

Higher Education Associations Representing Thousands of Colleges and Universities Pledge Reforms to Fight Campus Antisemitism

The American Jewish Committee (AJC) led a landmark joint pledge with the Association of American Universities (AAU) and the American Council on Education (ACE), which is a critical advancement in creating learning environments where all Jewish students can pursue their education safely and without hate.

The joint statement reads:

America's higher education and Jewish communities share and endorse the Trump Administration's priority of eradicating antisemitism. We come together to ask the Administration to pursue this important goal in ways that preserve academic freedom, respect due process, and strengthen the government-campus scientific partnership that has made America stronger, healthier, and safer.

The proper and essential role for the U.S. government in addressing antisemitism is through the nation's powerful anti-discrimination laws, which allow for vigorous enforcement while providing due process rights that are essential to ensure fair treatment of individuals and institutions.

In the name of combating antisemitism, the federal government has recently taken steps that endanger the research grants, academic freedom, and institutional autonomy of America's higher education sector.



AJC, the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people, believes that when these actions are overly broad, they imperil science and innovation, and ultimately detract from the necessary fight against antisemitism while threatening the global preeminence of America's research universities and colleges.

Antisemitism is a plague on humanity. It has found unacceptable expression on U.S. campuses in recent years, as it has elsewhere in American society, on both sides of

the political spectrum. The universities and colleges represented by the Association of American Universities and the American Council on Education pledge continuing consequential reform and transparent action to root out antisemitism and all other forms of hate and prejudice from our campuses. AJC is committed to helping universities achieve these results.

Over the past three months, AJC's Center for Education Advocacy conducted more than 25 meetings with presidents and chancellors,

including those at Ivy League schools, large public research institutions, and small liberal arts and faith-based institutions. CEA has delivered educational briefings at UPenn, Pitt, and to a dozen universities participating in the Ruderman Campus Allies Initiative. This engagement has led to tangible results, helping universities develop and implement strategies for long-term culture change and adopt relevant action items from AJC's Action Plan to address campus antisemitism.

Visit www.westchesterjewishlife.com

New Board Members Appointed to JCC Mid-Westchester

The JCC Mid-Westchester (JCCMW) announced that local community leaders Allison Abrahms and Aaron J. Fleishaker have joined its Board of Directors, and Lee Maude now serves as Treasurer and is a member of the Executive Committee, further supporting the organization’s efforts to strengthen the community and inspire joyous lives.

“We are honored to add to our esteemed board these two highly respected and accomplished individuals who are generously dedicating their time and energy to JCCMW’s community-building mission,” said Elise Dowell, CEO of the JCCMW. “With shared values and a passion for the work we champion daily, they are poised to help make our flourish-



Allison Abrahms



Aaron J. Fleishaker

Donald J. Fleishaker, z”l, who served with distinction for six years. He began a new appointment in July of this year. He also serves on the Board of Directors of the Westchester Jewish Council and is a past president and current board member of Beth El Synagogue Center of New Rochelle.

Fleishaker is a real estate attorney who manages an extensive portfolio. His areas of expertise include real estate management, development, and construction. He looks forward to drawing on this experience to support the JCCMW in its future initiatives. Fleishaker lives in New Rochelle with his wife, Sheryl.

Maude is a Chartered Financial Analyst with a Masters of Business Administration in Finance from the University of Michigan. She has served on the JCCMW Board since July 2021, during which time she has served on the Finance Committee and chaired the Master Planning Committee. Maude brings four decades of experience in credit analysis, portfolio management, and direct lending, with senior roles at Credit Suisse, Citadel Investment Group, Katonah Capital, Deutsche Bank, Bankers Trust, and First Chicago.

A dedicated community leader, Maude served on the Scarsdale Board of Education—including two years as Board President—held leadership roles in the Fox Meadow PTA and Neighborhood Association. She was recently elected to the Board of Scarsdale Adult School. Maude and her husband, Alan, raised their family in Scarsdale, and now divide their time between White Plains and Manhattan.

The JCC Mid-Westchester is a nonprofit organization that supports the community by offering outstanding cultural, educational, and human services programming to all people regardless of age, background, religion, gender identification, or sexual orientation. Programs are grounded in Jewish values and are open to all! The JCCMW enriches families, connects friends, strengthens community, and helps people lead joyful lives. To learn more, visit jccmw.org.

ing organization even stronger. We’re also grateful to Lee Maude, whose role has expanded as she now serves as Treasurer and a member of the Executive Committee.”

Abrahms resides with her family in Larchmont, where she also grew up, and has fond memories of attending events and classes at the JCCMW as a child. Abrahms holds a Bachelor of Arts from Dartmouth College and a Masters in Education from Bank Street College of Education. She taught at a small independent school in the West Village of Manhattan until she left the classroom to raise her own children. Abrahms reconnected with the JCCMW when she enrolled her daughter in swim lessons and was a participant in a JCCMW trip to Israel in the summer of 2023.

Abrahms completed two terms as a trustee of Westchester Jewish Center, her synagogue since birth, during which time she co-chaired the search committee for the current ECC Director as well as served on the rabbinic search committee. She also spent five years on the board of Impact100 Westchester. Abrahms has recently begun her “second act,” penning two novels in the last two years, and is currently writing a third.

Fleishaker joined the JCCMW Board in September 2024 to complete the term of his late father,

AJC

LFT

Leaders for Tomorrow

EMPOWERING TODAY’S GENERATION OF GLOBAL JEWISH ADVOCATES

AJC Leaders for Tomorrow (LFT) high school students at the 2025 LFT Summit participants after advocating on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.

Calling all 10th,11th, 12th graders!

Applications are Now Open!

Are you interested in learning to be a strong Jewish and pro-Israel advocate?

AJC’s Leaders for Tomorrow (LFT) innovative education program for Jewish high school students, is designed to empower today’s generation of young Jewish leaders to advocate on behalf of the Jewish people and Israel. LFT instills in teens the knowledge, confidence, and passion to serve as positive changemakers among their peers and in their communities.

To learn more about LFT and Apply for the 2025-26 LFT High School Leaders Cohort, contact Jill Friedman at friedmanj@ajc.org or westchester@ajc.org or apply at AJC.org/LFT

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WJCS Hosts Its 2025 Back-to-School Drive

Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS) will be accepting gift card donations and brand-new backpacks, filled with new school supplies, to distribute to children and parents in their programs who are experiencing financial need. Donations are accepted until August 6.

Folders, pencils, markers, wide-ruled paper, and other tools will fill backpacks donated by individuals, organizations, and the UJA-Federation of New York, in partnership with Supplies for Success. Children ages 5-11 will receive a new backpack filled with supplies. Youth ages 12-18 will receive a \$50 gift card to buy specialized supplies they need or new clothing for school.

“With the cost of living rising and financial pressures mounting, the burden of back-to-school shopping has become more than just stressful — it’s simply out of reach,” said WJCS Chief Advancement Officer Amanda Garfinkle.

Last year, the WJCS Back-to-School Drive collected 409 backpacks. Children and parents in the WJCS Parent Child Center, home visiting programs, and mental health clinics were brimming with gratitude upon receiving the dona-

tions.

“It can be easy to forget about school supplies until the last minute,” said Jennifer Kaplan, Director of Development at WJCS. “These supplies proactively prepare students for academic, vocational, and overall life success: a theme that shines throughout all WJCS services.”

In addition to supplies, WJCS encourages donors to give children’s books, since “many of our families do not own children’s books,” according to Volunteer and Event Associate Michelle Siegel. By adding them to the list of supplies, it will improve literacy rates in children.

Students from underserved communities are at risk of starting school without adequate equipment, adding to pre-existing educational gaps. As families face more challenges in the current climate, WJCS anticipates a significant increase in demand for supplies. Donations are vital in helping students start the school year prepared and confident.

To find out how to donate to the WJCS Back-to-School Drive, go to www.wjcs.com/get-involved/volunteer/back-to-school-drive/

Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust Announces Date for Fourth Annual New York Jewish Book Festival

The Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust announced that the fourth annual New York Jewish Book Festival will be held on Sunday, November 16, 2025, featuring events for adults, kids, and families and offering tours of the Museum’s current exhibitions, The Holocaust: What Hate Can Do and Courage to Act: Rescue in Denmark.

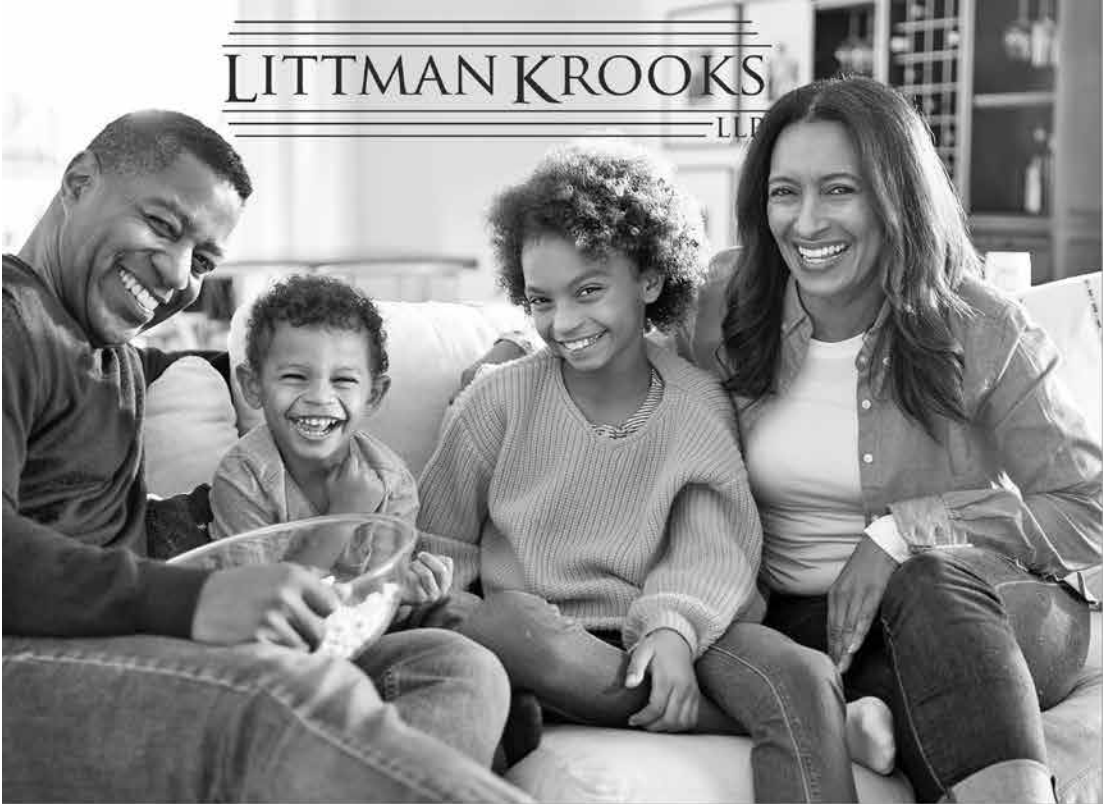
The festival – which will be held both in-person and virtually – will feature talks, panels, and author signings. The festival will touch on themes of Jewish heritage, culture and history, modern life and literature.

This summer the Museum has opened a call for submissions to present and/or participate. Anyone interested can submit an author, a book, or a panel to be considered for this year’s festival. More information – including a link to sign up to receive updates, and a form to submit authors or books for consideration (deadline August 15, 2025) can be

found at <https://mjhnyc.org/new-york-jewish-book-festival-2025>.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust is New York’s contribution to the global responsibility to Never Forget. Opened in 1997, the Museum at 36 Battery Place, New York City, is committed to the crucial mission of educating diverse visitors about Jewish life before, during, and after the Holocaust.

The Museum plays a leading role in Holocaust education in New York City and the tri-state area, serving many thousands of school children each year, with initiatives such as its Holocaust Educator School Partnership Program, professional development opportunities, its Speakers Bureau which enables conversations with survivors, and the creation of tools and resources such as the newly released Antisemitism FAQ Educator Resource to support educators in teaching about both historical and contemporary antisemitism.



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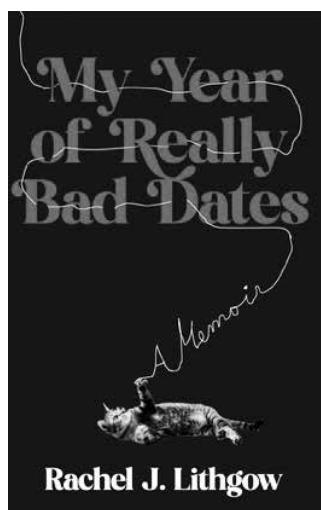
Summer Read: *My Year of Really Bad Dates*

After two life-shaking events, Rachel Lithgow leaves a thirty-year career to write full time and pursue a relationship with a man she recently met online. But then he announces he's joining a cult and moving to Phoenix with a blonde real estate agent.

What follows is a year of terrible dates, a few great experiences, and a lot of pinot noir. This is the story of how Rachel learned that patterns can be changed, that asking for help is sometimes necessary, and that there's only one way to repair her brokenness: by facing trauma and demons head-on. Through a unique mix of humor, self-deprecation, and gritty vulnerability, *My Year of Really Bad Dates* tackles divorce, dating, single motherhood, PTSD, grief, loss, and starting over in midlife.

Rachel J. Lithgow is a historian and museum professional with thirty years of experience running large cultural institutions. Her work and writing have appeared in dozens of publications around the world, including *The New York Times*, *The Daily News*, *Time*, *The Advocate*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Times of Israel*, *eJP*, *The New York Observer*, and the *Buffalo News*. Rachel has two children and splits her time between Long Beach, Long Island, and Hell's Kitchen in New York City.

"From the opening sentence, I knew Rachel Lithgow is a hilarious new voice in women's fiction. This book is part memoir, part life lessons, and part How-NOT-To instruction manual on love & dating. The stories of sex, heartache, love, betrayal, and ultimately hope will keep you laughing and crying, then laughing again. This is a MUST read!" —Randi Mayem Singer, screenwriter of *Mrs. Doubtfire*



Gaining Skills and Confidence: WJCS' Volunteer Internship Program (VIP)

BY AVA PROPPER RUBIN

share their volunteer experiences and engage in group activities.

"Volunteering at St. Joseph's Medical Center in Yonkers has been a wonderful experience for me. It has been the perfect stepping stone as I re-enter the world of work. I work as a cashier in the gift shop four days a week. I am slowly overcoming my fears of getting back to work and socializing in professional environments. I have gained confidence that I am capable of being professional in the workplace." —Susannah, 43, Participant in the WJCS Volunteer Internship Program

Susannah, 43, is one of the many individuals who has found purpose, developed skills, and increased confidence as a result of being involved in the Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS) Volunteer Internship Program (VIP). "VIP was established for adults 18 and older recovering from mental illness and wish to partake in and benefit from a volunteer or internship work experience," said VIP Coordinator Jodi Maxner.

After an intake process, participants are placed in volunteer positions at non-profit organizations throughout Westchester that match their interests, skills, and prior job history. "The volunteer experiences help participants gain valuable tools to help them achieve their future vocational goals," explained Maxner, who hosts monthly meetings in which members have the opportunity to



From left: Jodi Maxner, WJCS VIP Coordinator; Susannah, VIP participant; Maria F. Callarame, External Affairs Manager at St. Joseph's Medical Center

Like her dedicated volunteering peers, Susannah has committed to devoting at least 10 hours a week to her position. "Susannah is a great addition to our volunteer family. We are blessed to have her join us. Her great customer service and smile makes a difference to all that walk in to the gift shop," said Maria F. Callarame, External Affairs Manager at Saint Joseph's Medical Center.

For more information about the WJCS Volunteer Internship Program, contact Jodi Maxner at 914-761-0600 x2223 or email jmaxner@wjcs.com. VIP applicants must be referred by a mental health professional and reside in Westchester County.

Jewish High School Students Showcase Advocacy Initiative



American Jewish Committee's Leaders For Tomorrow (LFT) program empowers high school students to turn their learning into action by implementing an original capstone project that combats antisemitism, strengthens Jewish identity, and builds intergroup understanding. This year's finalists addressed Jewish visibility, October 7 remembrance, and inclusion through educational campaigns, campus installations, and library initiatives.

The inaugural recipients of the LFT Advocacy Capstone Project Award are Tessa Siegel, Sarah Korff, and Sydney Kurtz (New York City), Kate Effress and Abigail Weisman (San Diego). Mazal tov to these five outstanding students, who have each been awarded scholarships to attend AJC Global Forum 2026 in Washington, DC next June!

Applications for LFT 2025-2026 are now open. LFT is AJC's premier, year-long leadership program that empowers Jewish high school students to build confident Jewish identities. Through immersive learning, hands-on experiences, and skill-building, LFT prepares students to combat antisemitism, engage meaningfully with their communities, and advocate for the Jewish people and Israel—in high school, on campus, and beyond.

LFT proactively equips Jewish teens with the knowledge and network to meet the challenges they face in high school and on their future college campus. With access to our network of over 3,500 alumni, LFT students continue to support each other as they bring their advocacy skills into the halls of government and their local communities.

To apply, go to <https://ajconline.wufoo.com/forms/20252026-ajc-leaders-for-tomorrow-application>.

AJC Delegation Travels to London to Counter Antisemitism and Support the Jewish Community

A delegation of American Jewish Committee (AJC) leaders recently visited London for the second time since October 7, 2023, and since the Labour Party came into power. London is home to the second-largest Jewish community in Europe, and the city's Jews have experienced surging antisemitism to unprecedented levels. Through meetings with Parliamentarians—including Lord John Mann, the government's independent adviser on antisemitism—government officials, diplomats, and representatives of the Jewish community, the AJC delegation built relationships, advanced AJC's priorities, and provided unwavering support to London's Jewish community and its allies who have courageously confronted antisemitism in the city. This delegation follows AJC CEO Ted Deutch's powerful week-long advocacy mission across Western Europe in December 2024, when among many meetings with high-level government officials, he attended the Labour Friends of Israel lunch, at which Prime Minister Keir Starmer delivered a resounding message of solidarity with the Jewish community.

Hadassah Names New Rochelle's Dana Asher Co-Director of Marketing & Communications

Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, the largest Jewish women's organization in the United States, is pleased to announce that New Rochelle resident Dana Asher has been named Co-Director of Marketing & Communications, reporting to Chief Executive Officer Ellen Finkelstein. Asher, whose appointment took effect on July 14, joins Hadassah after serving as Senior Executive Director, Fundraising & Marketing Communications, in the Office of Institutional Advancement at Yeshiva University.

Said CEO Ellen Finkelstein, "Dana Asher's broad experience in not-for-profit marketing and her deep knowledge of the Jewish communal world are a perfect fit for Hadassah, with its diverse array of programs and activities in the US and Israel."

Over the course of three decades,

Asher has held a variety of marketing roles at leading Jewish organizations that include UJA-Federation and Women's American ORT as well as Yeshiva University (YU), her most recent employer. Having worked in a broad swath of marketing specialties, she has a wide-ranging skill set, with a particular expertise in branding. An emblematic example of her accomplishments is a marketing strategy instrumental in driving a \$613 million, five-year YU capital campaign so successful it reached 85 percent of its goal in just three years.

Asher will partner with fellow Marketing & Communications co-director Sharon Scalora to lead a 20-person team charged with articulating Hadassah's mission and sharing news of the organization's activities with its many stakeholders. Asher will oversee Hadassah's marketing activities (the website,



Dana Asher

digital communications, creative services, advertising and video production), collaborating on branding and other cross-functional initiatives with Scalora, who directs the organization's communications functions (editorial content, social media, media and public relations, and strategic and executive communications).

Dana Asher graduated cum laude from Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Public Communications with a

bachelor's degree in Journalism and Public Relations. She lives in New Rochelle with her husband.

Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, is the largest Jewish women's organization in the United States. With nearly 300,000 members, donors and supporters, Hadassah brings women together to effect change on such critical issues as ensuring Israel's security, combating antisemitism and promoting women's health care. Through its Jerusalem-based academic medical center, the Hadassah Medical Organization, Hadassah helps support both exemplary care for more than 1 million people every year and world-renowned medical research. Hadassah's 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 two youth villages that set vulnerable teens and pre-teens in Israel on the path to a successful future. Visit hadassah.org for more information.



Team #WJCSProud represented Westchester Jewish Community Services at the Annual 2025 NAMI Walk alongside other mental health organizations and advocates in Westchester. NAMI is the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for millions of Americans affected by mental illness. NAMIWalks is the organization's oldest signature fundraising program.

Putting the Unity Back in Community



More than 150 leaders from across Stamford came together for the city's second annual Unity Breakfast, co-sponsored by Mayor Caroline Simmons and the City of Stamford, along with American Jewish Committee Westchester/Fairfield.

This inspiring event, based on AJC Westchester/Fairfield's long-standing community Thanksgiving Diversity Breakfast, brought together the strength of Stamford's diverse communities—faith leaders, civic officials, educators, students, and neighbors—not only to celebrate our shared values, but to engage in meaningful dialogue and take concrete steps to uplift one another and strengthen the UNITY in commUNITY.

At a time when hate is growing louder and more dangerous, this breakfast was a powerful reminder that silence is not an option. Through purpose-driven conversations and the launch of a bold, action-oriented Unity Pledge, participants committed to standing together against hate in all its forms.

We are grateful to our partners for the Unity Breakfast: City of Stamford; AJC Westchester/Fairfield; Stamford Public Schools; Strong Cities Network; and United Jewish Federation of Stamford, New Canaan and Darien; and sponsored by Charter Communications, with keynote address by Richard Harwood and call to Action by Myra Clark-Siegel, AJC/Westchester/Fairfield.

Do you know a child or young adult with autism/developmental delay who wanders, elopes, or has gotten lost?

WJCS Project Lifesaver uses radio frequency technology, employing devices worn on a wrist or ankle, to locate wandering and lost children/young adults to bring them home safely.

Questions? Please contact Isabel M. Pettersen, Project Lifesaver Program Manager, at 914-761-0600 x2230; ipettersen@wjcs.com. For more information, visit www.wjcs.com.

Calendar of Events

Concert and Humanistic Judaism Q&A

Saturday, August 2, 2 PM

Community Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 468 Rosedale Ave, White Plains

Musician Rebecca Goldfarb will perform a medley of songs, followed by a Humanistic Judaism Q&A session with Rabbi Frank Tamburello. Free admission. Light refreshments will be served. For more information, visit <https://wchj.org/Havdalah.html>.



The Sounds of Psalms and Silence

Friday, August 1, 5 PM

Saturday, August 16, 12:30 PM

Temple Beth-El of City Island, 480 City Island Avenue, Bronx

This interactive workshop will immerse

participants in the melodies and lyrics of Paul Simon, and the psalms of the Old Testament. Through listening, learning, and singing, we will explore how his music mirrors our own evolving spiritual journeys and deepens our connection to God as we navigate the passage of time. To register, go to www.yourshulbythesea.org.

Kumzitz: Night of Israeli Music

Wednesday, August 6, 7 PM

JCC Mid-Westchester, 999 Wilmot Road, Scarsdale

Musician Beth Styles will lead the annual summer Kumzitz, an unforgettable evening of Israeli music and community. Bring your singing voice and meet under the tent at the Jewish Community Center of Mid-Westchester! Drinks and desserts will be served. Free of charge. To register, go to <https://jccmw.org/event/kumzitz/>.

Birthright Israel Summer 2025 Programs Reinstated



Recent Birthright Israel participants who arrived from the United States. Photo credit: Birthright Israel

Birthright Israel will officially resume its Summer 2025 season, with the return of participants to 10-day Classic trips, Onward internships, Volunteer programs, and the Excel fellowship, following the lifting of Home Front Command restrictions.

This announcement comes just 10 days after Birthright successfully executed the largest civilian evacuation in Israel's history, ensuring the safe return of 2,800 participants, including young adults from the United States, Europe, Australia, and South America.

"We led a historic operation grounded in resilience, responsibility, and care, and now we're opening the gates to Israel once again," said Gidi Mark, CEO of Birthright Israel. "Our commitment to connecting Jewish young adults to Israel is stronger than ever, and we expect thousands of participants to arrive from now through the end of the summer season."

This year, Birthright Israel is marking its 25th anniversary, celebrating a quarter-century of impact as the world's largest educational tourism organization. Since its founding, the organization has provided more than 900,000 young Jewish adults with the gift of a 10-day educational journey through Israel, as well as internships, fellowships, and volunteer opportunities — deepening Jewish identity, strengthening communities, and forging lifelong connections to the land and people of Israel.

A Man With Sole: The Impact of Kenneth Cole with Special Guests Kenneth Cole and Dori Berinstein

Wednesday, August 6, 7 PM

Bedford Playhouse, 633 Old Post Road

This film examines fashion designer Kenneth Cole's relentless commitment to supporting social causes, including AIDS, homelessness, LGBTQ+ rights, and now, mental health, giving voice to the voiceless, shattering stigmas, provoking conversation, and empowering action for good. A Q&A with Kenneth Cole and director/producer Dori Berinstein follows the film. For more information, go to bedfordplayhouse.org.

49th Annual Jewish Music & Arts Festival

Sunday, August 17, Noon to 6 PM

Kensico Dam Plaza, 1 Bronx River Parkway, Valhalla

Premier Israeli Music Cover Band TLV will headline the festival. Other performers include Westchester Klezmer Program, the Levins, Kol Hazzanim — Westchester Community of Cantors, WonderSparks Puppet Show sponsored by PJ Library, Dance with Leng — Israeli dancing, Juggler

Ned Gelfers, and face painting by Maria. Sponsored by Westchester Jewish Council and PJ Library. PJ Library sends high-quality Jewish children's books to families around the world every month, completely free. Families with children ages 0-8 should enroll at pjlibrary.org/signup. Families with children ages 9-12 are invited to sign up for PJ Our Way, PJ Library's chapter book program, at pjourway.org.

Intergenerational Tables and Tea — Bonding Over Board Games

Tuesday, August 27, 2 PM

DOROT Westchester, 925 Westchester Avenue, White Plains

More than an intergenerational game day—it's a chance to connect, play, and create memories across multiple generations at DOROT Westchester. Join the Young Men's Service League volunteers, mothers and their high school sons, who will be sharing some of their own board games. This program is for adults 60 and older. To register, go to <https://dorotusa.jotform.com/251704585926162>.

Summer Fun with WJCS POINT



Westchester Jewish Community Services POINT members performed in Seussical the Musical for their annual Theater for Action show to a packed audience at the Play Group Theatre in White Plains, after seven months of rehearsals! The group also enjoyed their annual Field Day at Delfino Park with relay races, games, and cheering each other on!



POINT (Pursuing Our INdependence Together) supports adults, ages 21 and older, with developmental and learning disabilities, including autism spectrum disorders, to live independently in apartments located throughout downtown White Plains. Participants engage in

individual and group meetings that emphasize life skills training, health awareness and social interactions. In addition to building camaraderie, participants are supported by a dedicated staff of master's level specialists.

For more information about the POINT program, contact director Suzanne Wallach, MSED, swallach@wjcs.com

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Projects at WJCS



Hannah Skolnick and Sia Carr brought supply-stuffed backpacks to WJCS headquarters for the agency's annual Back-to-School Drive.

BY AVA PROPPER RUBIN

Take some Mitzvot (religious commandments), throw in Tikkun Olam (repairing the world), and sprinkle the vast Westchester communities served by Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS), and you have a great opportunity for Jewish youth celebrating their B'nai Mitzvah to experience fulfillment and help others.

When taking on the responsibilities of Jewish adulthood at ages 12 or 13, many boys and girls in our community are asked or required to do a Mitzvah Project. In anticipation of their Bar or Bat Mitzvah, they reflect on issues that are meaningful to them and work with community organizations to engage in a project that resonates with their concerns and values.

Communities being served by WJCS range from LGBTQIA+ groups to Holocaust survivors, and even children and adults on the autism spectrum. Anyone can support these groups through donations or direct personal relationships, especially with guidance from WJCS.

This B'nai Mitzvot season, students Hannah Skolnick and Sia Carr worked together, filling 27 new backpacks with new school supplies that will be distributed to WJCS clients who live in under-resourced communities.

Each backpack contained school supplies like folders, writing utensils, and even a heartfelt handwritten note, ensuring that students start

the academic year prepared and inspired to succeed. When delivering the backpacks to WJCS, the girls spoke with WJCS Director of Development Jennifer Kaplan and WJCS Director for Training and Digital Equity Caitlin Leon, who explained how their Bat Mitzvah projects would strengthen and help shape the future of those receiving them.

For her Bat Mitzvah project, Sienna Zimmerman chose to create sensory bags to comfort kids who had experienced trauma. She met Dr. Liane Nelson, WJCS Chief Psychologist and Director, at the Trager Lemp Center for Trauma and Resilience. Together, they discussed who will be helped by the bags and the importance of volunteering, especially at nonprofits. Zimmerman shared that she has friends who have experienced mental health crisis, demonstrating how her Mitzvah Project clearly connected to the people she had already helped and loved.

For anyone looking for Mitzvah Project opportunities or simply some meaningful volunteer work, go to <https://www.wjcs.com/get-involved/volunteer/>



PJ Publishing Set to Release Largest Ever Slate of Jewish Board, Picture, and Middle Grade Books

PJ Publishing, the publishing imprint of the beloved free Jewish book program PJ Library, is about to have a standout season. Since its formation in 2014, the imprint has released more than 60 Jewish picture books and delivered them to hundreds of thousands of PJ Library subscribers worldwide. In 2025 alone, PJ Publishing will release 10 books, bringing the total number of releases to 70, marking the imprint's biggest year yet.

Here's just a sample of what's coming.

Lesléa Newman and Noa Mishkin – Bless the World (Fall/Winter 2026)

PJ Publishing has acquired world rights to Bless the World by National Jewish Book Award winner Lesléa Newman, illustrated by Noa Mishkin. This lyrical board book celebrates small, everyday moments as a family moves through their day from morning to night, appreciating each other and the world around them. Though PJ Library has sent many of Newman's other titles to young readers, this is her first title to be published through PJ Publishing.

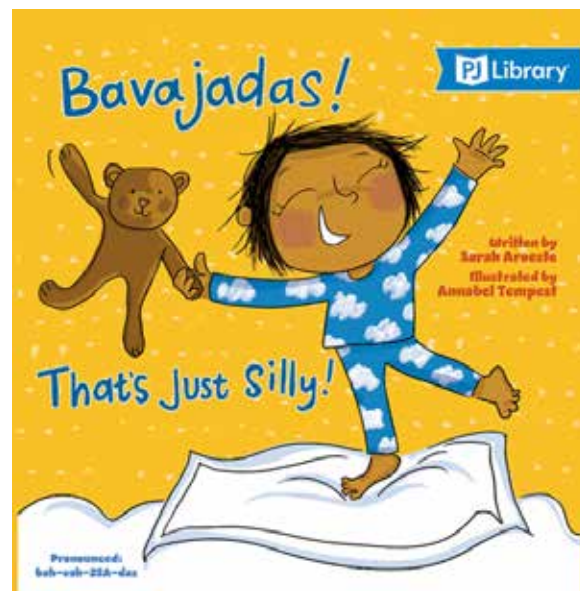
"This book feels extra special because I have spent time with both the author and the illustrator on several PJ Library sponsored author stewardship trips," says Naomi Shulman, Managing Editor, PJ Publishing. "In fact, Leslea first wrote the text while at Picture Book Summer Camp at Highlights! And after getting to know Noa through the Illustrator Storyteller Fellowship, I just knew her work would be a perfect fit for this gorgeous, child-friendly poem."

Sarah Aroeste – Uno, Dos, Tres (June 2025) and Bavajadas (Oct 2025)

Sarah Aroeste is a singer, musician, and writer who has spent the last two decades bringing her contemporary vision of Sephardic culture through books and music to audiences around the world. She sings in Ladino and writes books interlaced with the Judeo-Spanish dialect. A member of PJ Library's inaugural Sephardic Stories Initiative cohort, Sarah is a mentor and role model for burgeoning Sephardic and Mizrahi literary talent.

Sarah has two board books publishing through PJ Library this year.

Uno Dos Tres: A Sephardic Count-



ing Book by Sarah Aroeste, illustrated by Nathalie Belhassen, depicts beautiful papercut art of oil candles, hand drums, biskochos, and other Sephardic symbols paired with simple Ladino counting. It was sent to 2-year-old PJ Library subscribers in June.

Bavajadas! That's Just Silly! by Sarah Aroeste, illustrated by Annabel Tempest, is a laugh-out-loud rhyming board book that embraces silliness with the fun of the Ladino word "bavajadas:" nonsense! It will be sent to 2-year-old PJ Library subscribers in October.

Sarah's other board books include Mazal Bueno!; Buen Shabbat, Shabbat Shalom; and the upcoming Anyada Buena, Shanah Tovah from Kar-Ben Publishing.

Diana Harmon Asher – Trouble Finds Evie Lefkowitz (Sept 2025)

What could be more humiliating than your mom dating your assistant principal? Evie's about to find out in this hilarious, big-hearted novel about surviving the uncertainties of middle school, sticking up for what you believe, and becoming the person you're meant to be. This middle grade book from the author of Upstaged and Sidetracked is one of the first middle grade books to be published by PJ Publishing and distributed through PJ Our Way, an extension of PJ Library for middle grade readers. Through PJ Our Way, PJ Library readers ages 9 to 12 can choose their own book or graphic novel each month.

Grappling with themes such as the loss of a parent, antisemitism, and bullying, Trouble is Diana Harmon Asher's most personal – and explicitly Jewish – book yet.

Dr. Eric Levine of Touro University Appointed Chair of National Association of Social Work-NY Ethics Committee

Dr. Eric Levine of White Plains, Director of Social Work Alumni Engagement, Continuing Education, Licensing and Development at Touro University Graduate School of Social Work, was appointed chair of The National Association of Social Workers – New York Chapter (NASW-NY) Ethics Committee.

Dr. Levine also serves as Adjunct Professor at Touro University and brings decades of experience in social work practice, social work education, ethics and organizational leadership to this role. He is a longtime member of the Hebrew Institute of White Plains.

Levine has been deeply involved with NASW- NY Chapter since earning his MSW, holding numerous positions including Vice President, Executive Committee and Board Member, Delegate to the NASW National Delegate Assembly, and Co-Chair of the Immigration and Global Social Work Committee. He also served on the Chapter Continuing Education and Ethics Committees and played an active role in the current transition effort unifying the New York City and New York State Chapters into a single statewide chapter—an initiative designed to enhance NASW's ability to serve social workers across New York State and the five boroughs.

Upholding Ethical Standards for Social Work Practice

“The ethics committee is critical to the upholding of ethical standards in social work,” said Levine. “Our goal is to continue engaging around ethics to provide professionals with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and tools so that they can practice with greater ethical insight, commitment and action. Social workers are not only concerned with the ethical implications of their own direct practice, but they're also concerned with the ethical quality of society at large. I look forward to working collaboratively to enhance ethics education, foster professional development, and support ethical practice across New York.”

The NASW-NY Ethics Committee provides ethics programming, educational resources, and guidance on ethical dilemmas, working in coordination with NASW's National Ethics Committee and Office of Professional Review.



Dr. Eric Levine

In recent years, NASW has addressed a wide range of pressing ethical issues affecting social workers in diverse practice settings. Topics have included professional boundaries, privacy and confidentiality, end-of-life care and related ethical dilemmas as well as ethical considerations in telehealth. The committee has also examined ethics related to contemporary social policy issues and special populations—such as aging adults, children in the welfare system, and individuals with oncology diagnoses—as well as the complexities of intimate partner violence, self-disclosure, and professional responsibilities during public health crises like pandemics.

A longtime scholar and advocate for ethical practice, Dr. Levine is the course lead and one of the faculty teaching the required social work values and ethics course at Touro University. He has published on ethics in professional journals and is currently co-authoring a forthcoming textbook on social work ethics to be released in 2026.

“This new role is a meaningful way to bring together my professional interests, academic work, and service to the field,” Dr. Levine said. “It also reflects the exceptional standing of the Touro University Graduate School of Social Work, and I am grateful to Dean Nancy Gallina and the university for their ongoing support.”

Back to School, Back to Advocacy



BY MYRA CLARK-SIEGEL,
AJC WESTCHESTER/FAIRFIELD
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

As we prepare for the school year to begin, educators, school administrators, and Jewish parents and students face a challenge far greater than school supply lists and syllabi. They return to classrooms still reverberating from the aftershocks of October 7, still confronting hostility and distortion, and still navigating what it means to be visibly Jewish in a climate increasingly shaped by division, denial, and disinformation.

This isn't just a “back to school” moment. It's a back to reality moment.

Antisemitism is no longer hidden in corners or confined to the internet. It's showing up in lesson plans, faculty lounges, school board meetings, and student protests. And it's happening not just on college campuses, but in our schools. We've seen it in curriculum debates, classroom incidents, and school silence in moments that demand moral clarity.

If we are to ensure that Jewish families thrive in safety and dignity, we must meet this moment with something stronger than concern: we must meet it with clarity, courage, and commitment.

Over the past two academic years, we've seen that when Jewish families – parents AND students – are equipped with language and strategy—not just emotion—they can advocate effectively. When school leaders are given facts and context—not just pressure—they can understand and teach more effectively. And when communities work across lines of faith and identity, they can challenge hate with unity.

Over the past year, our region has brought together hundreds of parents, teens, and educators through quiet briefings and dynamic summits. We've empowered school leaders to recognize the real, lived experience of the Jewish community as a minority community, and to respond to and prevent antisemitism. And we've equipped students to

express pride in their identity, navigate complexity, and speak up for Israel.

But we are only just beginning.

This Fall, we cannot afford to be reactive. We must be strategic. That means holding substantive conversations with school leaders and providing resources for educators to understand the lived experiences of the Jewish community as a tiny minority, even in an area such as Westchester County. It means training students to understand both their heritage and the headlines. It means engaging our non-Jewish neighbors in deeper partnerships grounded in shared values and the need to stand up and speak up for the Jewish community.

Our region has undertaken this work—with briefings for superintendents, summits for parents and teens, and ongoing advocacy with interfaith partners and government officials. But there is more to do.

We need more voices at the table, more allies in the room, and more readiness in our own ranks. Because no student should feel alone in their identity—and no parent should feel powerless in the face of rising hate.

This fall marks the 10th year of AJC' Westchester/Fairfield's Leaders for Tomorrow (LFT) program—our high school advocacy initiative for 10-12th graders that trains high school students to be informed, confident Jewish leaders. Applications are now open, and already, most spaces are filled. If you know a student who needs this moment—and this training—now is the time. And the same goes for the parents. To apply, go to westchester@ajc.org.

Because Jewish families must not inherit silence. They must inherit strength.

And strength doesn't come from isolation. It comes from strategy.

So as backpacks are packed and classrooms reopen, let us recommit: not just to showing up, but to speaking out. Not just to reacting, but to reshaping the space around us. Let's recommit not just to presence, but to strategic purpose.

The classroom should be a place of learning and our town squares a place of upstanders—not of fear. Let's make it so. Together.

AJC is the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people. To learn more about AJC educational and advocacy resources and ways to make your voice heard, contact us at westchester@ajc.org.

Should I Bring a Family Member to my Estate Planning Meeting?



BY BERNARD A. KROOKS, CERTIFIED
ELDER LAW ATTORNEY
SPECIAL GUEST CONTRIBUTOR:
JOEL KROOKS, ESQ.

When you attend an estate planning appointment, it is important that you feel comfortable sharing all the relevant information. Yes, an attorney will ask who should receive your assets and who you'd like to

make decisions for you if you become incapacitated—but the attorney will also ask about your family dynamics, financial situation, and health. These conversations can sometimes go in unexpected directions, and having a family member in the room may limit your ability to speak freely.

For example, if your child were sitting next to you, would you feel comfortable saying that you don't want your child's spouse to benefit from your estate? Or discussing concerns about one child's ability to manage money responsibly? What about sharing details regarding a family member's addiction, gambling issues, or health problems? It's completely natural to hold back in these situations when someone close to the issue is present.

Even if none of these scenarios apply to you, or you believe you wouldn't hold back, the attorney won't know that until you speak with them talk one-on-one. Attorneys have an ethical obligation to keep everything you share with them strictly confidential. That includes both the details of your estate plan and any personal or family information you disclose during the planning process. But if someone else is in the room, your right to confidentiality can be compromised.

When a family member starts speaking for you, or your children begin suggesting what should be updated/done, it can quickly become unclear whose goals are driving the plan. That's why it is best to begin by meeting with the attorney alone. It allows the attorney to understand your unique situation, clarify your goals, and ensure the plan is built around what you want.

In addition, part of an attorney's role is to ensure you have the capacity to understand the decisions you're making. This may require meeting privately to assess whether you understand your assets and how you

want them distributed. When someone else answers questions for you, it becomes difficult to gauge your true understanding.

In summary, it's usually best to attend your initial estate planning meeting alone or with just your spouse. This allows for open, honest conversation and ensures the plan reflects your true intentions. That said, if you're more comfortable, including a family member, and there are no known conflicts, it's often fine to do so. Just remember this is your estate plan. It should reflect your wishes, not anyone else's.

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.littmankrooks.com.

American Jewish Committee Provides Grant for Relief Efforts After Texas Floods

American Jewish Committee (AJC), the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people, provided a grant to support relief efforts following the floods in the Texas Hill Country, which left at least 135 people dead and three missing.

The donation, made possible through AJC's Harriet and Robert Heilbrunn Humanitarian Relief Fund, will be given to the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country, which created the Kerr County Flood Relief Fund in the wake of devastating flooding along the Guadalupe River on July 4.

"We are accustomed to storms in Texas, but the magnitude of the flooding in Kerr County is still hard to comprehend," said AJC Houston Director Rachel Schneider. "AJC is standing with our fellow Texans during this moment of incredible heartbreak and grief. Contributing to this relief fund is one way for us to show our support for the Texas Hill Country community."

Grants from the Kerr County Flood Relief Fund will support nonprofit organizations, first-responder agencies, and local governments actively involved in response, relief and recovery efforts.

Kerr County was the area hit hardest during the flooding. At least 106 people died there, including 37 children.

AJC is the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people. With headquarters in New York, 25 regional offices across the United States, 15 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. For more, visit www.ajc.org.



AJC Houston Director Rachel Schneider

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WJCS Releases 2025 Impact Report

Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS) recently released its Impact Report for 2024. The report shows the vast range of services and programs WJCS provides to thousands of individuals and families across Westchester County. It captures the impact of the agency—helping people overcome significant challenges and find the strength, skills, and courage they need to transform their lives.

Among the highlights:

- “Building Partnerships, Strengthening Community, and Inspiring Hope” on page 5 shows how WJCS has developed and expanded collaborations with school districts, community-based organizations, and government leaders to create a more coordinated and comprehensive network of care to address clients’

emotional, social, physical, financial, and family struggles.

- A list of WJCS programs, organized by specialty area on pages 6 to 9, includes descriptions of programs for strengthening families, caring for children, supporting senior citizens, helping people with disabilities and meeting the evolving needs of the Jewish community. A complete list with contact information is on pages 13 and 14.
- A list of donors and funders on pages 16 to 19.
- Statistics on the back cover, which speak to the remarkable reach of WJCS programs—3,594 mental health and trauma clients, 14 satellite clinics (including 11 schools) serving 817 clients in the community and more.

To download the report, go to wjcs.com.

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Local Delegation to Join Thousands at the Global Conference for Israel

A delegation from Westchester and other areas of New York will join more than 2,500 passionate supporters of the land and people of Israel October 23–26, 2025, at The Diplomat Hotel in Hollywood, Florida, for Jewish National Fund-USA's Global Conference for Israel—one of the world's premier gatherings for philanthropy, advocacy, and Zionist engagement. Together, attendees will Unite for Israel's Future through meaningful connection, bold ideas, and an unwavering commitment to building what comes next.

The multi-day event showcasing the pride and beauty of Zionism will unite philanthropists, congressional leaders, activists, Israelis whose lives have been transformed by decades of support from Jewish National Fund-USA, and individuals who are passionate about celebrating a strong and prosperous future for the Jewish Homeland.

Leading speakers from Israel will also share first-hand accounts about the realities on the ground two years after the devastating terrorist attacks of October 7, 2023, and provide updates about rebuilding initiatives underway in Israel's North and South.

"Through every challenge, we have overcome, fueled by an unshakable spirit and an unbreakable bond with our ancient homeland," said Jewish National Fund-USA President, Westchester & Southern CT Board, Dori Bomback. "Now, more than ever, Israel needs us, and we need Israel. Our Global Conference for Israel is more than just a gathering—it's a call to action, a celebration of resilience, and a reaffirmation of our eternal connection to our land and people of Israel. Together, we will celebrate Israel's future by uplifting stories of strength, solidarity, and shared destiny."

From dozens of intimate breakout discussions to large-scale plenaries featuring keynote addresses by esteemed speakers from across the globe, the conference will offer attendees the opportunity to engage meaningfully with those who have helped shape Israel's past, present, and future.



Conference headliners (in formation) include:

- Journalist and New York Times Bestselling Author Douglas Murray
- United States Congressman (NY-15) Rep. Ritchie Torres
- International Broadcaster and Advocate Erin Molan
- Israeli Diplomat Amb. Ido Aharoni Aronoff
- Former NBA All-Star Eddy Curry
- Kansas City Chiefs' Hall of Famer Nick Lowery
- Nova Music Festival Survivor Ofri Reiner
- Comedians Mario Adrion and Joel Chasnoff

The conference will include more than 100 sessions tailored for the diverse array of attendees, including college students, faculty members, young professionals, older adults, rabbinical attendees, major philanthropists, those beyond the Jewish faith, and more.

Additionally, a variety of unique experiences will be featured throughout the conference, including an Israel Expo with complimentary swag and Israeli goods for sale, an evening of comedy, a movie night, a catered Shabbat dinner, a young professionals after party, a Chopped-style cooking competition, and an exclusive musical performance by Israel's beloved Special in Uniform Band.

"This conference is about building partnerships, reaffirming commitments, and leaving with a deeper sense of purpose—and pride—for what we can achieve together," said Jewish National Fund-USA Chair, Westchester & Southern CT Board, Diana Sklar. "The Global Conference for Israel is a beacon of light, drawing dreamers, defenders, and doers who believe that the story of the Jewish People is still unfolding—and that by coming together, we Unite for Israel's future with vision and purpose."

For more information, including a full list of speakers, Conference Chairs, and programming (in formation), or to register for the Global Conference for Israel, visit jnf.org/global.

The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Appoints Jonathan Cannon as CEO

The Rabbi Sacks Legacy is proud to announce the appointment of Jonathan Cannon as its new Chief Executive Officer. He will assume the role in mid-August.

Cannon's appointment marks a significant milestone in expanding the reach of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks' teachings. It comes as The Rabbi Sacks Legacy prepares to commemorate the fifth yearzeit of Rabbi Sacks with a year of major educational initiatives—including the launch of the new Koren Sacks Humash and the annual Global Day of Learning.

As CEO, Cannon will lead efforts to bring Rabbi Sacks' moral voice, timeless wisdom, and educational vision to communities, institutions, and individuals across North America, throughout the Jewish world, and beyond.

Jonathan Cannon is an accomplished educational leader and mentor with over 35 years of experience in Jewish day schools, including 23 years as a Head of School—most recently at the Ramaz School in New York City. He brings a rare blend of visionary lead-

ership, deep Jewish values, and a lifelong dedication to the transformative power of education. As a sought-after consultant, he has worked with more than 60 schools to guide innovation and support leadership transitions. Cannon lives in Potomac, Maryland, with his wife, Gilly, and their family.

With this appointment, Joanna Benarroch—who joined the Office of the Chief Rabbi in 1997 and worked alongside Rabbi Sacks for 24 years—will assume the newly created role of President of The Rabbi Sacks Legacy. She and Cannon will partner in leading global efforts to perpetuate Rabbi Sacks' teachings and vision.

Benarroch commented: "I'm thrilled to welcome Jonathan Cannon to the professional team and look forward to working alongside him as we continue to advance and



Jonathan Cannon

expand the impact of Rabbi Sacks' enduring legacy."

Cannon is completing his seventh year as Head of the internationally renowned Ramaz School. Under his leadership, Ramaz embraced 21st-century, skills-based education and prioritized student-centered learning across both Limudei Kodesh and General Studies. He has been recognized for introducing bold initiatives, including an unprecedented post-COVID mission of 500 high school students to Israel.

In addition to his work with schools across four continents, Cannon has been a thought leader on integrating technology into educational and communal settings. He has also led professional development at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Andrew Klaber, Chair of the North America-based Rabbi Sacks Legacy Corpo-

ration, said: "Jonathan Cannon is a highly respected figure who brings deep educational leadership experience, a strong connection to Rabbi Sacks' teachings, and a proven ability to build trusted relationships within and beyond the Jewish community. This is a transformational moment for our global impact."

On accepting the role, Jonathan Cannon said: "Rabbi Sacks has long been a guiding voice in my life. It's a true honor to help carry his legacy forward in this role. His religious and ethical guidance is needed now more than ever, and I'm excited to work with the outstanding professional team and lay leaders—as well as educators, communities, and institutions—to bring his teachings to an even wider audience and into the heart of Jewish life."

Lady Elaine Sacks added: "Education was at the very core of my dear husband's mission. He believed in the power of ideas to inspire and shape the future. As a longstanding friend with a deep commitment to education, I believe Jonathan Cannon's appointment is one he would have especially welcomed."

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