

Building trust in Community

Dear Friends,

To quote Mr. Rogers, “All of us, at some time or other need help. Whether we’re giving or receiving help, each one of us has something valuable to bring to this world.”

WJCS helps people in our community of all ages and backgrounds who face difficult challenges in life and need additional support to build a strong foundation of well-being to strengthen their ability to weather life’s storms.

Whether people are experiencing mental health, trauma, disability, aging, educational, or often systemic challenges, we all know that accessing support can be very difficult.

Being a champion of WJCS means you ensure that access to support is available and equitable to everyone in our community. When you support WJCS you recognize that our community is stronger when everyone feels like they belong.

Your compassionate support means you impact over 20,000 of our Westchester neighbors who work in partnership with our experienced and exceptional staff to meet their needs.

When you show your kindness to WJCS you are expressing your values of transforming lives together and convey your trust in WJCS to strengthen our community for everyone.

We could not be more grateful to you in our care for each other. As we begin the new year we want to share more about who you impact.

Sincerely,



Seth Diamond
CEO



Bruce M. Freyer
Board President



Lauren Candela-Katz
Chief Advancement Officer

YOU help children, teens, and adults who are experiencing mental health, trauma & substance use challenges.

"Going through a divorce, the brink of homelessness, and a mental illness was just chaos. A couple of times I attempted suicide. When I walked into a WJCS mental health center, it was such a welcoming environment.

I said, 'Okay. Let me give WJCS a chance.' From there, my journey started."

-Prudence



WJCS believes no one, of any age, who is experiencing trauma, substance use, anxiety, depression, or other mental health problems should feel alone. We also recognize that mental health challenges do not exist in a vacuum. Substance use, traumas, joblessness, the loss of a loved one, a chronic illness, poverty, homelessness, and legal problems exacerbate mental health conditions and must be addressed by taking an integrative approach. A sense of well-being can only be achieved when basic needs are cared for and co-occurring disorders, like substance abuse, are addressed. Once people have the emotional and practical support they need, they have a foundation for weathering life's storms.

"I came to WJCS for therapy at a time of serious distress in my 20's. I couldn't afford much, and was able to pay just a very modest amount thanks to financial support from WJCS. Valerie saved my life and I am eternally grateful to her and WJCS."

-Kristin



The number of people suffering from mental health and substance use problems are skyrocketing. More than 20% of Americans, including youth, teens, and adults of different socioeconomic groups, are living with a mental illness. **Only about half of adults receive treatment.** More than 20 million Americans 12 years and older are affected by substance use disorder. These conditions don't discriminate. They affect people in all socioeconomic groups.



YOU help children, youth & families who need skills and support to thrive.

WJCS recognizes that every child deserves to have the skills, tools, resources and affirmations they need to be prepared for and thrive in school. WJCS is devoted to decreasing the effects of socioeconomic disparities and promoting parent-child engagement, early literacy, and social-emotional building for families from under-resourced and marginalized communities.

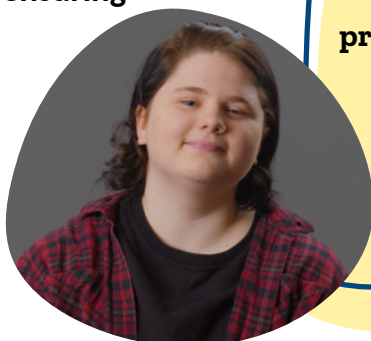
After-school programs promote positive youth development by focusing on academic support and social and emotional learning, and enrichment, to help low-income students improve their competencies. Increasing the emotional and social well-being of children, youth, and families, including LGBTQIA+ youth, pregnant teens, and those exposed to domestic violence, can make all the difference in building a strong the foundation for a positive future.

Ten percent of children in Westchester county live below the poverty line. Boosting the educational, social, and emotional skills of the next generation has invaluable long-term impact. **By supporting children, youth, and families, we are ensuring positive outcomes for them now and in the future.**



"I was new to this country and starving for information. Through the WJCS Parent-Child program, I learned strategies for playing and interacting. I can't imagine what would have happened if WJCS hadn't come into my life."

-Monica



WJCS Center Lane's Transparency program is a place where people who don't have anywhere to go can find love, meaning, and family...And that can save someone's life.

-Spirit

YOU help people with disabilities enjoy a full life.

WJCS is committed to helping individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities live full lives. We are dedicated to giving those who live in our community residences and in independent living situations the tools and support they need to live with purpose and dignity. With social, emotional, vocational, and life skills support, neurodivergent individuals can thrive. They feel confident and proud in their abilities, rather than self-conscious of their disabilities. They contribute to society by participating in day programs, volunteering, and working at jobs. They develop friends and community and an appreciation of themselves, their loved ones, their life.

People with disabilities tend to experience loneliness and social isolation at significantly higher rates than people without disabilities. They are also at a higher risk for experiencing trauma. Loneliness is a particularly significant driver of poor well-being among people with a disability. Interventions to reduce loneliness make a huge impact. The adults we serve are eager to lead rich, full lives—but they need support. They need help with life skills, like time management and helping with household chores to the best of their ability. They need vocational counseling and opportunities for recreation, socialization, and community involvement. And, some individuals need significant daily care. **With your kindness and compassion, WJCS is able to provide these life-changing programs and services, and help these individuals live safely in our community.**



"All of us want our kids to be okay when we're not around anymore. I'm not going to be here forever. Since my daughter's placement at the WJCS resident group home, I've seen her grow so much."

-Alan



WJCS POINT enjoyed dinner in NYC and seeing the tree at Rockefeller Center, an annual tradition made possible by POINT Parents, Friends & Family!



WJCS Shelanu cheered on the victorious Westchester Knicks Basketball Team at the Westchester County Center!

YOU help seniors age in place with dignity and provide caregiver support.

WJCS is dedicated to helping seniors age in place safely and with dignity. Seniors generally prefer living in their own homes, in their familiar surroundings. But as they age, seniors often experience health challenges that make shopping, driving to medical and dental appointments, and socializing difficult. Being involved in the community all becomes a struggle. The stresses of aging are exacerbated by feelings of loneliness. The death of a spouse or friends, the demands of being a caregiver, and the difficulty traveling to see friends can all create a sense of social isolation.

Twenty percent of the population in Westchester is over age 60. Of those age 65 and older, 39% live alone. Growing older is not just physically challenging; it's also emotionally challenging. Many seniors face health and mobility limitations. Those who enjoyed and are no longer working often lack a sense of purpose and vitality. Innovative program, services, and fitness, recreational, and educational activities help seniors maintain a sense of identity, self-esteem, and self-worth. Emotional and practical support, both individual and in groups, helps caregivers who are often overwhelmed with stress and added responsibilities, navigate their challenges and feel less isolated and alone, emotional support, care management guidance, and resources play an important role in helping caregivers deliver the best care for their loved ones and themselves.

Your compassion makes sure seniors and their caregivers in Westchester can age in place for as long as possible safely and as part of the community.

"I never expected to live to be 100 years old. I couldn't believe I was left with the prospect of losing my home. Somebody introduced me to WJCS and it was like a dream come true. My social worker Susan has done so much for me."

-Mildred



TIPS FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS

by Gillian Rittmaster, LCSW, Assistant Executive Director of Jewish Programs and Health & Healing Support Services

- Create a network of support for you and your loved one, including medical professionals, family, friends, neighbors, and mental health and recreational services.
- Put your oxygen mask on first! If you aren't caring for yourself you cannot care for a loved one.
- Exercise, eat right, see friends and family, ask yourself what brings you peace and comfort.
- Caregiving is a balance of attending to your loved one and finding activity and joy outside of the caregiving.
- Get respite from the caregiving when you can even if it is mini breaks.
- Acknowledge the losses you may feel and allow yourself time for your feelings. Find validation among your support system.
- Connect with your loved one you are caring for in new ways. What can you do together? What joys do you share?
- Don't forget that intimacy as small as a comforting touch can be a powerful connection.
- Join a support group of your peer caregivers.

YOU help the Jewish community stay connected and uplifted.

WJCS was founded in 1943 as an organization to help Jewish families and has grown to be an agency that supports people in Westchester of all backgrounds and ages. While our mission has expanded, we continue to be deeply committed to meeting the emotional, spiritual, educational, and cultural needs of the entire Westchester Jewish community. **Whatever your affiliation or identification to being Jewish, WJCS is here for you. We do our best to connect you to a broad range of services or assist in referring you to services to meet your needs.** Through Jewish Programs we support Aging Holocaust survivors, seniors in assisted living centers, family caregivers whose loved ones suffer from dementia, and those who are grieving. Synagogue rabbis throughout Westchester County depend on WJCS for spiritual and emotional guidance for their congregants in emotional distress. When there is a tragedy in our community, we are here. And, we support children and families in Jewish nursery schools and day schools who are experiencing emotional and behavioral problems.

Along with the rest of life's typical challenges, the Jewish community in Westchester faces an alarming rise in antisemitism. With your dedication and generosity of our donors, we provide support in a number of ways and believe that together we can strengthen the resilience and connection of our Jewish community.



I can't imagine what it would be like to serve a community that does not have WJCS. We can provide congregants with a WJCS social worker and support those going through painful life transitions. I know when it's time to refer my congregants to the kind of skilled and compassionate care that WJCS offers.

*-Senior Rabbi Johnathan E. Blake,
Westchester Reform Temple*



Annual Holocaust Survivor Hanukkah Celebration at Westchester Reform Temple

It is me who thanks you for giving me back my dignity and common sense, as well as my sanity in this very scary world.

-Jackie

wjcs

Gala April 16, 2024

Connect, Recharge, and Be Inspired as we honor...



Meira Fleisch has been a dedicated and invaluable WJCS Board member for eight years. Before joining the Board, Meira worked as an early learning specialist for the ParentChild+ program, helping families develop positive parent/toddler interactions, build language skills, and strengthen the child's readiness for school. After joining the Board, Meira continued her work on a volunteer basis. When the program went virtual during the pandemic, Meira continued helping families, as well as tutoring a student from Yonkers, a participant of a different WJCS program in a new virtual mentoring program. Meira has served on several WJCS Board committees including Executive; Children, Youth and Families; and Gala. She was Chair

of the Program Services Committee, highlighting the impact of the agency's work on individuals and the community. Meira currently chairs the Jewish Program Services Committee, organizing meetings to keep the committee informed of both the services and the needs of the division which includes support for synagogues, Jewish Centers, Jewish Day Schools, and Holocaust survivors. As an adult child of Holocaust survivors, who were refugees in Israel and eventually immigrants to the U.S., Meira finds the work of WJCS particularly meaningful, even more so in the current environment of rising antisemitism. She is in awe of the agency's work, the compassion of its staff, and commitment of the Board.



Stephanie Marquesano launched the Harris project after her 19-year old son Harris died by accidental overdose in 2013. Like millions, Harris had co-occurring disorders, the combination of both mental health and substance use challenges. As the nation's only nonprofit organization dedicated to the development of an integrated system of care from prevention through sustainable recovery the Harris project strives to improve the lives of teens and young adults with, or at risk of developing, co-occurring disorders. Stephanie's proactive, collaborative and transformational approach to the overdose and suicide epidemics gripping our nation led the Harris project to collaborate with WJCS on several

fronts, including co-chairing the Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health Co-Occurring System of Care Committee, training staff on co-occurring disorders and launching new services for teens and young adults in Westchester County. She also leads a multi-agency project, that includes WJCS, bringing Encompass, an integrated evidence-based treatment modality, to local teens and young adults. Central to her work is a commitment to saving lives and improving outcomes.



845 N. Broadway
White Plains, NY 10603



wjcs
Gala 2024

Support.
Resiliency.
Well-Being.

Tuesday, April 16, 6pm
Brae Burn Country Club, Purchase, NY

Honoring

Meira Fleisch & Stephanie Marquesano

save the date