By Dawn Berney, Executive Director

I keep hearing about the “silver linings” of the pandemic. Personally, I have not found many. BUT I have been part of one shining experience. JSS formed some beautiful partnerships with other local organizations this spring when the Dane County COVID-19 Emergency and Recovery Fund offered nonprofits an opportunity to address community needs as efficiently as possible. Under the leadership of the Tenant Resource Center, we are collaborating with over a dozen agencies (see list on page 2) to help those at risk of eviction. Rather than wasting resources by competing against each other, numerous organizations are working together for the first time under a new system that will allow eviction prevention resources to reach as many people as possible.

Robin Sereno, Executive Director of the Tenant Resource Center, explains the collaborative this way: “We need to be partnering with new folks whom we’ve never seen before and who are doing fantastic community work – like Jewish Social Services.”

The funding will allow us to provide case management and financial support to prevent homelessness and housing insecurity.

As of the time of this writing, JSS has already helped a few families with rental assistance. We know that the number of clients who need our help will grow. During the first three months of the pandemic, evictions were banned in the county. That ban ended and we expect to hear from many more people who have lost their safety net. The funding we secured will allow us to provide case management and financial support to prevent homelessness and housing insecurity, which puts people at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19.

In particular, we are concerned about refugees, asylees, and immigrants. Many left their homes because of the grave danger they were facing, and now they have to worry about coronavirus. JSS staff have been hard at work helping former resettlement clients who were hit hard by the pandemic. This issue of Connections focuses on the work of our Resettlement and Immigration Legal Services staff, highlighting their successes as well as the challenges our clients face during these unprecedented times.

The Torah (Deut. 15:8) says that a poor person should be granted “sufficient for what lacks, according to what is lacking to them.” We see ensuring appropriate housing as our obligation.
“according to what is lacking them.” Many thanks to all our community supporters, and to United Way, HIAS, and the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families for allowing JSS to collaborate with others.

**Eviction Prevention Partner Agencies:**

- Tenant Resource Center
- JustDane (formerly Madison-area Urban Ministry)
- Middleton Outreach Ministry
- Friends of State Street Family
- Homeless Services Consortium – Doubled-Up Workgroup
- Porchlight DIGS
- START (Stoughton Area Resource Team)
- Mount Zion Church
- Keeping Neighbors Connected
- Centro Hispano of Dane County
- Latino Academy for Workforce Development
- Christ the Solid Rock Baptist Church
- Sankofa Educational Leadership United
- Sankofa Talented and Gifted North
- Sisters of African Descent

If you know someone who could use case management services or rental assistance, please contact maya@jssmadison.org, joni@jssmadison.org, or the main desk at 608-442-4081.

This issue of *Connections* highlights our refugee resettlement and immigration legal services programs.

**SUPPORT FOR IMMigrants**

- **160** Immigrant clients served
- **FIVE** Green card applications approved by USCIS
- **17** Different countries of origin
- **94** Receiving case management services

Refugees resettled during COVID-19

Note: all numbers for January–June, 2020.

Created by Rochael Wortzel
Refugee Resettlement Volunteers Tell Us What They Find Most Gratifying About Their Work

“I’ve been honored and awestruck to work with the incredibly dedicated people who make up Open Doors. I’ve also been repeatedly moved by the warmth and gratitude of the people we serve, and by seeing the impact that we have on their lives.” -Ken Baun (co-founder and General Manager of Open Doors For Refugees (ODFR), a vital partner with JSS in resettling refugees to the Madison area)

“I am in awe of the fortitude and strength that I see (in JSS resettlement clients). I have learned much about cultures that were new to me through new friendships that have grown over time. I have been truly enriched in my retirement.” -Margaret Brauer (ODFR Leadership Council, JSS volunteer (for new arrivals) and ODFR Transportation Coordinator, advocate, outerwear/school supplies/food co-coordinator)

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“This work has been very gratifying. Every volunteer I have met has the same drive to help lessen the terrible burden that refugees face.” -Jeff Lindholm (appointment driver and co-coordinator of refugee family apartment set-up and move-in)

“Meeting other members of the greater Madison community is fun. The work tends to be fun too, with lots of conversation going on as the furniture is moved. It’s nice to help new refugees get settled – and meet new people in the process.” -Ken Schneck (co-coordinator of refugee family apartment set-up and move-in)

“Seeing (resettlement clients) having to actively engage in their integration with the community – and being able to see actual change and prosperity in their lives – has for me been life changing, too. The opportunity has also established for me a community of friends; both among staff and clients, and provided me a chance to continue using my language.” -Jacob Muniko Mwita (translator)

“I love the opportunity to develop relationships with people from different cultures and to help make our community their home. One highlight was seeing one of the kids we helped with English proudly recite her middle school graduation speech!” -Erica Serlin (refugee and asylee advocate, event planner, and former ODFR welcoming committee member)

“I especially enjoy ODFR’s Naturalization Ceremonies, Thanksgiving gatherings, and community picnics with refugee families. In 2018, I wrote a book about one family whose friendship gave me an extended family spanning three continents – and changed my life.” -Madeline Uraneck (ODFR Leadership council, fundraiser, and event planner)
Imagine what it would be like moving to a new country with few resources, not understanding the culture, and not speaking the language. We work with many refugees who embrace this challenge, and with hard work and help, manage to build gratifying new lives in America.

Refugees and asylees view education as one of their top priorities when they resettle here. Yet resettlement can interrupt educations. Many must learn English before they can attend high school equivalency programs, vocational programs, or college. Last spring, three clients invited JSS staff to celebrate their graduation from Madison College’s High School Equivalency Degree (HSED) program. Two of the graduates are sisters from the Democratic Republic of Congo and they were happy to tell me about their experiences. (Note: Esther and Katie are pseudonyms.)

JSS: Tell me about yourselves.

Esther: We used to live in Burundi, and we were going to high school there. I was going to get my diploma in five months, but I came to the United States before I could complete it. JSS helped us to know where to go to learn English and that was the first step. Then a volunteer told us about the HSED program.

At school, some teachers were patient – and some were not. After ESL classes, we were required to pass reading and writing tests before starting the HSED course. In the beginning, the HSED was not easy. We were learning the same things we were learning in Africa, but in English instead of French.

JSS: You completed your HSED last year with your sister. How did that feel?

Esther: We feel like we accomplished some of our dream. With this, we can go to college!

Katie: It felt good! It was my dream to get my diploma so I could go to university. My dream is to become a doctor.

JSS: What are you doing now?

Esther: After HSED we took another test to see our level in English and decide on a course of study. Now I’m planning to start a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) course when it is safe to do it in person.

Katie: Now I’m working. I didn’t want to do online classes, so I’m waiting for in-person classes to start again, to take a CNA course.

JSS: What are your plans for the future?

Esther: My plan is to finish CNA first, get some experience, and go to nursing school.

Katie: I am also planning to start with CNA, then I will do the medical transfer program for premed.

JSS: What other accomplishments are you proud of?

Esther: I bought a car! I got my driver’s license! I didn’t know how to drive when I came here so I’m proud of that. And, I have a job and I’ve kept it for more than two years.

Katie: Yes, having a car was my dream. Now I have one and I’m proud to be able to drive in the U.S. More dreams are coming; they are on the way!

Katie’s advice to everyone: People think things are so hard – when they haven’t tried it yet. It’s important to just try and you’ll find that you can do it!
Dane County has few resources for new immigrants with limited resources who want to become citizens. We are proud that JSS’ Immigration Legal Services program represents refugees and asylees as they progress along the path toward U.S. Citizenship. Refugees and asylees can apply for a green card one year after arriving or being granted asylum in the U.S. Despite the difficulties faced in our immigration system at this time, we are proud to have helped five refugee clients in 2020 to obtain their green cards.

Nelson (not his real name), told me his thoughts about the process of applying for his green card. “It was a good experience, but it was not easy!” He remembered many appointments at JSS to prepare the 20-page application form, and collecting all of his supporting documents. “It was hard, scheduling around my work.” Many refugees are still new to their jobs when they apply for green cards, and do not have paid time off to use for the process. Nelson often came to JSS at 5:30 pm, exhausted, after a full day of work.

After submitting his application to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, and attending a background check appointment in Milwaukee, his application was approved in about seven months. Unfortunately, many applicants wait up to a year for a decision.

What does having a green card mean to Nelson? “I’m now safe, not like I was before. And my employer is happy that I have my green card.” Refugees can legally work upon arriving in the U.S., but not all employers are familiar with the law. Potential employers often ask refugees “Are you a U.S. citizen?” and when they hear no, they ask “Do you have your green card?” Nelson can now show his green card to his employer, and the employer immediately understands Nelson’s immigration status.

Nelson is looking forward to his next step: applying for U.S. citizenship. Refugees may apply for citizenship five years after arriving in the U.S. While not required to become U.S. citizens, most refugees do. For Nelson and many other refugees and asylees, getting a green card is a significant first step toward becoming full citizens of the country they now call home. Please join us in welcoming them!

"Many applicants wait up to a year for a decision from USCIS."
Jewish Social Services of Madison

Providing case management services for refugees and asylees is an important part of our work at JSS. Our team of staff and volunteers, as well as Open Door for Refugees, help newly arrived families deal with the disorienting unfamiliarity of a new country. Refugees enthusiastically look for work as soon as they arrive in the U.S. They are legally permitted to get jobs and to receive temporary government assistance when they arrive, but do not understand how to get a work permit or apply for benefits. We provide a wide range of services, from legal assistance and translation services to rides or bus passes. We help our clients learn to navigate day-to-day life in America. The more our staff and volunteers can help them overcome challenges they encounter, the faster they become self-sufficient and feel successful as they build a new life for themselves.

Ms. Taha was trained and worked as a medical doctor before coming to America in 2000. She worked as an Arabic medical translator before joining JSS as translator and resettlement case manager in 2017, helping settle an influx of Arabic-speaking refugees before recent policy changes slowed their arrival.

What is a typical day for you?

If a family is arriving, I have SO much to do. I check their apartment, arrange for a translator, line up volunteers, and get them a cell phone and some cash for incidentals. Then I meet the exhausted family at the airport with a hot meal of familiar foods and take them to their apartment. The next day I orient them to things like unfamiliar appliances and calling 911. Then we must meet with a medical provider, apply for a Social Security number, sign up for English classes, apply for benefits, and register kids for school.

Otherwise I follow up with clients and volunteers, and take people to appointments.

What do you love about your job?

Most of all I love that I can help people because I was in their shoes 19 years ago! There was no one waiting for me at the airport. I had to figure things out for myself. I had MANY ups and downs. I like to support and mentor people so that they can succeed here. I like seeing the happiness in their eyes as they find their own way.

What is a good day at work?

When I hear that clients found jobs they like, and their kids are happy at school. Our goal is to have clients be self-sufficient within 3-6 months of arrival.

One of my best days was hearing from a Syrian family who got their green cards (meaning they are “lawful permanent residents”). This family was thrilled because it meant they could travel overseas to see family they had not seen since coming to the U.S. I know from personal experience that leaving family is one of the hardest things for refugees. The day families learn they can see loved ones again is an emotional one.

What is hard about your job?

Finding affordable housing in a safe neighborhood with good schools is challenging, but very important. The JSS team, volunteers, and our landlord partners work together to find a way.

What jewels of wisdom can you offer readers?

Volunteer! JSS volunteers get a really unique opportunity – to meet people from all over the world. You learn firsthand that there are so many ways of being human. Volunteers get to appreciate our common humanity AND our great diversity. They also get a chance to make a significant difference without huge effort. Something simple – teaching someone to understand a bus schedule, or driving them to an important appointment – can make a HUGE difference to someone building a new life here.
Imagine fleeing war and famine in your country of birth, finding your way to the United States, and working hard to build a new life and a new sense of security in Madison. Then the COVID pandemic hits, and you are laid off from your job, and surrounded by conflicting advice about a new scary threat to your family’s health.

Our Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Legal Services staff have seen the COVID pandemic hit our clients hard. We have been very busy since mid-March, trying to help families who had achieved independence maintain their economic security, and work to help them navigate life during a pandemic.

When Wisconsin’s “Safer at Home” order went into effect, many service sector employees were let go almost immediately. One family lost all their income as all three of its working-age members were laid off. JSS staff helped these clients apply for unemployment benefits before the flood of applicants overwhelmed the state Department of Workforce Development.

But the job losses continued to mount. Many refugees and asylees work at a local hospital laundry, and were furloughed when hospitals and clinics postponed all nonurgent medical care. Luckily all of those workers were back at work after a few weeks.

JSS worked with Forward Service Corporation (FSC), a nonprofit provider of employment assistance, to help clients navigate the changes. JSS and FSC met weekly and collaborated to make sure clients who had been furloughed or laid off were enrolled in appropriate unemployment programs and knew how to file required weekly claims.

Because of the unprecedented spike in unemployment filings, many claims are held up in processing. Some clients have been waiting since April to hear from the state about their unemployment applications. Case managers spent a great deal of time trying to help clients access their benefits, but to no avail. People applying for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (a program for people who don’t qualify for standard unemployment insurance) are also waiting long past the 30 days promised by the government. Case managers have been unable to reach actual human beings by telephone. We have also been working with clients whose loss of work qualifies them for

Continued on page 8
Although the pandemic persists, the refugees and immigration clients continue to be enthusiastic about living in Madison and have demonstrated amazing perseverance through a very difficult time.

Food Share or Badgercare, helping them access that extra assistance from the state.

Some clients who arrived in the past year qualified for extended Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA). This program helps support refugees and asylees in their first months in the U.S. while they adapt, learn English, and search for employment. The federal government extended the cash assistance program to help support those whose job search was interrupted by the pandemic.

Now a few positive COVID cases have appeared among clients. JSS recently received a grant from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (JSS’s sponsoring national resettlement agency) to conduct more outreach and education among resettlement clients to teach them about COVID prevention and care.

The pandemic has interrupted immigration in multiple ways. Most poignantly, people who were hoping to immigrate to U.S. to join their families this spring were unable to come. Refugee resettlement was suspended on March 18, and most U.S. consulates worldwide were closed, halting interviews and processing of immigrant visas. Among those already in the U.S., immigration applicants have been waiting since late February for fingerprint appointments at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services office in Milwaukee. The office reopened in early June, but many of those waiting have no idea when their appointments will be scheduled. Those who were planning to complete the last step of their immigration – the naturalization oath ceremony – are in limbo now as those ceremonies were canceled during the first months of the pandemic and are happening much less frequently now. JSS stopped taking new clients for immigration legal services during the initial months of the pandemic, in order to focus on providing remote services for current clients. Now we are accepting new clients on a low-contact basis.

As many aspects of life moved online in the last few months, some JSS clients struggled to keep up on their smart phones. Thanks to HIAS and a generous private donor, JSS was able to give Chromebook laptop computers to households that did not have a computer. This grant will enable our new neighbors to participate in doctor’s appointments, meetings with case managers, religious services, and other activities that have moved to virtual delivery.

Although the pandemic persists, the refugees and immigration clients continue to be enthusiastic about living in Madison and have demonstrated amazing perseverance through a very difficult time. Their fortitude and optimism are truly inspiring. JSS staff are resolved to continue helping them, and we are confident that they will get through this difficult time with the support of the Madison community.
Jewish Social Services receives financial support from individuals, foundations, and organizations of many kinds. JSS would like to thank every one of our donors for their valuable contributions. Big or small, your gifts demonstrate your caring for our community and allow us to do our work. Please join us in recognizing the following for their generous contributions in 2019.

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Mikhail and Tatyana Reynman
Judith and Michael Rothschild
Catherine Rudin
JoAnn Salin
Irina Savina
Steve Scheibel and
Jane Pearlmuter
Mary L. Schneider
Kathleen Schuster
Susan Schuster
Becca Schwartz and
Charles Anaman
David and Tina Schwartz
Jerri McCallum-Schwartz
and Robert D. Schwartz
Steven Schwartz
David Sebag
Christine Shanahan
Leslie Shear and Laurel
Holgerson
Sarah and Adam Sherman
Anne Shlimovitz and
Tim Schneider
Marc Shovers and Jan Loeb
Lawrence and Linda Shriberg
Karen Sielaff
Cindy Sitrick
Robert and Jo Ann Skloot
Ina and Theodore Smolker
Harvey and Judith Sokolow
Kenneth Soltz
Bill and Bunny Spitz
Lois Stoler
Charlotte Stein
James Stein
Rochelle Stillman
Corinne Stoddard and
Jane Sadusky
Marylyn and Stuart Stroup
Judith Swartz
Valerie Swigart and
Michael Gold
Robin Taylor
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Francine Tompkins
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Linda Tuchman-Ginsberg
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Karin Twilde-Shifer and
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Joshua Udler
Jennifer Ullman and
Matthew Jones
James van Akkeren
Flora Van Wormer
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Alan Weinberg and Claire Weiss
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Michael and Sara Wisdom
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Beth Wortzel
Clarice Wortzel
Rachaël Wortzel
Joanne Yavin
Haya and Moshe Yachtman
Brenda and Robert Zitowsky
Ellen Zweibel
In Memory of Charles Borowsky
Barbara Spierer

In Memory of Gary Friedman
Thomas and Margie Krauskopf

In Memory of Herman Goldstein
Barbara Miller

In Memory of Hilda Mirkin
Mike and Linda Puls
Elaine Rosenblatt

In Memory of Jerry Shriberg
Jeffrey and Judith Ross
William and Bunny Spitz
Frank and Barbara Tuerkheimer

In Memory of Marilyn Jacobs
Jeffrey and Judith Ross

In Memory of Sally Marks
Raube Marks

In Memory of Sandra Porter
Andrea Kaufman
Timothy and Susanna Lodge

In Honor of Bob and Joann Skloot
Judy Sidran

In Honor of Dawn Berney
Aaron Albert
Wendy and Rich Nelson

In Honor of Jim and Ziva Wear
Simon and Billie Hellerstein

In Honor of Judy Pierotti
Jim Mackman

In Honor of Mary Schettler
Mike and Christina Kantor

In Memory of Miriam Greenberg
Robert Greenberg

In Memory of My Grandparents
Zoe Faiivre Werth

In Memory of Lillian and Larry Stern
Julie Rivchin

In Memory of Marilyn Jacobs
Frank and Barbara Tuerkheimer

In Memory of Mildred Agins
Linda Barrett

In Memory of Richard Kaplan
Janice Kaplan

In Memory of Richard McGucken
Joan and Ken Riggs

In Honor of Tom Hirsch
Marc and Sheila Cohen

In Memory of Diane Schwam
Emanuel Schwam

In Honor of Pearl Nathanson
Josh Arnold

In Memory of William Barest
Linda and Charles Barrett

In Honor of Rabbi Renee Bauer’s Birthday
Robert and Rosyland Bauer

In Memory of Joel Kupferberg
Robert and Jean Breslow

In Memory of Serena Kaplan
Judy Coburn

In Honor of Rachel Rosenfeld and Brad Goldstein
Emily Fite
Bobby Present
Katrina Thornburgh

In Memory of Van Jamison
Louise Goldstein and Bruce Thomadsen

In Memory of Ray Naomi Hoffman
Deborah Hoffman and Mark Hazelbaker

In Honor of Michael Ihnchak Jr.
Elayne Ihnchak

In Memory of Ruth Scheuer Tsotsis
Katherine James
Kathleen Katz
Susan Kniebes
Kathleen Miller
Antje Petty
Helena Tsotsis
Claudia Zitzmann

In Memory of Lee Kanter
Stanley Kanter and Sarah Grimes

In Honor of JSS Staff
Merilyn Kupferberg

In Honor of Michele Kamet-Levy
Andrea Levy

In Honor of Eve Siegel
James Mackman

In Memory of Walter and Isabelle Polner
Joan Polner

In Honor of Barbara Goldstein
Judith Rabinowitz

In Memory of Berek Haus
Lauri Roman

In Memory of Mona Fay Schwab
Erica Serlin and Ken Kushner

In Memory of Norton Stoler
Lois Stoler

In Memory of Gladys and Ben Sherman
Lois Stoler

In Memory of Sandra Porter
Mark Wexler and Kathy Heady

In Memory of Aren Wish
Carol and Joel Wish

In Memory of Barry Greenberg
Stephen and Lillian Abrams
Eve Siegel

In Memory of Fred Kantor
Stephen and Lillian Abrams

In Memory of Ilene Kaufman
Susanna Rogers

In Memory of Naomi Siegel
Stephen and Lillian Abrams
David Goldenberg
Thomas and Margie Krauskopf
Jim Mackman
Jeffrey and Judith Ross
Merle and Patti Sweet

Anyone can donate in honor or memory of a friend or loved one. Please go to our website at www.jssmadison.org or call Jim at 608-442-4081 to learn more.
No one could have predicted anything that could keep us from seeing each other, eating a meal together, celebrating and learning together – but here we are.

We will continue to hold yoga from a chair online. Use the link we email to join us anytime from 11:00–11:30 am each Monday to chat. Yoga with Betsy Haimson is from 11:30–noon. I do look forward to “seeing” all of you online each week.

We continue to have speakers present on a variety of topics on Fridays. Links to recordings of some speakers are up on our website (www.jssmadison.org).

We aren’t calling these “Lechayim” or the “Levy Series” because as Jeff Levy put it, those programs are about interacting together and sharing a meal in person.

On the upside, I have been able to invite AMAZING presenters who might not have been available otherwise. We have had speakers and participants from all over the United States, and even one from France.

To view some recent presentations, go to www.jssmadison.org and look under “Programs” for “Zoom Recordings.”

• “From Holocaust to Civil Rights,” presented by the Simon family
• “Justifiable Revolution: The Rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence,” by Professor Emeritus Steven Lucas
• “Listen to What I See: A Memoir,” by author Michael Christopher
• “Sandhill Cranes,” by Anne Lacy of the International Crane Foundation
• “Yoga from a Chair,” with Jill Johnson, Certified Iyengar Instructor and Physical Therapist

ROSH HASHANAH GIFT BAG DELIVERY

JSS will need volunteers to assemble the Rosh Hashanah gift bags and deliver some to seniors at home or in residential facilities. Jewish youth from area congregations have teamed with JSS for many years to assemble gift bags and make Rosh Hashanah cards that they then deliver to isolated seniors. Instead of getting together in a large group to make cards and assemble bags this year, teens will be working alone or with their families. If you want to volunteer to help deliver holiday gift bags, please contact Paul Borowsky at paul@jssmadison.org.

For more info on youth groups:
www.bethisraelcenter.org/youth-groups
www.tbemadison.org/youth
www.shamayim.org/childrenandteens

JSS ROSH HASHANAH ZOOM GATHERING

We will have an online intergenerational get-together on Sunday, September 13, to discuss coping with pandemic-related restrictions on holidays and in our lives – and just to say hello and see some smiling faces. Look for more information by email as the date approaches.

OTHER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We are discussing a few possible volunteer projects that we can do during the pandemic. One is providing information on voter registration and absentee ballots to help get out the vote. Another is to interview area seniors to collect life lessons and reminiscences. If you are interested in these or have questions or suggestions about volunteering or programming, please email paul@jssmadison.org.
Thank You to All of Our Volunteers Who Have Made Hundreds of Phone Calls to Area Seniors

And to those of you keeping in touch by email! Thank you also to those who delivered meals for Passover and cheesecakes for Purim, and those who help bring groceries and other everyday needs to our community members and clients.

Shana Tova! A Good Year from JSS!

Temple Beth El
Together we are on a multistep journey toward transformation. To help as we travel this path together, we are offering a variety of events, classes, and worship experiences to the community. Please register to receive links for Zoom worship. No charge. Donations are appreciated.

For a full schedule and to register, visit tbemadison.org/hhd5781, email rabbi@tbemadison.org, or call 608-238-3123.

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Chabad
Chabad will be offering High Holidays services and programs that will comply with up-to-date COVID-19 guidelines. Chabad services are free of charge and open to all, but pre-registration will be required due to COVID-19.

ChabadMadison.com
608-231-3450
info@chabadmadison.com

The annual Shofar in the Park will be held on Sunday, September 20.

Beth Israel Center
Beth Israel Center will be offering live-streamed services open to all on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Rosh Hashanah
Friday evening, September 18
Saturday and Sunday, September 19 and 20, beginning at 9:00 am

Yom Kippur
Sunday evening, September 27
Monday, September 28, beginning at 9:00 am and ending with the Final Shofar.

For more information, including where to find these services online, please call 608-256-7763 or email bic@bethisraelcenter.org.

Levy Series Announcement
JSS missed seeing all of you AND our fascinating guest speakers at the canceled 2020 Levy series. Keep your eye out next spring for news about the 2021 lunch and speaker series.

Thanks to Bader Philanthropies Inc. for a new senior adult transportation grant!
For more information, call 442-4081.
As we approach the High Holiday season, many Jews turn their attention to reflection and repentance. This work of teshuvah, of returning to our best selves, is a process of looking both inward and outward. How have we cared for ourselves and treated our loved ones? How have we contributed to injustice and ignored inequity in our society?

The biblical readings on Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, reveal this balance between cultivating an inward and outward focus. First, we read a detailed description from the Book of Leviticus of the Temple rituals of sacrifice and atonement; our ancestors’ quest to create a holy society by using ritual to make God’s presence manifest in their lives. Then we turn to the Book of Isaiah, where the prophet questions the meaning of ritual observance done without a commitment to social justice – to caring for the needy in our society and to fighting oppression of all kinds. These two passages teach that both the internal dimensions of our relationship to God and the external tasks of seeking social justice are both holy and essential.

Contemporary Jewish communities and organizations work hard to do both: nurturing the rich traditions, rituals, and folkways that create a distinctive Jewish identity, and responding to the needs, values, and issues of the larger world in which we are located. In my role as community chaplain, I serve unaffiliated Jews who seek spiritual care. I bring Jewish ritual to the bedside and Jewish wisdom to the bereaved. JSS staff and volunteers bring Shabbat services and Jewish holiday baskets to isolated area seniors. We also offer immigrant legal services, extensive programming for seniors, and social services to a broad group of people facing life challenges, whether they are Jewish or not.

We are at a historical moment in this country. We are reckoning with the horrors of racism in both history and modern society. JSS staff are looking internally to make our agency more equitable, and are planning programming to respond to racism in the communities we serve. We are doing the internal work called for in Leviticus, while striving to create a better world for all, answering the call of Isaiah.

I wish for each of us, whether or not we celebrate the High Holidays, to find the space in our hearts and the time in our lives to do the work of teshuvah, of returning to a righteous path, both in our personal lives and in the world at large.

RABBI’S CORNER by Rabbi Renée Bauer
The Two-Fold Path of Teshuvah

This work of teshuvah, of returning to our best selves, is a process of looking both inward and outward.

The Benefits of Preplanning Your Final Wishes

Planning ahead provides comfort and guidance to your family, and allows them to focus on Kavod HaMet (honoring the departed).

Please join us for an informative webinar to discuss Beit Olamim (Madison’s Jewish Cemetery), Jewish burial rituals, and the process of making prearrangements.

Monday, August 17 at 12:00 pm (with JSS’ Rabbi Renée Bauer)
OR
Thursday, August 20 at 7:00 pm (with Rabbi Jonathan Biatch)

Led by representatives from Cress Funeral Service and the Jewish Burial Association of Madison, as well as a local rabbi.

RSVP at tinyurl.com/plan-2020 or call Cress Funeral Services at 608-238-3434.
Anna (a pseudonym) met an American man in her native Ukraine and came to the U.S. on a fiancée visa a few years ago. She quickly realized that the gentleman she thought she knew was in fact verbally abusive and controlling. He tried to isolate her from the world, and refused to help her apply for a Social Security card or residency status, or to find a class to learn English. With help from the police, Anna escaped to a domestic violence shelter. Staff there reached out to Jewish Social Services to help Anna navigate language and cultural barriers.

JSS and Domestic Abuse Intervention Services worked together to help Anna get a divorce and apply for residency. They helped her find housing, start English lessons, and get medical attention. The Madison Police Department, RISE, the Catholic Multicultural Center, UW Health, and others all collaborated to help Anna. Recently, Anna got great news: U.S. immigration officials approved her petition for permanent residency (green card) and she is now looking for work.

While anxiously awaiting her green card, Anna kept her spirits up by trying all different kinds of crafts, which she gifts to friends and supporters. Anna found a creative way to challenge herself, stay busy, maintain hope, and give back to her new community.