

# A Message from Our Board President



As we approach the Passover holiday, it is natural to think about the concepts of slavery and freedom. As Canadians, most of us enjoy tremendous personal freedom, but there are still many people amongst us who struggle with different forms of slavery. This is true across the country and in our own local Jewish community.

Financial hardship, family breakdown, domestic abuse, addictions, aging and mental illness are just some of the issues that can compromise an individual's feeling of freedom. Similarly, a lack of resources, choices, and control over one's life can make a person feel chained to one spot and unable to move forward.

As the social service arm of the Winnipeg Jewish community, Jewish Child and Family Service works tirelessly year round to help break those chains. All of the agency's programs and services, including individual and family counselling, child welfare and older adults services, and addiction recovery supports, have been specifically designed in response to and in anticipation of the needs of community members. As well, all of JCFS's services, programs and future plans reflect the core values that have sustained the Jewish people, faith and culture for thousands of years.

At Passover we are directed to retell the story of our journey from slavery to freedom and, at the same time, to remember with compassion those who still are not free. Passover, then, is a perfect time to think of JCFS, its storied history and its ongoing commitment to the 'liberation' and emotional health and welfare of everyone in our community. Passover is the ideal time to consider a gift to JCFS.

This gift can be directed as you see fit. It can be allocated to the Passover Assistance program to help ensure that everyone in the community who wishes to commemorate the holiday has the means to do so, or it can be used to enhance any one of the agency's other programs, services and support.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of JCFS, I wish you and your family a meaningful Passover, one in which your freedom, and the freedom of all those you love, is easily attained, gratefully appreciated and joyously celebrated.

With gratitude,  
Danita Dubinsky Aziza

# A Word from Al

**"In every generation, each Jew must view oneself as if they themselves were freed from Egypt."**

*(Passover Haggadah)*



At the time of writing this Sherut message, I have just returned from an incredible five day immersive program at Beit T'shuvah ([www.beittshuvah.org](http://www.beittshuvah.org)), a Jewish addiction recovery centre in Los Angeles. Our delegation of four staff from JCFS, together with five synagogue-based community educators from other US cities, were privileged and humbled to experience first-hand a taste of Beit T'shuvah's spiritual (and clinical) approach to wellness and recovery and to meet the amazing residents and staff who live it, each and every day.

Many of these residents are young adults from good Jewish homes, and represent all spectrums of Jewish observance, socio-economic status and educational levels. We were a bit surprised to also meet other Beit T'shuvah residents - former gang members, ex-convicts and persons of other ethnicities and religions who, like their Jewish counterparts, are sadly too familiar with the equal opportunity pervasiveness and inherent destructiveness of addictions.

"Enslavement and Freedom" are the daily struggles for each of these unique souls. Formerly enslaved by addictions, mental illness, street life, isolation, disconnection, deceit and pain, their Exodus has led them on a journey into the unknown wilderness of sobriety, connection, atonement, rediscovery, relationship repair, and the hard work of daily self-improvement for sustaining long-term wellness, sobriety, and recovery.

Is this not a modern day embodiment of Yetziat Mitsrayim, the Exodus from Egypt?

And yes, addictions are a problem here in Canada, in Winnipeg, and within our own self-contained shtetl. Many people in our own Jewish community are struggling with addictions to drugs, alcohol, gambling, and other vices, and also living with mental health challenges. Addictions and failing mental health, whether they are independent or co-exist, often result in poverty, homelessness, physiological ill health, broken families, tattered lives and shattered souls.

JCFS exists to help heal those broken families, tattered lives and shattered souls. We exist to help them understand and acknowledge addictions when they occur and to guide them on their road to recovery, repair, and return. We exist because the Jewish community is not immune to the ails of life like addictions, mental illness or the myriad of other plagues of modern society.

With your generous support, JCFS will continue to fortify vulnerable lives and help free those lives from what enslaves them. We will continue to provide advice and counsel, and to build a stronger community. We will continue to make it possible for all community members to experience the Exodus from Egypt each and every day!

Wishing everyone a happy and joyous Pesach!!

*Al Benarroch, Executive Director*

# IN OTHER NEWS

## Bikkur Cholim Training to Begin

JCFS's Bikkur Cholim program will be holding a second training session for new volunteers interested in becoming spiritual care friendly visitors. Bikkur Cholim volunteers pay regular visits to isolated and unwell community members living in predominantly non-Jewish institutions, and provide them with companionship, conversation and a connection to their faith and culture.

Those interested in attending the training sessions, to be held on consecutive Sundays April 30 and May 7, are asked to contact JCFS Manager of Volunteer Services, Einat Paz-Keynan.

## JCFS and NCJW Purim Partnership

As they have done for more than a quarter century, members of National Council of Jewish Women got together in February to bake hamantashen and prepare Shaloch Manot for clients of JCFS. The custom of giving Shaloch Manot dates back to the time of Queen Esther, the heroine of the Purim story, and is meant as an expression of friendship, community and joyous celebration during the holiday.

## Meetings Provide Safe Space for Addiction Recovery

JACS meetings for Jewish alcoholics and addicts are held every Tuesday at 7:30pm at Temple Shalom. JACS explores recovery through a combination of Jewish spiritual resources, 12-step fellowship and support.

## Tribute Cards Support Agency Activities

JCFS tribute cards provide an easy and meaningful way to recognize any milestone or occasion and a great way to support JCFS. Cards can be ordered on-line or over the phone, and can include personal messages that reflect the senders' sentiments, good wishes or condolences. All tribute card donations are used to support the many vital services that JCFS offers to Winnipeg Jewish community members.

# NEW STAFF



**Janelle Gulay** – JCFS is pleased to welcome registered social worker Janelle Gulay to its Older Adult Services team. Janelle grew up in Arborg, Manitoba, graduated from the University Of Manitoba Faculty of Social Work in 2015, and has enjoyed a wide range of work and volunteer experiences. A self-described fitness enthusiast, Janelle values a holistic approach

to life and looks forward to empowering her clients to build on their own inner strengths.



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# BREAKING NEWS...

## JCFS STAFF GO TO REHAB Beit T'Shuvah Welcomes Winnipeggers

A person who has never experienced addiction can't possibly know what recovery feels like. But after spending five days in February in a special immersive program, four JCFS staff members now have an understanding of what the long hard road to recovery might look like, the tremendous work that it involves, and the critical role that spirituality can play in the healing process.

They intend to use this new knowledge to enhance the agency's addiction and mental health services and ultimately incorporate a spiritual aspect, for those seeking it, into those services.

The Residential Immersion Training Program that Executive Director Al Benarroch, Adult Services Manager Cheryl Hirsh Katz, Addictions Services Coordinator Ivy Kopstein, and JCFS Consulting Psychiatrist Dr. Cara Kroft participated in is one of several innovative programs run out of Beit T'Shuvah, the renowned Jewish addiction rehab and residential treatment centre in Los Angeles, California. The program is designed to improve clinicians' knowledge and understanding of addiction and recovery while familiarizing them with Beit T'shuvah's cutting edge, integrative model for recovery and wellness. This innovative and highly effective model approaches recovery through both a therapeutic and spiritual lens and incorporates all aspects of the body, mind and soul.

"We attended in order to continue to enhance our capacity at JCFS for providing more robust and enhanced culturally relevant addiction and mental health recovery services," explains Al Benarroch.

The immersive program featured a variety of intense learning, exploratory and interactive opportunities, many of which the JCFS participants experienced side by side with Beit T'Shuvah residents. These included daily



JCFS staff Al Benarroch, Cheryl Hirsh Katz and Ivy Kopstein at Beit T'Shuvah. Dr. Cara Kroft (missing)

Torah study, 12-step meetings, learning in pairs, meditation and acupuncture, psychotherapy, moments of personal reflection, creative arts, lectures on accountability and responsibility, and group discussions that used ancient and modern Jewish texts as a means to examine addiction and recovery. Many of the sessions and much of the group dialogue focused on the concept of teshuva, repentance or return, and on the attributes of truthfulness and holiness.

In the course of their stay, which was generously funded by a grant from the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba, the Winnipeg visitors also were warmly welcomed to sit in on Al-Anon, AA and SMART Recovery meetings, and participate in a stirring community Kabbalat Shabbat. They listened to powerful testimonies from Beit T'Shuvah alumni and had many moving and candid conversations with current Beit T'Shuvah residents.

"The most salient aspects that stood out for me was the ability of this environment to foster a sense of non-judgemental support, a sense of community, the importance of truth and honesty both to oneself and to others, and person-centred spiritual growth," Al says.

Having found the overall experience in Los Angeles to be profound and transformative, he is eager to recreate aspects the Beit T'shuvah atmosphere and philosophy at JCFS, where the demand for addiction services for Jewish community members has increased significantly in recent years.

"There is still the lingering belief that alcoholism and addiction is uncommon in Jewish communities," says Scott McWilliam, a recovering addict and member of JACS Winnipeg, the JCFS sponsored support group for recovering Jewish alcoholics and addicts.

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But that is not the case.

“The disease of addiction is killing us, and the death count is growing,” he says. It is imperative that the community do everything possible to resist the trend and help those suffering from it.

“As we embark on expanding our services in these areas,” Al adds, “in addition to the excellent clinical services that we provide, we must look at Jewish cultural and spiritual

resources that clients and the community can access in order to enhance their recovery, connect with their chosen concept of Higher Power, and improve their interactions with others and their overall lives.”

As Beit T’Shuvah has proven, Jewish cultural and spiritual resources provide a sense of wholeness and a sense of holiness that, together with other supports and services, can mitigate the hard and necessary work of recovery.

## Talking Openly About Mental Health

On January 25, Bell Let’s Talk Day encouraged Canadians from across the country to speak up, ask questions and start conversations in order to help end the stigma associated with mental illness. That day, dozens of Winnipeg Jewish community members did just that, by stopping at a JCFS information table set up in the foyer of the Asper Jewish Community Centre.

Judy Plotkin, JCFS’s Mental Health Program Coordinator, estimates that she spoke to almost 100 people over the course of a few hours, including high school students on their lunch break, seniors on their way to exercise classes and Jewish organization staff members running between meetings. Judy provided them with information about JCFS and other local mental health resources and services, encouraged them to pick up information brochures on such topics as Stress Hacks for Youth and Reasons to Live, and steered them towards the Bell Let’s Talk website and its public education campaign.



Judy Plotkin Coordinator of Mental Health Program

Talk to help further the agency’s commitment to delivering and enhancing accessible and supportive mental health services. That funding has made it possible for the agency to hire a mental health community support worker to assist clients with mental health differences in achieving greater independence in daily living.

She offered advice, support and reassurance, spoke about the prevalence of a disease that affects one in five people, and even used the opportunity to recruit volunteers and to encourage donations in support of JCFS’s mental health services.

Judy also had on display the giant \$18,000 cheque that JCFS proudly received for a grant last fall from Bell Let’s

## Grant Funds Mental Health Support Worker



Al Benarroch, JCFS Executive Director receiving Bell Let’s Talk cheque from Michael Landsberg, Bell Let’s Talk Ambassador and Host of TSN’s Off the Record

Last fall, JCFS was the proud recipient of an \$18,000 grant from Bell Let’s Talk in recognition of its commitment to delivering accessible and supportive mental health supports to Manitobans.

JCFS used that funding to hire Sandra Novak as a community support worker in our Mental Health program.

Sandra is tasked with helping clients who are experiencing mental health differences to learn and develop new skills

for daily living and recovery, so that they can manage more independently. She works intensively, one-on-one with a dozen clients, most of who are living with depression, anxiety, schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

“Within the JCFS mental health program, we see many clients who require individualized time and attention to achieve greater independence,” explains Cheryl Hirsh Katz, JCFS’s Adult Services Manager.

“Everyday tasks such as buying groceries, using public transportation or speaking with other service providers are often too emotionally difficult to contemplate, let alone attempt on their own,” she adds.

Sandra tailors her support to her clients’ needs, assisting some with budgeting, banking or decluttering, while

## Program to Keep Families Safer and Together

Contrary to what many people believe, the Jewish community is not immune to domestic violence. In fact, research indicates that domestic abuse occurs at the same rate and intensity in Jewish homes as it does in the mainstream community. Research also verifies that children who have been exposed to domestic violence are negatively impacted in a myriad of ways, and are more likely than other children to experience anxiety and anger, depression and disobedience, and low self-esteem.



That chilling research is part of the reason that JCFS Child Protection and Family Service Worker David Azuelos is currently being mentored in a new child protection program advocating an innovative way to deal with domestic violence. The American program, called Safe and Together, is being adopted by numerous child welfare jurisdictions, including Manitoba’s Child and Family Services General Authority.

Safe and Together is described as a perpetrator pattern, child-centred, survivor strength-based approach to working with clients who have experienced the intersection of child



Sandra Novak

“The ultimate goal of this project is to focus on a wellness perspective to enhance the abilities of individuals to engage in the community and ultimately lessening the need for such services,” says Cheryl. “Through greater community involvement, the intent is also to build capacity and reduce stigma of mental health issues within the community.”

maltreatment and domestic violence. It is designed to promote the best interests of children, including safety, permanency and well-being.

“Past approaches to domestic violence tended to put blame on the protective parents (usually the mother) for failing to keep their children safe from the abusive partner or from exposure to domestic violence,” David explains.

“This new approach,” he adds, “does a better job of holding the abuser accountable for their actions and choices and in helping the agency to partner with the victim(s) in understanding the abusers’ patterns of coercive control.”

The goal, as the approach is called, is to keep more families safe and together.

David’s training involves 10 full-day interactive learning sessions and a certification exam. Once his training is completed, he will share his knowledge with other JCFS clinicians and facilitate the implementation of the Safe and Together model into the agency’s everyday practice.

## JCFS to Welcome Government Sponsored Refugees



JCFS Resettlement Worker Nafiya Naso

In 2016, JCFS helped bring the plight of the Yazidis to the world’s attention by partnering with Operation Ezra in raising funds and awareness about this beleaguered people. As a result of that extensive lobbying, the Canadian government announced last fall that it will undertake a humanitarian initiative

and bring 1,200 Yazidi people to Canada as government assisted refugees.

About 200 of these refugees, primarily vulnerable women and girls from Northern Iraq who have been victims of human trafficking, are expected to be resettled in Winnipeg in the coming months. In anticipation of this, JCFS has hired local Yazidi activist Nafiya Naso on a full-time basis for one

year as part of our Settlement Team, to help with their resettlement and integration.

“My role will be to ensure the basic needs of the families are met upon arrival,” Nafiyah explains. “This will include translators, school registration for kids, English language programs for the adults, finding family doctors, opening bank accounts and just ensuring the settlement process is as smooth as possible.”

Nafiya also will be facilitating JCFS’s partnership with other local refugee service providers including Welcome Place and Accueil Francophone, and helping to educate these

## Music Sparks Memory and Emotional Well Being

Music therapists long ago recognized that music has the power to spark memory, ease anxiety and provide a sense of calm and comfort to its listeners. JCFS is currently applying that knowledge to improve the quality of life for elderly clients living with dementia through a program called Music & Memory. The program was launched on a trial basis in January with funding from the New York based Music & Memory non-profit organization.

Each of the four clients in the start-up program meets regularly with a music therapy student from Canadian Mennonite University to talk about music and listen to songs that the students have downloaded on to iPod Shuffles. The curated songs are all ones chosen by the client or based on the client’s history, interests or experiences. Some songs are in Yiddish, some are in Hebrew, and some harken back to their childhood days. There are lullabies, jazz greats and Broadway tunes.

In between meetings, the iPods are left in the care of the clients so that they can listen to the songs at their leisure with the help of family or caregivers.



other agencies about the Yazidi people, their history, experiences and the trauma that they have endured. Both Nafiya and JCFS were already instrumental in helping to successfully resettle six privately sponsored Yazidi families to Winnipeg this past year.

Her current goal, Nafiya says, is to make the resettlement and integration of the anticipated 200 government sponsored refugees to Winnipeg into a city-wide project with multiple faiths, organizations and businesses involved.

“We know it truly takes a village and any help will be appreciated greatly,” she says.

This endeavour marks the first time that JCFS has partnered with neighbouring CMU, and it has proved to be an ideal match.

“Their focus promotes what the Music and Memory program is all about, which is the use of music to promote positive changes in the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual functioning of individuals,” says Older Adult Services Manager Cheryl Hirsh Katz.

“The students are placed with us as a part of their practicum and we have the benefit of their knowledge and expertise in this area.”

“The feedback from both the students and the clients has been great,” Cheryl adds.

“The clients love having the opportunity to listen to a wide variety of their favourite music and the students noted how the participant’s whole demeanour changes and their faces light up when listening to the music.”

In some cases the Music & Memory program has even prompted conversation, socializing and smiles that have been absent for a long time.

Having noted the positive impact that the program has had on clients with cognitive challenges, JCFS is hoping to expand Music & Memory to embrace many more elderly clients. To that end, the agency is seeking volunteers who wish to share the gift of music with others, as well as donations of iPods and iTunes gifts cards.

Those interested in the Music & Memory program also are encouraged to view the Netflix documentary, Alive Inside.

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