Celebrating Israel @ 71: Our Community Unites
Pages 6-7
Music, noshes and fun at Federation’s 82nd Annual Meeting

Our Jewish community packed the second floor of the city’s Whole Foods store on May 20 to celebrate one of the busiest years ever for the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso. The meeting introduced the 2019-20 Board of Directors and reviewed the past year’s activities.

Janet Wechter, Board President, and Scott Stevens, Vice President - Nominating, thanked outgoing board members for their service: William Bass, Loree Furman, Julian Gonzalez-Herrell, David Kern (JCRC Chair), Steve Lanski, John Moye, Debbie Pazos, and Mitch Panchett.

Executive Director Robert French presented an inspiring video featuring dozens of images from events sponsored by the Federation and Jewish organizations supported by it. Photos of many members of our Jewish community flashed across the large screen accompanied by lively music. Handouts at each table listed the many recipients of funds and budgeted programming expenses with percentages and amounts set to total around $471,376 this year. Both the video and the funds distribution list are on the Federation’s website at www.jewishpaso.org and were sent out in the Federation’s weekly email.

Janet’s remarks to the crowd expanded on her “mantra” for the year: “Better Together.” She spoke about building bridges and finding a way forward, regardless of affiliation and perspectives. She introduced two important initiatives for the coming year. The first is an ambitious and highly important program aimed at helping our partners work collaboratively with a shared sense of purpose to tackle challenges facing Jewish life in Greater El Paso. The second is a demographic study of the area’s Jewish population that can help shape the community’s and Federation’s work and goals in the future.

Congratulations to Dr. Lauren Eisenberg and Adam Rosenfeld, recipients of the 2019 Bernard and Florence Schoichet Young Leadership Award. Ophra Leyer-whalen, the 2018 award recipient, spoke of the couple’s ongoing commitment to the community, their outstanding work in the shul and local organizations, and their involvement with the Federation’s Maimonides Society for medical professionals. The award includes a grant toward a trip to the Jewish Federations of North America General Assembly in Washington, D.C., in November.

Lauren, daughter of Cliff and Martha Eisenberg, and granddaughter of Jack and Doris (of beloved memory) Eisenberg, grew up in El Paso’s Jewish community. The couple’s three children - Davna, Oliver, and Andrew - represent the family’s fourth generation of involvement in Jewish education and service.

The crowd enjoyed delicious food, wine, and beer from Whole Foods along with live music presented by Frank Ecket. The evening was a memorable one, with a diverse multi-generational gathering of both new faces and old friends from across Las Cruces, El Paso and our entire community. Kudos to event co-chairs, Stephanie Calvo and Loree Furman!
Better Together: A look forward

June is a good time to reflect on the 2018-19 year and look ahead, as Janet Wechter completes her first year as Board President and new Executive Director. Robert French, approaches his first-year milestone. Your Jewish Federation has begun to be more visible and make a greater difference in our Jewish community – and that’s just the beginning, as we learned in a recent conversation with Janet.

Cindy Graff Cohen: What changes have you seen over the last year at the Jewish Federation?

Janet Wechter: More involvement. More outreach. The Federation is doing a better job at working with the community to get buy-in for the programs and engaging more people, regardless of age. We have an engaged and committed Director and an active Board.

Our staff is more organized, with more direction. Having a Jewish community professional like Robert French work with us and with volunteers is a game changer. He spent his first six months meeting with community members, getting to know them and listening to their ideas and concerns – and he is still meeting with them.

Communications have improved. The Jewish Voice is better positioned to share news about the Federation and our community. The website continues to improve and our weekly email is opened by more people.

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) has been very involved this year. If Library is doing a better job with engaging young children and their parents with educational programs that are also really fun. Borderland’s Café Europa for our senior community members has expanded its programming. Our community is abuzz with our successes of Good Deeds Day, our moving and inspiring Ha’atikvah program and our Celebrate Israel @ 71. People have even taken the time to call, email and write to us, our Chairs and volunteers to thank us! Robert’s fundraising expertise helped last year and we’re on track to increase donations in 2019 as our community gains a better understanding of our role and our purpose.

We improved our Granting Process and are continuing to do so for the benefit of our grantees and community members.

CGC: What new initiative is in the works for the Federation?

JW: We’re creating a new forum with the goal of bringing our partner Jewish organizations together for the benefit of our entire Jewish community. We are confident that building relationships and trust can help us overcome the challenges Jewish communities are facing all over the country. With so many needs and desires in our community, we must find common threads to bind us together in order to move forward and share resources. We will then be better able to try to do something that will ensure our Jewish community and our Jewish institutions thrive. All of us need each other. The more successful each of our individual institutions – the stronger we are together.

Our first meeting took place in May to discuss, “A Way Forward for our Greater El Paso Jewish Community”, which Robert French outlined in his report, “Engage, Connect & Support.” Since then we have been awarded an Impact Grant from the Jewish Community Foundation which will fund this important work with a diverse group of leaders and representatives to help bring about true collaboration and positive change in the Greater El Paso community.

Members from our community will be invited as well to share ideas and create innovative solutions to our community’s needs.

By coming together and listening with an open heart, we can build bridges amongst our institutions that can have significant effects on our community. It takes more than just a willingness to make this happen – there are techniques and a trained professional can help to facilitate this growth.

An objective facilitator can guide us through honest conversations about what we’re doing, what we need to be doing, and how we can bring Jewish life to those in need and those who may not be involved.

CGC: What has surprised you about this past year?

JW: It surprised me that I could actually do this! I read and studied BoardSource best practices, good governance, and looked for techniques to engage our Board and volunteers. This and my energy and determination to make a difference fueled my confidence. I also am fortunate to work with a professional like Robert French. And the Board has been incredibly supportive believing in me to do the work. I can do it, you can do it: it just takes passion and commitment.

I’ve been involved with the Federation for over 30 years. My first exposure was on a Federation Mission trip to Israel 34 years ago with my father, who was involved in our Jewish community for decades. The Federation has been helping the Jewish community for over 80 years now and although various issues have come up, it’s bigger picture that really matters.

Supporting the work of the Federation is really important and it’s a way to show that you deeply care about the Jewish community, no matter how you identify yourself Jewishly.

CGC: What is next for the Federation?

JW: We have an exciting and ambitious research project launching this summer at UTEP in the Sociology Department – it’s a comprehensive survey of our Jewish community that you will be hearing more about in August. The data collected will not only give us population, but also help us understand the needs, attitudes and perceptions of our Jewish community. It will be available to our partner organizations, and we will provide answers to fundamental questions about how to serve needs which will ensure the health and vitality of our community’s future.

We need to be proactive in developing our future leaders and philanthropists. Many of the same needs that drove the foundation of Jewish Federations across the nation still exist, but we need to find new ways to address those needs while still providing exciting and innovative programs that interest people of all ages. We need to figure out a way to really make a difference. We know people like to be at events with more people. What if more terms could be together?

The more we get to know each other, the more we will want to develop a community that is really a true community where people feel good going to all places of worship for programming and events. To really feel welcome everywhere is a goal in itself.

These We Honor With Tributes

Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso

To: Leslie Beckoff
In Honor of Your Special Birthday
From: Jene Snow

To: Lauren and Adam Rosenfield
In Honor of Your Receiving the Schochet Leadership Award
From: Martha and Cliff Eisenberg

To: The Jewish Federation in Gratitude for Shalom Shuttle Service
From: Rachel Saks

Camp Kadima Memorial Scholarship in Memory of Leona Goldthorp and Minna Frank

To: The Family of Frank Altus in his Memory
From: Bobbi Goldfarb

 Federation Campaign Callers

Leslie Beckoff, Weylin Burlington, Stephanie Calvo, Gloria Davidoff, Lori Gaman, Cynthia Heurs, Jack Heydelmann, Mika Cohen Jones, Gregory Martin, Sara Heller Peña, Stuart Shiloff, Nathan Stevens, and Alison Werestman

Café Europa

Itamar Basteikar, guest speaker

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Marla Schlusselberg
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Judy Shae

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As its second year comes to a close, The J Center for Early Learning is "filled with gratitude," says Interim Director Meg Birk. In year two, the school has seen incredible growth. "When I ask my daughter if she'd like to stay home or go to school," says parent Rachel Good-man, "she always says she wants to go to school! That's how you know it's the right environment."

Throughout the year teachers have crafted lesson plans that are student-centered, experimental, and relationship-driven. While the many successes of the program are almost too numerous to share, we've included a few highlights.

Fall Holiday Programs: The J observed Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Simchat Torah. The students closed out the year with a Chanukah program honoring our heritage and our city. The program, which was supported by so many in the community, was followed by a dinner that ended, of course, with sufganiyot! "It was truly great to see community come out in full force to support the J at Chanukah," shared parent Alison Westermann.

Organic Herb and Vegetable Garden: Our three, four, and five-year-olds sprouted seeds as they learned about the life cycle of plants and caring for our planet. The class took hands-on learning seriously as they took to the dirt and planted an organic garden at the J. They're learning perseverance and diligence in harvesting their mighty crop.

Hands-on Model Seder: The J educators took a Reggio Emilia approach to this year’s model Seder, encouraging the children to engage their curiosity. They not only sang the four questions, but also celebrated with activities such as turning water to "blood" with food coloring, tossing cotton balls high in the air to represent hail, and running through lengths of blue fabric to experience crossing the Red Sea.

Week of the Young Child: The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) encouraged programs across the country to participate in the "Week of the Young Child" to highlight early childhood education. The J kicked off the week with two UTEP music students and a cello concert and presentation. The week also included special art, cooking, and family programs.

Early Childhood and Parenting Coach Susan Glaser from the National JCC: The J welcomed parenting coach Susan Glaser for several parenting sessions at the preschool. These sessions covered topics ranging from navigating challenging issues to setting reasonable expectations. Parents were encouraged to share with each other, learning from one another while building community.

NAEYC International Conference: Over 9,000 educators came together for the largest early childhood conference in the world. Three teachers from The J attended, bringing a wealth of knowledge back to the preschool and placing our preschool on a path to be among the best.

Enrollment for the 2019/2020 school year is nearing capacity with over 80 students in 9 classes — in fact, some classes are already adding prospective students to a waitlist. The J remains thankful to Temple Mount Sinai, the Jewish Community Foundation, and the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso. With these organizations’ support, as well as individual donors and volunteers, the continuity of the 50-year tradition of Jewish preschool education in El Paso has been possible!
The Jewish community and other supporters of Israel gathered to celebrate the nation’s 71st Independence Day at the Keystone Heritage Park Botanical Gardens on May 5. When they left the packed parking lots, they walked into a setting unlike any other in our community’s history: a creatively designed “map” of Israel’s landmarks, each with activities for the whole family.

Presented by the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso and a small army of well-prepared volunteers, the afternoon was a joyous discovery of the beauty of Israel right here in El Paso. People wandered the desert environment from Tzfat to Tel Aviv and from The Golan to Jerusalem, stopping to eat, play, dance, and even pet farm animals at the “kibbutz.”

A handout marking the park’s Israel-inspired locations took participants across the map. They sipped Israeli wine at an elevated deck in Golan’s vineyards at the edge of a little pond that could be re-imagined as the Sea of Galilee and they placed prayers in a rock wall representing the Kotel. Children enjoyed a fun archaeologi-
The Jewish Voice

June 2019

Israel at 71

Israel@71 Sponsors

Café Dizengoff: Janet and Randy Wechter
Golan Winery: Robin and Tony Furman
Petting Zoo: Martha and Cliff Eisenberg
Supporters: Shari and Stuart Schwartz
Friends: Robert French, Lori and Alan Gaman, Susan Michelson and Bill Stein, Meralee and Sidney Schlusselberg

Todah Rabah to Israel@71 Sponsors

Cindy Graff Cohen
Editor, The Jewish Voice
The Federation’s 2019 Women’s Campaign Road Trip to the Pink Store in Palomas, Mexico, was a party on wheels. The morning started with brunch, coffee, and mimosas in front of Congregation B’nai Zion before Rabbi Stephen Leon shared a traveler’s prayer and a Talmud reading he had creatively interpreted for the occasion.

During the bus ride participants enjoyed hearing good news fortunes by a talented psychic whose insightful readings surprised and impressed several people with their accuracy. The block-long walk to the Pink Store was easy. The updated and beautiful new border crossing includes attractive landscaping and clean new buildings on both sides.

Before and after the group lunch, complete with mariachis and an impromptu line dance, everyone shopped at both the farmacias and the Pink Store. With the Pink Store’s truck and golf carts, all kinds of packages made it back to the bus and walking back to the United States and through Customs was fast and simple. People thoroughly enjoyed the road trip — and several women said they were ready to go again any time!

**Bar Mitzvahs: Mazel Tov!**

I am Leor Daniel Goldstein and I am excited to have my Bar Mitzvah at Temple Mount Sinai on June 1st. I am currently a 7th grader at Lincoln Middle School. I have been preparing this year to lead my service and teach my friends, family and congregation, and I am doing a teen philanthropy mitzvah project with my Sunday school class.

While I was preparing this year I also have been busy with my sports, judo, basketball and track. I love spending time with my friends, playing Fortnite, and being with my awesome animals: Bamboo and Rosy are my dogs, Till and Jay are my turtles and my cool chameleon is Darwin. My brother Elan, and my sister Dora already had their bar and bat mitzvahs and I look forward to mine too. My parents, Karen Herman and Randy Goldstein, and my grandparents Tova and Peter Herman are excited for me too. After my bar mitzvah, I get to go back to my summer camp at Camp Hess Kramer and see all my California friends. I love going to Jewish summer camp every year.

On May 18, 2019, Samuel Farley celebrated his becoming a Bar Mitzvah. He has put in many hours with his Bubbe preparing for this day. This last year at religious school, he was in a class that taught him the meaning of being a humanitarian. From there, he wanted his mitzvah project to involve animals. He is a registered volunteer and plans to be an active volunteer at the Humane Society this summer. When Samuel isn’t practicing Hebrew and going to religious school, he has played basketball at Hornedo Middle School and for the Wolverines city league team. He is very academically driven as he was inducted into the National Junior Honor Society. His mom and dad, Matt and JoAnne Farley, and his grandparents, Simon and Grace Bir, are so proud of the young man he has become.

**Happy Graduation!**

Lydia Duran graduated from Washington University in St. Louis with majors in Marketing/Supply Chain Management and a minor in Design. While at Wash U, Lydia was a senator and the PR project manager for student government, held various officer positions in Gamma Phi Beta, and served as a TA in the business school. She worked as a graphic designer, both for the university’s law school and as a freelancer. Her work has been featured in several publications authored by various professors. Having been a devoted coffee drinker since high school, Lydia started @nextcupblog on Instagram reviewing independent coffee houses in St. Louis. In June she will begin her career in advertising at Ogilvy in Chicago. Bob, Greta and Kaylon are so proud of her!
Temple Beth-El News

A full house enjoyed Temple Beth-El’s concert with Julie Silver, renowned Jewish singer/songwriter/recording artist, funded by a grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso.

Julie Silver played guitar and sang with Temple Beth-El’s Rabbi Larry Karol.

Camp Kadima celebrates 32nd anniversary

Founded in 1987 by Robin Gold, Camp Kadima is a summer camp for special needs children and adults. This year’s session runs from June 17 to July 5 at Congregation B’nai Zion. The camp provides a variety of field trips and activities, including swimming, therapeutic horsemanship, boating, vocational skills development, sports, sign language training, dancing, special guest visits, and more.

“We meet the needs of each individual camper,” says Robin, “We are proud to provide these unique services to the El Paso community and proud to be entering our 32nd season.” She adds that the staff is experienced in special education and the campers represent an array of disabilities.

For information and registration, contact Tom Murphy, the camp director, at 915-449-6473. The cost is $375 for the three-week session. The camp receives funds from the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso and individual donors. Donations may be sent to the Federation for the Camp Kadima Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Temple Beth-El students and faculty gather for a picture on the school year’s last day of Religious School.

Mazel Tov to Dr. Larry Lesser and his team for winning a Grand Prize in the 2019 National Science Foundation’s “We Are Mathematics” Video Competition in Washington, D.C. in May. Professor Lesser, left, joined his team before their Grand Prize-winning video was screened at the biennial National Math Festival, organized by the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute and attended by some 20,000 people.

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Your in for something fresh.
Every Other Wednesday: Café Europa

Borderland’s Café Europa invites senior members of our community for a Kosher style/vegetarian lunch and learning at the Federation’s offices from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. every other Wednesday. Come join the fun!

June 12 - Birthdays Celebration
June 26 - Dr. Ophra Leyser-Whalen, “How Social Sciences View Aging”
July 10 - Birthdays Celebration
July 24 - Dragonfly Songs with Alison Westermann

Community Safety Classes

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Classes to cover:
Active Shooter Emergencies
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June 20 & 27 6 pm - 10 pm
June 23 & 30 9 am - 5 pm
Space is Limited! Register today:
Prez@cbzep.org

At the El Paso Holocaust Museum in June

“The Anguish of Liberation as Reflected in Art”
Works created 1945-47 by Holocaust survivors
On loan from Yad Vashem in Jerusalem
Through July 5, 2019

Mazel Tov

Civil Engineering Professor Soheil Nazarian, Ph.D., received the 2019 UTEP Meritorious Service Faculty Award in May at the UTEP Honors Convocation.
Math Professor Larry Lesser, Ph.D., was elected to the UTEP Academy of Distinguished Teachers.

Chaplain’s Catering

Gerry Chaplain

3950 Doniphan, Suite P
El Paso, Texas 79922
(915) 585-0595
goodfood@whc.net

Letter to the Editor

My deepest gratitude and appreciation to the Federation for supplying the Shalom Shuttle during the times I needed to attend physical therapy. The company supplied excellent service, were always on time and provided fantastic drivers. The service helped make a difficult situation better. I urge anyone who made the service to take advantage of it. “Try it, you’ll like it.” Rochelle Saks

Congregation B’nai Zion Sisterhood

Congregation B’nai Zion Sisterhood
Announces 2019-21 Board
Co-Presidents: Debra Cohen, Sarah Williams
VP Membership: Debra Cohen
VP Programming: Sarah Williams
Treasurer: Blanca Carrasco
Recording Secretary: Dora Roe
Corresponding Secretary: Eileen Armour
Parliamentarian: Debra Cohen
Board Members: Holly Hernandez, Beth Kurland, Joyce Lieb, Alex Sosa, Anabel Wong

Thank you to the 2017-19 Board, you did a great job!

The Jewish Voice

10 | June 2019

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BETTER TOGETHER
L’Dor V’Dor: Four Generations of Jaffees in El Paso

Joyce Friedman Jaffee is a prolific and talented artist whose landscapes, portraits, and still-lifes fill her beautiful home, bringing color to every corner and hallway. Yet when she sits in her study, she has a different view: smiling faces everywhere you look as these walls are full of family pictures with happy children and good memories.

Although most of her four children, eleven grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren are spread out around the country, she is very glad to have a pair of great-grandsons here in El Paso. They represent the mantick’s fourth generation of family in her own hometown.

Richard (of blessed memory) and Joyce’s son Mike has lived in El Paso all his life, except while attending University of Texas in Austin. Mike and Susan, who grew up in Iowa but met Mike during a visit to El Paso while she was also in school at U.T, have three children. While Lindsay is an attorney in Denver, Melissa and Alex have returned to El Paso. Melissa and her husband Jeff Gelb are the proud parents of the El Paso great-grandchildren, Kenny and Cory.

Joyce and Richard’s three daughters – Leslie, Sharon and Laurie – live elsewhere, but see their mother often. In Austin, Leslie and Rick Otis are also grandparents: their daughter Julie and her husband Ben Walter have Joyce’s first two great-grandchildren, Noah and Addison.

The family certainly has its share of daughters; nine of Joyce’s grandchildren are girls. Joyce was one of Ernest and Diane Friedman’s three daughters and like both her sisters, Doris Eisenberg (of blessed memory) and Lainy Bookbinder, Joyce had three daughters, and two of them – Leslie and Laurie – have three daughters! (Of course, Joyce and Doris each had a son in addition: Mike Jaffee and Cliff Eisenberg.)

While Joyce is overjoyed and understandably proud of each of her family members, she points out something special that brings her great happiness: each of her four children and four married grandchildren chose Jewish spouses. That is a lot of huppahs, horas, and broken wine glasses to celebrate!

Cindy Cuff Cohen
Editor, The Jewish Voice

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Childcare available from 7 am to 6 pm

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Start with as little as $1000 and your contribution to the Jewish Community Foundation of El Paso is on its way to helping our community continue to grow and prosper.

It’s simple, but then again, some of the most amazing things in our world are.

To learn more about how you can invest in a Jewish future in El Paso, visit www.jcfep.org and please spread the word.

For information on how you can start your own fund with us, please contact Robert French at 915-842-8934.