President’s Annual Meeting Speech  
Dr. Joseph Isaacson

I am thrilled to see the auditorium filled with so many people, JFS staff and community members, people who support JFS SV.

**How did I get involved with JFS?**

Two years ago, Rich Namm asked me to join the board of directors, explaining that he loved being part of the organization. I confess I really wasn’t sure what JFS did specifically, even though we were regular financial contributors. Then I thought about it: My parents were Holocaust survivors and I remember my father telling me it was HIAS and JFS who helped them when they arrived to the US in 1948. 

When my mom moved to the Atrium in San Jose to be closer to me, there were Shabbat services and seders and Chanukah celebrations, led by JFS chaplain aides. She received holiday gift bags at Passover and Chanukah from JFS friendly visitors. When I once again tried to navigate the maze of the Claims Conference to receive some monetary support for her, Avital and Galina helped us actually get some small support after years of trying.

With that in mind and the fact that I have a problem of saying ‘no’, I joined the board. There I met a passionate group of people who care about our community. I recognized how much we do and how much we can do.

Fast-forward to today, I am proud to be the president of an agency that helps people that need help.

It is difficult to imagine that we accomplish so much with only eighteen staff members. The way we do it is by depending on nearly 700 volunteers, we couldn’t do it without you.

**What draws people to tzedakah and the support organizations such as JFS?**

Like me, some learn it from our families, colleagues and other influential role models. Even though we didn’t have much, I learned the importance of Tzedekah as a youth. We had the blue *pushke* can that we kids put the coins in every week. I remember my father would bring me to his side when he wrote checks to charity.

**Personally, I do this work, in part, in my parents’ memories.**

The other reason is I want to create a better world for my kids and grandkids.

**Charity and giving are part of my identity as a Jew. Part of the way I express my Jewish values is to help members of the community.**

Our country and our world is in the midst of uncertain times. During these times we have to remember why we are doing the work we do.
We need to focus on the good things that are happening every day that give us hope.

In the end, it is about the lives we can improve and the people we can protect.

No one knows what is in store for JFS, for our country or for our world. What is important is that we continue to do our good work, help people that need our help. It still boils down to Tikkun Olam, heal the portion of the world that we can.

Our liturgy tells us that there is a better place, a promised land. We know that the winding way to the promised land passes through the wilderness. We also know that the only way to get from here to there is by joining hands and marching together.

I look forward to joining hands with all of you. Please help us, with your time as a volunteer, or with your check book.

Thank you.