



# COMMUNITY Matters

A publication of Jewish Family Service of Northeastern Pennsylvania

SPRING/SUMMER 2021

Newsletter Sponsored by the Barbara Sapsowitz Memorial Fund

## Temple Israel of Scranton Donates \$1,450 to JFS Mae S. Gelb Food Pantry



The Temple Israel of Scranton, PA Mitzvah Committee, consisting of Suzy and Rick Jacobson, Karen and Robby Pollock, Marian and Gary Beckhorn, Victoria Geyfman, Annie Monsky, Rabbi Miriam Spitzer, Paulette Okun and Geordee Pollock provided 85 Mishloach bags to area Congregants. Proceeds from the purchased bags were donated to the Mae S. Gelb Food Pantry at JFS!

Pictured Left to Right: JFS Board President Deirdre Spelman, ACSW, Annie Monsky, Geordee Pollack, JFS Executive Director Sheila Nudelman Abdo, ACSW, LCSW, Paulette Okun and Marian Beckhorn.

## A Message from the Executive Director



by Sheila Nudelman Abdo  
JFS NEPA Executive Director

We can all agree it has been a difficult year. A year filled with loss, unrest, grief, fear and anxiety. We must also remember we have made it this far and to take time to reflect on thoughts of gratitude and hope. Our JFS community

has given us strength together for over 100 years, and I am grateful to everyone who helps our organization continue to fulfill our mission to improve the lives of those who depend on us. JFS would like to thank the support we received from donors and foundations to include The Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, the Scranton Area Community Foundation, NEPA Grantmakers and the Jewish Federation of Northeastern Pennsylvania who reached out to help JFS continue our mission to help others.

During this time of uncertainty, JFS continued to assess and prepare for the evolving impact that Covid would have on all of us and figure out a way to move forward. We all have been forced out of

our comfort zone feeling exhaustion as we try to see our way. Even though we are all stressed and feeling unsure, maybe we can ask ourselves if this change forced upon us can help us in ways we did not see before.

Perhaps we learned the importance of our relationships and how to appreciate family and friends. Maybe you saw your neighbors more due to everyone working from home and developed a closer sense of neighborhood and community. Focus on nature and appreciation of the warmer weather settling in can certainly feel good. Maybe that home improvement project you have been putting off or on-line class gave you a new prospective or skill. Isolation is real but remember each of us can make a positive difference when we extend ourselves to be present by caring for ourselves and for others. That is the definition of Community.

Stay safe.

*Sheila Nudelman Abdo*

# President's Message

*"What a strange world we live in" Alice said to the Queen of Hearts.*



That certainly rings true for the past year.

Jewish Family Service's roots go back 105 years, so we were there for the community during the 1918-1919 pandemic just as we have been for the community during the past year through the current Pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted all our lives. We all went through a most unusual year as everyone adjusted to new routines, social distancing, masks, hand sanitizing and virtual platforms. Jewish Family Services met the challenge and while we move seamlessly to what we envisioned a temporary change to a telehealth platform, our clients and their needs were for upmost.

COVID-19 presented a number of challenges in how we delivered our services but we have been able to remain available and connected to the most vulnerable, our clients. Working remotely and virtually we became accessible to the people and partnerships we serve so they could count on us to be there when they need help. Indeed we even developed a new free service COVID Telehealth Counseling open to anyone needing to discuss the impact of COVID during these difficult times.

The programs and services we offer continue to make a difference in the lives of those we serve by helping them to deal effectively with the problems and the challenges they face and dealing with the added impact of COVID 19 on their lives. Helping our clients develop the skills to cope with and handle changes brought about by the continued pandemic has been an important intervention. We are and we will remain focused on helping our clients and our community recover, deal with change and move forward. Events of the past year have only

strengthened our commitment to transforming lives. The people we serve know they can count on us when they need help.

We have been able to accomplish this because of the dedicated, skilled and committed staff; our Executive Director, Sheila Abdo, the Social Workers: Don Minkoff, Marguerite Bushwick and Peter Dunford, the Coordinator of Older Adult Services: Lorrie Loughney, the Coordinator of Marketing and Development: Art Levandoski, our Business Manager: Susan Washko, our Administrative Services Coordinator: Colette Jesikiewicz, and Medical Billing Specialist: Michele Breese. Thank you to each of you for all you contribute to the success of JFS.

I want to thank all of you; our dynamic Board of Directors, our Volunteers and all our donors for what you have done in support of our programs and I ask for your continued support as we continue our important work in the community. It really does take a community and I am proud to be part of ours as we continue to make a difference and carry on the tradition of service to all

Our donors are essential component to our programming as your generosity supports our programs and improve the lives of those we serve. Your donations touch many lives. If you're not a current donor and would like to support our programming please visit [www.jfsnepa.org](http://www.jfsnepa.org).

As President of the Board of Directors I am proud of the agencies reputation , the work of the Board of Directions and the impact JFS has on the community. I know in the coming year with all your support continue to move forward in recovering from the Pandemic.

L'shalom (in peace)

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deirdre Spelman".

Deirdre Spelman ACSW, LSW

# Finding Meaning



By Don Minkoff, LCSW

Before starting this article, I went to the JFS website and read an article I wrote, dated 5/23/20. Reading it caused me to shiver. WHY? Because the uncertainty I felt and wrote about is still strongly behind my thoughts and feelings today. Since I wrote the article, in addition to Covid, multiple things have occurred, personally and environmentally, which have impacted me and intensified my thoughts and feelings of uncertainty.

I wrote then “The longer we live with the uncertainty, the farther away we get from the hope we will get back to what we know.” I am further away from the life I know and live with the uncertainty of what it will be on the other end of all this. Will I need to wear a mask, keep “social distance,” not be able to shake hands or give a hug without fear of getting sick? Due to ongoing political events, will I live with the fear of how we as a society will live? Due to personal issues, how will it all work out and what does the future hold for someone I love? How do I make sense of it all, and find meaning so that it doesn’t overwhelm me?

Victor Frankl in the book “Man’s Search for Meaning” put it this way “it did not really matter what we expect from life but rather what life expected from us.” He continues “Life ultimately means taking responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual.” “These tasks, therefore the meaning of life, differ from man to man and from moment to moment.”

So what does this mean? First, it is an acceptance that what we are living today is “normal.” Second, it is also the recognition that while this experienced is shared, how we experience is unique to each individual. Finally, it is the acceptance of a contradiction, how we react to what we are powerless over.

(Continued on page 11)

# Covid-19 and Children



By Peter Dunford, LSW

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented an additional set of challenges for families and children in our community. Children are receiving a lot of information about COVID-19 through social media, friends, adult conversations and T.V. What they are hearing or seeing can be overwhelming and cause anxiety. Some of the information they are receiving may be inaccurate.

Children rely on their parents and other caregivers to help them cope with their fears and worries. Children have had to cope with numerous and significant adjustments to their pre Covid-19 lifestyles. This includes wearing face masks, frequent hand washing, less interactions with their friends, as well as a shift from being taught in a classroom setting to remote learning. Unfortunately some children have also had to deal with the loss (death) of family members (parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle) as a result of a COVID-19 pandemic.

Parents and caregivers can help their children cope with the stress and or anxiety they are experiencing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents can take the following steps to reduce the stress that their children may be experiencing. 1) Take the time to listen your child’s worries and fears. 2) Find out what your child already knows about COVID-19 and clarify or correct any misunderstandings they may have. 3) Give your child age appropriate information about COVID-19. Be honest and truthful about the possible consequences of contracting COVID-19 for people in their family (ie. most children do not have serious symptoms, but their grandparents can get very sick and die). Don’t overwhelm children by giving them more information than they are asking for.

(Continued on page 11)

# The Golden Years, are they so golden and shiny?

By Marguerite Bushwick, LCSW, NCG



**I**n this article we are going to look at the challenges of old age in order to make you aware of what seniors may go through, especially during this time of the pandemic.

Every stage of life has its challenges. Old age has often been characterized as a time of primary loss and detachment. Even though most people look at later life as a time of leisure and enjoyment of family and friends, many also contend with an increasing number of losses. These losses include social roles, relationships, health, cognition and functional ability. In some sense, the elderly experience the loss of pieces of themselves. Most literature on grief and loss focuses on bereavement after the death of a loved one. There are many losses that occur later in life. Old age can be seen as a succession of losses, gradual and sudden. In this stage of life people do a life review which is a process of introspection, self-reflection and reminiscence that commonly includes reflecting on themes of loss.

Elderly face grief and loss differently than do others. The psychological context of loss is different for the elderly compared with that of younger people, said Dr. Arbore (Director and Founder Elderly Suicide Prevention and Grief Related Services at Institute on Aging). In younger people, losses tend to be sudden and unexpected. For the elderly losses are not unexpected. And though they are perceived as inherent to living a long life, the accumulation of loss can lead to "bereavement overload".

Grief is a natural and expected reaction to any loss, not only to a person's death. It is the process of experiencing the psychological, behavioral, social and physical reaction to loss. Grief has been described as a long roller coaster ride that gradually levels out. Grief is an emotional pain that needs to be acknowledged and experienced. The stages of grief are: shock, denial, anger and guilt, despair and depression and acceptance. In contrast: depression is a state where pain is experienced as being useless and meaningless.

Normal reactions that individuals experience after a loss include denial, confusion, lack of concentration, fatigue, forgetfulness, irritability and anger, sadness and anguish, anxiety and horror. A person needs an outlet for their pain by grieving.

What allows some people to thrive emotionally at a time when losses are piling up like leaves under a maple tree in October? How do they find the courage to care when they have so much experience with heartbreak? Seniors who are thriving despite loss say they make a point of trying new things and meeting new people. They accept the possibility of failure, rejection and pain. They cherish memories. They do not fear grief.

The recent pandemic with its restrictions on social gatherings, religious service attendance and the fear of the unknown have added to the feelings of loneliness, feelings of anxiety especially for the elderly in our communities.

So, what can we do?

The most effective way to help someone who is grieving is to listen, be empathic, acknowledge the person's loss and help the person experience the event at his/her own pace. Remember that every person has inherent worth and something to offer. Do not be blinded by and individuals' strengths in the face of a loss. Explore individuals remaining strengths. What can they do? What are they good at? What do they enjoy doing that they are able to do?

During the pandemic we all have to think about new ways of handling our lives; social media and electronic devices are being used to continue our work load where possible. These same devices are being used to connect with friends and relatives.

In these times of being restricted to our homes we still can learn new skills, join a book club or volunteer through a social platform and do not have to be isolated for the society.

If you experience above mentioned negative feelings and if you need some one to talk to, we are here to listen! Please call 570-344-1186 for a confidential, professional initial intake interview with a licensed social worker to determine if counseling will be beneficial to you.

# JFS Board Spotlight — Sara J. Levy

Sara Levy has been involved with JFS since 2015, but she has been aware of JFS for much longer. Sara was a student of Don Minkoff at Temple Hesed Sabbath School for many years. She became involved with JFS after speaking with Executive Director Sheila Abdo about the organization.

As an Associate Broker with Classic Properties for over 15 years, her greatest accomplishment came in 2013 when she was chosen by Realtor Magazine and the National Association of Realtors as one of the top 30 Realtors under 30 in the country. At the time, she was only the 9th Realtor to be given this honor in the State of Pennsylvania, in the award's 11 year history.



When she graduated college and moved home in 2007, Sara got involved volunteering with a few local organizations and a public school. She was just starting her career so she had the time to give to the community. Volunteering led to getting involved with different organizations at the board level. She has served on different boards for the past 8 years.

*"I would encourage young professionals to learn about and get involved with organizations in their communities early on in their careers. Not only do you provide a service to the community, but you also gain personal development that you usually don't get in the workplace. JFS is an organization that young professionals in any field can contribute to and benefit from."*

Today, Sara lives in Clarks Summit with her dog, Mickey.



Bedrock raised \$1,070 from their Electronics Recycling Event held on October 17th. Thank you to Adam Basalyga, Colby Kalinowski and the entire Bedrock team for their ongoing support of JFS. We would also like to thank Downstate Property Managers, LLC for donating an additional \$200 as part of the event. Pictured in the photo Adam Basalyga, Arthur E. Levandoski, Sheila Nudelman Abdo and Colby Kalinowski.

Jewish Family Service of Northeastern Pennsylvania is extremely grateful to the hundreds of families and individuals who participate in our Tribute Card and Tree of Life Programs. It is a wonderful way to honor and recognize people in your life, and, at the same time, help Jewish Family Service. This listing includes gifts received through December 30, 2020. Please accept our apology if we have missed you. We researched carefully to be certain we included everyone, but occasionally mistakes get past us! If your name is not listed, or if you know of someone else's name we have omitted, please contact us so we can properly acknowledge all efforts.

## General Fund

### IN MEMORY

Hilary Steinberg  
In memory of mother  
Sandra Steinberg  
Alan & Michele Smertz

Georgianne Cleveland & Family  
In memory of husband  
Harry Cleveland  
Larry & Sheila Abdo  
Don Minkoff

Gloria Davidow & Family  
In memory of husband  
Laurence Davidow  
Deirdre Spelman  
Ann Vaida  
Gerald & Maureen Frost  
Gail Van Horn  
Jack Gantz Foundation/ Joseph  
Gantz/ Paula Blumenfeld  
Leigh & Richard Benowitz  
Davidow Family Foundation

Jeffery Meil & Family  
In memory of James Meil  
Deirdre Spelman

Robert Davidow  
In memory of Liesel Wright  
Shirley Nudelman  
Gloria Davidow

Elaine Ehrlich & Family  
In memory of Melvin Ehrlich  
Bob & Lorie Edgerton

Peter Murai  
In memory of Kazumi Murai  
Don Minkoff & Family

Denise Barber Brown  
In memory of mother  
Lou & Barb Nivert

Charles Utan & Family  
In memory of father Edwin Utan  
Natalie Gelb & Mike Washko

James Cader & family  
In memory of father Irving Cader  
Larry & Sheila Abdo

Carol Almond  
In memory of Louis Gomlick  
Alan & Michele Smertz & Family

Eric Baar & Family  
In memory of wife Gayle Baar  
Larry & Sheila Abdo  
Lackawanna County Federation of  
Democratic Women  
James & Susan Connors  
Barbara Urnoski  
Seth & Sheryl Gross  
Barbara Smith  
Deirdre Spelman  
Willard & Marsha Phillips  
Morley Winograd  
Esther & Kenn Cooperman  
Olivia Joorman  
Tom Hill  
Eric Baar

Mark Kaplan  
In memory of Shelly Kaplan  
Deirdre Spelman

Bob & Laney Ufberg  
In memory of father Jesse Izenberg  
Nancy Johnson  
Janet & David Wenzel

Family of Otto Robinson  
In memory of Otto Robinson  
Gloria Davidow

Sheila Cutler & Family  
In memory of mother Thelma Nutis  
Sheila & Larry Abdo  
James & Susie Connors  
Seth & Sheryl Gross

Family of Rabbi Turin  
In memory of Rabbi Turin  
Seth & Sheryl Gross

Deirdre Spelman  
In memory of niece  
Staci Dene Spelman  
Larry & Sheila Abdo  
James & Susie Connors

Eileen King & Family  
In memory of mother Eleanor King  
Don Minkoff

Family of Marv Brotter  
In memory of Marv Brotter  
Lackawanna Neighbors Inc.

Cindy Pearl & Family  
In Memory of sister Ricky Pearl  
Andrea & Arnold Love  
Michael Mardo & Iris Liebman  
Ellen McGuire  
Lenora Delvecchio

Paula Levy & Family  
In memory of husband Richard Levy  
Sheila & Larry Abdo  
Nancy & Bill Johnson  
Michael Mardo & Iris Liebman  
Myer Moskovitz  
Lenora Delvecchio

Elaine Pachter  
In memory of husband  
Howard Pachter  
Amos Lodge  
Alan & Gary Smertz

Frances Gelb & Family  
In memory of mother Naomi Alamar  
Sheila & Larry Abdo

Steven Rothstein & Family  
In memory of mother  
Guitelle Rothstein  
Alan & Gary Smertz

Ruth Gelb  
In memory of son Larry Gelb  
Sheila & Larry Abdo

Howard & Suzin Levy  
In memory of mother Mitzie Levy  
Sheila & Larry Abdo

William Levy  
In memory of James Ellenbogen  
Richard Bishop  
Marjorie Berman  
Dorothy Bosak Bosley

In memory of David & Tobi Fink  
Dovid Yehudah Fink

Renee Schectman  
In memory of Alfred Edelsohn  
Gail Edelsohn

Mim Joseph & Family  
In memory of Joel Joseph  
Sheila & Larry Abdo  
Morey & Sondra Myers  
Jim & Susie Connors  
Jean Marie & Gene Warpus  
Patricia McCormack  
Maggy & Nathan Bushwick  
Mark & Bray Stahler  
Roland & Cynthia Maiolatesi  
Paul Cinquegrani  
Anne Weisbord & David Stern

Jerry Wirth & Sons  
In memory of Shelly Wirth  
Don, Stephanie, Chelsea, Cassidy  
& Joe

Margery Rosenberg  
In memory of Paul Rosenberg  
Judith & Louis Premselar  
Beverly Gelb Klein  
Ken & Jill Swartz

Chriss Raider & Family  
In memory of Jeffrey Raider  
Richard & Faye Bishop  
Sheila & Larry Abdo

Morey & Sondra Myers  
In memory of Lee Myers  
Sheila & Larry Abdo

Diane Kahanowitz & Family  
In memory of Louis Kahanowitz  
Murray Glick  
Webster Towers/United  
Neighborhood Center

William Roth & Family  
In memory of Devorah Roth  
Sandra & Dan Ginsberg

Edwin Brandes & Family  
In memory of Phyllis Brandes  
Paula Roos

Margery & Shelley Rosenberg  
In memory of Paul & Sheldon Rosenberg  
Ross Family Foundation  
Jim & Gloria Ross

Renee & Elliot Schoenberg  
In memory of Nina Silverman  
Jim & Susie Connors  
Bill & Maureen Bender  
Shirley Nudelman

Alan Silverman & Renee Schoenberg  
In memory of Nina Silverman  
Patty & Jim Alperin

Rick & Faye Bishop  
In memory of Louis Kahanowitz  
Jim & Susie Connors

Pamela Goodall  
In Memory of her father  
Jim & Susie Connors, Eileen Coyne,  
Fern Blum

Mary Grace Phillips  
In Memory of David Phillips  
Louis & Barb Nivert

Marilyn Deutsch  
In Memory of Cele Braverman  
Nancy & Bill Johnson

### **SPEEDY RECOVERY**

Eric Weinberg  
Seth & Sheryl Gross

Dr. Richard Silbert  
Don Minkoff  
Larry & Sheila Abdo

Alan Goldstein  
Eileen Baine & Family

Mike Greenstein  
Larry & Sheila Abdo

Jeff Raider  
Larry & Sheila Abdo

Bill Calpin  
Larry & Sheila Abdo

Deirdre Spelman  
Natalie Gelb  
Sheila & Larry Abdo

Sheila Cutler  
Jim & Susie Connors  
Sheila & Larry Abdo

### **RETURN TO GOOD HEALTH**

Chelsea Minkoff  
Colette Jesikiewicz  
Sheila & Larry Abdo

### **CONGRATULATIONS**

Maggy Bushwick  
Congratulations on the birth of  
grandson  
Rhonda Fallk

### **IN HONOR**

Barbara & Louis Nivert  
In honor of Community Matters  
Recognition  
Renee Schectman  
Marilyn & Bernie Rappaport  
Howard & Jill Fragin  
Rhonda Fallk  
Abby Weinberg & Nathan Martin

Deirdre Spelman  
Donation made in her honor  
Jane Strobino

Mildred Weinberg  
Donation made in her honor  
Neil & Arlene Weinberg

Susie Blum Connors  
In honor of Society of Irish Women  
Award  
Nancy & Bill Johnson

JFS Professional and Support Staff  
Deirdre Spelman

Annie Monsky  
Donation made in her honor  
Paulette Okun

Rachel Weissberger  
Donation made in her honor  
Deirdre Spelman

Morey & Sondra Myers  
In honor of their anniversary  
Toni Goldberg

Sheila Nudelman Abdo  
In honor of her outstanding leadership  
Elayne Kornblatt Phillips

Don Minkoff  
In honor of Chelsea Minkoff

Peter Dunford  
In honor of Mary Kelly Dunford

### **BIRTHDAYS**

Joel Joseph  
Happy 90th Birthday  
Larry & Sheila Abdo

Miriam Joseph  
Happy 90th Birthday  
Larry & Sheila Abdo

Elaine Shepard  
Carol & Don Dembert

Bev Klein  
Larry & Sheila Abdo

Barb Nivert  
Patti & Tom Staples

Barbara Ehrenpreis  
In honor of 90th Birthday  
Nancy & Bill Johnson

### HAPPY HANUKKAH

H.P Baker, Rachel Gross  
Sandy Bodzin, Shoshana Gross  
Seth & Sheryl Gross

### HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

Sondra Myers  
David Myers

### HAPPY NEW YEAR

Sheila Nudelman Abdo & Staff  
Elaine & Jerry Goodstein

## May S. Gelb Kosher Food Pantry

### IN MEMORY

Gloria Jurkowitz  
In memory of daughter  
Deborah Jurkowitz  
Bev Klein

Lewis Sare & Family  
In memory of Alan Sare  
Bev Klein

David Bachman  
In memory of mother  
Natalie Bachman  
Bev Klein

Regina Werbler  
In memory of father, Alex Horowitz  
Bev Klein

Karen Widner & Family  
In memory of Lisa Konigsberg  
Bev Klein

Paula Levy & Family  
In memory of husband, Richard Levy  
Bev Klein

Rachel Weissberger  
In honor of her 100th birthday  
Paula Wasser  
Shirley Nudelman

Lynne Kaye & Family  
In memory of Alan Kaye  
Paula Wasser

Frances Gelb & Family  
In memory of mother Naomi Alamar  
Ellen & Stan Strichartz, Bonnie  
& Dick Weissman, Barbra & How  
ard Goldberg, Dale & Marc Attias,  
Charlotte & Robert Pollock, Gladys  
& Richard Kramer, Ronnie Levi,  
Judith Kozloff, Nancy & Jim  
Branch, Susie Gelfand, Sandi  
Nogi, Sandra & Sandy Barth, Judi  
Ostroff, Terri Wolkoff

Mim Joseph & Family  
In memory of Joel Joseph  
Bev Klein

Morey and Sondra Myers  
In memory of Lee Myers  
Margery Rosenberg  
Beverly Klein

Judy & Lou Premselaar  
In honor of their special birthdays  
Margery Rosenberg

In memory of his mother  
Natalie Goodman Bachman  
David Bachman MD

## Sheri & Barry Finkelstein Fund

### IN MEMORY

Hal Finkelstein & Family  
In memory of Naomi Finkelstein  
Howard Spizer  
Joseph Roma  
James Pizzuti  
Eileen & David Feibus  
Helaine, Gail & Jodi Dubner  
& Families  
Gregg, Jackie, & Joe Ascutto  
Grace Wright  
Leah Kramer

Family of Alan Sare  
In memory of Alan Sare  
Harold Finkelstein

Doris Koloski & Family  
In memory of husband  
Charles Koloski  
Harold Finkelstein

Jerome Finkelstein  
In memory of mother  
Naomi Finkelstein

Edwin Brandes & Family  
In Memory of Phyllis Brandes  
Harold Finkelstein

## Sapsowitz Fund

### IN MEMORY

Rabbi Marna & Mel Sapsowitz  
In memory of Barbara Sapsowitz  
Murial Troy & Family

In Memory of Barbara Sapsowitz  
Marna Sapsowitz

Hope Morris & Family  
In memory of mother Naomi Alamar  
Dayle Fragin

Fran Gelb & Family  
In memory of mother Naomi Alamar  
Dayle Fragin

## Tree of Life

Elliot Schoenberg  
In honor of 70th birthday  
Annie & Ed Monsky, Paulette &  
Jay Okun

Gayle Baar  
In memory of Gayle Baar  
JFS Board of Directors

## Beverly Klein Emergency Assistance Fund

Fund Established in Honor of her  
90th birthday  
Morey & Sondra Myers

Bev Klein  
In honor of her 90th birthday  
Sheila & Larry Abdo  
Ronnie & Bob Powers  
David Myers  
Toni Goldberg  
Natalie Gelb & Michael Washko

### IN MEMORY

Diane Kahanowitz & Family  
In memory of Louis Kahanowitz  
Morey & Sondra Myers

William Roth & Family  
In memory of Devorah Roth  
Morey & Sondra Myers



# Have You Heard of Telehealth?

By Michele Breese

I am going to guess your answer is yes, and I base my guess on the fact that the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency has caused a significant increase in the use of Telehealth, but, did you know that Telehealth has been around for years? My first encounter with billing Telehealth services was in 2016.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) defines Telehealth as “the use of telecommunications and information technology to provide access to health assessment across distance.” There are strict rules all insurances require providers to follow to safely provide basic healthcare such as wellness visits, medical consultations, mental health counseling and many other services for various specialties.

Prior to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, CMS required Telehealth services to be furnished using only secure telecommunications technology that has audio-video capabilities that are used for 2-way real-time interactive communication. If a provider was not set up with such a secure system, they were not allowed to provide Telehealth services. Also, Telehealth was only allowed in rural areas where there was a shortage of providers.

Due to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, CMS has broadened access to Telehealth services, including services done by telephone, so clients can receive services in the comfort of their home with less travel to their providers office allowing clients as well as providers and their staff to follow the Center for Disease Control’s guidance in lessening the possibility of COVID-19 transmission. Rural

areas are now not the only areas in which Telehealth services can be provided. Providers may even conduct Telehealth services across state lines.

As private insurances create many of their own policies, they look to CMS as the lead to guide them. But, even during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, there are still some private insurances that do not offer Telehealth benefits to their subscribers. On the other hand, there are many private insurances that do offer Telehealth benefits to their subscribers and have been waiving copays, deductible and coinsurance responsibilities normally assumed by the subscriber and will continue to do so until the Public Health Emergency has been declared over.

Here at JFS, we have welcomed the use of Telehealth by various means, to ensure that we continue to provide quality care to our clients. Since the end of March our counselors have provided care via telephone calls and Zoom sessions with individual client sessions, as well as family sessions. Although we had been searching for Electronic Health Records software prior to the Public Health Emergency, which would include Telehealth and a client portal, our search has heightened due to the caseload we have been carrying since March when we could no longer serve clients in person. Many clients receiving our services back in March have easily transferred to Telehealth and although some have achieved their goals and are no longer with us, there are some that continue with us today and in the last few months we have been seeing an influx of new client referrals.



You’ve probably heard of June Gloom, but are you aware of Vroom Gloom? Vroom Gloom is a common side effect of vehicle neglect. If you have a car, truck, or boat just sitting alone without a mile in its heart, without the drive to leave home—donate it to JFS right away. Philanthropy is often the best therapy for vehicles suffering from Vroom Gloom because it feels so good and it’s free!

*Here’s how to get started:  
Call 877-537-4227!*

# Surprising Resilience

By Lorrie Loughney, NCG



The world has been in pandemic mode for over a year. Everyone I know is resigned yet weary of all the restrictions, precautions and news reports. The daily news of exponential new cases and deaths can be overwhelming, even in

light of the release of vaccines. Particularly difficult for everyone is the sense of isolation and missing the common comforts of social, religious and work gatherings, or even being able to comfort one another with hugs when someone we love dies or is going through a difficult period.

Our older adult neighbors and loved ones who were already at a higher risk of isolation have now decreased opportunities for interactions – senior centers, high rises and community living facilities such as assisted living and nursing homes found it necessary to discontinue, reduce or modify activities that helped to mitigate isolation risks in order to protect health and safety of the participants. Not only are they more isolated socially, but also face long days without activities to punctuate and give meaning to the hours. Many older adults report that being bored is one of the more challenging aspects of the pandemic.

The University of Chicago's NORC social research organization has been conducting long term studies of issues surrounding older adult issues, including the National Social Life, Health and Aging Project (AP 1/15/21) Their most recent study, involving self-reporting surveys from 1284 participants age fifty-five through ninety-nine, revealed some surprising discoveries. This generation of older adults seem to be exhibiting many signs of resilience. The rate of those reporting a decline in mental health was about 9% which is consistent with the rate reported in the past. This stability maintained in spite of the fact that 20% had had no in

person contact with family and friends outside their own households.

The university's program analyzed this surprising statistic and realized that because of their many years encountering and surviving various life stresses, they developed a resilience to cope with the restrictive conditions necessitated by the pandemic. About 50% able to maintain contacts, and adapted surprisingly well to video chats (42%) and text messaging (37%) while 32% primarily used telephone calls. (the study reports about a 4% margin of error in the statistics).

While this is good news for those who are anxious about loved ones they have not been able to visit directly, it is still important to use what technology is available to maintain connections with family, friends, neighbors and former colleagues. In addition to finding stability in mental health issues such as depression, there was about a 50% decrease in participants who reported feeling "very happy" or "extremely happy" than in previous studies.

Most nursing homes will make activity and social work staff available to execute Facetime or Zoom visits and most facilities have increased their available portable phones to take to residents. Even a 10 minute phone call can help to alleviate the tedium of a long day. Sending cards, notes, or children's (and adults) coloring or other projects also contribute to their sense of belonging, being remembered and being considered a participant in the lives of others.

## Planned Giving

Planned Giving is a method of charitable giving that involves a consideration of your retirement plan and/or family estate to be distributed to Jewish Family Service upon your passing.

### *Build Something Today, To Support Tomorrow*

#### **To Share With Your Attorney**

I hereby give, devise and bequeath to **Jewish Family Service of Northeastern Pennsylvania**, with offices at **615 Jefferson Avenue, Scranton, PA, 18510**, federal tax ID # **24-0796423**, or its successors in interest, the sum of \$(amount written), exclusive of my lifetime donations, if any, for use in its most urgent priorities as determined by its board of trustees in their sole discretion. *Your attorney can change this to a percentage of your estate, rather than a fixed amount if you prefer.*

*For more information, or if you have designated JFS as a beneficiary please contact:*

**Sheila Nudelman Abdo, Executive Director (570) 344-1186**

**(Finding Meaning Continued from page 3)**

It involves taking stock in the moment and maintaining good physical health. Are we getting enough sleep, keeping a healthy diet and getting enough exercise?

We must maintain a good balance. What are we doing with our time? Are we keeping a predictable routine which can give a sense of balance? Is one setting boundaries so not to feel overwhelmed when pursuing information through social media, news outlets, etc. Is one maintaining social relationships? When working at home, are we creating space between work and non-work environment?

Do you continue to reflect? As you are going through your day, be aware of how thoughts and feelings change, take stock of how you are feeling at the moment.

Do not “should” yourself. There is no right or wrong way of living as we are today. This can become overwhelming creating multiple feelings: anger, sadness, fear, anxiety with the thoughts of uncertainty, powerlessness and hope.

The above are some things we can do to give one a feeling stability within our environment and oneself, which free one up to focus on self, to find meaning and purpose. While the pandemic has created limitations the question of how open one is to at what one can do versus what one cannot do. Today’s circumstance could be seen as a favorable time to be open to striving for new opportunities to give our life meaning and finding enjoyment within the life we are now living.

Victor Frankel wrote there are 3 ways we can find meaning:

1. By doing and/or creating.
2. By appreciating what is around us, within nature and through relationship and interactions with.
3. By adapting and reacting well to unavoidable life situations, such as our pandemic.

My stepdaughter made us cloth masks early in the pandemic. Do not be surprised by this, but one of the cloth masks she made me was a series of Mickey Mouse cartoons, which is fun for me to wear. I have also felt smiles behind others’ masks, even when I do not hear, “I like your

mask.” Believe me, it is a great feeling. I have a number of animation ties that I enjoy wearing to the office. As we are currently using a telehealth model to continue the work we do at JFS, through my stepdaughter knowing me I can continue experiencing the joy, though more limited, I lived wearing my animation ties.

This is a simple example of my understanding of what Victor Frankel means to strive toward finding meaning and purpose: feeling moments of happiness within this new normality”

When feelings and thoughts are overwhelming making it difficult to strive to find meaning, the social workers at JFS are here to assist and support you on your journey to find meaning.

*Sources:*

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*psychologytoday.com*

*Man’s Search For Meaning by Victor Frankel*

**(Covid and Kids Continued from page 3)**

4) Explain to your child about how the changes in their daily routines (frequent hand washing, wearing a mask and social distancing) are necessary for their and their family’s well being.

Parents can also help their children better cope with the stress they are feeling as a result of missing their pre COVID-19 activities and routines by being creative in planning activities that their children can safely enjoy. It is also vitally important that parents take some time each day for self-care. Parenting during this COVID-19 pandemic has put additional demands and stress on parents. Like all members of our community, parents need to spend some time each day or as often as possible doing activities that they enjoy. This will help reduce their stress and help them face the demands of parenting.

*Source: kidshealth.org*



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Jewish Family Service of Northeastern Pennsylvania is accredited by the Council on Accreditation, Member of Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies and is an affiliated organization of the United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties and the Jewish Federation of Northeastern Pennsylvania.

*This newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Barbara Sapsowitz and to the continuation of her caring work within our community.*

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## Meet The Staff



### **Michele Breese**

Medical Billing and  
Scheduling Specialist

Michele Breese, a former employee from 2011 until 2013 when she and her husband decided to move closer to their daughter to experience the beauty of Oregon, has returned to her roots in Northeastern Pennsylvania and to Jewish Family Service. Michele returns to JFS as the Medical Billing and Scheduling Specialist with 7 more years experience for a total of 17 years as a Medical Billing and Scheduling Specialist. She will handle billing and collection of all counseling services as well credentialing of providers. Michele's outside interests include reading, cooking and preserving everything her husband can grow in their garden, and most importantly spending time with her granddaughter.

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