Howie Weil

Rabbi Adam Greenwald
Thank you for serving as Rabbi at the bris of Sullivan Leo Mirowitz!
Hilary & Eric Mirowitz

Carol & Howard Hayden
Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!
Karen & Howie Weil

Sandra & Steve Hecklin
Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!
Karen & Howie Weil

Sandra & Steve Hecklin
Mollie & Bobby Perry

Gail Jacobs
Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!
Karen & Howie Weil

Nancy & Raymond Jacobs
Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!
Karen & Howie Weil

JFS Staff
Congratulations on receiving the 2020 JFS Ruach Award!
Rae & Bruce Hirsch
Barbara & Bob Woolf

Leslye Lapidus
Congratulations on receiving the 2020 JFS Chaver Award!
Sally & Bruce Alterman
Arlene Averbuch
Jessica & Sam Averbuch & family

Larry Averbuch
Didi & Brian Biesman
Ellen Dansky
Jill & Dan Eisenstein
Bobbi & Barry Freeman
Cindee & Michael Gold
Martha & Fred Goldner, Jr.
Michael Gryll
Sherry & Grif Haber
Rae & Bruce Hirsch
Mindy & Kenny Hirt
Irma Kaplan
Pam & Saul Kelner
Steve Lapidus
Dede, Larry & Betty Lipman
Brett Mirman
Candy & Kieth Mirman
Elaine & Michael Neumann
Janet Parr
Ruth Pressman
Joyce & Joe Rosenfeld
Brenda & Bill Rothschild
Alyssa Trachtman
Karen & Howie Weil & family
Irene & Alex Wolchansky
Barbara & Bob Woolf
Erin, Greg, Rena, Sari & Tali Zagnoev

Jenny & David Lewis
Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!
Karen & Howie Weil

Judy & Mickey Metzman
Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!
Karen & Howie Weil

Martha & Bob Nemer
Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!
Karen & Howie Weil

Trent Rosenbloom
Thank you for performing the bris of Pierce Douglas Dainard!
Rachel Giyanani

Trent Rosenbloom
Thank you for performing the bris of Sullivan Leo Mirowitz!
Hilary & Eric Mirowitz

Trent Rosenbloom
Thank you for performing the bris of Arthur Pikelný!
Caitlin Canty & Noam Pikelný
Nancy & Izhak Pikelný

Trent Rosenbloom
Thank you for performing the bris of Gabriel Bennett Wolf!
Rachel and Michael Wolf

Howard Safer
Congratulations on receiving the 2020 JFS Chesed Award!
Barbara & Tom Davis
Rae & Bruce Hirsch
Pam & Saul Kelner
Diana & Jeremy Landa
Leslye & Steve Lapidus
Jan Liff
Dorothy & Jack Miller
Debi & Charles Robin
Carolyn & Barrett Rosen
Cathy & Howard Rosenblum
Shirley & Stuart Speyer
Carol & Roy Smith
Barbara S. Turner

Suzanne & Jimmy Schulman
Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!
Karen & Howie Weil

Goldie & Mark Shepard
Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!
Karen & Howie Weil

Anna Sir
Lilo Feinstein

Maria M. Salas
James Mathis

Leslie & Ira Stein

Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!

Karen & Howie Weil

Karen & Fred Yazdian

Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!

Karen & Howie Weil

Robyn & Sam Yazdian

Thank you for making Lori & Scott's wedding weekend so special!

Karen & Howie Weil

IN APPRECIATION**Diana Lutz**

Ash Gerecht

Carrie Mills

Cindee & Michael Gold

Adam Hirsch

Thank you for producing the JFS Senior Seder video!
Pam Kelner

MOTHER'S DAY**Florence Geller**

Amy-Jill Levine & Jay Geller

NEW HOME**Sandra & Steve Hecklin**

Carolyn & Barrett Rosen

HAPPY HANUKAH!**Dianne Berry**

Wishing you, "Grandma Di", a Happy Hanukkah!
Erin, Greg, Rena, Sari & Tali Zagnoev

Rae & Bruce Hirsch

Jan & David Fox

Linda Latter

Jeffrey Podis

BAT MITZVAH**Anna Banner**

Terri Cohen

NEW BABY**Alene Averbuch**

Congratulations on the birth of your 1st Great Grandchild, Jacob Robert Odrezin!"

Carolyn & Barrett Rosen

Katie & Adam Wayne

Congratulations on the birth of your new baby girl, "Alice Margaret Wayne!"

Pam & Saul Kelner

SPEEDY RECOVERY**Larry Evans**

Leslye & Steve Lapidus

Reah Friedman

Leslye & Steve Lapidus

Diana Lutz

Michael Gryll

Phyllis Stoup

Leslye & Steve Lapidus

BIRTHDAY**Larry Averbuch**

Carolyn & Barrett Rosen

Brian Berry

Teri & A.G. Kasselberg

Lanie Cook

Judy Matheny

Annette Eskind

Jan Liff

Rae Hirsch

Brook, Hirsch & Zagnoev
Children & Grandchildren

Elaine Parker (90TH)

Ilyse Shechtel

Arlene Safer

Marcia Cohen

IN MEMORY (Z "L")***Jerome Averbuch**

Heidi & Ronald Addlestone
Pat Snyder & Robert Garfinkle

Larry Berman

Heidi & Ronald Addlestone
Nan Speller

Bubba

Martin Lipke

Judy Cram

Ron Soltman

Rabbi David Davis

Lisa & Michael Shmerling

Rae Denemark

Barbara S. Turner

Richard P. Feldman

Nan Speller

Henry Foyer

Lisa & Michael Shmerling

Anne Wohl Gold

Robin & Mark Cohen

Michael Gryll

Carolyn & Barrett Rosen

Arlene & Ronnie Schreiber

Carol & Roy Smith

Edna Gold

Debi & Charles Robin

Reta Goldner Guttman

Leslye & Steve Lapidus

Nan Speller

Hanna Hamburger

The Hamburger Family

Marge & Harold Hankin

Pamela & Mark Carver

Paula Harari

Leslye & Steve Lapidus

Marion Katz

Lisa & Michael Shmerling

Ann Kauvar

Robin & Mark Cohen

Toni & Dick Heller

Pam & Saul Kelner

Patty & Jimmy Marks

Julie & Bob Neaderthal

Janet Parr

Elise & Jim Straus

Betty F. Kirshner

Nan Speller

Florence Kornman

Arlene Averbuch

Terri Cohen

Carolyn & Barrett Rosen

Arlene & Howard Safer

Bernard Leff

Kim & Brian Lapidus

David B. Levine

Lisa & Michael Shmerling

Rosalind Levitt

Patti & David Steine

Charlotte Kamsky Lewis

Janet Belsler

Edith Harris Marcus

Robin & Mark Cohen

Jan Liff

Lotte Melamed

Warren Melamed

Marc Miller

Robin & Mark Cohen

Debi & Charles Robin

Shirley Millender

Carolyn & Barrett Rosen

Sam Mislow

Terri Cohen

Robert ("Bob") Moses

Pam & Saul Kelner

Leslye & Steve Lapidus

Ellen & Michael Levitt

Roslyn Pressner

Pam & Saul Kelner

Jan Liff

Staci Robbins

Leslye & Steve Lapidus

Betty Lee Rosen

Michelle & Steven Tishler

Lottie Strupp

Nan Speller

Melvin Schlanger

Lynn & David Barton

Cindee & Michael Gold

Leslye & Steve Lapidus

Carolyn & Barrett Rosen

Lisa & Michael Shmerling

Diane Trachtman

The Trachtman Family

Sara Levine Wagner

Cheryl & Stanley Lane

Michael Weinberg

Leslye & Steve Lapidus

Jack Weitzman

Nashville Fertility Center

continued from page 7

Betty Werthan
Lynn & David Barton
Lisa & Michael Shmerling

Evelyn "Joyce" White
Teri & A.G. Kasselberg

Sidney Wright
Debi & Charles Robin

Garry Zeitlin
Heidi & Ronald Addlestone
Terri Cohen
Carolyn & Barrett Rosen
Lisa & Michael Shmerling
Nan Speller

**Toni Jacobsen Psalm
103.2 Greatest Need Fund**

Lilo Feinstein
Leslie Klein & Mark
Freedman
Cheryl & Stanley Lane
Linda McBride
Lisa Thrall
& Thanasis Papaioanu
Janet & Eileen Wallach
The Williger Family

**Toni Jacobsen Psalm
103.2 Greatest Need Fund**

In Memory of Marilyn Cohen
Davis
Marilyn Davis (z"l)
Rhoda, Wayne Fleisig
& family
Amy & Greg McCoy
Renee & Richard Stein
Karen, Dan & Jack Weinrib
Dorothy Ziff

In Memory of Jim Jacobsen
Robin & Mark Cohen
Pam & Saul Kelner
Leslye & Steve Lapidus
Jan Liff
Diana & Shelly Lutz
Linda McBride
Julie & Bob Neaderthal
Nan Speller
Susan & Jeffrey Zager

*** Tribute donations received
after November 5, 2020 will
be included on the next JFS
Newsletter.

* (Z " L) - Of Blessed Memory



Since launching Life and Legacy the following people have signed a letter of intent indicating they will leave an after-lifetime gift to Jewish Family Service. We are so appreciative of your commitment to ensuring that JFS will be around for another 166 years serving the ever changing social and economic needs of the community.

If you would like to have a conversation regarding your Legacy, please contact either Pam Kelner at 615-354-1644 or Sandra Hecklin, JFS Team Leader at 615-356-3473.

- Anonymous (5)
- Theresa and Kevin Alexandroni
- Felicia and Ken Anchor
- Larry Averbuch
- Richard Barnett
- Lynn and David Barton
- Jamie and Jeremy Brook
- Starlet Burney
- Robin and Mark Cohen
- Mary Cornelius and Elaine Taubin
- Erin Coleman
- Karen Dotter
- Annette Eskind
- Andrea and Kevin Falik
- Nancy Flexer
- Nili and Eitan Friedman
- Harris Gilbert
- Cindee and Michael Gold
- Bernie Goldstein
- Bernice and Joel Gordon
- Robert Gordon
- Reta Guttman
- Heidi and John Hassenfeld
- Rachel Hauber
- Sandra and Steve Hecklin
- David Heller
- Reva and Gene Heller
- Toni and Dick Heller
- Rae and Bruce Hirsch
- Melanie and Doug Hirt
- Mary Loventhal Jones
- Jackie Karr
- Pam and Shaul Kelner
- Leslie and Howard Kirshner
- Ruth Klar
- Glenda and Lee Kraft
- Roslyn Landa
- Valerie and Adam Landa
- Leslye and Steve Lapidus
- Jan Liff
- Diana and Shelly Lutz
- Patty and Jimmy Marks
- LaQuita Martin and Richard Orland
- Suzy Perlman
- Daniella Pressner and Rabbi Saul Strosberg
- Edria and David Ragosin
- Marsha Raimi
- Esther and Steven Remer
- Evan Rittenberg
- Marissa and Ben Russ
- Arlene and Howard Safer
- Stan and Marco Fernandez-Schklar
- Suzanne and Jimmy Schulman
- Lisa and Mike Shmerling
- Elise Small
- Nan Speller
- David Steine Jr.
- Cindy Stone and Mark Glazer
- Laura Thompson and Yuri Livshitz
- Alyssa Trachtman
- Katie and Adam Wayne
- Erin and Greg Zagnoev

* Names in blue indicates that the gift has been formalized.



Keeping Connections Strong During a Pandemic

In March when the JFS staff began working remotely due to Covid-19, the initial expectation was for a couple of weeks working from home at the most. Nobody could foresee what the ensuing months would look like, and for many of the seniors in our community, the cessation of in-person programming and socialization was difficult.

In the initial days of quarantine volunteers reached out with phone calls to older adults that were on the JFS radar. And while telephone reassurance continues to be a mainstay of the Helping Hands Program, JFS has also found meaningful ways to expand the program during this challenging time. “We have simply had to be more flexible and creative than ever before,” says Anna Sir, Helping Hands Program Coordinator, “2020 has shown us that our connections with each other are what will ultimately help us all in coping with this experience.”

Natalie Steinberg was one of the earliest volunteers who reached out to Anna in the spring. At that time, many people in the community felt helpless and were grateful for the opportunity to engage, especially with the more vulnerable sections of the community. As Natalie explains her motivation, she describes, “Volunteering has been a huge part of my life for many years, and I know how hard it can be to maintain relationships and connections during the current pandemic. My senior buddy, Rhoda, and I started out by writing snail mail letters to each other 1-2 times a month. I always looked forward to getting letters from her and learning more about her and her life. More recently, we started talking on the phone 1-2 times a



Rhoda Cooper and Anna Sir

month and sometimes talk for almost an hour- it is really easy to talk to her about anything. I have loved getting to know her and becoming friends!”

Needless to say, the feeling is mutual. As Natalie’s buddy Rhoda says, “Even though we’re from different generations Natalie has become a dear friend to me during this crazy time and I just love talking and laughing with her. Talking to Natalie always lifts my spirits and I am so grateful.”

Thanks to the wonderful volunteers in our community JFS has been able to make phone calls, write letters & cards, conduct socially distant porch visits, have Zoom get togethers, and remain connected to the seniors who are an important part of our larger Jewish community.

If you’re interested in volunteering, or if you’d like to receive calls, letters, or a socially distant porch visit, reach out to Anna Sir at helpinghands@jfsnashville.org or 615-354-1686.

JFS distributed 130 masks to seniors in the community. Each mask was sewn by volunteers who took time out of their busy lives to join our efforts to keep seniors safe. We received positive feedback from seniors who said they felt cared for and from volunteers who felt good about using their talents to help someone else. We have extra masks so let us know if you or someone at high risk needs one. JFS is here for you during ordinary times and during a pandemic.



Naomi Pritikin dons her homemade mask.



Saul Kelner shows off one of the masks that he sewed for our seniors.



Some of the masks sewn by our volunteers

“2020 has shown us that our connections with each other are what will ultimately help us all in coping with this experience.”

- Anna Sir, Helping Hands Program Coordinator



Jewish Family Service Recognized for Helping Same Sex Couples Build Families

By BARBARA DAB

Jewish Family Service of Nashville and Middle Tennessee is being recognized by the Human Rights Campaign in its 2020 All Children All Families Report for its work in the field of same sex parent adoptions. The report is in its second year and recognizes organizations that implemented LGBTQ-inclusive policies and practices, including non-discrimination, staff training and creating a welcoming environment. JFS, which achieved the, "Building Foundation for Inclusion," tier, is the only agency in Tennessee to receive the designation. Alison Depercio, Director of All Children All Families of the Human Rights Campaign, says agencies like JFS not only provide service, but they go beyond by educating others about the need for support for same sex families. She says, "It is a huge message to the community at large that it is in the best interest of children to remove obstacles in creating permanent families."

Four years ago, Brandon and Ozzie Di Paolo Harrison began their process to expand their family. Both are professors at Austin Peay State University and learned about JFS from a colleague. They were referred to Toni Jacobsen, Clinical Director at JFS, who they say made them feel comfortable and welcome. "Working with Toni was so positive. She was kind, thorough and left nothing to chance," says Brandon. The adoption process can take anywhere from one year to 18 months and includes a home study, post-placement visits and assistance with paperwork. Families must find another agency to help with placement of the child. Toni says, "As Jews, people know we have faced discrimination and antisemitism and understand what that is like. They know we will serve them with integrity." Toni helped the couple



Di Paolo Harrison Family, left to right: Brandon with Isabella, Madelyn and Ozzie

navigate some sticky bureaucratic processes to facilitate the adoption of their daughter, Isabella. In fact, it took six months for the birth mother to relinquish parental rights, something that usually takes days. Ozzie says it was a stressful time, but JFS was there to support them through it all, "It was so important to have Toni. It felt like she was our partner through the whole endeavor. She was always open and honest."

JFS began facilitating same sex adoptions in 2002, mostly to non-Jewish couples. Since then, the agency has been involved with over 150 same sex adoptions. Former JFS social worker Teri Sogol assisted with the very first adoption. She says, "JFS's history as a welcoming and inclusive social service agency is well known in the GLBTQ community and beyond. This recognition of the agency's achievement in meeting important benchmarks is well deserved."

Earlier this year, Governor Lee signed into law a measure that allows agencies to deny adoption services to same-sex couples if doing so violates their religious policies or beliefs. The American Civil Liberties Union urged the Governor not to sign the legislation and advocacy groups like HRC say it targets members of the LGBTQ community. But for JFS, helping all families is business as usual. Pam Kelner, Executive Director, says, "We have always opened our doors to all couples seeking adoption, and we will continue to provide these services as long as they are necessary." And Brandon Di Paolo Harrison says that by just doing the work, it sends what he calls, "a poignant message that a religious organization in Tennessee will support same-sex families."

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JFS, which achieved the, "Building Foundation for Inclusion," tier, is the only agency in Tennessee to receive the designation.



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LGBTQI

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are some local organizations that are starting to commit resources to this community of young people. "This year Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee has worked hard to develop LGBTQI youth programming and services. Jewish Family Services invited me in to do this incredible training. That type of resource allocation allows our city to better meet the needs of the LGBTQI community and allows us to reach all sorts of folks who might not walk into an LGBTQI center, even if we had one," they said.

This program was offered in direct

get the satisfaction of giving a truly meaningful gift and we take care of sending the card.

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- 1) Go to www.kroger.com
- 2) **SIGN IN** or **CREATE AN ACCOUNT**
- 3) Click on **Savings and Rewards** near the top of the page
- 4) Scroll down to **Kroger Community Rewards**
- 5) Scroll down to find the "I'm a Customer" box and click on view details.
- 6) In the **Search** bar, **TYPE** in "Jewish" (or **#YR766**) and click **Search**.
- 7) Select "**Jewish Family Service**" (It will also show our address and account number – YR766)

response to the surveys from last year's family learning program and reflects the teens' interest in the topic. Ashley Franklin, a social worker with Jewish Family Service, said, "We wanted to really listen to what topics the teens had expressed interest in. LGBT gender identity issues have so many definitions and ever-changing facets; it was amazing to hear Galia have meaningful conversations with the kids and watch them be engaged and interested." She also said the information shared by both Galia and Shawn will help provide even more inclusive services to the local LGBTQ community.

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Tornado

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into what used to be our living room. It was GONE. Everything in it. Nothing survived. The entire home was in shambles. I remember screaming a little. Then we saw our neighbor, standing outside our home looking in, shouting to make sure we were alive. He told us to pack up some stuff and come over. While grabbing a suitcase from our guest room, we saw that the ceiling had been blown off, insulation now covered the bed, and all the furniture was soaking wet. We were literally crunching over our belongings as we walked.

Looking through the wreckage, we noticed that our mezuzahs, placed at both our front and back doors, were still intact and remained nailed into the door frames, despite everything else being destroyed. It was hard to believe that even though walls had been folded in half and windows were blown in, our mezuzahs still remained in place, unbroken. We also saw that most of the photos hanging in our home had fallen, broken into pieces, or were covered with debris and mud. Yet somehow, our ketubah, remained on our bedroom wall, completely intact. We believe that G-d was watching over us that night and protected us. If the tornado had gone through the closet where we hid, as it did in the living room, we'd be dead.

We're so lucky and still feel so lucky today, grateful to have completed repairs in August and living back in our home.

Eddie and Lauren Driscoll celebrated their first wedding anniversary in October and are expecting their first baby girl in March.





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- Sanhedrin 37a