

# FamilyTies

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See Page 7*

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*Deena Gerber  
JFS Executive Director  
See Page 4*



JFS Homemaker Valerie Vaughn enjoys working with Lillian Koretzsky.

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*Anne Freedman, Associate Director  
See Page 5*

“ When clients pay their monthly bills, they often write on the bottom of the payment stub, “My homemaker saves my life every week. ”

*See Page 6*



Susan and Gerald Levin in front of their store at 904 Harrison Avenue in Lakeview.

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*If you are interested in serving on the Jewish Family Service Board, please contact Deena Gerber at (504) 831-8475 or email her at [deena@jfsneworleans.org](mailto:deena@jfsneworleans.org)*



## A Letter From the President

Dear Friends,

Our agency is so fortunate to have the help and support of so many people outside of our New Orleans metro community. We thank them enormously for their generosity and their commitment to helping our community through this time of recovery, renewal and rebuilding. We are extremely grateful to United Jewish Communities and the Jewish Federations all over the United States that have contributed funds to assist the Greater New Orleans Jewish community since Katrina. Behind that support are some extraordinary people who have worked diligently and tirelessly to raise funds for Jewish Family Service and nearly all our local synagogues, Jewish agencies and organizations.

We also thank so many local agencies, foundations and individuals for their continuing gifts of support including Jewish Federation and United Way. And we could not operate without our exceptional Board of Directors, our outstanding staff and our wonderful volunteers.

On December 10, 2006, Executive Director Deena Gerber was fittingly awarded the Helen Mervis Award by Jewish Endowment Foundation for her service to our community as a Jewish professional. Deena personifies dedication and excellence and is an exemplary leader of our agency.

In the past several months, I have had the privilege of attending two wonderful events honoring JFS volunteers. One was the Teen Life Counts luncheon honoring the many lay volunteers who go into the schools to present the teen suicide prevention program to students at 40 high schools and middle schools in the metro area. These volunteers work with the students to educate them to identify warning signs of suicidal teens.

The other event honored the JFS Lifeline volunteers. The Lifeline monitoring program is so important to people who live alone because it gives them the security to be able to continue to live independently in their homes or apartments. If someone needs help, all they have to do is press the Lifeline button around their neck or on their wrist, and they know that someone will come to their aid. JFS currently services 500 people through its Lifeline subscription program.

In our community, JFS remains on the front line of mental health services. We continue to be a responder to the mental health and case management needs of the community. We are here for you whenever you or someone you know needs us. Please don't hesitate to call.

Best regards,  
Andrea Lestelle  
President

# Comprehensive Listing of JFS Services

JFS offers a variety of programs and services for the entire community as well as guidance and psychotherapy for individuals and families, all facilitated by our highly trained, experienced staff of therapists and counselors. For more information about any of the listings below, please call (504) 831-8475. Pre-registration is required for groups, and a sliding fee scale is available upon request.

**Counseling** – guidance and psychotherapy for individuals of all ages, couples and families

**Information & Referral** – for a wide variety of mental health resources and social services in our community

**Adoption** – home studies and follow-up supervision

**Outreach to Interfaith Families** – Seminars and workshops for interfaith couples

**Teen Suicide Prevention** – a school-based suicide awareness and prevention program called “Teen Life Counts”

**Refugee Resettlement** – for elderly refugees from the former Soviet Union who were resettled by JFS

**Passover Food Baskets** – holiday food and ritual items for Jewish families in financial need, nursing home residents, and others who need help in celebrating holidays

**Rosh Hashanah Gift Bags** – holiday food for homebound older adults and nursing home residents

**Financial Assistance** – cash grants and loans to Jewish families and individuals

**Chanukah Project – Light One Candle for Tzedakah:** holiday gifts for Jewish individuals and families in need



## Groups

**Coping with Their Divorce** – for children and their parents who are divorced or separated

**Motherless Daughters** – for women whose mothers have died

**Girl Power** – a self esteem group for preadolescent girls



**Teen Girl Power** – a self esteem group with age-appropriate themes for teen girls

## Services for Seniors

**Homemaker** – weekly home help and transportation

**Lifeline** – electronic emergency response system



**Case Management** – assistance in planning for long-term care

**Catch-a-Cab** – taxi coupons for older Jewish adults

# Catch-a-Cab Provides Affordable Access To Taxi Service for Jewish Seniors

“Imagine what it’s like for some of us back in New Orleans now,” said Mrs. T. “I used to go to lunch every week with my friends. I don’t drive but one of my friends did. She moved to Wisconsin after the storm and because of transportation problems, those of us who are back find it harder to get together these days.”

But that was before she heard about Catch-

a-Cab. Now Mrs. T and her friends can get together, go shopping, keep doctor’s appointments, attend synagogue services and many other outings with the help of the Catch-a-Cab program.

Through the generosity of an anonymous donor, any Jewish person 65 years of age and up can purchase \$100 worth of cab coupons for only \$25. Every three months a participant in the program may reorder coupons.

The cab companies that honor the coupons are Metry, White Fleet and Yellow Checker.

For more information or to register for the program, call Julie Hoffman at (504) 831-8475.

“Cabs aren’t just for tourists anymore,” said Mrs. T.



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## A Letter From the Director

Dear Friends,

Trying to guess the future – as all of us in New Orleans know only too well – is impossible. But at the same time it is incumbent upon each one of us to provide thoughtful direction and leadership to our community.

During the past few months, the board and staff of Jewish Family Service have been analyzing JFS, examining where the agency is today and envisioning where we can be the most helpful to our community in the future. Under the leadership of Andrea Lestelle and Julie Wise Oreck – president and vice president of JFS, and with the professional guidance of Ruth Kullman, we have undertaken a comprehensive and thorough strategic planning process. I would like to share with you some of the trends that are emerging.

Those involved in the strategic planning see the greatest strengths of the agency as:

- the quality of service provided
- the professionalism of the staff
- the variety of services offered
- the commitment of the board to the agency's mission.

The critical issues facing the agency are:

- securing stable funding
- continued availability of qualified staff
- maintaining a regional presence
- the need to communicate to the community (those who have lived here for years and those who will be new to our community) the services that we provide.

Dealing with these challenges while maintaining our strengths will be the job of the board and staff of JFS over the next few years.

All of us are aware of the mental health and social service crisis in which our community is mired. I am proud to say that JFS has been a beacon of hope to many by continuing to provide needed services during trying times. Counseling, Homemaker Service, Case Management, Catch-a-Cab, Lifeline Emergency Response System and Teen Life Counts have maintained themselves as reliable and high quality services. The expansion of financial assistance to include an interest-free loan program is a remarkable achievement.

It is my hope that through careful planning JFS will be able to continue to be relevant and responsive to the needs of our community for many years to come.

B'shalom,

Deena Gerber  
Executive Director

## JFS Administers Loans, Grants To Jewish Hurricane Victims

### Imagine...

The flood waters have long since receded but your home business is still in shambles. Inventory, computers and other business supplies were destroyed but your insurance, unfortunately, only covers damage to the house itself.

Or imagine that you own a home and apartment. There was no flood insurance on the house and you'd like to fix it up so you can move back in and then rent the apartment to someone else who needs housing.

The one thing both of these families have in common is a need for assistance and a solution to the problem in the form of an interest-free loan from the Jewish community, administered by Jewish Family Service.

One thing that LSU researcher Rick Weil's study of the Jewish community and its response to Katrina showed is that people in the community believe that Jewish institutions did not fail them during their time of great need. That commitment to our community continues to grow with the addition to our different aid packages of the interest-free five-year loan program. Qualified applicants may borrow up to \$15,000 interest-free for five years to help rebuild their homes or their businesses.

As of the end of March 2007, 17

loan packets have been submitted to the loan committee and 12 have been approved. Four more are pending approval. Two business loans have already been approved and disbursed.

To qualify for a JFS loan, applicants must be Jewish, over 21 years of age and currently living in New Orleans. Tax returns for the last two years are required.

Additionally, applicants' net assets may not exceed \$150,000, exclusive of qualified retirement plans, primary residence and primary vehicles.

The Jewish Family Service financial assistance program strives to make the process easy, efficient and respectful.

Repayment cannot exceed five years and early repayment is encouraged with prepayment incentives which reduce the amount to be repaid.

The loan program is now a permanent part of Jewish Family Service said Deena Gerber, Executive Director. "As people repay the loans, the money will be recycled as new loans."

"We are so appreciative of Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans, United Jewish Communities, Jewish Federation of Orange County California and Jewish Family and Children's Services of San Francisco for so generously funding this program to help our community recover," said Deena.

For more information, call Julie Hoffman at (504) 831-8475.

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## Northshore Satellite Office Remains Busy

Candice Rosenblum has always had a heart for children. Whether she was serving as a social worker in the public school system, working in cooperation with the Office of Community Services to help reunite children with their families, or counseling families whose lives have been torn apart by divorce, her primary focus has remained on empowering children and offering them a safe harbor in what can be an erratic, unreliable world.

All these skills have helped Candy in her role as a social worker for the Northshore Jewish Family Service satellite office which is housed within the Northshore Jewish Congregation building at 1403 N. Causeway Blvd. in Mandeville.

Candy counsels children, adolescents and their families. She helps them transition through a divorce. "When a family is going through the traumatic life changes that come from divorce or custody battles, the parents often get so caught up in their own wounds and anger that they fail to see what the child is going through," Candy said. "I try to teach children that their opinion and their feelings matter and that there's a respectful, appropriate way for them to let their parents know what they're feeling and what they need."

She also counsels teens with bipolar disorder, eating disorders, and any number of other psychological issues.

For more information call Candy at (985) 264-1619.

# Homemakers' Help Appreciated

"Our homemakers are on the front lines every day," says Julie Hoffman, GSW, supervisor of the Homemaker program. "They are our hands and our hearts in the community."

The Homemaker service, a United Way supported program, serves the elderly and disabled in the Greater New Orleans area with home visits of 3 1/2 hours every week or every other week. While there, the homemakers assist their clients with transportation, light housekeeping, laundry, shopping and meal preparation.

"The Jewish Family Service (JFS) homemakers always go above and beyond in serving our clients with kindness and generosity of spirit," said Anne Freedman, LCSW, JFS associate director. "When clients pay their monthly bills, they often write on the bottom of the payment stub, 'my homemaker saves my life every week.'"

Homemakers Betty Galloway, Sandra Harris, Valerie Vaughn and



Homemaker Betty Galloway helps make life easier for Amy Lake.

Renée Johnson use their expertise in working with older or disabled clients to advocate for their needs. One homemaker advocated strongly for a client who needed financial assistance to purchase needed medical supplies that were not covered by insurance or

Medicaid.

Another homemaker convinced a client to go to the hospital for help, stayed with her throughout the long admitting process, and then made sure she had food available before leaving her for the night.

Another time, a homemaker found her client on the floor, having fallen down the stairs earlier that day. She was able to get emergency help for him right away and stayed with him, calming him until help arrived.

Monthly staff meetings between homemakers and social workers allow staff to help each other find solutions for new and better ways to serve our clients. Professional training also is offered during that time each month.

Homemaker services are available on a sliding fee scale basis.

For more information or to schedule a home visit and assessment for the service, call Julie Hoffman at (504) 831-8475.

## Independent Living Made Possible Through JFS

It was almost four years ago when Jewish Family Service got the call about Mr. C. A worried neighbor called the JFS office about an elderly neighbor, living alone and with no family in the area. He needed a lot of help with grocery shopping, housekeeping, meals and just plain emotional support and companionship.

"He wants to stay independent, but all the neighbors are worried about him," said his concerned friend from across the street.

JFS made a home visit and determined that he was indeed a perfect match for the Homemaker service. Although there were no immediate openings, he was put

on the waiting list.

About three weeks later he was called to begin the service. There was no answer. Repeated calls were unsuccessful, and neighbors did not know where he was. There were no known family members to call.

About 14 months later, a call came in to the older adult services coordinator from a case manager working with Mr. C.

He had broken his back and had been in a hospital, a rehab unit and finally a nursing home for the previous year. He had been told he would never walk again.

But that didn't stop Mr. C. He had vowed that he would not end his life in a nursing home, and so he began his own recovery program, walking the halls and climbing the stairs at the nursing home all day long.

Finally he was strong enough to leave, and he wanted his Homemaker service that he had applied for a year or so earlier.

The homemaker was sent, and the match was a good one. Mr. C and Valerie, the JFS homemaker, worked hard together to make his home comfortable and safe for him to continue to live independently.

When the flood came, Mr. C evacuated to a distant relative's home, but he came back as soon as he could. His homemaker returned to work with him.

This year, after a brief illness, Mr. C died at home. He lived his life the way he wanted. The Homemaker service he received from JFS helped him achieve his goal. He died in his own home, just as he had always wanted.

# Margaret Winston Specializes Children and Play Therapy

Play therapy is based on the belief that playing is the essential language of childhood. "It is the way through which children can express their feelings in a constructive manner," says Margaret Winston, LPC, child specialist for Jewish Family Service, "a way to build on the natural way children learn about themselves. Play helps children find a safe distance from their problems so that they can learn new ways of coping with them."

Margaret says that play therapy allows the therapist to help the child develop self-respect, learn new social skills and begin to recognize their own unique qualities and strengths. It helps children become more responsible for their behavior and begin to develop more successful strategies in their life.

A native New Orleanian and a graduate of Tulane University, Margaret taught elementary school for 10 years at Audubon Montessori. In 2000 she returned to school, earning



a Master's degree in guidance and counseling from Loyola University.

Before coming to JFS, Margaret worked at Grace House, a residential treatment facility for women recovering from addiction. Her experience working with adults at Grace House and with children as a teacher makes Margaret a great addition to the JFS staff.

Margaret's expertise with children also helps in her work at the New Orleans Jewish Day School where she does on-site counseling twice a week.

"Margaret's understanding of children and her experience as a classroom teacher give her a unique perspective in helping children achieve to their fullest potential," said Deena Gerber, executive director of JFS.

Margaret sees adults as well as children in her practice at Jewish Family Service. You can reach Margaret Winston, LPC at (504) 831-8475.

## Pirke Avot Lessons For Today

*"He [Rabbi Tarfon] used to say, it is not upon you to complete the task, but you are not free to idle from it." 2:21*

There are very few of us who could not change the world for the better if we had only the vision and the drive. Yet we must not feel it all rests on our shoulders: the task is not ours to complete. We must make the effort, whether or not our efforts will be successful.

# Sharon Kirkpatrick Takes Interesting Path to JFS



Developing a sense of trust is absolutely essential to doing good clinical work with couples says Sharon Kirkpatrick, the newest member of the JFS clinical staff. Laying the foundation of therapy is critical and many clients are hesitant at first. "People divulge at their own pace," Sharon said. "They need to watch my reactions to feel comfortable."

"Many clients continue to deal with Katrina-related issues and some couples are struggling with whether or not to remain in New Orleans or move," she added.

Sharon took an interesting path

on her way to joining the clinical staff at Jewish Family Service. She was a CPA for 20 years before earning her Master's in Social Work from Tulane University in 2005.

After graduation she worked for Associated Catholic Charities administering the Louisiana Spirit program.

Since joining JFS, Sharon has worked with children, adolescents, adults and couples. "It's interesting to work with people who have different experiences and backgrounds," she said. She is especially interested in working with couples, she added.



Riverdale High School students enjoy Teen Life Counts volunteer, Monica Kalozdl's information session.

## Teen Life Counts Volunteers Reach 6,000 Students Post-K

"It is very good to know that there are other people outside of a school setting, available readily to work with the children of New Orleans....Continue working in the recovery of our city!"

These words came from a program evaluation form filled out by a school professional following the Teen Life Counts (TLC) training for the Recovery School District on March 29. Jewish Family Service conducted the training for more than two dozen participants.

JFS is readily available to schools and students who need help. Following the recent suicide of a student from Archbishop Rummel High School, TLC immediately responded with staff and an awareness program for the teens.

"They provided our school with a very professional team of presenters, and the discussions and presentations proved to be very informative, comforting and brought closure to a tragic situation," said Cherry Spiers, guidance counselor at Rummel.

"We felt fortunate to be able to offer it [the Teen Life Counts program] to our students and plan

to continue it for many years," she added.

The program is aimed at tenth graders in public, private and parochial school and consists of three one-hour sessions teaching students about depression and suicidal thinking, the importance of not keeping secrets when a friend's life is at stake, and how and who to ask for help.

The classroom sessions are taught by volunteers in the community who have gone through extensive training by JFS staff members, Ellie Wainer, TLC director; Linda Rothschild, LCSW, clinician and trainer; and Sarah Keith, LPC, adolescent specialist.

Since Katrina, the TLC program has been taught at more than 40 schools, reaching 6,000 students and referring more than 500 to a counselor for additional assessment and help. TLC staff member Carol Schudmak follows up on each referral.

"Teens are dealing with the loss of friends since Katrina," said Ellie Wainer. "They are also dealing with depressed parents as well as the loss of their city. They wonder if it will come back."

For more information or to volunteer with Teen Life Counts call Ellie Wainer at (504) 831-8475.

## A First- Person Account

By Andrea Lestelle

Several months after we returned to New Orleans, my husband Terry and I had a contractor over to our home to assess damages from Katrina. Patrick (not his real name) had done some work for us in the past.

He came over early one weekday morning. We were happy to see him and he was glad to see us. We chatted. He told us his business was booming, and he was making a lot of money. He also said that he and his wife had been lucky – their home was not damaged by water – but he was troubled by the misfortune of so many others. He would be able to help us, but it would be several months before he could start work on our home.

We walked outside with him to his truck to say goodbye. We started to walk back into the house when Patrick called out: "Can I ask you a question?" "Of course," we said in tandem. He caught up to us, but said: "No, it's silly, never mind."

He got back into his truck. Then we heard him call our names again. We turned around and noticed him walking up the driveway. "I really have to ask you something," he said. Something in his voice made me quiver. We told him to ask us anything he wanted. (These were trying times and everyone needed to talk.) He hesitated, but then blurted out: "I woke up this morning with thoughts of suicide and I'm afraid to go home. Do you know where I can go for help?"

I felt as if someone punched me in the stomach, but I gathered my thoughts and knew what to do. We brought Patrick back into our home and told him about the counselors at Jewish Family Service. While Terry talked to him, I called Deena. By late that afternoon, Patrick had a counseling session with one of our trauma specialists at JFS.

Patrick is still in therapy, but feeling much better. Whenever I see him, he tells me how grateful he is to Jewish Family Service.



Evolyn Bennett chats with JFS Lifeline Coordinator Pam Buckman in her lovely home. Volunteers call monthly to check the working order of the Lifeline buttons.

## Lifeline Helps People Remain Independent, Secure at Home

“Lifeline has made such a difference in the quality of life for my mom,” said the daughter of one of our Lifeline clients. “She no longer worries about being alone in the house and we feel more at ease knowing that if something happens, help is just a push of the button away.”

Lifeline is an electronic personal emergency response system that provides quick contact to needed assistance.

Using Lifeline as part of the safety net has helped more people remain safely and confidently living independently in their own homes.

Because of the limited medical resources in the area post-Katrina, many older adults are afraid of getting into an ambulance. The JFS Lifeline program is unique in that it notifies designated family members, neighbors and friends first before calling emergency services.

Research available on the Lifeline website, [www.lifelinesys.com](http://www.lifelinesys.com), reports that subscribers to the service are 10 times less likely to move to long-term care facilities than those without the service. The knowledge that assistance is quickly available

motivates family and caregivers to continue to support the client's wishes to live independently.

How does the Lifeline button work? Subscribers wear a waterproof personal help button around the neck or on the wrist. When a subscriber pushes the button, a “Help Needed” message is received in the Lifeline Emergency Response Center. Then the subscriber is called.

If the subscriber cannot be reached by phone, a responder is contacted to check on the person calling for help. If responders cannot be reached, 911 is called.

More than 20 times a month the Lifeline call system is activated, says Pam Buckman, LCSW, Lifeline Coordinator. “We follow up on every incident,” she said, stressing the personal customer contact that she and her staff provide.

Currently there are about 500 subscribers in New Orleans, the North Shore and Baton Rouge. Lifeline is a joint program of JFS and Touro Infirmiry with the support of Touro Auxiliary and NCJW.

For information call Pam Buckman at (504) 831-8475.

## Lifeline Volunteers Needed

If you are a “people person” and enjoy reaching out to others, being a Lifeline volunteer is made for you!

Lifeline is looking for volunteers to make monthly phone calls to our subscribers reminding them to test their units.

Volunteers call clients each month, remind them to test their equipment and then report back to the JFS office. Calls can be made at your convenience and from your home, but clients must be called monthly.

If you are interested in volunteering, please call Pam Buckman, Lifeline coordinator, at (504) 831-8475.

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