

Israeli President Isaac Herzog Addresses Joint Session of Congress

BY STEPHEN E. LIPKEN

Israeli President Isaac Herzog addressed a Joint Session of Congress on Wednesday, July 19, 2023, introduced by Speaker of the House, Kevin McCarthy.

After a thunderous, prolonged standing ovation, Herzog began, "On November 10th, 1987, I was sitting at home with my wife Michal, expecting our first child. We were watching the first Israeli president invited to address a Joint Session of Congress, in honor of Israel's 40th year of independence. That president was my father. Standing here today, representing the Jewish democratic State of Israel in its 75th year, at the very podium from which my late father, President Chaim Herzog, spoke, is the honor of a lifetime.

"Against all odds, the Jewish people returned home and built a national home, which became a beautiful mosaic of Jews, Muslims,



Christians, Druze and Circassians, secular, traditional and Orthodox..."

"Perhaps the greatest challenge that the U.S. and Israel face together is the Iranian nuclear program. Let there be no doubt: Iran does not strive to obtain nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Iran has spread terror, hatred, and suffering throughout the Middle East, adding fuel to the disastrous suffer-

ing in the Ukraine."

"My deep yearning, Mr. Speaker, is for Israel to one day make peace with our Palestinian neighbors. Palestinian terror against Israel or Israelis undermines any possibility for a future.

of peace between our peoples...At the same time, successful terror attacks are celebrated, terrorists are glorified, and their families are financially rewarded for every Israeli they attack."

"Terror is hatred and bloodshed. It contradicts humanity's most basic principles of peace."

A Joint Statement from Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC)-NY-LI and Westchester Jewish Council (WJC) expressed sincere appreciation to Congressional Delegation members for their support for the 75-year relationship between the United States and Israel by supporting H. Con. Res. 57, "Expressing the sense of Congress supporting the State of

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American Jewish Committee Launches Media Campaign To Step Up Fight Against Online Antisemitism

The statistics that chart the rise in antisemitism online and on social media are nothing short of alarming.

The latest State of Antisemitism in America report by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) found that two-thirds of American Jews surveyed had seen antisemitic content online or on social media. That number jumps to 85% for Jewish adults under 30, and one in four of those respondents said those online incidents made them feel physically threatened.

But beyond the numbers lies the true impact of antisemitism when it is seen, heard, or poses a physical threat.

Telling that story is the impetus behind a new media campaign from the American Jewish Committee (AJC). At its core are four short videos that highlight the pride as well as the peril of being a Jew in America. The campaign also features non-Jewish allies to emphasize that antisemitism is not just a Jewish problem; it is one that all of society needs to solve.

"The Jewish people and their allies will

stand up to antisemitism, not run from it," said AJC CEO Ted Deutch. "These videos will not only be a source of inspiration for many Jews; seeing these people speak so forcefully and passionately about their Jewish identity filled me with pride. We have many challenges to take on as a people but if these videos are any indication, the Jewish future is bright."

The issue of online antisemitism has become a priority, given that social media platforms make it easy to conceal an identity. Commenters often don't hold back their hate, as one woman, Rena, found out.

"TikTok has been an awful place to be as an out Jew," she said in one video. "The comment that stood out to me the most was 'Hitler should have done a better job.'"



Ted Deutch

The videos also highlight when antisemitism is not just ugly but dangerous. One person, Azriel, talks about one incident that now makes him think twice about wearing a yarmulke in public.

"I was walking home from Shabbat dinner one night. I got surrounded by a group of guys," Azriel says while becoming visibly emotional. "Got yelled at, just called a lot of slurs. It became really scary after that. After that, I took off my kippah."

Indeed, the State of Antisemitism in America 2022 report found nearly four in 10 American Jews said they have changed their behavior in public at least once out of fear of antisemitism.

The campaign begins just as AJC has launched a task force to help implement the

White House national strategy to counter antisemitism announced in May. The strategy features dozens of recommendations offered by AJC.

Some mirror AJC's Call to Action Against Antisemitism, a society-wide guide that includes a comprehensive plan social media companies can take to strengthen hate-speech policies and take a zero-tolerance approach to antisemitism. The videos are accompanied by a link to a petition that calls on social media companies to crack down on antisemitism.

The videos and related materials will appear on AJC's social media channels and be part of an extensive digital campaign urging people to take action against online antisemitism.

Another AJC video series, tied to the release of the previous AJC antisemitism report, has received over 14 million views.

The series also reinforces the need for all people to act against antisemitism and includes allies of the Jewish community amplifying the

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Israel” and for attending Israeli President Isaac Herzog’s special address.

After his address to Congress, New York’s governor, Kathy Hochul met with President Herzog. Afterward, she spoke about New York’s “unbreakable bond” with the State of Israel, “The State of New York and the State of Israel have an unbreakable bond, and I was proud to reaffirm that commitment to Israeli President Isaac Herzog during our meeting today. I also congratulated President Herzog on his powerful speech to the U.S. Congress, where he stood up for our shared democratic values and highlighted the need to fight antisemitism in all forms.”

Speaking about New York’s commitment “to curb the rising tide of antisemitism,” she continued, “As Governor of the State with the largest Jewish population outside the State of

Israel, I feel a solemn responsibility to protect and uplift New York’s vibrant, diverse Jewish communities. I shared with President Herzog the steps we are taking in New York to curb the rising tide of antisemitism, in partnership with President Biden, as well as efforts to push back on the harmful BDS movement. We discussed the need for further economic cooperation between New York and Israel, and we committed to continuing conversations between New York and the Israeli Ministry of Economy.”

New York Governor Kathy Hochul with Israeli President Isaac Herzog



Local Resident Named to Florence Melton School Board of Directors



Bruce Segal

expansion efforts for leading public service organizations such as Senior Law Day Collaborative. Segal received his bachelor’s degree from Yale University and his Master’s degree in business administration from Stanford University.

The Florence Melton School of Adult Jewish Learning is a worldwide movement of committed learners who are empowered to enrich Jewish life. Its innovative curriculum and immersive travel and learning experiences have now reached over 200 communities across the globe and inspired more than 55,000 learners worldwide. To learn more visit <http://www.meltonschool.org/>.

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need to fight anti-Jewish hate.

Toward that end, the videos also feature comments from non-Jewish allies including Father Nicolas, a Greek Orthodox priest. “If we don’t speak out, we are putting ourselves in danger,” he said.

It is that kind of allyship that the videos explain is both welcome and needed. Each ends with a simple plea: “Join us.”

AJC is the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people. With headquarters in New York, 25 offices across the United States, 14 overseas posts, as well as partnerships with 38 Jewish community organizations worldwide, AJC’s mission is to enhance the well-being of the Jewish people and Israel and to advance human rights and democratic values in the United States and around the world.

AJC LFT
Leaders for Tomorrow
INFORMING AND EMPOWERING TOMORROW'S
GLOBAL ADVOCATES



Do you want to be a strong Jewish and pro-Israel advocate?

Calling all Jewish high school students in 10th, 11th and 12th grades!

The AJC (American Jewish Committee) Leaders for Tomorrow (LFT) Westchester/Fairfield student advocacy training program registration is now open!

LFT is an award-winning leadership development opportunity that enables young Jewish leaders to develop skills to advocate on behalf of the Jewish people, Israel and human rights around the world.

The **AJC LFT Westchester/Fairfield** program is open to students who will be high school sophmores, juniors or seniors in Fall 2023.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis but will close soon, so we encourage any interested student to apply at their earliest convenience!!

Interested students should submit an online application at <https://ajc.org/lftinfo>

The Florence Melton School of Adult Jewish Learning, a worldwide movement that has been empowering adults through the life-enhancing study of Jewish texts and ideas for over 40 years, is expanding its national board of directors with the appointments of Bruce Segal of Dobbs Ferry, New York, Harman Avery Grossman of Teaneck, New Jersey, Rochelle Friedman of Falls Church, Virginia and Carolyn Bass of Cooper City, Florida.

“Each of our new board members brings not only a passion for Jewish education but also extensive knowledge across their respective industries that will become vital as Melton continues to expand its reach and foster learning opportunities for Jewish communities across the globe,” said Melton International Director Rabbi Dr. Morey Schwartz. “We are thrilled to have these esteemed individuals who join us in our desire to expand the opportunities for learning by providing unparalleled adult Jewish-learning opportunities.”

Professionally, Segal has extensive corporate marketing experience with rebranding and

Schneider Lesser Family Endows Birthright Israel's Social-Diversity Module

The Schneider Lesser family is making a transformational endowment gift to the Birthright Israel Foundation to fund the Birthright Israel Social Diversity Module, a program that educates tens of thousands of Jewish young adults each year about the true face of Israel, in which Jews, Arabs, and other ethnic groups live and work together. The gift is part of a new strategic partnership between Birthright Israel and the Schneider Lesser family and is emblematic of both sides' visionary leadership.

The family is best known for its extraordinary involvement in the Schneider Children's Medical Center of Israel, in Petach Tikva, which treats Israel's and the surrounding area's diverse pediatric population.

Birthright Israel's Social Diversity Module offers programming highlighting Israel's social diversity and how it is a valuable asset to the country, even amid challenges. The program is dedicated to working with entities presenting the complex reality of living as a minority in Israel. Such minority communities include Bedouin, Druze, LGBTQ+, Haredi and secular Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Arab- Israelis.

"Many people don't understand what Israel is. Israelis actually work together, and to see these people from these distinct communities collaborate is a remarkable thing," said Mindy Schneider,

who is making the contribution with her husband, Michael Lesser.

"You can hear about Israel, and you can read about Israel, but you don't know Israel until you visit and see what's going on. You realize it's not like the newspapers describe, which is an Israel always in crisis. You can see that Israel is a great, booming country, a young people's country," said Michael Lesser.

The Birthright Israel Social Diversity Module is one track that Birthright participants may select for their 10-day Israel experience. The module exposes participants to the Jewish state's diversity and helps them to grasp the complexity of modern Israel, particularly important in today's anti-Israel climate on social media. Birthright Israel promotes inquiry and openness, which enables our participants to reflect thoughtfully and criti-



(L to R) Mindy Schneider Lesser, Katie Lesser, Jake Lesser and Michael Lesser MD. Credit: Birthright Israel Foundation.

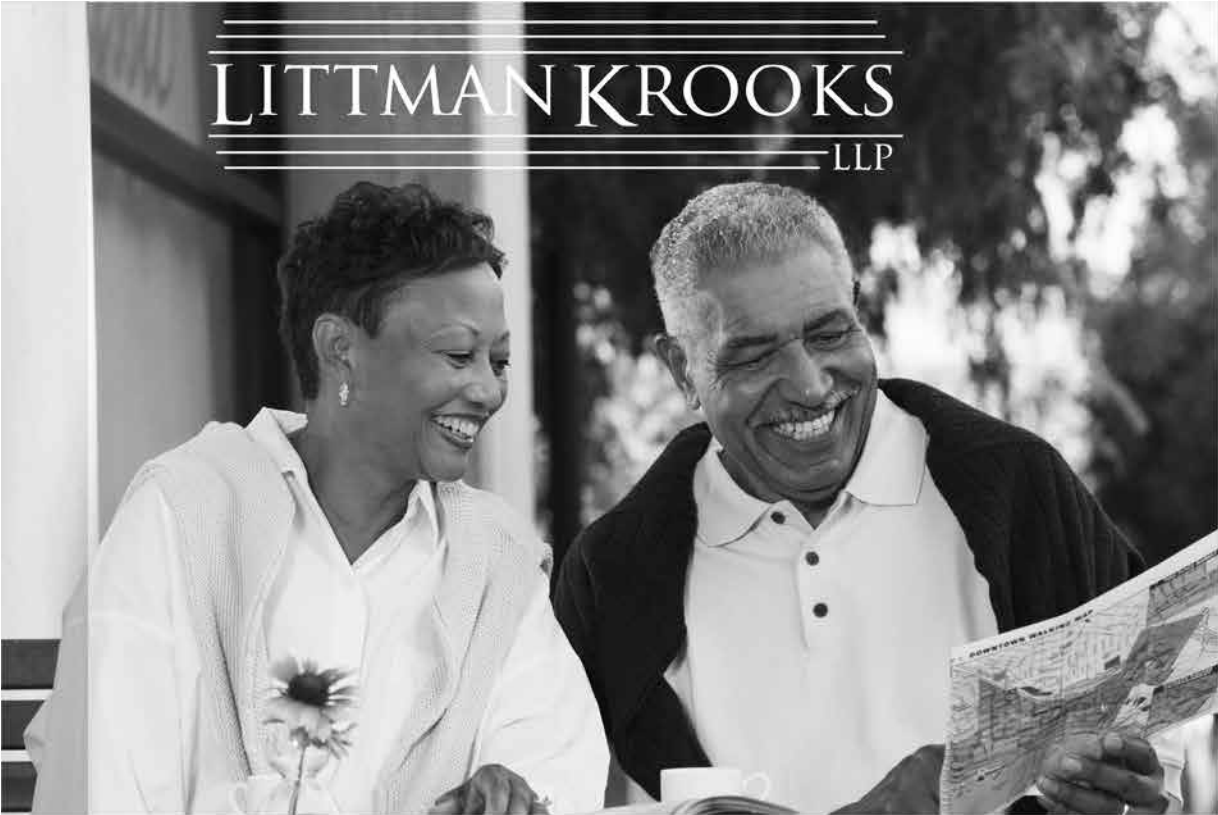
cally during their Jewish journey of developing a personal relationship with Israel.

The module includes visits to a center on Ethiopian-Jewish culture and history; Sindya of Galilee, a female-led non-profit organization that promotes fair trade and the business of

peace; and Schneider Children's Medical Center of Israel. Participants also meet members of the LGBTQ+ community of Jerusalem and communal leaders, such as Sheikh Bader Qassem, a Druze official. Overall, the module's participants are exposed to the intricacy of Israeli society and learn of different communities' decency, compassion, and joined human values in genuine and touching contexts.

"Birthright Israel does not propagate any specific political, religious, or ideological stance. Instead, it introduces and discusses certain key issues vital to understanding the intricate nature of Israel's overall social reality," said Gidi Mark, Birthright Israel's CEO. "Today's socio-political climate often aims to amplify conflict and wrap every aspect of Israeli life in rival ideological schools. Our Social Diversity Module, however, aims to show the opposite: that thinking of Arabs and Israelis does not always need to be an association with conflict. Instead, we highlight splendid displays of human decency in Israel and peoples' contribution to the greater good."

He added: "The Schneider Lesser family's generous gift will help Birthright Israel to educate young Jews and strengthen their Jewish communities. They'll be exposed to people of different cultures throughout Israel, and that will broaden their perspectives and enrich them."



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Major Jewish Organizations Announced the Formation of the J7, the Large Communities' Task Force Against Antisemitism

On July 18, in response to increasing rates of antisemitism around the world, major Jewish organizations in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Argentina, and Australia announced the formation of the J7, the Large Communities' Task Force Against Antisemitism.

The task force will consist of the following member organizations and nations represented:

- The United States: ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations
- The United Kingdom: Board of Deputies of British Jews
- France: Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de France (CRIF)
- Germany: Central Council of Jews in Germany
- Canada: Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA)
- Argentina: Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA)
- Australia: Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ)

In addition to top-level consultations, the J7 will organize several working groups comprised of subject matter experts from each community to develop strategies and action plans within areas such as policy and advocacy, tech policy, security, extremism, and education against antisemitism.

The formation of the J7 Global Task Force comes at a time when data from around the world indicates a rise in antisemitic incidents and attitudes, and growing concern within our Jewish communities who are confronting this rise.

Leaders of these seven communities shared their perspectives on the importance of this collaboration:

Argentina – Jorge Knoblovits, President, DAIA: “To be part of J7, represents for the DAIA a great responsibility as one of the world’s largest Jewish communities and the only one in Latin America. J7 will allow us to have a greater understanding of the challenges faced by world Jewry in the areas of antisemitism, Holocaust remem-

brance, and other hate-related topics. To be part of J7, led by ADL, ensures that the perspective of Latin American Jews will have a global reach.”

Australia – Peter Wertheim, Co-CEO, Executive Council of Australian Jewry: “Antisemitism is a disease of the human spirit that eats away at the foundations of civilisation everywhere. It is not limited by geographical borders, ideology, or creed. It is a global phenomenon that requires a global response. As the elected peak representative body of the Australian Jewish community, we are pleased to join our colleagues from organisations representing other major Jewish communities in the diaspora to coordinate our efforts to combat antisemitism and maximise our impact.”

Canada – Shimon Fogel, President and CEO, CIJA: “What starts with the Jews, never ends with the Jews. There is a global imperative to confront antisemitism and drawing on the expertise and strength of the J7 coalition is an important catalyst for universal action.”

France – Robert J. Ejnes, Executive Director, CRIF: “If antisemitism exists everywhere in the world, it is in Europe that it has been brought to its climax. Together with the J7 task force, we will look at the resurgence of antisemitism in all its forms, whether Islamist, conspiratorial, hatred of Israel, or Holocaust denial, from wherever it originates. Together, we will monitor the expressions of hate and fight for a better tomorrow.”

Germany – Dr. Josef Schuster, President, Central Council of Jews in Germany: “The internet, as a means of fast and easy communication, increasingly blurs national borders. Similarly, antisemitic networks, tactics, and developments don’t stop at national borders either. We endorse this additional opportunity for exchange in the J7 format, which will facilitate interaction between representatives of Jewish communities at this level. Together we will approach globally operating institutions or companies and unite our efforts in combatting antisemitism.”

UK – Marie van der Zyl OBE, President, Board

of Deputies of British Jews: “Antisemitism knows no geographic boundaries. The Board of Deputies looks forward to being part of this international coalition of leading Jewish organisations, each at the forefront of the fight against the challenges posed by the rise of this global hatred. By working together, we strengthen our ability to tackle antisemitism wherever it emerges.”

U.S. – William C. Daroff, CEO, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations: “Antisemitism, which is the world’s oldest hatred, no longer looks or spreads the way it did in the past. The vitriol once felt for individual Jews or Jewish practice, has metastasized into blaming the Jewish people and the Jewish state for the ills of the world. Social media enables antisemitic hate to cross borders, where it spreads faster than ever before. It is therefore imperative for the largest diaspora Jewish communities to engage in regular conversation to develop strategies to combat



Jonathan A. Greenblatt

the pernicious spread of antisemitism. Including our Conference of Presidents member organizations that are engaged in combatting antisemitism will bring great synergies to this effort. What impacts one community, impacts us all.”

U.S. -- Jonathan A. Greenblatt, ADL CEO: “Antisemitism is rising around the world, especially in countries where there are large Jewish populations. And threats to our communities are not contained by continents and borders. We needed to meet these challenges through coordinated action. This new coalition

of major organizations representing seven large Jewish Diaspora communities in liberal democracies will provide a formal framework for coordination, consultation, and formulating global responses to antisemitic threats against the Jewish people.”

The J7 leadership will meet periodically virtually and in-person, including at ADL’s 2024 Never is Now Summit on March 4-7, 2024.

ZOA Welcomes Lee Rosenblum as National Chief Development Officer

The ZOA is pleased and delighted to announce that Mr. Lee Rosenblum has joined us as our new National Chief Development Officer. Mr. Rosenblum comes to the ZOA after nearly a decade of serving as National Executive Director for Friends of ELNET, a premier pro-Israel advocacy group operating in key countries within the EU created to empower friends of Israel to promote relations between Israel and Europe and to support a pro-Israel advocacy network in key European countries. At ELNET, Mr. Rosenblum functioned as a CEO in planning and directing all North American operations, including organizational governance, board matters, income generation, donor development and day to day administration.

Prior to ELNET, Mr. Rosenblum served in major development positions at American Friends of Bar-Ilan University, the American Committee for the Weizmann Institute of Science, and the Averim Philanthropic Group. He can be reached at 212-481-1500 x246 and LRosenblum@zoa.org.

Mr. Rosenblum can be reached at 212-481-1500 x246 and LRosenblum@zoa.org.

Founded in 1897, ZOA played a key role in the Jewish State’s re-establishment. Today, ZOA is the leading major American Jewish organization courageously defending Israel and the Jewish people; fighting against all forms of antisemitism, including anti-Jewish boycotts; and promoting the Jewish people’s lawful right to live in and settle historic Jewish lands. ZOA exposes that a Palestinian state would endanger Israel’s existence; presents the facts about the Arab/Islamic war against Israel; and combats the anti-Israel lie that Israel is an “occupier” of her own land. ZOA spearheaded long battles to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, and apply civil rights protections to Jewish students. ZOA provides free legal assistance and programs to pro-Israel students at numerous college campuses. ZOA’s bold, unapologetic voice has a significant impact on public discourse and policy.

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Noam Gilboord Appointed as Interim CEO at JCRC



BY NOAM GILBOORD

This month, I begin my tenure as Interim Executive Vice President and CEO of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York (JCRC-NY). I am truly humbled by the support of the organization's dedicated board of directors, led by our President Ben Golub and Chair Cheryl Fishbein, for placing their trust in me to lead JCRC-NY during this moment of transition until a permanent CEO is identified.

For the last 13 years, the Jewish community relations field has been my professional home at both the local and national levels. During this time, I have worked alongside some of the foremost practitioners in the field on many critical issues facing the Jewish community. I know from first-hand experience how these leaders work tirelessly to build bridges between diverse communities, train new generations of civil servants and social service providers, and advocate for the interests and security of the New York Jewish community. Indeed, due to the generous support of UJA-Federation of New York, the work of JCRC-NY and our partners has made our communities stronger and safer and our city more inclusive and resilient.

Every day, new and greater challenges threaten our communities. Anti-Jewish incidents of hate,

along with other hatreds directed at our neighbors, has risen to levels I have not witnessed in my lifetime. Communities in close proximity feel compelled to compete for limited resources in a zero-sum manner. Discussions around many sensitive issues, including politics, religion, and Israel, are often dominated by polarized factions, and room for compromise and mutual understanding is often eschewed.

While these challenges are great and complex, they are also energizing. In this city that never sleeps, JCRC-NY remains on the cutting edge of strategies and initiatives that have a proven track record of uniting communities in common purpose and creating an interconnected New York for all. Our incredibly talented staff thrive upon being creative conveners, solving problems, and managing crises. In the coming months, JCRC-NY will continue to show up for our community and our partners, and we will stand up for our rights with conviction, strength, and unity.

Twenty-five years ago, I celebrated my bar mitzvah and read this week's Torah portion – Parashat Re'eh (Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17). Here, the Jewish people are provided with guidelines for civic engagement and community cohesiveness. One must celebrate holidays to remember our history, observe dietary laws, treat all others with dignity and respect, and make special effort to welcome the stranger in our midst. It is in this tradition that JCRC-NY seeks to strengthen our own community from within and the greater communities in which we live. All New Yorkers are stronger when we are united.

To our friends in the Jewish community, the many diverse religious and community-based organizations in New York, and our public officials, the entire team at JCRC-NY will continue to be your partners in good faith offering our expertise and services to advance our society together. To this end, I invite you to be in touch with me directly at gilboordn@jcreny.org.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Gideon Taylor for his years of service to JCRC-NY, both as a member of the board and as CEO. On behalf of JCRC-NY, I wish him much success in his new role as President of the World Jewish Restitution Organization and in his service to the Holocaust survivor community and in advancing Holocaust education in New York and internationally.

House Leader Jeffries Joins Met Council to Distribute Food and Announce Federal Funding Boost



House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries joined the Met Council on Jewish Poverty and CEO David Greenfield in Brooklyn to distribute food to those in need. They were accompanied by Rabbi Avrohom Hecht, Executive Director of the Canarsie JCC. Throughout the event, over 500 food boxes, along with fresh produce, were distributed, demonstrating the organization's dedication to nourishing New York City's communities.

Rep. Jeffries also took this opportunity to announce a significant achievement: an allocation of \$1 million in federal funding for Met Council. This sizeable contribution underscores the Congressman's enduring commitment to the well-being of his constituents and his belief in the importance of Met Council's work. The allocation of resources and staunch support from Congressman Jeffries are integral to Met Council's ongoing efforts to assist seniors and feed the needy in New York City. The Congressman's advocacy is vital, especially now, in bolstering Met Council's ability to broaden its impact within the community. This latest achievement not only represents a significant boost for Met Council's Emergency Kosher & Halal food program but also a major win for the countless individuals and families who depend on Met Council's services for sustenance and support.

Met Council is the largest charity in the Congress Member's district and the nation's largest Jewish charity. Met Council is the proud owner and manager of six affordable housing buildings and supporter of five Jewish Community Councils (JCCs) in Rep. Jeffries Congressional District.

Each month, it serves over 20,000 people in the district, nearly half of whom are from minority and immigrant communities, living up to its mission of providing critical services to New York City's most vulnerable populations.

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries remarked, "Met Council has really been a shelter in the time of storm for the people that I represent here in the 8th Congressional District, particularly East New York, Canarsie, Marine Park, Brighton Beach, and Coney Island. Met Council has done tremendous work - but that work was urgently necessary when a once-in-a-century pandemic struck our community, struck the nation, and struck the world."

Met Council CEO David Greenfield commented, "We are so thankful for this vital funding from Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, who has always been a champion for Met Council and for the Jewish community. We know that Rep. Jeffries always has our backs in Washington and fights hard to make sure people have access to food, meals, and the services they need. We are grateful for his leadership and look forward to our continued partnership."

As the largest free distributor of Kosher food in the United States, Met Council helped get over 21 million pounds of food to more than 250,000 New Yorkers last year alone and provided services to over 325,000 people in need. With steadfast allies like Congressman Jeffries, Met Council will be able to assist thousands of more New Yorkers and ensure they are fed, housed, and taken care of.

Hadassah Statement on Israel's Judicial Reform Legislation

Rhoda Smolow, National President, and Naomi Adler, CEO, of Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, issued the following statement on Israel's judicial reform legislation:

"We are deeply disappointed that the Israeli government passed the first piece of the judicial reform legislation despite widespread calls — from Israel's president, Isaac Herzog, and many non-partisan organizations and Israeli citizens — to work toward reform together and to bridge the divides."

As a devoted supporter of our beloved land of Israel and her people for over a century, Hadassah has continuously expressed our values regarding Zionism, democracy and respect for all. We believe Zionism can best flourish in a democratic Israel that includes checks and balances and inclusive, open-minded dialog to reach consensus, compromise and mutual understanding. We echo President Herzog's sentiment, expressed in his speech to Congress last week: 'We must find the way to talk to each other no matter how long it takes.'

"This week, we are reminded of the importance of the fast day of Tisha B'Av, which remembers the destruction of the First and Second



Naomi Adler, CEO, Hadassah. Photo credit: Paige Thatcher

Temples in Jerusalem, and we are mindful that what unites us is more important than what divides us."

"Hadassah will continue to meet with Israeli and US leaders to voice our concerns and advocate for a strong US-Israel relationship as we remain steadfast in our unwavering commitment to our mission."

Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, is the largest Jewish women's organization in the United States. With nearly 300,000 members, Associates and supporters, Hadassah brings women together to advocate on such critical issues as ensuring Israel's security,

combating antisemitism and promoting women's health. Through the Hadassah Medical Organization, Hadassah's medical center in Jerusalem, Hadassah helps support exemplary care for more than 1 million people every year and world-renowned medical research. The hospitals serve without regard to race, religion or nationality and earned a Nobel Peace Prize nomination in 2005 for building bridges to peace through medicine. Hadassah also supports several youth villages that set at-risk children in Israel on the path to a successful future. Follow Hadassah on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter.

47th Annual Westchester Jewish Music & Arts Festival Returns!

The 47th Annual Westchester Jewish Music & Arts Festival will be held on Sunday, August 20, 2023, from noon to 6 p.m. at Kensico Dam Plaza in Valhalla, New York. The festival is presented by The Westchester Jewish Council and in cooperation with Westchester County Parks.

Westchester Jewish Council CEO, Elliot Forchheimer shared “Once again, we have an incredible feature performance by Neshama Carlebach, along with special guests The Liz Queler Band and Urban Garage, and folk duo The Levins, plus festival favorites including Ned Gelfars, Israeli Dancing with Leng and a WonderSpark Puppet show sponsored by PJ Library. It is a great way to spend the day with family and friends.”

Neshama Carlebach is an award-winning singer, songwriter and educator who has performed and taught in cities around the world. A winner and four-time nominee in the Independent Music Awards for her most current release, Believe, and winner of the Global Music Awards Silver Award for Outstanding Performance by a female vocalist for the album, Neshama has sold over one million records, making her one of today’s best-selling Jewish artists in the world.

Neshama has been a cornerstone of major Jewish music festivals across the U.S. and globally, performing in front of thousands at countless concerts and gatherings for audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

Urban Garage is a program that mentors teen musicians in pop/rock genres with free monthly open mic and guided jam sessions in NYC.

Partners in marriage and music, Liz Queler and Seth Farber are both three time Grammy nominees. As children of musical parents and parents of a musical child, they started bringing their son Joey on stage with them when he was a tot. Now, a graduate of Berklee College of Music, he has stepped in as an equal. They blend and communicate as only a family can. Heavy on harmonies with influences from Appalachia, bluegrass and gospel, their music is infused with a rock sensibility, creating a soulful cross between Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, Patti Griffin and John Mayer.

Join us for Israeli dance with Leng, sponsored by Camp Zeke, as well as free face painting by Maria. We are also thrilled to have the WonderSpark Puppets Show, sponsored by PJ Library



in New York, and juggler Ned Gelfars performing throughout the day. In addition, there will be plenty of games, crafts, and more to keep the whole family entertained.

The event is free (including parking), open to the public, and will be held rain or shine. Attendees are welcome to bring chairs, blankets, and picnics. A tented area is available from which to enjoy all the musical performances and Israeli dancing. Food will be available for purchase.

Pre-registration is requested at www.wjcouncil.org. For more information about the event, including information on becoming a vendor, visit www.wjcouncil.org or contact Westchester Jewish Council Assistant Executive Director Pam Goldstein at pam@wjcouncil.org (914) 328-7001.

The Westchester Jewish Council connects Westchester's Jewish communities and strengthens relationships among Jewish organizations and other ethnic and faith based groups, elected officials, Israel and the community at large. The Westchester Jewish Council is a proud Core partner of UJA-Federation of New York. For more information about the Westchester Jewish Council, visit us online at www.wjcouncil.org.

JazzFest White Plains Announces 2023 Lineup

JazzFest White Plains returns brighter than ever with more than 15 live performances taking place across five days, September 6-10, 2023.

Jazz lovers will enjoy music by emerging talent and world-class artists, including four Grammy Award winners this fall in White Plains. Free and affordable performances will occur on downtown streets and in intimate venues that include ArtsWestchester, Grace Episcopal Church and the White Plains Public Library.

“JazzFest features some of the most talented musicians you will ever hear, but it’s also so much more. It’s a celebration of cultures, communities and the artists who make the magic come to life,” says ArtsWestchester CEO Janet T. Langsam. “Tickets just went on sale for our paid concerts and they are going fast.”

White Plains Mayor Tom Roach explains, “The City of White Plains is excited to welcome back JazzFest to downtown White Plains. This event continues to delight and entertain jazz enthusiasts and budding jazz appreciators from around the region. I am proud that the City is partnering with Montefiore Einstein, ArtsWestchester and the White Plains Business Improve-

ment District to create and produce this high-quality musical event, which will provide free and affordable performances for all. See you there!”

For a full festival schedule and to purchase advanced tickets, visit artsw.org/jazzfest.

About the 2023 Featured Artists:

John Scofield and Joe Lovano: Across more than three decades, a half-dozen albums, and hundreds of gigs, the partnership of John Scofield and Joe Lovano has defined contemporary jazz.

Three-time Grammy Award winner John Scofield is considered one of the most important guitarists and composers in jazz. Possessor of a distinctive sound and stylistic diversity, Scofield is a masterful improviser whose music falls somewhere between post-bop, funk-edged jazz and R&B. He has prominently led his own groups in the international jazz and contemporary scenes, recorded more than 40 albums as a leader, and collaborated with current favorites and jazz legends, including Miles Davis, Pat Metheny, Charlie Haden, Herbie Hancock, Medeski, Martin & Wood, Bill Frisell, Brad Mehldau, Dave Holland and Phil Lesh, to name a few.

Grammy-winning Cleveland native Joe Lovano stands out as one of the most successful saxophonists in jazz today. He has distinguished himself for some three decades as a prescient and pathfinding force in the arena of creative music. Lovano has earned praise, not just for his tone and improvisational abilities, but also for his forward-thinking presentation of new musical ideas and ensemble concepts.

Cécile McLorin Salvant & Sullivan Fortner: Cécile McLorin Salvant has developed a passion for storytelling and finding the connections between



Mike Phillips

the world, theater, jazz and Baroque music. Salvant is an eclectic curator, unearthing rarely recorded, forgotten songs with strong narratives, interesting power dynamics, unexpected twists, and humor. She won the Thelonious Monk competition in 2010, is a three-time Grammy Award-winner for Best Jazz Vocal Album, and was the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship and a Doris Duke Artist Award.

For the past decade, Sullivan Fortner has been stretching deep-rooted talents as a pianist, composer, band leader and uncompromising individualist. The Grammy Award-winning artist from New Orleans received international praise as both key player and producer for his collaborative work on The Window (Mack Avenue, 2018) alongside vocalist-composer Cécile McLorin Salvant.

Endea Owens & The Cookout: Detroit-raised recording artist, bassist and composer Endea Owens is known as one of jazz’s most vibrant emerging artists. She has been mentored by jazz icons Marcus Belgrave, Rodney Whitaker, Ron Carter, and more. Owens has toured and performed with Wynton Marsalis, Jennifer Holliday, Diana Ross, Solange, Jon Batiste, Dee Bridgema-

ter and Steve Turre, to name a few. In 2018, she graduated from The Juilliard School and joined The Late Show with Stephen Colbert as a member of the show’s house band, Stay Human. Since then, Owens has won an Emmy Award, Grammy Award and George Foster Peabody Award.

Mike Phillips: Mount Vernon native and contemporary jazz saxophonist Mike Phillips is one of the most electrifying instrumentalists today. Phillips combines smooth, romantic riffs with a funky, hip-hop-influenced sound. He is the first musician signed by Michael Jordan to the Nike Jordan Brand and is the only musician in the world to have recorded and toured with all of the legendary “Big Three” of American soul and pop music: Michael Jackson, Prince and Stevie Wonder. He has also distinguished himself with his own albums, including 2005’s Uncommon Denominator and 2020’s Pulling Off the Covers.

Other notable artists scheduled to perform at the 2023 JazzFest White Plains festival include: Aaron Seeber, Helen Sung, Edmar Castañeda, The MCW Jazz Faculty Ensemble, Richie Goods & Chien Lu, Mike Freeman and more.

Jennifer Furioli, Executive Director of the White Plains BID explains “White Plains is known for being a beacon of creativity and the arts, and every year both come to life in the heart of our downtown thanks to the longstanding and well-known White Plains Jazz Fest. It’s a pleasure to participate once again as a partner in this event which activates our downtown, and brings diverse organizations, businesses and neighbors together united with the shared love of jazz.”

JazzFest White Plains is made possible with major support by Montefiore Einstein with additional support from Westchester County, Apple Bank, Bright Energy Services, Westchester Center for Jazz and Contemporary Music, News 12 and Westchester Magazine.

Artsw.org



John Scofield and Joe Lovano

Calendar of Events

Jewish Dungeons & Dragons: Seeking Teen DMs and Tween Gamers!
Teen Dungeon Masters (DMs)

JCCMW
999 Wilmot Road, Scarsdale

Are you a passionate Dungeons & Dragons player with a desire to serve your community and cultivate your abilities as a leader? We are recruiting teens, ages 14–18, to serve as dungeon masters (DMs) for our new Jewish Dungeon & Dragons (JD&D) programming! DMs must be available for all game days, plus a DM workshop on September 10, 2023. Interested? Apply now! https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScvOWVe1NNdupg2PD-3-D4Yn72gq0d3epmsq_hVspfw6s5rxg/viewform. We only have five spots available!



Tween Gamers: Whether you have played Dungeons and Dragons before or this is your first time, our JD&D program will be a fun place for you to explore different worlds with Jewish themes all while making new friends.

| JD&D Game Schedule | Dates |
|----------------------------|--|
| Tween Gamers: 3:30–5:30 PM | October 22, November 19, December 10, 2023, and January 7, February 11, 2024 |
| Teen DMs: 2:00–6:00 PM | |

Westchester County Cultural Festivals
Kensico Dam, Valhalla
August 20 – Jewish Heritage Festival from noon to 6pm
August 27 – Muslim Heritage Festival from noon to 6pm
Kensico Dam Plaza is located at 1 Bronx River Parkway, Valhalla.



Exciting News! For the first time ever, Pickleball will be played at a Maccabi event! Learn more about the Pan American Maccabi Games in Buenos Aires in December 2023. They are recruiting for Open M/F and Masters 50+ M/F Teams. To register and for an informational zoom to learn more, visit https://us02web.zoom.us/join/registration/tZcoc-2vpzwH91E3_u5JZ490RJ1yTVYrUCB?_x_zm_rtaid=QDI3jPt4T86GIONNIOKSlw.1688748980970.d72a05ef-c5286723ef1dd285227f6667&_x_zm_rhtaid=702#/registration. Questions? Email Marty Einhorn at martyeinhorn@comcast.net.

**The Parade Ground in Van Cortlandt Park
Bronx, NY
ADL New York/New Jersey Walk Against Hate
Sunday, August 20th**

The Walk unites hundreds of ADL constituents, allies, and community partners in the effort to fight hate for good. Register for free and invite your family and friends to do the same. There will be raffle prizes, outdoor games and activities, face painting, snacks, iced drinks, coffee bar and more! For questions or more information regarding the Walk, email WalkNYNJ@adl.org.

**Museum on Eldridge Street
12 Eldridge Street
New York, NY
Walking Tour: “All-of-a-Kind Family”
Sunday, August 20, 10:30 a.m.**

Stroll through the story and into the streets to learn about the real-life people and Lower East Side places that inspired Sydney Taylor to write All-of-a-Kind Family. These behind-the-scenes details are guaranteed to make you love the book even more! Recommended for children five and up and their adult companions. Ticket Price (includes Museum admission): Adults: \$15; Students & Seniors: \$12; Children 5–17: \$10; Children 5 and Under: Free

Preparing Tomorrow’s Leaders Today

LFT (Leaders for Tomorrow): A Groundbreaking Program for High School Students



BY MYRA CLARK-SIEGEL,
AJC WESTCHESTER FAIRFIELD REGIONAL DIRECTOR

- “Hitler was right.”
- “Israel is a ... [fill in the blank] state.”
- How can you support Israel – I thought we were friends?
- “We are dismayed to report that at [insert any variety of high school names here] we found swastikas carved into desks.”

As jarring as these are to read, these are all real examples of what our high school students face today, either directly by classmates or on social media.

In May 2021, during the Hamas-Israel conflict, social media was flooded with such horrific social media posts as “Hitler was right” –posted on social media a staggering 15,000 times in one week alone.

Numerous reports noted that the conflict “sparked the largest increase in on-line mentions of anti-Israel allegations like ‘apartheid,’ ‘colonialism,’ and ‘settler’ in the history of social media, creating a tide of racialized and hate-inducing sentiment against Israel.”

At the same time, as AJC’s Antisemitism in America reports demonstrate, antisemitism is on the rise in the United States.

So many Jewish teens who have gone to Jewish summer camp, attend Jewish day schools or Hebrew schools, or who belong to Jewish youth groups found themselves staring at their cell phones – or their classmates – in disbelief.

The safe “Jewish bubble” so many worked to create seemed to burst right before people’s eyes, and many high school students and parents were ill-prepared to deal with the situation.

The question: what can we do to prepare and protect our high school students?

The answer: AJC’s LFT or Leaders for Tomorrow program.

American Jewish Committee (AJC) has a high school program here in Westchester/Fairfield that helps teens address these issues and become strong, confident Jewish, pro-Israel leaders.

AJC Leaders for Tomorrow (LFT) students are not just future leaders; they are today’s leaders. LFT is AJC’s education and advocacy program for teens that empowers young Jews to speak up for Israel and the Jewish people.

LFT helps high school students develop a strong Jewish identity and trains them as advocates for Israel, and to be voices against antisemitism.

Through innovative and didactic activities, engaging guest speakers and abundant opportunities to engage with experts and interact with leaders, LFT alumni become equipped to strengthen a world that desperately needs Jewish advocates.

Throughout the program, 10th, 11th, and 12th graders learn about effective coalition and relationship building.

Knowing how to advocate makes all the difference.

As LFT student Ben Messafi noted, “The biggest skill I got from LFT was the idea of interfaith dialogue...we need to look at other communities and see what they need so that we can create that interfaith partnership that will overall help us both succeed.”

LFT alumna Eliana Fromer adds, “LFT brings together kids from all different backgrounds, schools, levels of (Jewish and Israel) education and observance.”

As LFT alumnus Kevin Khitrov notes, “LFT has provided me with a platform to engage in discussions with students outside of the program and diplomats from the United States and around the world to better understand what actions we must take to address antisemitism in the 21st Century while upholding democratic values.”

LFT applications for the Westchester/Fairfield 2023-2024 school year cohort are now open. If you know of a rising high school sophomore, junior, or senior who may be interested, please email us at AJC at Westchester@ajc.org.

JCCMW
999 Wilmot Road
Scarsdale

Monday, September 11, 4:00 to 5:00 pm

Westchester Jewish Community Center will offer a free, informative workshop to learn about the myths of grief—what society has taught us about bereavement and the current thinking of the lived experience of grief. Westchester Jewish Community Services staff will present on these topics and discuss the upcoming Bereavement Support Group that will be held at the JCCMW, with support from Plaza Jewish Community Chapel, starting in October. The Workshop is free, but call (914) 725-7300 to RSVP.

The Benefits of Addressing Mental Health and Physical Health

Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS) is the largest provider of community-based outpatient mental health services. In caring for the mental health needs of clients, addressing their physical health needs is often necessary to achieve the best overall health outcomes for them. At WJCS, our team of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) supports both the mental and physical health of our clients.

Specifically, LPNs in each of our clinics meet with all new admissions for Health Monitoring Visits. During these visits LPNs check vital signs, administer injectable medications, screen for medical problems, provide health education, recognize and connect clients with emergency services when needed, and refer clients to primary care physicians.

Our Medical Director, Dr. John Douglas supervises the LPNs at WJCS. According to Dr. Douglas, “Our LPNs are critical to supporting both the psychiatric and medical care of all the clients we serve. LPNs enable our Psychiatric Staff to work at the top of their licenses and facilitate our caring for people as a whole.”

Below are just two examples of when our LPNs made a significant difference in the lives of our clients:

1. During a Health Monitoring Visit, one of our LPNs was conducting a health screening on a 33-year-old female client who had recently been discharged from a psychiatric hospital and started on a new medication. While meeting with the LPN, the client complained of neck and shoulder stiffness. She was also having trouble moving her tongue and could not speak clearly. The LPN immediately recognized the client was having a medical complication and brought her to see one of our nurse practitioners who recognized the client was having an acute dystonic reaction. The nurse

practitioner educated the client about what was happening and referred the client to an emergency room. The LPN helped ensure the client made it to the emergency room where the client received treatment and recovered. The LPN called the client the next day and the client reported feeling much better. The LPN scheduled an initial psychiatric assessment which the client received a few days later. The client continues to receive ongoing psychiatric treatment at WJCS along with individual therapy and is now doing well. The LPN also helped the client establish care with a primary care physician.

2. While meeting with another of our LPNs during a Health Monitoring Visit, a 79-year-old female client's blood pressure was found by the LPN to be extremely low. The client lived alone and had a history of schizophrenia, multiple psychiatric hospitalizations, high blood pressure, irritable bowel syndrome, gastroesophageal reflux disease, and osteoarthritis. The client acknowledged feeling dizzy to the LPN during the Health Monitoring Visit. The LPN then elevated the client's legs and gave her some salty crackers with tuna and water. The LPN observed the client for about 60 minutes and then checked her blood pressure again which, fortunately, had increased. Before the client returned home, the LPN recommended that the client schedule an appointment with her primary care physician, who the client had, “not seen for a while.” This recommendation promoted the client to see her primary care physician soon after. The primary care physician arranged for the client to have a home health aide to assist with the activities of daily living and administer the client's medications. These interventions significantly improved both the client's physical and mental health. The client is now doing well.

To learn more about Westchester Jewish Community Services, please go to www.wjcs.com.

Advanced-Level Hebrew Offered by SAJE

The Suburban Alliance for Jewish Education (SAJE) will offer an advance-level Hebrew course, Biblical Hebrew IV, part four of an ongoing course, which will meet ten Thursday evenings this fall, September 21 & 28, October 12, 19, & 26, November 2, 9, 16 & 30, and December 6, from 7:00 - 8:30 PM, Eastern Zone. A pdf of the textbook is included with tuition.

The participants of this course will read and translate a variety of vocalized and unvocalized Hebrew texts of various genres, with an eye towards improving comprehension. A prerequisite is near-mastery of biblical Hebrew, approximating two semesters of formal study in a biblical Hebrew textbook.

Write to Rabbi Karp with your Hebrew background, requests for text selections, and three timeslots (day and time) that would be possible for

you. The group would begin after Sukkot.

Additional new classes are in formation, and requests and suggestions for new courses are invited. Courses which have been requested include, among others, Wise Aging, Modern Jewish Philosophers, various levels and genres of Hebrew, including beginning and modern, a full cycle of Torah in English starting with Genesis, Prayer and the Prayerbook, Basic Judaism, Understanding Israel, Jewish mindfulness. Write to rabbimollykarp@gmail.com with your ideas.

The tuition is \$400 per course.* All sessions are recorded for those who must miss a class. Private sessions are also available. To express your interest, or with questions, or * for a sliding scale in cases of genuine need, write to Rabbi Karp at rabbimollykarp@gmail.com. Learn about Rabbi Karp at www.rabbimollykarp.com.

RNA-Based Drug Delivered By Nanoparticles Destroys Most Cancer Cells In Bone Marrow

Using an RNA-based drug delivered to multiple myeloma blood cancer cells by targeted lipid nanoparticles, researchers at Tel Aviv University (TAU) destroyed 90% of the cells under laboratory conditions and 60% of the cells in human tissues.

The researchers developed lipid-based nanoparticles, similar to those used in the COVID-19 vaccine, containing RNA molecules that silence the gene CKAP5, encoding cytoskeleton-associated protein 5. With this protein inhibited, the cancer cell is unable to divide, which essentially kills it. To avoid damaging noncancerous cells, the nanoparticles were coated with antibodies that guided them specifically to the cancer cells inside the bone marrow.

The breakthrough was achieved by a group of researchers from TAU and the Rabin Medical Center led by Professor Dan Peer, a pioneer in the development of RNA therapeutics and Head of the Nanomedicine Laboratory at TAU's Shmunis School of Biomedicine and Cancer Research, and by Ph.D. student Dana Tarab-Ravski. The results were published on July 27, 2023, in *Advanced Science*.

“Multiple myeloma is a blood cancer usually found in the older population,” Tarab-Ravski explains. “While most blood cancers appear in the bloodstream or lymph nodes and spread from there to the rest of the body, multiple myeloma cells appear and form tumors inside the bone marrow and are therefore very hard to reach.”

The study's findings are very encouraging. Under laboratory conditions, where cells are grown in flasks, the nanoparticles developed by the researchers eradicated about 90% of the cancer cells. At the second stage, the new treatment was tested on cancer samples taken from multiple myeloma patients at the haemato-oncological ward of the Rabin Medical Center. The success rate in these samples was 60%.

Testing the ability of the nanoparticles to reach

the bone marrow in an animal model, the researchers found that after a single injection, the RNA had penetrated to 60% of the multiple myeloma cancer cells in the bone marrow. Lastly, examining the therapeutic effectiveness of the nanoparticles in the animal model resulted in the eradication of two-thirds of the cancer cells, and the animals showed significant improvement in all clinical indicators.

“People with multiple myeloma suffer from severe pain in their bones, as well as anemia, kidney failure, and a weakened immune system,” says Tarab-Ravski. “There are many possible treatments for this disease, but after a certain period of improvement, most patients develop resistance to the therapy and the disease relapses even more aggressively. Therefore, there is a constant need for developing new treatments for multiple myeloma.

“RNA-based therapy has a great advantage in this case because it can be developed very quickly. By simply changing the RNA molecule a different gene can be silenced each time, thereby tailoring the treatment to the progression of the disease and to the individual patient. The drug delivery system we developed is the first that specifically targets cancer cells inside the bone marrow, and the first to show that silencing the expression of CKAP5 gene can be used to kill blood cancer cells.”

Professor Peer, who also serves as TAU's Vice President of Research and Development, says, “Our technology opens a new world for selective delivery of RNA medications and vaccines for cancer tumors and diseases originating in the bone marrow.”

The clinical team included Dr. Tamar Berger, Dr. Iuliana Vaxman, and Professor Pia Raanani from the Institute of Hematology, Rabin Medical Center. The research was funded by the Varda and Boaz Dotan Research Center in Hemato-Oncology at TAU and by the Lewis Trust for Blood Cancer Research.

The Jewish Literacy Initiative - Fall Programs

The Westchester Jewish Council has announced that exciting learning opportunities are available through its new partnership with the Jewish Studies Program at Purchase College. They have generously allowed the Council's subscribers to enroll as non-matriculated students in the “Jewish Music in Modern Europe and the Diaspora” course, which will be taught by Jonathan Salamon. Registrants are entitled to certain campus benefits. For more information and to register, please visit [https://files.constantcontact.com/6e6b6558001/6d97f1c3-](https://files.constantcontact.com/6e6b6558001/6d97f1c3-9a5a-4aa8-b733-33ce4434f01c.pdf)

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Additionally, subscribers may wish to attend “Abayudaya: the Music and culture of the Jews in Uganda” in September, “Yearning and Rejoicing: Jewish Music of the Diaspora” in October and The Klezmatics' upcoming performance in November at Purchase College. You are eligible for two complimentary tickets to the Klezmatics. Further details are available below.

For more information, please visit www.purchase.edu/academics/jewish-studies/events.

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For more information please call our sales counselors at:

(914) 769-0603



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Westchester Jewish Life

Edward Shapiro, President and Publisher
es@shorelinepub.com

Helene Pollack, Emeritus Publisher

Joyce Farrell, Editor
joyce.farrell@shorelinepub.com

Cynthia Pena, Art Director
shorelineproduction@gmail.com

Mary DeYoung, Advertising Account Executive
mdeyoung.61@gmail.com

Lauren Levine, Advertising Account Executive
levinelaure@gmail.com

Lynne Glaser, Advertising Account Executive
Lynnesglaser@gmail.com

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County Executive Delivers 6th State of the County Address

Touting his Administration's successes and plans for the future, Westchester County Executive George Latimer delivered his highly anticipated 6th State of the County Address on Thursday, June 29 to a full Board of Legislators Chamber. The address, which is mandated by the County Charter to be delivered by the County Executive to the Board of Legislators and its Chairman Vedat Gashi, served as a platform for Latimer to outline his administration's remarkable accomplishments, with a focus on efforts to support asylum seekers within the County, tax reduction and dropping crime rates.

During the address, Latimer said: "So here we are, still sharing this small patch of land for a moment in time, all of us here together in our Westchester County. So, you ask – what is the State of our County? Is it fierce? Is it united? Or is it thriving? It is all of this – because the State of our County is one of unyielding strength, unwavering resolve, and, most crucially, boundless potential."

Latimer's State of the County Address featured seven short videos, showing, through a different medium, the countless accomplishments of the past year.

Under the leadership of Latimer, Westchester County has experienced significant advancements in various areas, fostering a thriving community that prioritizes the well-being and prosperity of its residents. Through smart fiscal management, Latimer has successfully implemented four consecutive tax cuts that have provided relief to homeowners - allowing them to invest in their future while strengthening the local economy.

Latimer said: "I am proud that we have accomplished another significant milestone in our journey toward a better future. Our County has successfully cut County property taxes for the fourth consecutive year. This achievement is a testament to our commitment to fiscal responsibility and our dedication to improving the lives of our citizens.

Cutting County property taxes is not mere political rhetoric - it is a tangible action that directly impacts the lives of our residents. It allows hardworking County residents to keep more of their earnings, invest in their dreams, take the kids to do something fun - and most of all - worry less."

One of the key highlights of the State of the County Address was the decline in crime rates throughout Westchester County. Working with the County's Department of Public Safety, local police departments, and community organizations, Latimer's Administration has made significant strides in creating safer neighborhoods. Latimer highlighted the importance of these efforts, emphasizing the continued commitment to enhancing public safety and ensuring the well-being of all residents.

Latimer said: "In Westchester County, our commitment to combating crime is unwavering. Recognizing the importance of this mission, I have significantly increased the funding for the Westchester County Department of Public Safety, providing them the highest level of financial support in their entire history. While some areas in the country may be experiencing an unfortunate increase in crime rates, tonight I am announcing that Westchester County continues to witness a consistent drop in criminal activities. I attribute this positive trend to the dedication and bravery displayed by our men and women in uniform."



County Executive George Latimer

Also in his address, Latimer recognized the tireless work in supporting asylum seekers who have found their way to Westchester County. Recognizing the challenges faced by individuals seeking refuge, Latimer has prioritized providing essential services, resources, and a welcoming environment to those in need. By fostering a compassionate and inclusive community, Westchester County has become a model for humanitarian efforts, offering support [and] seeking ways to offer opportunities for a brighter future.

Latimer said: "So, let's talk openly, and inclusively, about the most pressing issue of our time - the plight of asylum seekers. We must approach this

matter with compassion, empathy, and a commitment to upholding our values as a nation. Asylum seekers are individuals, just like you and me. They are individuals who have fled their home countries due to persecution, violence, and unimaginable hardships. Unimaginable. They come seeking refuge, hoping for a chance at a better life for themselves and their families. I know that we all, deep down, believe in treating them with dignity and respect, while also ensuring a fair and efficient immigration process and protecting the interests, and addressing the legitimate concerns of those who already live here."

Latimer also used the address to highlight millions of dollars of capital funding allocated toward:

- the rebuilding of the historic Playland Amusement Park,
- various County parks projects,
- restoring Muscote Farm's Main House,
- smart QR codes in parks for patrons who need emergency services,
- Pickleball Courts at Tibbetts Brook Park,
- the first full Cricket Pitch at Croton Point Park,
- an upgraded South County Trailway,
- restoring Kingsland Point Lighthouse,
- reopening the Westchester County Center,
- and the long-awaited reopening of Memorial Field.

Latimer said: "The Parks, Recreation and Conservation Department has been working tirelessly to enhance the quality of life for our residents and provide them with exceptional recreational opportunities.

We reopened the Westchester County Center. After serving as an overflow hospital, testing center, and vaccination site during the pandemic, the County Center returned to its regular operations – including Section One Basketball.

And through our tireless efforts and persistent determination, we bore witness to the extraordinary transformation of Memorial Field, as it emerged, triumphantly, like a phoenix from the ashes soaring to new heights.

From my earliest days to the present, I have embraced the spirit of Mount Vernon, and it will forever hold a special place in my heart. Once a Mount Vernon Knight, always a Mount Vernon Knight. Although, let me give a shout-out to my Rye Garnets too."

The State of the County Address served as a reminder and reinforcement of Latimer's dedication and vision for Westchester County. In addition to his record on taxes and crime reduction, Latimer touted the County's efforts on innumerable fronts including the environment, mental health services, economic development, parks improvements, Westchester values, and veterans' services.

2026 Estate Tax Sunset on the Horizon



BY BERNARD A. KROOKS, CERTIFIED ELDER LAW ATTORNEY

With the Presidential election coming up next year and the primary season right around the corner, it got me thinking about how quickly time flies. It seems like only yesterday when the Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017 (TCJA) was signed into law. That law made changes to, among other things, the estate tax laws; however, many of those changes are scheduled to sunset (expire) at the end of 2025.

By way of background, the maximum federal estate and gift tax rate is 40 percent. However, you don't have to pay gift or estate taxes until your combined gifts exceed your lifetime estate and gift tax exemption. One of the most significant changes made by the TCJA was to increase the federal estate tax exemption from \$5.4 million to \$10.8 million. That's for the aggregate lifetime gifts, and bequests you make on your death since the estate and gift tax systems are unified. Moreover, the TCJA further provided that the enhanced estate tax exemption is indexed for inflation each year and now stands at \$12.92 million, an \$860,000 increase over the 2022 amount. Thus, a married couple in 2023 can leave up to \$25.84 million ($\12.92×2) estate tax-free to their family.

In addition to the lifetime exemption amount, individuals are permitted to make annual exclusion gifts to as many people (and, in certain cases, trusts) as they like. In 2023, the federal annual gift tax inclusion increased from \$16,000 to \$17,000. For married couples, the annual gift tax exclusion is \$34,000 ($\$17,000 \times 2$) for each gift recipient. Moreover, gifts made for medical or education expenses are not subject to the annual exclusion limitations provided that the gifts are made directly to the medical provider or educational institution. Payments of these amounts are not even considered a gift and you do not have to file a gift tax return.

However, the foregoing is not the end of the analysis when it comes to estate and gift tax planning. In addition to the federal estate tax, New York has its own estate tax, and the maximum rate is 16 percent. Also, the New York state estate tax exemption is lower than

the federal amount and currently is \$6.58 million, an increase from last year's amount of \$6.11 million. However, unlike the federal exemption, the New York exemption is phased out for taxable estates between 100% and 105% of the exemption amount. Thus, for a New York estate that exceeds \$6.909 million (105% of \$6.58 million), the exemption is completely phased out and the entire estate is subject to New York estate tax. Practitioners refer to this as the New York state "cliff," since once you are over 105% of the exemption amount, the entire estate is taxable, and you get no benefit from the \$6.58 million exemption. Fortunately, New York state does not have a gift tax. However, gifts made within three years of death are subject to a claw-back rule, which means they are included in the person's taxable estate.

If no steps are taken by Congress prior to 2026, the federal estate tax exemption is scheduled to sunset to the pre-TCJA (2017) level of \$5 million, adjusted for inflation. Many practitioners think that the inflation-adjusted number will be around \$7 million. The good news is that the IRS has announced that individuals who take advantage of the increased exemption for lifetime gifts prior to 2026, will not be adversely affected by a decreased federal estate tax exemption after 2025. Thus, if you made a \$10 million gift in 2023 and the federal estate and gift tax exemption is lowered to \$7 million in 2026, your gift is grandfathered, and you will not owe federal estate or gift taxes on that gift. However, you may still owe New York state estate taxes.

Confused yet? Join the club. Even simple gifting should be undertaken with caution. In addition to estate and gift tax consequences, gifts can have an impact on income tax—both good and bad. For example, any income earned on the gifted asset will be taxed at the recipient's income tax rate, which could be higher or lower than the donor's rate. It's a good idea to get a full analysis of your entire tax picture prior to making any significant gifts. Just keep in mind: proper planning takes time and 2026 is not that far away. No one really knows what's ahead; now is a good time to determine what steps you should be taking, if any, to reduce your estate and gift tax exposure.

Bernard A. Krooks, Esq., is a founding partner of Littman Krooks LLP. He was named 2021 "Lawyer of the Year" by Best Lawyers in America® for excellence in Elder Law and has been honored as one of the "Best Lawyers" in America since 2008. He was elected to the Estate Planning Hall of Fame by the National Association of Estate Planners & Councils (NAEPC). Krooks is past Chair of the Elder Law Committee of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel (ACTEC). Mr. Krooks may be reached at (914-684-2100) or by visiting the firm's website at www.lit-tman-krooks.com.

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