Message from our CEO Rimma Zelfand
The Power of Community

“I don’t know where I would be without JF&CS.”

“JF&CS saved my life.”

“Because of JF&CS I can give my family a better life.”

These profound statements illustrate the work and mission of JF&CS. Every single day we improve people’s lives, and in some cases, we change lives for generations to come. We do this by establishing relationships with our clients and taking the time to get to know them and their families. We talk with clients about their objectives and goals and the obstacles they face such as hunger, homelessness, and financial instability, and we try to support them by giving them food, emergency financial assistance, and legal advice. We also provide the tools to develop positive connections with their children and to help them navigate services for aging parents. We strengthen families and create generational change by giving loans and scholarships to advance educational and professional opportunities.

However, we do not do this work alone. On the pages that follow, you will learn about our partnerships with donors like Cindy and Rubin Gruber, Jackie Bechek, Debby Stein Sharpe, the Krupp Family Foundation, and remarkable corporations like Eastern Bank. In addition you will learn about our proud associations with Keshet, CJP, Alzheimer’s Association, and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs of Massachusetts.

I call this “the Power of Community,” and on April 12, 2018, I hope you will join us as we celebrate and honor Barry Shrage, President of Combined Jewish Philanthropies. More than any person I know, Barry has the gift of mobilizing people to work for and give back to their community. Over the past 30 years, Barry has strengthened our community by creating partnerships with synagogues, agencies, and day schools, and most recently with Catholic Charities to address the legal issues facing immigrants.

I think that Barry’s greatest lesson and legacy is that we each have the power to change lives and make a difference. I am inspired every day by our donors, volunteers, and staff who give their time, talents, and resources to transform and enrich the lives of families for generations. I look forward to seeing you on April 12!

Rimma Zelfand
Chief Executive Officer
Different Cultures, Same Sacrifice:

JF&CS Shoulder to Shoulder Delegation Visits Israel to Learn More About Resiliency Programs Supporting Military Members and Their Families

“We met dedicated people who work effortlessly to help all Israelis—soldiers and civilians—who experience trauma as a result of ongoing conflict in this sacred land. Although their work is much broader than JF&CS Shoulder to Shoulder’s work, their commitment to try to positively impact the family is the same,” says Stacie Fredricksson, JF&CS Shoulder to Shoulder program manager and former US Air Force Reserves member.

Fredricksson was one of four Shoulder to Shoulder staff and advisory board members who visited Israel in May as part of a collaborative research project through a grant awarded by the Andrea & Charles Bronfman Philanthropies in 2016. Focusing on innovative practices addressing the integration of military members into civilian life, the collaboration could not have been a better fit. Shoulder to Shoulder provides unique home-based services, along with connections to community resources and family events, to strengthen the resiliency and improve the lives of military and veteran families throughout Eastern and Central MA.

Margot Davis, PhD, a member of the Shoulder to Shoulder Advisory Committee, is Senior Research Associate at the Institute for Behavioral Health at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University. Davis was responsible for drafting the grant proposal for the project and for bringing Shoulder to Shoulder together with the Israeli groups and universities that became part of this initiative.

Davis, Fredricksson, and Shoulder to Shoulder founder and JF&CS Board President Jamie Grossman and Major (US Army, retired) Bob Kinder, met with numerous Israeli resiliency programs and mental health professionals to study how Israel deals with the effects of trauma on military members and the reintegration of military members back into society and back into their family units after service. Because of its long history of addressing non-combat community crises as well as the diverse needs of post-deployment reintegration, Israel is a good collaborator for the development of best practices in the US.

Focusing on the family as an agent of both change and stability, the JF&CS delegation sought to answer the following questions:

1) What innovative practices are promoted in Israel to foster family resilience?
2) What indicators are used to measure program impact?
3) What policies are in place to support the work of reintegration into the soldiers’ home community?

They learned that despite some obvious differences between service in the US and in Israel, the struggles faced by soldiers upon deployment were strikingly similar.

“As staff and advisory committee members of Shoulder to Shoulder, we took with us the experience of serving US military and veteran families. We shared some of the struggles and challenges US military and veterans face, and in turn, learned how IDF soldiers deal with those same challenges,” Fredricksson remarks. “We learned quite a lot about resilience,” she adds.

“Military families are at greater risk of facing major adversities, which may result in damage to relationships, depression, anxiety, PTS, and numerous other stressors,” continued Fredricksson. “Thus, it is essential to tend to our resilience stores regularly to insulate us from these unique risk factors. By doing so, we can ensure that we are more capable of ‘weathering the storm’ when we have to.”

“In the US, service members do not share stories and emotions, which results in a lack of empathy from civilians as well as a stoicism about the military. There’s a disconnect,” remarks Grossman. “Israel recognizes that families are on the front line of seeing the need for help. They realize that families must be supported. A stronger family equals a stronger service member. In Israel, we learned that outreach is a key component of our program as military members often shy away from asking for assistance. We continue to identify need and increase our outreach efforts, ensuring that the military communities know that JF&CS is here for them.”

Shoulder to Shoulder hopes to work together more in the future with the people and organizations it called upon in Israel. “You never know what will come of these collaborations. They can be quite fruitful,” says Davis. “We came away with such a breadth of understanding. It was great. This is the beginning of many other collaborations with Israel and the military population and other populations that experience trauma. We all learn from each other.

“I want to give kudos to the Bronfman Family Foundation,” she adds. “Programs like this have real vision. The model of an academic institute collaborating with a community program like Shoulder to Shoulder is quite a wonderful synergy.”
Dear Friends,

Recently, my younger son was watching Back to the Future for the umpteenth time and in an attempt to make the most of some family bonding, I sat down to watch with him. I was struck by one of Doc Emmet Brown’s lines, “Your future is whatever you make it, so make it a good one.” I let that line sink in for a few minutes and it struck me that at JF&CS, we are working very hard to make our future a good one. We are literally as focused on the present as we are on the future.

Our agency is fiscally sound, thanks to the generosity of our loyal supporters and the wisdom of the leadership of our Board of Directors, Finance and Development Committee members. In fiscal year 2017, we engaged more new donors and volunteers than ever before. Our Corporate Partners Program is flourishing with volunteer engagement and sponsorship from close to a dozen new organizations meaningfully engaged in our work. And our special events not only achieved our fundraising goals, but engaged new committee members and guests. In fact, our Women’s Breakfast realized more than 25% new attendees and our CHAI event welcomed 100 new guests!

For more than 150 years, JF&CS has literally been “Caring for Generations,” and as we look ahead to the next 150 years, we must be certain to ensure our agency remains fiscally sound, able to provide support, resources, and services to improve the lives of each person who walks through our doors. As we look ahead to the future security of the agency, I am proud to announce the launch of the Tree of Life Society, the JF&CS Legacy Society.

In his book, “Legacy: The Giving of Life’s Greatest Treasures,” Dr. Barrie Sanford Greiff shares, “…the answer for tomorrow, is to build a legacy today, to bequeath not only what we have earned, but what we have learned.” Often, people equate estate planning with one’s death, but I believe that Dr. Greiff sheds a new light on the concept of “legacy.” How can we ensure that those values and ideals, that the passion of our life continues long after our own lifetimes?

This year, we are eager to debunk some widely held myths about Planned Giving. First, Gift Planning is not complicated. And second, making a Legacy Gift is not only for people over 70. At JF&CS, we are eager to talk about the very simple ways that anyone who cares about our work can easily ensure that your values will enrich our agency for generations to come.

On the pages that follow, I hope that you will be inspired by the stories of the impact we are making on our clients’ lives and our community and that you will be motivated by the stories of how philanthropy is making a difference today and well into our future.

My personal thanks is beyond measure for your generosity, your kindness, and your commitment to improving lives.

Warmly,

Wendy Schiffman Wilsker  
Senior VP of Institutional Advancement

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Donor Advised Fund Simplifies Giving


It’s a good thing that Debbi’s Donor Advised Fund simplifies giving, as she and her family donate often! Tzedakah, or the importance of charity, stands at the center of her Judaism. During a recent service her rabbi spoke about what it means to “give until it hurts,” and Debbi had to smile. She knew exactly what he meant: giving is a priority for the Stein Sharpe family.

The value of tzedakah is one that she learned from her parents; even with limited resources, they gave with their time and their money. It’s also a value that Debbi is reminded of with her involvement at Temple Beth David of the South Shore in Canton, Massachusetts. Debbi spent ten years teaching preschool at Temple Beth David, and each week began class by speaking about the importance of giving back.

Giving is also something that Debbi hopes to pass along to her own children. While her three children are adults now, Debbi first learned of JF&CS when her kids were young. Temple Beth David of the South Shore joined JF&CS in sponsoring drivers for JF&CS Family Table, New England’s largest kosher food pantry. Debbi and her children were looking for a service project that the family could engage in together, and Family Table was the perfect fit. Together they helped pack and deliver food throughout the community. Assisting around hunger remains an important part of Debbi’s giving.

Debbi’s Donor Advised Fund keeps her giving by simplifying and streamlining the process. “Back in the day, before the fund, I had to write checks to everybody, which was really cumbersome,” shared Debbi. “With my Donor Advised Fund, it’s just a few clicks of the mouse and the money can go where I want it to go. It makes it easy to manage my charitable budget.”

Debbi also pointed out that her Donor Advised Fund helps her track her tax deductions, and, because it’s so tax efficient, she’s able to give even more.

“There is hunger in our community and there is hunger in the greater community,” Debbi told us. “JF&CS does good work and I’m glad to support the program through my Donor Advised Fund.”
At our CHAI Champions event on November 5, we recognized 18 extraordinary advocates for people with disabilities.

Meet our 2017 CHAI Champions!

The Association of Developmental Disability Providers (ADDP) has taken a leading role over the years in supporting providers (including JF&CS) and helping to move legislation and programming for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities forward.

Babson College embraces a strategic vision that states its commitment to create “a diverse, multicultural, and inclusive community of highly talented students, faculty, and staff characterized by respect, understanding, and appreciation of the uniqueness and value of all people.”

Kay Bernon is the cofounder and board chairperson at the Berkshire Hills Music Academy, a unique school that uses music to help individuals with intellectual disabilities develop skills to enhance communication, independence, and employment opportunities. Kay has been a champion for nurturing the abilities and talents of people with disabilities.

If you live in or near Newton, you’ve been to Cabot’s Ice Cream. Cabot’s is a family owned and operated old-fashioned ice cream parlor and restaurant, known for its homemade premium ice cream and frozen yogurt creations. Joe Prestejohn runs the restaurant with sister Susan and wife Carol and has a commitment to hiring people with disabilities.

Commonwealth Financial Group (CFG) not only wants to improve the lives of its clients, but also the people and communities that surround it. CFG’s volunteer efforts are primarily in the special needs community via a program within CFG known as SpecialCare, which supports individuals and families that have a loved one with special needs.

Exceptional Lives provides information to parents and caregivers through personalized how-to guides that are available through the web and via mobile devices. These guides walk parents through complex processes such as how to obtain special education services for their children and how to get started with early intervention, as well as connect users to agencies that offer benefits and services.

Robin Fabiano was a long-time special education leader in the Newton Public Schools before moving to Westwood High School two years ago. Her focus has been on integration, as well as developing more opportunities for students with disabilities.

Prior to his passing in 2016, Gerry Feldman, z”l, was the longest-serving member of the JF&CS Board of Directors and his involvement with the organization spanned more than 30 years. Gerry demonstrated his passion for JF&CS Services for People with Disabilities by designating an annual gift to the program through his estate.

Now in its second decade, Gateways: Access to Jewish Education provides a comprehensive set of services to students, families, and educators across all Jewish educational settings to promote the meaningful and successful inclusion of students with disabilities in Jewish education and in Jewish life.

The Help A Little One Foundation (H.A.L.O.) is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for children with neurological disease by providing tangible items and supporting programs that increase physical comfort, facilitate social interaction, and build acceptance in the greater community. Additionally, H.A.L.O. endeavors to assist and support the caregivers of these children.

Sue Loring is the Director of HMEAs Autism Resource Central. She has a son with autism and has been a member of Advocates for Autism of MA since 2004, as well as a member of the local DDS Citizens Advisory Board and the Statewide Advisory Council to DDS, and a member of the Governor’s Commission on Autism.

Maimonides School in Brookline strives to imbue its students with an attitude of respect toward others, aligning with its goals of inclusion and appreciation of differences. Maimonides has partnered with JF&CS CHAI Works Day Program to bring CHAI Works participants to the school to serve hot lunches to the children four days a week.
Eve Megargel is an author, educator, filmmaker, and pioneer in advocating that all individuals on the autism spectrum are independent communicators who are capable of self-expression and social relationships. Eve consults, collaborates, and engages on key autism issues and initiatives with several organizations, including Massachusetts General Hospital and Jewish Family & Children’s Service.

Steve Merritt is the Executive Director of the Norwood Housing Authority. He was instrumental in creating the JF&CS “Yellow House,” which gave seven individual adults with disabilities the opportunity to live independently.

The Ruderman Family Foundation is committed to supporting adults with disabilities and helping to provide meaningful job training and work opportunities. They have funded the very successful Transitions to Work Internship Program in collaboration with CJP and JVS since 2011.

Ken W. Shulman is an attorney at Day Pitney, LLP, who assists individuals and families with estate planning and related issues for older adults and families with children with disabilities. He also frequently serves as a trustee for families with special needs.

Sandy Slavet has worked with children and adults with disabilities since 1970. In 2001, she became the director of a newly formed information and referral service for people with disabilities, family members, and providers at JF&CS, which became the Disabilities Resource Network. She has held that position since May of 2001 and in 2012, her position expanded to include Director of Jewish Life Services for People with Disabilities at JF&CS.

Howard Trachtman considers himself as having experience with mental health treatment and a peer to other people with mental health diagnoses. Howard turned his experiences with mental health treatment into an opportunity to become a Certified Peer Specialist and a Certified Psychiatric Rehabilitation Practitioner.

Meet Joan Ingersoll, Vice President of Disability Services

It is such a privilege for me to be the new Vice President of Disability Services at JF&CS. After many years living and working outside of Massachusetts, I am thrilled to have returned to this area and excited to be part of such an amazing organization. I have joined a talented and compassionate team of colleagues who are invested in providing exceptional services to our participants and their families.

Like many people in this field, I had a family member with a developmental disability.

My grandmother’s older sister, Dora Goldsmith, was born with disabilities that impacted her cognitive and physical development. The oldest of three children, Dora lived with her family in Winthrop until her mother died when Dora was 16. My grandmother and her brother were sent to live with different relatives, but no one would take Dora. So my great-grandfather brought her to the Wrentham State School. Dora lived at Wrentham for the next 40 years.

In the 1960’s, as the state tried to address the overcrowding and poor conditions at Wrentham, Dora was moved to the Cushing Hospital in Framingham. That is when I got to know her. I would visit her with my mother and grandmother every couple of months, and each summer she stayed with my grandparents for a few weeks. Dora was a kind and dependable companion to me; we played cards and jacks and board games – I looked forward to her visits and we were both sad when she had to go back to Cushing.

Although Cushing was definitely an upgrade from Wrentham, Dora spent most of her time in a large “day room” doing puzzles and knitting items like potholders. She never attended school or received educational services, but she could read, write, use a calendar, and do basic math. Her mother must have taught her all of these skills as a child.

My grandmother learned to accept Dora’s living situation, but I never did. Although the group home movement had taken hold in the 1970’s, the state decided Dora was too old to live in the community.

In 1976 my grandmother received notification from the state that they were moving Dora out of Cushing and into a nursing home in Brookline. And that is where she spent the final 15 years of her life. When she died at the age of 88 there were just a few of us at her funeral.

And that is where she spent the final 15 years of her life. When she died at the age of 88 there were just a few of us at her funeral.

Since joining JF&CS, I have reflected on what a perfect place this would have been for her. When I attend our Shabbat dinners and see the community that is created, I know that Aunt Dora would have found friendship and spirituality. When I talk with participants about their volunteer work, I can picture how proud Aunt Dora would have been to help others. And I imagine that with support, she could have held a job and had financial independence.

I have often thought about how different Dora’s life would have been if she were born 50 years later. Her experience inspired me to choose a career in this field. My personal vision is that every one of our participants finds purpose, friendship, community, joy, and meaning in their lives.
Adoption Resources Receives Generous Grant from the Krupp Family Foundation for LGBTQ Equality Project

We are pleased to share that JF&CS Adoption Resources was granted funding by the Krupp Family Foundation to deliver targeted support to LGBTQ families who pursue adoption as a means of creating and expanding their families. Adoption Resources plans to mitigate the financial burden and the financial risk of adoption for LGBTQ families, boost the program’s capacity to provide LGBTQ-inclusive services, and provide support specifically to LGBTQ adoptive families through community outreach and education programming.

For many LGBTQ families, the financial obligation and risk of adoption will necessitate a delay to start their family while they work to save the necessary funds. Sometimes these financial barriers preclude adoption altogether. While there are other financial resources available for adoptive parents, many of these exclude LGBTQ families because of religious restrictions and are simply insufficient to meet the needs of the many families who require financial assistance in order to adopt. Thanks to this newly awarded and very generous funding, Adoption Resources will be able to pilot a new loan program to allow LGBTQ families to undertake the adoption process when they are ready by partially funding their placement fees and providing flexibility to repay the loan over time with zero interest.

In addition, Adoption Resources is excited to create workshops and educational sessions for pre- and post-adoptive families on topics such as transracial adoption, financing adoption, private adoption, navigating open adoptions, and caring for substance-exposed newborns. A number of these workshops will be co-sponsored by Keshet, a national organization that works for full LGBTQ equality and inclusion in Jewish life. While these educational workshops will be targeted to the LGBTQ community, they will be open to the community at large and many topics will be relevant to adoptive families of all backgrounds.

Betsy Hochberg, Director of Adoption Resources, shared, “JF&CS Adoption Resources has a rich history of serving all families. Our work focuses on finding homes for every baby. We hope that this grant will enable us to develop a truly diverse group of waiting adoptive families.”

Idit Klein, Executive Director of Keshet, stated, “We applaud JF&CS Adoption Resources and the Krupp Family Foundation for their leadership on this important issue. Responding to a critical need in the LGBTQ community, we hope that this initiative will set a new standard for LGBTQ-inclusive adoption practices for JF&CS and other adoption providers nationwide.”

My Journey to Motherhood

My name is Kate Rooney and I am a recent graduate of Jewish Family & Children’s Service Healthy Families program. My daughter Ariya and I participated in Healthy Families for over three years, and we owe so much of where we are today to the support and guidance given through this program.

I would like to share my story with you, in the form of snapshot moments over the past four years.

May 6, 2013

The pregnancy test is positive. My head is spinning. I feel like a walking stereotype; I never imagined I’d be the one 16 and pregnant.

How can I take care of a child when I can barely take care of myself?

I’ve dug myself into a hole these past few years, with my depression as my shovel. I’m in state custody, and in and out of treatment facilities every month. I’m supposed to be a junior in high school, but I have barely any high school credits to my name.

What will my mother say? What will my probation officer say? All I know is that right now I’m on a road to nowhere, but soon I’ll have a tiny life that will be walking beside me.

I need to change my path, but how?

September 2013

It took four months, but I’m slowly but surely turning myself around.

I attended summer school and got my driver’s license. My sobriety has given me a newfound clarity, and the shadow of depression is falling further behind me every day.

I’ve been released from state custody and juvenile probation, and have enrolled in night courses at MassBay Community College with the hopes of graduating high school in the spring. I feel healthier than I have in years, but I still feel like I am only at ground zero.

My family is in disbelief. While my mother respects that it’s my decision, and will never stop loving me, I can sense her doubt at the thought of me being a mother.

I definitely have a long way to go to be ready to take on motherhood.
Everybody Could Use a JF&CS

“People shouldn’t be so shocked to hear about making a bequest,” says Jackie Bechek. “When you’re nearly 60, it’s not a big deal to have a will. You need to be realistic and you need to have things in place for the future.”

Jackie, a long-time JF&CS supporter, recently surprised us by including the agency with a very generous gift in her estate plan. She is part of a growing trend of younger individuals and families who are crafting estate plans to include charities like JF&CS that are meaningful to them.

“The only way for organizations that you believe in to continue is to put your money where your mouth is and make a bequest so you can be sure that they can continue,” adds Jackie, who first connected with JF&CS several years ago through friends who volunteered in the Lauren & Mark Rubin Visiting Moms’ program. Soon, Jackie became a volunteer Visiting Mom herself. “I love the program,” says Jackie. “Every single young mother could use it. I certainly could have used it when I was a young mother – my mother didn’t live nearby.”

“I think every city in the country should have it and that’s why I continue to support it, because I feel that the strength of that program should spread to other cities, and now I see that it’s already spreading to Tel Aviv, Australia, and Ukraine. It seems so obvious – it’s not technical, it’s not difficult. It’s just being there for somebody and that’s just what young mothers really need because it can be so isolating being a young mother.”

Jackie’s connection to the Visiting Moms program became so strong that she also joined the advisory committee for the JF&CS Center for Early Relationship Support (CERS), which is responsible for early parenting groups like Visiting Moms within the agency. She became a valued supporter of the annual JF&CS Women’s Breakfast, as well.

She had been a volunteer Visiting Mom for more than five years when Jackie separated from her husband and, through a twist of fate, moved to Greenville, South Carolina in 2012.

Although Jackie no longer lives in Massachusetts, her commitment to JF&CS has not diminished. Last year, she flew from South Carolina to Boston five times to attend CERS committee meetings. “If you make a commitment, you have to be there,” she remarks. “If you believe in a cause, you have got to do the work.” Jackie also points out that she and her family have always been involved in Jewish social service organizations. Both her mother and mother-in-law were social workers at Jewish Family Service of Metro Detroit, each for more than 30 years.

In choosing to include JF&CS in her estate plan, Jackie notes that it was a natural fit. A strong supporter of many charities, including Brown University and Milton Academy, she included them in her estate plan, as well. “I don’t think it’s fair to put the burden of deciding which charities to support on my children after I’m gone,” she notes.

“We are so grateful to Jackie for her legacy gift,” says Wendy Wilsker, Senior Vice President of Institutional Advancement at JF&CS. “As a Visiting Mom, Jackie understood the importance of the early bond between a mother and infant. The support she provided literally planted seeds for the parent-child relationship to blossom. By including JF&CS in her estate plan, Jackie is again ensuring a strong future for generations of families.”

“JF&CS is always working so hard to raise money,” Jackie adds. The work JF&CS does is phenomenal. It’s life changing for people. I want this to continue beyond me, beyond [CERS Founding Director] Peggy Kaufman. I really want it to be part of the next generation, too. Everybody could use a JF&CS.”

It’s easy to name JF&CS as a beneficiary.

Go Online: Access your financial account online and add Jewish Family & Children’s Service as a beneficiary. Our tax ID number is 04-2104356.

Contact your plan administrator: Request a beneficiary designation form. An attorney is not needed to make this type of gift.

Call us: Ruth Maffa, Senior Development Officer, is here to help! Contact Ruth today at rmaffa@jfcsboston.org or 781-693-5059.

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January 2014

My pregnancy has gone smoothly but I am so nervous about my imminent due date.

Thankfully, I found support from Jewish Family & Children’s Service Healthy Families.

This program serves to guide young moms through the challenges of new motherhood and ensures that both parent and child are thriving. Through this program, I found Rachel Wallace, a family support advocate. Rachel radiates compassion and wisdom, and helps me set goals for my parenting, as well as my academic and personal aspirations.

It’s a relief to know I’ll have her guidance when my daughter arrives in a few short weeks; but at the same time I am overwhelmed just thinking about all of the logistics and details that need to be figured out before my baby comes.

One of the first things Rachel helped me do was to obtain clothing and baby items from the JF&CS Center for Early Relationship Support. This helped me to feel a sense of independence and optimism.

On January 10, 2014, my daughter, Ariya, was born healthy and beautiful at 6 lbs, 13 ounces.

June 2014

Against all odds, I received my high school diploma with my class.

It was difficult because of my challenges with finding child care. I was denied childcare vouchers when it was time for me to return to school.

Rachel immediately guided me to a different organization that could provide vouchers. Although there was a three-year waiting list, Rachel found a way to get them to me on time, and helped me find the perfect daycare for my daughter.

It was such a relief to have a place for Ariya, but I have to admit it was challenging to find myself at a child care center with women in an entirely different place in life than I was. But that feeling of fleeing as I knew I had the community of other young mothers who were also in the JF&CS Healthy Families program

With the help from JF&CS I graduated from high school, accepted a job, and continued my attendance to Wentworth Institute of Technology beginning in the fall.

JF&CS seems to have an endless network of services, and has put me in touch with college programs, legal consultants, early intervention, and nutritional advisors… Rachel is always on top of making sure that Ariya and I are healthy.

And Ariya is already a four years old today, and a truly beautiful little ray of sunshine.

June 2015

I’ve been seeing Rachel for close to three years –

Continued on page 8
The Importance of Giving Back

When Cindy Gruber was a small child, her grandmother kept a tin can in their kitchen. The can, which served as a tzedekah box (a way to collect donations for the Jewish community), was a daily reminder of the importance of giving back.

Now, quite a few years later, those values remain strong with Cindy and her husband Rubin. The Grubers’ recent support of Jewish Family & Children’s Service is already making a difference. Their gift through CJP is helping the Bet Tzedek Legal Services and Emergency Financial Assistance programs flourish.

“The Grubers’ gift has been critical in enabling us to expand our capacity in the area of benefits advocacy. Many JF&CS clients are low income and struggle to navigate the complex rules that govern assistance programs,” shared Rachel Pemstein, the director of JF&CS Bet Tzedek Legal Services. “As a result of this generous contribution, our benefits advocates are able to focus on the needs of these clients as they seek access to public benefits, primarily SNAP (food stamps). Cindy and Rubin have been crucial partners in these efforts.”

The Grubers are no strangers to philanthropy, having given generously to CJP in the past as well as providing scholarships to students in need at their respective alma maters. Cindy is also a founding member and former Chair of the Women’s Leadership Council at Lahey Health in Burlington, MA, former Board Chair of The Wellness Community, former board member of the Walker School in Needham, MA, a member of the Hestia Fund in Boston, MA, and a member of Women of Impact, a national group of women leaders trying to make an impact on healthcare.

Cindy and Rubin Gruber are also personally familiar with the feeling of need. Rubin’s story starts with humble beginnings and Cindy herself experienced tough financial times when she was young.

As a single mother, Cindy struggled through a difficult child support battle, an experience that resonated with her when she first heard about Bet Tzedek Legal Services. “I know how difficult it can be to keep fighting for your legal rights when you don’t have the financial resources.” Thanks to the support of her parents, she was able to build a successful career but never forgot her earlier struggles.

The importance of community, and the very real way that JF&CS supports the Jewish community, made the Grubers’ very generous gift an easy decision.

Cindy shared that it is important to support “Jewish organizations that lend assistance to the community. These are challenging times for people, and we never know when we’re a heartbeat away from needing help—whether it be legal help, an issue with mental or physical health, or financial stress. The one thing that should connect us all is that we care for people in our community. We must look out for each other and show kindness to each other.”

While Cindy’s Jewish values influenced her decision to give to JF&CS, she was quick to point out that “Jewish values are universal human values that we should all share as citizens of the Earth.”

Above, left to right: Kate, Ariya, and Rachel Wallace

and during that time the Center for Early Relationship Support has been my lifeline. Rachel has provided infinite wisdom on every phase of Ariya’s growth, routinely checking that she is meeting her developmental milestones.

Rachel helped me through a rocky path in my breastfeeding relationship with Ariya and we are now approaching a year and a half of nursing.

Last week, Healthy Families organized an outing to Drumlin Farm. It was so nice to let Ariya explore the farm with kids her age while I got to spend time with moms my age. Outings like these, and the six-week group series that Healthy Families hosts several times a year, remind me that I am not alone.

June 2017

I can’t believe that in just a year I will receive my bachelor’s degree in biomedical engineering.

This summer is going to be a busy one, with twenty credits of courses, two research projects, and working parttime as a research assistant, but I’ll balance the stress with plenty of time in the sunshine with Ariya.

I can’t believe what a beautiful three-year-old she has grown into. I feel grateful for the balance I have achieved between being a mother, a student, and an employee.

It feels so good to be acknowledged for what I have accomplished: last week, I was inducted into the national honors society for engineering technology, Tau Alpha Pi, and I’ve consistently been acknowledged on the Dean’s List during my time at Wentworth.

Healthy Families has been such an important part of my support system, getting me to where I am today – a healthy and happy place.

Motherhood is mentally, physically, and spiritually transforming. I am making sure to take what I have learned from this experience to create a loving and secure environment for my daughter. I am eternally grateful for all that JF&CS – and particularly Rachel Wallace – has done for me and my family.

Actually, I have recently completed an ambassador program so I can be a role model for other new moms!
Taking the Lead: Supporting People Impacted by Dementia

Starting a Memory Café: The JF&CS Massachusetts Memory Café Toolkit

Isolation… fear…embarrassment. These emotions are often experienced by people living with Alzheimer’s or a related disorder and their care partners. Memory cafés have been created to combat these feelings, and to promote new friendships and a sense of community.

A memory café is a social gathering for individuals living with dementia and their care partners. It provides a welcoming atmosphere and offers social connection, enlivening activities, and information to an often neglected community.

Last year, JF&CS helped support the spread of cafés with its introduction of the Massachusetts Memory Café Toolkit. Developed by Beth Soltzberg, Director of JF&CS Alzheimer’s/Related Disorders Family Support, with generous support from the Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging (MCOA), this is the only memory café resource to include downloadable templates that can be edited and adapted for use by a new memory café and include sample flyers, planning worksheets, a guide for guest artists, registration and budget templates, and a tip sheet for volunteers.

Did You Know?

The first memory café was started in 1997 in Holland and the model spread around the world. By 2011, Massachusetts had its first café in Marlborough. The second memory café opened at JF&CS Headquarters in Waltham in 2014 and after receiving many inquiries and requests for assistance, JF&CS started the Percolator Network, a mutual assistance forum for those wanting to start or sustain a memory café.

The Percolator Network: Success through Collaboration

In 2014, JF&CS launched the Percolator Memory Café Network, which was started with generous funding from the Rita K. and Stanley H. Kaplan Family Foundation, to encourage the efficient and coordinated development of memory cafés throughout Massachusetts. Thanks to the Percolator, Massachusetts is now home to more than 70 memory cafés, one of the largest concentrations of cafés in the country. Leaders in other states are increasingly seeking to learn how our network has made this possible.

Without the Percolator, most memory cafés in Massachusetts simply would not exist, and its impact has been profound. As one guest shared, “This is the first positive activity we’ve had in months…we are ready to become café groupies!”

JF&CS Leads Dementia Friends Implementation in MA

Dementia Friends is a global movement launched by the Alzheimer’s Society in the UK to change the way people think, act, and talk about dementia. Recently, Dementia Friends has come to the US, and JF&CS is leading its implementation in Massachusetts. We decided to take on this role because we know that reducing stigma and increasing public awareness can make communities more inclusive, respectful, and safe for people living with dementia and those who care about them. This is exactly what Dementia Friends aims to do.

As the Master Trainer for Massachusetts, JF&CS will train volunteer Champions to lead information sessions in their communities, organizations, and workplaces. These sessions teach participants key messages about dementia and help them explore how dementia affects daily life. Participants then turn their understanding into practical actions that can help those living with dementia in their communities.

JF&CS is honored that the managing organizations of the Dementia Friendly Massachusetts Initiative support its role in spearheading this new program, and are assisting in its rollout across the state.

Balancing Act: A Support Group for Adult Children of Parents with Dementia

“I fought it for so long. I didn’t want to believe that my accomplished and competent mother had dementia,” says Heather. “As soon as I gave into it and opened myself to being educated and supported, I found another whole world out there, beginning with JF&CS.”

Heather is a participant in Balancing Act, the JF&CS monthly support and discussion group for adults who have a parent with dementia. Facilitated by experienced social workers, the group encourages participants to share wisdom and encouragement. “Just knowing that this group is there with information, support, and understanding is helpful. It’s so nice to know that I’m not alone in this, nor is my mom,” adds Heather.

“Our family, through the Lebovitz Family Charitable Trust, has sponsored both the leadership summits and the Memory Café. We feel so proud to support JF&CS and the initiatives they have created. They have truly been leaders in our community and pioneers in the Alzheimer’s area. They are really making a difference in the community and we’re thrilled with the results. It has been so gratifying to get feedback from the participants showing that JF&CS and the Alzheimer’s/Related Disorders Family Support team are really making an impact in this area.”

—Beth Backer, Trustee, Lebovitz Family Charitable Trust
Your Elder Experts: Providing Answers and Assistance

Picking up the phone and declaring "I need help" can often be an overwhelming moment. When you need help for your aging parent or an older adult who doesn’t have family support, that call can be downright daunting—especially when you are starting down a path with hundreds of options and no idea where to begin.

That’s where the aging life care managers of Your Elder Experts come in. Karen Wasserman, Your Elder Experts Director, explained, “The Your Elder Experts team can help a family navigate what options best match their personal resources, and what solutions are appropriate, both for right now and in the future.”

That first phone call can be tough, but Your Elder Experts is there to offer the level of help that feels right for you. Sometimes what you need is some advice to get you pointed in the right direction, and sometimes you need someone to walk step-by-step with you through the entire process.

“Consultations,” shared Wasserman, “are where we meet with an older adult, a family, or a caregiver to offer education and advice on the process and what is available. We can also be a part of the whole process, from acting as eyes and ears for someone who is unable to be as hands-on as they would like, to supporting transitions around living situations, medical issues, or crisis management.

“It can be incredibly difficult to go to a nursing home knowing you’re looking for [a place for] yourself or your parents — no one wants to,” Wasserman continued, “but sometimes it’s the appropriate place. Going in with someone who can have a professional distance and then talk about it after can be very helpful.”

Your Elder Experts can be the teammate of an only child — or serve as a buffer when familial relationships are strained. For children who live in a different state than their parents, Your Elder Experts can act as ‘Johnny-on-the-spot’ during a crisis, updating you on the situation and keeping medical professionals in the loop regarding medications and healthcare needs of the older adult.

For Andrew Shure and Jeffry Musman, Your Elder Experts meant answers where they previously had none. When their business partner, Joe, fell ill, they had no idea how to find the end of life care he needed. Luckily, a co-worker recommended they call Your Elder Experts.

“We went from having no idea how to start—one day he was working, the next day he was never to return to his home,” said Andrew and Jeff. “Thankfully, we had help with every piece of that process. Susan, our care manager, helped us understand the process and make an educated decision.”

It was important for Joe, their partner, to be a part of this process. Andrew and Jeff both worried about how he would react to someone coming in and offering to take the lead, but Joe very quickly realized that he could trust Susan and his team at Your Elder Experts.

Andrew and Jeff agreed; “Susan, who we knew not at all, has become one of our friends. She was an incredibly important person in the process. We would not have been able to get through this without her—she had options for us when we had no options. For anyone going through these kinds of issues, this is the best money you’ll spend in the process.”

Andrew and Jeff know personally just how daunting the process of caring for a sick loved one can be, but they both agree: pick up the phone and call.

JF&CS Awarded $10,000 Grant from Eastern Bank

We are proud to announce that Jewish Family & Children’s Service (JF&CS) has been awarded a $10,000 grant from the Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation’s Targeted Grant program to fund home visits and support groups for immigrant parents of young children through the JF&CS Center for Early Relationship Support (CERS).

Each year, the Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation’s Targeted Grant program focuses on a different need in the community. In 2017, the Targeted Grant program will donate more than $1.5 million to organizations working to support immigrants in communities served by Eastern Bank. In recent months, new parents who are immigrants have become especially vulnerable due to rising fear, isolation, and emotional strain caused by uncertainty surrounding their sense of belonging in their communities.

Our Lauren & Mark Rubin Visiting Moms’ program supports these families throughout the critical first year of life when a secure relationship with a responsive caregiver — usually the mother — is essential to healthy development. The grant will enable CERS to increase the hours of our Spanish-speaking staff to serve additional Spanish-speaking new moms, as well as immigrants from other areas of the world. Almost 50% of the new parents served by the Visiting Moms program are immigrants to the US. For more than 25 years, the Visiting Moms program has been providing mother-to-mother support through weekly home visits throughout the first year of parenthood so that parents can provide the responsive, consistent care their babies need to thrive. The goals of these visits are to improve parenting competence, reduce maternal depression, and strengthen the mother-baby bond. Additionally, the program provides free weekly support groups that empower parents to find out what works best for them while helping to build a peer-supported community. The Eastern Bank grant will also help fund our Spanish-speaking support groups.

As part of a larger human services agency, JF&CS can provide our immigrant clients with access to additional services such as our food pantry, benefits and legal assistance, and other programming to support vulnerable immigrant populations.

“Every parent dreams of a bright future for their newborn and yet, being a new parent is a daunting task for all of us,” says Laura Kurzrok, Executive Director of the Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation. “We believe this program will help ease the burden for immigrant parents who are already coping with an overwhelming number of issues as they adjust to their new lives.”

We are honored to be able to offer the services provided by the Visiting Moms program to vulnerable immigrant families in our community thanks to this very generous grant from the Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation.

How You Can Help Improve People’s Lives

Thanks to the generosity and vision of our committed donors, dedicated volunteers, and talented staff, JF&CS has provided a safety net to so many throughout Massachusetts for 150 years.

Yet, our work is far from done. There are still too many people who require the services and sensitivity of our staff. There are still many innovative programs yet to develop to help people live better.

The need for people like you to become a part of the JF&CS family is greater than ever. When you volunteer or donate to JF&CS, you’re investing in the future health and well-being of the community. You’re ensuring that the essential services we provide will be there for all who need them, now and for the next 150 years.

www.jfcsboston.org/donate
www.jfcsboston.org/volunteer
JF&CS ANNUAL BENEFIT
Thursday, March 2, 2017
Event Chairs: Alison Wachtler Braunstein & Barry Braunstein and Jamie Grossman & Bob Kinder
The annual Benefit raises critical funds to ensure that resources are available to support the innovative and comprehensive programs that JF&CS provides to the community. We were pleased to honor Ellie Svenson at this year’s event.

1. Left to right: Co-chair Bob Kinder, JF&CS CEO Rimma Zelfand, Co-chair Jamie Grossman, Honoree Ellie Svenson, and Co-chairs Alison Wachtler Braunstein & Barry Braunstein
2. Julie & Stephen Weil
3. Nielsen and Svenson Families
4. David Schechter, left, and Neil Wallack
5. Brad & Jennifer Weiner
6. Left to right: Joe & Hope Albert, Lauren & Joe Mazzella
7. Left to right: Deanna Wolk, Jim Hazlett, Helaine Hazlett, and Sidney Wolk

WOMEN’S BREAKFAST
Wednesday, June 7, 2017
Event Chairs: Leslie Pucker and Beth Schlager
Honorary Co-Chairs: Laurie Brownstein and Danielle Darish
The annual Women's Breakfast supports the JF&CS Center for Early Relationship Support®. The 2017 event featured guest speaker Carnie Wilson, singer, television host, and advocate for support for postpartum depression.

8. Left to right: Co-chair Leslie Pucker, Director of CERS Peggy Kaufman, Carnie Wilson, and Co-chair Beth Schlager
9. Left to right: Audrey Schuster, Lynne Elfland, and Elise Cherry
10. Jessica Merle, left, and Lisa Sands
11. Amy Sucoff, left, and Abby Shapiro
12. Lara Cohen, left, and Lorin Seidman
13. Left to right: Director of CERS Peggy Kaufman, Lauren Rubin, and Julie Nadal

CHAI CHAMPIONS
Sunday, November 5, 2017
Event Chairs: Leslie & Stephen Bernstein and Robin Schreier Scari & Steven Scari
At this biennial event, supporting JF&CS Services for People with Disabilities, we recognized 18 individuals and organizations that are extraordinary advocates for people with disabilities.

14. Left to right: John Brodrick, Theresa Holland, Jessica Brodrick, Paula Doherty, Carole Brodrick
15. Left to right: Event Co-chair Robin Scari, Wendy Simches, and Claudia Braunstein
16. Left to right: Michelle Theroux, Kay Bernon, and Michelle Kostek
17. Left to right: Event Co-chair Steven Scari, Richard Romanow, and Michael Simches

PLEASE SUPPORT JF&CS TODAY. VISIT WWW.JFCSBOSTON.ORG/DONATE
Jewish Family & Children’s Service is a leading provider of comprehensive human services, delivering personalized and integrated care that improves people’s lives.

SAVE THE DATE

JF&CS ANNUAL BENEFIT
THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 2018
6:00 P.M.
THE CASTLE AT PARK PLAZA, BOSTON
celebrating

The Power of Community

HONORING BARRY SHRAGE
EVENT CHAIRS: SHARI & ROBERT CASHMAN AND JILL COHEN & MICHAEL SAVIT
Invitation to follow