



All of Us Are Vulnerable at Some Point in Our Lives



By Dawn Berney, Executive Director

The theme of this issue is the Jewish value of *Caring for the Vulnerable*. Typically we think about social services staff supporting clients and community members. But our staff are also part of the community, and we can be vulnerable as well. JSS volunteers, donors, and clients take care of us when we are in need.

"And, again, you are coming forward to give hope to those most vulnerable."

As many of you know, JSS staff had a rough few months this fall. JSS Case Manager Joni Pico passed away in October, and two other staff members lost close family members recently. The JSS community came together for us. You provided rides and food, made donations in memory of those who died, and helped organize and attended funerals, memorials, and Shivas.



Our community has also stepped up to care for vulnerable neighbors in so many ways, from people hit hard by pandemic financial upheaval to refugees escaping war and poverty. COVID-related needs are still pressing, and our Refugee Resettlement staff are busier than they have ever been. Resettlements stopped for eight months,

then began again this spring. At times we had several arrivals per week. In addition, JSS has begun resettling Afghan humanitarian evacuees, and we expect up to 75 individuals at press time (though things can change quickly).

And, again, you are coming forward to give hope to those most vulnerable. By volunteering your time, you are doing for the refugees what you've been doing for years in our community – caring for your neighbors. Your donations pay for client rent, utilities, cell phones, and other necessities, as well as for operating expenses for our team of dedicated professionals. All these things reflect ways that you "love your neighbor." We at JSS are so grateful to be part of such a caring community!



COVID EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE:

Keeping Challenges From Becoming Crises



Our team of dedicated case managers work hard to prevent vulnerable people in Dane County from falling into crises. During the pandemic, they are working harder than ever. The pandemic dramatically increased the scale of needs among our neighbors. In late 2020, Tim and Kathy Mazur established the JSS COVID Emergency Fund to provide material support to keep people hit by the COVID pandemic stable through their crises. So far, this fund has helped over 70 individuals and families from sliding into deeper crises that could change the course of their lives forever. The Mazurs replenish the fund to meet people's ongoing housing and employment needs. Recently, the fund received a boost from the Madison Community Foundation and other JSS supporters.

Below are a few stories about vulnerable neighbors and the work JSS does to find or provide the assistance they need to regain hope and live stable, fulfilling lives.



A local disabled man's wife died, and after losing her income, he lost their home. Shelters were full due to COVID-19. The waitlist for subsidized housing is long, and the client's dyslexia prevented him from applying. Case Manager Maya Garbuz is assisting him

with applications for subsidized housing and Social Security Disability Insurance. She found transitional housing in the interim. She also

helped him get winter clothing and located free veterinary care for his emotional support animal.

A mother lost her home after a traumatic brain injury left her unable to work. She took her children to a shelter and put all her belongings in storage. Unable to find employment due to her medical condition, she could not pay for the storage unit and risked losing all her belongings. JSS was able to cover the costs of her storage unit. She recently found housing and a new job and continues to work with Maya as she gets her life back on track after her injury.

The COVID Emergency Fund, funded primarily by Tim and Kathy Mazur, is helping vulnerable neighbors remain stable and hopeful.

An older woman with a disabled husband took in her daughter's family. The daughter needed to care for her children when schools turned to virtual learning. She lost her job as a result, and so moved in with her mother. Her mother's income was not enough to support them all, so they turned to Caren Minkoff at JSS for COVID Emergency Relief funds to pay some bills until the family could get on their feet financially.

A single mother lost her job after missing nearly a month of work while caring for her child, who was hospitalized with COVID-19. She got behind on rent and other bills. JSS helped her apply for CORE assistance and connected her to other community resources to help her ensure stability for her family. Fortunately, the mother was able to find new employment, and the child is back at preschool, running and playing after a long and scary hospital stay.

With your support, we are restoring hope to many people.

JSS Current Board Members on Why They Serve the Community through JSS



“ Many years ago, when I moved my elderly father to Madison from California, I needed help. JSS was there for us. When the opportunity arose to help give back, I jumped at it. ” - Barry Gidal



“ My grandparents who fled Nazi Germany always instilled a commitment for social justice in me – a commitment that I want to share with my son. It’s rare to find an organization that truly embodies tikkun olam. JSS does just that! ”
- Rachel Rosenfeld



“ Jewish tradition is strongly focused on the importance of providing food, shelter, clothing, and medical care to those in need, and to use a community’s resources wisely in this pursuit. This is what JSS is all about. ”
- Livia Asher: (Ms. Asher served on JSS’s Board for nearly a decade)



“ I feel privileged to play a small part in supporting the amazing work of JSS staff and programming. JSS plays such an important role in assisting members of our community through times of loss, isolation, and hardship. ”
- Ariela Karasov

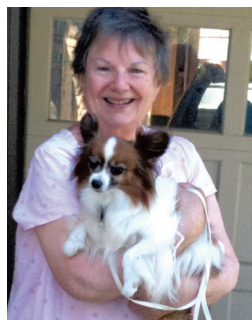


“ I serve on the JSS board because this agency reflects my core Jewish values of welcoming strangers, providing comfort to those in pain, and improving the lives of those in need by connecting them to essential services. ”
- Brad Goldstein



“ JSS does such meaningful work in our community. It is an honor to serve not just JSS’s mission but also the staff that put that mission into practice every single day. ”
- Carousel Bayrd

Legal Guardianship: Looking Out for People Who Cannot Look Out for Themselves



A few years ago, "Karla," a single senior woman in Madison, began knocking on neighbors' doors, asking for help to

find her way back to her own house. Eventually she asked for help in the middle of the night, telling neighbors that there were strangers in her house. Then things got more serious. She started neglecting her own health, including her treatments for cancer. A friend of hers contacted JSS to ask for a social worker's help. The social worker convinced "Karla" to see her doctor, and the doctor then determined that she was "incapacitated" (defined as a person unable to provide food, clothing, or shelter for themselves, to care for their physical health, or to manage their financial affairs because of a physical or mental condition). No family member was available to take over decision-making for Karla, so the court appointed Maya Garbuz, a social worker here at JSS, as the woman's legal guardian.

Legal guardianship helps the state ensure that the needs and interests of a disabled or incapacitated person (the "ward") are being met. If family is distant or for other reasons cannot have decision-making responsibility, the person is given a court-appointed legal guardian.

Serving effectively as a guardian can be emotionally and intellectually taxing, so it can be difficult for the courts to find people willing to take on the role.

Guardians can have several different types of decision-making roles, from financial to medical, and their actions are overseen by the courts to protect the wards. Initiating guardianship is a complex process. The courts want to minimize assigning guardianship only to those cases where it is truly warranted, and want to ensure that no one is taking advantage of the ward.

Over the years, JSS has served as a legal guardian for several adult Dane County residents. The guardian must balance the wishes of the ward with the need to keep them safe. This is an ongoing challenge. For example, Maya has a ward with mental health conditions who does not reliably take their recommended medications, and whose behavior can then become unmanageable. The ward was homeless and lost all documentation, so when they became a JSS client, Maya spent hours getting a replacement Social Security card and the other documents they needed to obtain government assistance. They have refused to stay in adult family homes Maya has found for them, so Maya continues to seek a non-institutional setting that can support this person's needs for both safety and independence.

Making major decisions for an incapacitated person is daunting even to a seasoned professional like Maya. But the need for legal guardianship is growing as people live longer, and as family members move far away. Serving effectively as a guardian can be emotionally and intellectually taxing, so it can be difficult for the courts to find people willing to take on the role; the workload can be heavy and unpredictable. Without competent professional guardianship, some of Dane County's most vulnerable residents would not have honest, kind, and knowledgeable professional advocates looking out for their interests. Fortunately, Dane County has JSS to help its residents meet this need.

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Q/A on the Afghan Evacuee Crisis

With Becca Schwartz, JSS Resettlement Director

What is happening with the Afghan evacuees at Fort McCoy?

Many thousands of people were evacuated from Afghanistan since the U.S. troop withdrawal began. Most were sent to military bases to have their resettlement cases processed, receive health screenings (and health care if needed), vaccinations, etc. They are now waiting to be resettled elsewhere. Most of the people at Fort McCoy will not be resettled in Wisconsin but will go to be near family or friends elsewhere in U.S. Evacuees do much better if they have a support system in place in their new home. They often prefer to live together if possible.

What challenges does JSS face in resettling Afghans here?

JSS is responsible for Dane County resettlements, and we have been asked to resettle about 75 people (in addition to about 50 from other countries); we are increasing our staff to meet this challenge. Unfortunately, we are having to deny some of the larger families the opportunity to resettle here, because it is very difficult to find affordable and appropriate single-family homes for rent in the local market. Sometimes we simply cannot find housing for large families, who very much prefer to live together rather than being separated into smaller houses or apartments. Even if we can find housing, many of these families will have



Afghan humanitarian evacuees were torn from their lives with only days or sometimes hours of notice. They had no time to adapt mentally and to learn about living in the U.S.

only a single income earner and they may not be able to afford local rental rates independently after initial assistance ends.

How are the Afghan evacuees doing now that they are in the U.S.?

Usually, refugees wait overseas for at least three years to resettle in the U.S., and in that time, they are able to prepare mentally for resettling in the U.S. When they arrive, they are eager to settle in, get jobs, and get their children enrolled in school. They have had time to learn about U.S. laws, culture, and social expectations, to become familiar with the process of resettlement, and to learn what to expect when they arrive. Afghan humanitarian evacuees were torn from their lives with only days or sometimes hours of notice. They had no time to adapt mentally and to learn about living in the U.S. We are helping Afghan evacuees understand and navigate a very different culture. Things that are acceptable at home, like keeping daughters home from school to care for younger children, can get

families in trouble here. We also help Afghans learn which of their culture practices can be continued in the U.S.; for example, if they are observant Muslims, they have a right to request time during the workday to say daily prayers.

How can the community continue to support Afghan evacuees?

The outpouring of donations and offers of help has been so moving and heartening. Unrestricted cash donations allow us to help all evacuees as well as current refugee clients as needed. We are finding that donations of items can be tricky, as we have limited storage space and limited volunteer capacity to move and sort donated items. Also, certain household items must be NEW according to U.S. law, so we cannot accept used mattresses and bedding. Please help us focus on our most pressing work and do not bring or drop off unsolicited items at JSS. You can learn more about how to help Dane County's newest residents at www.opendoorsforrefugees.org.

JSS Is Growing! Please Help Us Welcome Several New Staff Members:



Sam Van Akkeren, MSW, a former JSS intern, now serves as a Refugee Case Manager.



Lauren Bates fought for fair housing in New York City before coming to JSS as an Immigration Legal Services Assistant and Resettlement Community Outreach Coordinator.



Gilbertine ("Gigi") Harerimana is a multilingual educator who serves as a Refugee Resettlement Case Aide.



Stephanie Taylor, MSW, MBA, is our newest Refugee Resettlement Case Manager and she is very excited to work at JSS.



Sarah Friedman is an English Literature PhD Candidate at UW-Madison who serves as a Program Assistant.

Programming and Volunteer Updates

By Paul Borowsky, Events and Programming Manager



It seems like a lifetime ago since we were forced to shift to online-only programming. As 2021 is coming to a close, we are cautiously offering in-person programs (with precautions in place) and hybrid events that offer both online and in-person participation. In-person Shabbat celebrations at Capital Lakes and Oakwood Village West continue.

After many months of phone and internet-only contact, volunteers have been able to resume many of their in-person services while following COVID prevention guidelines. We continue to expand our reach with more people receiving holiday treat bags. Volunteers assembled and delivered over 100 Rosh Hashanah bags this year! We also helped host Rosh Hashanah events at two continuing care facilities.

Thanks to all our participants and volunteers for staying connected and engaged. Stay tuned for upcoming announcements as we continue to adapt and adjust to safely gather our community together.

Ongoing Volunteer Opportunities:



You can make a significant difference in the lives of others with a small act of assistance. We always have clients who need help with grocery shopping and rides to medical

appointments. Frail or isolated seniors need friendly visitors, and we have low-vision clients who would love to be read to. We are also looking for drivers to take a few clients to Friday afternoon Shabbat celebrations or other events. Contact Volunteer Coordinator, Paul Borowsky: paul@jssmadison.org, 608-442-4083

Tribute Donations

JUNE-SEPTEMBER 2021

In Celebration of Barbara Davis

Maureen McCoy

In Celebration of Becky's Birthday!

Richard Seesel

In Celebration of Dan Lipman's Bar Mitzvah

Judith and Jeffrey Ross

In Celebration of Ken Opin's 80th Birthday

Jonathon and Becky Kaiser

In Celebration of Marty Preizler's Bar Mitzvah

Judith and Jeffrey Ross

In Honor of All Jews Who Gave Their Lives for Their People

Benjamin and Sarah Arm

In Honor of Eve Siegel, for All That She Does for Others

Stephen and Lillian Abrams

In Honor of Barbara Spierer

Richele Leathem-Deneckere

In Honor of Francie Smith Saposnik

James Mackman
Judy and Ben Sidran
Eve Siegel

In Honor of Huyen Vu Bauknecht and the Vietnamese Community of Madison

Sarah Weden

In Honor of Jennifer Levenson

Julie Charles

In Honor of Joanna Berke and All That She Does for Others

Anonymous

In Honor of Linda Reivitz

Rabbi David Kopstein

In Honor of Nathaniel Deutsch

Suzanna Deutsch

In Honor of Our Afghan Friends

Anonymous

In Honor of Patricia Litscher

Stephen and Lillian Abrams

In Honor of Paul Borowsky and JSS Volunteers

Elizabeth Butler

In Honor of Rabbi Renée Bauer

Robert and Roslynd Bauer

In Honor of Those Who Serve Refugees

James Van Akkeren

In Memory of Harriet Amsterdam

Sara Berg

In Memory of Julienne Applebaum

Pamela Carlson

In Memory of Harvey Black

Monroe Rosner

In Memory of Jeanette and Isidore Elbaum

Terri Ludwig

In Memory of Vincent Fish

Ruth Marie Kleba

In Memory of Richard Kaplan

James Kaplan

In Memory of Sheldon Klein

Carol Klein

In Memory of Rabbi Shlomo Levitan

Stuart Levitan

In Memory of Lily Putziger

Margaret Zieke

In Memory of Jeanne Silverberg

William Huebel
David Silverberg
Joe Silverberg
Steve Silverberg
Dr. James Stein

In Memory of Daniel Tropp

Marianne Rosen

In Memory of Fran Weintraub

Bill and Bunny Spitz

In Memory of George Wolniak

Sandra Rochelle Farkas

In Memory of Ernie Zimmerman

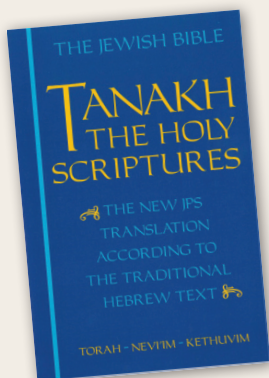
Louise Goldstein & Bruce Thomadsen

In Memory of Ruth Zitowsky

Brenda and Robert Zitowsky

Anyone can make a Tribute donation. Please call 608-442-4081 or visit jssmadison.org/ways-to-give, or use enclosed envelope to send a check and a note with tributee's name.

Books of Torah for Incarcerated Jews



One of the most invisible vulnerable populations in our society are those who are incarcerated. JSS has the opportunity to serve this population through a partnership with the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) and a private donor who wishes to

make copies of the Tanakh (the full Jewish bible) available to incarcerated people around the country. JSS sent six copies of the JPS Tanakh to the Sauk County Jail. Four additional copies are available for Jewish inmates who would like to read the Jewish scriptures for inspiration and study. Please reach out to Rabbi Bauer at rabbi@jssmadison.org or if you know of someone local who would like a copy.

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Madison, WI 53719-1117

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*We make your values come to life by caring
for our most vulnerable neighbors.*

RABBI'S CORNER by Rabbi Renée Bauer



Joni Gill Pico z"l (1957–2021)

The JSS community mourns Joni Pico, who died on October 13, 2021, after a valiant battle with cancer. Joni worked as a case worker at JSS for almost two years. Practicing social work at

JSS fulfilled Joni's longtime dream to combine her extensive social work background with her training from Brandies University in Jewish communal service. At JSS, she enjoyed participating in Shabbat and holiday programs and writing about Jewish topics.

Joni spent her life caring for the vulnerable. She lived for almost three decades in Alaska, and she advocated for and stood by Alaskan native people

on their journeys to wholeness. Most recently she served seniors and those in need in our Madison community. She was deeply dedicated to her work, asking about the well-being of clients even during her final hospital stay.

She will be missed by her colleagues at JSS who found her to be one of the best listeners they had ever met, and who all benefited from her humor and open-heartedness. We learned from her ability to hold space for others no matter what, and to communicate love and care, often without words.

May Joni's memory always be a blessing.

*Joni's full obituary can be found online at
cressfuneralservice.com/obituary/Joni-Pico*

JSS is a beneficiary
agency of:



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