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Summer with the (ice) pops

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Cantor Maayan Harel

New cantor in Canton

CANTON – Temple Beth David of the South Shore announced the appointment of Maayan Harel to the post of cantor, beginning July 1, 2020. Cantor Harel arrived at Temple Beth David following the recent retirement of Cantorial Soloist Howard Worona, who served TBD for 36 years.

Cantor Harel was ordained in June 2019 from Hebrew College, from where she also received her Master's in Jewish education. She grew up in Rhode Island before attending The Hartt School of Music in West Hartford, Conn., where she studied voice/opera. She has been a cantor and a b'nei mitzvah educator at several

communities in the Greater Boston area.

Cantor Harel believes that music is a universal language that inspires all of us. Singing together in the temple allows the congregation to be lifted from everyday life and to experience spirituality. She is looking forward to making music and to bringing voices together for this very special community. Her first service was Temple Beth David's Friday evening service on July 10.

Temple Beth David of the South Shore is located at 1060 Randolph St., Canton, MA. For more information, please visit templebethdavid.com, email office@templebethdavid.com or call 781-828-2275.

CORONAVIRUS IN OUR COMMUNITY

Agency tackles food insecurity

By Jason Fishman
Special to The Advocate

WALTHAM – “So many people already live paycheck to paycheck,” said Meredith Joy, the Director of the Center for Basic Needs Assistance at Jewish Family & Children's Service. “When the public health crisis began, we saw hundreds of families go from relative stability to all-out emergency.”

JF&CS has long been a safety net for the Jewish community and people of all backgrounds facing economic insecurity. During the pandemic, however, the agency has seen unprecedented levels of need. Requests for food, emergency financial assistance, and help applying for public benefits have skyrocketed in recent months.

“Serving our clients during this crisis has been one of the most challenging experiences of my life,” said Meredith. “At the same time, it has been completely gratifying and inspiring to watch our community come together to make sure everyone is taken care of during these difficult times.”

Before the Covid-19 outbreak, the Family Table food pantry at JF&CS was already providing groceries to more than 500 households each month. Since March, over 200 additional families have received emergency groceries as well.

See JF&CS, Page 5



Debbie Korn volunteering at a JF&CS Family Table distribution

COURTESY PHOTO

JF&CS

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"Many people have lost their jobs and suddenly have no money to feed their families," shared Bernice Behar, director of Family Table. "We have also been hearing from frail older adults, many of them Holocaust survivors, who simply can't risk going to a supermarket to purchase food."

When the crisis began, Family Table quickly pivoted to meet the new socially distant reality. Regular monthly food deliveries have continued on schedule, with volunteers packing grocery orders outdoors. Additionally, Family Table's weekly in-person food distributions have been converted to a contactless drive-through format. "It took a little creativity," said Bernice. "But we've been able to ramp up our food distributions while keeping our staff, volunteers, and clients safe."

JF&CS has also launched a new emergency grocery delivery program for people who need food urgently but can't get to one of their pantry locations. Family Table has been able to draw upon its roster of more than 1,200 dedicated volunteers to make these critical deliveries.

"We have been blown away by the response of Family Table volunteers during the pandemic," said Bernice. "In just one week after the crisis started, sixty-five new volunteers responded to our call for assistance."

Since the Covid-19 outbreak began, JF&CS has heard from numerous clients whose finances have been completely upended. When "Lena" reached out to the agency in early April, she knew her family wouldn't be able to pay rent that month. Her husband, "Brad," had been laid off from his new job, and his initial application for unemployment benefits was denied. To make matters worse, the youngest of Lena and Brad's three children, a 9-month-old baby, was still suffering from significant medical complications due to being born prematurely.

JF&CS was able to ease the worry and anxiety that Lena and Brad had about keeping their family afloat. The agency addressed their food needs with groceries from Family Table and paid for one month of rent to keep the family current while Brad's unemployment appeal took place.

"Lena and Brad's situation is all too common right now," said Meredith. "The need for emergency financial assistance for essentials like rent and utilities has never been higher." While there is a short-term moratorium on evictions and terminations for fuel and utilities, these measures are temporary, and when the moratoriums are lifted, people will be responsible for paying the amount they owe.

"We encourage people to reach out to JF&CS as soon as possible," added Meredith. "Whether it is emergency financial assistance or an interest-free loan, there are a variety of ways we can help."

The economic crisis has prompted thousands of people in Massachusetts to apply for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps), but the application process can be complicated and overwhelming. During the pandemic, the SNAP Advocates at JF&CS Bet Tzedek Legal Services have been working tirelessly to help clients obtain the benefits they are entitled to.

"Noah" and "Sandy" were referred to JF&CS by their rabbi after their application for SNAP benefits was denied. Lindsey Daley, the Senior SNAP Advocate at JF&CS, worked with the Department of Transitional Assistance to resolve the issue with the family's application and identified two areas where Noah and Sandy were eligible for additional benefits. The family now receives \$768 per month in regular SNAP and an additional pandemic-related SNAP benefit of \$1,197 to provide food for their children.

Receiving benefits and financial assistance makes a world of difference for the clients of JF&CS.

"You have helped me experience the goodness in this world," wrote one client. "You are really doing God's work here on Earth."

For more information about JF&CS and its services, visit jfcsboston.org.



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