

Using Spirituality as a Guide in Healing and Recovery

JCFS uses innovative approaches rooted in Judaic teachings in addictions programming

Judaism means something different to every Jewish person, but ultimately, it is a guidebook: it provides direction, room for interpretation, and lessons to people at all points in their life — from the peaks to the valleys.

“It’s always been recognized in Judaism and by the rabbis that people have struggles,” says Dorit Kosmin, Addictions Counsellor with JCFS. “There’s poverty, oppression, grief, depression, and many more struggles that people face. Addiction is one of them.”

All modern recovery-based programs build in a component of spirituality. At JCFS, that foundation is Jewish, with elements like Shabbat and important dates in the Hebrew calendar incorporated in an accessible way. Judaism is the foundation; the rest of the house is built with clinically proven approaches to recovery.

“Our services support the needs of the body, the mind, and the *Neshama* (the soul or spirit),” says Al Benarroch, JCFS Executive Director. “We marry best

practices in recovery with the richest spiritual aspects of Judaism. And wouldn’t you know, they go together quite well.”

Take for example *Tashlich*, a tradition whereby breadcrumbs are tossed into a body of water and a metaphor for regrets being cast away, takes place during the period of *teshuva* (repentance) between Rosh Hashana (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). Kosmin takes clients down to the Assiniboine River and conducts a version of the ceremony amended to themes of addictions and mental health: A recovery version of *Tashlich* becomes an opportunity for clients to plan their futures, take stock of what they’ve accomplished, recalibrate, and recognize they are not alone.

“One woman was so moved,” says Kosmin, who also runs a Friday recovery group, using Shabbat — the traditional day of rest — as an opportunity to reflect. “She kept saying she felt lighter. Not just mentally, but physically.”

Over the past five years, 45 individuals and families have accessed help from the JCFS Substance Use and Addictions Support Services program, with 14 new clients reaching out since the start of the pandemic (April 2020). Twenty-three clients in total currently participate in the program.

“Who knows where they’d go without it? Having a spiritually and culturally relevant model for recovery is a valuable thing”, Kosmin said, “creating lasting connections to lean on while walking the winding path of recovery.”

On a road like that, everybody could use some direction.



Executive Director's Message



As I write this heartfelt message, we are in the midst of the holiday of Sukkot. Sukkot is a fascinating and curious holiday with many themes that resonate for JCFS. There are many symbolisms of the sukkah. For eight days (seven in Israel), we build a flimsy temporary hut, called a sukkah, with branches for a roof, and

we venture outdoors to brave the elements (more so in Canada than in Israel) to venture outdoors and brave the elements. Some sleep in their sukkah, and minimally eat our meals in the sukkah.

The basic explanation is that we remember how the Children of Israel dwelt in sukkot after they were freed from slavery in Egypt and wandered in the desert for 40 years. However, our sages provide a deeper symbolism of the sukkah as representing the *Ananei Ha-Kavod*, Clouds of Glory. The Torah describes that

during the 40 years that the Children of Israel ventured through the harsh, dangerous, and unpredictable environment of the desert, the protective presence of God that descended over the camp in the form of a cloud. The dangers they faced were very real, both in the hostile environment and also from many unfriendly nations, and yet, they felt secure in the knowledge that God provided safety.

Ultimately, to understand the symbolism of the sukkah today, we must look at its deeper meaning - the *Ananei Ha-Kavod*, and that we continue to have faith in the protective nature of our creator, regardless of the harsh realities that life invariably throws our way.

In many ways, JCFS is like the *Ananei Ha-Kavod* of our community, doing holy work as a protective shelter for the most vulnerable in our community. This was especially true during last 18 months of the Covid pandemic, by reducing isolation, ensuring food and medication security, offering social programs, connecting people virtually, delivering counselling, arranging rides, and much more. This pandemic is far from over and we project a long road ahead.

We could not have done this alone. Last year, your support as donors, funders, volunteers, and staff made it possible for JCFS to make a difference. This newsletter always accompanies our appeal to the community for Annual Support, and I am sure that we can again count on your support this year.

The power of community is the best protective shelter that we can ever build.

Thank you for supporting JCFS and for being our partner in providing a shelter of protection in our community.

Al Benarroch, Executive Director



JEWISH CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE
Strengthening Lives in Keeping with Jewish Values

JCFS is located on Treaty 1 territory, the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, Dene People, and the homeland of the Métis Peoples. We support calls by Indigenous peoples and Canadians alike for the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

President's Message



As the JCFS Sherut newsletter for Fall 2021 goes to print, the Agency will have been operating under the new and challenging conditions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic for more than 18 months. When I first took on the role of Jewish Child and Family Service Board Chair in June 2020, I think it safe to say that none of us expected the pandemic to last this long or have the wide-ranging

and continuing impact that it has had and will continue to have for the foreseeable future. I am forever grateful for the JCFS staff and management team, and their ability to continually adapt both the means and types of service delivery to fit our community's ever-changing needs. As a result of this staff can now work remotely when necessary and see clients in person when it is safe to do so, in an effort to assure our essential services are provided without interruption and no client is left without service.

I am also, as always, thankful for JCFS's wonderful group of donors, who contributed more than ever to make 2020 JCFS's most successful annual campaign to date. We are now beginning the Agency's 2021 annual campaign, and I encourage everyone to continue providing JCFS with the much-needed funds it counts on to offer its programming and services. JCFS has utilized its resources over the past 18 months responding to the needs of clients and the wider community, while we are all coping with the challenges of a global pandemic. The Agency has sought to provide support and a sense of togetherness during these times when there is so much isolation in many of our personal lives; both offering individualized services to clients in its many program areas and attempting to unite us all by providing virtual venues for non-client community members to gather. Having said that, JCFS is also thinking towards the future, both in terms of keeping current with increasing caseload demands on its personnel by hiring new staff and planning for new future programs in departments with growing needs such as addictions and mental health. It is both a challenging and exciting time for the Agency and its stakeholders.

Along with the JCFS Board of Directors, I extend my heartfelt thanks for your generous and unwavering support of the Agency and its mission. I long for a time (hopefully soon) when our community can get "back to normal", but in the interim, I am reassured that an agency exists in our community to support the most vulnerable in times such as these. In keeping with this, I remain confident that Jewish Child and Family Service has the resources, tools, and expertise to continue responding effectively and efficiently.

With my sincere and continuing gratitude,

Ari Hanson, JCFS Board President

Federation Pilot Project Helps JCFS Connect with Seniors

It was a little over a year ago, in May 2020, that I began as the Senior Concierge and what an interesting year it has been. The Senior Concierge program is a pilot project of the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg's Subcommittee on Aging and jointly implemented by JCFS. The program began as a response to meet the needs of Jewish older adults in Winnipeg. The program's goal is to reach out to Jewish seniors and connect them with programs and resources, while also creating or enhancing their ties to our Jewish community. Though the Senior Concierge program was already in the planning before COVID-19 happened, the reality of pandemic meant that more than ever people, especially seniors, were even more isolated and in need of their community and interpersonal connection. The challenge was how to seniors get and feel connected during a time when in-person contact was not allowed.

I began by making calls to Jewish older adults in the community, first to just say "hello", explore how they were coping with the pandemic, and if there were any resources or supports that I could help connect them with. These grew into lovely conversations about all sorts of subjects. It was these discussions that led to the creation of "Coffee Talk", a weekly one-hour opportunity for seniors to get together on the telephone and schmooze about the news. I am proud that the Senior Concierge initiative has since expanded to include a number of additional programs, including a volunteer-led mobile library, and Juke Box Games, a series of musical games with live music. However, what I am most proud of are the friendships I have seen seniors form with each other over the telephone and computer.

While it has been quite unusual year, and challenged by not meeting people in person, this first year pilot as the Senior Concierge has been quite meaningful. I am very excited to see what the next year as Senior Concierge will bring. If we have accomplished this much in a virtual world, I am especially looking forward to what we can accomplish when we can start meeting again in person.

Danielle Tabacznik, MSW, Senior Concierge



JCFS Foster Child Takes 2nd Place in Writing Contest

Haley Shore, a Grade 11 student at Gray Academy of Jewish Education, wanted to be an artist since she was a very young girl. In her spare time, she enjoys drawing, painting, and singing. When Haley was born, she was placed in foster care at JCFS, and at the age of 2 months met and was placed in long term foster care with her loving family, where she still remains today. Haley excels academically, socially and is a gifted artist. She has learned through experience that it doesn't matter where you come from. Everyone should be proud of who you are. Haley heard about the Diverse Minds Creative Writing Competition** through her school, and for a few weeks contemplated entering the contest. However, one day she sat down, decided that she was going to participate, and started writing and illustrating. Haley wanted to write a story that shows how we need to lift each other up, work together, and be proud of our differences. She hopes that her story, *Better Together*, will teach children to celebrate their individuality, uniqueness, diversity, and be more accepting of others.

**B'nai Brith Canada is proud of the Diverse Minds Creative Writing Competition, an exciting educational initiative that promotes diversity and teaches valuable lessons of inclusion to both elementary and high school students. The competition offers an opportunity for high school students to reflect about these values and create a story for elementary school children on how they can improve their communities. This exciting competition allows high school students to become active human rights role models for their younger peers.



In this photo (left to right): Nancy Ettegui Margolis (Gray Academy Teacher) and Haley Shore

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Retirements and Farewells



MARVIN HAMM – APRIL 2021

Marvin retires from JCFS after over 25 years of service. Marvin started at JCFS in the Child Welfare Department, left for a brief time and returned to work in our Mental Health Team. Marvin always brought a level of personal and professional skill, expertise, and commitment to the agency and his clients. Marvin's gentle nature and steady demeanor translated to all his clients and coworkers alike. We thank Marvin for the positive changes he has brought to hundreds of lives. Congratulations on a much-deserved retirement and we wish Marvin the best on this new chapter in his life.



IVY KOPSTEIN – OCT 2021

Ivy joined JCFS just over 10 years ago with the task of developing our fledgling addiction support services. Needless to say, we could not have asked for more. Ivy was instrumental in creating awareness about addictions in our Jewish Community, building partnerships, growing, and steering best-practices among all our teams, helping countless individuals and families, putting JCFS on the Jewish recovery international map, and helping us strategically develop a plans for future services. Thank You Ivy for being a key player in the field of Jewish addiction supports and for making a difference. All the best in your retirement.

SHANA MENKIS, SEPT 2021

Shana joined JCFS just over four years ago in the role of Director of Operations. In a short time, Shana helped JCFS move forward on strategic objectives, developed operational improvements in HR policies and continuous quality improvement, and created a more purposeful marketing plan including increasing our presence of social media. JCFS wishes Shana the best of luck in her new position with the Province of Manitoba.



MEY TAL LAVY SEPT 2021

Meytal Lavy dedicated the past six-and-a-half years to JCFS, starting as our Receptionist and later as our Office Manager. Meytal was integral to the daily running of the office, supporting the needs of staff, interfacing with clients and donors, and much more. JCFS thanks Meytal for her years of service and we wish her good fortune in her new role in the Development Department at the University of Manitoba.

New Faces - Welcome to Team JCFS!



NEIL HUSSAIN

Neil joined the JCFS Mental Health Services team in April 2021. In his brief time here, he has already taken on a full case load and is working on a number of support groups to further enhance support services. Neil began his career working with immigrant and refugee youth, and also spent time with St. Raphael's Centre in the area addiction supports. Neil came to JCFS most recently from Sara Riel, where he served as a community mental health counsellor. When he isn't working, Neil enjoys an active lifestyle, working out, and biking alongside his dog and spending time with family and friends.



CASSANDRA BOSC

Cassandra started at JCFS in her first social work field placement nearly 2 years ago. Over the past year, she provided training and support to seniors in our Technology Lending Program. She has worked with seniors for many years; working part-time at an assisted-living facility, and now with JCFS. Cassandra has now graduated from her BSW program and is joining the Older Adult Services team for a term social worker position. We are excited to continue to have Cassandra on our team and look forward to another year growing together!



TOBI OYEUSI

Oluwatobi (Tobi) Oyeusi, joined the administrative team as the Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director. Tobi has a bachelor's degree in economics from her home country, Nigeria, and a master's degree in Finance & Accounting from the University of Westminster, UK. Tobi brings over 10 years' experience in executive administration and account/finance relations to JCFS and plans to contribute her vast and diverse experience to the Jewish community in a positive and meaningful way. She is excited to learn and grow with her team and the JCFS staff.



KIMBERLY THIESSEN

JCFS welcomes Kimberly Thiessen as a social worker in our Older Adult Services (OAS) Department. With the influx of new OAS cases during the pandemic year, JCFS has hired Kimberly to meet the expanding needs of that program. Kimberly was previously employed

as a Home Care Case Coordinator with the WRHA and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in working with seniors. In her spare time Kimberly is dedicated to her family of nine adult children and fourteen grandchildren! Spending time in nature and practicing yoga allow Kimberly to regenerate and enjoy all of these gifts.



MARA PELLETTIERI

Coming to JCFS as our new Office Manager, Mara spent the last few years at the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg as their Engagement Coordinator. Mara managed a number of large engagement and administrative portfolios. Prior to that, Mara worked in retail as well as public administration. She comes with a breadth of experience that will be a great asset to JCFS. With excellent organizational skills and creativity, there's nothing she can't get done. She is team and community oriented and committed to helping make our Jewish community a better place.

SHERUT STAFF:

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 Thank you!