

AN EVENING WITH SCHOKE JFS

Celebrate, Honor, and Give Back – May 17, 2026

Mark your calendars for **An Evening with Schoke JFS: Seeds for Tomorrow**, taking place on **May 17, 2026, at 5:30 PM** at **Whispering Oaks** (32 Weed Ave, Norwalk, CT). Join us for an elegant and inspiring evening of cocktails, dinner, dessert, and celebration as we come together to honor two exceptional community leaders whose work embodies compassion, service, and impact.

This year, we are proud to recognize **Wheel It Forward**, recipient of the **46th Annual Mitzvah Award**, and **Ben Frimmer**, recipient of the **Community Service Award**. Event chairs Laura Tobin and Melissa Marlowe-Reiner, along with auction chair Meryl Japha, invite you to an evening filled with connection, recognition, and inspiration.

Set on 66 secluded acres of rolling hills, sweeping lawns, and scenic ponds, Whispering Oaks offers a serene and luxurious backdrop for the evening. Nestled in the heart of Fairfield County, the venue reflects the spirit of *Seeds for Tomorrow*, the meaningful, lasting impact the Schoke JFS community continues to cultivate.

Honoree Spotlight: Wheel It Forward



Founded in 2020 in Stamford and inspired by Israel's Yad Sarah, **Wheel It Forward** operates as a community lending library for durable medical equipment. From wheelchairs and walkers to hospital beds and shower safety equipment, these essential items are provided at no cost to borrowers throughout Fairfield County.

The model is simple, sustainable, and impactful: equipment is often used for only a few months before being stored or discarded, yet sanitized and maintained, it can help countless others in need. Today, Wheel It Forward serves over 7,000 families annually, managing more than 18,000 items and keeping over 100,000 pounds of equipment out of landfills. With four additional branches in Bridgeport, Stratford, Newtown, and North Haven, the organization continues to expand its reach, bringing essential resources to communities across the county.



Honoree Spotlight: Ben Frimmer

Ben Frimmer is a TONY-nominated producer and director, veteran theatre educator, and distinguished EMS leader based in Weston, Connecticut. With more than 30 years of experience across the arts and public safety, he brings a powerful blend of creativity, leadership, and service to every role he undertakes.

Ben has served with Westport EMS since 1985 and is a longtime Crew Chief, as well as Deputy Chief of the Weston Volunteer EMS. A respected regional leader, he is also a Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC) and EMS Instructor, training police, fire, and EMS professionals throughout CT Region 1.

Deeply engaged in Jewish communal life, Ben has served on the board of Temple Israel and currently participates on its Security Committee. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he served as the congregation's COVID Response Point Person, helping ensure community safety and continuity.

In the arts, Ben is a TONY-nominated producer of *John Proctor Is the Villain* and currently serves on the producing team for *The Hunger Games On Stage* in London. A passionate theatre educator for more than three decades, he has taught and directed middle and high school students nationwide.

Ben serves on the board of the Westport Country Playhouse and is Co-Chair of its Development Committee, producing charitable Broadway and comedy concerts including *Voices for Volunteers* for Schoke JFS. He holds master's degrees in Teaching and Educational Theatre from NYU.

Whether on stage, in the classroom, on the ambulance, or supporting his community's institutions, Ben remains deeply committed to service, storytelling, and strengthening the communities he loves.

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A Message From the President & CEO and Board Chair



Matt Greenberg
President & CEO



Ken Neuhaus
Board Chair

Over the past year, we have all felt how uncertain the world can be. Rising food prices, housing instability, and ongoing global tensions have created real anxiety for many families in our community. At Schoke Jewish Family Service, we see the impact of these pressures every day—increased calls for food assistance, more requests for counseling, and a growing number of seniors and families who simply need someone to turn to. Our work is about meeting those moments with compassion, dignity, and practical help.

In recent months, our food programs have continued to expand to meet rising demand. More families are relying on pantry support, and our home-delivered groceries for seniors and homebound clients remain a lifeline for those who cannot easily shop for themselves. At the same time, our counseling and social service teams are helping individuals cope with stress, grief, financial challenges, and the emotional toll of a difficult world.

When global or national events create fear or uncertainty, we often see the effects locally—especially among seniors, immigrants, and families already living close to the edge. Our staff works closely with community partners, synagogues, and schools to make sure people know they are not alone. Whether it's emergency financial assistance, a counseling appointment, or simply a caring voice on the phone, we are here.

This spring, we will gather as a community at our **Evening with Schoke JFS on May 17**, where we hope you will join us as we honor **Wheel It Forward** and **Ben Frimmer** for their outstanding commitment to helping others. Their work reflects the very best of our community, people stepping forward to lift others up. We look forward to celebrating their impact and sharing more about the lives being changed through the work of Schoke JFS.

Every day, we are reminded that our mission is not just about services; it's about people. It's about the senior who feels less isolated because groceries arrive at her door, the family that can put dinner on the table, and the individual who finds hope again through counseling.

Thank you for being part of this work. Your support ensures that, no matter what challenges arise, Schoke Jewish Family Service will continue to be a steady source of help, compassion, and stability for our community.

Matt Greenberg, President & CEO

Ken Neuhaus, Board Chair

Schoke Jewish Family Service

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☆ – of blessed memory



Community in Action on MLK Day

Each year, **Schoke Jewish Family Service** honors the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by bringing the community together in service of the values that he stood for and are at the core of our mission. This January, 67 volunteers, including families, teens, and community members from across Fairfield County, came together at the Schoke JFS offices to support their neighbors with dignity, connection, and care.

During three lively shifts, volunteers packed 211 bags of essential items and created compassion cards for members of our community. These efforts supported programs that address food insecurity and reduce isolation, making a meaningful and tangible impact on the community we serve.

At its heart, MLK Day of Service is about showing up for one another and honoring Dr. King's legacy through action. It is also an invitation to continue that spirit of service beyond a single day. For many participants, MLK Day becomes the starting point for ongoing volunteer engagement with Schoke JFS.

We are deeply grateful to every volunteer who chooses to give their time and compassion, on MLK Day and throughout the year. Their dedication reflects the heart of our volunteer program and our shared responsibility to care for one another.

MLK Day is one powerful example of how volunteers support the mission of Schoke JFS, but it is not the only opportunity to get involved. Throughout the year, community

members are invited to volunteer in meaningful ways that fit their interests and availability.

Volunteers support food and essentials programs, help build connections with seniors and families, assist with community service events and drives, and provide behind the scenes support that keeps programs running smoothly. Through the leadership of Schoke JFS Community Partnerships Manager, Aubri Doughty, the agency has new and expanded opportunities for community service and engagement from individuals and families to B'nai Mitzvahs and large groups. Connect with Aubri to learn more at Adoughty@ctjfs.org or 203-998-7854.



Using Financial Literacy to Break the Cycle of Debt

For many individuals and families, debt is not the result of poor choices but of limited access to financial education, predatory systems, and economic instability. The Case Management Program at Schoke JFS has recently partnered with an exciting new resource that we are planning to have break the cycle. However, without addressing the root causes of financial vulnerability, these challenges can persist across generations. One powerful and often underutilized strategy is to partner with financial planners to deliver accessible, community-centered financial literacy education, which is our plan here at Schoke JFS.

Financial literacy is a critical tool for breaking the cycle of debt. Many people are never taught how credit works, how to budget effectively, how to interpret loan terms, or how to plan for emergencies. As a result, individuals may rely on high-interest credit cards, payday loans, or other short-term fixes that deepen financial strain over time. By partnering with a certified financial planner, Schoke JFS can offer access to accurate, practical guidance tailored to the real financial challenges our clients face.

A Certified Financial Planner brings specialized expertise in budgeting, debt management, credit repair, savings strategies, and long-term planning. With this partnership we plan to offer educational seminars on what financial literacy means, looks like, and how to implement these new skills. Our new community partner is eager to give back to an underserved population. This collaboration will help shift financial planning away from being perceived as a luxury service and toward a tool for empowerment and equity.

The long-term benefits of such partnerships are significant. Financially literate individuals are better



equipped to avoid predatory lending, manage debt responsibly, build emergency savings, and plan for future goals such as education, homeownership, or retirement. Over time, this reduces reliance on crisis-based services and can move from short-term assistance toward sustainable outcomes. The community at large becomes more resilient when individuals understand and can navigate financial systems with confidence.

In breaking the cycle of debt, knowledge is power. In the collaboration between Schoke JFS and a Certified Financial Planner, we plan to create a holistic support model that addresses both immediate needs and long-term stability. Financial literacy education does more than teach numbers, it restores agency, builds confidence, and opens pathways to lasting economic security.

Learn more about how the Case Management Program at Schoke JFS is changing lives:

www.ctjfs.org/casemanagement/

CONTINUED FROM COVER

AN EVENING WITH SCHOKE JFS

Celebrate with Us

Guests will enjoy a lively cocktail reception, dinner, awards presentation, and dessert, along with opportunities to support Schoke JFS programs and services through a paddle raise and to participate in our exciting online auction.

Tickets are \$275 per person and include dinner and dessert. To learn more about our honorees or to purchase tickets, visit www.ctjfs.org/gala. For journal ads or sponsorship opportunities, please contact Erika Llanos at 203-921-4161 or ellanos@ctjfs.org.

Don't miss this memorable evening of celebration, recognition, and giving back, an opportunity to honor extraordinary impact and strengthen our community!

**PLACE YOUR
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Your journal ad ensures we can
provide critical service to
families and individuals in need.

Contact: ellanos@ctjfs.org for more information

New Staff Members



Aubri Doughty joins Schoke JFS as the Community Partnership Manager. Originally from Maine, she moved to Connecticut with her wife and son, bringing a grounded, people-focused perspective shaped by the belief that communities are strongest when people feel seen, supported, and valued.

Aubri earned her undergraduate degree in Psychology from the University of Maine at Presque Isle, where she developed a strong interest in human behavior, well-being, and the systems that support individuals and families. She is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Nonprofit Management and Community Engagement at Merrimack College, with a focus on volunteer engagement, community partnerships, and the creation of sustainable, values-driven nonprofit programs.

"I'm excited to be working at Schoke JFS because my passion is creating spaces where people feel connected and empowered to contribute meaningfully. I'm especially interested in reducing isolation, strengthening intergenerational relationships, and designing community engagement initiatives that honor dignity and lived experience."

Outside of her professional and academic pursuits, Aubri enjoys photography and traveling, and she aspires to explore the world more fully in the future. She values time spent with her family and finds inspiration in experiences that foster creativity, perspective, and connection.

Michael Corcoran joins Schoke JFS as a Case Management Support Specialist, where he supports individuals and families in navigating public benefits, health coverage, and community resources. After spending time working in the culinary world, Michael began exploring a path toward more spiritually fulfilling, service-oriented work, which led him to case management. He plays an active role in coordinating and running case management events, is quick on his feet, and remains deeply engaged in learning and growth. Michael is grateful for the opportunity to continue developing his skills while contributing meaningfully to the community. "I'm drawn to work that allows me to show up for people in practical, compassionate ways," Michael shared. "Being part of Schoke JFS gives me the chance to learn every day while making a real difference in people's lives."

Spring Into Renewal: Refresh Your Mind, Not Just Your Space

As winter's chill fades and the promise of spring warms the air, many of us feel inspired to declutter our homes and reboot our routines. But this season of renewal is also the perfect time to check in on something just as important as our physical surroundings, our mental health and emotional well-being.

The winter months can quietly accumulate stress, anxiety, and burnout as we juggle work, family, and the constant pull of digital life. While technology keeps us connected, too much screen time can leave us feeling drained, distracted, and off balance.

Spring invites a natural reset with a "digital detox." This doesn't mean cutting out technology completely, but setting healthier boundaries can boost focus, sleep, and mood. Try turning off nonessential notifications, establishing screen-free evenings, or taking breaks from social media. Swap scrolling for outdoor walks, community events, reading, or face-to-face conversations to reconnect with yourself and others.

At Schoke Jewish Family Service, we encourage you to prioritize self-care this season. Check in with a neighbor, attend a local event, or enjoy outdoor activities. And if you, or someone you know, needs support, reaching out is a sign of strength.

Use this spring to refresh not just your space, but your mind. Build balance, resilience, and a healthier, more connected community. **Reach out for support today:** www.ctjfs.org/counseling



Rethinking the Face of Food Insecurity

When people hear the term *food insecurity*, a familiar image often comes to mind: someone who is unemployed, unhoused, or living on the margins. This narrow perception overlooks a growing reality, food insecurity affects individuals and families whose lives may appear stable, including those who are employed, live in suburban communities, and even own their homes.

At Schoke Jewish Family Service, we see this reality every day through the **Freedberg Family Kosher Food Pantry**. Many of the individuals we serve have mortgages, steady jobs, and deep roots in their communities. Yet rising housing costs, childcare expenses, medical bills, and the increasing price of groceries can make it difficult to afford nutritious food.

Food Insecurity Isn't Always Visible

Food insecurity is often misunderstood as extreme hunger or starvation, but it can take quieter forms. Families may skip meals, stretch food longer than is healthy, or rely on less nutritious options to make ends meet. This "hidden hunger" can affect physical and emotional well-being over time, even when no outward crisis is visible.

Working, Housed, and Still Struggling

Another common misconception is that food insecurity only affects those who are unemployed or homeless. In truth, most food-insecure households include at least one working adult and stable housing. Stagnant wages paired with rising costs mean that even responsible financial planning doesn't always add up. Government assistance programs can help, but they often fall short of covering a family's full nutritional needs.

The **Freedberg Family Kosher Food Pantry at Schoke JFS** exists to challenge these misconceptions. It is here for anyone in our community who needs support accessing kosher, nutritious food, regardless of employment status, housing situation, or life circumstances. Food insecurity does not have a single face, and needing help is not a failure, it is a reminder of the strength of community care and compassion.

Learn more about our food programs:
www.ctjfs.org/feedingthecommunity.

Schoke JFS: A One-Stop Agency Supporting Clients at Every Stage of Life

A call to Schoke Jewish Family Service often begins with a conversation about case management. A family may be unsure where to turn, a parent's health is changing, bills are becoming overwhelming, or emotional stress is affecting the household.

Through the **Case Management Program**, social workers assess each client's full situation, medical, emotional, financial, and social, and develop a coordinated plan of care. They help families navigate complex systems, apply for benefits, and connect to the right services at the right time.

But the Case Management Program is rarely the end of the story; it is often the entry point.

As needs are identified, Schoke JFS connects individuals and families to additional programs within the agency. Clients experiencing food insecurity or difficulty preparing

meals may be referred to the **Freedberg Family Kosher Food Pantry** or the **Hirsch Delivered Meal Program**. Those facing emotional distress, anxiety, or life transitions are connected to the **Kuriansky Family Counseling Program** for professional mental health services. Older adults seeking cognitive stimulation and social engagement may participate in **Brain Fitness**. Caregivers receive guidance and respite through the **Caregiver Support Group**, while children benefit from opportunities like the **Zinbarg Camp Scholarship Program**.

Because all services are housed within one agency, support is coordinated rather than fragmented. Families are guided through transitions internally, with communication across departments ensuring they do not have to search for outside organizations or start from scratch when needs change.

This holistic approach allows Schoke JFS to respond to the full picture of a client's life, not just a single need at a single moment.

As needs become more hands-on, many clients transition to the **Home Companion Program**. Older adults receive practical, reliable assistance that allows them to remain safely at home. Companions help with meal preparation, household tasks, transportation to medical appointments, shopping, exercise, and social engagement. For clients with more complex needs, Certified Nurse Aides provide personal care including bathing, dressing, and feeding.

At Schoke JFS, one call opens the door to comprehensive, compassionate care, providing continuity, dignity, and peace of mind for clients and families alike.

Learn more about our programs and services at www.ctjfs.org.

Q&A with Marina Sapir, Anachnu Holocaust Survivor Program Director

Q Can you briefly describe Schoke JFS and your role in it?

A Schoke JFS works with Holocaust survivors, providing practical and financial support that allows them to live safely and with dignity in their own homes. I coordinate assistance programs, work directly with clients and their families, and help secure resources for essential care. Much of my work is also about advocacy, making sure survivors are not forgotten and that their needs are understood.

Q Who are the Holocaust survivors you work with today, and what does life look like for many of them now?

A Most of the survivors we work with are in their late 80s, 90s, or older. Many live alone, struggle with chronic health conditions, limited mobility, and very modest incomes. While the war ended decades ago, its consequences are still very present in their daily lives, physically, emotionally, and financially.

Q What kinds of assistance do Holocaust survivors most urgently need at this stage of their lives?

A The most urgent needs are basic but critical: help at home, access to medical care, medications, mobility aids, dental treatment, and vision or hearing support. These are not luxuries, they are essential for functioning, safety, and independence.

Q How does Schoke JFS help survivors remain in their homes and live with dignity?

A We provide in-home assistance and help cover costs that survivors simply cannot afford on their own. Remaining at home is extremely important to many of them. It gives them a sense of control,

familiarity, and dignity after a lifetime in which so much was taken away.

Q Medical care is often very expensive. How do you help cover costs such as medications, dental care, hearing aids, or mobility aids?

A We help compensate medical expenses that are not fully covered elsewhere, including medications, prosthetics, dental work, glasses, and hearing aids. Even partial support can make a life-changing difference. For someone on a fixed income, these costs are often impossible without help.

Q Why are these supports not “extras,” but necessities for your clients?

A Without hearing aids, people become isolated. Without proper dental care, they cannot eat properly. Without mobility aids, they risk falls and injuries. These supports directly affect health, independence, and quality of life. For elderly survivors, delaying care often leads to much more serious problems.



Q How do you assist survivors with Claims Conference applications and other complex paperwork?

A The application process can be overwhelming, especially for elderly people dealing with trauma, language barriers, or cognitive decline. We guide survivors through the paperwork step by step, help gather documents, and ensure applications are completed correctly. Without this help, many survivors would simply give up or never receive the benefits they are entitled to.

Q You work with organizations like Kavod. How do these partnerships expand the help survivors receive?

A Our partnership with Kavod allows us to address needs beyond what Claims Conference our own funds can cover. Kavod helps with medical services, food support, and essential home repairs without delay and bureaucracy. Together, we are able to respond more holistically to the realities survivors face every day.

Q Can you share an example that shows how your work directly improves a survivor’s quality of life?

A There are many examples. We recently helped an elderly survivor obtain hearing aids she had gone without for years because she
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Q&A with Marina Sapir, Anachnu Holocaust Survivor Program Director, *continued*



could not afford them. After receiving them, she told us it was the first time in a long time she felt connected to the world again, able to talk to people, hear the phone, and participate in conversations. Small interventions can have profound effects.

Q Beyond practical and medical assistance, how do you help Holocaust survivors stay socially connected and avoid isolation?

A Social isolation is one of the most serious and often overlooked challenges facing Holocaust survivors today. Many live alone and have very limited opportunities for regular social interaction. To address this, we organize Zoom programs two to three times a week, which include educational talks, discussions, concerts, travel club and chair yoga. In addition, we host in-person gatherings once in 2-3 months.

These programs give survivors something to look forward to and a sense of belonging. They are not just social events, they help maintain cognitive engagement, emotional well-being, and human connection. For people who have already experienced profound loss and isolation in their lives, simply being seen, heard, and included makes an enormous difference.

Q What challenges does having limited funds create?

A Our resources are always stretched. The needs are growing as survivors age, but funding does not grow at the same pace. We must constantly make difficult decisions about how to allocate limited funds, knowing that every request represents a real human need.

Q Are there moments when you cannot provide all the help that is needed because of financial constraints?

A Yes, and those are the hardest moments. There are times when we can only offer partial assistance or have to delay help. It is painful to know that more could be done if resources were available.

Q What would you like readers to understand about the importance of supporting Holocaust survivors today?

A Holocaust survivors are not a chapter in history books, they are living people who need help now. Supporting them is not only an act of charity, but a moral responsibility. Donations directly translate into better health, dignity, and comfort in the final years of their lives.

Support the Anachnu Program: www.ctjfs.org/anachnu



Chairman's Society: A Schoke JFS Giving Society

Bruce Newman MD

I am a long-time supporter to Schoke JFS. My wife Rose (z'l) and I were strong believers in Legacy, which allows one to support Jewish charities and institutions after one's death. I personally used the Schoke JFS Home Companion Program after my wife died four years ago, and it helped me to get grounded and settled. I also used the Home Companion program for my father (an Auschwitz Survivor) who was in his nineties and in an Assisted Living Memory Program in Stamford. His Companion made sure he had a good life, was an advocate for him, and extended his life for 2.5 years until he died at the age of 97 years, and Schoke JFS does much more. It provides food to those who need it, deals with difficult situations such as divorce and death, counsels for mental health, helps the elderly and helps Holocaust survivors and immigrants who need housing, care and stability. In my opinion, Schoke JFS provides the most for those who need it.



Chairman's Society: A Schoke JFS Giving Society

To support our existing services, nurture program expansion, and ensure a strong and sustainable future. Learn more: www.ctjfs.org/chairmansociety/

KURIANSKY FAMILY COUNSELING PROGRAM

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www.ctjfs.org/counseling/



Pamela & Michael Hirsch Kosher Home Delivered Meal Program

Are you looking for **healthy kosher meals**?

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We are here to help!

Contact:

Jen Bernstein
jbernstein@ctjfs.org,
203-921-4161



www.ctjfs.org/koshermeals/



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Care at Home: **Personalized** for Your Needs at **Affordable Rates**

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Contact: **Isrella Knopf**, Director of Senior Services
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www.ctjfs.org/home-companion-program/



Thank You to Our Generous Grant Providers

We extend our sincere gratitude to the following organizations for their generous support during fiscal year 2025. Your grants made it possible for us to continue delivering vital services to our community.

ACME Foundation

Conference on Material Claims Against Germany

CT Foodshare

FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Program

First Presbyterian Church

KAVOD Survivors of the Holocaust Emergency Fund

Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies

Seed the Dream Foundation

Southwestern CT Agency on Aging

St. John's Community Foundation

UJA/JCC Greenwich Teen Changemakers

United Way of Coastal and Western Connecticut

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Ensuring Schoke JFS is here to meet the needs of tomorrow with a legacy gift!

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www.ctjfs.org/legacy/



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

List in Formation as of February 2026

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Gail G. and Stephen Trell
Janet Wainright
Linda B. Gornitsky and
Harvey Weber

Lauren Zalis
Joe Zalis
Renee Zinn

* of blessed memory



United Jewish Federation

Keeping Minds Sharp: Schoke JFS Brain Fitness Class Helps Seniors Stay Mentally Active

In the heart of our community, a different kind of workout is underway. There are no dumbbells or treadmills—just sharp minds in motion. Brain Fitness, a class designed especially for older adults, is proving that mental strength can be trained just like physical fitness.

Every Monday and Wednesday, a group of spirited seniors log onto Zoom for what's become one of the most anticipated highlights of their week. Led by Schoke JFS neuropsychologist Toby Lazarus, PhD, the class helps participants exercise key cognitive skills such as memory, language, perception, and attention - abilities essential for staying sharp, confident, and independent.

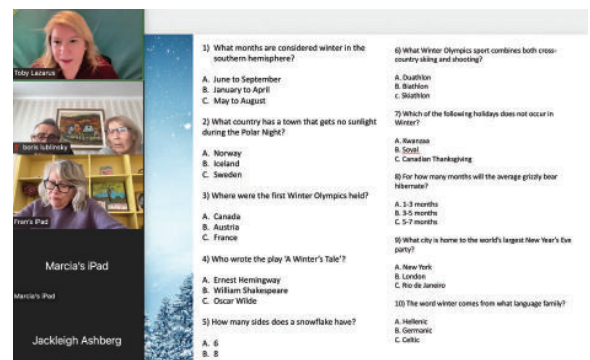
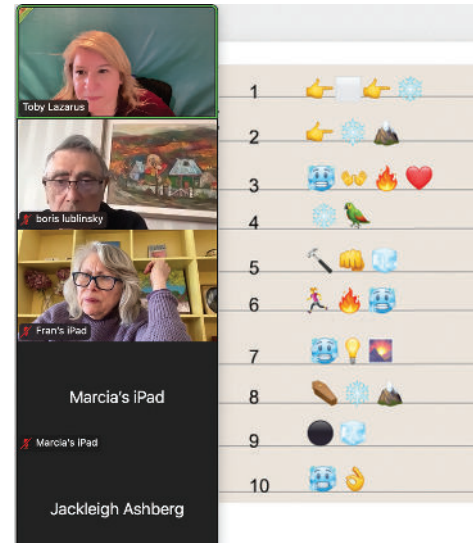
Each one-hour session offers a peek into the incredible mechanics of the mind. Students discover which parts of the brain spring into action when recalling a shopping list, recognizing a familiar face, or focusing on a tricky puzzle. Then come the strategies: practical "brain hacks" like mnemonic tricks, focus techniques, and daily habits that strengthen mental agility over time.

And finally, the fun part. The class wraps up with interactive games that put those new skills into action. Participants might tackle word challenges to stretch their vocabulary or quick-reaction games that boost attention and coordination. These friendly exercises often end in laughter, camaraderie, and a renewed sense of achievement.

One participant says the class has made a real difference. "I used to walk into a room and forget what I was looking for," she laughs. "Now I feel sharper - and my grandkids can't believe how fast I can beat them at word puzzles!"

The growing popularity of Brain Fitness underscores a simple truth: it's never too late to invest in our most vital asset, the mind. By blending science, strategy, and play, this program is helping older adults stay mentally strong and socially connected.

Learn more about the Brain Fitness Program:
www.ctjfs.org/brainfitness



Make a difference in our community!

- Volunteer opportunities include:**
- Mitzvah Match (social connection & food delivery visits)
 - B'nai Mitzvah and Youth Service Projects
 - Food Pantry and Distribution Support
 - Holocaust Survivor Program Support
 - Community Packing Events and Service Days
 - Customized Service Experiences
 - Discover more volunteer opportunities online!

www.ctjfs.org/volunteer

Questions?
 Contact Aubri Doughty
 203-921-4161, adoughty@ctjfs.org





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