



## Message from the Chair of the Board

By Karen Ferleger

### Closer To Home

With every passing month we are closer to home. For our Eastern Fairfield County Jewish Community, “home” has many meanings, but mostly, it is where we feel safe and protected, while at the same time feeling empowered to grow. While we miss our JCC, we realize more and more that “home” is not only a physical space, it is a place of nurturing that follows us wherever we are.

Home is sharing office space and staff with our Westport area Jewish Federation neighbors.

Home is planning programs together that elevate our Jewish culture and spirituality to a place of renewed meaning and strength.

Home is the synagogue in which we worship to express our prayers and wishes.

Home is the place where Israel is our heart’s homeland, even when we choose to live elsewhere.

Home is the place where we raise our family in an environment of love and respect.

Indeed, for the past several months, as our board members and leadership have been diligently preoccupied with finalizing our Federation merger, all of us actively working to make the merger a reality have come to understand that we are building a new home for us, and for our Jewish communal family.

Some recent examples of our unity:

We held our first joint Federation board meeting in the beginning of October. We had a great speaker, Linda Hurwitz, who is the chief volunteer fundraiser for our parent, The Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA). Linda spends time with federations across the country, inspiring and training leadership to be more effective in securing much needed financial support for the programs that we fund in our community, in Israel

and around the world. Our Federation system is our community chest. Our annual fundraising campaign is what ensures that our programs and organizations receive the support that they need and deserve to make certain that no one in our family is abandoned.

Friends, our annual campaign ends on December 31, 2014. Our dedicated volunteers have been making phone calls to past and prospective donors. You will also soon receive our end-of-year mailing that will ask for your annual gift. We need the help and participation of every member of our community. I ask you, therefore, to please be responsive and generous. To make a secure online donation, please visit our website: [www.ujafederation.org](http://www.ujafederation.org). Together, let’s make certain that every person in our Jewish community has a home; a home not just to live in, but a home full of love, safety and opportunity.

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### Upcoming Events:

**Kristallnacht**  
**November 9th**  
**4:00PM @ the**  
**Conservative Synagogue**  
**Westport**

**Super Sunday**  
**December 7th**  
**10-2:00 PM**



## Message from the President and CEO

*Steven M. Friedlander*

### Providing Help and Hope

What do our local hospital, police and fire departments, and our UJA/Federation all share in common? They all keep hope alive! We know that in an emergency or during a time of need, effective help is nearby and immediately available. Of course, our hospital and emergency services enjoy the benefit of being funded by insurance payments and our taxes. For our UJA/Federation to function effectively however, we must rely exclusively upon your voluntary charitable gifts.

It is remarkable to hear about how many people are helped by a program that we fund. A friend or neighbor may have lost a job, or is suffering from an acute illness that limits their ability to care for their family. Our Jewish Family Service of Westport & Eastern Fairfield County can provide crisis counseling and emergency assistance, **but only if the necessary resources are available!**

The same is true in Israel. The government provides very modest support for our Jewish children who must live in a residential

center when their parents are no longer able to take care of them. But it is our responsibility to supply what is missing: **it is your donation to UJA/Federation's annual campaign that provides a full year's supply of clothing to the children of the Emunah Sarah Herzog Children's Center in Afula, Israel.** We must limit the trauma that our children have already experienced in their brief but tumultuous lives. Your annual contribution provides security where none is assumed.

The above are just two examples of how our annual campaign plays a crucial role in the lives of our extended family.

We will soon celebrate the much beloved Thanksgiving holiday. It is a time when we give thanks for the abundance that we enjoy and that we share with family and friends. Some people even refer to the holiday as the "Secular Passover." **May I ask you to take a moment sometime this month to mail your annual campaign gift to UJA/Federation?** Doing so will allow our economically

challenged family members to share Thanksgiving with us. If you wish, you may also make a secure online donation on our website ([www.ujafederation.org](http://www.ujafederation.org)).

As you know, our Westport area and Eastern Fairfield County UJA/Federations are in the final stages of merging. We are making this bold and progressive move in order to strengthen our lifeline to the Jewish Community, and that includes helping to make certain that no one in need is abandoned to the fate of whatever help might be available. We want to be sure that both help and hope are preserved and guaranteed, but only your actions can provide the resources to make that guarantee secure.

We thank you for your generosity. On behalf of everyone in our extended family, we wish you a very festive and meaningful Thanksgiving.

B'shalom,  
Steve



## Meet Allison Halpern Vice President, Development

I am thrilled to join the Eastern Fairfield County and Westport Weston Wilton Norwalk UJA/Federation community and I really appreciate the warm welcome I received. This is an extremely exciting time to be part of the lay and professional team during this time of change. I am ready for the challenge and feel that we are poised for efficiency, effectiveness and success.

A little bit about me: I grew up in Rockland County but have fond memories of visiting my grandparents in Trumbull. My dad, who moved to Connecticut when he was in high school, was the Treasurer of our UJA/Federation and my mom was a Chair of Super Sunday. I was destined for Jewish communal life!

In terms of my professional background, most recently I served as Director of the Men's Division of Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York. I have worked with a number of successful campaigns during my nearly 18 years of development and non-profit experience with Hadassah, Jewish Federations, and JCCs. I am entrepreneurial in spirit, passionate about my work, and always interested in applying new techniques and technologies to further institutional goals.

I received a Bachelor's Degree from Binghamton University and a Master's Degree in Jewish Professional Leadership from Brandeis University. I

was honored with a FEREP (Federation Executive Recruitment and Education Program) scholarship for my graduate studies. I consider myself a Zionist and have visited Israel many times, including a year-abroad program. Besides Israel, I have traveled to Mexico, Venezuela, Germany, Hong Kong, China and Malaysia. I enjoy high-energy workouts at a cardio kickboxing gym to balance out my passion for cooking and entertaining friends.

I am eager to get to know the community and learn different perspectives. Thanks for your generous support. Together I know that we can make a difference here at home in Upper Fairfield County, in Israel and around the world.

Allison

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## Funded UJA/Federation Micro-Grants

*Andrea Gottschall, Allocations Chair 2014*

### Tie and Shake Your Lulav

**By Ellen Bedford**

An amazing fall season is here in Eastern Fairfield County, filled with the "fruits" of wonderful local community programming and generous contributions to Israel. Never has it felt so good to be chairperson.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my committee members who thoughtfully deliberate how we allocate with maximum benefit to all. In addition, I express deep gratitude to the board of directors as they continue to find new and exciting ways to bring programming, education and holiday fun here and abroad.

I hope your new year is off to a great start and that you enjoy reading about or attending one of the many new and exciting programs in our Jewish community.

The Sunday after Rosh Hashanah, members of multiple congregations were taught through online videos and on how to make the ring ties that hold the lulav together and how to assemble the 3 species into one bundle. Our teacher, Serene Victor, came prepared that day with visual aids as well as hands-on directions.

Once the procedure was mastered by several members of the community, the day after Yom Kippur saw the community congregate at Silverman's Farm in Easton to tie everyone's lulavs.

The original idea for "Tie and Shake your Lulav" was a collaboration between of Rabbi Daniel Victor from Congregation Rodeph Sholom in Bridgeport and Education Director Beth Tepper from Congregation B'nai Torah in Trubmull. It wasn't long before we had all four Fairfield area synagogues involved, as Beth El in Fairfield and B'nai Israel also in Bridgeport joined the fun. The lulav factory allowed each person at the farm to make their own ties and many participants went back to their own synagogues to help others complete a lulav for Sukkot.

There was a wonderful representation from all of the synagogues that afternoon. They shared the experience of making lulavs, shared donuts and drinks, and many participated in the fun of shaking the lulav to Jewish music with a Zumba instructor. It was a shakin' good time for everyone who came, and we hope to do this event again next year, but perhaps we will samba instead.





## **JCCS Awards** **\$25,000 Grant to SIGNAL**

**By Jeff Siegel**

Sino Israel Global Network & Academic Leadership - Enhancing Relations Between Israel and China

The Board of Directors of the JCCS has made a \$25,000 grant to SIGNAL, an Israel-based organization founded in 2011 that advances Israel's relationship with China through academia. SIGNAL established the field of Israel Studies in the Chinese higher education system and is the only Jewish or Israeli NGO with established programming across China. SIGNAL is also the only organization whose programs are recognized by China's Ministry of Education.

SIGNAL, was formed to help China's current and future thought leaders gain accurate insights and understandings about Israel through high-level academic interchange. SIGNAL enhances China's and Israel's relationship by establishing significant, long-term academic alliances between the two nations. The academic framework serves as the foundation for mutually beneficial and broad-based cooperation.

The JCCS grant will fund five \$5,000 fellowships to train Chinese professors and assistant professors in SIGNAL's annual faculty Training Program Fall 2015. These five professors, hailing from universities where SIGNAL has established Israel Studies Programs, will return to China and ultimately expose hundreds of students to the study of Israel. These JCCS-funded

faculty graduates of SIGNAL's Israel Studies education program will join the two dozen faculty who have already completed the program to educate a generation of Chinese students in all aspects of the study of Israel from an Israeli perspective.

SIGNAL's Faculty Training Program is housed at the prestigious Ben Gurion University in the Negev. In prior terms, Chinese faculty have attended from Henan University, Shanghai International Studies University, Shihezi University, Yunnan University and Northwest University in Xi'an.

Andrea Gottschall, chair of the JCCS Allocations Committee said: "This grant furthers our mission-driven commitment to Israel and fulfills the will of donors who rely on the UJA/Federation annual campaign to channel funds to Israel-based charities."

Carice Witte, SIGNAL's Founder and Executive Director, originally from Westport commented, "This grant from the JCCS is the first from a UJA/Federation supporting China- Israel relations through academia. It shows great vision in recognizing China's growing potential to make a contribution to Israel's future."

For more information about SIGNAL, please visit their website: <http://en.sino-israel.org/>

## **Joint Slichot program with Rabbi Mark Borovitz**

**By Rabbi Marcelo Kormis & Ira Wise**

*Erev Slichot*

On Saturday, September 20, Rabbi Borovitz spoke to a congregation of nearly 200 people at Congregation Beth El in Fairfield. This congregation was made up of members of congregations Beth El, B'nai Israel, B'nai Torah and Rodeph Sholom. His message of hope, repentance and being your authentic self resonated deeply with the community. He shared his experiences as a con-man, thief, convict, alcoholic and rabbi. He taught about recovery and that each person matters. During the oneg he was approached by many people for advice and to begin to explore seeking help for themselves or their loved ones.

The themes of his presentation were in perfect sync with the coming high holy days. During the service, we had the participation of the community choir (composed by members of the four synagogues) that enhanced and beautified the prayers.

*Teen Program*

On Sunday, September 21, 49 teens came to Congregation B'nai Israel to meet with Rabbi Borovitz. He explored what it means to be "Good Enough" in a community that sends the message of "You need to be perfect and get into the Ivy League." Those kinds of unrealistic expectations may lead to the kinds of self-destructive behaviors that bring people to Beit T'shuvah Treatment Center. Following the program, some teens shared the following responses:

*(Continued on pg 6)*



### Joint Selichot... Continued from pg 5)

"He was awesome."

"He heard what I haven't been able to say out loud."

"I needed to hear some adult tell me I am OK and that I matter."

#### Teacher Program

After the teen program, 45 teachers from our Hebrew Schools joined the teens for lunch and then had their own session with Rabbi Borovitz. His topic was hearing the Nigun of your students' souls and teaching from your own. The essential idea is that as teachers, we need to hear what students are saying and listen for what they are not able to articulate. And as teachers, we need to speak with students and teach from a place of authenticity. The teachers were enthusiastic in their response and asked that we bring Rabbi Borovitz back for another session. We would like to thank the UJA/Federation of Eastern Fairfield County and the UJA/Federation WWWN for their generosity supporting this fascinating program.

Shlomo Kessel

Director of Resource Development and Social Projects, Emunah Israel

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### Talking Tachlis

By Shlomo Kessel & Ellen Yassky

Working in Development (Fund Raising) is a pretty tough job sometimes. People know you're going to be asking for a donation at some point in the conversation. It can be difficult or challenging, even though you are 100% behind the cause. But then, there are the times when it's the BEST job in the world, such as when you're speaking with the amazing people from the UJA/Federation of Eastern Fairfield County.



When you speak with them, you don't have to try and make sure they understand the potential impact they could make on the lives of the children at the Emunah Afula Children's Center. They get it. Completely.

So when Shlomo Kessel and I sat down last year to talk about what was specifically the most important purchase for our children here, we both said, simultaneously, "Computers and computer stations." Access to the Internet, for all our children, had been Shlomo's dream during his tenure as Director of the Center. He knew that it would make an immediate and positive impact on the lives of our children. Because computers are ubiquitous, because most of us have at least one computer at home not to mention tablets and smartphones, access to the Internet and the world at large

is no biggie. But for the children living here at Emunah, and those who come for our after-school programs, being able to consistently get on a computer to do their homework, some research, have some fun, catch up with friends, even virtually explore the world, is a life-altering opportunity. They don't take it for granted. And the UJA/Federation of Eastern Fairfield County? They saw the potential immediately and jumped at the opportunity to make this dream, to make this access, possible. The Federation decided to donate a significant sum of money to create more than a dozen custom-built computer pods, each outfitted with new computers and screens, keyboards, mice, the installation of reliable Internet access, printers, plus training for our kids to learn how to effectively and safely use this new portal into the world. Finally, our kids are going to be able to compete with their peers in school. Now they won't have to be ashamed to tell their teacher or classmates that they couldn't do the work because they didn't have a computer. This is Israel, after all, the birthplace of the Pentium chip. Computers are everywhere . . . except where they aren't. And for those without access? It's a life-long game of catch-up.

Thanks to the foresight of the Allocations Board of this marvelous and strong Federation those with the happy but difficult task of deciding which needy non-profit or person is to receive help our children here at Emunah Afula will no longer have to play catch-up. Now they know that when we tell them they are important, loved, safe, and cared for, that we mean it. And we show them. Tachlis (Brass tacks) on the table . . . the computer table, that is.



## Joint Lion Pom a Huge Success!

The Power of Women . . .  
The Strength of Community . . .  
That is UJA/Federation!

On Tuesday evening, November 4<sup>th</sup>, Karen Ferleger hosted a very successful Lion of Judah/Pomegranate Women's Event for WWWN and Eastern Fairfield County. New friendships continue to be forged as we move toward merging into one unified Federation within the next few months.



We welcome any comments, suggestions and submissions and are continually working on updating our database. If you receive duplicates, or know someone who would like to be included on our mailing list, please contact us at [janet@jccs.org](mailto:janet@jccs.org).

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