Beit Ruth Fundraiser Sunday, February 21 at 11 am, via Zoom

Beit Ruth addresses the needs of at-risk girls who have been physically, emotionally, and sexually abused. In addition to direct programs and services in the Beit Ruth Village, our advocacy and partnership work drives awareness of the estimated 30,000 girls at-risk of abuse in Israel. Through our Advocacy & Outreach Initiative, we leverage our on-the-ground expertise in treating complex post-trauma, and participate in coalitions and forums that are leading social change efforts about the crisis of abuse in Israel and globally. Without understanding the root causes of why girls at-risk remain invisible, they will likely continue to remain in violent, life-threatening situations.

Over the last 10 years, the Jewish Council of North Central Florida has raised over $100,000 for Beit Ruth. JCNCF is proud to be their partner in serving Israel’s most vulnerable young women and girls. We hope you can join us on Sunday, February 21 to hear more about their life saving work. Please turn to page 3 for more information.

The Annual Gainesville Jewish Film Festival Returns in March!

By Jack Kugelmass, Professor
UF Center for Jewish Studies

There’s a moment in selecting films for this festival when I doubt there will be enough new material to put together a high quality event. A bit of faith and patience invariably dispels that concern and we soon find ourselves excluding excellent films because there are not enough slots for all the films that deserve to be screened. The twelve selections for the 11th Annual Gainesville Jewish Film Festival are a case in point. These are all worthwhile films and I would have a very hard time advising which ones to select and which to avoid. Due to an agreement with the distributor, we cannot publish the name of the opening selection, but in terms of subject and film making, it deserves to be the opener. The producers are looking for major league premieres so we’re allowed to screen it as long as we don’t reveal the name. Gainesville is not Cannes. The film is made in contemporary Warsaw with an eye on the Jewish ruins that lay buried beneath the rebuilt center and the imaginative encounters with those ruins and their former inhabitants by those now living there. It’s what I call a post Holocaust film. Another superb example of the genre is Winter’s Journey. It’s partly documentary and partly docudrama. The lead actor you’ll recognize from the film Downfall. Tomorrow, When the Apricots Bloom is a fascinating account of the Jewish role in shaping Egypt’s film industry with emphasis on Egypt’s “Jewish Disney” because of the popularity of his animated strips. Kiss Me Before it Blows Up is an Israeli romantic comedy in which almost any conceivable transgression happens. Its subject is refreshing. Although ostensibly not about the conflict, the conflict enters into it as does the Holocaust, forbidden love and a whole lot more. It’s a charming controversial film and I’m glad we can include it. The Light Ahead is a recently restored classic of Yiddish cinema and should be seen by anyone interested in the history of Jewish film and the history of modern Jewish literature. Marry Me However is a sensitive examination of the plight of gay people who attempt to conform to Orthodox norms through marriage and family. Leona is a new and well done feature film from Mexico. Shared Legacies is a very timely reminder of the political alliance between Jews and African Americans in the struggle for freedom. It’s an upbeat story and deserves to be widely seen. The festival concludes with the most unusual of the entries: Der shoymer (The Vigil) is a contemporary Yiddish horror film. It’s included for those who love both and though by no means a perfect work of art the effort is worth supporting—especially putting Yiddish onto the contemporary screen and making an American Jewish film that doesn’t hinge on nostalgia or intermarriage. It’s great fun, so watch with a friend, plenty of popcorn and enjoy.

The 11th Annual Gainesville Jewish Film Festival will run from Sunday, March 7 through Saturday, March 20.
Together we can do extraordinary things!

JCNCF’s Annual Campaign goal (2020/2021) is $200,000 and we have raised nearly $172,000. That is 86% of our goal. Thank you to everyone who made that possible. Visit www.jcncf.org to make your secure donation online now, or contact us at 352.371.3846 or office@jcncf.org.

The Jewish Council of North Central Florida operates entirely on the contributions of generous community members like YOU! With that in mind, the JCNCF events that you see listed in this newsletter each month are made possible by those donations. Please consider making a gift to the Annual Campaign or to any of our special funds. Your donation supports Jewish causes locally and globally and means so much to so many.

Name ____________________________ Email ____________________________ Phone ____________________________
Street ____________________________ City ____________________________ State ___ Zip ____________________________
Signature ____________________________ Pledged $ __________ Enclosed $ ________

JCNCF Mission Statement
As set forth in the Articles of Incorporation, the JCNCF has been formed to operate and engage in philanthropic, cultural, and other group activities for charitable and educational purposes that shall contribute to the welfare of the Jewish community of North Central Florida and other Jewish communities around the world.

Submissions Policy
News and announcements of events that are of interest and open to the entire Jewish community will be included as space allows. The times and places of regular and special Jewish religious events, as well as Jewish organizational events, will be placed in the Chronicle’s monthly community calendar.

Please submit original material of 500 words or less, not published or to be published elsewhere, along with photos of interest to the community. Submissions may be e-mailed in Word document format to chronicle@jcncf.org; or dropped off at the Jewish Council of North Central Florida office. Please submit photos in high resolution with a caption identifying the subject and all people depicted. JCNCF reserves the right to edit all submissions. The Chronicle does not publish letters to the editor.

The Chronicle and the Jewish Council do not endorse the goods and services advertised in these pages, and make no representation as to the kashrut of the food, products, and services in such advertising.

If you have any questions, email chronicle@jcncf.org or call 352.371.3846.

All submissions are due on or before the 10th of the month prior to publication.

The Board & Staff of the Jewish Council of North Central Florida

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BEIT RUTH FOR YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS AT RISK: IMPACTING CHANGE IN ISRAEL, ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE AROUND THE WORLD
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21 AT 11 AM VIA ZOOM

FEATURING PANELISTS:
SUSAN ASHNER, FOUNDER & BOARD CHAIR
ELIEZER HEMELI, BRIGADIER GENERAL (IDF RET.) & ISRAEL BOARD MEMBER
RONIT LEV-ARI, DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY & OUTREACH
IRIS TWERSKI, MANAGING DIRECTOR
RAZ YONA, ALUMNA

MODERATED BY
DANIELLE BURENSTEIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Eliezer Hemeli is a retired Brigadier General of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and a member of the Beit Ruth Board in Israel.
During his esteemed military service, General Hemeli was Commander of the Artillery Forces where he prepared operational plans for the Northern Command and commanded the Artillery Forces during the Lebanon War.

Susan Ashner is the Founder, Board Chair, and along with her husband, Michael Ashner, the spirit behind Beit Ruth for Young Women and Girls At Risk. Susan and Michael's philanthropic giving has always centered around education. They founded Beit Ruth to address a dire need in Israel.
Thanks to their vision, conviction, and generosity, and to Beit Ruth’s professional staff, they have demonstrated that the future of at-risk girls won’t be determined by their past.

Ronit Lev-Ari is the Director of Advocacy & Outreach for Beit Ruth and a founding staff member. Ronit is a pioneer in the field of gender-based violence in Israel, and a sought-after expert and speaker throughout the country. She shares Beit Ruth’s on-the-ground best practices to stakeholders, and also addresses needed policy reforms that focus on the needs of at-risk girls and young women.
Ronit’s many leadership roles include serving as the Israeli Government’s foremost authority on women’s issues under two Prime Ministers.

Iris Twerski is Managing Director for Beit Ruth and a founding staff member who manages all of Beit Ruth’s institutional activities in Israel, including partnerships and collaborations, and operations. She also oversees Beit Ruth’s Capital Development Projects, including the construction of Beit Ruth’s new onsite school building, “The Beit Ruth School,” and onsite residential houses.
Prior to joining Beit Ruth, Iris spent 7 years in New York as the Regional Director of the tristate area with the Friends of the IDF (Israel Defense Forces).

Danielle Burenstein is Executive Director of Beit Ruth for Young Women and Girls At Risk. Danielle directs strategic planning and development to help lead Beit Ruth to a higher level of community-building, visibility, partnership development, and impact.
Before joining Beit Ruth, Danielle was the Executive Director of Agahozo-Shalom Youth Village in Rwanda for vulnerable and orphaned youth that was modeled after the youth villages built in Israel after the Holocaust.

Raz Yona is a Beit Ruth Aluma. Raz arrived to Beit Ruth at the age of 14 after surviving on the streets to escape her abusive home, living in a homeless shelter, and being placed in an institution in Haifa. She credits Beit Ruth for changing the direction of her life and breaking the cycle of violence for her and her children. Following Beit Ruth, Raz earned a BA in human resources. Today, Raz is an emergency room nurse at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem, a frontline responder, and the mother of three young daughters.
Helping Hands Clinic Dinner

On Monday, November 16 JCNCF partnered with Chef Empowerment Underground Kitchen to bring a special holiday meal to the clients and staff of the Helping Hands Clinic.

Thank you to Chef Carlston Watts and his team! And a special thank you to everyone who donated to this project!

Thank you to the sponsors of November’s meal:
Shifra Armon and William Little, Kim Feigenbaum and Alan Geering, Alison Gerencser, Sharon and Andrew Hirshik, Sharon Huey, Barry and Elaine Jacobson, Dorie Stein

Donate Now to Support Our Next Meal at the Helping Hands Clinic
Monday, March 22

We will be partnering with Sababa Israeli Cuisine

Visit www.jcnco.org/donate or contact the JCNCF office at 352.371.3846
Mitzvah Makers Marks 30 Years of Tikkun Olam

By Dawn Burgess-Krop JCNCF Past President

This year will come close to the 30 year mark for Mitzvah Makers, a group of women who were brought together by Charna Cohn. As the director of the Information and Referral Service, then a United Way agency, Charna would attempt to locate services and referrals for people with a wide range of needs. She found that she too often encountered individuals who were experiencing life crises and needs which did not fit within the capacity of the various social services agencies. There were many people who were one crisis away from being homeless or unable to obtain critical items.

Charna is never one to be complacent with unsolved problems, so she reached out to a friend and social worker, Bonnie Cooper, and together, they brought the problem to their Rosh Chodesh group and the birth of Mitzvah Makers resulted. Barbara Oberlander has served tirelessly for countless years as the secretary and chronicles the contributions.

In its initial phase, Mitzvah Makers involved women of the Rosh Chodesh group, and they met on alternating months to contribute $25.00 each. Mitzvah Makers now includes some non-Jewish community members, and other organizations have followed their example. Although the group has expanded and evolved and the contribution amount has changed over the years, the concept has remained largely intact.

Mitzvah Makers works anonymously with social services agencies in Alachua County and solicits cases where they can offer help. The group rotates members who serve as the “social worker” of the month, and reach out to a wide variety of agencies in Alachua County. The agencies identify cases that meet the criteria for Mitzvah Makers and the “social Tikkun Olam with Mitzvah Makers worker” compiles a list for consideration by the membership. Serious discussion is involved in identifying the most pressing needs and dividing up the funds available and group consensus is reached.

Criteria for Mitzvah Makers requires that the donation meets a onetime need. Mitzvah Makers does not pay rent or utilities, but the range of needs they have fulfilled is vast. Mitzvah Makers helps domestic violence victims get basic necessities to start over, buys glasses, beds, and even necessary car repairs for someone to get to work so they can provide for their family. Because dental health is fundamental to physical health, Mitzvah Makers works with Acorn Clinic to meet urgent dental needs.

In keeping with Maimonides’ definition of the levels of tzedakah, Mitzvah Makers provides assistance in ways in which the recipient and the giver are unknown to each other, and the funds are distributed by a communal agency. The stark reality of every Mitzvah Makers meeting is the number of people in our community who live on the edge, where one misfortune can disastrously upend their lives. Mitzvah Makers members leave every meeting profoundly touched by the stories they hear and rededicated to make a difference on the ways they can.

Since the Jewish Council adopted Mitzvah Makers in 2013 we have collected nearly $94,000. Those funds have supported individuals in need through these partner agencies:

Acorn Clinic, Family Promise of Gainesville, UF Health, Catholic Charities of Alachua County, The Association of Retarded Citizens (ARC) of Alachua County, Citizens for Social Justice (The Home Van), Three Rivers Legal Services, Focus on the Future, Gator TeamChild Juvenile Law Clinic, Families Up Front, The Child Advocacy Center, CHILD Center for Early Learning, Rural Women’s Health Network, UF Law Center Association, Victim Services And Rape Crisis Center, Black on Black Crime Task Force, Pine Ridge Community Center, Habitat for Humanity, Bread of the Mighty Food Bank, GRACE Marketplace, Radiant Hands, STAR Center Children’s Theater, Guardian Ad Litem, Partnership for Strong Families, Helping Hands Clinic, Peaceful Paths, The Actors’ Warehouse, Center for Independent Living, Saint Francis House, Lubavitch Chabad Jewish Student and Community Center, Meridian Behavioral Health, Lake Forest Elementary, Rawlings Elementary, and Alachua County Department of Social Services
PJ Library Celebrated Tu B’Shevat

In January, nearly 20 PJ Library families met at The Family Garden CSA (community supported agriculture) to pick strawberries in celebration of the holiday of Tu B’Shevat. The weather was perfect once the drizzle cleared. Kay and Luke, who work at the Family Garden, gave the group some history of the farm and then everyone got to pick some carrots, as well as, strawberries. It is debatable if there were more strawberries going home in the baskets or the tummies, but they were definitely delicious!

On Sunday, February 21, PJ families are invited to meet via Zoom to make wearable art to go along with our Purim costumes. And on Sunday, February 28, we’ll show off our costumes and the wearable art at Congregation B’nai Israel’s parking lot! Masks and social distancing are a must! Contact Alicia Rudin at 352.371.3846 or family@jcnf.org for more information about both of these activities.

In March, PJ Library is planning a family movie event in conjunction with the Gainesville Jewish Film Festival!
By Dawn Burgess-Krop  
Past President, JCNCF

In my current life as a Bubbe, I read a LOT of children’s books. Some are acceptable and some are remarkable. The recent PJ Library book, Maddi’s Fridge, was exceptional. Best friends, Maddi and Sofia, play at the park every day. Sofia is the fastest runner and Maddi can scramble up the climbing wall. They are good-natured in their competitions and encourage one another. When each returns home for the day, Sofia arrives to healthy dinners while Maddi has an empty refrigerator where she forgoes milk, to save for her younger brother. One day, through happenstance, Sofia discovers that Maddi’s family does not have enough food, and a humiliated Maddi begs a promise of silence about her situation. There follows a series of Sofia sneaking healthy foods in her backpack to bring to Maddi at school, but, alas, fresh fish and eggs do not survive a day in a backpack. Eventually, Sofia’s mother discovers the subterfuge, and the truth comes out. They respond by packing an entire bag of groceries and bringing it to Maddi’s family. Their kind and compassionate presentation is gratefully accepted and the transgression of telling a secret is forgiven as the mother’s bond and the children play. In subtle ways, awareness of economic strife, the importance of tzedakah, and the value of friendship are intertwined in an entertaining story.

Why am I writing a children’s book review for adults? I have personally witnessed the worthy investment PJ Library books present for all who wish to reinforce the essence of Judaism to the next generation. They reinforce the principles of Jewish life, and tether young children and their families to the Jewish community. Be proud that, as supporters of JCNCF, you are maintaining that vital thread to the next generation. L’dor’ v’dor could not be more meaningful!

Before you go, fill a bag of staples and bring it to the Bread of the Mighty or another facility that feeds the needy. These are extremely hard times and so many people are struggling. If you have children or grandchildren, involve them in this activity and tell them of our Jewish commitment of tzedakah. Since we are all challenged in our shopping during the pandemic, a donation will also fill an important need – and your heart! L’shalom.

You can help those facing hunger in our community by supporting Bread of The Mighty Food Bank with donations of food or much needed financial support. You can also help by supporting JCNCF’s quarterly meal at the Helping Hands Clinic. Our next meal at Helping Hands is Monday, March 22. Contact the JCNCF office or visit www.jcncf.org/donate to support this project.

When Sofia learns that her best friend, Maddi, doesn’t have enough food in her fridge, she wants to help — but Maddi has asked Sofia not to tell anyone. What should Sofia do?
JELF Applications - March 1 Through April 30

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

The JELF loan application opens on March 1. We look forward to supporting Jewish students achieve their education dreams with our interest-free loans.

JELF’s interest-free, last dollar loans for higher education can save students thousands in interest. But first, they have to know about JELF. With a small act of kindness, you can help make that possible.

Send applicants to JELF.org to get a reminder about our application for the 2021-22 academic year - opening on March 1.

Don’t let anyone you know lose the opportunity to lower their debt!

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Transitions: Community Life Events

Do you have a life cycle event you would like to share with our JCNCF community? Please submit items to chronicle@jcnarf.org. Submissions may be edited as space allows. Pictures are welcome and encouraged! Transitions may include birth, engagement and wedding announcements, bar and bat mitzvah, graduations, promotions and honors, and memorials.

In Memoriam:
Our community mourns the passing of these beloved friends and family members:

Howard Levine,
Father of Lisa Levine

Phil Siegel,
Husband of Judi Siegel

Dr. Steven Wald,
Brother of Ken Wald and Robin West

May their loved ones find solace in their memory.
Position Available

**Director of Community Engagement & Programs**

The Jewish Council of North Central Florida is looking for an energetic, passionate professional for the position of Director of Community Engagement and Programs. This position is focused on developing and implementing community programming for JCNCF. It also includes responsibilities related to our weekly and monthly print and digital newsletters.

This is a full time position with an estimated start date of May 2021. For more information on how to apply, please call 352.371.3846 or email office@jcncf.org.
Ocala & Other Congregations & Organizations

Beverly Hills Chapter of Hadassah (BHCH)
Miriam Fagan
352.746.0005

Chabad House of Ocala & The Villages (CHOV)
Rabbi Yossi & Chanie Hecht, Directors
www.ourchabad.org
13030 CR 103, Oxford, FL 34484
352.330.4466

Congregation Beth Israel (CBI-O)
Elaine Morrison, President
www.bethisraelocala.org
4511 SW 48th St, Ocala, FL 34474
352.236.0701

Congregation Beth Sholom (CBS)
Cantor Alisa Forman, Spiritual Leader
www.bethsholomcitrus.org
102 Civic Circle, Beverly Hills, FL 34464
352.746.5303

First Congregation Sons of Israel (FCSI)
Rabbi Joel Fox
www.firstcongregationsonsofisrael.com
161 Cordova Street, St. Augustine, FL 32084
904.829.9532

Ocala Chapter of Hadassah (OHAD)
Judi Siegal, President
morrobay03@embarqmail.com
352.237.8277

Temple B’nai Darom (TBD)
Rabbi Harold Jaye
www.facebook.com/TempleBnaiDarom
7465 SW 38th Street in Ocala, FL 34474
352.624.0380

Temple Beth Shalom (TBS)
Rabbi Ze’ev Harari
www.jewishocala.com
1109 NE 8th Avenue, Ocala, FL 34470
352.629.5837

Temple Shalom of Central Florida (TSCF)
Rabbi Zev Sonnenstein
www.templeshalomcentralfl.org
13563 County Road 101, Oxford, FL 34484
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When Life Changes, We're There
Save These Dates

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