

JEWISH YOUNGSTOWN AREA JOURNAL

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ON THE COVER

The Early Learning Center at the JCC recently expanded with the addition of a classroom.

see page 12

INSIDE

Giving Tuesday campaign raises more than \$228,000.

see page 17

BBYO teens volunteer for local organization.

see page 13



A classroom for ages 16 to 22 months recently opened as part of the Early Learning Center at the JCC.

WE STAND



WITH ISRAEL

CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES

January 23	5:10 p.m.	February 27	5:53 p.m.
January 30	5:19 p.m.	March 6	6:01 p.m.
February 6	5:28 p.m.	March 13	*7:09 p.m.
February 13	5:37 p.m.	March 20	*7:17 p.m.
February 20	5:45 p.m.	March 27	*7:24 p.m.

**Daylight saving time in effect*

MAILING LABEL



LISA'S LONG VIEW

From crisis to courage:
Choosing light, choosing joy,
choosing one another

A Message From Lisa Long
Federation Chief Executive Officer

In recent weeks, I have found myself thinking deeply about what it means to lead, and to belong, during complicated times.

Across our community, and across the Jewish world, we are living with a mix of gratitude and grief, pride, and pain. Our

institutions are strong, our people are resilient and yet many of us are tired. I know I am.

Since 2020, we have been operating in what I can only describe as crisis mode: responding to COVID, mounting emergency campaigns, supporting Israel and Ukraine,

mourning losses in Pittsburgh, Israel, Australia, and elsewhere. Each moment has demanded urgency, focus, and heart and we rose to meet every one of them.

At the recent Jewish Federations of North America General Assembly, a question was posed that has stayed with me: How do we shift from crisis mode to dream mode?

How do we move from survival to vision? How do we reclaim Jewish Joy without ignoring the very real challenges that remain? For me, the answer begins with community. When we choose connection over fear, we build something far stronger than any one institution or moment. At the same time, we must acknowledge the heaviness many are carrying. Antisemitism is not theoretical or historical, it is present, personal and painful.

My tenure at Federation hasn't been easy, and I sometimes ask myself: Are you ready

to throw in the towel, or are you ready to get back in the ring?

I am not ready to throw in the towel. My work here is not just operational; it is sacred.

This moment calls not for retreat, but for courage. For joy that is intentional and communal. Jewish Joy does not mean ignoring pain; it means refusing to let pain be the final word. The work ahead will not always be easy. But it is meaningful. And it is ours.

So I'll ask the question again, this time to all of you:

Who's ready to get in the ring with me?

If we choose vision over fear, joy over despair and community over isolation, I am confident the light we create together will reach far beyond ourselves.

And that, especially now, is something worth fighting for.



NANCY'S NOTES

Teamwork: Working
together on a common goal

By Nancy Burnett

I'm not much of a sports fan. I don't understand football—it's just too violent for me—and the Super Bowl interests me only for the halftime show and the food. Soccer seems exhausting; cricket and lacrosse are a mystery. I like going to hockey games, and tennis and croquet were favorites in my youth. I also like baseball, probably because my kids played it and it's my grandson's favorite sport. I follow the Olympics totally—both summer and winter.

Mostly I think I just like the idea of teams and teamwork. Even a bench-clearing brawl makes me smile as I realize teammates in unison are expressing outrage for an infraction of the rules or civility. I like the idea that even the poorest player on a team can join in the celebration of a win. I am the one who sits on the sidelines and, after a loss, assures the losing players that it was a good game

and they tried their best.

The idea of teamwork—working together on a common goal—applies not only to sports but to the business and non-profit worlds as well. An ideal team consists of players who bring differing skills to the table. The Talmud resonates with different ideas and arguments. Just as Hillel and Shamai and their followers argued vociferously, we too find ourselves in a world increasingly divided but with certain moral red lines that cannot be compromised.

The "team" with which we surround ourselves in life is similarly made up of different individuals with different skills and ideas and personalities. We need to learn to respect others' rights to their opinions even though we vehemently disagree.

Even families serve as teams. We argue, we disagree, and yet we are bound together inseparably by genetics, heritage,



OUR SERVICES

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Licensed, experienced professionals provide therapy for individuals, groups, families, and children. We are here to assist you with mental health challenges and life transitions.

EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SUPPORT GROUPS

Our professional staff offers educational support on a variety of topics to meet client needs. We provide assistance to those facing difficult life decisions, members of the aging community, those living with mental health disorders, and those that need developmental support.

OUTREACH SERVICES

Our outreach coordinator and social workers welcome the opportunity to talk with elders and their families.

517 Gypsy Lane | Youngstown, Ohio 44504 | 330.746.7929

or shared experiences.

As we progress through the revolving sports year, always with the mantra, "There's always next year," let's remember that we are always a part of Team

Humanity. Let's keep that hope in our hearts that we did our best to make it a better world, and next year we'll continue to improve and make it a good year for all of our "teams."

ABOUT THE JOURNAL

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February 17 is the deadline for articles and ads for the Passover Issue. Submissions may be edited for length and/or clarity. The Jewish Journal does not assume the responsibility for the Kashruth of any product or service advertised on its pages.

The Jewish Journal is now accepting opinion columns. Send submissions to journal@jewishyoungstown.org as a Word document. Include name and contact information. Acceptance is at the discretion of the editor and may be edited for clarity.

JCRC annual health and resource fair draws a crowd



Nearly 200 community members attended Mitzvah Day in December. The Jewish Community Relations Council of the Youngstown Area Jewish Federation’s Social Action Committee partnered with Thrive and Organización Cívica y Cultural Hispana Americana, Inc. for its annual health and resource fair. It was held at

OCCHA for the first time. Attendees received free haircuts and medical services from Mercy Health, learned about their rights with Community Legal Aid, and were able to “shop” in the pop-up store, which was filled with personal hygiene supplies and winter hats, coats, and gloves donated by Berk Enterprises.

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Art gala held at Heritage Manor



Heritage Manor Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation held an art gala in early December. The gala showcased the artwork and handcrafted creations of residents. Participating artists were Jane Popa,

Eileen Morel, Sharon John, Mary Hanick, Jenean Lamos, Mary Ann Evans, Richard Yarmy, Gayle Deorio, Jessie Oliver, Carol Peto, Michele Grazier, and Mary Vranches. Pictured is Grazier.

Levy Gardens tenants make ceramics



Wonderstruck Artisan paid Levy Gardens Assisted Living a visit for a ceramics class. "Tenants absolutely loved it and are so very talented,"

said Kristen Oakley, Senior Living by Youngstown Area Jewish Federation program and activity manager. Pictured is Judy Pazol.

FOR TICKETS: WWW.FUNNYFARMCOMEDYCLUB.COM 330-759-HAHA

February Shows



HEYWOOD Banks
Feb 6/7



LOU Santini
Feb 13/14



VIRZI Trei
Feb 19

FUNNY FARM comedy club

Baking Club at ADS proves popular



The Baking Club at Adult Day Services at Heritage Manor proved so popular it moved from once a month to three times a month. Currently, most of the recipes they prepare are no bake. "Our Clients love using their hands to make something, and baking is a great way to put that to use, reminiscing about being in the kitchen and what

their favorite dishes to make are or used to be," said Kristen Oakley, Senior Living by Youngstown Area Jewish Federation program and activity manager. "Most times we do current events while tasting what we made that morning." Pictured from left are Gregg Mansour, Frank Karcher, Arnett Cooper, Bill Tassian, and Stephanie Floyd.



SENIOR LIVING
by Youngstown Area Jewish Federation



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SKILLED NURSING & REHABILITATION

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Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation
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**ADULT DAY
SERVICES**
AT HERITAGE MANOR

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Supervised Activities
Structured Socialization
VA Approved



**LEVY
GARDENS**
ASSISTED LIVING

Assisted Living
All-Inclusive Rent
Expert Nursing Care
Home-Like Environment

Faith-based values fuel our compassion

yajf.org/seniorliving

Children of Israel announcements



New Tuesday evening class beginning February 3.

Join Children of Israel Tuesdays from 6-7:00 p.m. for a new class exploring “What is the Oral Law,” and why do we need it? We will begin the study of Mishnayos, the foundation of the Oral Law. Participants will develop lifelong skills in “learning how to learn” and gain the ability to engage more deeply and confidently in Torah discussions. All are welcome. An RSVP for the first class is appreciated to allow for proper planning.

Youngstown Yahrzeit Initiative (Y.Y.I.)

Children of Israel is proud to launch the Youngstown Yahrzeit Initiative, a community effort to help provide in-person weekday yahrzeit minyanim

in Youngstown. At present, to the best of our knowledge, Children of Israel’s Sunday morning minyan is the only in-person weekday minyan available. We recognize the significant community need—particularly for those wishing to recite Kaddish in the traditional manner they were accustomed to prior to COVID—and are working to develop a sustainable solution. This initiative is being organized for the benefit of the entire Youngstown Jewish community. All are welcome to participate, with no additional commitments and regardless of synagogue affiliation. Those interested in participating and/or helping others say Kaddish are invited to email coiyoungstown@gmail.com for more information.

Stay Connected

For updates on schedules, classes, and programs, please visit coiyoungstown.org.

Our Mission

Children of Israel is dedicated to sustaining traditional Jewish life and meaningful connection within the Youngstown Jewish community. If you would like to support this mission, please consider making a donation by scanning our QR code.



Bringing greater depth and variety to worship



**Rabbi
Courtney Berman**
Ohev Beth Sholom

As we begin 2026, I am still carrying some of the light from Hanukkah with me. The Shabbat before Hanukkah started, our sanctuary was filled with community

members of all ages. Our religious school

students led us in song and shared readings they had prepared, Rabbi Jessie offered an engaging story, and our board helped bless our congregation.

The festive dinner after the service with klezmer music and time to connect with each other all made for the perfect evening. In the days leading up to that special Shabbat, as I prepared the service and

searched for readings our students could confidently lead, I found myself reflecting on how we invite children into our worship. The texts in Mishkan T'filah are rich and beautiful, yet their language and structure can be a little too complicated for our student leaders. If we want our children to truly participate—to feel like they are a true part of the prayer experience and can comfortably help lead it—we must give them liturgy crafted with their voices, their understanding, and their spirits in mind.

This realization led me to make a shift. For our Hanukkah service, we used the Visual T'filah from Mishkan T'filah for Youth. Although this siddur was designed with children and school communities in mind, I found that it offers far more than a simplified liturgy. Its readings and reflections open familiar prayers in ways that speak across ages, reminding us of the meanings and intentions at the heart of our tradition, and its thoughtful artwork creates an additional sense of kavannah for children

and adults alike. This experience was so meaningful that I am continuing to explore how we can make our services more accessible to our younger congregants and their families. On Jan. 23, I will once again lead services using Mishkan T'filah for Youth and invite religious school students to share readings throughout the service. We will also be officially welcoming Rabbi Jessie to our team, with meals sponsored both Friday evening and Saturday morning in her honor.

In the past, our Tot Shabbat services have offered songs and a story, which were always joyful. Some parents have shared with me that they hope for something more for their children—more depth, more participation, more of a sense that their children are truly part of the prayer life of our community. I understand this, and I want to offer more as well. I want parents and children of all ages to feel at home in our sanctuary, and I want everyone to be able to enjoy dinner together after services in a way that feels natural, meaningful, and truly communal.

With all of this in mind, I am going to experiment a bit this year by intentionally planning some of our services to be more youth-friendly. This is not meant to exclude anyone who may desire a more mature or traditional experience. On the contrary, it is meant to bring all of us greater depth and variety in our worship, and to expand the ways we show that our community includes and values every generation. When we pray alongside children, we are reminded of wonder, curiosity, and sincerity. When we make room for them, our prayer is expanded, not diminished.

As we move forward into 2026, my hope is that, together, we will continue shaping a prayer life that reflects the fullness of who we are here at Ohev Beth Sholom. And may the light from our Hanukkah celebration continue to guide us as we enter the new year—toward learning, toward inclusion, and toward a community where every voice, from the youngest to the oldest, feels at home.

Quiet Mitzvot: The Work That Matters | Ron Della Penna

By Sarah Wilschek

Judaism teaches us to pay attention. We have blessings for waking up, for eating, for trying something new. We bring ritual into our lives every day, finding meaning in the smallest moments. It's how we live—with intention, with awareness, with care.

This is especially true when it comes to our sacred texts. Kavod sefarim—honoring our books—is fundamental to who we are. The Talmud is clear: When a holy text is damaged beyond use, we don't throw it away. We bury it with respect in a genizah, honoring the sacred words it once held.

But there's another option, one that matters just as much: repair. When a book can be saved, fixing it becomes a mitzvah. Tikkun—making whole what's broken. It's about more than books. It's about how we show up for what we value.

Every Shabbat at Ohev Beth Sholom, we gather as a community; Friday evenings and Saturday mornings. On

Saturday mornings, Rabbi Berman chants Torah, and we follow along in our Etz Hayim chumashim. These books have been with us for years—held by b'nai mitzvah students, grandparents, mourners, celebrants. They've been part of our most sacred moments.

And it shows. Pages tear. Bindings loosen. The evidence of their use, their purpose, their importance is written in every worn edge.

That's when Ron Della Penna quietly stepped in.

Ron didn't announce it. He didn't ask for help or recognition. He simply started taking home one chumash at a time, repairing it carefully and bringing it back ready for Shabbat. Then he'd take the next one. Week after week, one book at a time, Ron has been doing the work that needed doing.

It's a remarkable thing—to notice what's broken and actually fix it. To see



Ron Della Penna repairs Etz Hayim chumashim for OBS.

Quiet Mitzvot continued on page 7

Quiet Mitzvot continued from page 6

a need in your community and respond, not with a plan or a committee, but with your own two hands. Ron could have suggested someone handle it. He could have waited for someone else to step up. Instead, he just did it.

This is what tikkun olam looks like in real life. Not abstract or distant, but here in our own sanctuary, with our own books, through the steady effort of someone who cares.

Ron embodies what makes Ohev Beth Sholom special. We're a community where people don't just talk about values—they live them. Where someone sees what needs doing and does it, simply because it matters.

Thank you, Ron. You didn't just repair our books. You reminded us what it means to truly show up for our community.



Ron Della Penna

OBS celebrates Hanukkah



Welcoming Rabbi Educator Jessica Locketz to Ohev Beth Sholom

By Rabbi Courtney Berman

I am delighted to share the wonderful news that Rabbi Educator Jessica Locketz has joined our professional team at Ohev Beth Sholom. This part-time position—approved by our board in August—marks an important step in strengthening Jewish learning at our congregation. Rabbi Jessie brings with her a wealth of experience and creativity, and I am excited for the impact she will have across our community.

Rabbi Jessie will develop a comprehensive curriculum for our religious school, one that reflects our values, our educational vision, and the spirit of our community. Her leadership will help us build a strong, integrated foundation for Jewish learning – one that supports our children as they grow and provides opportunities for their families to learn and engage alongside them.

Her work will also extend far beyond the religious school. As our Rabbi educator, she will help shape Jewish learning across the lifespan, from our youngest community members through adults. She will support opportunities for study, connection, and growth throughout the year and will bring an educational lens to our Shabbat and holiday observances.

The timing of her arrival could not be more perfect. With our strategic visioning process now underway, Rabbi Jessie will play an active role in helping us imagine the future of education at Ohev Beth Sholom. Her voice and expertise will help inform the important work our board is doing, adding depth and clarity to our educational vision as it takes shape.

I hope you will join me in warmly welcoming Rabbi Jessie Locketz to Ohev Beth Sholom! I look forward to the meaningful and inspiring work we will create together in this next chapter.

WELCOME

RABBI JESSICA LOCKETZ



RABBI EDUCATOR

CONGREGATION
OHEV BETH SHOLOM



Rabbi Jessica Locketz is a rabbi and Educational Leader in the greater Pittsburgh area. Recently, she served Rodef Sholom Congregation Support Rabbi and Engagement Director. It was a return to her roots - she previously served this congregation as an Assistant Rabbi upon her ordination from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 1999. In between, she served Beth El Hebrew Congregation in Alexandria, VA, and Temple Emanuel of the South Hills as Rabbi and Director of Education.

Rabbi Locketz is passionate about creating Jewish community and exploring the many ways to live authentically Jewish lives. As her love for Jewish education - both, teaching and learning - continued to grow, she returned to her alma mater - HUC-JIR and graduated in 2016 with an Executive Masters of Religious Education and was granted the highly coveted distinction of Reform Jewish Educator (RJE). In her capacity as an Educational Leader, she currently teaches an education class to students at the Academy of Jewish Religion in Los Angeles, CA.

Rabbi Locketz served for many years as the co-chair of PAJE (Pittsburgh Area Jewish Educators). She is a past board member of the Hillel Jewish University Center of Pittsburgh. She is a current board member of the Association of Reform Jewish Educators and a lay leader on the Camp Harlam Council. She is an alumna of the Leadership Development Initiative of Leadership Pittsburgh and the STAR PEER (Synagogues Transformation and Renewal Professional Excellence in Education for Rabbis) Program.

Rabbi Locketz enjoys doing yoga, taking long walks, reading good books and hanging out in coffee shops. She lives with her husband, two sons, and two cats in the South Hills of Pittsburgh.

Reflections on My Recent Trip



Rabbi Seth Sternstein
Temple El Emeth

Now that I've returned from my latest trip to Israel (I hope to return in the future), let me share a few observations about the country and our people living there.

The last time I was in Israel was 15 years ago. If you don't return on a frequent basis, you will be astonished at the rapid physical growth within the country. Areas that just a decade and a half ago were villages, have expanded to become cities. As an example, Tel Aviv throughout the 20th century had few tall buildings. Most were the original Bauhaus style that comprised only a few floors. Hence, many of the older buildings were "walk-ups." In addition, most of these buildings got their heating from large water tanks sitting atop the buildings, exposed to the strong sun that shines on Israel throughout the year.

Today, the Tel Aviv skyline is dominated by sleek new high-rises and cranes putting up more high-rises. Gleaming towers overlook the Mediterranean, and purchase prices have "gone through the roof." Apparently, the demand to live in Tel Aviv—despite the war and economic pressures—is very high. And why not? The allure of the beach and the attraction of many high-end shops is powerful. It was hard for me to decide whether to run to the Mediterranean for another knee-high wade, or window-shop for things I'd have trouble affording! I'm not complaining, mind you. It is invigorating to see Israel's economy growing steadily. It is a divine blessing that our Israeli cousins can live in an Israel whose stores rival any we have in the West, and whose apartments are stunning.

Second—the people. Sometimes,

Israelis are criticized for their very forward attitude. It seems to outsiders that Israelis often interfere in other people's business. Stories abound of Jewish women looking at babies in strollers, and telling the mothers they think the baby is too cold or too hot or too thin. Or Jewish men who overhear a political conversation at the next table and "butt in" with their opinion. This is not because Israelis are rude for the sake of rudeness. It stems, rather from the fact that, as all Jews are extended family, most Israelis are genuinely concerned for your welfare, and will freely opine as to how to raise your child, or how to cook better, or how to vote. While we might consider this "none of your business," this attitude has a positive side. As an example, one evening I was sitting outside my hotel, on a fountain-pool wall. I may have had a "far-away look" on my face (or, perhaps, a confused look). In any case, a woman noticed me, walked over, and kindly asked, "Atah B'seder?" ("Are you o.k.?"") I assured her that I was, and thanked her for asking. As she walked away, I wondered whether I would have gotten an inquiry like that if I had been sitting in a similar spot in the United States. So often people walk by without stopping, even if they know the person may indeed need some help.

Third—the food. The food in Israel is delicious. My younger son, Daniel, joined me in Israel to celebrate a family wedding. As he has visited Israel many times in the last two years, he is quite familiar with several major cities. When I asked about lunch one afternoon, he took me to a shawarma/falafel stand that has been in steady operation since 1939. It is reputedly the best fixed-stand shawarma/falafel place in Tel Aviv. The food was outstanding! (I am starting to salivate just remembering the dish we got—we shared one because the plate was piled high with food). Vegetables and fruit throughout Israel are very fresh, usually delivered just hours before use. And, it is remarkable to note that historically, under every foreign

conqueror, the soil became weak, yielding very poor results. Only under the Jews does the land reveal its fertility.

Fourth—the incredible advances in archaeology. Fifteen years ago, a tunnel under the Western Wall in Jerusalem had been uncovered, and the process of searching it had recently begun. Today, much more of the tunnel has been excavated, and all sorts of treasures from both Second and First Temple times have been recovered. A bell from the hem of the robe of one of the High Priests' garments was recently found! The tunnel now leads to a place within just a few yards of where the Holy of Holies stood! The Pilgrim Road, on which our ancestors walked, as they ascended Mount Moriah to reach the Temple has been revealed! It is breathtaking to realize that one discovery after another fits right in with the Biblical story of Israel during the reign of King David and of King Solomon. Our enemies wish these discoveries didn't exist. Anyone who

appreciates the Bible, however, hears historic voices from 3,000 years ago calling clearly to us. Archaeological discoveries prove that those stories and details are as true today as the day they were recorded. Israel is, indeed, the motherland of the Jewish people.

Taking these four observations together, you can understand why I was reluctant to board the plane from Tel Aviv to New York. Of course, I love and appreciate the many friends and family I have here in the U.S. But, truth be told, I'd hop on the next plane to Tel Aviv, if I could. I hope to return to breathe in more of the air of Eretz Yisrael, and celebrate the existence of the State. "My heart is in the East, and I am in the uttermost West," said lamented poet Judah Halevi, 900 years ago. What would he have given to be able to board an airplane and arrive in Israel in a matter of a few hours?

Let's see—the next El Al flight from JFK to Tel Aviv leaves at...

TEMPLE EL EMETH EVENTS

Our Walker's Group is up and "running"! Join Ronna and friends on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10 a.m. to walk around the building for some exercise and camaraderie.

Torah Tuesdays with Rabbi Sternstein is off in January and will resume in February. The group explores a topic found in the week's Torah portion. Sessions are in person or via zoom.

Temple El Emeth will host a Tu B'Shevat program with PJ Library February 2. A pizza dinner will be served and children will be making grass pets. Please call Barb Wilson at the JCC to RSVP at 330.746.3251.

El Emeth will host a Shabbat Luncheon following services February 7. The service and lunch will be in recognition of the "Four Chaplains," four Army Chaplains who sacrificed their lives after a troop transport ship was torpedoed at sea in 1943. They selflessly gave their life jackets to other soldiers and were seen praying together as the ship went down. Please call the Temple office to RSVP for lunch.

Save the date for El Emeth's Community Purim celebration March 2.

Temple El Emeth celebrates Hanukkah



Gary Clayman lights the Menorah while Stephen and Jodi Stoyak (left) and Sherri Clayman (right) look on.

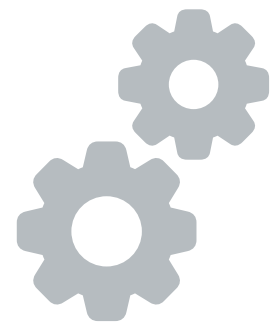


Scott, Devra, and Frankie Sadler enjoy the Hanukkah festivities at Temple El Emeth.

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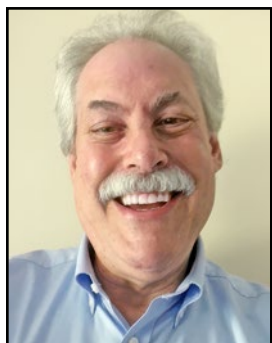
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Death becomes me (Where this phrase comes, no one seems to know.)



Art Einzig
YAJCA
Executive Director

Our goal is for no one to have any reservations when dealing with the YAJCA. The purpose of this article is to make the greater Youngstown Jewish community a little more familiar with the Youngstown Area Jewish Cemeteries Association; its history, its purpose, and some of the things we have accomplished. We just celebrated our fifth anniversary in October, and have sadly managed about 75 funerals in any one of our six cemeteries over these past five years. Yes, the funerals are of utmost importance, but there are other aspects of the YAJCA that I would like to share with you over the next year.

The first question you might ask is, “Why were we formed in the first place?” The answers are pretty obvious, but let me be more specific. With our Jewish population shrinking in numbers, causing some congregations to downsize, others to merge, and yet others to disappear, there was less peoplepower for each synagogue to manage their own cemeteries and pay the mounting expenses. Add in the 4,000 aging memorial stones, an aging Youngstown Jewish population, and an uncertain future. A group of committed leaders formed a committee to chart the future. After a lot of hard work and buy-in by all congregations and the Youngstown Area Jewish Federation, a plan was approved by all, then properly funded, and is successfully operating five plus years later. We have learned much over these past five years and will continue to develop and serve the community in the best of ways. With any new organization, especially one so personal as death, there are hurdles and challenges.

This article will begin by addressing perpetual care of our cemeteries,

and also address family and synagogue responsibilities—all of us working together to accomplish good outcomes as a team. We begin with...

Perpetual care is usually the largest dollar amount a family or individual contributes when arranging a burial. It is \$3,000 for each person buried in our cemeteries and covers all general costs including but not limited to lawn care and landscaping, snow removal, upkeep of paved drives and parking areas, maintenance of buildings and fencing, consultant fees when required, staff salaries, and any other items needed for the physical upkeep and care of our six cemeteries. It does not include the maintenance of memorial stones (tombstones or headstones). I’ll get to that a little later.

The grave or plot fee is the cost of one gravesite in any of our cemeteries. It is \$900, entitling a person one plot in any of our cemeteries. There are some exceptions or added things regarding cremation at some cemeteries where allowed. At one time, one synagogue also charged an additional fee to reserve a plot, but that was eliminated when the association was created in 2020.

Opening and closing a grave is a set fee for our grave digger to dig the grave and backfill the grave once the vault and casket are lowered into the hole. It also includes the leveling of the soil and grading and replanting of grass after settlement. This fee amount is \$650.

Chevra Kadisha is the Jewish custom of preparing a loved one’s remains prior to burial by the Chevra Kadisha Society. This is required in five of our cemeteries. The cost is \$400 and includes the proper burial shroud, washing and dressing the body, and all religious prayers by the society.

Security at funerals—something we always encourage in these times. We highly suggest it to all families, and most families agree to have one of our

security personnel or a member of a local police department present during a funeral at one of our cemeteries. This cost is \$200.

A very important mitzvah we do is repair and restoration of our monuments. A family may go to any monument provider for their loved one’s headstone. However, the vendor chosen shall abide by our guidelines regarding size, material, foundations, symbols, and wording on a stone, found in our Rules & Regulations. It is the responsibility of the family to pay for the

stone and its installation, and have the stone design approved by our executive director. It is also the responsibility of the family to pay ongoing repairs as needed over the ensuing years. To give you an idea of how important this process is, we are currently budgeting approximately

\$10,000 per year for monument repair of stones with no living relatives available to cover these costs. Up to now our annual YAJCA appeal covers a portion of this expense. I am proud to say we are at a pace to restore 40 to 50 stones per year as needed.

In closing I want to thank everyone who has cared—whether by donating monies or time by serving on the board or subcommittees, or simply visiting our cemeteries. The YAJCA has a board representing all synagogues and the Federation, who meet quarterly as a board and have several subcommittees that also meet. Our cemetery fees are the same for all members of the Jewish community with the one qualifier being that you are a member in good standing at one of our synagogues. Anyone can give me a call or email me (330.720.5140 or arteinzig@gmail.com) with questions or setting up a meeting time. I realize this is a complicated subject for many. I look forward to your input.

With our Jewish population shrinking and our cemeteries aging, a group of committed leaders came together to chart the future.



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Early Learning Center at JCC expands



The ELC at the JCC recently opened a new classroom. Pictured from back to front are Vanessa Rivera and Valynne Anderson.

The Early Learning Center at the JCC of Youngstown is expanding. A classroom for ages 16 to 22 months recently opened.

The new classroom features:

- Age-appropriate learning materials and toys to foster sensory exploration and early developmental milestones
- A low child-to-teacher ratio to ensure personalized care and attention
- Dedicated spaces for play, rest, and feeding, tailored to meet the unique needs of infants and toddlers
- Highly trained, compassionate caregivers who prioritize the well-being, growth, and happiness of each child

“We are very excited to be able to expand

our program,” said Adrienne Achenbach, director. “Our waitlist for this age group is always the greatest need, so this classroom will help serve more toddlers in our community. We appreciate all the donations that helped make this happen.”

Donors to the project are J. Ford Crandall Memorial Foundation, Beecher Foundation, John S. and Doris Andrews Memorial Fund, Penner Family Endowment of the Youngstown Area Jewish Federation, Frank and Pearl Gelbman Charitable Foundation, Community Foundation of the Mahoning Valley, and Walter E. and Caroline H. Watson Foundation.

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2026

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MEMBERSHIP

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When you refer a friend who joins, you'll both be entered in our opportunity to win a free month! If you upgrade your membership, you'll be entered to win a J prize pack. All February long.

AGING WELL

CAREGIVER CAFE

February 2 & 16, March 2 & 23 | 10:30–11:30 a.m.

TECH TUESDAY

February 3 & 17, March 3 & 24 | 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

GRIEF GROUP

January 21, February 18, March 18 | 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

LUNCH BUNCH

January 22, February 19, March 26 | 11:45 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

KINSHIP PROGRAM

January 28, February 11 & 25, March 11 & 25
11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

THRIVE WITH FIRST LIGHT

January 27 | 12:30–2:30 p.m.

SELLING MADE SIMPLE

Your Guide to Online Marketplaces
February 11 | 1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.

OUTBACK RAY'S AMAZING ANIMAL SHOW

February 13 | 2:00–3:00 p.m.

WELLNESS

J WELL, HEALTH & WELLNESS CHALLENGE

Challenge 1: February 2–March 28

CO-ED INDOOR VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE

January 20–March 3

LIFEGUARD TRAINING

(Ages 15+) Multiple Sessions Available

LIFEGUARD RECERTIFICATION

(Ages 17+) Multiple Sessions Available

LIFEGUARD INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATION

(Ages 17+) March 13–15

100 MILE SWIM CHALLENGE All year long
Escape to Paradise Swim Challenge through March 31

ARTS & CULTURE

TU B'SHEVAT COMMUNITY ART PROJECT

February 2

TU B'SHEVAT AT EL EMETH

February 2

HAVDALAH UNDER THE STARS

February 7

PURIM CARNIVAL

March 1

VETERANS BREAKFAST CLUB

Vietnam, Then and Now - March 25

SUSAN KANTERMAN BOOK CLUB

FEBRUARY: "The Majority: A Novel" By: Elizabeth Silver

MARCH: "The End is the Beginning: A Personal History of My Mother" by Jill Bialosky

SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS

CRAFT & KVELL

February 20 - Beaded Windchimes

March 24 - Watercolor Landscapes: Spring Scenes

JEWELRY MAKING 101

January 26 - Beading Basics

February 9 - Wire Wrapping

February 23 - Metal Findings

March 9 - Fused Glass

TEXTURED BLOOMS: 3D FLOWER CANVASES

February 15 | 2:00–4:00 p.m.

YOUTH

AFTER SCHOOL FAMILY FUN IN THE POOL

January 23 - Dive in Movie

February 20 - Rubber Duck Party

March 13 - Treasure Dive

J ALL DAY (GRADES K-5)

Check Calendar for upcoming dates

LITTLE GROOVERS (AGES 2-5)

February - Winter Olympics

PARENTS NIGHT OUT (GRADES K-6)

February 21

BBYO teens volunteer at Red Door Cafe

Youngstown BBYO teens, in partnership with the Jewish Community Relations Council, volunteered at the Red Door Cafe in December, helping prepare and serve nearly 90 meals to members of our community. For the past two years, the teens have been passionate about this project and continue to give back by volunteering again and again. St. John's Episcopal Church of Youngstown has hosted weekly free meals for the community through their Red Door Cafe for more than 30 years.



Pictured from left are Blythe Hively, Tres Hively, and Sidney Braslawscce.



Pictured above is Henry Long.

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Hanukkah celebrated across the Youngstown Area Jewish Federation campus



On the eighth night of Hanukkah, BBYO Youngstown teens came together to light the menorah, retell the story of Hanukkah, sing along to favorite Hanukkah songs, and cook and enjoy delicious latkes.



As part of the Better Together Intergenerational Program, Akiva Academy students and Levy Gardens Assisted Living tenants celebrated Hanukkah with pizza and donuts followed by a hands-on clay workshop.



JCC members enjoyed a free Hanukkah celebration with latkes and donuts while playing Hanukkah Bingo.



Students in the J All Day program watched the Hanukkah "Rugrats" special, played dreidel, learned about Hanukkah, and enjoyed latkes.



Our Gang's Hanukkah party included dinner, crafts, and games as well as lighting the menorah and saying the prayers together. Each member received a gift card.



Levy Gardens Assisted Living tenants enjoyed a Hanukkah party in the Multi-Purpose Room of the JCC.



Students in the Early Learning Center at the JCC celebrated Hanukkah with a spirit week. They also enjoyed sufganiyot and latkes, lit the menorah, and sang songs.



Adult Day Services clients enjoyed a Hanukkah party that included playing dreidel.



Early Learning Center students shared cards and kindness stickers with Heritage Manor Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation residents.



Residents of Heritage Manor Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation enjoyed a klezmer band and latkes and sufganiyot.



Youngstown Area Jewish Federation staff enjoyed a party with lots of food, a photo booth, and more.

New Akiva Academy middle school nearing completion

Final touches are being made to the new Akiva middle school. The Youngstown Area Jewish Federation and Akiva Academy plan to open the new facility for fifth through eighth grades later this year.

Altshuler Akiva Academy, Goldstone-Mirkin Family Middle School at the Suzi Solomon Campus will be located at 520 Gypsy Lane. The expansion includes four classrooms, office spaces, and a multipurpose area designed for Shabbat services. In the next five years, this project will allow Akiva Academy to double

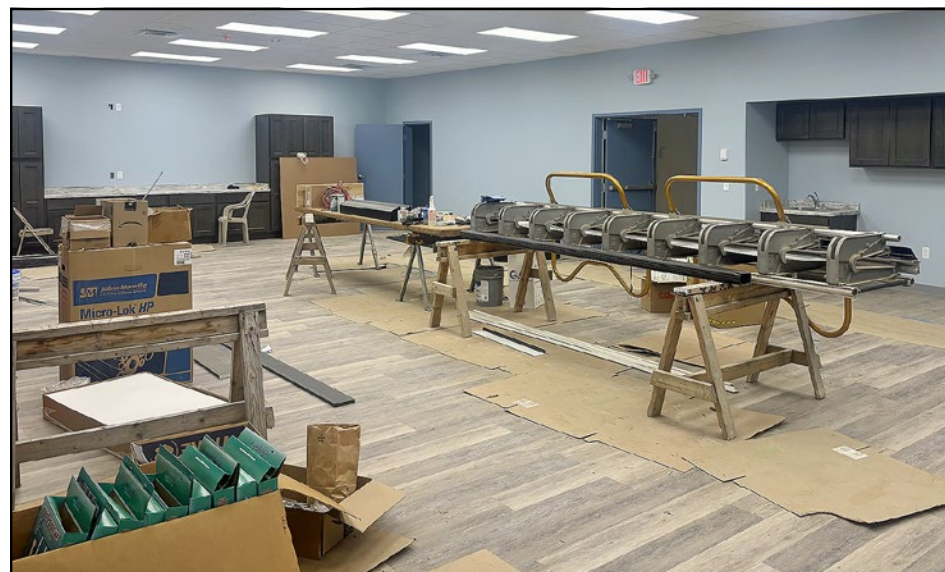
its current enrollment.

“The moment you step inside the building it fills you with excitement for all that lies ahead in the coming year,” said Courtney Campesi, Youngstown Area Jewish Federation financial resource development director. “Thanks to the community’s incredible generosity, we have raised an inspiring \$1,301,963 toward our \$1.9 million goal.”

A few naming opportunities are still available. Contact Campesi at ccampesi@jewishyoungstown.org for information.



Entrance door (portico)



Multipurpose room



Hallway & lockers

Nominations for volunteer award sought

The Youngstown Area Jewish Federation is seeking nominations for the Esther Marks Memorial Volunteer Award.

Esther Marks was a prodigious volunteer within the Federation and its agencies, at her synagogue, and in the general community. The Esther Marks Memorial Volunteer Award is meant to encourage volunteerism at all levels and to honor her memory.

Nominations must be submitted in writing and be one page and double spaced. The nomination should detail why the nominee is deserving of the award. Individuals may be nominated by any individual or organization of the Jewish community. Nominees should be involved in Federation and/or any of its agencies or affiliated organizations and in the general Jewish community including

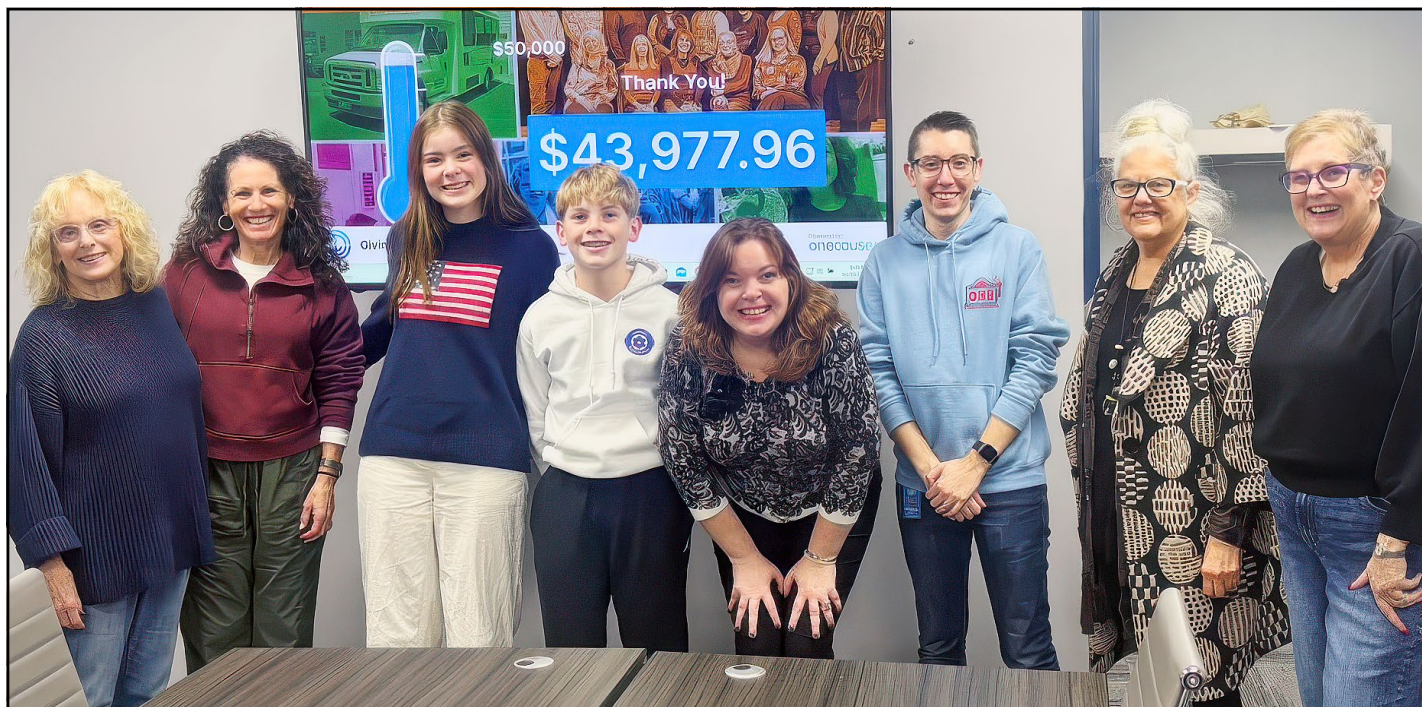
involvement in Jewish organizations or synagogues.

Nominees should also be involved in organizations in the general community. Nominees need not be a volunteer in a purely leadership role. Rather this award will give priority to those who volunteer for direct services to people or agencies. Consideration will be given to, but not limited to, direct vol-

unteer activities, membership on boards or committees, leadership positions, length of time of service, and quality of volunteerism.

Nominations are due by May 21. The award will be presented at the Youngstown Area Jewish Federation annual meeting. Send nominations to Lisa Long, CEO, Youngstown Area Jewish Federation, 505 Gypsy Lane, Youngstown, Ohio, 44504.

Volunteers raise more than \$2,000 for Federation campaign



Volunteers devoted time Nov. 23 for Tzedakah Sunday. They made phone calls, texted, and personalized postcards. In two hours, their efforts helped raise more than \$2,000 for the Youngstown Area Jewish Federation's 2025 annual campaign. Pictured from left are Claudia Moss, Wendy Weiss, Maddie Long, Henry Long, Lisa Long, Nic Bush, Samie Winick, and Cari Immerman.

Giving Tuesday donations to Federation top \$228,000

The Youngstown Area Jewish Federation raised over \$228,000 during its Giving Tuesday campaign, supported by DeSalvo Construction.

DeSalvo Construction partnered with the Federation, first offering to match every donation to the Federation up to \$25,000, doubling the impact of community contributions. In the last week of the campaign, after that match was met, DeSalvo Construction offered another \$25,000 match, which was also met.

"We are all just so amazed and thankful for this opportunity and the generosity that came out from the community to make this happen," said Courtney Campesi, Federation financial resource development director.

Funds raised directly benefit programs and services across the five counties the Federation serves—Mahoning, Trumbull, Columbiana, Mercer, and Lawrence.

JCC PURIM CARNIVAL
SUNDAY, MARCH 1 | 12:00-3:00 P.M.

Join us for this fun family event! Enjoy carnival food, games, prizes, a bounce house, a costume contest, entertainers and more. Admission is free, tickets for games and food will be available for purchase.

ALL FAMILIES ARE WELCOME!

Games: 12:00-2:00 p.m.
Entertainment & Costume Contest 2:15 p.m.

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Fried Chicken
Beverages

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Cards
Decorations
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Manischewitz & Mogen David
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Federation staff attend JFNA General Assembly



Melissa Bateman, Youngstown Area Jewish Federation director of community engagement; Bonnie Deutsch Burdman, Federation executive director, community relations/government affairs; and Lisa Long, Federation CEO attended the JFNA General Assembly in November. They spent a full day on Capitol Hill with Ohio Jewish Communities. They met with Senator Bernie Moreno and legislative aides from Senator Jon Husted's office, as well as Congressman Dave Joyce. They also

connected with legislative aides from Congresswoman Emilia Sykes' office and the offices of Congressman Michael Rulli, Congressman Dave Taylor, and Congressman Warren Davidson. Across all meetings, they had productive conversations focused on community security needs and efforts to address food insecurity. Pictured from left are Bateman; Long; Moreno; Howie Beigelman, OJC president & CEO; and Oliver Young, Jewish Federation of Cleveland senior associate, community relations.

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HAVDALAH UNDER THE STARS

PJ Library and OBS present a unique community Havdalah experience at the planetarium. Begin with a guided Sky Talk, pause for Havdalah prayers and singing as three stars appear, then journey through the night sky and meet the moon, a beloved marker of the Jewish calendar.

YSU Ward Beecher Planetarium

Saturday, February 7 | 5:15 p.m.-6:30 p.m. | This program is free.

Register by February 5 to bwilson@jewishyoungstown.org.



CONGREGATION
OHEV BETH SHOLOM

Partnership2Gether chairs share 2025 overview

Editor's note: This is reprinted with permission from Partnership2Gether. Megan Maurer, U.S. chair, and Moti Yeger, Israel chair, originally shared this in an email. The Youngstown Area Jewish Federation is part of the Western Galilee Partnership. This partnership connects Youngstown with 16 U.S. communities, Israel's Western Galilee (Akko and Matte Asher) and Budapest, Hungary. The fifteen other U.S. communities in our Partnership are Des Moines, Iowa; Louisville, Ky.; Omaha, Neb.; Akron, Canton, Dayton, and Toledo, Ohio; Austin, San Antonio, and Fort Worth, Texas; Peoria and Springfield, Ill.; Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, and South Bend, Ind.; and Northwest Indiana.

Shalom Dear P2G Family,

As 2025 ends, we hope this message finds you well and reflecting on a meaningful year. For Moti and me, it has been a privilege to serve as your Partnership Co-Chairs. This has been a particularly busy and consequential year for our organization,

with several milestones worth highlighting:

- Hiring our new Director, Ory Rosin
- Celebrating the one-year anniversary of our Consortium Director, Tamara Lawson Schuster
- Hiring key professionals in Budapest and establishing both a budget and ongoing support framework for the rebuilding of their momentum and capacity
- Ensuring financial integrity:
 - ✧ Onboarding a new banking community
 - ✧ In partnership with JAFI, completing a comprehensive review of our financial systems, resulting in an overhaul of our budgeting process and the implementation of a new, transparent reporting structure.
 - ✧ Establishing a more thoughtful budget process, enabling all Federation Executives to review and opine on the budget in advance of the COC
 - ✧ Creating a system of internal and external financial controls
- Ensuring sufficient insurance coverage

through a systemic review of policies and a market analysis

- Achieving 100% representation of our communities in the LLC as signatories
- Welcoming a new community: JewishAkron
- Bringing 99 participants to the Western Galilee over the course of two missions

None of this would have been possible without the extraordinary dedication of our professionals. Our colleagues in Israel had worked under terribly difficult circumstances, and on the U.S. side Tamara has carried the lion's share of the work to ensure consistency and momentum. Mark Freedman, our consultant, continues to do heavy lifting wherever it's needed, particularly in finance. We have also relied heavily on our volunteers, whose commitment and generosity of time continue to inspire us. We are grateful to the new Committee Chairs currently being onboarded and look forward to the energy and ideas they will bring. Finally, we owe a deep thank you to our Federation Executives and Professionals for their ongoing support, professionalism, and guidance. Our progress this year is a direct result of all of you.

Now that our long-needed stabilization efforts are taking hold, it is time to move forward thoughtfully in reevaluating our programming. Programming is not the objective—it is how we achieve the P2G mission of connecting Jewish people. This revitalization effort will depend on

meaningful input from all of you—our constituents, and its success will be directly tied to the strength of our committee work. Please watch for opportunities to participate in surveys and/or serve on a task force. As we look ahead to 2026, we are excited to present refreshed and updated programming, which we hope to unveil at our COC this summer in Indianapolis.

If you are reading this letter, you are likely already involved and familiar with the “magic” of P2G. We need your help to expand the P2G circle—draft into the P2G world a couple of folks in your orbit that will enrich P2G. Encourage them to get informed and involved by signing up for the P2G Weekly newsletter, ask them to join your local P2G/Israel Committee and/or help plan an event, encourage them to attend a local or international P2G program, and/or reach out to Consortium Director Tamara Lawson Schuster to learn more ways to be involved.

In the meantime, please don't hesitate to contact us with thoughts or suggestions. It is a privilege to partner with you in this sacred work. Since P2G was founded, its mission has never been more urgent or more relevant. Stay strong, stay unified, take care of one another, and take pride in who we are and what we do.

With gratitude,

MegaMot

Megan Maurer, U.S. Chair

Moti Yeger, Israel Chair

Be part of
a collaborative
community
wooden tree
art project in
celebration of
“The Birthday of the Trees.”

**Community
Art Project
for
Tu B'Shevat**

Foods associated with the holiday
will be available to sample.

Date: Monday, February 2 | **Time:** 9:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m.

Location: JCC First Floor

Cost: Free/Member | Guest Pass/Non Member



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Akiva Academy celebrates Hanukkah with student performance



Akiva Academy held a Hanukkah program at Stambaugh Auditorium Dec. 18. The theme was the Story of Hanukkah and each class took part in the show with a dance, skit or a song.

Annual Akiva spelling bee held



Akiva Academy held a spelling bee Jan. 6. Jayce Viera (right) came in first and Rebecca Sakelaris in second place.

Godfrey Anderson

Godfrey Anderson, 101, of Youngstown, Ohio, passed away peacefully on Dec. 5, 2025.

Born on July 13, 1924, in London, England, Godfrey was the son of Rex and Hilda (Marlot) Anderson. During his early years, he lived in Brussels, Belgium, and then Brighton, England.

A proud veteran of the British Royal Navy, Godfrey served with distinction during World War II, participating in the Normandy Landings at the June/ Gold Beaches and also seeing action in North Africa, Anzio, and Burma. After the war in 1947, Godfrey immigrated to Youngstown, Ohio, and joined his sister, Pauline Berkowitz, ready to build a new life in America.

In Youngstown, Godfrey met and married Bessie (Osgood) Anderson, his beloved wife and partner of 69 years, who predeceased him in August 2025. Together, they raised three sons and built a family and business rooted in hard work and shared purpose.

For nearly 60 years, Godfrey worked as a realtor and developer, building and managing numerous single-family homes and apartment buildings throughout the community, always with Bessie by his side.



While he wasn't quite as passionate about gardening as Bessie was, he was always there in the greenhouse, late into the evening, by her side.

Outside of work, Godfrey found joy in life's simple pleasures. He was an avid fisherman and enjoyed a bit of friendly competition playing poker—whether at the weekly JCC game or on his tablet from his favorite chair at home.

Godfrey is survived by his sons and family:

David (Marcee) Anderson of Pittsburgh, Pa., Steven (Terri) Anderson of Girard, Ohio, and Michael (Kimberly) Anderson of Palisades, Calif.; nine grandchildren; and fourteen great-grandchildren, all of whom will cherish his wisdom, humor, and unwavering love.

He will be remembered for his resilience, generosity, and devotion to family. A life well lived and deeply loved.

The family would like to thank the staff at Heritage Manor, Shari Loeb for her years of comfort care, and Mindy from Southern Hospice for their wonderful care and attention during the last few years of his life.

Memorial contributions may be made to Heritage Manor, 517 Gypsy Lane, Youngstown, Ohio 44504.

Donald Lee Reisman

Donald Lee Reisman, 85, passed away Dec. 26, 2025, at Heritage Manor Hospice Care.

He was born July 30, 1940, to the late Arthur and Frances Haenick Reisman.

He was a graduate of Warren G. Harding High School, Class of 1958, and then went on to graduate from Youngstown State University. He was also a member of Beth Israel Temple in Warren since its construction. Later, he joined the U.S. Army Reserve and served his country. He was the owner of Maxson's men's clothing store. He was known for his work ethic, and most of his friends referred to him as Max.

He married the love of his life, Janice Farkas Reisman, in March 1965. Together they built a loving and caring family. He was a big fan of OSU and all Cleveland sports teams. He enjoyed the game of golf for many years, especially with his old pal,

Michael Rosenberg. He will be missed by those who knew and loved him.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Arthur and Frances Reisman; father- and mother-in-law, Vas and Viola Farkas; and grandson, Max Miller

He leaves his wife of 60 years, Janice Reisman; children, Dr. Deron Reisman, Brian Reisman and Greta (Scott) Reisman Miller; grandchildren, Sophia Reisman, Anthony Reisman, Claire Miller and Mason Miller; sister, Judy Grossman; sister-in-law, Jean (Gene) Stan; along with many nieces and nephews whom he loved so much.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to The V Foundation for Cancer Research, 14600 Weston Parkway, Cary, NC 27513, V.org.

Calling hours were at Lane Funeral Home, Roberts-Clark Chapel, with online condolences at lanefuneralhomes.com.

Toby (Guttermann) Brenner

Toby Brenner, age 94, formerly of Youngstown died Dec. 24, 2025 at Otterbein Sunset House in Ottawa Hills, Ohio. She was born in Cleveland on April 21, 1931 to Anna (Itzkovitz) and Jacob Guttermann. Toby moved to the Toledo area in 2017 to be near her daughter.

Toby was preceded in death by her husband Raymond "Mickey" Brenner in 1998. Surviving are her daughter and son-in-law, Marilyn and Neal Levine of Sylvania, Ohio and two grandchildren.

Services and interment were at El Emeth Cemetery in Youngstown.



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Elaine Haims

Elaine Haims, of Monroe Township, N.J., formerly of New Castle, Pa., where she resided for more than 60 years, passed away on Dec. 15, 2025. She was born in Aliquippa, Pa., on Dec. 3, 1934.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 72 years, Jack M. Haims; her parents, Israel Allan Davis and Helen Klein Davidson; and her sister, Suzanne Davis Wasser. She is survived by her children, Lynn Shakin (Michael) of New Jersey, Allan of Los Angeles, and Joshua of New Orleans; six grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

Elaine served for many years as the Regional Director, Midwest for Academic Management Services, based in Rhode Island, which provided tuition payment plans to college and university students.

She was deeply involved in her community and dedicated many years



to volunteer service, including serving as Women's Chair of the United Jewish Appeal, and as a member of Tifereth Israel Synagogue Sisterhood, the League of Women Voters, and the Jameson Memorial Hospital Junior Guild.

While Elaine greatly valued her professional and volunteer work, nothing brought her more joy than time spent visiting her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She will be dearly missed by all who knew and loved her.

A private graveside service and interment was held at Tifereth Israel Cemetery, New Castle. Arrangements were made by R. Cunningham Funeral Home & Crematory Inc., New Castle.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorial donations be made in Elaine's memory to the Jewish Federation of Pittsburgh or the Jewish Community Legacy Project.

Stephen "Steve" Gerson

On Dec. 2, 2025. Loving father of Synthia (Eric Casaburro) Gerson and Laura (Phillip) Silverman. Son of the late Meyer and Sylvia Gerson. Brother of Dr. Larry (Barbara) Gerson and Rose (Irwin Harris) Gerson. Grandfather of Addison, Cameron, and Ari Silverman and Ian Casaburro. Stepson of the late Lucille Gerson. Stepbrother of Rabbi Norman (Andrea) Cohen, Marilyn (Dr. Jerry) Lipson, Mila (Andy) Paul and Larry Cohen. Also survived by nieces and nephews, cousins and friends.

Steve was a graduate of Taylor Allderdice High School in 1965 and Penn State University in 1969. His journey in the sign industry began shortly after graduation. Some of his most notable projects were the Heinz

Ketchup bottle, the main entrance sign at the Pittsburgh International Airport, and the main marquee at the Bryce Jordan Center in State College. He was a former vice president of Beth El Synagogue, ZOA, and Community Day School.

Services were at Ralph Schugar Chapel Inc., 5509 Centre Avenue, Shadyside, on Dec. 4, 2025. Interment was in Kether Torah Cemetery. The family would like to thank the staff at Shadyside Hospital and the Hillman Cancer Center. Steve passed away from medical complications following a prolonged illness. Contributions may be made to Tree of Life Congregation, P.O. Box 5273, Pittsburgh, PA 15206, or a charity of the donor's choice.

League of Women Voters accepting Hall of Fame nominations

The League of Women Voters of Greater Youngstown's Hall of Fame nominations are now open. Nominations must be submitted no later than 5 p.m. January 31.

The League of Women Voters of Greater Youngstown's Hall of Fame cel-

ebration will be held March 19 at the Jewish Community Center.

To nominate an individual visit <https://forms.gle/JkzACbiHED84XHbu8>.

For more information visit the League of Women Voters of Greater Youngstown's website at <https://www.lwvgy.org>.

Mikveh unearthed beneath Western Wall tells Temple's destruction story

By Andrew Silow-Carroll

(JTA) — Archaeologists have uncovered a 2,000-year-old Jewish ritual bath beneath the Western Wall Plaza in Jerusalem that bears ash and destruction debris from the Roman conquest of the city in 70 C.E., officials said.

The find, announced in December by the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Western Wall Heritage Foundation, lies just west of where pilgrims once entered the Temple Mount, offering a rare physical link to everyday life in late Second Temple Jerusalem.

The mikveh, hewn into the bedrock, measures approximately 10 feet long, four feet, five inches wide, and six feet, one inch high, with four steps leading into the bath. It was found sealed beneath a destruction layer dated to the year 70 C.E., filled with ash, pottery shards, and stone vessels.

"Jerusalem should be remembered as a Temple city," said Ari Levy, the excavation director for the Israel Antiquities Authority, said in the announcement. "As such, many aspects of daily life were adapted to this reality, and this is reflected especially in the

meticulous observance of the laws of ritual impurity and purity by the city's residents and leaders." Levy noted that stone vessels, which do not contract ritual impurity under Jewish law, were common in the area.

Heritage Minister Rabbi Amichai Eliyahu said the discovery "strengthens our understanding of how deeply intertwined religious life and daily life were in Jerusalem during the Temple period" and underlined the importance of continuing archaeological research in the city.

Mordechai (Suli) Eliav, director of the Western Wall Heritage Foundation, described the mikveh and its contents as a vivid historical testament: "The exposure of a Second Temple period ritual bath beneath the Western Wall Plaza, with ashes from the destruction at its base, testifies like a thousand witnesses to the ability of the people of Israel to move from impurity to purity, from destruction to renewal."

Researchers say the mikveh likely served both local residents and the many pilgrims who visited the Temple in the years leading up to the Roman siege.



Workers clear debris from the excavation of a Second Temple period ritual bath, or mikveh, in Jerusalem, Dec. 2025. (Emil Eljem, Ari Levi and Yuli Schwartz, Israel Antiquities Authority)

Eighteen notable Jews who died in 2025

By Grace Gilson

(JTA) — Jews around the world were already reeling after nearly two years of war and death in Gaza and the grim confirmation that many hostages hadn't survived the October 7 attacks or two years of captivity. Then came news of the shootings in Sydney, Australia, where 15 people were gunned down at a celebration of Hanukkah.

Despite its grief, the Jewish world also took time to celebrate the lives lived by a constellation of figures who made lasting contributions to film, architecture, politics, and Jewish scholarship and letters.

In chronological order, here are obituaries of 18 notable Jews who died in 2025.

Marion Wiesel

Marion Wiesel (born Mary Renate Erster), a Holocaust survivor and humanitarian, married the writer and human rights activist Elie Wiesel in 1969, and was the translator of many of his award winning and influential books on the Holocaust, including the final edition of "Night." Following Wiesel's 1986 Nobel Prize win, the couple founded the Beit Tzipora Centers in Israel, an educational program for Ethiopian-Israeli youth, which Marion Wiesel went on to lead for a number of years. "In the alignment of stars that helped make Wiesel the international icon he became, his marriage to Marion was among the most significant," wrote Joseph Berger in his 2023 biography "Elie Wiesel: Confronting the Silence." She died on February 2 at 94.

Jacqueline van Maarsen

In 1942, Anne Frank immortalized her friendship with Jacqueline van Maarsen, writing that she "is now my best friend." While the pair were forced apart during the war, never to be reunited, van Maarsen went on to write multiple books about Frank, including 2008's "My Name is Anne, She Said, Anne Frank." In 1986, van Maarsen also began lecturing on the Holocaust and antisemitism at schools. "In her books and during school visits, Jacqueline spoke not only about her friendship with Anne but also about the dangers of antisemitism and racism, and where they can lead," the Anne Frank House said of van Maarsen. She died on February 13 at age 96.



(Presley Ann/Getty Images for MOCA, Alexi Rosenfeld/Getty Images, Estee Lauder Companies, Tommaso Boddi/WireImage, Dia Dipasupil/Getty Images for Tribeca Film Festival, Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

Leonard Lauder

Leonard Lauder built his Jewish family's business, The Estée Lauder Companies, into a cosmetics empire, serving as its president from 1972 to 1995 and as CEO from 1982 through 1999. But beyond his entrepreneurial prowess, Lauder also was a major patron of the arts, at one point donating a collection of paintings to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York valued at more than \$1 billion. "The number of lives he touched and positively impacted across all his endeavors is immeasurable," his younger brother, Ronald, said. "His passion and generosity have inspired us all, and there are no words to express how much he will be missed." He died on June 14 at 92.

David Schaecter

After losing 105 relatives during the Holocaust, David Schaecter went on to spend his life pushing for restitution, Holocaust education, and vigilance against antisemitism. In 1989, Schaecter founded the Holocaust Memorial in Miami Beach and in 2000 created the Holocaust Survivors' Foundation USA, which often took a more aggressive stance than other Jewish organizations in pursuing restitution of goods looted during the Holocaust. "I am here to remind everyone that there are still thousands of Survivors alive today who are in desperate need, and who cannot be for-

gotten," Schaecter told the Senate Special Committee on Aging on April 30. He died on September 4 at 96.

Ruth Posner

After Ruth Posner escaped the Warsaw Ghetto along with her aunt as a child, she went on to flee to the United Kingdom at 16 where she began an illustrious career as an actress and dancer. She was a founding member of the London Contemporary Dance Company and worked for the Royal Shakespeare Company, and also starred in films including "Leon the Pig Farmer" and "Love Hurts." In 2022, she was awarded a British Empire Medal for her commitment to Holocaust education. She died on September 21 at 96.

Aron Bell

Aron Bell was only 11 or 12 when he and his older brothers formed the famed Bielski partisans, a group that saved more than 1,200 Jews from the Nazis during the Holocaust. The brothers' tale of defiance also inspired several adaptations of their story, including the books "The Bielski Brothers" by Peter Duffy and "Defiance: The Bielski Partisans" by Nechama Tec, which was later made into the 2008 film "Defiance" with actor George MacKay portraying Bell. "If you were in the company of those three brothers, you felt like you had a whole army behind you, you were fearless,"

said Bell in his 1996 testimony to the USC Shoah Foundation. He died on September 22 at 98 at his home in Palm Beach, Fla.

Katherine Janus Kahn

Katherine Janus Kahn's vibrant watercolor illustrations in Jewish children's books helped shape the imaginations of generations of Jewish children. Beginning with her paper-cut illustrations for "The Family Haggadah," which became a best-seller when it was published in 1987, Janus Kahn later went on to illustrate more than 50 books for Kar-Ben, a publishing house for Jewish children's books. Among her work for Kar-Ben was the "Sammy Spider" franchise, which includes more than two dozen books about Jewish holidays, prayers, and practices. "We are profoundly grateful for her legacy, and for the countless stories and memories she leaves behind," said Kar-Ben. She died on October 6 at age 83.

Rabbi Moshe Hauer

Rabbi Moshe Hauer, the executive vice president of the Orthodox Union since 2020, was widely respected across denominations and was considered an exemplar of Modern Orthodoxy's historical blend of religious and secular expertise. In 2023, he testified about antisemitism on college campuses at a hearing of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, which prompted several investigations. "Rabbi Hauer was a true *talmid chacham*, a master teacher and communicator, the voice of Torah to the Orthodox community, and the voice of Orthodoxy to the world," the Orthodox Union said after his death. He died on October 14 at 60.

Susan Stamberg

When Susan Stamberg first got behind the microphone at the newly minted National Public Radio in 1972, some board members feared she was "too New York" for Midwest audiences. But Stamberg nevertheless became one of the station's "founding mothers," helping to craft its intimate, often humorous and consistently eclectic voice. Stamberg was the co-anchor of "All Things Considered" for 14 years, before pivoting to cultural stories. "I think all of that is very

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Jewish, the telling of stories, but also the seeking of opinions and also being open to the range of opinions that are out there,” Stamberg told the Jewish Women’s Archive in 2011. She died on October 16 at 87.

Tova Ben-Dov

Tova Ben-Dov devoted six decades of her life to the Women’s International Zionist Organization, serving as the president of World WIZO from 2012 to 2016. She also served as the vice president of the World Jewish Congress, a member of the executive committee of the Jewish Agency for Israel and a member of the International Council of Women according to JNS. “For 60 years, Tova devoted her heart and soul to WIZO—a lifetime of love, leadership, and giving to women, children, and families in Israel,” said World WIZO chairperson Anita Friedman. She died on October 17 at 88 in Tel Aviv.

Arthur Waskow

Rabbi Arthur Waskow first became one of the most notable progressive rabbinic voices in 1969 when he created the “Freedom Seder,” a version of the Passover Haggadah that blended contemporary liberation struggles with the ancient Passover story. Throughout his career, Waskow authored more than two dozen books that offered a Jewish perspective on civil rights, economic injustice, nuclear arms control, and climate change. He was arrested more than two dozen times at protests. He died on October 20 at 92.

Mark Mellman

At the height of his illustrious career as a pollster and political consultant, Mark

Mellman was the go-to pollster for Democrats as well as a wide variety of firms and interests, including the NBA’s Washington Wizards, United Airlines, and both Pepsi and Coca-Cola. In 2019, he founded the Democratic Majority for Israel, a group he said was formed to “strengthen the pro-Israel tradition of the Democratic Party, fight for Democratic values and work within the progressive movement to advance policies that ensure a strong U.S.-Israel relationship.” He died on November 21 at 70.

Carrie Soloway

Carrie Soloway, a Jewish psychiatrist in Chicago, came out as a transgender woman at 70-years-old, a milestone that formed the basis for her children’s hit Amazon TV series “Transparent.” After the show’s 2014 premiere, Soloway visited the White House under then-President Barack Obama and became friends with trans elected officials, while “Transparent” blazed a path for modern LGBTQ Jews exploring their identity. “She loved the show and us and the character, but sometimes she wasn’t in the mood to be everyone’s favorite trailblazer,” her son, Joey, said after her death. She died on November 21 at the age of 88.

Tom Stoppard

Tom Stoppard was in his 80s and had already won four Tony Awards during his prolific career as a playwright and screenwriter when he finished “Leopoldstadt,” which portrayed a Jewish family dealing with rising antisemitism in Vienna, and a young writer, much like him, who only earned of his Jewish forebears as an adult. His final work won the Tony for best play after it opened on Broadway in 2022. Stoppard’s other era-defining plays include “Rosencrantz and

Guildestern are Dead” (1968), “Travesties” (1974), “The Real Thing” (1986) and “The Coast of Utopia” (2007). “I just live my life and let the Jewishness take care of itself,” Stoppard told the New York Times Magazine in 2022. He died November 29 at 88.

Frank Gehry

Frank Gehry, born Ephraim Owen Goldberg, was one of the most influential talents in the history of modernist architecture. Among his most acclaimed works, which feature his signature sculptural style, are the Bilbao Guggenheim, the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, the Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris, DZ Bank Building in Berlin, and oversized fish sculptures he said were inspired by the carp his grandmother would turn into *gefilte* fish. In 1989, Gehry won the prestigious Pritzker Prize, considered one of the top awards in the field of architecture, and in 1999 won the Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects. While Gehry identified as an atheist throughout his adult life, he told the Jewish Journal that “there’s a curiosity built into the [Jewish] culture” that influenced his career. He died on December 5 at 96.

Rabbi Eliezer Diamond

Rabbi Eliezer Diamond taught at the Jewish Theological Seminary for over three decades, where he also published several texts on the Talmud and left an indelible mark on generations of rabbis and Jewish scholars. In 2003, he published “Holy Men and Hunger Artists: Fasting and Asceticism in Rabbinic Culture.” “Wherever I am, God is there too. I hope that I will return home soon,” wrote Diamond in his last post on Facebook, where he detailed his long struggle with cancer. He died on December 11 at 73.

Rob Reiner

Rob Reiner, a beloved Jewish film director, actor, and liberal activist, left his mark on modern American comedy and drama with his generation-defining classics from the 1980s and 1990s, including “When Harry Met Sally,” “The Princess Bride,” “Stand By Me,” “A Few Good Men” and “This Is Spinal Tap.” The son of legendary Jewish comedian Carl Reiner, he also starred in the ’70s sitcom “All in the Family” and became a prominent Democratic Party activist later in life. Reiner, 78, and his wife, Michele Singer Reiner, 70, were found dead in their California home on December 14. The couple’s son, Nick, has been charged in connection to their killing. Days after his death, Reiner gave a pre-recorded address at a virtual Holocaust survivor event where he told attendees, “If ever we needed to be resilient, it’s now.”

Norman Podhoretz

Norman Podhoretz was 30 when he was appointed to run the American Jewish Committee’s thought journal commentary. Over his career, he charted a path from Jewish liberal to pro-Israel neoconservative, serving as the godfather to a movement that long dominated late- and post-Cold War conservative politics. He made waves in 2016 for endorsing Donald Trump in his first run for president. “He was a man of great wit and a man of deep wisdom and he lived an astonishing and uniquely American life,” his son, John Podhoretz, wrote in a remembrance for the magazine announcing his father’s death. “And he bound himself fast to his people, his heritage, and his history.” He died on December 16 at 95.

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