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Passover Baskets Help Needy Jews at Home *Please Contribute Dollars, Food, Time*

Elderly ladies alone at Passover, families whose heads of households have lost their jobs or become disabled, mothers with small children to support – these are just a few of the people who receive Passover baskets from Jewish Family Service.

For the past 10 years, JFS has provided Kosher Passover food to local Jewish families in need. Tucked into the grocery bags are ceremonial objects, including Seder plates and cards created by children at the Jewish nursery schools and religious schools.

Volunteers and their families deliver the food on April 9, the Sunday morning before Passover.

"It's an eye-opening experience for children," says former JFS president Walter Levy who has brought his two children for the past two years. "They loved doing it. They met people they thought were nice, living in conditions they didn't know Jews lived in."

The food is purchased with contributions from synagogues, brotherhoods, sisterhoods, other organizations, food purveyors and individuals.

"The baskets touch lives and help create a true celebration of Passover," says Andrea Huseman, co-chair of the drive with Patty Ungar.

"It's important that we work together as a community to help all who are in need," Huseman continued.

This outreach program also helps JFS identify individuals who may benefit from other community services.

Each year, some nonJews request food baskets.

"We don't like to turn away anyone in need, yet kosher food is expensive," says Huseman. For the first time, students in local religious schools will collect non-perishable food. They'll be feeding the hungry and demonstrating that the Jewish community cares.

Please call JFS at 524-8475 to volunteer, make a contribution or receive a Passover basket. Donations may be sent to JFS, 2026 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans, LA 70130.

SEEKING JEWISH WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY Anne Brener to Lecture, Lead Workshop March 30 & 31

Seeking spirituality is a deep-felt need in modern life, yet many don't know how to find it. A recent *Newsweek* poll found that 58 percent of Americans feel the need to experience spiritual growth.

Psychotherapist Anne Brener will help New Orleans women find that spirituality in Judaism, in a 7:15 p.m. lecture on Thursday, March 30 at the Metairie JCC (6121 W. Esplanade Ave.) and a 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. workshop on Friday, March 31 at the Uptown JCC (5342 St. Charles Ave.). Both are titled, "Seeking Jewish Women's Spirituality." Participants are welcome to attend either or both events. The fee for Thursday and Friday is \$15, for Thursday or Friday only, \$10.

To Brener, finding spirituality means connecting with what feels holy, and she'll guide women toward reaching that very personal, sacred connection in Judaism.



Anne Brener

In her lecture, Brener will examine the role of Jewish women and their modes of spiritual expression, past, present and future.

The workshop will offer exercises, explore participants' sense of their own spirituality and examine avenues for women's spiritual expression within Judaism. She will discuss ways for women to explore spirituality to better experience the Torah and to incorporate spirituality within the Jewish tradition.

"We will explore our personal relationship with the Torah and the tradition, and find ways to weave 'the branches of our lives into the tradition'," says Brener, quoting poet Marsha Falk. "Most people find it a creative and joyful experience, and end up having a lot of fun."

"Much of Jewish tradition and history is in the voice of the men," Brener explains. "Even the women's experience has been described not from their own perspective, but from that of men. I value these voices of tradition enormously, but I would like to hear more voices of women."

Brener uses the example of the Torah recorded at Mt. Sinai. While 600,000 people are said to have witnessed the event, the account focuses on the experience of the men. What was it like for the women who were there?

One of the first feminist Jewish issues was the inclusion of women in traditionally male-only religious rituals. Now that women are participating, the language of religion – and our view of God – are changing, points out Brener.

"I think there's a difference between the experience of spirituality and religion," Brener explains. "Spirituality is an experience of connection with what feels holy, and religion organizes that experience with rituals and practices."

Continued on Page 4

It's All In The Family

If you missed the marvelous three-week workshop, "How to Raise a Jewish Child in a Jewish Home in an Interfaith Family," do not despair. Due to its popularity, it will be offered again this summer.

Nearly 30 people attended the workshop at Temple Sinai. Rabbi Edward Cohn and Courtney Nathan, JFS outreach coordinator, developed and led the program. Here's a sample of what they covered:

Communication Between Partners: religious upbringing, spirituality and faith, ethnic and religious identity exploration, roadblocks to communication and expression of needs and feelings.

Jewish Identity and Living:

What does it mean to be Jewish? What is a Jewish home? What factors come into consideration in a couple's decision to bring up the children as Jews?

Wendy Good, mother of two children, visited the group and gave tips on creating a Jewish home.

The humorous film, *Gefilte Fish*, presented the issue of establishing one's own traditions and feeling comfortable with them. A grandmother chops her gefilte fish by hand, her daughter uses a Cuisinart, and the granddaughter feels proud of the artfully arranged fishball she produces from a jar.

Life Cycle Events and Holidays:

Birth to death rituals, setting boundaries with in-laws, observance of holidays, coping with loss (childhood memories and associations), celebrating Jewish holidays.

Rabbi Robert Loewy will lead the summer workshop in July at Gates of Prayer. For information, call Courtney Nathan at 524-8475.



Workshop Participants

(L to R) Carol Hernandez, Wendy Good, Rabbi Edward Cohn

LIFELINE Links Seniors to Touro ER for 10 Years



Millie Landau

For more than 10 years, Lifeline has helped elderly individuals live comfortably in their own homes.

The city's first Lifeline system, this JFS service remains the only 24-hour emergency response system linked to a local hospital.

"Lifeline is like a security system," said Mildred Landau, a subscriber since 1989. "If something does happen to you – especially if you live alone – you have a way of getting through to someone on the outside."

From a fledgling 25 units in 1984 to 192 units, Lifeline now provides peace of mind to about 240 people a year.

It's used primarily by people living alone or recuperating from an illness.

"The units are in constant demand," says Jackie Silverman, coordinator of the program.

When a subscriber pushes the personal help button, a "help needed" message is received in Touro Infirmar's Emergency Room. The client is telephoned. If the client does not respond, designated relatives, friends or neighbors are contacted, and 911 is called if necessary.

Landau "checks in" with Touro Infirmar twice a day – in the morning and at bedtime. This communication informs the hospital that the equipment is in working order. If the unit is not reset daily, a built-in timer will alert the hospital to inactivity and send a "help needed" message.

Once, Landau traveled out of town to visit a daughter and forgot to inform Touro of her trip. The professionals began calling until reaching a neighbor who knew of her whereabouts.

"They were concerned about where I was and how I was," Landau explained.

"I feel good about having Lifeline," she added, "It's just another way of taking care of yourself."

The monthly fee for Lifeline depends on the subscriber's income. A staff of well-trained volunteers is also on hand to help new subscribers learn the system.

"Many of our subscribers pay reduced rates," says Silverman.

Lifeline is a community service of Jewish Family Service and Touro Infirmar with support from the Auxiliary of Touro Infirmar and the National Council of Jewish Women. It is funded, in part, by United Way.

A community leader in geriatric services, Jewish Family Service helps to address the needs of the elderly and their families.

Among the many services offered by Jewish Family Service are:

"Caring For The Elderly – A Workbook For Caregivers" – A must-have workbook for those dealing with senior citizens, whether as family members or employees. The newly updated resource manual contains valuable information on topics, such as hiring in-home help, choosing a nursing home, preparing a will, filling out Medicare forms, finding hospice care and much more.

Counseling – Licensed professional social workers are available to help the elderly and their families through anxieties and issues relating to aging. They can help seniors move beyond depression over losses and physical impairments, adjust to changes and make decisions.

Elder Support Network – The network provides peace of mind to out-of-town relatives of senior citizens, serving as a link between local elderly and distant family members. It is there when family members can't be. Among the services are evaluating the need for care, making sure a parent gets to the doctor or has a hot meal every day.

Homemakers – Once a week, a homemaker visits elderly clients to clean, cook or drive to medical appointments and shopping. Currently, the program has a waiting list.

For information on elderly services, call Jackie Silverman at 524-8475.



Deena Gerber
MSW, BCSW



Doug Brackenridge
MSW, BCSW



Roberta Hirsu
MSW, BCSW



Courtney Nathan
MSW



Linda Rothschild
ACSW, BCSW

Meet Our Clinical Staff

Our clinical staff is a team of experienced specialists. Most have more than 10 years as clinical social workers and offer individual and family therapy. We'd like to introduce you to them:

Deena Gerber, MSW, BCSW, JFS Executive Director

Older Adults: *assessing needs and options.*

Adults: *stress and anxiety related to work, school or changing life situations.*

Doug Brackenridge, MSW, BCSW

Children and adolescents: *problem behavior assessment and intervention.*

Adults: *individual treatment, compulsive and addictive behaviors, relationship issues.*

Couples: *communication facilitation and relationship building.*

Roberta Hirsu, MSW, BCSW

Adult survivors of physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse. *Recovering alcoholics and addicts.*

Families dealing with chronic mental illness.

All aspects of adoption.

Courtney Nathan, MSW

Interfaith couples: *counseling and programming.*

Children: *depression, adjustment difficulties such as divorce, family problems and behavior problems.*

Adolescents and young adults: *depression, school problems, identity issues, family problems, adjustment difficulties.*

Linda Rothschild, ACSW, BCSW

Adolescents: *anxiety and depression; personal conflicts, grief and loss; family and relationship stress.*

Adults: *anxiety and depression; personal conflicts, changes, relationship stress; grief and loss.*

Families and Couples: *conflicts, stress, changes.*

Bereavement group for survivors of loss of a spouse.

Teen Life Counts Program Helps Youth of New Orleans

Our **Teen Life Counts** Program helps kids find alternatives to deal with the stress, depression, and uncertainty they may feel in their lives.

The suicide prevention curriculum taught in local high schools by our trained volunteers requires that each student complete an evaluation form, which helps identify and get help for those at risk. One student told us . . .

"From going to this course I opened up to a friend . . . I was feeling really depressed, but we talked last night and she has helped me a lot. I know that won't solve my depression, but it helps to have someone to talk to."



Ellie Wainer

If you would like to be a **Teen Life Counts** volunteer, call Ellie Wainer, TLC Volunteer Coordinator at 524-8475.

What Our Family Life Education Department Has For You

The JFS staff has much experience speaking to community groups, such as synagogues, sisterhoods, brotherhoods, service organizations, religious and secular schools. Popular topics include:

- **A Conversation on Grief and Loss**
- **Helping our Aging Parents**
- **Suicide Prevention**
- **Life in an Interfaith Family**
- **Sexual Harassment in the Workplace**
- **Jewish Voices from the AIDS Memorial Quilt**
- **Judaism and the Adoption - Built Family**



Sue Daube

If your group has a special interest

Continued on page 4



Adrian B. Blotner
M.D.

WHAT A FIND!

Our deepest, heartfelt gratitude to **Adrian B. Blotner, M.D.**, local psychiatrist, who has been providing our clinical staff with quality continuing education and consultation since October 4, 1994. On the second Tuesday of every month at lunch time, Dr. Blotner takes time away from his busy practice to come to Jewish Family Service to teach us how to refine our clinical skills. His teaching is studded with pearls of wisdom about treatment issues that cut right to the heart of the dilemmas facing our clients.

Dr. Blotner's contribution to our agency and community is without measure. He truly gives of himself. We thank him for

sharing his knowledge, art, and talent with our clinical staff and, thereby, enhancing our service to our clients.

Time-Saving Technology Leaves No Time For Families

In an age where technological breakthroughs are heralded as "time savers," time is the only thing we consistently lack.

"It's rare to find anyone today who thinks they have 'enough time' for what confronts them in a day --though our lives are filled with devices invited to 'save time,'" writes Michael Ventura in *Family Networker* magazine. "what we have is a staccato rhythm of doing one thing after another, filling up the 'saved' time with new chores, and what we experience is not satisfaction but a frustrated sense of continual interruption."

Case in point: the telephone. No longer do we talk to one person at a time. Now, call-waiting allows individuals to interrupt callers at will in order to experience as many incoming phone calls as possible. And, cellular phones interrupt driving time, which has replaced family time for many. Family life, personal time and shared time in relationships are the biggest victims in society's time squeeze.

The average American working couple spends only 20 minutes a day sharing time, according to Ventura. Today's family places quality time behind commuting, working, cooking, shopping and cleaning.

Throw in the intrusive television set (which consumes 40 percent of our weekly leisure time), and time literally slips away.

The only way for relationships to survive the crunch of time is for individuals to make time, says Deena Gerber, JFS executive director.

"To find those moments of quality time, you have to spend hours of regular time together," Gerber said. "There's no way around it. Certain things take time. Relationships take time. You can't schedule 15 minutes of quality communication, it has to unfold."

**Family life, personal
time and shared time in
relationships are the
biggest victims in
society's time squeeze.**

Gerber, a clinical social worker and family therapist, insists that couples and families sacrifice time-consuming tasks to allow themselves valuable shared time.

"You have to make choices. You can't have it all."

When families forego quality time together -- or use commuting or other stressful daily tasks as shared time -- they risk jeopardizing the family. The elements that strengthen the bonds of family life are often sacrificed to the overwhelming social demands on a family's time.

Family life shared together are often the best memories of adulthood, she

said.

When people look back on their lives, they don't treasure the views from the scenic overlook, praise from their boss or the movie they rushed to in order to sit together in silence, they remember the family moments.

"If we want our families to survive," Gerber concluded, "we have to give them time."

Brener - Continued from page 1

Raised in New Orleans, Anne Brener attended Newman School and Touro Synagogue. She is a clinical social worker in private practice in Los Angeles and teaches classes and workshops around the country. She is a graduate of the School of Communal Service of Hebrew Union College, the seminary for Reform Judaism.

Best known for her work on bereavement, she is the author of the highly acclaimed *Mitzvah and Mourning*, the only bereavement guide included in *The Millennium Whole Earth Catalog*. She is also a contributor to the newly published *Life Cycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages and Personal Milestones*, edited by Rabbi Debra Orenstein. Brener serves on the Steering Committee of the Los Angeles Jewish Feminist Center, where she is a frequent instructor.

FLE - Continued from page 3

we would be glad to work together to develop a program.

Call Sue Daube, FLE Co-ordinator, for more information at 524-8475.



JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE

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