

When Community Organizations Come Together Big Mitzvot Happens

Schoke JFS Mobile Food Pantry and Back to School Shop Partnership



(l-r): Co-founder and co-chair of Back to School Shop and Schoke JFS board member, Meryl Japha, Schoke JFS Chief Program Officer, Leah Schechter, Dr. Joe Feuerstein of Everyday Health's Condition Kitchen, and Schoke JFS CEO & President, Matt Greenberg

Schoke Jewish Family Service had the distinct pleasure of partnering with the Back to School Shop (BTSS) for the 9th Annual Back to School Shop event on Sunday, July 30, 2023. At the BTSS event, elementary school children from low-income families in Stamford selected their own brand new school items in a one day "pop-up" shop where everything was free!

This year, the Schoke JFS Kosher Mobile Food Pantry was there to provide food resources to the 400 families attending the event, making

it the largest distribution for Schoke JFS. Leah Schechter, Schoke JFS Chief Program Officer, said, "As a community-focused organization, we look for partners throughout Fairfield County to maximize our impact. Partnering with the Back to School Shop has been an extraordinary opportunity to provide food and services to families in Stamford, and to serve as an example of how collaboration between organizations and the local school districts fulfills our mission of raising up our community to the fullest extent."

The day's events also included two in-person food demonstrations with Dr. Joe Feuerstein of Everyday Health's Condition Kitchen. He provided food samples while sharing healthy tips and recipes using the shelf-stable groceries and produce provided by the Schoke JFS Kosher Mobile Food Pantry. This collaboration of health professionals, Schoke JFS, and the Back to School Shop offered families unique access to support and resources free from the obstacles they might otherwise face.

Co-founder and co-chair of Back to School Shop and Schoke JFS board member, Meryl Japha, said, "We are thrilled Schoke JFS brought their Mobile Food Pantry to this year's Back to School Shop event. In addition to being able to shop for brand new school clothes and supplies at no charge, the families of 400 children had the opportunity to select free food items from the Mobile Food Pantry, to see a cooking demonstration of how to use the items to prepare healthy meals, and to register to receive services from the Mobile Food Pantry on an on-going basis. We are so grateful for the generosity of Schoke JFS."

To support Schoke JFS food programs, go to www.ctjfs.org/thegatheringtable



A Message From the Board Chair



I am honored to have recently been elected Chairman of the Board of Schoke Jewish Family Service of Fairfield County.

While Covid may be receding, the significant increase in demand for our programs and services continues unabated. Thanks to the dedication of our talented staff and volunteers, the generosity of our donors, and the thoughtful leadership of Matt Greenberg, President and CEO, and Paul Gordon my immediate predecessor, we meet these challenges.

Over the past year we are even better positioned to respond to the needs of our clients. The SJFS Kosher Mobile Food Pantry, on the road several times a week since October 2022, reaches dozens of additional families facing food insecurity throughout Fairfield County. This past April we opened an office on Blackrock Turnpike in Fairfield, making it more convenient for our clients to be seen and helped.

And we are not content to rest on our laurels.

As we enter our 44th year, we recognize the importance of continuing to provide programs and services that are sustainable, effectively delivered, meet the needs of the community

and will be relevant in the future. Our recently completed, year-long strategic planning exercise, provides an essential road map and important areas of focus prioritized by our Board and staff over the next 3 years.

I come to my position at a time when Schoke JFS is thriving and is frequently acknowledged for its significant contributions to our community. I feel extremely fortunate and I look forward to working with you to build on our strengths.

Wishing everyone a happy, healthy, and fulfilling New Year.

Ken Neuhaus, Board Chair

Schoke Jewish Family Service

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www.ctjfs.org

Victoria Parruccini & Rabbi Amy Goodman,
Editors

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A Message From the President & CEO



Most years, we sound the shofar on both days of Rosh Hashanah. This year, however, the shofar will be silent on the first day in many synagogues because it is also Shabbat.

Sounding the shofar has so many meanings in our tradition; a reminder of our faith, a call to action to improve ourselves and the world, and to gather people together for important moments.

On Shabbat Rosh Hashanah, the 100 voices of the Shofar we usually hear, are silenced. That means 100 sounds, the 100 calls to action, will be missing. It's an invitation to think about those who have no voice, those whose cries we often don't hear.

The lack of sound heightens our awareness to what is missing, and invites us to fill the void with our own thoughts and actions.

At Schoke JFS, these moments of opportunity are present all year long.

At Schoke JFS, we are constantly challenged to hear those silent voices. There are 100 clients who are hungry and need food from the Freedberg Family Kosher Food Pantry. And 100 seniors who receive care and compassion from our Home Companion aides. And 100 struggling families who come to us for counseling to help them face life's challenges.

As you listen to the wail of the shofar, please know that your support of Schoke JFS is a comforting response, a way of reaching out to the missing voices, a way of making the call of the shofar and act of repairing ourselves and our community. Shana Tova!

Matt Greenberg, President & CEO

Schoke JFS Opens New Office in Fairfield

Schoke Jewish Family Service opened an additional office at 2452 Black Rock Turnpike, Suite 2, Fairfield, CT earlier this year. The new, full-service satellite office expands our reach in the many towns we serve throughout upper Fairfield County offering services such as in-person counseling, case management, and geriatric care management.

This is an exciting chapter in the agency's 45-year history. Matt Greenberg, Schoke JFS President and CEO, shared, "Schoke JFS is pleased to have been serving clients in Bridgeport, Westport, and throughout upper Fairfield County for over twenty years. In fact, nearly 30% of Schoke JFS' current clients are located in upper Fairfield County. This new office in Fairfield offers us a greater capacity to serve our clients in-person and right in the communities where they live."

Schoke JFS hosted an open house at the new Fairfield office with community members, volunteers, and local partner organizations including Jewish Federation of Greater Fairfield County and United Jewish Federation of Stamford, New



(l-r): Sally Kleinman, SJFS Board Member, Matt Greenberg, SJFS President & CEO, Leah Schechter, SJFS Chief Program Officer, Stacy Kamisar, Jewish Federation of Greater Fairfield County Director of Programming & Partnerships, Paul Gordon, SJFS Past Board Chair, Rabbi Amy Goodman, SJFS Chief Advancement Officer

Canaan, and Darien. Jillian Klaff, Schoke JFS board member, and her husband Anthony Klaff dedicated a mezuzah in memory of their parents and grandparents and in honor of their children and grandchildren.

The new office in Fairfield is integral to the agency's Strategic Plan to serve our clients and community as best we can. Schoke JFS is

already busy using the space with volunteer, education, and community events. On August 17, the agency hosted a Cup of Care volunteer opportunity bringing together families for an afternoon of socialization and a mitzvah. Volunteers customized coffee cups for clients by decorating sleeves, and assembling care packages for a warm drink and a warm hello.



Jillian and Anthony Klaff

Schoke JFS Welcomes New Board Members



Risa Goldblum



Celia Offir



ANACHNU PROGRAM

Holocaust Survivor Day



(l-r): Marina Sapir, Schoke JFS Bilingual Program Director, Elizabeth Hinds, Schoke JFS Volunteer Services and Programs Coordinator, Carmen Hughes, Stamford's Director of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, Diane Sloyer, CEO of United Jewish Federation of Stamford, New Canaan, and Darien

On June 4th, over 80 attendees – many of whom were first- and second-generation Holocaust survivors – marked International Holocaust Survivor Day at Schoke JFS' Anachnu gathering at Young Israel of Stamford.

Guest speakers included Schoke JFS staff including President & CEO, Matt Greenberg, members of the United Jewish Federation of Stamford, New Canaan, and Darien including CEO, Diane Sloyer, Stamford's Director of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, Carmen Hughes, and Holocaust Survivors and educators. Young Israel's band, including Rabbi Kohl, provided live music!

Holocaust survivors had an unforgettable time at the Anachnu luncheon, many leaving with tears of joy in their eyes. One client shared, "this day is what it is supposed to be about. It's about survival. It's not about life, but living. All of us, we're living."

To learn more about Anachnu, contact: Marina Sapir at msapir@ctjfs.org or 203-921-4161.

New Around the Agency



Janet Wainright joins Elayne & James Schoke Jewish Family Service of Fairfield County as Manager, Operations, and Development of the new Fairfield Office. Before joining Schoke JFS, Janet worked for the Jewish Federation of Greater Fairfield County and the Jewish Center for Community Service in Bridgeport. Janet brings

experience in development, operations, and marketing, along with a wealth of knowledge of the upper Fairfield County community and its people. She believes her purpose in life is to help others, and comes to work daily striving to contribute to Schoke JFS' mission to the best of her ability. "It is a privilege to work in an environment with a team so passionate about the care of others. Having the ability to support the community through our work is a great reward."

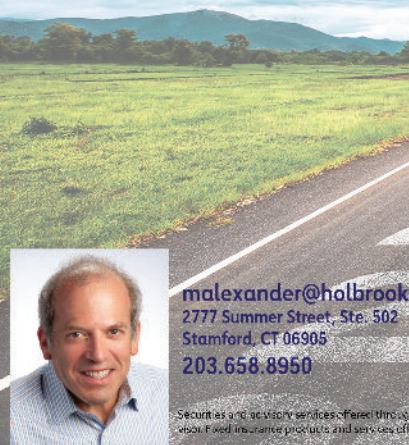


Marina Zatman, M.D.

joins Elayne & James Schoke Jewish Family Service of Fairfield County as the Medical Director. Dr. Zatman brings a wealth of experience to the agency as a psychiatrist at hospitals throughout Fairfield County and in her own private practice. She specializes in adult psychiatry and psychopharmacology. "I'm

excited to join the team at Schoke JFS and contribute to the care of our community."

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All in A Week's Work – A Week in the Life of a Schoke JFS Volunteer

With services across Fairfield County, Schoke JFS is home to a large team of dedicated volunteers. From Pantry Open Hours, to English Café, to weekend Kosher Mobile Food Pantry distributions, volunteers are consistently serving the community throughout the week.

Starting at nine o'clock on Monday morning, the agency is open and ready for both clients and volunteers. By 10:30AM, the Freedberg Family Kosher Food Pantry opens its doors. With the help of staff and volunteers, the agency's Stamford pantry is able to provide food to countless families during open hours on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. Schoke JFS clients come to the entrance with empty arms and leave with full bags of groceries. But our pantry volunteers don't stop when open hours are done. During afternoons, additional volunteers help prepare for the next day's pantry operations. At 4:00PM, when volunteers leave the pantry clean, stocked, and ready to serve more families, our



volunteers' day is done.

The Schoke JFS Kosher Mobile Food Pantry also makes its way into the community during the week. With the help of three to five volunteers, the mobile pantry is loaded with food, and then bags are packed on-site to feed dozens of families for one or two distributions each week.

On Wednesday evenings, the sounds of giggles and conversation resound throughout Schoke JFS offices as the conference room becomes a classroom for English Café. From 3:00PM, volunteers help build a space for learning and connection for Ukrainian refugees. While the clinicians of the Schoke JFS team support their clients' professional needs, volunteers are supporting the social and educational needs of even more individuals. By 6:00 PM, the office is rearranged, and the day's pantry hours, mobile pantry distribution, and evening of learning are finally complete.

On Thursday mornings, volunteers pack both Hirsch Kosher Home Delivered Meal program and Shabbat delivered meals for forty clients. By 11:30AM, Stamford volunteers arrive to start deliveries. That afternoon, another volunteer brings meals to Fairfield for more volunteers to deliver throughout upper Fairfield County on Thursdays and Fridays.

And the work isn't over yet! Some weekends may include a Sunday mobile pantry distribution at Congregation Beth El in Norwalk or Congregation B'nai Israel in Bridgeport. Yet another team of volunteers gather to continue the work. Meanwhile in Stamford, families are volunteering as Mitzvah Matches to deliver groceries to homebound clients.

At the end of a full week, over sixty Schoke JFS volunteers have participated in a dozen volunteer opportunities. Their dedication, time, effort, and dependability make them valuable members of the agency's mission and work.

Interested in volunteering with Schoke JFS?

Go to: www.ctjfs.org/volunteer

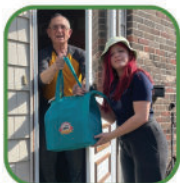
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- Kosher Mobile Food Pantry Distributions
- Hirsch and Shabbat Meal Deliveries
- Organizing and maintaining the Freedberg Family Kosher Food Pantry
- Special Occasion Card Creations & More!



www.ctjfs.org/volunteer

Schoke Jewish Family Service Legacy Giving Circle

Schoke JFS is an organization that holds a special place in our hearts. Throughout the years, we have wholeheartedly supported Schoke Jewish Family Service through our donations, volunteering, and as legacy donors, we find solace in knowing that our contributions will continue to make a difference even after we are no longer here. Our choice to be legacy donors isn't just a financial decision; it's a reflection of the values we hold dear and the lessons we aim to pass down to our children. Just as we learned from our parents, we strive to instill in our children the significance of standing by organizations like Schoke JFS and Temple Sinai.

The work that Schoke JFS undertakes resonates deeply with us. It's an organization that radiates kindness

and generosity, enriching the lives of countless individuals within the community. Our family, personally, has been touched by the Home Companion program for a remarkable eight years. During a time when Jeri's dad needed unwavering support, Schoke JFS extended its helping hand, becoming a true lifeline for us.

Our commitment to Schoke JFS stems from our profound connection to our Jewish values, which emphasize compassion, ethical conduct, and the pursuit of mitzvahs. These values remind us of the intrinsic value of kindness and the importance of extending a helping hand to those in need.

As we reflect on the journey that has brought us here, we remain steadfast



in our commitment to Schoke JFS. May our legacy of support serve as a testament to the enduring power of love, kindness, and the pursuit of tikkun olam—repairing the world—one act of compassion at a time.

Jeri and Mark Appel

To join, or to learn more about our Legacy Giving Circle please visit our website ctjfs.org/legacy or contact Lisa Rich, 203-921-4161 or lrch@ctjfs.org.

Schoke JFS extends our deepest appreciation to the following people and their families for their support through a Legacy Gift:

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Learning From Experts: *The Schoke JFS Internship Experience*

Schoke Jewish Family Service has a skilled staff of licensed clinicians at the helm of our Kuriansky Family Counseling Program, Case Management, and Home Companion programs. It is exciting to have qualified professionals mentoring and guiding the next class of social workers in these fields in addition to everything they offer our clients.

Interns working with Isrella Knopf in the Home Companion Program have the opportunity to complete home visits with our elderly community members, joining intake conversations which will determine how Schoke JFS will support the client and which aide is best matched to the client's needs. Home Companion interns also assist with training and certification programs for prospective aides within the department.

Meanwhile, interns reporting to Hannah Pollack in the Case Management Department fill many different client needs, guiding clients through resources, assisting with application completion, organizing and initiating referrals, and even serving as medical advocates. With opportunities to build relationships with clients and partner agencies alike, Case Management interns gain valuable experience practicing social work in a variety of situations.

Varying slightly, interns in the Counseling Department support a caseload of 5-10 individuals, couples, or family therapy clients. They have the opportunity to facilitate support groups or socialization programs as part of their capstone project. Counseling Department interns

participate in the department's weekly meeting, learning from a team of qualified, licensed clinicians.

Those interested in learning more about internships at Schoke JFS are welcome to contact Leah Schechter, Chief Program Officer at lschechter@ctjfs.org or 203-921-4161.



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Learn more at: www.ctjfs.org

Actionable Ways to Prevent Cognitive Aging

Scientists have always recognized the brain develops from infancy to young adulthood. Rather than stagnating in our mid 20s, however, recent studies suggest the brain continues to change throughout adulthood and even into old age.

Neuroplasticity is the process by which our brain continues to create new neurons and make fresh connections between brain cells throughout our lives. If the brain is injured, it can generate new cells and repair itself or create new neural pathways to take over the functions of the injured area. In addition, the brain can make new neural connections within our brain in response to new stimuli and changing environments.

The more we are exposed to new stimuli, the more neural connections our brains make. Neuroplasticity is an exciting concept because it means our brain is continuously growing, and we can attempt to keep it functioning optimally by engaging in new activities.

Top ways to keep your brain healthy

Diet: Eating well contributes to overall brain health. Keeping cholesterol at a healthy level and monitoring our blood sugar helps our brain cells function.



Exercise: Physically active people are less likely to experience cognitive declines, enabling our brain to receive appropriate levels of oxygen and nutrients.

Sleep: Ensuring you receive the proper number of hours of sleep per night, around seven to nine hours of continuous sleep, helps the brain consolidate memories and allows our body to recharge.

Engaging in mentally stimulating activities – learning new subjects, doing puzzles, or reading – helps you stay sharp and keeps your brain in shape.

How do you exercise your brain?

Schoke JFS offers a Brain Fitness program that targets various cognitive areas to help stimulate the brain. Run by Dr. Toby Lazarus, group and individual sessions are offered. Wordplay, puzzles, memory games, and problem-solving activities can enhance your brain power and are fun ways to challenge yourself. Strategies for improving your skills are discussed during these sessions, and participants share the most compelling techniques. Finding multiple ways to problem solve and approach tasks improves mental flexibility as well. These interactive programs engage the mind in thoughtful ways, are designed for a range of ages and abilities, and can be adjusted based on the participants. You are never too old or too young to stimulate your brain!

To learn more about the Brain Fitness program, go to:
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- Join us once a month to load the truck or as a Companion Shopper/Delivery Driver
- Current sites are in Stamford, Bridgeport, and Norwalk
- Regular team meetings will be held for updates and scheduling

Orientation will be on
Wednesday, September 27
at 5:30 PM in both the
Stamford and Fairfield offices!



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**-Mother of 3 daughters,
Mitzvah Match Volunteer**

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