



# COMMUNITY *matters*

ISSUE NO. 34

A publication of Jewish Family Service of Northeastern Pennsylvania

Spring/Summer 2023

Newsletter Sponsored by the Barbara and Mel Sapsowitz Memorial Fund

## Serving our entire community

by Michele Breese, JFS Medical Billing Specialist



We are all affected by mental health and here at JFS, we service the entire community. Started over 100 years ago, our counselors treat community members through the Jewish tradition of caring and compassion for all people in need.

In 2021 JFS implemented an Electronic Health Records (EHR) system in order to better track our clients' needs. Another benefit of the EHR system is the ability to quickly see who our clients are and be able to provide a snapshot of their demographics. All individual client data is kept confidential.

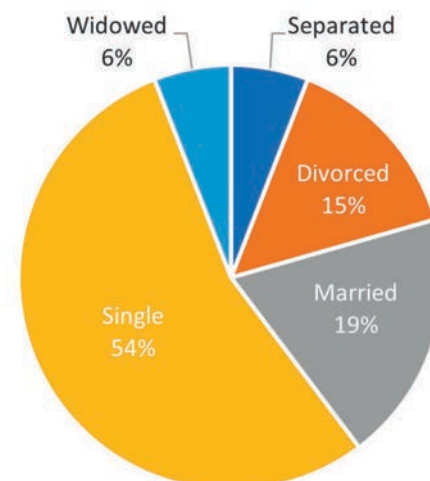
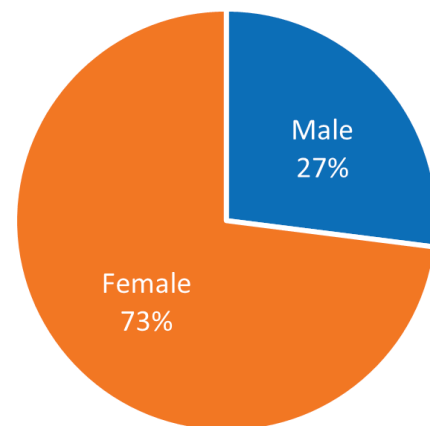
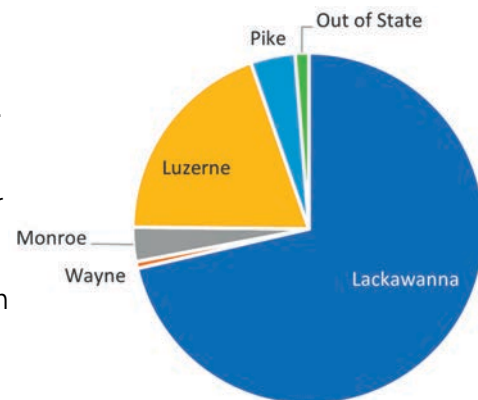
Although we are a small organization JFS is making a big impact. Throughout the first six months of the year, our social workers have held just over 300 counseling sessions. An amazing feat when you realize we currently have just 3 social workers!

JFS has seen 24 new clients in the first half of the fiscal year, which is from July to June. These clients come from a variety of referral sources including insurance providers, pastors and rabbis, employers, and other organizations as well as self, family, and friends. Many people also find us through the Internet and information provided at places like our local libraries. Lastly, we also see former clients return for help.

Clients come to JFS for a variety of reasons including depression and anxiety, relationship issues, life transitions, abuse, academic challenges, grief and loss, addiction, OCD, trauma, and aging.

It's important to note as well that age and income level are not the determining factors when help is needed. JFS sees clients from younger than 10 years old to over 80 years old. The need for help is also not determined by your financial status. JFS will never turn away someone in need of help.

Mental health is just as important as physical health. As we continue to remove the stigma attached to mental health remember we are here to help. JFS licensed social workers are accredited by the Council on Accreditation and our use of a systems approach means we can get you the full help you require. Working with family, employers, and partner agencies together as one community.



# A Message from the Executive Director

by Sheila Nudelman Abdo, ACSW, LCSW, JFS NEPA Executive Director



We all know that living with high levels of stress is not good for our emotional or physical health. We also know that stress is part of life. Sometimes it might feel like stress is unmanageable and there is nothing you can do about it, but did you know that social support can help

reduce stress and improve one's mental health?

The importance of social support cannot be minimized or overlooked. Relationships with friends and family can help. Make the most of your connections. Reach out and schedule a time to meet with a friend or neighbor. It's not always easy to build or strengthen friendships, but if you put in some effort and time, your social network will grow and expand.

Social networks can be built on community relationships as well as individual and family relationships. Perhaps joining a local book club, taking a class, or volunteering with a local non-profit organization you are interested in can connect you with others with similar or perhaps even different interests. Offer your time to help someone else, reach out to an old friend you haven't spoken to in a while. Take a class at a library or college. Open yourself to new experiences.

Social support, friendships, and community are vital to being human. Start by being there for yourself and you may find that being there for others will energize you and that your daily stressors will be reduced.

Thank you for caring and thank you for helping JFS help others.

*Sheila Nudelman Abdo*

## Nonprofit Leadership Certificate Program

by Arthur E. Levandoski, Coordinator of Marketing and Development



I first learned about the Kania School of Management's Nonprofit Leadership Certificate Program way back in 2019 at the Scranton Area Community Foundation's first NEPA Learning Conference. I was immediately attracted to the idea of the program and sought to apply. After a delay, because of Covid I finally applied this year and have been happily accepted.

Our first session was held on January 9th, it was certainly interesting being back in the classroom and my first time attending The University of Scranton as a non-event visit. The Cohort as it's called is spread across ten sessions continuing through February of 2024. The program is focused on providing high-potential leaders with the knowledge and insight required to enable

their nonprofit organizations to achieve and sustain their respective missions and ensure positive community outcomes. Perhaps more importantly it brings a smaller group of those potential leaders together, allowing them to network and develop meaningful relationships that will hopefully continue long after the program ends.





## President's Message

by Deirdre Spelman, ACSW, LSW, JFS Board President



As I wind down my tenure as President of the Board of Directors of Jewish Family Services of Northeastern PA (JFSNEPA) I find myself being quite sentimental. It has given me the opportunity to stop, reflect and have gratitude for what is important. While JFS

has had a consistent presence in our community making a difference for the past 107 years by providing quality services to support and empower diverse individuals and families of all ages and all kinds of needs, I am reminded that JFS has been a presence in my life for over 70 years.

As a child, JFS was still part of the Jewish Federation, and my mother Florence Dinner Spelman of blessed memory was an active volunteer. I have many fond memories of helping with many of the projects she was involved in. My Tzedakah Box, (which I had made in religious school at the Madison Ave. Temple) monies were given to JFS. I received my teeth cleaning at the Dental Clinic when it was housed within JFS and I was a recipient of a JFS scholarship to attend the JCC Travel Camp. I volunteered as a teenager for programming.

Al Geffen, of blessed memory, inspired me to become a social worker and wrote a letter of recommendation for me to the then-new MSW program at Marywood. My Aunt Gloria Dinner, of blessed memory, and Great Uncle Phillip Schwartz, of blessed memory, were both actively involved. When I returned to Scranton it was a natural connection for me. I am humbled to be both a recipient of services in the past and a steward of current services. I am proud of the organization and the difference it has made and continues to make in so many lives.

JFS has been a consistent presence in Lackawanna Co. as our programs continue to evolve to meet the needs of the community and to provide a caring and compassionate environment. We have weathered coping with and adapting to a changed world as a result of the COVID pandemic and continue to provide excellent, comprehensive services and look for innovative ways to improve our service delivery.

Our donors are an essential component of our programming as your generosity supports our programs and improves the lives of those, we serve. Your donations touch many lives. JFS helps create futures every day by making a difference in the lives of our clients and community partners.

L'Shalom

*Deirdre Spelman*

## JFS Recieves Grant from SAF



JFS recently received a community needs grant in the amount of \$5,000 from the Scranton Area Community Foundation for the purpose of operational support.

Pictured from left to right: Cathy Fitzpatrick, Grants Administrator for Scranton Area Community Foundation, Sheila Nudelman Abdo, Arthur E. Levandoski, Heather Greene, and Laura Ducceschi, MBA, MA, President / CEO of the Scranton Area Community Foundation.

# Reframing the Way We Talk About Aging

By Lorrie Loughney, NCG, MPA

It is great news that Americans are living longer and living healthier lives. As a result, many people, even after retiring, maintain lifestyles they enjoyed when they were younger while acquiring new strengths. Many older adults contribute significantly to their families and communities, sharing their accumulated wisdom and skills.

Yet many stereotypes continue to color our thinking about the privilege of advancing in years. Granted, as we get older, accompanying aging issues naturally initiate some decline in physical strength or exacerbate chronic conditions.

However, ingrained notions that no longer apply create a culture of ageism, resulting in marginalization and isolation for many older adults. Ageism is reinforced through jokes (i.e., "senior moments"), or graphic images and languages that depict older adults as frail and needy, or curmudgeonly. Often older adults are portrayed as being technologically inept. A casual glance at the internet social media brings up the following examples of portrayals through memes and other shared content:

*Photo of an older man with a big smile: "You know you are growing old when Happy Hour is a nap."*

*Photo of an older woman, peering under her glasses at a computer screen: "Tracking my cookies? They will never get my recipe!"*

*Photo of an older woman in the driver's seat of her car: "turning right in 5 miles...Better signal now." And other: "May you live to be so old that your driving terrifies people."*

*Photo of an older couple with a cell phone: "Did you make sure to take two pictures so you can give me one?"*

Such negative and inaccurate stereotypes often result in both overt and subliminal discrimination.

The words we use matter. The images they convey carry nuances far beyond intentions. Often negative language is not used to intentionally denigrate an older person because the

phrases have become commonplace in our interpersonal as well as public interactions.

In response, JFS has been collaborating with several organizations in the area that provide services to older adults to address the issue of isolation as well as ageism in our region. Coordinated by the United Way with some funding through the Moses Taylor Foundation, the collaborative is learning to raise awareness, through the Reframing Aging Initiative, based on research conducted by the Frame-Works Institute.

The goal of our collaboration is to find creative solutions to ensure that all people, including older adults, thrive at every stage of life. The Frame-Works Institute has contracted with the collaborative to provide ongoing technical assistance to transform the language and images we use to portray older adults. We are all learning to be mindful of how essential it is to be respectful when communicating with people of every age and background. Spreading the word will help to shift and correct cultural defaults.

<sup>1</sup> Official statement from the Frame-Works Institute about the Reframing Aging Initiative: "Reframing Aging is a long-term social change endeavor designed to improve the public's understanding of what aging means and the many ways that older people contribute to our society. This greater understanding will counter ageism and guide our nation's approach to ensuring supportive policies and programs for us all as we move through the life course."



# Doomscrolling

By Peter Dunford, LSW

Doomscrolling is a term that first appeared in 2018 on Twitter. It refers to the activity of "scrolling" on our social media devices (e.g., phones, iPad, computers, etc.) while viewing a lot of negative content. Social Media platforms use algorithms that automatically send the viewer similar negative content to what they already read/viewed (e.g. Disturbing local & national news, politically divisive topics, fake news, etc.). So the viewer ends up exposing themselves to a host of disturbing stories, hence the term "Doomscrolling", which understandably leads to the feeling that the world is full of doom and gloom.



Most of us are exposed to this social media culture and participate in it to a greater or lesser extent. Some of us can view this social media content without serious consequences. We stop scrolling on our social media devices and take care of our daily responsibilities. However, there are many individuals who have underlying mental health issues (depression, OCD, anxiety, etc.) and are more vulnerable to negative content on social media. This can trigger their symptoms and result in them having difficulty carrying out their daily responsibilities.

For the benefit of our general sense of well-being, we all need to limit our time on social media, especially those of us who experience mental health challenges. We can replace this addictive behavior with healthier and more enjoyable alternatives. Most of our devices have Screen Time apps that will tell you how much time you spend on your phone or tablet. These apps can help you set limits for yourself or others. If we continue to struggle with disengaging from social media, you can reach out to a mental health provider such as JFS, who can help you through this process.

<https://psychcentral.com>

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org>

## JFS Welcomes New Medical Students

Our 2nd-year Medical Students from Geisinger Commonwealth Medical College introduced the Music and Memory project to the incoming group of students this past September.

This year's goals include the development of personalized music playlists and the acquisition of music players for JFS guardianship clients who have dementia. The students will also be devising testing instruments to determine the effectiveness of connecting the music selections to memories of life events. Finally we will begin to replicate the project with other clients.



Photo: From Left to Right: Thomas Buerkert, Morgan Glasser, Kamil Falkowski, Jacob Feibusch, Jonathan Kerr, Nina Gennusa, Khevna Joshi, SooYoung VanDeMark



Jewish Family Service of Northeastern Pennsylvania is extremely grateful to the 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 January 15, 2023. Please accept our apology if we have missed you. Occasionally mistakes get past us. If your name is not listed, please contact us so we can properly acknowledge all efforts.

For a more permanent recognition, a silver, bronze or gold leaf can be purchased and displayed on the "Tree of Life" which is located in the entranceway of the Myer Davidow Wing of the Jewish Community Center. More information can be obtained regarding a contribution by calling the Jewish Family Service office at 570-344-1186.

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Gloria Davidow

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**In honor of Deirdre "Cookie" Spelman**

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**In honor of Susan Connors**

Mary Jane Moran

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**In honor of 87th Birthday**

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**Chelsea Rose Minkoff**

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**Renee Schectman & Gary Schectman**  
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Paula Wasser

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**SHERI & BARRY FINKELSTEIN FUND**

**In memory of Naomi Finkelstein**

Jerome and Polly Finkelstein

**TREE OF LIFE**

**In memory of Henri Deutsch**

Marilyn Deutsch

**In memory of Eileen Baine**

Joan Frantz  
Dorothy Haas  
Anne Marie Clarke

## JFS Remembers Richard R. Silbert, MD

by Sheila Nudelman Abdo, JFS NEPA Executive Director



Rich was a mentor, a teacher, a supporter, and a friend of JFS for so many years that I can't remember JFS without him. I'm not exactly sure how we had the good fortune of meeting Rich, but it was our good fortune indeed. I believe I met Rich in 1990 when our longstanding relationship began. Rich offered JFS consultation and preceptorship. He shared his professional experience by providing clinical supervision, education, and guidance. JFS looked forward to our monthly discussions on medication management, mental illness, drug and alcohol treatment, behavioral health disorders, and many other complex situations. Rich was not a direct provider of services to our clients, but they indirectly benefitted from his expertise as he allowed us to consult with him. JFS will be forever grateful for his impact, and he will be sorely missed. JFS is a better organization because of Richard Silbert. Let his memory be a blessing to all who knew and loved him.

## Beth Shalom students support Mae S. Gelb Food Pantry, and get a lesson from Don

JFS Social Worker Don Minkoff discusses the importance of the Mae S. Gelb Kosher Food Pantry with students of Beth Shalom Academy. The students donated canned food items and non-perishables for families in need. They also had some fun stacking the cans into a giant menorah for Chanukah!





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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**



## JFS Board Spotlight - Dovid Yehudah Fink

Dovid Yehudah Fink joined the JFS Board of Directors in the Summer of 2019.

His grandfather ob"m was very involved with JFS so when he was approached and asked to consider joining the board he said yes. "For me, it was a good opportunity to get involved, help out and learn more about nonprofit board work."

He is a part owner and the CFO of his family business, David Elliot Poultry Farm, Inc. The business was founded by his grandfather and has a long legacy of community support including semi-annual chicken donations to the Mae S. Gelb Kosher food pantry for the JFS Holiday Assistance programs.

In 2020 he and his brother took over ownership of David Elliot Poultry Farm, Inc. For them steering the business through the most challenging time in modern history was challenging beyond words. "I'm very proud of our success in being able to maintain operations, employee/customer safety, jobs, and keeping our family legacy and business operating."



A Hill section resident, he enjoys living locally with his wife, Gila, and his two young sons, a two-year-old and a six-month-old. "It's a great privilege to live in a town where my family has been so involved for so long. I still have extended family, my parents, my brother, my uncle and aunt living here, and my wife has a brother as well."

"JFS work is boots on the ground. Their programming directly helps clients and the community just when they need it. When you volunteer your time with JFS, you're exemplifying Chesed, lovingkindness, which is one of the core attributes of being Jewish."

## JFS to Honor Natalie Gelb in June

Back in 2020, JFS was ready to honor Natalie Gelb at our 5th Annual Community Matters event. Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond everyone's control, that event had to be postponed.

Finally, just a few short years later, JFS will get a chance to honor Ms. Gelb at our 5th Annual Community Matters event! The event is set for June 1, 2023, and will be held at the Scranton Cultural Center.

Tickets for the event will be \$100 which will feature full kosher dinner stations catered by Pocono Kosher as well as a cash bar. We will have entertainment by Doug Smith and will once again host our silent auction. A presentation will be held honoring Ms. Gelb with coffee and dessert afterward.

For advance ticket and ad book sales please contact JFS at (570) 344-1186. Information will also be mailed out in March and posted on the JFS website, social media, and e-newsletters.



## Looking Back and Be Proud

**By Marguerite Bushwick, LCSW, NCG**

As I look back at the 30+ years that I have been involved with Jewish Family Service (JFS) I am proud of this agency's accomplishments in developing programs and projects to address the changing needs in the community.

During the 1980s this agency started resettling refugees from the Former Soviet Union. Through the generosity of members of the Jewish community and through a contract with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the local Jewish Family Service assisted more than 250 refugees from the Former Soviet Union resettling in this area. Before the refugee's arrival, apartments were rented, and volunteers helped furnish the apartments, getting food ready for the refugee's arrival, and later invited the refugees into their homes. Qualified volunteers taught the newcomers English and the American way of living.

Jewish Family Service became an active member of the Pennsylvania Refugee Mental Health team, to which end one of the social workers was invited to 3 weeks of intense training in Harrisburg about the refugee experience, the traumas involved, acclimatization, and resettlement. As part of this team, JFS organized 6 professional conferences at Marywood University where national and international trauma experts were invited to address the professionals attending these conferences. In addition, JFS collaborated with other local resettlement agencies to organize a week-long interpreter training both in Lackawanna and in Luzerne counties, both were attended to capacity.

In the 1990s it became clear that as Holocaust Survivors were getting older, they had additional needs than the general population. JFS developed a program to assist holocaust survivors in this area to live their remaining years as independently as possible and in dignity. Survivors in Luzerne County and the Poconos were served through this initiative. Grants that totaled over \$250,000 were received from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany which went straight for assistance for the survivors, whether for home health, housekeeping, medical equipment, etc. Still today, 85 years after the start of the holocaust, JFS assists aging Holocaust Survivors in this area.

The Adult Guardianship program was established around 10 years ago to serve the most vulnerable in our community. As the population ages, more people live longer and may need more assistance making decisions for their best care. Not everyone is blessed to have relatives who can make those decisions and many situations occur where the elderly is abused. JFS stepped in and has become one of the agencies which offer guardianship services which are appointed by a Judge. JFS has a contract with the local Area Agency on Aging for this program.

I am aware that this is only a sampling of what JFS does. I did not touch on, for example the counseling services, referral services, and Kosher Meals on Wheels offered day in and day out.

JFS should be proud of how over the years, it has developed programs to address the changing needs in the community and help people live their life to the fullest, safely, and in dignity.



**Donating your vehicle to JFS will give you a smile as sweet as spring. It's easy, the pick-up is free, and your donation is tax-deductible.**

**Call 877-537-4227  
or donate online  
[jfsnepa.careasy.org](http://jfsnepa.careasy.org).**

# Sadness or Depression

By Don Minkoff, LCSW

Recently, I noticed people have been asking me how I have been doing. Often, I am not sure how to respond. It could be "I am doing ok," it could be a gesture like shrugging my shoulders, or a more specific thought and/or feeling. However, in thinking about the responses we do give to the question "how are you doing:" in my own unofficial reflective survey, one of the responses that stand out is, "I am feeling depressed." Again, within my unofficial reflective survey, I do not remember the last time I heard, "I am feeling sad," which triggers me to reflect further, "what is the difference between feeling sad and feeling depressed?"

Sadness is described as a normal feeling we all experience, which is usually triggered by life events: for example, a loss of a job, the break-up of a relationship, the loss of a friendship, making a mistake, school issues, or death. Some of the symptoms of sadness are:

**Crying, Spending time alone, Arguing, feeling more pessimistic, and maintaining regular eating and sleeping habits: though maybe not on the same level as we were doing before feeling the sadness. Participating in normal life activities: work, school, family events, recreational activities but may not enjoy the activity at the same time and feeling better over time.**

Sadness is a feeling we do not like to experience. However, sadness is a warning something is not right, that an experience occurred we need to address.

Depression on the other hand is an emotional state. Depression can be caused by past or current circumstances or by brain functioning, that becomes overwhelming over time: making it difficult to function in life. Some of the characteristics of depression are:

**Feeling sad. Feeling discouraged. Thoughts of hopelessness and helplessness. Lack of motivation. A loss of interest in activities has been enjoyed. Low energy. Difficulty concentrating, focusing, and/or remembering. Anger Intense worrying. The feelings and thoughts last over a period of time, without feeling better. Can intensify which can result**

**in loss of appetite, isolation, disrupted sleep, and thought of self-harm, which can result in suicidal attempts and/or self-hurting actions, such as self-cutting or actions without regard to safety.**



Self-medicating through the use of alcohol and/or drugs, resulting in the risk of dependency and/or addiction.

Not every person who is depressed experiences all of the symptoms or an intense severity of the symptoms.

To reiterate, being sad, can be overwhelming, but there will be moments when one can find joy and respond to others around us. Depression is also overwhelming, making it more difficult to find joy and connect with others around us. Sadness can move into depression, which can mask depressive symptoms until the thoughts and feelings can be overwhelming. Doing an honest inventory of one's thoughts and feelings is a way to address what is going on. Reaching out to supports that you know will be understanding, such as family and/or friends if one finds it this confusing and difficult. Through professional guidance, one can identify sadness or depression and get direction and help, through education, counseling, medication, and referral to other support services, so an individual can get one's life on track.

Once you and/or your supports identify sadness or depression, or it is still difficult to understand what is going on, contacting your physician or counselors, such as the social workers at Jewish Family Service is the next step.

Sources:

[choosingtherapy.com](http://choosingtherapy.com)

[differenceguru](http://differenceguru)

[healthline.com](http://healthline.com)

[mentalhealthfirstaid.org](http://mentalhealthfirstaid.org)

[psychologytoday.com](http://psychologytoday.com)

[screeningmhintional.org](http://screeningmhintional.org)





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Jewish Family Service of Northeastern Pennsylvania is accredited by the Council on Accreditation, Member of the Network of Jewish Human Service 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 and Mel Sapsowitz and to the continuation of their caring work within our community.*



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