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Alan Engel is recipient of the 2026 Ottenheimer Award – he and fellow JCL Award honorees will be recognized at JCL’s Annual Meeting on Monday, June 29

By Andrew Adler
Community Editor

The Blanche B. Ottenheimer Award, which is the highest honor the Jewish Community of Louisville can give, is presented annually to a leader (or leaders) who have made a real difference – improving the quality of life in Louisville, in Kentucky and beyond. Ottenheimer was a Jewish Louisville community activist. In addition to serving as president of the National Council of Jewish Women, Louisville Section, she worked for passage of the city’s Model Registration Law, which curbed corruption and led to cleaner elections.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines the word “indefatigable” as someone who’s “always determined and energetic in trying to achieve something and never willing to admit defeat.”

That is also a perfectly apt definition of Alan S. Engel.

During his four decades of service to Louisville’s Jewish community, Engel has set a benchmark of zeal and commitment that anyone would be hard-pressed to equal, let alone surpass. Locally he’s best known for his 22-year tenure as executive director of the Jewish Federation of Louisville, taking up the post in July 1988 and retiring in October 2010.

Not surprisingly, “retirement” ended up being only a vague notion for a fellow who was soon poised to embrace a new set of challenges.

“When I first entertained the idea about two years prior, I wasn’t sure how I would react, who I would connect with, and what I would do post career,” Engel wrote in a July 2017 Metro United Way online post titled, “Retirement: An Opportunity to Reconnect.”

“Would I consult, travel or just hang around,” he continued, recalling how “a friend of mine who had gone through the same process a few years earlier suggested that I take six months off after formally retiring and do no volunteering or make other commitments. Just enjoy the freedom, the serenity, the sleep, and chance to play golf whenever I felt like it. That was the best advice I received!”

Eventually, golf gave way to a renewed sense of purpose.

“Like many, eventually I wanted to share some of my experiences,” Engel wrote, “so I spent time wading through papers and books and created a library for any consulting I might do. It wasn’t easy, but it gave me time to reflect on all that I had accomplished in my career. It enabled me to see the role I played here and in other communities where I had lived. Soon after, I began getting recruit-

ed by other nonprofits to sit on committees and boards. I tried to take it slow and did for the most part. The great part was that I could pick and choose where I wanted to be and with whom. That is the beauty of being independent.”

Today, Engel can look back on any number of achievements. His advocacy was a key factor in merging the Federation and the old JCC in 2009 to create the JCL. He was a stalwart energizer of the Federation’s Annual Campaign, advocated on behalf of Hillel at the University of Louisville, and lent his expertise to such organizations as the Coalition for the Homeless and the Center for Nonprofit Excellence.

Indeed, if you’ve ever attended classes at the Florence Melton School for Adult Jewish Learning or participated in the Jewish Agency for Israel’s Partnership-2Gether Western Galilee programs, you have Alan Engel to thank.

“Through decades of dedication, Alan Engel gave our community not just his leadership, but his heart,” said JCL Board Chair Beth Salamon. “The thriving Louisville Jewish community we experience today stands as a testament to his tireless efforts and deep commitment to others. This award is a fitting tribute for all he has given to the community.”

Not bad for a guy who grew up in



Alan Engel, recipient of the 2026 Ottenheimer Award

Youngstown, Ohio, during an era when vast steel mills dotted the area’s industrial landscape. It was also where Engel’s father spent 1950 to 1984 as executive director of the city’s Jewish Federation, an experience that served as a template for the younger Engel’s subsequent Louisville career.

See **ANNUAL MEETING** on page 4

Something extraordinary is happening at the Trager Family JCC



Philanthropy
Lenae Price

Our community is rising to meet the moment.

On May 11th, the Jewish Community of Louisville officially kicked off the “Building on Our Promise” capital campaign, a bold \$29 million vision to expand connection, belonging, wellness,

and Jewish engagement for generations to come.

Nearly 80 longtime supporters, community leaders, and philanthropists gathered in the backyard of Kate and Allan Latts’ home to hear about the momentum behind the campaign and the plans unfolding on the Jewish Heritage Fund Campus.

Campaign Co-Chairs Kate Latts and Steve Trager welcomed guests alongside Vice-Chairs Marsha Roth and Alexander Blieden, reflecting on both the significance of this moment and the extraordinary growth the community has experienced in recent years.

Steve spoke movingly about looking around the gathering and seeing so

See **CAPITAL CAMPAIGN** on page 9

A bold vision comes this fall to Louisville’s Jewish Learning Experience



Jewish Learning Experience

Jessie Gindea

This fall, the Jewish community in Louisville begins building something sacred together: the Jewish Learning Experience (JLE), a bold new vision for

K–12 supplemental Jewish education designed to spark joy, belonging, curiosity, and lifelong connection. Rooted in the belief that Jewish learning should be both intellectually serious and deeply joyful, JLE is designed to help children and families cultivate Jewish identity, belonging, curiosity, and connection in meaningful and lasting ways.

JLE will offer a dynamic structure that includes Sunday learning for kindergarten through second grade and Sunday/Wednesday learning for students third through eighth grade, alongside rich family engagement opportunities. JLE

See **JLE** on page 10

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THE DASHBOARD

Word of the Month

The Midrash of Shavuot: A Call to Inclusion



D'var Torah

Rabbi
Shani
Abramovitz

For nearly all 49 days of the Omer, I am simultaneously blessed with and plagued by one persistent question: How do we unlock and open the doors to our tradition, whittle down barriers, and make our shuls more open, expansive, and truly welcoming? In short, how can we help people discover and fall in love with Torah and Jewish life? To be sure, this is the central animating question of both my personal and professional lives. I think about it constantly. But, in the lead-up to Shavuot, as we prepared to relive and experience Revelation at Sinai, its call was a little louder, its pull just a little stronger.

Shavuot is one of my favorite Jewish holidays. I love the late-night learning—schmoozing and questioning together over coffee cake and tea. I love the intensity, and the beauty of Shavuot, that sacred invitation to step back in time, to gather around the mountain, and imagine that moment when we truly became a covenantal people—bound to G-d, but also to one another. I love reading the story of Ruth—celebrating a learned, resilient woman who defies the odds to join her fate to ours. The cheesecake is pretty good, too.

But more than the experience of the holiday, I find the preparation to be sacred, too. Not only in counting the Omer, but in encountering the many different Midrashim of the Rabbis, as they contend with what really happened at Sinai—many of which radically underscore the fundamentally expansive, inclusive, and accessible nature of Torah.

One such Midrash from the Tanchuma teaches that all Jews—past, present, and future, were present to receive the Torah at Sinai. Every single person who was or would ever count themselves among the Jewish people experienced this identity-making moment together. Each of us, no matter our context, no matter how learned we are, or where we find ourselves on our journey, share equal ownership over this tradition and its most sacred text.

Another Midrash, from *Exodus Rabbah*, suggests that everyone who was present for the revelation heard it in a language they could understand. In this deeply collective moment, G-d simultaneously spoke to all of us, and each of us, transforming revelation, and by extension our entire tradition into something that is meant to be personal, relatable, understandable, and accessible. You needn't, this Midrash teaches us, be fluent in Hebrew or classical Aramaic. Perhaps

you needn't even be particularly religious or "perfect" in your faith or observance to be counted among the Jewish people—and counted, more importantly as a member of this holy covenant. I love this Midrash because it acknowledges the basic fact that each of us learns and communicates differently. What better way to honor and validate our G-d given humanity, than for G-d to be our very first teacher?

But there is yet another Midrash on the first two verses of *Parshat Bamidbar* that I am holding close and thinking about differently this year. In Numbers 1:1-2 we read:

On the first day of the second month, in the second year, following the exodus from the land of Egypt, the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of meeting, saying: Take a census of the whole Israelite community by the clans of its ancestral houses, listing the names, every male, head by head.

Bamidbar Rabbah, the Midrashic work that focuses on the whole of the book of Numbers, asks why it was important for the verse to specify that this encounter between Moses and G-d took place in the wilderness?

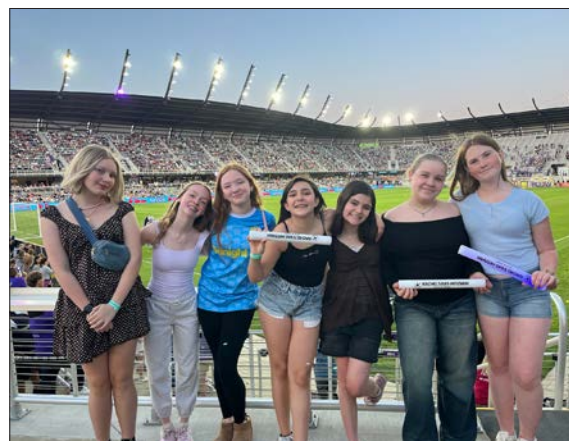
From here the sages taught: the Torah was given through three things: through fire, through water, and through the wilderness...And why was it given through these three things? Rather, just as these are free to all who come into the world, so too the words of Torah are free to all.

Torah, just like fire, water, and earth, is elemental. It gives us life, sustains us, guides us, and gives us steady ground on which to stand. Torah is sharpening and clarifying. It can be warming or scalding to the touch. Torah is healing and heavy, G-d's creation, and our responsibility.

But the Midrash here is also pushing us to think about the cost of Torah, and more specifically, the sometimes inaccessible costs of trying to find a true place of belonging in Jewish community and tradition. When I read this Midrash, I read it both as an invitation and a caution. I hear the echo of the Rabbis from all those years ago, challenging us to make Jewish life as life-affirming and accessible as possible. What might change, what new revelation might we all encounter if we welcomed with open arms all those people in our communities who have not yet found their place. What if we removed the barriers and boundaries, and lived out this value that our tradition has been channeling for thousands of years: The Torah was written and given over to every single one of us. It is free. And it's just waiting to be expounded.

Shani Abramowitz is Rabbi of Ohavay Zion Synagogue in Lexington, Ky.

Snapshots



BBYO and Teen Connect helped Rachel Ohayon celebrate her Bat Mitzvah at a LouCity game in May.

Candles

Here are the candle-lighting times for Shabbat in June:

- June 5 @ 8:45 p.m.
- June 12 @ 8:49 p.m.
- June 19 @ 8:51 p.m.
- June 26 @ 8:52 p.m.

Contacts

Got a story idea? A letter? A gripe? A kudo?

Send it along to *Community* at community@jewishlouisville.org.

Not getting your paper? Want to subscribe? Putting your subscription on hold? Ryan Benningfield can handle all

circulation questions. He can be reached at rbenningfield@jewishlouisville.org or 502-238-2739.

Got an item for the *Community* eblast? Send it to community@jewishlouisville.org.

Deadlines

Got a news item for Community? Deadlines matter, especially for newspapers. Send in your news by **Monday, June 15** (though sooner is better).

The paper will be published on **Friday, June 26**.

Submitting an item for *Community's* weekly eblast? Please submit it by Friday to community@jewishlouisville.org. The eblast is sent out every Monday afternoon.

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Maybe you like the look of a real paper without the, er ... pa-

per. Then check out *Digital Community* at jewishlouisville.org/community/community-newspaper/print-version/.

If you read on the run, *Community's* social media is just the thing. Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/JewishLouisville/ or on Twitter, twitter.com/JewishLouNews, for the latest Jewish news from Kentucky and around the world.

Corrections/Clarifications

Have a correction? Send it to community@jewishlouisville.org

NEWS

From Passover to the Yoms to Derby (and Hawaii!), it's been another ShinShinim whirlwind

By Rona and Yael
Our ShinShinim

Shalom Y'all!

It's Rona and Yael again, and we can't believe it's already May!

We've had a busy, fun, and eventful couple of months.

March was full of joyous Passover celebrations.

We started the month with a PJ Library cooking event where we made Charoset, did seder plate crafts, and ran an obstacle course that led us through the desert and out of the sea.

With BBYO, we had a tasty chocolate seder, and with Teen Connect, we played some fun Passover-themed games at our awesome Passover party.

Then, we took off and flew to the far destination of...Hawaii! An amazing week of hiking, traveling, exploring, and of course, not eating any bread!

We got back straight into Yom Hazikaron (Israel's Memorial Day) events.

The first one was "Hour To Honor" - where community members came and worked out for one hour in honor of Israel's fallen soldiers, and people hurt in Israel's wars. Participants walked, jogged, or practiced yoga in their honor. It was heartwarming to see so many people take an hour of their day to remember and honor our heroes.

The JCC staff also got to take part in our "Lunch and Learn," where we talked about "Yom Hazikaron" commemorations in Israel and abroad, and specifically, about Omri Tamari z"l, a soldier that we knew. We thank everybody who came and took part in an important, honest conversation.

We also took part in BBYO's Spring Convention. Besides connecting with teens from across the region and having fun together, we got to do our own session with the Cincinnati ShinShinim for the teens, where we talked about subjects that are important to us, why we are here, and answered their questions.

Straight from there, we had very few hours of sleep and then got on a plane with LBSY's 8th graders to...Washington, D.C. We toured the incredible Holocaust Museum, learned a lot, and connected to our past together. We also had the opportunity to visit the World War II Memorial, Martin Luther King Jr.'s Memorial, Abraham Lincoln's Memorial, the Vietnam War Memorial, and even passed by the White House. It was a day full of history and memory, both Jewish and American. Then we had one of the most meaningful days of the year yet.

Our communal "Yom Hazikaron" ceremony was a project we worked

hard on for a very long time. With the help of so many community members and leaders, congregations, and organizations, and also our great "Shlichim B'Madim" that visited our community, we were able to organize an amazing, unforgettable event.

This ceremony, honoring fallen soldiers and victims of Israel's various wars and attacks, is a ceremony we experience in Israel every year. Yom Hazikaron is such a big part of Israel, and in the life of every Israeli. We felt so fortunate to bring such an important ceremony to this amazing community, and the hard work paid off. The ceremony was meaningful, respectful, and touching, and we got amazing feedback on it.

We thank everyone who came, participated, and honored them.

Jumping to May, we had the privilege to go to Derby! We were so excited, and it was wonderful to wear dresses and fascinators while seeing the track and the horses. We definitely got the genuine Louisville, Kentucky experience.

A week later, The Temple honored us by hosting a "ShinShinot Shabbat". It was a touching, heartwarming night, where we shared our experiences in Louisville and our feelings about being far from home this year. We want

to thank everyone who came, and of course, The Temple, for this great night and for always making us feel welcome during our work in Sunday School and at the preschool, or at Friday services and events.

We got together with BBYO and Teen Connect again for a great night at the LouCity soccer game! We hung out with the teens, enjoyed the game, and saw so many dogs, as it was "Bring Your Dog to the Park" night, which only added to the fun.

We also got to meet the Partnership-2Gether young adults who visited us this month from Israel's Western Galilee and Budapest, Hungary. We had a great time getting to know them, while having meaningful conversations with members of our community here at the Trager Family JCC.

As we're approaching the end of May, we are also getting closer to the end of our year in Louisville. But we still have more time and a lot of exciting plans ahead of us (Camp Livingston & Camp J, here we come!), additional trips, and continuing to explore Louisville.

Thank you for another two awesome months!



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NEWS

ANNUAL MEETING

Continued from page 1

Along the way, son Alan (like his father) attended The Ohio State University, emerging with a Master's Degree in Social Work and the commensurate skill of an intuitive, insightful listener. He put in stints with Federations in St. Louis and Denver, eventually landing in Louisville when – at age 42 – he interviewed for and landed the Federation's top job.

It proved a successful meshing of ambition and skill, drawing implicitly on Engel's academic training as a therapist.

"I think that (degree) helped me, because people would come in and talk about stuff going on at home, or with relatives or friends," Engel said. "I could relate to that, and could refer them to JFCS (known as Jewish Family & Vocational Services until 2008) or privately if need be."

"If you're a good professional – whatever you do – you have to have confidence in yourself, and take risks," he emphasized. "I'd encourage my staff (by saying), 'You don't have to do it my way.' I learned that you can't get anywhere by screaming. One of the things I was most proud of over the years was mentoring staff. Some of the people who worked here went on to become executives in other communities. I'm proud that I played a part in their growth." Sara Klein Wagner, President and CEO of the Jewish Federation and Trager Family JCC echoed that sentiment.

"Alan is a social worker at heart; he truly has the patience to listen and provide space for those he collaborates with or supervised to work through their options rather than telling others what to do," Wagner said.

"Engel," she emphasized, "is passionate and truly people driven while never looking for the accolades or spotlight. I have literally known Alan for decades, first as my mentor and my boss for 19 years and for the past 17 still a mentor, a champion, a volunteer leader, and a friend."

Merging the Federation and the JCC may have been Engel's most visible achievement, but it was hardly his sole major accomplishment. He supported JFCS resettling Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union in Louisville, coordinated the Federation's purchase of Shalom Towers from what was then the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and was a key figure in establishing Louisville's Keshet Kentucky program for Jewish teens.

These days, "my passion is still with the Federation," Engel said. "My vision was that we could have a united community. That has begun to happen more and more. Agencies are working better with one another and with the Federation, and I think that's healthy."

Now, with so much behind them, Engel and his wife of 53 years, Linda Engel, have undertaken a resettlement of their own. A few weeks ago, they exchanged their longtime Louisville home for a condo in a suburb of Charlotte, North Carolina – where

their son, Jeremy (one of their three children), daughter-in-law Nikki, and two young grandchildren will provide plenty of happy diversion.

"It was time to let go," this year's Ottenheimer honoree observed. Still, the indefatigable Alan S. Engel is in no danger of being forgotten.

"I'm sure people are going to call me," he said. "And that's fine."



Chris Brice

This year's **Ronald & Marie Abrams Volunteer of the Year Award**, whose extant namesakes exemplify community service, goes to **Chris Brice**.

Growing up in Lawrence, NY – one of Long Island's so-called Five Towns and a geographic exemplar of Jewish life – Chris Brice was steeped in a culture where friends, food and faith were inextricably intertwined.

"I really didn't know what a Protestant was until I went to college" at Duke University, he admitted, recalling how "you had Jews and then you had all the other ethnic groups. It was a very sheltered environment, and there's great joy and strength in that. But it can also create complacency."

No such danger for Brice in Louisville, where he's a financial services executive with Northwestern Mutual. As JCL board Vice-Chair, his vantage point has afforded him a valuable perspective on how to grow Jewish life in his adopted city.

"Obviously we have smaller Jewish community than New York, but more than we thought after the (2022) Brandeis study – which challenges us to engage each other more," he said. "I look at that challenge as a great opportunity."

Brice arrived in Louisville during the summer of 1992, armed with a degree in political science from Duke and an arrangement to teach middle and high school history at Kentucky Country Day. Decades later he'd become a KCD parent (he met his wife, Sarah, while both were teachers there), and is a member of the school's Board of Trustees, which he currently chairs.

It wasn't so different from Jewish volunteerism, Brice emphasized.

"Like our JCC, I'm definitely drawn to community," he said. "I've always said you have to create a small pocket within a bigger group, otherwise you can feel overwhelmed."

He's carried that imperative to the present day. Whether at KCD, as a volunteer at Louisville's West End School (serving an under-resourced Pre-K-8th Grade student body), a supporter of Kentucky military families and especially via his ongoing commitment to Jewish Louisville, Brice is a testament to leading with a purpose.

His volunteer résumé reflects that commitment. He's coached a Louisville Maccabi boys basketball team in a St. Louis tournament (capturing a gold medal), put in a stint as Principal of a revitalized High School for Jewish Studies, and for a year was Keshet

Kentucky's program director.

"My most important volunteer work has been around serving on the (Federation) Endowment Committee," close to seven as chair, Brice said, citing three points of emphasis:

"One, we have a great, intergenerational group of committee members. I'm the guy in the middle and I love learning from those with the vast experience and wisdom, as well as younger members that have such a fresh perspective. I also really enjoy working with the professional staff of the JCL, from Sara on down."

"Two, I like making systems and processes better. When I first became chair, we spent a lot of time on improving how we steward our endowment gifts. That was an incredible team effort between our committee and the professional leadership."

"Three, I love talking with members of our Jewish community about their personal stories and the legacies they want to leave. I think there are few things in this world that serve as a better vessel for one's legacy than an endowed gift. Both the impact that the donor sets out for this gift and the reasons for why they did it will speak volumes to their descendants and the community about the donor's values. As a member of the endowment committee, I have had the blessing of helping members of our community shape their legacy. That's hard to beat."

Brice added: "I am a fervent advocate for the importance of endowments to support non-profit organizations. A strong endowment creates income streams for our Jewish community that help us invest in our dreams and protect us when challenges arise. Our committee's goal is to advance our current endowment, which I'd rate as "good" when matched with comparable Jewish communities, to levels of greatness, providing more impact and security for our Jewish community. This is a very long game, and I believe we are on the right track. What excites me about this work is that even though it is unlikely I will see much of the fruits of my labor, future generations will."



Mariya Leyderman

The **Julie Linker Community Relations Young Leadership Award** is named for a Jewish leader who passed away unexpectedly in 1984, depriving the community of a friend. She chaired the Young Women's Division

of the United Jewish Campaign and was Vice-Chair of the Major Gifts Division, of the Women's Division, and was vice-president of the Women's Cabinet of the Federation. This year's winner is **Mariya Leyderman**.

Mariya Leyderman knows a lot about how to translate compassion into action.

As executive director of Metro Louisville's Office of Behavioral Health, Leyderman has focused on addressing the needs of unhoused citizens, many of whom are grappling with

chronic mental health challenges.

"Permanent supportive housing will be central to the new office's work," a Metro Government statement promised this past October 30, when Mayor Craig Greenberg announced the department's founding, with Leyderman as its leader. "Stable housing is the foundation of recovery," Greenberg said.

A native of St. Paul, Minn., Leyderman did her undergraduate work at the University of Minnesota – where she was active in Hillel – before earning a Master's in Social Work from Tel Aviv University and a Ph.D in Psychology from Louisville's Spalding University. She's lived in Louisville for a dozen years, most recently serving as a Jewish Community Relations Council member.

In city government, Leyderman approaches her current job with an imperative of empowering people all too often regarded as powerless.

"I think the position is incredibly important, and I think the work is incredibly important," Leyderman said.

"It's arguable that behavioral health can weave into a whole lot of spaces and places and systems," she believes. "There are a lot of opportunities that people are excited about. Direct work coming out of my office, whether it's housing, working with the police department, or on some new projects with the prosecutor's office."

Indeed, "there have been obvious spaces where the administration wanted me to take over and drive these initiatives," she added. "And outside of that, it's kind of open to me being able to weave together and bring in work that I was doing previously for Metro government," perhaps most notably, her role as coordinating mental health services in the city's Department of Corrections.

"I always joke that if I didn't have my previous job at the jail...and I landed in this position, it would be very challenging." She cites her efforts to forge cooperative programs alongside "the courts, working with state hospitals, emergency departments and community mental health" organizations.

Beyond that, Leyderman encouraged "changes in policy, law and legislation," efforts she says led to "connections and partnerships that have translated into the work I'm now doing in the mayor's office."

"You never would have thought working in a jail would make you successful to work in the community, but I think it was the best way to (understand) every system that impacts people who are marginalized, have severe mental illness and high needs."

Leyderman acknowledges the value of viewing her professional responsibilities through a Jewish lens.

"You always get asked the question, 'How did you know you wanted to be a psychologist?' I don't think I ever had a lightbulb moment of, 'This is what I want to do.' I grew up going to a Jewish day school and Jewish values of helping other people, giving back to the community. My entire life, as I navigated pathways into professional careers, I do think that's always been

Continued on page 5

NEWS

Continued from page 4

rooted in who I am.”

In other words, more intrinsic than formally explicit.

“I wouldn’t say that I’m necessarily religious in any fashion, but the cultural and social values of Judaism are very close to me. What’s valuable and meaningful to me are the relationships that come out of working with people, and I think that’s obviously connected to all of our Jewish values.”



Alison Roemer

The **Arthur S. Kling Award** honors the memory of a prominent Jewish Louisville leader, who served as president of the YMHA. He was instrumental in establishing the original JCC on Dutchmans Lane and founding the Bureau of Jewish Education and the Conference of Jewish Organizations, which ran the United Jewish Campaign. This year the award – which recognizes outstanding performances by JCL staff – goes to **Alison Roemer**, Senior Director of Jewish Journeys and Experiences at the Trager Family JCC.

Winning the Kling Award “was a total surprise for me and I’m humbled to have received it,” Roemer said. “It feels good to be recognized for the work that you do by leadership.”

Roemer joined the JCL staff in June 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic had compelled most programming to shift from in-person to virtual formats. Academically trained as an educator, she’d put in eight years as director of The Temple Preschool before looking for her next professional challenge.

“I loved my time at The Temple,” Roemer said, “but I just wanted a career change. Sara Wagner (President and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Louisville and the Trager Family JCC) caught wind of that and said, ‘Let’s talk.’ At the time I didn’t know what she had in mind, or that there would be anything to entice me. But it turned out there was a new position they were creating to do outreach to young Jewish families – figuring out how to get them connected to the Jewish community, and for their children.”

“Alison is the the point person that helps every family navigate their Jewish journey through our community,” Wagner said.

Perhaps inevitably, “we started with our youngest kids, because that’s where most people’s paths start when they have young children,” Roemer said. “But a big part of this job began with camp grants, sending kids to Jewish overnight camps and teen Israel trips with One Happy Camper grant dollars from the Jewish Heritage Fund and the Federation. That’s still a big part of this job: connecting families with the right path for them.”

Regardless, it’s vital to remember that “what might be right for my family and the path we’d chosen might

not be the same path somebody else takes,” she added.

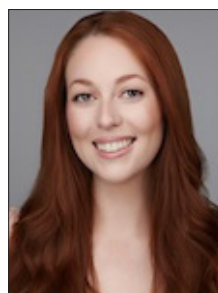
“There are lots of entry points, lots of ways to be involved and to do things that speak to you. So, if you’re social and like being with other people, we have tons of opportunities for you to meet other people and do social activities. And if you want more spiritual or religious activities, there are plenty of those in our community – we can connect you with people who have similar likes and interests.”

Sometimes those connections span multiple generations. Roemer remembers her days as a teenage Camp J counsellor, where some of the kids she supervised would eventually grow up and send their own children to Camp J.

One of those alumni is Travis Haynes, who attended Camp J during Roemer’s counselor years, later sending his own children to The Temple preschool.

“The success of my children’s early education can be directly traced to Alison’s leadership,” Haynes recalled, adding that those same kids have flourished during their summers at Camp J, where Roemer and Camp Director David Siskin work in close collaboration.

“Every year, when I see opportunities for my kids to spend a week here or there at a different summer camp, they either try it and don’t like it, or simply respond, ‘No, I would rather be at Camp J,’” Haynes said. “But beyond the fun, I get the benefit of knowing that under Alison’s leadership—and now her daughter’s leadership as a counselor—my kids are weaving themselves into the fabric of the Louisville Jewish community.”



Elizabeth McCrary

The **Joseph J. Kaplan Young Leadership Award** is named for a leader in Jewish education and president of the Young Men’s Hebrew Association (YMHA) – the predecessor of the Jewish Community Center. Kaplan encouraged people to remember Jewish Louisville in their wills. The Award was established during his lifetime. This year’s winner is **Elizabeth McCrary**.

Asked to ruminate on her notion of leadership, Elizabeth McCrary paraphrased the celebrated quote attributed to early common-era Rabbi Tarfon.

“It’s not your job to complete the work, but neither are you free not to participate,” said McCrary, whose own participation is best expressed via her work connecting young families to the richness of Jewish Louisville.

“What I love so much about my community involvement is my favorite committee, Shalom Louisville,” McCrary said. Or as the Federation program itself explains: “*Whether you have recently arrived in Louisville, are planning to move here or if you have lived here a while but are now looking to make Jewish Louisville a part of*

your life, we are here to help!”

She cited the tasty success of Shalom Louisville’s bagel brunches, where she met a collection of newcomers who later were guests in her home. “I got to feed them from my own kitchen,” McCrary said. “And that was really, really special.”

The hosting dynamic could hardly be more natural for McCrary, a Jew by Choice who grew up in Augusta, Georgia and had an earlier career as an event planner. These days she works virtually for Cincinnati-based Women of Reform Judaism as Executive Associate supporting WRJ’s CEO, Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch.

“I love to be hospitable and welcome people,” McCrary said. “And to me that’s what WRJ does, either through affiliating sisterhoods or by creating opportunities for unaffiliated women to find their passion in Judaism.”

In Louisville McCrary attends Keneseth Israel, where her partner, Greg Moore, had been a member, together with various friends. “I was enveloped by these wonderful people and felt at home.” In parallel, “I’d been living Jewishly for a year or two and started taking the Judaism 101 class with Rabbi Freed,” alongside several fellow prospective Jews by Choice.

“My cohort was finishing going to the mikvah and that kind of thing – it was August or September (of 2023), but for personal reasons, I wasn’t ready,” McCrary said. “And then October 7 happened, and I thought – ‘I am reacting to this as a Jew.’ I had kind of a lightbulb moment.”

By the very next day, “it was obvious there were two camps – I’m oversimplifying a very complicated thing – but in my experience there was a ‘Jewish’ response and a ‘non-Jewish’ response,” she said. “I was in the ‘Jewish’ response. So I texted Rabbi Freed and I said, ‘Okay, it’s time.’”

As Co-Chair of KI’s May 31, 2026 Centennial Gala, McCrary acknowledges the responsibility of a different shade of leadership.

“The fact that this congregation, which has existed for 100 years, has entrusted me to lead has definitely been a moment of personal growth,” she said. “Honestly, it makes me feel a little guilty sometimes, because I have all this positivity and so little negativity.”



Alexander Blieden

The **Lewis W. Cole Memorial Young Leadership Award** is named for an organizer of the Conference of Jewish Organizations, the predecessor to the Federation. A committed Annual Campaign volunteer, Cole devoted his life to Jewish Louisville. This year’s winner is **Alexander Blieden**.

As a member of the youngest adult generation of the Blieden family, Alexander Blieden recognizes how vital it is for him to support the Trager Family JCC as it embarks on a \$29 million expansion of its Jewish Heritage Fund

Campus.

“My family’s been here for years and years,” said Blieden, who along with Marsha Roth is vice-chair of the expansion’s capital campaign (Kate Latts and Steve Trager are the campaign’s co-chairs). “It’s a secular space, super inclusive, and what’s happened with (growing) membership is incredible. And thinking about long term, as a young parent, what the JCC has meant to my family and what it means to me,” makes that relationship all the more significant.

“My wife (Amanda Blieden) is here three or four times a week, and I’m here on a weekly basis,” said Blieden, who is president of Kaden Companies, his family’s 46-year-old commercial real estate business. The Trager Family JCC “has some of the nicest facilities of any community center in the city.”

They include the Blieden Family Playground, which opened two years ago with an emphasis on accessibility.

Blieden has been connected to the various iterations of the facility for as long as he can remember. “I grew up going to the JCC – my family sent me to camp there,” he said. “I used to play basketball there, and all the sports. That’s where some of the key relationships I still have to this day were built – because of the JCC and the community I had there.”

He took a somewhat circuitous route from teenhood to his eventual return to the city of his birth. After graduating from Tulane University in New Orleans, he made his way to Chicago and his initial forays into commercial real estate.

“At the same time, I was pretty involved with the Jewish Federation in Chicago,” Blieden said, “and a lot of my community there were young Jewish professionals and guys I ended up going on Birthright with.”

But after five years in the Windy City, the tug to return to Louisville was too potent to resist. Still, “for the first several years I was just getting my footing. I felt something was missing.”

That “something” began to gel several years ago after what ended up being a pivotal conversation.

“I was told about a program called ‘Cabinet’ from a buddy of mine in Chicago,” Blieden recalled, and I ended up reaching out to Sara, referring to Sara Klein Wagner, President and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Louisville and the Trager Family JCC.

“Cabinet” is Jewish Federations of North America’s National Young Leadership Cabinet, which JFNA says is aimed at “the next generation of global Jewish leaders towards philanthropy, communal engagement and activism in support of Jewish people and community everywhere.”

Blieden was intrigued. “My buddy told me about all the relationships he’d made, about the philanthropic component, the mission component... how it changed his involvement and outlook.”

For Blieden, “that was the catalyst. And when we’re talking about me being part of this capital campaign, that

Continued on page 7

COMMUNITY

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All letters must be of interest to the Jewish community or in response to an item published in the paper. They must be no longer than 300 words in length and signed. Name, address and daytime phone number must be included for verification purposes only.

Community reserves the right to refuse to publish any letter, to edit for brevity while preserving the meaning, and to limit the number of letters published in any edition.

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FORUM



Whether in Brooklyn or Israel, extremism is the flavor of the day



Mindful Ramblings

Andrew Adler

*There's battle lines being drawn
Nobody's right if everybody's wrong
– "For What It's Worth" (Stephen Stills/
Buffalo Springfield)*

This was not an optimal week to be shopping at the Park Slope Food Co-op.

Founded almost exactly 50 years ago and boasting some 17,000 members, the Brooklyn, N.Y. co-op has a reputation for progressive social politics that, of late, is being sorely tested. A vociferous segment of its membership has advocated removing all products sourced from Israel from its shelves. The supporting arguments are all too familiar: Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, West Bank settlers are murdering Palestinian farmers, while IDF bombs are killing scores of Lebanese civilians in the name of vanquishing Hezbollah.

Just as familiar are the opposing arguments: Boycotting Israeli goods is synonymous with antisemitism, a pallid dog whistle on behalf of Boycott, Divest and Sanctions Movement – "BDS" in the predominant vernacular.

Not surprisingly, some circumstances in upscale Park Slope have devolved into dispiriting extremism. "While the overwhelming majority of members have continued to engage respectfully and cooperatively, we have also seen incidents that have gone beyond normal disagreement

and escalated into verbal confrontations and, in some cases, physical altercations between Co-op members," said a co-op email, as reported by The New York Times this past May 25.

Such is the sorry state of dialogue, or what passes for same, in much of contemporary America. Maybe certain stakeholders who populate the Park Slope Food Co-op should take a cue from Louisville's Year of Civil Discourse, which aims to defuse the confrontational dynamics that make a mockery of reasonableness.

And if anyone believes such devolved "debate" is confined to the U.S., a glance at the sorry state of Middle East politics will quickly put the lie to that notion. Recent images of detained activists from an intercepted protest flotilla – showing detainees with hands bound behind them, forced to kneel face-down on the bare floor (while surveyed by a gloating national security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir) – were so disturbing that even Israel President Isaac Herzog was compelled to respond.

"Detainees must not be abused," he said. More forceful, still, was his condemnation of violent acts by West Bank settlers against Palestinians living nearby. As quoted in a May 24 account by The Times of Israel:

"We are witnesses to a wave of terrible violence that is being carried out by an anarchist mob," Herzog said in a speech at a ceremony granting the Jerusalem Unity Prize, describing the near-daily acts of violence by Jewish extremists as "acts that defile and violate every basic moral, legal, and Jewish norm."

"There are elements on the fringes of our society that have normalized violence, and, sadly, some go even further — celebrating it and taking pride in it," he added.

Consider the phrase "normalized violence" and its close cousin, "normalized

extremism" – the latter manifesting in seemingly benign circumstances like the Park Slope Food Co-Op dustup. Of course, there's a vast difference between verbal altercations and outright physical abuse (or worse). Yet verbal violence is threatening enough when a previously accepted norms crumble, each side convinced that their methodology is the sole authentic truth.

Whatever moderating forces are present in Israel (or for that matter, in Iran, Lebanon, Syria, wherever) find themselves shoved aside by mutually declarations of righteousness. Inject sectarian extremism – Jewish, Islamic, whatever, into the mix – and you have a recipe for chaos, if not catastrophe.

Entrenched beliefs are always difficult to shake loose. In Park Slope, where over the decades the Co-op has exemplified institutional cooperation and participation (to be eligible to shop there, each member must work least one three-hour shift per month), the present ideological conflict is poised to pit neighbor against neighbor. It is a conflict that no one can win.

In a genuinely cooperative context, the two camps would have devised a strategy to head off confrontation. It may yet be possible to avoid ugliness, as Co-op members were set to vote May 26 on whether to proceed with the boycott. Regardless of the outcome, however, members will have to address the enmity that is almost certain to linger.

It may be a stretch to declare that as Park Slope goes, so goes the world. Regardless, the battle lines have been drawn, and it will be up to all parties – whether in Brooklyn or Tel Aviv – to pull back from the brink of calamity.

Andrew Adler is Managing Editor of Community.

FORUM

Continued from page 5

experience strengthened my connection to the local community." Participating in Cabinet also demonstrated "how the Jewish experience I thought I wouldn't be able to attain here in Louisville (because) I was leaving behind a bigger city with a stronger population" was, in fact, a fallacy.

Coupled with the post-October 7 realities, "a lot of people who felt ostracized from their communities – and who were seeking connection to their Judaism," Blieden said, "elevated the importance of being in a Jewish space like the JCC, with the safety of being within these walls."



Harvey Liebschutz

First given in 1974, the **Elsie P. Judah Memorial Award** was established to honor the late Elsie P. Judah, who was one of the founders of the former Golden Age Group. Judah, who died in 1972, left \$3,000 to the Jewish Federation as a bequest. At the request of her son, Clarence F. Judah, the Federation board of directors and endowment fund trustees approved the establishment of the annual award. This year's winner is **Harvey Liebschutz**.

Among the regulars who attend

AgeWell's weekday lunches at the Trager Family JCC's Kohn Family Town Square, Harvey Liebschutz stands out for being (A) a confirmed bachelor as he closes in on his 88th birthday, (B) a steady volunteer making sure the monthly AgeWell newsletter is mailed out on time, and (C) likely the only cohort member who – while serving in the Army – made a habit of catching rides after flagging down passenger trains as they sped along tracks out of Anchorage.

More about that in a bit. But first, why is he so dedicated to getting that newsletter in the mail?

"Why?" Liebschutz echoed, sounding a bit surprised that anyone would ask such a question. "Because who else is going to do it? And it saves labor to volunteer. You don't have to pay somebody to do it. That costs money, and income is limited there."

Call this a reflection of his intrinsic pragmatism. So is his ongoing bachelorhood, a circumstance he acknowledges without a trace of fuss. Not to mention his innate generosity.

"Harvey's volunteerism is very under the radar," said Janet DeArk, assistant director of the AgeWell program. "We will show a film with popcorn and pop and all kinds of stuff. The movie will be over, and Dara (Cohen, AgeWell's director) and I will get up and go in there – and the place will be completely clean. That's the kind of volunteering he does. We don't have to ask – he just does it."

Another example of Liebschutz's pitch-in eagerness is "My Dog Eats First," "a local organization that packages dog and cat food for pets of the unhoused, and which is one of our mitzvahs," DeArk explained. "Harvey was one of the folks who helped bag it up. He's the best kind of person you can have."

"In my opinion it's cheaper and you don't have to deal with headaches that way," he told an interviewer in 2018 as part of an oral history project at the Filson Historical Society. "As a result, I was able to do most of the things I wanted to do. I've been to California, Vegas, and on several cruises. Once I caught a train from the old L&N station, which is now the TARC station, to watch a football game in Chicago."

Liebschutz's trains may not run quite so often these days, but he is still mobile. Living in a condo situated in a building where one side of the street is in Lyndon and the other in St. Matthews, he typically arises at 9 a.m. and gets to his AgeWell lunch a little after noon – four days a week – followed by walking the upstairs track. On Shabbat he plays the Reform-Conservative-Orthodox shul trifecta: Friday nights at The Temple, Saturday mornings at Keneseth Israel and Saturday evenings at Anshei Sfard.

"You've got to stay active," he says. "If not, you become a vegetable, just sitting at home watching television and twiddling your tongue."

Oh, and about that Alaska venture:

Intent on visiting his younger brother Donald, Liebschutz hitchhiked from his Army post in Arkansas to Oklahoma, hopped a military plane and made his way to Anchorage, where Donald, also serving in the Army, was stationed.

"We decided to travel out from Anchorage," Harvey Liebschutz explained, remarking that "the way you'd do that was very unorthodox: We'd stand on the railroad tracks and wait. When a train came along, it would stop and you'd get on. There was no station or anything; just simply standing on the railroad tracks. I always found that interesting and I'm curious if they still do that today."

The 2026 JCL Award recipients include six teen honorees, shown on page 18.

The Jewish Federation of Louisville and the Trager Family JCC will hold its 2026 Annual Meeting on Monday, June 29 in the Trager Family JCC's Shapira Foundation Auditorium. Join the Jewish Federation and the Trager Family JCC as we elect our officers and new board members, as well as recognize and celebrate our award winners. The evening begins with cocktails and appetizers at 5:30 p.m., followed by the meeting and awards ceremony at 6:15 p.m. RSVP to Adam Cohen at 502-238-2722 or email annualmeeting@jewishlouisville.org.

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Monday, June 29

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6 p.m. Meeting and Awards Ceremony

Please join the Jewish Federation of Louisville and the Trager Family JCC as we elect officers and new board members and celebrate honorees.

Award Recipients

Blanche B. Ottenheimer Award: Alan Engel

Ronald & Marie Abrams Volunteer of the Year Award: Chris Brice

Julie Linker Community Relations Young Leadership Award: Mariya Leyderman

Lewis W. Cole Memorial Young Leadership Award: Alexander Blieden

Joseph J. Kaplan Young Leadership Award: Elizabeth McCrary

Elsie P. Judah Award: Harvey Liebschutz

Arthur S. Kling Award: Alison Roemer

Joseph Fink BBYO Community Service Scholarship: Natalie Scaiewicz

Tony Levitan Award: Maya Ciriano

Stacy Marks Nisenbaum Award: Noa Chottiner and Hailey Woods

Ellen Faye Garmon Award: Norah Corson and Brody Bailen

RSVP

Adam Cohen, 502-238-2722 or
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PICTURE THIS: CAPITAL CAMPAIGN KICKOFF

Building on Our Promise officially kicked off on May 11 as nearly 80 community leaders, supporters, and philanthropists gathered to celebrate the future expansion of the Trager Family JCC and Jewish Heritage Fund Campus. Guests heard inspiring remarks from campaign and community leadership and exciting updates on the campaign's momentum, including the announcement that more than \$21 million has already been secured toward the \$29 million campaign vision. (Photos by Mackenzie Lynch)



Kate Latts, Campaign Co-Chair



Judy Shapira and Elaine Weisberg



Susan Blieden and Michelle Hertzman



Ron Weisberg and Frank Weisberg



Marcy Rosengarten, Elliott Rosengarten, Steve Trager, Co-Chair and Amy Trager



Anne Monnell, Executive Director of Legacy Foundation of Kentuckiana, Allan Latts, John Roth, and Bonnie Roth



Peggy Misbach and Chester Misbach



Steve Trager, Campaign Co-Chair



Alan Linker, Martin Ruby, and Ed Cohen



Jennifer Tuvlin and Beth Salamon



Ralph Green, Kevin Trager, and Mark Hammond



Shellie Branson and Jeff Polson, President and CEO of JFH



Karen Abrams

NEWS

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Continued from page 1

many people he grew up with at the JCC, reflecting on the friendships, memories, and sense of community that has shaped his life. He shared how proud he is of what this community has built together and how the Trager Family JCC has become “exactly what we hoped it would be — a place that brings people together, reflects the very best of Jewish values, and creates a genuine sense of belonging.”

“When I was asked to co-chair the campaign, I thought how could I say no,” shared Kate Latts. “This is our moment to fuel the momentum of the vibrancy of our Jewish community for generations to come.”

That same sense of personal connection and shared purpose is reflected

throughout the campaign leadership team. Vice-Chair Marsha Roth recently shared, “I first came to the Louisville JCC as a BBG teenager from Columbus, Ohio. Little did I know that Louisville’s JCC and the people inside it would change my life. I am passionate about the impact this community has on all our lives and excited to help us continue to grow.”

Vice-Chair Alexander Blieden echoed that sentiment, sharing, “The campaign is deeply important to me because our JCC serves as the glue that brings our local Jewish community together. I am proud to support the expansion of the JCC — an investment that my children and so many families in Louisville will benefit from for generations to come.”

The evening highlighted the remarkable success of the Trager Family JCC, with Tom Wissinger, Executive Direc-

tor of the Trager Family JCC, describing a campus that is “bursting at the seams” as participation continues to grow across programs, camp, wellness, and Jewish life experiences. Since opening the new facility in 2022, membership has doubled, and the JCC is now serving more Jewish member households than it has in decades. Sara Klein Wagner, President & CEO of Jewish Community of Louisville, also shared the broader vision for the future and the lasting impact the expansion will have on our Jewish Community for generations to come.

One of the evening’s most exciting moments came with remarks from Karen Abrams, Chair of Jewish Heritage Fund, and Jennifer Tuvlin, Vice-Chair and Chair of the Jewish Life Committee, both spoke about JHF’s partnership and support for the project. Over the past year, JHF engaged in an extensive vet-

ting process that included presentations, campus tours, financial review, and detailed discussions about the long-term impact of the expansion. In the end, the JHF Board voted unanimously to commit an \$8 million cornerstone gift along with a \$10 million matching gift toward the campaign.

The excitement throughout the evening was palpable as guests learned that the JHF commitment, combined with the generosity of early donors, has already secured over \$21 million toward the campaign’s \$29 million goal.

The campaign is currently in its advance, or quiet, phase, with leadership conversations underway among longtime partners and community philanthropists before a broader public phase begins. While much of this work is happening behind the scenes, community members can expect to see visible progress soon, with groundbreaking of the Benovitz Pavilion anticipated in the coming months.

This campaign is about ensuring that every person searching for connection, belonging, and Jewish community has a place to walk through the doors and know they belong. In the end, that is what makes a community truly extraordinary.

Lenae Price is Vice President & Chief Philanthropy Officer at the Jewish Federation of Louisville and the Trager Family JCC.



Jonathan Wolff, Tom Schwartz, Barbara Schwartz, and Jonathon Greer



Allen Hertzman, Sarah Brice, and Chris Brice

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FORUM

JLE

Continued from page 1

will also be offering extra, optional time to learn and play with the Shin-Shinim Tuesdays and Thursdays after school. Sundays will become a true community learning experience, with parallel parent learning sessions, family connection opportunities, and ongoing teacher professional development woven into the rhythm of the morning. If families are interested in adding additional Hebrew learning, students can participate through a combination of one-on-one Zoom sessions and small-group work, while the optional enrichment opportunities throughout the week will allow students to deepen friendships and Jewish engagement beyond the classroom.

JLE's educational vision is being strengthened through guidance and consultation from the Institute for Jewish Enrichment (IJE), a nationally recognized leader in inquiry-based Jewish education with more than a decade of experience developing innovative approaches to Jewish learning. Through ongoing consultation and educator training, JLE faculty are drawing on IJE's distinctive approach, which integrates Jewish text study, creativity, social-emotional learning, and experiential education. Rather than approaching Judaism as a collection of isolated facts or subjects, students will engage with Jewish learning as part of an ongoing con-

versation that connects their own lives and questions with the broader story of the Jewish people.

Beginning in the Bar and Bat Mitzvah years, JLE students will engage in a deeply relational and meaningful journey centered on Jewish identity, personal growth, and global Jewish connection. As part of this experience, students will build ongoing relationships with peers in Louisville's Partnership cities in Israel's Western Galilee, learning together across cultures and continents during these formative years of Jewish life.

The capstone experience of the JLE journey will take place in eighth grade, when students travel to Israel over spring break for an immersive experience designed to deepen their sense of identity, strengthen their understanding of the global Jewish community, and meet in person with the peers they have come to know throughout their Bar and Bat Mitzvah journeys. Upon returning home, students will bring their experiences back to the Louisville community through meaningful leadership opportunities, including helping to plan and lead community commemorations for Yom HaShoah and Yom HaZikaron, as well as helping to envision and create a vibrant community-wide Yom Ha'Atzmaut celebration. For our first trip in March 2027, ninth and tenth graders in the community will be invited to participate as well.

For high school students, JLE is launching a new partnership with

American Jewish University that will offer students the opportunity to engage in rich, discussion-based Jewish learning while also earning college credit. Designed to balance depth with the realities of busy teen schedules, the program will include sixteen sessions throughout the school year, creating space for thoughtful learning, meaningful conversation, and community building without overwhelming students with additional academic pressure.

At the center of all of this is a profound commitment to relationships and community. JLE understands that Jewish identity is built not only through curriculum, but through meaningful experiences, caring mentors, strong friendships, and opportunities for families to grow together. Parents will have opportunities for weekly learning, social connection, and shared exploration of Jewish ideas and values alongside their children.

JLE is thrilled to welcome Rachel Goldman as Assistant Director of the Jewish Learning Experience. Rachel is already a beloved and deeply respected presence within the Louisville Jewish community. Through her years of involvement in Jewish education, including her work with LBSY and at Keneseth Israel Congregation for Shabbat programming, Rachel has brought deep warmth, thoughtfulness, creativity, and a real love of Jewish learning to this work. Her understanding of the Louisville Jewish landscape, combined with her com-

mitment to building joyful and meaningful Jewish experiences for families, makes her an essential part of the JLE vision. Our community is incredibly excited to welcome Rachel into this leadership role and to see the impact she will have on shaping the future of Jewish learning in Louisville.

The coming year will include major milestones, including a multi-day Teacher Professional Development Institute in August, the official community launch celebration on Sept. 6, expanded family learning opportunities, collaborative holiday programming across the city, and innovative community-wide celebrations centered around joy, learning, and Jewish connection.

Ultimately, JLE is grounded in a simple but powerful belief: that every learner deserves to feel seen, valued, inspired, and connected to the Jewish people. By combining educational excellence with creativity, relationship-building, and joy, the Jewish Learning Experience aims to help shape a vibrant and connected Jewish future for Louisville families for generations to come.

Jessie Gindea is Executive Director of Jewish Learning Experience.

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NEWS

In Louisville, a P2G Shabbaton demonstrates the resonance of personal connection

By Amanda Blieden
Guest Columnist

Over the weekend of May 15-17, I had the opportunity to participate in a Louisville-based “Shabbaton” organized by Partnership2Gether (P2G) that brought together Jews ages 25-45 from Louisville, Israel’s Western Galilee region, Budapest, and from across the United States. While the program was designed principally to foster connections among communities, what emerged was something far more personal and profound. Over the course of our time together, people who began as strangers quickly became friends, and conversations that started casually turned into moments of genuine understanding, vulnerability, and connection.

As the newly appointed U.S. Vice-Chair of the P2G Young Adult Committee, the experience felt especially meaningful because it reinforced the importance of building lasting relationships with Jewish communities around the world.

During the first part of the program, our Israeli and Hungarian guests spent time exploring Louisville and getting to know our community. It was meaningful not only to share our city with them, but also to hear about their own lives, traditions, and experiences growing up as Jews in different parts of the world. Although our daily lives may look different, from the outset there was an undeniable sense of mutual familiarity – a feeling that we already understood one another in a way that is difficult to explain unless you have experienced it for yourself.

The final portion of the program was the Shabbaton itself, where we shared meals, stories, traditions, and long conversations. Throughout the weekend, we spoke openly about both the joys and challenges of Jewish life today. We discussed family, identity, community, fears, hopes, and the responsibility we all feel to preserve Jewish life and tradition for future generations. What made these conversations so impactful was not just what was said, but the openness and trust with which people shared their respective experiences. Despite coming from different countries and backgrounds, there was a deep appreciation that we are all part of one extend-

ed family.

One of the highlights of the weekend was attending “Downs After Dark” at Churchill Downs together, but my favorite moment actually took place the evening before in a much quieter setting. At one point, several attendees began singing, and slowly everyone joined in. Song after song, voices from all over the world blended effortlessly. What struck me most was that although we came from different countries, we all knew the same songs and sang them in the same way. No one needed lyrics or explanations. In that moment, the distance between the United States, Israel and Hungary seemed to disappear entirely. It was one of the clearest reminders of how connected the Jewish people truly are across the world.

I was also deeply moved by the way our Israeli guests approached Shabbat. There was such a sense of joy, warmth, energy, and togetherness woven into their traditions. Shabbat felt alive – filled not only with meaning and spirituality, but also with music, laughter, singing, and genuine celebration. It was beautiful to witness how naturally they brought people together and created an atmosphere that felt both deeply meaningful and incredibly fun. Experiencing Shabbat in that way inspired me, and it made me think about the kinds of traditions and feelings I hope to bring more intentionally into my own home and family life. Also, hearing about the rich and resilient history of the Jewish community in Budapest added even more depth and perspective to the weekend and to the conversations we shared.

What I took away from this experience extends far beyond memories of a single weekend together. In a time when the world can often feel divided and isolating, this program was a reminder of the power of human connection and the importance of Jewish community across borders. It reminded me that even when Jews live thousands of miles apart, we remain deeply connected through our traditions, our history, our values, and our shared understanding of one another.

I left this Shabbaton feeling incredibly grateful – grateful for the conversations, the laughter, the vulnerability, and the friendships that were formed in such a short period of time. The con-

nections made during this weekend did not feel temporary or superficial; they felt lasting and meaningful. I am thankful to now be able to say that I have friends in the Western Galilee and Bu-

dapest, and I know the relationships and memories from this experience will stay with me for many years to come.



Flavors of Israel

Three Culinary Opportunities with Chef Uri Arnold
June 5 & 7, 2026

Friday, June 5 – Shabbat In a Box

Kosher* Dinner for Two
Maklubah**, Salads, Hummus, Challah, Candles, and Grape Juice
Pick-up: 4:30-5:30 p.m., Keneseth Israel Congregation
Dinner for two \$72, Dinner for four \$136
*Cooked in Keneseth Israel's kitchen under the supervision of Rabbi Freed.
**Maklubah is a Levantine chicken, rice, and vegetable dish.

Friday, June 5 – VIP Experience

Exclusive Shabbat Dinner and Wine Tasting
with Chef Uri Arnold
7 p.m., Location to be shared to attendees
Space is limited
Price: \$118/person

Sunday, June 7 – Mediterranean Masterclass

Hands-on Cooking Workshop and Demo
12-2 p.m. or 3-5 p.m., See website for details
Trager Family JCC, Kohn Family Town Square
Price: \$72/person



Chef Uri Arnold
Akko, Western Galilee, Israel

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Event committee: Becky Admony, Yuval Friedman, Scott Gilman, Elayne Karrel, Dara Woods



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PICTURE THIS: ENDOWMENT PREVIEW RECEPTION

On Wednesday, May 6, Life & Legacy and Endowment Donors were invited to a special reception and exclusive preview of Fiddler on the Roof presented by Center-Stage as a thank you for their enduring support of our Jewish community.
(Photos by Kathryn Harrington)



Maura Temes, Ron and Elaine Weisberg, Jerry Temes



Mickey Ruby, George Polur, Amanda Blieden, Vice-Chair of the Endowment Committee, and Michael Gold



David Fuchs, Bob Kohn, and Harris Berman



Shelly Gilman, Michael Shaikun, and Phyllis Shaikun



Nancy Gilman and Frances Skolnick



Sherry and Buddy Kaufman



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JCC YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAMS

In memory of David Leibson

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PICTURE THIS: FIDDLER ON THE ROOF



What an incredible way to close out the 2025–2026 CenterStage season with *Fiddler on the Roof*.

We are so grateful to our amazing cast, crew, and audiences who helped bring the story of Tevye, his family, and the village of Anatevka to life on our stage. Thank you for supporting another unforgettable season of theater, community, and storytelling.

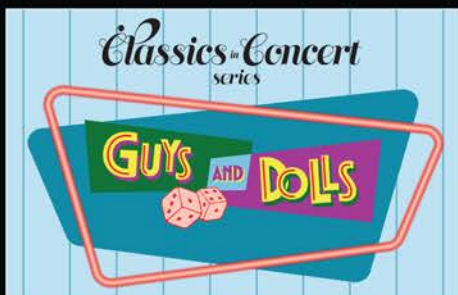
As we look back on these special moments from the show, we're already excited for what's ahead – season subscriptions for our next CenterStage season are now available! We can't wait to see you back at the theater for another amazing year.

(Photos by Kathryn Harrington)



CenterStage
at the Trager Family JCC

2026-27 Season



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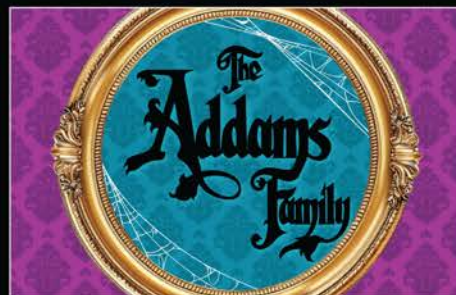


NOVEMBER 2026
5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14 & 15



FEBRUARY 2027
18, 20, 21, 25, 27 & 28

MARCH 2027
4, 6 & 7



MAY 2027
6, 8, 9, 13, 15 & 16

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Single Tickets on sale July 1!

Learn more at jcclouisville.org/centerstage

PICTURE THIS: JCRC ACTIVITIES

On Monday, May 18, members of JCRC traveled to Washington, DC for Jewish Federations of North America's Advocacy Fly-In: Securing Our Communities. More than 400 Federation leaders from across the country met with lawmakers to educate about the safety and security needs of the Jewish Community. Louisville's delegation, comprising JCRC Director Trent Spoolstra, Becky Ruby Swansburg and Greg Moore, met with representatives from Sen. Mitch McConnell and Rep. Morgan McGarvey's offices. (Photos courtesy of Trent Spoolstra)



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PICTURE THIS: NCJW VOICE FOR CHOICE AWARD



Kim Greene and Kim Hales



Ashley Haynes, Beth Salamon, and Samantha Simon



Sarah Harlan and Kate Cunningham



Kate Cunningham, Leah Delijoo, and Lilly Delijoo



Kate Cunningham

The National Council of Jewish Women Louisville Section's Jewish Voice for Choice Award breakfast was held in the Trager Family JCC Shapira Foundation Auditorium on Wednesday, May 20. Kate Cunningham was awarded the Sonia and Dr. Ronald Levine Jewish Voice for Choice Award for her work in reproductive justice. (Photos by Amy Landon)



Donna Stone, Sonia Levine, Glenn Levine, and Marci Levine



Corey Shapiro and Kentucky State Senator Karen Berg



Corey Shapiro, Amber Duke, Kate Cunningham, Jill Seelmeyer, and Jessica Loving

Volunteer Opportunity! Food Pantry Meal Prep

Tuesday, June 2

12:30 - 2:30 p.m.

Lunch will be provided.

Join Women's Philanthropy to help stuff food pantry bags for Jewish Family and Career Services. Prepare and pack bags for local families in need while making a meaningful impact in the community. Lunch will be provided for all volunteers.



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Abstract Expressionists

Private Speed Art Museum Tour

Sunday, June 28

Speed Art Museum

Enjoy a private tour of Abstract Expressionists: The Women at the Speed Art Museum, Kentucky's first exhibition devoted to women of the Abstract Expressionist movement. Featuring works by more than 30 artists—including Helen Frankenthaler, Joan Mitchell, and Lee Krasner—the exhibition highlights the bold creativity and groundbreaking contributions of women, many of whom were Jewish, who helped shape modern American art. Through large-scale paintings, archival materials, and immersive storytelling, visitors will experience the energy and innovation of this transformative artistic movement.

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NEWS

From the confines of prison, Shawn Balva rediscovered God, Judaism and hope

By Andrew Adler
Community Editor

"This is a very crazy story – it's not going to be something that you guys will hear normally."

So went the provocative introduction to an even more provocative presentation by Shawn Balva, who on this late afternoon of May 18 was addressing an audience gathered in the Fleischaker-Greene Family Community Room at the Trager Family JCC.

"I'll start off by saying that I found Hashem, and I found Judaism, and I found Torah spending six years in Federal prisons," said Balva, who was appearing under the auspices of Congregation Anshei Sfard. It was probably safe to assume that his tale of robbery, rumination and eventual redemption would not be regarded as a typical path toward spiritual fulfillment. Yet listening to Balva's story – compressing half a lifetime's ignoble experiences into a roughly half-hour's narrative – a listener might have thought this guy, improbably, was on to something.

The facts of Balva's descent into criminality were straightforward enough. Born in the northern New Jersey town of Englewood Cliffs – just across the George Washington Bridge from upper Manhattan – he was the son of an Israeli father and a Russian-Hungarian mother, herself an Ashkenazi Jew.

When Balva was five his parents divorced, a fraught circumstance "that was so painful to my young spirit, I didn't know how to deal with it," he recalled. His response was a classic example of extreme acting out. "I became very angry," he said. "Even though I was a good kid growing up, I became the bad kid."

Three years later, now eight, Balva found what was to be his salvation: a love of football. More accurately, it was an obsession. Inspired by TV images of New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady shredding the opposition, Balva decided on the spot that he, too, was destined for a career in the NFL.

"He showed me what it is to be resilient, to be strong at heart," Balva said. His obsession became his own brand of spirituality, substituting for a conspicuous absence of God's grace anywhere in

the Balva household.

"I was born Jewish, but there was no talk of Judaism, no talk of God at all," he said. "I was the type of kid that, after going to any type of Jewish event, couldn't wait to leave."

Balva did end up having a modest Bar Mitzvah, by which time his parents had decamped to Las Vegas – divorced, but somehow still functioning as a paired-off mother and father. He eventually enrolled in a Catholic high school boasting an especially strong football program. "It was like a miracle that, as the only Jewish boy in that school, I was never (bullied)."

For various reasons, as a rising sophomore Balva transferred to a nearby Lutheran school – where he played more football and at age 16 began his descent into mistake and misery.

"I speak to high school (students) and young adults, about how one choice, one bad decision, can ruin your life."

He told how, after one Friday night football game, "some friends came up to me and said, 'Shawn, let's go party; let's drink.' They had smiles on their faces, and I didn't want to be left out. So I took my car, went out, and drank my first beer."

Before long, beer had given way to prodigious alcohol consumption, black-out drunk episodes, and worse.

"Those Friday nights turned into Saturday nights, and then every single day – to the point where, going into my senior year, I'm a 17-year-old kid and a full-blown drug addict."

For a brief interval, after praying to God "please give me a good football season, and I'll stay away from drugs," Balva pulled himself out of the pit.

It was not to last. After the third game of what had been a brilliant start, another friend persuaded Balva to "go out and smoke some weed." The very next game on the opening play, he threw an interception. "My mind was messed up," he said.

What followed was worse: being kicked off the football team and abandoning school in favor of a criminal life.

"That was a black hole," Balva acknowledged. To feed a five-drug-a-day habit, he became a dealer and full-time holdup man – "on October 25, 2015, arrested for committing eight armed rob-

beries in one night."

Looming in front of him was an extended prison sentence. Out on bail, wearing an ankle monitor, Balva contemplated what lay ahead. He realized that if he was to survive, he had to change – radically.

"I said to myself, the only way I'm going to get out of all this impurity is to get closer to God and to learn about my Jewish roots. That was the answer for me. That's what came into my heart."

Figuring he might as well begin serving time, Balva voluntarily returned to his Vegas jail. There he was introduced to literature from the Miami-based Aleph Institute, which tends to the needs of Jewish inmates.

It was not an immediate hook.

"I'm reading all this information, and I don't know anything they're talking about," Balva said. "But it said something about how you could fast over Yom Kippur, which was coming up. I was like, 'Okay, this is a good place for me to start and commence my Judaism.' So, the following day, I fasted on Yom Kippur – and afterward, broke the fast with a pork-and-cheese-nachos bowl."

Collective curiosity began to build among his fellow inmates. "Everybody's nosy in prison; everybody knows what you are. Mind you, all these gang members were in there, some with Nazi tattoos, swastikas all over the place."

Then came an epiphany of sorts.

"One afternoon I'm sitting down eating my pork and cheese thing, and one of these Nazis comes up to me and says: 'I don't understand you Jews – you fast and pray, but you eat non-Kosher food. You're a hypocrite.' He was the first person to tell me I was a Jew, and I believed him. So, if anybody ever had a Nazi be their first rabbi, it was me."

Five months later, a federal judge handed Balva an eight-year sentence, to be served in California's Federal Correctional Institution, Victorville. He was all of 21 years old.

One day at Victorville, Balva looked in on a Shabbat service where a lone African American inmate – wrapped in a tallit and sporting a tattoo of the Hebrew word אָדִיר ("mighty") under one eye – was deep in prayer.

"I introduced myself, told him I was Jewish, and the following morning he



Shawn Balva (Photo by Andrew Adler)

starts showing me how to eat Kosher, bringing his tefillin every single weekday morning," Balva said. "He would teach me to the best of his abilities. I was thinking about all those thoughts I had in the beginning when I went to jail, how I wanted to live this happy, positive life, to not be a criminal or drug addict anymore."

Snaring a transfer to FCI, Otisville in upstate New York, Balva suddenly found himself in what counted as Jewish prison nirvana. "There were 20 Jews in Otisville, 15 (of them) religious Jews, and four rabbis who were inmates for financial crimes. It was like a yeshiva for me."

He spent the next five years in Otisville, writing a book he titled "Conviction," finally gaining supervised release in 2022.

These days Balva works in medical device sales, sharing his story via in-person appearances and electronically on shows like the Meaningful People podcast ("very big in the Jewish world," he declared).

"It's been an amazing opportunity" reaching out to his broad-based constituency, Balva said. Prison may have been "the worst thing that ever happened to me, but at the same time it was the best. If I truly believed in G-d, He was exactly where He wanted me to be."



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NEWS

I attended PJ Library's recent International Conference – and came away with renewed appreciation for the power of connecting books with children and parents

By Michelle Klecner
Guest Columnist

Am I the only one that doesn't like opening their mail? Is that bad to admit? After all, it's usually bills, junk mail, or some sort of credit card offer that I don't need. I'm not sure what's worse, opening your paper mail or opening your emails.

However, there's one time each month when I get excited to check the mail – when it's PJ Library time. My kids eagerly look forward to getting the big white envelope with blue writing addressed to *them*. A PJ Library book is the mail that gets opened first, and quickly. My kids jump for joy when they get a PJ Library book. Their excitement is such a wonderful sight to behold that I really don't mind the accompanying mess of a shredded white and blue envelope on the floor.

What I look forward to is much more than getting a book every month. It's getting to share stories about Jewish values and identity with my children. Reading a bedtime story aloud is a cherished moment that I eagerly anticipate most nights. In my mind, I know this bed-

time routine will change as my kids grow older. As a parent, these books are important to me because they create and nurture core memories.

Not long ago I was asked to attend this past April's 2026 PJ Library International Conference in Springfield, Mass. I'm not entirely sure *why* I was asked, but reasoned it'd be a welcome break from being a stay-at-home mom. I wouldn't need to check the mail, I could get a good night's sleep, and I could talk to adults the entire day. It's the little things, right? I figured I'd be getting a sneak peek at the lineup of books for the future. I ended up getting a sneak peek of so much more.

Let me share an inside scoop with you. PJ Library is not just a Jewish children's book program – it's a way to help families connect and engage with their Jewish identities. The PJ Library professionals I met in Springfield believed in the heart-felt mission of bringing Jewish joy to their communities. Attending the conference made me appreciate the programs and events that the Jewish Federation and the Trager Family JCC offer families. What PJ Library means to me is not simply about

books – it's bringing Jewish joy to my family and my own community.

With that in mind, I've decided to put a notice in the Community Newspaper looking for family friends. I'm a mom raising Jewish kids (ages 3 and 4) seeking Jewish families to share fun meetups with our kids, celebrate Jewish holidays together, all while bringing Jewish joy into our homes. If you feel like you're a good fit, please reach out to the Federation's Jordan Leanhart for information about the next PJ Library event. I hope to see you there!

P.S. If you want to get mail that you actually look forward to opening, sign up to get PJ Library books. Just ask Jordan (jleahart@jewishlouisville.org) on how to get your first package – she'll be glad to help.

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 **Jewish Federation**
OF LOUISVILLE

NEWS

The 2026 JCL Awards celebrate six teen leaders

By Andrew Adler
Community Editor

The Joseph Fink BBYO Community Service Scholarship

Joe Fink was passionate about the Jewish Community Center's Senior High program and served as a two-term president of B'nai B'rith Louisville Lodge No. 14. He was a member of the District Board of Governors for B'nai B'rith and was named B'nai B'rith Person of the Year. Locally, he served as the B'nai B'rith advisory chair at the JCC and served on the KIO Regional BBYO Board. He was also president of Hillel and was a member of the Jewish Community Center Board. When he died unexpectedly at a young age, his family and friends knew the best way to honor him would be to establish an endowment that would provide a partial-tuition college scholarship for qualifying BBYO members. The Joseph Fink BBYO Community Service Scholarship is presented to a senior who was an active member of their BBYO chapter and has performed a significant amount of community service during high school.

The Joseph Fink BBYO Community Service Scholarship goes to **Natalie Scaiewicz**.



Natalie Scaiewicz

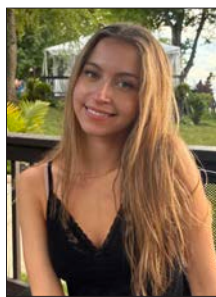
Throughout my high school years, I have made it a priority to stay actively involved in both my school and my community. One of the most meaningful parts of my experience has been my involvement in BBYO, where I have been an active member of the Louisville chapter for five years. Through BBYO, I have grown as a leader, built strong friendships, and participated in programs that have strengthened my sense of Jewish identity and responsibility. Being part of this organization has taught me the importance of commitment, teamwork, and giving back.

Service has also been a major part of my high school experience. I work at my temple as a fifth-grade teacher assistant, where I help teach Hebrew and support younger students in their learning. This role has been especially meaningful because it allows me to give back to my religious community while also serving as a role model for younger children. Alongside with temple, I volunteer with "Fill the Fridge," where I help make cookies and prepare sandwiches for individuals experiencing homelessness. These experiences have taught me empathy and the importance of small acts of kindness in making a difference.

The Tony Levitan Award

Tony Levitan was a tireless community worker who was well known and respected throughout the city. He served as president of B'nai B'rith and was the main propelling force behind the B'nai B'rith Institute for Adult Jewish Education, in addition to serving as treasurer of the YMHA. The Tony Levitan Award is given to outstanding high school senior athletes who have demonstrated exceptional character and leadership throughout their participation in team sports and Jewish communal events.

The 2026 Tony Levitan Award goes to **Maya Ciriano**.



Maya Ciriano

I joined the Jewish youth group, B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (BBYO) in 2021 as an 8th grader. I have held various leadership positions including N'siah (President), Morah (Recruitment), Gizborit (Fundraising), and Mazkriah (Social Media). I have attended four Spring Conventions, four Drew Corson Basketball tournaments, three Fall Conventions, and endless chapter events throughout my time as a member. My strong experiences with conventions made me fall in love with my local branch of BBYO, Jay Levine, and desire to be a leader in the Jewish community. I have been N'siah of Jay Levine, the Louisville girls chapter, for the past two terms, and stepped down to social media chair for Spring term. As President, I helped five girls on-board manage their positions, mentored newer members with BBYO education, ran board calls, planned events, worked with my adult advisors, and stood as a leader to all Jay Levine girls.

Additionally, Community Service has been a big priority for my high school life. I have been involved with the organization Blessings in a Backpack since 2021. At each event we package food for the Women's and Children's shelters in Louisville. We create boxes of food that include canned and packaged nonperishables. A specific event that spoke to me was when I volunteered, and we made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the homeless shelter. It was impactful because it opened my eyes to seeing that the small necessity of a sandwich could mean the world to someone else. My volunteer work with Blessings in a Backpack has taught me to give back and appreciate my community.

The Stacy Marks Nisenbaum Award

Stacy Marks Nisenbaum was active in Louisville BBYO and had a special devotion to Jewish camp, even choosing a career in Jewish communal service serving as the Associate Regional Director of BBYO's Lone Star Region. To honor her memory, three friends established this camp scholarship to enable youth to attend Camp Beber or a national BBYO convention each year. The Stacy Marks Nisenbaum Award is presented to incoming high school juniors or seniors who are leaders in BBYO, strengthening and growing the program, while staying active at school and in the community at large.

The 2026 Stacy Marks Nisenbaum Award goes to **Noa Chottiner and Hailey Woods**.

I have served on one of Louisville BBYO's chapter boards, Jay Levine, for two terms as Morah and Sh'lichah. I have attended five regional events with those being two Drew Corson Basketball Tournaments, two Spring Conventions, and snow tubing. I have attended numerous chapter events and an International Convention. In addition to BBYO, I have been very engaged in the Jewish community. I attended LBSY through eighth grade



Noa Chottiner

and then worked as a madricha for two years. I attended HSJS for two years and was confirmed in 2025. I attended Keshet Sundays this year and plan to return next year. I am most proud of representing the Jewish People at our annual World Fest. This past year, I volunteered at the Sonny & Janet Meyer Food Pantry and participated in their certificate course designed to help teens learn life skills. – Noa Chottiner



Hailey Woods

BBYO has become one of the biggest parts of my life because it has given me a place where I truly feel like I belong. Since joining, I have met so many amazing people, grown closer to my community, and become more confident in myself as both a leader and a person. Through events like Kings Island Kickoff, Fall Convention, Spring Convention, and many Jay Levine events, I have been able to make friendships and memories that I will carry with me for a long time...leadership positions have taught me responsibility, communication, and how important it is to help others feel included. – Hailey Woods

The Ellen Faye Garmon Award

The Garmon Award is given annually in memory of Ellen Faye Garmon, a teenager who died in July 1968 in a tragic accident. She was actively involved in Jewish life through BBYO and the Jewish Community Center. The Ellen Faye Garmon Award goes to incoming high school juniors or seniors who demonstrate leadership and are involved in their BBYO chapter and community, working to strengthen and grow both.

The 2026 Ellen Faye Garmon Award goes to **Norah Corson and Brody Bailen**.



Norah Corson

I am fairly new to BBYO. I have been a member for 2.5 years, but I had never fully exercised my Jewish identity until August of last year. I was pressured into running for chapter board, which led to my first regional event of RLTI (Regional Leadership Training Institute). Saying that I loved it is an understatement. If someone were to ask anyone in my region if they knew if I liked BBYO, they would say that I absolutely LOVE it. At BBYO, not only do I get to meet countless new people and create bonds that are forever-lasting, but I also get to explore my Jewish identity, as well as find my true self and belonging. BBYO is my home. Being with people from different backgrounds that never judge one another, and knowing that we all have one thing in common—it's a feeling that I know I will never get to experience anywhere else. – Norah Corson



Brody Bailen

My Jewish identity has been shaped from the day I was born. Shabbat dinners at my grandparents' house were a weekly occurrence throughout my childhood. We took a family trip to Israel before I took my first steps. However, in my early teenage years, with my Bar Mitzvah occurring during Covid, I began to feel disconnected from the Jewish community. That changed when I joined BBYO. Suddenly, I was spending more time with other Jewish kids. Since joining, I have had the opportunity to be involved in many different fun activities, but what I enjoy most are the simple gatherings at local restaurants where I get to sit around the table with friends who understand what it means to be Jewish. I feel fortunate that I have been able to meet and become friends with kids from other local schools as well as kids from other KIO cities. – Brody Bailen

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NEWS

A review of “Antisemitisms: A History of Jew Hating”

By Ranen Omer-Sherman
Guest Columnist

For generations of scholars and general readers, Sander Gilman's thought-provoking studies (he has authored or edited over a hundred books to date) are regarded as essential resources. Indeed, the academic field of Jewish Studies itself would be unimaginable today without his interdisciplinary beacon. Now, in *Antisemitisms: A History of Jew Hating*, Gilman has delivered what he regards as the culminating statement on his life-long engagement with the phenomenon. Amid our growing anxiety and bewilderment, the most inauspicious time for Jews globally since the Holocaust, it is a book we sorely need.

Gilman moves us deftly from century to century across a range of cultures, up to the aftermath of October 7. *Antisemitisms* is organized around four case studies he sees as essential to the construction of the imagined Jew: “visible difference (appearance), vulnerability (disease), belonging (rootedness), and boundary setting (self-hatred).” For Gilman, the vexing challenge faced by the scholar of Jew hatred is that, whether deemed nomadic or rooted, the Jewish “target is always shifting and always different, from place to place, from individual to individual, from epoch to epoch.” What most distinguishes Gilman's nuanced approach is his inherent challenge to the common and reactive view of those like the late antisemitism scholar Robert Wistrich who, in labeling antisemitism as “the longest hatred,” insist on a static and eternal paradigm, somehow

unlike all other expressions of xenophobia. For Gilman, antisemitisms are always “situational, inherently inconsistent, often contradictory.” A favorite word is “wobbly,” alluding to the ever-shifting, malleable meanings that have accompanied the Jews' reception by hostile individuals or collectives throughout time.

Whether addressing the fraught role of hats or beards as key signifiers in antisemitic discourse, the physiognomic imagination of Victorian England, or the nuances of contemporary self-critical Jewish discourses, Gilman's exemplars are often surprising and always illuminating. Notwithstanding his grim subject matter, this proves an enthralling intellectual adventure, often leavened by his seasoned wit. Even those familiar with Gilman's earlier close examinations of the contradictory discourses of eugenics and miscegenation anxieties, the fantasies of scientific racism and stereotypes of the “Jew's body,” will find much to appreciate, including his attention to popular cultural portrayals in comics, Hollywood films, and television.

At the heart of *Antisemitisms* is Gilman's sustained focus on the “contested, contradictory and fluid” nature of both Jewish identities and the social and cultural fantasies of the antisemite. Throughout, he interrogates a vast array of thorny issues; Holocaust denialism, “philosemitism,” “chosenness,” charges of “Jewish dual loyalty,” the contemporary “antizionism is antisemitism” debates among them, always with historical, political, and even literary acumen. At one point he addresses the risible category of so-called “Jewish antisemites,” a charge he himself has faced.

Gilman accomplishes all this with remarkable economy, as suggested by the laconic titles of his five chapters: “Making Jews,” “Seeing Jews,” “Healing Jews,” “Wandering Jews,” and “Unmaking Jews.” *Antisemitisms* is generously illustrated with helpful historical images: satanic Jews of the medieval Christian imagination, rabbis of Victorian London, New York bankers of the late 19th century, and New Jews of early Zionist postcards.

Even those familiar with Gilman's earlier close examinations of the contradictory discourses of eugenics and miscegenation anxieties, the fantasies of scientific racism and stereotypes of the “Jew's body,” will find much to appreciate. Gilman's reminders that not only the Jews are impacted by mid-Pacific or mid-Atlantic “global standards of beauty” are highly instructive. And Gilman leavens his grave subject matter with occasional wit. At one point, he admits his exasperation with a certain question that has dogged him over the years: “I am regularly asked after talks whether there really is a Jewish nose. I answer that, over my long career, I have known thousands of Jews. And each and every one has had a nose.”

Like the best of Gilman's vast corpus, *Antisemitisms* is dazzlingly erudite yet as accessible to general readers as it is to scholars. Perhaps what most distinguishes Gilman's approach from his predecessors is his meticulously comparative approach to the diverse ways that menacing distinctions between Self and Other have accompanied many other minorities across time and space. The Jews, it turns out, are perhaps not quite so unique a case as so

ANTISEMITISMS

SANDER L. GILMAN



A HISTORY OF JEW HATING

many have concluded, even as dangerous fantasies and dehumanizing tropes about us persist and intensify our growing sense of unease in a time of rising violence.

Ranen Omer-Sherman is the JHF Endowed Chair in Judaic Studies at the University of Louisville and editor of *Amos Oz: The Legacy of a Writer in Israel and Beyond*.

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JFCS Builds Bridges Through the 20th Annual MOSAIC Awards



As we reflect on the 20th Annual JFCS MOSAIC Awards, we are filled with gratitude for the community that has embraced this event for two decades. What began as a way to recognize the contributions of immigrants and refugees has grown into a cherished JFCS tradition, one that reminds us of the stories, values, and people that strengthen Louisville.

This year, we were honored to celebrate Alejandro Pousa, Patricia Kim, Mustakim Hussain, Herberto "Bruce" Ucan Ake, and Sameera Chowdhury Jackson. Their stories of perseverance, leadership, and service now join those of more than 100 MOSAIC honorees from 49 countries who have been recognized over the past 20 years.

We are deeply grateful to the Jewish Heritage Fund, our longtime Avodah (Service) Title Sponsor, for their continued support of this community celebration. We are also thankful to the Legacy Foundation of Kentuckiana for sponsoring the Taste of the World Cocktail Hour, which highlighted some of Louisville's outstanding immigrant-owned restaurants.



Most importantly, we extend our deepest gratitude to the 2026 JFCS MOSAIC Committee, every guest, donor, sponsor, and volunteer who helped make the 20th Annual MOSAIC Awards such a meaningful evening. Your support affirms a simple but powerful belief: our community is strongest when every person has the opportunity to belong and thrive.

The Jewish tradition of welcoming the stranger reflects our shared history, as many Jewish families came to this country seeking safety and opportunity to build a new life. Through the JFCS MOSAIC Awards and the work of JFCS, we celebrate immigrants whose leadership and resilience enrich Louisville every day. By investing in services that support people from all backgrounds, we are building a more connected and vibrant community for everyone. In doing so, we not only strengthen Louisville, but we also help foster understanding and reduce fear and division. Thank you for helping us celebrate the past 20 years and for inspiring hope for the future we will continue to build together.

If you were unable to attend the 2026 JFCS MOSAIC Awards, or would like to help continue this important work, please scan the QR code or contact Courtney Evans at cevens@jfcsloouisville.org. Your support helps JFCS welcome, serve, and strengthen our community every day.



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Jewish Family & Career Services



Moderator
Helene Trager-Kusman

**Tuesday, June 16
12:00 PM – 1:30 PM
at JFCS
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2026 Annual Meeting

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NEWS & NEWSMAKERS

Louisville's Mark Clayton Oppenheimer among the final rabbinical graduates at Cincinnati's Hebrew Union College



Mark Clayton Oppenheimer (Center)

When Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion announced four years ago that it would close its doors after its 2026 graduating class, that meant one of the final cohort of rabbinical graduates would include a Louisville native: Mark Clayton Oppenheimer.

Declining enrollment and accompanying financial pressures led to the closure of HUC's residential program. As the principal seat of Reform Judaism training in the U.S., HUC has seeded rabbis throughout the nation. And while its Cincinnati headquarters is downsizing, the facility will retain its library, museum and extensive archives. A "low-residency" rabbinical and cantorial program is anticipated, and existing HUC residential centers in Los Angeles and New York remain open.

Meanwhile, Oppenheimer is among HUC-Cincinnati's final cohort of four young rabbis.

"As we mark this deeply meaningful moment, we celebrate Mark Clayton Oppenheimer and his classmates for their extraordinary dedication and achievement," Andrew Rehfeld, Ph.D., President of Hebrew Union College, said in a statement.

"Their ordination represents both years of study and the beginning of their lives of service and leadership. Especially at this historic juncture for our Cincinnati program, this class carries forward a powerful legacy, one that will continue to shape and strengthen Jewish communities

for generations to come."

An HUC news release also remarked, "Oppenheimer and his classmates now carry that legacy forward, joining a distinguished lineage of leaders dedicated to serving the Jewish people with wisdom, adaptability and purpose."

Oppenheimer – who goes by "Clayton" – spent five years studying at HUC.

"I grew up in Louisville, Kentucky, surrounded by rabbis and mentors who modeled curiosity, self-exploration, and a healthy relationship with the sacred," he says on his comprehensive website. "Eight summers at Jewish camp deepened that early spark, revealing how nature, song, and a tight-knit community can open people to wonder. These experiences planted a vision of a joyful and meaningful life. When I finally paused to ask what kind of life I wanted to build, I realized I was called to this path of meaning, community, and care."

He adds: "While studying Economics and Philosophy at the University of Kentucky, I worked at Congregation Adath Israel Brith Sholom (i.e., The Temple) helping facilitate learning, organizing events, and guiding students through their B'nei Mitzvah studies. I was welcomed into regular one-on-one study sessions with the rabbis, who encouraged my questions and nurtured my growth. Through supporting others' learning, I discovered how shared study invites belonging and connection, and I found myself deepening my own. Those experiences showed me the kind of communal life I wanted to help build."

He's not sure where he'll land next. Meanwhile, under the heading of "Rabbinic Philosophy," Oppenheimer offers the following:

I believe the heart of the rabbinate is presence. Sacred things happen when people feel seen and accompanied, and I try to meet others with warmth, curiosity, and compassion so no one has to navigate life alone. Community is built through vulnerability and shared stories, and I hope to create spaces where people truly belong. I also believe sanctity is woven through daily life, and that ritual, reflection, prayer,

and relationship help us notice it. My work as a rabbi is to help people connect to meaning, to one another, and to the holiness within ordinary moments through the wisdom and practices of Jewish tradition.

Jewish Federation of Louisville and the Trager Family JCC welcome Gabe Shir as teen director



Gabe Shir

The Jewish Federation of Louisville and the Trager Family JCC have a new teen director:

"My name is Gabe Shir and I am a recent University of Kentucky graduate. I went to GUCI as a camper since 3rd grade and have worked there for the past 4 summers. Working at the JCC means a lot to me because I get to follow in the footsteps of my grandmother, who worked here for three decades – primarily as the Senior Adult Director.

"As Teen Director I hope to make an immediate impact with our Teen Connect and BBYO programs, getting Jewish teens involved in Jewish programming and staying connected with the community." He will also play a summertime role at Camp J.

Shir takes over from Abigail Goldberg, who's moved over to the Philanthropy department as NextGen Engagement & Outreach Program Director at the Federation and the Trager Family JCC.

Travelling to Israel during one recent summer, Shir couldn't help admiring the physical beauty of the nation and the resilience of its people. As he puts it:

To have a life changing experience in Israel is like loving your mother, it happens naturally. For someone who was skeptical about going to Israel, I can proudly say that any doubts in my mind were gone by the first week. Israel is a place like no other. With

being the only predominantly Jewish country, the way Israel holds itself is on another level. The sightseeing, the food, the atmosphere. I've traveled a bit, and without a doubt this experience was the most outworldly (beyond superior). You will learn so much just by walking, seeing markets, interacting with the locals, trust me when I say that Israel is a treasure map with infinite Xs."

Israeli Family Festival set for Sunday, June 7



Make plans to attend the 2026 Israeli Family Festival, slated for Sunday, June 7 – from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. – at the Trager Family JCC's Shapira Foundation Auditorium.

Sponsored by Zack & Yael Melzer, the free festival will feature Israeli-themed crafts, face-painting, Israeli music, a bounce house, and other diverting fare. And speaking of diverting fare, Chef Uri from Israel's Western Galilee (part of our Partnership2Gether region) will reveal how to prepare his signature hummus during a live cooking demonstration.

Please note that RSVP is required, plus you can sign up to volunteer. To RSVP, go online at tinyurl.com/3zm92y93. To volunteer, hop over to tinyurl.com/2u4bwmcv.





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(Unless otherwise noted, all events are free and open to the community.)

Adath Jeshurun

Shabbat Social Celebrating Pride Month: Friday, June 19

AJ's monthly Shabbat Social will temporarily move in June from its usual place on the second Friday of the month to the third Friday for the month, June 19, to celebrate Diversity, to honor Pride month, and in observation of Louisville's Pride Parade on June 20. The evening begins with Happy Hour at 5 p.m., followed by Kabbalat Shabbat services at 5:45 p.m. Dinner will begin around 6:45 p.m. and will be catered by Chef Maureen Hartmann. The cost is \$15 per person with children 12 and under free of charge. Visit AJ's website to make your reservations; the deadline to RSVP is Tuesday, June 16.

Shabbat-Luck Dinner: Friday, June 26
AJ Shabbat-Luck Dinners are evenings of food, friends, and fun. Join us at 5 p.m. for Happy Hour followed by Kabbalat Shabbat services at 5:45 p.m. Dinner, beginning around 6:45 p.m., will feature a chef-prepared entrée and delicious sides prepared by you. For more information and to RSVP, please visit AJ's website.

Anshei Sfard

Congregation Anshei Sfard has open study time every weeknight (Sunday-Thursday) from 7:45-8:30 p.m. All are invited to come and study with the Rabbi, with a friend or by yourself. You are welcome to study whatever topic you choose and have your personal questions about Judaism answered. Refreshments are served.

Shabbos Davening at 9 a.m. including Rabbi's Parsha outline and sermon, followed by a delicious Kiddush. Every Wednesday night at 7:45 p.m., Judaism in Action. Current series: Laws of Shabbos, every Saturday night at 7:15 p.m. Talmud Trek Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. led by Rabbi Lederman. For more information, email rabbilederman@ansheisfard.com.

Chavurat Shalom

Thursday, June 4 - Bernie Schweickart will play old and new favorites on the piano. Lunch will include cheese que-

sadillas, Mexican-style rice, black bean and corn salad, fresh fruit, and Mexican-style chocolate mousse.

Thursday, June 11 - Time for esteemed accordion player, Mike O'Bryan, to share his talent and great sense of humor with us. Lunch will include salmon cakes, mashed potatoes, green peas & carrots, cole slaw, fresh fruit, and chocolate trifle.

Thursday, June 18 - Singer, songwriter, guitarist Tyrone Cotton returns for another wonderful program. Lunch will include pasta with meatballs, Caesar salad, fresh fruit, and cookies plus brownies.

Thursday, June 25 - Our friend Bob Mueller will talk about, "What I Learned in Seminary." Lunch will include barbecue chicken, roasted potatoes, green beans, mixed green salad, fresh fruit, and assorted desserts.

If you're not "a regular," please RSVP by 5 p.m. Tuesday if you'll be attending that week in person by calling or emailing Sarah at 502-423-1818 or sarahharlan86@gmail.com.

Chavurat Shalom is a unique opportunity for Jewish senior adults to meet socially and share ideas. Chavurat Shalom is funded through the generosity of the Jewish Heritage Fund, The Temple, The Temple WRJ/Sisterhood, The Temple Brotherhood, and many other generous donors.

Jewish Federation of Louisville

Be Part of the Republic Bank Players Challenge

The annual Republic Bank Players Challenge, set for Monday, Aug. 31 at Standard Club, benefits Jewish Family & Career Services and the Trager Family JCC to help secure better lives for individuals and families overcoming life's challenges with confidence and dignity. All are invited to be part of this day, whether it's playing golf, participating in the inaugural Mahjong for a Mission event on Aug. 30, becoming a sponsor, or volunteering. Registration opens soon. For sponsorship or volunteer opportunities, contact Lindsey Palgy, lpalgy@jewishlouisville.org or Tina Agonva, tagonva@jewishlouisville.org.

Keneseth Israel

Jews & Brews

Wednesdays, June 3, 10, and 24 at 11 a.m.

Join Rabbi Freed at the Trager Family JCC for coffee, cookies, and Torah in a relaxed and welcoming setting.

Shabbat with the Kids

Tot Shabbat will meet June 13 and 27, featuring joyful Shabbat songs and family fun. Shabbat Shalom Club meets every Saturday at 10:30 a.m. for children in grades K-5, offering Torah learning, games, songs, and snacks.

Shabbat in the Park

June 26 at 6 p.m. at Stegner Pavilion in Cherokee Park

Come enjoy a musical Kabbalat Shabbat service followed by a BYO picnic dinner. Dessert is on us.

Torah Yoga

Thursday, June 4 at 6:30 p.m.

Join Cantor Hordes for gentle yoga and Torah-inspired meditation. Suggested donation: \$10 to the Cantor's Fund.

Jews & Brews: After Hours

Thursday, June 18 at 7 p.m.

Enjoy a beer and Torah on tap with Rabbi Free, location TBD.

Shabbat & Sundaes

June 27 at 6 p.m.

Treat yourself to a sweet ice cream - on us - at Graeter's, 2204 Bardstown Rd.

Kol Israel Jewish Renewal Community of Kentucky

Community-Wide Jewish Meditation: Inner Peace for Challenging Times

Monday, June 8 at 8 p.m.

Gather with Jewish communities around the country to experience inner spaciousness and healing. Free and open to all. To register for the Zoom link, call or text Blu at 502-277-0555.

Adat Ha'Araphel - Congregation of the Cloud

Saturday morning, June 13 and 27

Please join us as we celebrate Shabbat on Zoom or Facebook.

Join many of our Jewish Renewal leaders for our innovative, musical and inspirational service. We gather at 10:15 a.m. for greeting and schmoozing online. The service begins at 10:30 a.m. sharp. For the Zoom link, call or text Blu at 502-277-0555.

Louisville Vaad Hakashruth

The Vaad will be renovating the mikvah through the middle of June. While we will make an effort to keep the mikvah open at night, the mikvah will be closed during the day when contractors are working. If you would like to receive notices of when the mikvah will be closed, please contact Steve Goldstein at 502-541-3498 or by email at: sgoldsteinaia@outlook.com or by calling Carla at 502-451-3122.

The following venues are supervised and certified by the Vaad: Trager Family JCC (Nancy Abrams Kitchen) and Dive-in-Diner (Outdoor Pool); and Krispy Kreme, 3000 Bardstown Rd.

Momentum - Journey of Growth

Seven Days in Israel: Nov. 1-11, 2026

Join women from around the world

for an immersive journey to Israel during this pivotal moment in Jewish history full of self-discovery, meaningful connections and inspiring moments of Jewish learning. More information is available online at MomentumUnlimited.org/Journey, by calling Alison Roemer at 502-238-2730, or emailing her at aroemer@jewishlouisville.org.

National Council of Jewish Women - Louisville Section

Sonia and Dr. Ronald Levine Jewish Voice for Choice Award

Our hearts are filled with gratitude to everyone who supported our 4th Annual Advocacy in Action - Jewish Voice for Choice Breakfast last Wednesday, when we proudly presented the Sonia and Dr. Ronald Levine Jewish Voice for Choice award to Kate Cunningham for her work to secure reproductive justice for the people of Kentucky. For the past 131 years, NCJW, Louisville Section has remained focused on its mission to improve the quality of life for women, children, and families by using progressive Jewish ideals for social justice. This work is done by launching news community initiatives, collaborating with other organizations, and aligning with NCJW, Inc. to empower change. NCJW works in deep partnership and collaboration with other like-minded non-profits and organizations, local government agencies, human service providers, faith-based institutions, as well as elected officials.

Please feel free to contact Sarah Harlan at 502-458-5566 or executive-director@ncjwlou.org and let her know how you want to join us as we continue to speak up for reproductive justice for all!

NCJW Takes the Lead in Mifepristone Case

On May 1 we were reminded just how quickly the landscape of reproductive health care can shift. A ruling from the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in Louisiana v. FDA threatened to significantly restrict access to mifepristone, a medication that has been safely used for more than two decades and is critical to abortion and miscarriage care. While the US Supreme Court has issued a temporary stay, preserving access for now, these actions underscore the uncertainty and fragility of the right to the full suite of reproductive health care.

If affirmed, the ruling would have far-reaching consequences — especially for those who rely on telehealth as a primary pathway to care. At a time when abortion access is already severely restricted in many states, limiting medication abortion would deepen existing inequities and put care even further out of reach for millions of people.

NCJW continues to meet this moment with urgency, affirming that reproductive freedom is a fundamental and religious right. Through ongoing advocacy and mobilization, NCJW is committed to protecting access and ensuring our communities stay informed and engaged as this case unfolds. NCJW recently filed an amicus brief, joined by over 50 diverse faith organizations, with the Supreme Court defending



Jewish Storybooks Delivered Each Month!

PJ Library sends curated, award-winning storybooks and activities to Jewish children from birth through age 12. The program sparks meaningful conversation and provides opportunities to explore and celebrate Jewish life together.

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For questions about PJ Library contact
Jordan Leanhart at jleanhart@jewishlouisville.org.

AROUND TOWN

broad access to mifepristone and asserting that attacking access to this medication is an attack on religious freedom. You can read our press release here.

Host a Postcard Party!

Feeling frustrated that safe, effective medication abortion is under attack? Let's work together to protect it! The US Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) is poised to roll back approval of mifepristone, which would devastate access to medication abortion. We need to flood HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. with postcards to reaffirm that medication abortion is safe, effective, and used by millions! Want to host your own party? Follow this link to get started!

Jews for Freedom

NCJW is proud to be part of Jews for Freedom, a new national effort to mobilize Jewish Americans to defend democracy, stand with marginalized communities, and take meaningful action against the authoritarian attacks threatening all of us. Here's one way you can take action: Tell your Senators to oppose the SAVE Act — a voter suppression bill that would disenfranchise millions of eligible Americans.

Temple Shalom

BLT (Bagels, Lox, and Torah), Saturday, June 6, 10:30 a.m. at the Trager Family JCC
Led by Rabbi Beth Jacowitz Chottiner, Torah study explores the themes of the weekly Parsha and their relevance to today. Discussions are lively and engaging, and all are welcome. Bagels, lox, and juice are provided. Please note: There will not be services at Temple Shalom that morning.

Shabbat Services, Fridays at 6:30 p.m. and Saturdays at 10:30 p.m.
Services are both lay and clergy led. Friday night services are also streamed on our YouTube channel TempleShalomKy.

The Temple

Adult education at The Temple continues weekly with Torah Study with Rabbi David Saturdays at 9 a.m. For a full schedule and descriptions, please go to thetemplelouky.org/adult-education for more information.

The Temple invites congregants to attend Shabbat services on Friday nights and Saturday mornings. More information at thetemplelouky.org.

Join WRJ/Sisterhood for our end of the year meeting on Wednesday, June 3, when Temple President, Dr. Anna Feitelson, will share with us about her recent meaningful trip to Morocco. Meeting in the Klein Center, we'll start with heavy appetizers and pick up desserts at 6:30 p.m., followed by Anna's presentation at 7 p.m. Please let us know that you'll be joining us by RSVPing at thetemplelouky.org/wrj-closing or by emailing Sarah Harlan at sarahharlan86@gmail.com.

Join us on Saturday, June 6 at 10:30 a.m. in our outdoor sanctuary (weather permitting) for our next Shabbark service. This pet-centered Shabbat

morning service will celebrate our animal companions as we offer them special blessings, as well as take time to say a special pet kaddish for our pet companions that have passed. After service, we will have a pawsome doggie-bag Oneg Shabbark for pets and a special lunch for the humans. We will also have some booths featuring games for the pets, information on local rescues and shelters, and more. Shabbat services are open to all, but if you would like to attend the pawsome Oneg Shabbark and lunch, please RSVP with your name and your pet's name so we can make sure to have enough food. More info and RSVP at thetemplelouky.org/Shabbark. See you there and Shabbark Shalom.

Hike with Rabbi David! Sunday hiking adventures are for all ages; however, strollers are not recommended. The Temple will provide hikers with an awesome water bottle to not only ensure hydration, but also as a keepsake for your own hikes. In May, we will hike Harrods Creek Park on Sunday, June 14, at 9 a.m. (arrive at 8:45 a.m.). RSVP at thetemplelouky.org/hiking.

The Temple will have a special Father's Day Shabbat on Saturday, June 20 at 10:30 a.m. as we honor all the fathers in our community.

Join The Temple in NuLu as we march to celebrate all LGBTQ+ individuals and families at the Kentuckiana Pride Parade on Saturday, June 20 at noon. Please RSVP at thetemplelouky.org/pride-parade.

Come join Rabbi Matt and Ellen Shai-kun for Pride Tot Shabbat at 6 p.m. on Friday, June 26. Our Pride Tot Shabbat will be one of our monthly, 15-minute services with our youngest members in mind, but will also provide an opportunity to meet other families. This event is open to all. After Tot Shabbat ends at 6:15 p.m., we will welcome all the families to stay for dinner. Tot Shabbat is free, but if you plan to stay for dinner, please RSVP at thetemplelouky.org/shabbat-dinner so we have enough food.

Join us for Erev Pride Shabbat on Friday, June 26 at 7 p.m. with speaker, Dr. David Finke, CEO of Jewish Family & Career Services, as we welcome Shabbat together. Dr. Finke will discuss the work JFCS is doing with the LGBTQ+ community, especially trans youth. Please RSVP for the dinner at 6 p.m. at thetemplelouky.org/shabbat-dinner.

On Shabbat Morning, June 27 at 9 a.m. we will have a special LGBTQIA+ themed Torah study led by Rabbi David and Rev. Professor Johanna Bos. We will examine the Torah and Jewish texts within the lens of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Join us for our 12th annual Pride Shabbat with our LGBTQ+ members leading services on June 27 at 10:30 a.m. Shir Chadash, joined by VOICES of Kentuckiana (the first LGBTQ+ choir in Kentucky), will lead the music of the service. After the service, there

will be a performance by VOICES of Kentuckiana. There will be a special free lunch for all who attend (RSVP is needed at thetemplelouky.org/Pride-Shabbat). The desserts will include the famous WRJ/Sisterhood rainbow cake, and Sarah Harlan's delicious handmade rainbow challah.

Trager Family Jewish Community Center

Israeli Family Festival

Sunday, June 7, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.
Shapira Foundation Auditorium
Register today for the FREE Israeli Family Festival! Join us in the Shapira Foundation Auditorium for Israeli themed crafts, face-painting, Israeli music, a bounce house, and much more. Chef Uri from the Western Galilee, part of the Partnership2Gether region, will demonstrate how to prepare his signature hummus during a live cooking demonstration. RSVP is required at tinyurl.com/3zm92y93

More Flavors of Israel

World renowned Chef, Uri Arnold, from Israel's Western Galilee, returns to Louisville for a weekend of unforgettable culinary experiences celebrating food, culture, and connection!

Shabbat in a Box – Friday, June 5

Pick up: Keneseth Israel Congregation, 4:30-5:30 p.m.

Bring the warmth of Shabbat home with a chef-crafted, kosher dinner for two, ready for pickup and easy to enjoy.

Includes:

- Chicken Maklubah*
 - Two fresh, seasonal Mediterranean salads
 - Chef Uri's Hummus
 - Challah
 - Candles and grape juice
- *Maklubah is a traditional Levantine one-pot dish consisting of meats, rice, vegetables, and spices.
Registration closes on June 1st.

Mediterranean Masterclass – Sunday, June 7

Trager Family JCC, 12-2 p.m. & 3-5 p.m.

Step into the vibrant flavors on the Mediterranean and cook alongside Chef Uri in unforgettable hands-on culinary workshops. featuring:

- Vegetarian Beet Kubbeh**
 - A Fresh Seasonal Mediterranean Salad
- **Vegetarian Beet Kubbeh is a beloved Middle Eastern dumpling soup filled with rich flavors and vibrant beet broth.

Chef Uri will also demonstrate his signature hummus recipe, to be enjoyed together with fresh challah from Crust and Crumb Bakery and Cafe.

Guests will share this meal together and dine on-site at the JCC, making it a communal dining experience.

Each class is limited to 25 participants. Registration closes on June 3rd.

To register for either of these Taste of Israel events, go online at tinyurl.com/mrsj82ys

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LIFECYCLE

B'nai Mitzvahs



Beth Salamon

Beth Salamon will be called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah on Saturday, June 20, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. in the evening at The Temple. This Sabbath date corresponds to the Torah portion of her first

Bat Mitzvah in 1985, at which time her rabbi did not allow girls to read from the Torah. She is thrilled to finally have this opportunity.

Beth is the proud mother of Alexander and Jack, and wife of Michael Salamon. She extends her heartfelt gratitude to Rabbi Matt, Rabbi David, and the entire Temple staff for their guidance and support.

An attorney by profession, Beth has dedicated her time and energy to serving as a lay leader in the Jewish community. She currently serves as Board Chair of the Jewish Community of Louisville and sits on the national board of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW).

Beth and her family invite the community to celebrate her "Bat Mitzvah 2.0" by joining them for the Havdalah service.

Obituaries



Caitlin Claire Bordy

It is with deep love and gratitude for her life, that we announce the passing of Caitlin Claire Bordy, age 32, whose presence changed countless lives.

Caitlin was an influencer in the truest sense of the word. She taught people how to love more deeply, laugh more freely, slow down, pay attention, and recognize the dignity and value in every human life. Her impact stretched far beyond her immediate circle, reaching family, friends, caregivers, and medical staff.

Caitlin was tenacious. She met life with determination, resilience, and unmistakable spirit. Caitlin was non-verbal but was able to speak volumes regarding what she needed and/or wanted to those who knew

her and loved her. She possessed a personality larger than many who had every advantage in life. Caitlin formed connections that transcended language and reminded others that communication is far more than words.

She inspired devotion, patience, courage, and demonstrated the concept of perseverance in every way. Her life was not defined by disability.

Caitlin leaves behind a family and community who adored her and who will carry her spirit forward in the countless ways she shaped them. She is survived by her parents, Neil and Tonya Bordy; her sisters, Paige Bordy Mader (Isiah), and Morgan Fauser (Mike); her nieces, Mila, Georgia, and Sylvie; and her nephew, Charlie. She is also survived by her grandparents, Lyle and Peggy Anderson; her caregiver of the last five years, Josie Lopez; as well as countless aunts, uncles, cousins, and many other extended family members. She was preceded in death by her grandparents, Philip and Sylvia Bordy.

There was a celebration of Caitlin's life on May 26 at The Temple. Memorial gifts in Caitlin's name may be made to Temple Trager Early Childhood Education Fund; to First Christian Church of Louisville; to Kid's Center for Pediatric Therapies; or to Hosparus Health Louisville.



Allen L. Ehrlich

Allen L. Ehrlich, died peacefully on May 3, 2026, in Louisville, Kentucky. Allen was preceded in death by his parents, Martin and Nettie Ehrlich.

Allen was born in the Bronx, New York and after his graduation from City College of New York, he worked at the New York Stock Exchange. In 1976 he moved to Louisville and was a manager at Dan's Pawn Shop, later becoming a manager at Radio Shack. He enjoyed tinkering with electronics and imparting his knowledge in electronics to computer enthusiasts.

In 1985, Allen met Laura and they were married two years later. He loved spending time with his family and shared so many wonderful moments, including many vacations together. Allen deeply loved his grandchildren and was very proud to be their Pa-Paw.

Allen will always be remembered for his

kind heart and quick sense of humor.

Besides his love for his family, he loved bowling and greatly enjoyed being a member of two leagues.

Thanks to the wonderful staff at 7 Towers at Jewish Hospital for being so kind to Allen.

Allen is survived by his wife Laura and his daughters, Lynn Slayton and Stacey Rosenberg (Matthew Rosenberg); his grandchildren, Charles Slayton, Ariel Rankin (Travis Rankin), Payton Nimmo, Tristian Nimmo, Macklin Rosenberg, Lleyton Rosenberg; his great-grandchild, Carson Slayton, his sister, Deanne Cook (Bill), his sister-in-law, Karen Abraham (Eddie), close family friend, Alex Richardson, and many nieces and nephews.

Visitation was held May 6 at Herman Meyer & Son, Inc. Memorial contributions in honor of Allen Ehrlich may be made to Hosparus.



Gerald Louis Fine

Mr. Gerald Louis Fine of Louisville, Kentucky passed away on April 29, 2026, at the age of 94.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Emanuel and Ruth Fine; his beloved wife, Marcia Lookofsky Fine; his brother, Dr. Stuart Fine; his daughter, Marla Feinstein and his grandson Max Feinstein.

Jerry attended the University of Oklahoma and became a diehard Sooners fan for the entirety of his life. From there, Jerry served in the US military, spending time in Korea and earning the honor of becoming a lieutenant.

Jerry grew up in a close-knit family and began working early on at Oak Drugs, his family's business. Jerry held various careers throughout his life but found his niche as an insurance agent. He took great pride in forming lasting relationships with his clients, many becoming lifelong friends.

Jerry was many things to people: a partner, friend, brother, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. He shared a deep and enduring love with his wife, Marcia. Fate brought the two together when they coincidentally met in a doctor's office waiting room and fell in love shortly thereafter. Jerry and Marcia built a mean-

ingful life and raised their three daughters together, creating a family that continued to grow for generations. Jerry was a loving steadfast caregiver for Marcia until the end of her life in 2009.

One of Jerry's greatest sources of pride was his career as a runner, highlighted by many marathons across the country and a half marathon completed at age 85. He carried the Olympic torch through Louisville for the 2002 Winter Olympics, an honor for which he was nominated for by his brother, Stuart. If you've ever visited Seneca Park, you've likely seen Jerry completing his two daily laps around the loop. Jerry's lifelong love of walking and running brought him both joy and a deep sense of community.

Jerry cared deeply for those he loved. He found immense joy in being both a grandfather and great-grandfather, affectionately calling his loved ones his "sweet thing." Following the death of Marcia, he formed a loving and meaningful relationship with Denise Schiller, with whom he shared many beautiful years of life.

Jerry is survived by his daughters, Halle Fine Nussbaum (Rob) and Missy Woodward (Jason); his grandchildren, Brett Nussbaum (Courtney), Adam Nussbaum (Robyn), Audrey Nussbaum (Spencer), Taylor Feinstein (Lexi), Emily Rottner, Lindsey Rottner (Jared), and Kelsey Rottner; his partner, Denise Schiller; his sister-in-law Bobbe Fine; and his four great-grandchildren, Henry, Sadie, Lev, and his namesake, Jack.

A funeral service was held May 3, 2026, at Herman Meyer & Son, followed by private burial at The Temple Cemetery. Memorial donations honoring Jerry may be made to the American Lung Association.



Ella Netter Bass Goodman

Ella Netter Bass Goodman, 100, passed away in Louisville, Kentucky on April 26, 2026, just a few days shy of her 101st birthday. Ella was born in Louisville on May 3, 1925,

to the late Herman and Goldie Netter, and she spent her 100 years building a legacy characterized by resilience, strength, and optimism.

Ella graduated from Atherton Girls

Continued on page 25



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LIFECYCLE

Continued from page 24

School and then married Allen Bass when they were both 19. Ella followed Allen to the Naval Base in Great Lakes, Illinois, and upon his honorable discharge, they returned to Louisville and opened Allen's Supermarket.

For many years, Ella helped in the supermarket and raised her three children, Larry, Beverly, and Brent. After Allen passed away much too young at the age of 38, Ella began working at Bacon's department store, where she worked for over 30 years. She retired from managing Bacon's children's shoe department, and even after retiring, she never missed an opportunity to take her grandchildren and great-grandchildren shoe shopping.

In 1973, Ella married Milton Goodman. Less than two years later, Milton was shot during a robbery at his own grocery store and was paralyzed from the waist down. Ella cared for Milton with strength and grace for over 20 years, until his death in 1996.

Ella retired when Milton needed more extensive care, and at that time, she also began volunteering with Jefferson County Public Schools as a reading tutor and classroom assistant. She was an avid reader and found joy in sharing books with her family.

Ella also enjoyed hosting family celebrations for as long as she could, and her sweet tooth ensured that a meal never ended without Charlotte Russe or some other excellent dessert. She was fortunate to travel with family to many places, including Israel, Hawaii, and several other islands on numerous cruises, all places she couldn't have gotten to, or around, on her own, given her sense of direction.

Ella never had an unkind word for anyone. She treated everyone with respect and always sought to make people around her feel comfortable. She was proud of being Jewish, had a strong sense of faith, and attended Friday night services at The Temple on a regular basis when she physically could.

She took great joy in her children and the families they each built. Her pride in her grandchildren was immense, and she felt even more joy to be part of the lives of her great-grandchildren.

She instilled in her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren the importance of Judaism and a legacy of commitment, love, and devotion to her family and friends.

In Judaism, a traditional blessing is to wish someone live to age 120, meaning they live a healthy, complete, and meaningful life. Ella may not have quite made it to 120, but she certainly lived a long life filled with purpose and meaning, and her memory will always be a blessing to those who knew her.

Ella was predeceased by her parents, Goldie and Herman Netter, her husbands, Allen Bass and Milton Goodman, her son, H. Brent Bass, and all of her siblings, Irene Smith, Ike Netter, and Mitchell Netter.

She is survived by her son, Larry Bass (Sara Gould), her daughter, Beverly Weinberg (David), and her daughter-in-law, Amanda Bass.

She also is survived by her grandchildren, Scott Weinberg (Hunter), Lindsey Rossen (David), Noah Bass, and Jacob Bass, and her great-grandchildren, Anne Miriam Weinberg, Eloise Weinberg, Sophie Rossen, Beatrice Weinberg, and Ethan Rossen.

Ella's life was enriched by the love and

devotion of her stepdaughters, Robin Goodman (Lydia) and Susan Goodman, both of whom survived her.

Her circle of loving family broadened to include her step-grandchildren, Lisa Tapley (Brian) and Andrew Gould (Becca) as well as six step-great-grandchildren, Alaina, Charlie and Grant Tapley, and Richard, Eli, and Chris Gould.

Ella is also survived by numerous nieces, nephews, great-nieces, and great-nephews.

A graveside service was held April 28 at Adath Jeshurun Cemetery.

Ella was fortunate to have wonderful caregivers in her final years, and the family thanks Laura T., Susanne, Laura C., Tiffany, and Jimi for their compassionate and loving care.

The family also thanks the nurses, doctors, and other staff at Baptist Health Louisville Palliative Care Unit, where she received excellent care during her final days.

In lieu of flowers, contributions in Ella's memory may be made to Hosparus of Louisville or the University of Louisville Trager Transplant Center.



Nelson Goodman

Nelson Goodman, z"l, passed away on May 17, 2026 at age 89, after living a full and vibrant life devoted to music, work, sports, and his beloved wife, Nancy. He performed locally as a child entertainer, took up playing drums at an early age, and became the youngest member of the Musicians' Union at age 14. He continued to play drums and graduated from the U.S. Naval School of Music, entertaining troops throughout Europe in the Admiral's Band of the Sixth Fleet while assigned to the aircraft carrier Franklin D. Roosevelt. After an honorable discharge, he became a member of the Big Band era, playing with the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra.

Nelson built a successful 30-year career with New York Life. He was a dedicated tennis player before developing a passion for golf during his "second" career, spending more than 25 years at Golf Galaxy, where "Nellie" became beloved by coworkers and customers and was repeatedly honored as their longest continuously working employee. He recorded five holes-in-one over the years and took every opportunity to play, come rain or shine.

Nelson shared a loving 43-year partnership with his wife Nancy, marked by love, companionship, and unwavering devotion. He credited her steady support, attentiveness to details, and keeping him on track for his health, happiness, and longevity until the very end.

He is survived by his wife, Nancy Goodman; brother Stanton Goodman (Evelyn); son John Goodman; stepdaughters Julie Freedman and Marcie Cohen (Terry); grandchildren Samuel Cohen, Sadie Cohen (Matt Gentile), and Nathan Cohen. He was predeceased by his son, Andrew Goodman.

May his memory be for a blessing.

A graveside service was held May 24, at Keneseth Israel Cemetery -Temple Shalom section. Funeral arrangements were entrusted to Herman Meyer & Son.

Memorial contributions may be made

to the charity Nelson particularly favored: St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105 or through their website at <https://www.stjude.org/>



David Leibson

May 2, 2026 ~ 16 Iyar 5786

David Jay Leibson was born March 18, 1944, to Dorothy Reibert Leibson and Albert Leibson. He married the love of his life, Phyllis Leibson, in 1968. Then, in 1972, their lives were enriched by the birth of their only child, Jennifer Leibson.

He grew up in Crescent Hill playing golf at Crescent Hill Golf Club and baseball at St. Matthews Little League and Babe Ruth League. He excelled at golf, and in 1962 won the Falls City Junior Golf Championship. Later in life he won three club championships at the Standard Country Club and one senior club championship at Lake Forest Country Club.

David graduated from Atherton High School in 1962, a member of the last graduating class at the Morton Avenue site. He earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Vanderbilt University in 1966 before earning a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Louisville School of Law, graduating first in his class. He continued his legal education at Harvard Law School where he earned a master's in law degree (LLM) in 1970.

David then returned to Louisville and began practicing law at the firm of Leibson and Franklin. He taught part-time at UofL law school until 1972, when he was offered a full-time position. He dedicated his life to teaching and remained at the law school for 42 years. For 25 years he was honored with the Bernard Flexner Professorship in Law. During that time, he was also a visiting professor at McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento, California; the University of Leeds, England; and the University of Western Sydney in Sydney, Australia. He and his wife, Phyllis fell in love with Australia and returned five times to enjoy that wonderful country.

He won many awards for his teaching. He introduced a Law and Literature class, the first of its kind in U.S. law schools. He authored two books on law, one on Kentucky tort law and one on the Uniform Commercial Code, both of which became the gold standard in their respective subjects.

David was an active volunteer in many organizations. He and Phyllis volunteered at Market Street Neighborhood helping children learn to read. He also volunteered for Metro United Way and a variety of Jewish organizations including Eliahu Academy, Congregation Adath Jeshurun, The Temple, the Jewish Federation of Louisville, the Jewish Hospital Heart and Lung Center, and Jewish Family & Career Services. He was also President of the Jewish Community Center. He and Phyllis along with David and Nicole Goldstein established the Goldstein-Leibson Scholar-in-Residence Lecture Series. He was a winner of the B'nai B'rith Man of the Year Award, primarily for being an interviewer for Steven Spielberg's Shoah project, whose goal was to interview and record all living Holocaust survivors.

David is preceded in death by his parents Dorothy Reibert Leibson and Albert Leibson. He is survived by his wife, Phyllis; his daughter, Jennifer; brother-in-law

Neil Dobrin and nephew Andrei Dobrin; many wonderful cousins, and life-long best friends, Jane Goldstein and Chuck Kaplan.

"David loved the JCC," Goldstein wrote in an email following Leibson's death. "He felt strongly that the community should support so it will be here for others to enjoy and connect. We met when we were 15 and became instant, exceptional friends. The Jewish community has lost a thoughtful, generous friend, as have I."

The family would like to thank his caregivers, Shayna Hardin and Tevin Beard, for their exceptional care over the last several years.

Funeral services were held May 5, 2026, at Congregation Adath Jeshurun, followed by burial in Adath Jeshurun Cemetery. Donations in David's memory may be made to Congregation Adath Jeshurun or the Trager Family Jewish Community Center.



Shannon Shifrin

Shannon A. Shifrin, 53, of Louisville, passed away peacefully on Sunday, May 17, 2026. Her passing leaves a deep void in the hearts of those who knew and loved her.

A gifted professional and creative spirit, Shannon earned her bachelor's degree from Boston University and built a successful career as the IT Director of System Engineering for TMG-Media. She was respected for her intelligence, dedication, and leadership, and she approached her work with both precision and compassion.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Shannon was an avid photographer with a remarkable artistic eye. One of the proudest moments of her life came when one of her photographs was selected for display at a local Louisville art gallery — a reflection of the beauty she saw in the world and her ability to capture it for others to enjoy.

Shannon was an active member of Congregation Adath Jeshurun, Work-Multi Specialty Clinic, and Yew Dell Botanical Garden. She valued community, friendship, faith, and the quiet joy found in nature and creativity.

She was preceded in death by her sister, Deanna Lee Shifrin.

Shannon is survived by her loving parents, Gil and Sandy Shifrin; her uncle, Alan Erlebacher; her aunt, Sara Shifrin; and her cousins, Pam Sturt, Amie Goldberg, Jory Weissman, Jessica Berndt, Melissa Erlebacher, and David Erlebacher. Shannon's warmth, kindness, and artistic spirit will be cherished always by her family and friends.

A graveside service was held May 19, 2026, at Adath Jeshurun Cemetery. Arrangements were entrusted to Herman Meyer & Son, Inc.

Expressions of sympathy may be made to Congregation Adath Jeshurun, the UofL Specialty Clinic, c/o University of Louisville Foundation, PO Box 772050, Chicago, IL 60677-2050; Community Fitness & Wellness, or Yew Dell Botanical Gardens.

Shannon's memory will live on through the lives she touched, the beauty she created, and the love she shared so generously.

GLOBE

Sally Rooney to issue novel in Hebrew with Israeli publisher who complies with BDS

By Andrew Silow-Carroll
JTA

Irish novelist Sally Rooney, who drew headlines in 2021 for refusing a Hebrew translation of one of her books, is now publishing her latest novel in Hebrew through an Israeli publisher approved by boycott activists.

The Hebrew translation of “Intermezzo,” due out next month, will be published by November Books in collaboration with the left-wing Israeli news sites +972 Magazine and Local Call. The arrangement was announced this week alongside an interview Rooney conducted with Palestinian Irish activist Samir Eskanda in The Guardian.

Rooney’s decision marks an unusual but not unprecedented attempt to work within the framework of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, or BDS, which has long called on artists and cultural figures to avoid working with Israeli institutions it considers complicit in Israeli government policies toward Palestinians.

In 2021, Rooney declined to sell Hebrew translation rights for her novel “Beautiful World, Where Are You?” to the Israeli publisher that had previously released her books in Hebrew. At the time, she said she supported the BDS movement and would not work with an Israeli publisher unless it is willing to “publicly distance itself from apartheid and support the UN-stipulated rights of the Palestinian people.”

That move prompted backlash in Israel and beyond, including calls to boycott Rooney’s work. Israeli bookstore chains reportedly removed some of her books from shelves.

Now, Rooney, 35, says she believes publishing “Intermezzo” in Hebrew through November Books is compatible with the boycott campaign because the publisher does not operate in West Bank settlements, does not receive Israeli government funding and has endorsed Palestinian rights.

“Though my refusal to work with complicit Israeli publishing houses made the contractual side of things more complex, I was, of course, never boycotting the Hebrew language or any language,” Rooney told The Guardian. “I’m very pleased that ‘Intermezzo’ will soon be available in Hebrew with November Books.”

Rooney added that she had stayed in contact with PACBI, a founding arm of the BDS movement that advises artists on cultural boycott issues, “to try to ensure that I was upholding both the letter and the spirit of the institutional boycott.”

Haggai Matar, the executive director of +972, said BDS is willing to work with Israeli publishers if they express that they are not “complicit” with the Israeli state, do not accept government funding nor operate within the settlements.

BDS also demands that its targets recognize the rights of Palestinians under international law, including the right of return of Palestinians seeking to reclaim their former homes in modern-day Israel. While Israel and many of its supporters consider such claims an existential threat, Matar said it “can be implemented in all sorts of ways.”

Asked why +972 was eager to help publish Rooney’s book, Matar told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that it was an opportunity to “dispel myths that BDS is antisemitic or aimed at all Israelis.”

“To take someone as famous as Sally and as outspoken on the Palestinian issue was a great opportunity to say, ‘Look, Israelis aren’t outcasts. This is not about our identity.’ It is an attempt by Sally and the BDS movement to not be involved with organizations that are complicit with apartheid or war crimes. Once you [act and say that you aren’t] you are not subject to boycott at all.”

Since Oct. 28, 2024, more than 7,000 writers have signed onto a boycott of “complicit” Israeli literary institutions. The boycott said it had evaluated 98 Israeli publishers and found that only November Books met its conditions for exemption.

November Books is a small Israeli nonprofit that distributes its books mostly through independent bookstores. It has previously published Hebrew translations of works by Tanehisi Coates and Naomi Klein, both of whom support the boycott.

“Our task as a movement is to channel anger at Israel’s genocide in Gaza into the most meaningful initiatives,” said Rooney. Israel denies that the war in Gaza is a genocide, and supporters have called the war in Gaza a proportionate response to the Hamas attacks of Oct. 7, 2023, in which 1,200 people were killed in Israel and 251 were taken hostage.

Rooney also acknowledged what she described as inconsistencies in her earlier decisions. Rooney said that while she had supported BDS as a consumer, she had initially sold Hebrew translation rights for her first two novels to an Israeli publisher before concluding that mainstream Israeli cultural institutions were implicated in state policies she opposed.

“By the time it came to selling the rights for my third book in 2021, things had changed,” Rooney said. “I had come to a better understanding of the complicity of the Israeli culture sector in that apartheid system.”

Rooney’s novels, nearly all global bestsellers, have been translated into more than 40 languages and adapted for television by the BBC and Hulu.

The literary world has become a nasty if bloodless battleground since Oct. 7. Jewish writers say they have been targeted as “Zionists” even when their views on Israel aren’t public, bookstores have cancelled publicity events for Jewish authors, and that it



Sally Rooney, left, promotes her novel “Intermezzo” at London’s Southbank Centre, Sept. 25, 2024. Moderator Merve Emre is at right. (Faber & Faber via X)

has become more difficult to publish works with Jewish themes.

Meanwhile, Rooney asserted that “people” had warned that her decision to boycott Israel would harm her career, suggesting to her that she “had no idea what I was up against.”

“In reality, I have gone on writing and publishing happily since 2021,” she said.

Matar rejects the criticism that the cultural boycott, by targeting the lit-

erary and artistic community, only harms politically liberal voices and their ability to shape public opinion.

BDS, he told JTA, is a “nonviolent tool asking a publisher ‘to stand by us and not participate in our oppression.’ These are very minimal demands, not silencing or too heavy a burden.”

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As anti-LGBTQ laws spread, these Jewish nonprofits are funding moves to safer states

By Grace Gilson
JTA

As anti-LGBTQ legislation proliferated across the United States in late 2024, leaders at two Jewish nonprofits began discussing the mounting crisis for LGBTQ Americans who no longer felt safe in their home states but lacked the financial means to leave.

Now, some of those individuals are receiving interest-free loans to help finance their moves through “Move to Thrive,” an unusual joint initiative launched by the national LGBTQ Jewish advocacy group Keshet and the New York-based Hebrew Free Loan Society in March 2025.

The initiative has drawn more than 400 inquiries, according to Jaimie Krass, the president and CEO of Keshet. So far, 29 applications have been approved, representing 56 people across households in 12 states, and \$274,500 in loans have been disbursed.

“It is devastating that this is even necessary, and I think we can draw strength from what has been made possible by this resource, which is that dozens of households have been able to relocate to safer states, have been able to live more fully and openly as their authentic selves,” Krass told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

According to a 2024 survey by the Trevor Project, an LGBTQ youth crisis support nonprofit, nearly two in five LGBTQ+ people aged 13 to 24 said that they had considered moving to a different state, and 4% actually moved due to LGBTQ+-related politics or laws.

The collaboration between Keshet and the Hebrew Free Loan Society began in late 2024, when Idit Klein, then Keshet’s leader, approached Rabbi David Rosenn, the president and CEO of the Hebrew Free Loan Society, with the idea.

Rosenn initially told Klein it was not feasible, explaining that the Hebrew Free Loan Society serves individuals in the New York area and

generally does not operate nationally.

But then came what Krass called a “dizzying onslaught of attacks” on LGBTQ+ rights following President Donald Trump’s inauguration. In the first weeks of his second term, Trump signed a series of executive orders targeting transgender Americans, including measures recognizing only two sexes, male and female, and another that aimed to outlaw gender-affirming medical care for transgender youth. Lawmakers in red states picked up the pace of their legislation.

As the months went by, Rosenn said “it was clear that things were getting more aggressive in terms of the approach of legislatures in certain states,” so he went to his board to appeal for an exception.

“We concluded that if we did not do this, it would not get done, and we saw this as a matter of people’s personal safety and well-being,” Rosenn said. “People were expressing that they felt like they were at real risk, and we wanted there to be a way for them to make these moves to places where they would feel safe and welcome.”

The initial grant funds for the program came from the Jewish LGBTQ Donor Network, but Rosenn said that after more people learned about the program there had been a “spontaneous outpouring of support from people who heard that this was going on and wanted to be a part.”

So far, the program, which is open to both Jewish and non-Jewish applicants, has distributed loans of up to \$10,000 to applicants leaving states including Texas, Arkansas, Missouri and Iowa. The recipients, which included single transgender women and men and over a dozen couples and families, have used the loans to move to states, such as Massachusetts, Illinois and Oregon, with a more welcoming policy environment.

James Glick, who used a Move to Thrive loan to relocate from Texas to Minnesota with his wife, told JTA



Keshet staff rallies outside of the U.S. Supreme Court. (Courtesy of Keshet)

that the loan had brought him “life changing relief” after he watched anti-trans policies intensify at the Dallas school where he taught.

“I remember when we got the confirmation email, like we both just sat and cried and hugged each other,” they said. “It was just so difficult to move across the country, but it would not have been possible without that help.”

Glick said he first learned about the program through a Facebook group for transgender men in Dallas, and initially doubted whether he and his wife, who are not Jewish, would qualify.

But after learning that the program was “for everyone,” they said the support from Jewish organizations felt especially meaningful at a time when many people around him were dismissing fears about anti-trans policies.

“To have a Jewish organization recognizing that something like this was happening to the trans community, when so many people around me were saying, ‘It’s not that big of a deal, you need to calm down, like you’re going to be fine, why are you freaking out?’ — it was like, oh, no, people do acknowledge and understand that,” Glick said.

While dozens have used “Move to Thrive” to help finance relocations, other LGBTQ Jews and families with transgender children had already begun moving to states with stronger legal protections long before it was launched.

For Krass, the relocations echoed Jewish experiences of moving in search of safety in the past.

“Many of our own families have relocated at different times throughout history to different locations because our safety was undermined, and right now, those same sort of alarm bells of our shared history, of our collective memory, are certainly ringing right now because of the vast number of LGBTQ+ individuals, in-

cluding LGBTQ+ Jews, who are feeling forced to relocate to a different state for the sake of their own and their family’s safety,” Krass said.

The need for the program, Krass and Rosenn said, appears unlikely to disappear soon.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, there are currently 528 anti-LGBTQ bills under consideration in states across the country, in addition to those — such as a law passed last year in Texas that defined men and women by their reproductive organs — that have already gone into effect.

“That would be a great reason to suspend this program, if nobody felt that they were at risk and they were happy and able to thrive in whatever state they’re in, but since that is not the case, I think we will absolutely try to continue to be a resource in this way,” Rosenn said.

He said the partnership between his organization and Keshet also served as an exciting model for collaborations he hoped to see more of in the Jewish world.

“It was also just a signal out to the world that the Jewish community sees that this is going on, cares about this issue and is moving to do something about it, that two organizations who don’t normally do things together, would figure out a way to collaborate to make this happen,” Rosenn said. “It is not just something that is to the benefit of borrowers, it’s also a message about what the Jewish community is trying to accomplish in the world.”

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