

# Time to Grow



JF&CS HAS DEVELOPED A SPECIAL SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM TO HELP RUSSIAN-SPEAKING CHILDREN.

## New Initiatives at JF&CS Span a Lifetime

**f**or preschoolers, entering kindergarten can be both an exciting and a scary time. And for some children whose first language isn't English, it can be fraught with challenge. Thanks to a generous foundation, that wishes to remain anonymous, JF&CS has developed a special School Readiness Program to help Russian-speaking children make an easier transition to the classroom.

The School Readiness Program is one of three new offerings from JF&CS. Each new program is part of the Agency's on-going efforts to meet the needs of the underserved in our community.

### Ready for School

The ten-week School Readiness Program is now in its pilot stage. Eleven children, ages four and five, are getting ready for kindergarten this September. Their curriculum includes reading readiness skills, phonemic awareness skills and English vocabulary knowledge and use.

The goal of the program is to help ensure a smooth transition into the mainstream American educational environment for Russian-speaking children who have had limited exposure to the English language. In addition, the children are introduced to kindergarten curriculum.

The teacher, Anastasia Frank, is a Russian-speaking Reading Specialist/Speech Language Pathologist. She received her Master's Degree at the Massachusetts General Hospital Institute of Health Professions, which is nationally recognized for its training of Speech Language Pathology and Reading Instruction.

Ena Feinberg, Director of New American Services, is extremely pleased with the progress of the pilot program. She envisions including more preschoolers through community outreach and hopes to continue to develop and enhance the curriculum. And as happy graduates of this year's class, 11 new kindergartners can now say "Spasibo" and "Thanks!"

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## Welcome

Dear Friends,

It's fall again – New England's most beautiful time – when our thoughts turn to the upcoming holiday season.

Fall is a time for new beginnings. And for many of us with children, fall means back to school. In this issue we highlight new initiatives that span a lifetime from preschool to retirement and provide learning opportunities for all of us.

We're helping Russian-speaking preschoolers prepare for their entry into the American classroom and adults with disabilities gain greater independence through reading. We're also helping gay and lesbian seniors gain access to the services that they need, but haven't had due to isolation and fear of discrimination. And we're helping launch the next generation of Jewish philanthropists through our new Leadership Development Series.

As we prepare for the 140th anniversary of the founding of JF&CS, we continue to learn from past successes as we look toward the future.

I hope that the articles in this issue shed new light on the many ways we're connecting with our community through programs that touch the major stages of life. As always, I thank the many members of our community – especially our devoted volunteers, donors, staff and board members – who make all of our work possible.

Sincerely,

Seymour J. Friedland, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

## Blue Cross/Blue Shield Grant to help Russian Community

JF&CS has just been awarded a \$43,000 one-year grant from Blue Cross/Blue Shield for the development of a culturally sensitive training program to help Russian-speakers find jobs with health insurance. The participants in the program, in their 40s and 50s, will receive training to fit their individual needs after going through an assessment by JF&CS staff.



The goal of this program is to help the participants gain employment that will allow them to better integrate into our community as well as support their families and give them access to health insurance. A number of the participants will receive training as home health aides and will then be eligible to become employed by JF&CS.

Rita Blanter, Senior Services Director, said, "The participants in the program are bicultural and bilingual and can provide a very compassionate service. Not only are we helping middle-aged workers find access to health insurance, we're also providing elders with culturally sophisticated care."

The program is being implemented with the assistance of the Russian Community Association of Massachusetts and North Shore HealthCare Association.

## In Memoriam

JF&CS notes with sadness the passing of two vibrant members of our community, Eric Weizer and Lester Matzkin. The two men, who were profiled in our Summer 2002 newsletter, suffered from a rare progressive genetic disease known as Familial Dysautonomia (FD).



CHAI: After the Miracle offered Lester (left) and Eric (right) a chance to realize their dream for greater independence.

FD occurs in families of Jewish Ashkenazi descent and afflicts approximately 400 people worldwide. Most FD patients do not live past the age of 30. Miraculously, Eric and Lester were able to live 10 and 20 years beyond that with the devoted care of family members, doctors and JF&CS staff members.

Eric and Lester lived together through JF&CS' CHAI – After the Miracle program. The fact that they were able to live independently, with supports, in an apartment of their own while pursuing the fullest lives possible was a source of great pride to the two men, their parents and the JF&CS staff who worked with them.

We extend our deepest sympathies to the friends and families of Eric and Lester.

To learn more about independent living opportunities for people with disabilities or to make a donation to the CHAI program, please contact Betsy Closs at 617-558-1278 or visit [jfcsboston.org](http://jfcsboston.org).



## Kol Isha – JF&CS Jewish Domestic Violence Program Update

JF&CS IS PLEASED TO THANK THE NOVACK FAMILY, THE KLARMAN FAMILY, WOMEN'S PHILANTHROPY AT CJP AND ALL OF OUR GENEROUS DONORS FOR THEIR INVALUABLE AND CONTINUING SUPPORT OF OUR PROGRAMS TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY.

**K**ol Isha has recently been awarded a \$57,000 grant from the Massachusetts Office of Victims Assistance (MOVA) so JF&CS can continue to meet the growing needs of Jewish and Russian victims of domestic violence. Through this grant, Kol Isha will be able to help more women and children than ever before, as this additional money means we will be able to hire an additional full-time domestic violence specialist.

The specialist will be working with Jewish victims and creating a coordinated teen dating violence program, as well as doing outreach and education. The grant also includes funds for interpreters working with Russian-speaking clients.

Nicole Lesser, Program Coordinator, was thrilled about receiving the grant, saying, "It will revolutionize our abilities to do our job." She added, "The grant will allow us to see a lot more people and all of our clients will be better served."

### Sukkah of Peace Event

This holiday season JF&CS will offer the first community-wide event honoring the work of Kol Isha, the only Massachusetts program specifically designed to provide culturally and religiously sensitive services to Jewish domestic violence victims.

Lesser said, "The main goal of the evening is to raise awareness that this is an issue within the Jewish community and that we can no longer afford to ignore the victims' cries for help."

The Sukkah of Peace Event, to be held at Temple Israel on October 16 at 7:30, promises to be a powerful evening. Speakers will include Carol Goodman Kaufman, author of *Sins of Omission*, as well as a survivor of domestic violence who received services from Kol Isha.

Lesser added, "We choose to time this event in coordination with Sukkot because it's a holiday about both oppression and celebration. Just as the Sukkah is the temporary refuge for Jews fleeing oppression, Kol Isha is a virtual shelter for women fleeing abuse. But it's also a festival of the harvest and an appropriate celebration of the work of Kol Isha."

This event is being produced with the support of Women's Philanthropy at CJP and Women of Reform Judaism at Temple Israel, Boston. If you would like to attend this event, contact Michelle Bishop at 617-227-6641 or [mbishop@jfcsboston.org](mailto:mbishop@jfcsboston.org).

For more information about Kol Isha please contact Nicole Lesser, Program Coordinator, at 617-558-1278.

*New Initiatives continued from page 1*

**“YOU CAN’T UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERACY.”**

*ILANA GORDON-BROWN, CHAI DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT*

## Greater Independence

JF&CS is proud to address the issue of literacy. For some adults with disabilities, learning to read is a daunting challenge. But now residents of JF&CS’ CHAI program can meet this challenge with the help of a new initiative called the Literacy Program.

The Literacy Program was launched last winter when budget cuts forced the Massachusetts Department of Mental Retardation to cancel literacy services for CHAI clients. Through the generous financial support of donors Gerry and Judy Feldman, JF&CS was able to start its own program.

CHAI (Community Housing for Adult Independence) provides support to adults with disabilities who seek to live independently either in their own homes or in small group situations. CHAI serves adults with a wide range of physical and intellectual disabilities including mental retardation, autism and significant learning disabilities as well as people with persistent psychiatric illness.

Gerry Feldman is a long-time JF&CS board member. Judy Feldman’s sister, Ellen Sue Rosenthal, is a CHAI resident. Judy said they decided to get involved with the Literacy Program a year ago when they realized the tremendous benefits Ellen Sue was gaining from her lessons.

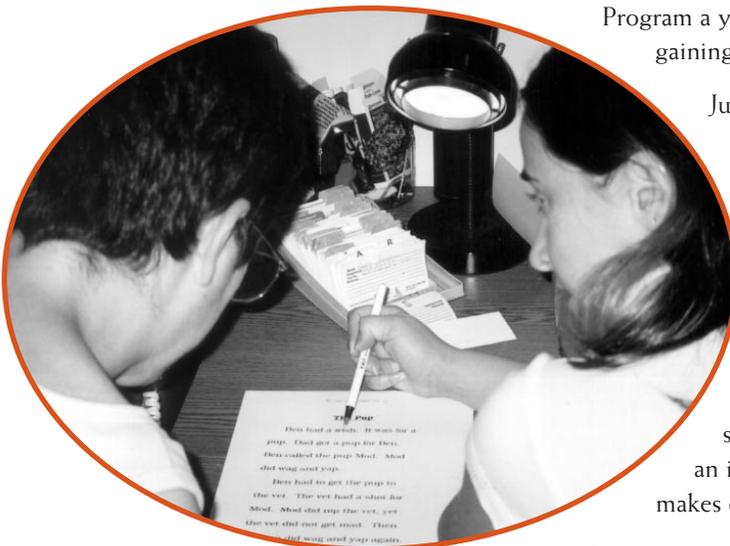
Judy said, “When Ellen Sue visited with us there was something different about her. She was more aware, reading signs and looking at the newspaper in a new way. It was due to the Literacy Program. So we were devastated when the [State] program was cut and decided to sponsor this program.”

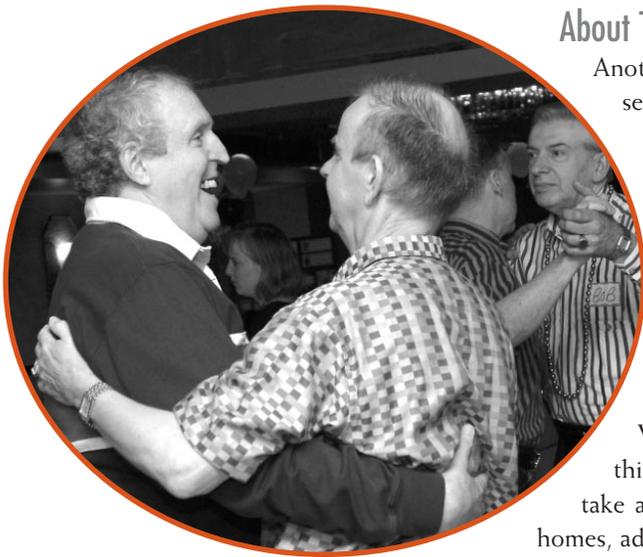
The benefits of the Literacy Program are twofold – clients gain both the practical skills necessary for daily living and a huge sense of accomplishment. The ability to read greatly expands what they can do on their own, from taking the T to going shopping, preparing meals and budgeting. And since literacy is such an important sign of adulthood and independence, gaining this ability makes clients feel good about themselves.

Judy agrees, saying that Ellen Sue has gained awareness and confidence because of her improving ability to read. She proudly adds, “She holds a full-time job at McDonald’s and takes The Ride to work.”

Ilana Gordon-Brown, CHAI Director of Housing and Program Development, says, “You can’t underestimate the importance of literacy. We’re really lucky to have found someone who can help us provide a service that is hard to come by these days.”

A number of these clients were in school before current, and more effective, special education programs were in place. Gordon-Brown notes that their reading levels might have been higher if they were in school today. She says the new program is “one way to make up for lost time.”





## About Time Tea Dance

Another new JF&CS initiative is the first of several aimed at connecting with seniors in the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered (GLBT) community.

On June 8, JF&CS was a lead sponsor of Boston Pride's first official event for gay seniors: the "About Time Tea Dance." Held in the ballroom of the Brookline Holiday Inn, the dance was held to raise the profile of the area's growing population of gay elders.

The event is part of a larger initiative aimed at creating a welcoming environment for gay seniors by reaching out to the elderly, educating providers, and training social service agencies.

With millions of gays and lesbians in this country over 65, the needs of this community are growing rapidly, yet many of them feel reluctant to take advantage of social services available to them, such as homecare, nursing homes, adult day health programs, and Council on Aging.

JF&CS became part of the Boston-based Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Aging Project, which organized the dance, last winter. The Aging Project has been conducting focus groups and research to find out what the elder community needs.

Karen Wasserman, JF&CS Coordinator of Geriatric Care Management, is the liaison to the Aging Project. She says that although their needs are great, gay seniors tend to be isolated and shy away from using the programs that exist. And she admits that there is some truth to their fears of homophobia because providers are not educated. "There's a need to sensitize providers and let elders know that JF&CS is available to help."

She adds, "We need to encourage GLBT elders to use the services that are in place for seniors. Boston has wonderful services, but because of the stigma and the way they've been treated in the past gay seniors are wary of making use of them."

The dance is the first of four social and educational events geared toward the gay community. Karen says, "Events like this will help the community see the Agency as a welcoming environment and a safe place to come to with their needs."

"WE NEED TO ENCOURAGE GLBT ELDERS  
TO USE THE SERVICES THAT ARE IN PLACE  
FOR SENIORS."

*KAREN WASSERMAN, COORDINATOR,  
GERIATRIC CARE MANAGEMENT*

## Supporting Jewish Family & Children's Service Initiatives

**J**F&CS depends upon philanthropic support from the community to provide vital services to the 25,000 people, who turn to us each year. If you are interested in learning more about how you can make a difference, please call our Office of Development at 617-227-6641.



# Leadership

## Interview with Richard Blankstein

**d**ick Blankstein is a vital member of the JF&CS community, an active and generous supporter and long-time board member. His roles include JF&CS President ('91-'93) and Association of Jewish Family & Children's Agencies President ('99 - '01). He is currently co-chair of the fundraising effort for the 140th anniversary celebration. Dick is an attorney with the firm Posternak, Blankstein and Lund, a general practice firm where he specializes in corporate and real estate law. He and his wife Beth have two children, Jim and Julie, and two grandchildren.

### How did you first become involved with JF&CS?

My involvement started about 30 years ago. I went on a United Jewish Appeal Young Leadership Mission to Israel. One of the people who had been on that Mission the year before was Joel Sherman. He was active on the board of JF&CS and he encouraged me to get involved. I had some involvement with other local, Jewish organizations and had not felt I was making a significant contribution. He assured me that JF&CS had a working board where people could make a difference, and that has been the case. That is what has kept me interested all these years.

### How would you describe the current mission of JF&CS?

We serve people facing life issues that all of us face with varying degrees of complexity and success. Many of these issues are unrelated to economic status – a child with disabilities, an elderly parent who needs help to live independently, families going through various crises of life. Whether you have a lot of money in the bank or no money has very little impact on how well you'll face these crises.

### What was accomplished during your presidency?

Just before I became president I represented JF&CS in working with a group of parents of adults with disabilities who were looking for a way to assure the future care of their children. The parents were concerned about who would be able to take care of their offspring and about having substantial care obligations while becoming older and frailer. We carefully considered what was the right way to go and looked at a number of options. This was a grass roots organization that in the end decided that becoming a part of JF&CS made the most sense. The result was a new program known as CHAI (Community Housing for Adult Independence). During my presidency we were able to put CHAI on a solid footing.

### What are your long-term hopes for the Agency?

There is a need for greater independence in fundraising. We have to be more self-supporting, because of the competing demands that draw on the same limited pool of centralized giving. We need to reach out and let people know how broad our spectrum of services is, how many people we serve, and how important we are in engaging people in the Jewish community. Even though people may be generous donors to CJP and United Way, it's important for them, if they value the human service agencies, to make them a significant object of their generosity.

### Is there a specific moment that has really made an impression on you?

My son came home from college one summer. Instead of taking a paid position, he wanted to know if it would be all right if he volunteered. He had done class work for an organization that provides services for children with disabilities and they wanted him to work for them. I was talking about it with my wife and she said, "And where do you think he got such an idea?" That he would give his time and energy like that made me feel very good about what I do.

**"WE SERVE PEOPLE FACING LIFE ISSUES  
THAT ALL OF US FACE..."**



# volunteer profile

## Nancy Viner Jump Starts New Series

**S**tarting this month, JF&CS is reaching out to young adults with a Leadership Development Series. The Series is designed to help young adults who may not be familiar with all the Agency's offerings learn more and get involved. Participants will have an opportunity to see JF&CS programs up close and get a feel for what they are about by talking with board members, staff and clients.

The Series is being chaired by Nancy Viner whose quick mind and ebullient personality bring just the kind of energy a start-up program needs. Viner, has a long-standing commitment to young adult programming, which she describes as "helping people find their course." She said, "I want to help funnel them to the right opportunity."

Viner said, "Most people don't realize the variety of programs that JF&CS offers. This is a chance for them to get a taste of what JF&CS provides and decide where they might like to get involved, whether on a fundraising or hands-on basis."

With experience, enthusiasm and an impressive network, Viner is the perfect choice to launch this initiative. She adds JF&CS to the list of premier Jewish philanthropic organizations she has been involved with including Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP) and Boston Center for Jewish Heritage. Her program development skills were forged during eight years with CJP where she helped create their young leadership programming and chaired the young leadership division. She also attended the Young Leadership Institute of the Anti-Defamation League.

Viner said, "My peer group is looking for a chance to have an impact immediately. It's one thing to write a check. It's another to go to Family Table and make a difference right away."

The Series consists of two parts. The first half includes an introduction to current issues facing the Jewish community and the JF&CS programs designed to address those issues. Participants will learn about hunger and poverty in the Jewish community at Family Table; domestic violence at a Sukkot program for Kol Isha; and meeting the challenges of living with disabilities through Community Housing for Adult Independence. Series participants will also have an opportunity to attend the JF&CS anniversary celebration.

During the second half of the program each participant will start working individually with the programs that fit his or her interests. The group will also begin to introduce others to JF&CS and build the next "class" of the Leadership Development Series.

Viner hopes that the inaugural "class" of the Series will become ambassadors for the Agency, letting others know about its wonderful variety of programs and services, and how easy it is to get involved. She explained, "JF&CS is unique because there is so much variety under one roof and it offers a chance to make a direct impact. Whether it's one hour a week spent meeting with a homebound senior or bagging food for Family Table, you can make a difference."

If you'd like to learn more about the Leadership Development Series at JF&CS please contact Mali Ionascu at 617-227-6641 or [mionascu@jfcsboston.org](mailto:mionascu@jfcsboston.org).

"MOST PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE THE VARIETY OF PROGRAMS THAT JF&CS OFFERS. THIS IS A CHANCE FOR THEM TO GET A TASTE OF WHAT JF&CS PROVIDES AND DECIDE WHERE THEY MIGHT LIKE TO GET INVOLVED, WHETHER ON A FUNDRAISING OR HANDS-ON BASIS."

# JF&CS Events a Great Success!

## CHAI Evening at Pops

More than 300 people attended this year's Evening at Pops event honoring Dr. Alan and Gayle Pinshaw, outstanding advocates for children with disabilities. This year's event raised close to \$140,000. All proceeds benefit Community Housing for Adult Independence (CHAI).



*Nancy Kaplan Belsky and Hope Albert, event chairs for CHAI Evening at Pops, with 2003 honorees Dr. Alan and Gayle Pinshaw.*

## Women's Breakfast

More than 150 women attended the Women's Breakfast at Pine Brook Country Club. This year's breakfast, raised a record \$50,000 for the Center for Early Relationship Support. Guest speakers included Suzin Bartley, executive director of the Massachusetts Children's Trust Fund, and Keri McDonough, a teen mom who shared her experiences.



*Above: Amy Abrams, Women's Breakfast Event Chair, with JF&CS Board Members Jackie Weinstein and Amy Bloomstone*



*Left: Peggy Kaufman, Director of JF&CS Center for Early Relationship Support, with Keri McDonough, guest speaker*

**To learn more about our events, please call the development office at 617-227-6641.**

## Celebrating 140 years of service to the community

**Saturday, November 8, 2003**

We are excited to announce a Saturday Night event to honor 140 years of JF&CS supporting the Greater Boston community. The evening includes dinner, dancing, and an auction and will take place Saturday, November 8, 2003 at the Seaport Hotel, Boston. For more information, call Michelle Bishop at 617-227-6641.

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [JFCSBOSTON.ORG](http://JFCSBOSTON.ORG)

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