

Susie Fishbein’s Chanukah Cooking Show came to the Jewish Federation of NEPA



No sooner had the word hit the street that, arguably, the doyenne of modern kosher cooking, Susie Fishbein, was coming to Northeastern Pennsylvania, than the first reservation was made! And they kept on coming... until we had to turn people away!

As was mentioned by so many excited participants, “if you’ve ever eaten in my house, then you’ve tasted Susie Fishbein’s zucchini soup.” “If you’ve had my turkey roast, the recipe is from Susie Fishbein’s ‘Kosher Palette’ cookbook.”



Men and women came to watch Susie ply her craft and learn tips and tricks. Her menu was pleasing to the eye and the palate and the Federation set up the Linder Room in Scranton’s Jewish Community Center for perfect viewing. Chaya Freilach, Rivka Edelson and Malka See “Fishbein” on page 12



Save the date for Celebrate Israel Parade

On Sunday, May 31, 2026, thousands of Jews will take to Fifth Avenue for the annual Celebrate Israel Parade – and the Jewish community of Northeastern Pennsylvania, under the banner of the Jewish Federation of NEPA, should be front and center. As a vibrant and integral part of Jewish life both in Israel and here in Northeastern Pennsylvania, our presence at this year’s parade is more important than ever.

“Our community has a deep and enduring connection to Israel. We are proud to stand with Israel, and we value the opportunity to express



our support in such a public and visible way.” “It’s a great honor for us to represent our community and show our unwavering support for Israel. We are proud of our heritage and our connection to Israel.”

This year’s parade follows a period of immense pain and uncertainty for Israel and Jews worldwide. As anti-Israel protests continue across the world, alongside rising antisemitism, the Israel Parade stands as a symbol of unity, pride, and resilience.

Let’s show up and march together, proudly and visibly, for Israel. *Am Yisrael chai!*

Please contact Dassy Ganz to register at 570-961-2300, ext. 2, or dassy.ganz@jewishnepa.org.



SPOTLIGHT
My personal story of coming to Scranton

BY ARYEH ALBRECHT

My name is Aryeh Albrecht and my family moved to Scranton, PA, so that I can grow up being myself in the most nurturing environment.

I had the privilege of studying in a large prestigious school. I loved my old school. I had great friends and awesome teachers. I thought school couldn’t get any better than that.

Suddenly, my parents told us that we were moving to Scranton and the main reason is so I can have an even more impactful school environment. At BSA, I realized that the teachers and administration see me for who I am. I don’t feel like one of 1,000 kids in my grade. I feel like myself, Aryeh, when I walk into BSA. I did not even realize how much I would value people valuing me.

In BSA, we get to be ourselves even in a school environment – which is most important. In BSA,

I get to learn a variety of subjects ranging from earth science all the way to Torah studies. In BSA, we have an amazing principal named Dr. Itzkowitz. She is a phenomenal principal and cares for every student’s needs.

If we need a change in the schedule, she creates it for us. If we need someone to talk to, she is there for us. Dr. Itzkowitz makes every day a special day for me and all of us. Not only is every day special for us, but holidays and Rosh Chodesh are extra special at BSA.

I have only been at BSA for a short while but I already feel at home at BSA – a school made for kids.

For more info on Beth Shalom Academy, visit www.bethshalomacademy.com.

CANDLE LIGHTING

January 2	4:27 pm
January 9	4:33 pm
January 16	4:41 pm
January 23	4:50 pm
January 30	4:58 pm
February 6	5:07 pm

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

School news

Local Jewish day schools report on recent student activities, from fall programs to Hanukkah parties.

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History

The latest history column looks at the activities of the 1946 Anglo-American Committee.

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In his own words

A former Gaza hostage shared her story of survival and faith at a Jewish Discovery Center event.

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Wellness spotlight: How seniors can nurture their mental health in winter

BY DR. KEN SEBASTIANELLI

As the new year begins, many seniors look forward to fresh routines, cozy indoor moments and time for personal renewal. Yet winter also brings shorter days, colder weather and often less social interaction – factors that may affect mood, motivation and overall mental well-being. The good news: with a little intention and gentle self-care, winter can become a season of comfort, connection and steadiness.

Below are practical, senior-friendly ways to support mental health this winter.

- 1. Embrace natural light every day
Winter daylight may be brief, but it's powerful. Exposure to natural light helps regulate sleep, boost energy, and elevate mood. Here are some tips to maximize absorption of natural light during these shorter days:
 - ◆ Opening blinds first thing in the morning.
 - ◆ Sitting near a sunny window for meals or reading.

- ◆ Taking short outdoor walks when the weather allows.
- ◆ Using soft indoor lighting in the evening to create warmth and reduce eye strain.
- 2. Create a gentle daily routine
Structure is comforting, especially in months when days feel similar. A steady routine can encourage motivation and reduce feelings of isolation. Try incorporating some of these ideas into your daily routine:
 - ◆ A morning stretch or light exercise.
 - ◆ Hydration and nourishing meals.
 - ◆ A planned social touchpoint – phone call, chat with a neighbor or virtual group.
 - ◆ Evening wind-down activities like puzzles, music or reflection.
 - ◆ 3. Stay social – even in small ways
 - ◆ Winter can make it harder to stay connected, but social contact is one of the strongest protectors of mental health. A few ideas for maintaining social connections include:
 - ◆ Weekly coffee dates – virtual or in person.
 - ◆ Joining senior center programs, book clubs, or hobby groups.



- ◆ Checking in with friends or family on a regular schedule.
- ◆ Engaging with intergenerational activities. (Grandkids love teaching technology!)
- 4. Keep moving, keep warm
Physical activity boosts mood, reduces stress and supports sleep – important all winter long. Some winter-friendly movement options include:
 - ◆ Gentle indoor walking or hallway laps.
 - ◆ Chair yoga or online senior fitness videos.
 - ◆ Light strength exercises with household items (like soup cans).
 - ◆ Seasonal outdoor walks with proper footwear and layers.
- 5. Prioritize sleep and comfort
Shorter days can disrupt sleep cycles. Good sleep supports emotional balance, memory and resilience. Here are a few ways you can maintain a good sleep routine in winter:
 - ◆ Keep a consistent sleep schedule.
 - ◆ Limit caffeine late in the day.
 - ◆ Enjoy warm beverages or relaxing routines before bedtime.

- ◆ Keep your bedroom cozy but not overly warm.
- 6. Engage your mind with pleasurable activities
Mental stimulation lifts spirits and supports cognitive health. Winter is a wonderful time to rekindle favorite hobbies or try new ones. Consider some of these ideas:
 - ◆ Reading, crafting, puzzles or journaling.
 - ◆ Learning something new through a senior class or online workshop.
 - ◆ Listening to music, audiobooks, or guided meditations.
 - ◆ Cooking simple seasonal recipes.
- 7. Practice gentle emotional check-ins
Winter can surface feelings of loneliness, sadness, or restlessness. Checking in with yourself helps you notice changes early and stay connected to what you need. Here are a few simple ways to check in:
 - ◆ Ask yourself daily: How am I feeling today? What would help me feel supported?
 - ◆ Share your feelings with a friend or family member.
 - ◆ Practice breathing exercises or mindfulness moments.
 - ◆ If difficult feelings persist, reaching out to a healthcare professional or counselor can provide helpful support.

- 8. Celebrate the small joys of the season
Winter also brings opportunities for comfort, beauty and reflection. Take advantage of some unique comforts of the season such as:
 - ◆ Warm blankets, soft music, and cozy reading corners.
 - ◆ Watching winter birds or seasonal nature from the window.
 - ◆ Enjoying hearty soups or herbal teas.
 - ◆ Setting simple goals or intentions for the year ahead.

January doesn't have to be a time of "pushing through" the winter. With mindful habits, meaningful connection, and a bit of daily light – both inside and out – this season can support calm, clarity and renewed emotional well-being.

Dr. Ken Sebastianelli has served as medical director for Elan Skilled Nursing and Rehab, a Jewish Senior Life Community, since 2012. Dr. Sebastianelli is a board-certified Internal Medicine practitioner with Prime Med Medical Group, and is affiliated with Geisinger Community Medical Center and Moses Taylor Hospital. He is also a member of the Medical Executive Committee at Geisinger Community Medical Center

The Reporter

Published by the Jewish Federation of Northeastern Pennsylvania

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Jewish identity as a positive force

I'm writing this column on the Monday following the Bondi Beach massacre. It is the first day of Hanukkah and my mind wanders to dark places. As of today, there are 16 confirmed dead and about 40 wounded. Among the dead, there are two rabbis, a 10-year-old girl and a Holocaust survivor who shielded his wife with his body during the shooting. Among the wounded, there is an October 7 survivor who was attending the event. It seems that the events in Australia and the way they were covered by the mainstream media reflect a twisted fascination with Jews as victims. Don't get me started on the social media celebrations of the event.

Is that what being a Jew means? To be a target? I refuse to accept that. Yet when going over the cultural representation of Jewish identity in American culture I find that over 70 percent of

all movies relating to Jewish identity focus on antisemitism or the Holocaust. The remaining 30 percent tends to have a heavy dose of Jewish self-doubt, dealing with interfaith families or the exploits of the Israeli army. And even among those movies about the IDF, the majority touch on anti-Jewish violence or Israeli rescue of Jews in danger. Can we not do better than that?

I see Jewish identity as a positive force; a foundation for resilience, a foundation for acceptance

they don't do very well in the U.S. market.

There are things we can do here, locally. We can come together to celebrate who we are – differences and all. A great opportunity to do so is coming on May 31 – the March for Israel in New York City. In these times when Jewish pride is needed, the parade is a great way to come together. Mark your calendar.

And share with us any other ideas you might have to wear our identity on the sleeve!



FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DANIEL CHEJFEC, PH.D.

of diverse opinions, for defiance in the face of history, in embracing of a millennia-old tradition. Where are the movies, the TV programs, the community expressions of that positive aspect of our identity? My Jewish identity is not the Jewish identity of the "Oy Vey," but the identity I wear on my sleeve.

I'd like to see celebrations of more positive aspects of our culture and history, like Mimouna, a Moroccan-Jewish celebration marking the end of Passover; or Sigd – the Ethiopian-Jewish celebration of the connection with the land of Israel. I'd like to see more movies and TV programs based on things like the novels of Isaac Bashevis Singer, or reboots of early 20th century Jewish films like "Gryine Felder" or "The Dybbuk." Well, "Yiddl Mitl Fiddle" actually did get a reboot in Barbra Streisand's "Yentl." There are some others, like "The Lion Within" and "The Golem." There are many Israeli films like "The Footnote" and others showing a positive image of Jewish culture, but

Jewish online resources

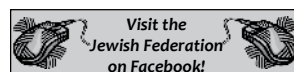
BY REPORTER STAFF

◆ The Hadassah-Brandeis Institute announces two virtual talks: Edith Pick, Ph.D., will speak on "Mothers and Nation: Maternal Politics in Israel and the Jewish Diaspora" on Monday, January 26, at 1 pm (<https://brandeis.zoom.us/join/2iCI-WnwKSomLgT2AXBJQfA#registration>); and the Sandra Seltzer Silberman HBI Conversations Series will feature Rabbi Jane Kanarek, Ph.D., speaking on "Beyond Brutality, Reclaiming Female Presence in Bavli Sotah" on Thursday, January 29, at 12:30 pm (https://brandeis.zoom.us/join/3_iO-URdQhiMnHnY2PuQbA#registration).
◆ Ritualwell will hold the virtual "The 10 Rules of Writing With Etgar Keret" on Sunday, January 11, from 1-2:30 pm. The cost to attend is \$54. In the talk, "Keret will explore how to nurture creativity, embrace imperfection, and find your truest voice on the page." For more information or to register, visit <https://ritualwell.org/event/the-10-rules-of-writing-with-etgar-keret>.

To get Federation updates via email, register on our website
www.jewishnepa.org



Pledge or Donate online at
www.jewishnepa.org/donate



DEADLINES

The following are deadlines for all articles and photos for upcoming Reporter issues.

DEADLINE	ISSUE
Monday, January 12	February
Monday, February 9	March
Monday, March 9	April
Monday, April 13	May

PICKLEBALL

at the

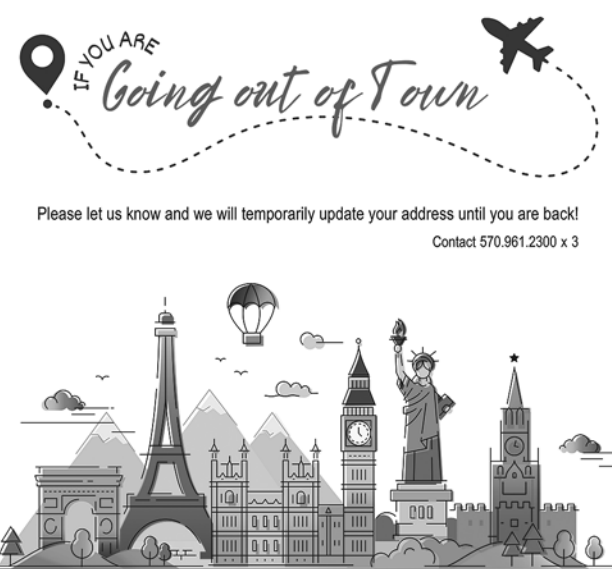


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TUESDAYS 12:00PM - 2:00PM
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➡ Check out the Federation's new, updated website at www.jewishnepa.org or find it on Facebook

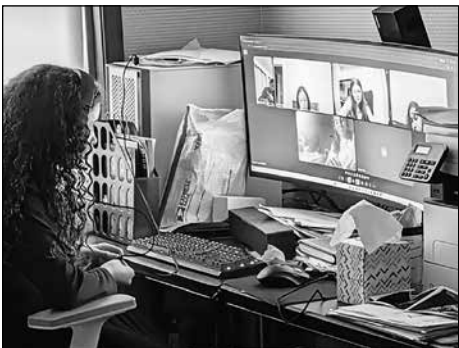
Learning beyond walls and weather: BSA’s vision for education that moves with the times

At Beth Shalom Academy (BSA), learning is not confined to four walls, a rigid schedule or perfect weather. Education is a living, breathing experience that travels with our students wherever they are: from their classrooms, to their homes and even to snowy winter days filled with sleds and snowmen. Moving with the times is more than a necessity; it is a mindset, a commitment to ensuring that learning continues in meaningful ways no matter the circumstances.

BSA proudly welcomes students from across the Greater Scranton area, with some traveling daily from



as far as Dallas, PA, to Stroudsburg, PA, though the heart of our school community remains rooted in Scranton. Our families demonstrate remarkable dedication and our students arrive each day eager to learn – whether in person or from a screen when conditions require.



This commitment is what defines our community: resilience, flexibility and a shared passion for growth.

That spirit was on full display during a recent snowstorm that blanketed Scranton and surrounding areas. While some faculty members were fully prepared to drive in from



Moscow and Back Mountain, the administration made a game-changing decision to move the school day online. Under the leadership of Mrs. Malky Gaerman, chief administrator and assistant to the principal, Beth Shalom Academy See “BSA” on page 9

Computer programming at Beth Shalom Academy

Under the tutelage of Dr. Stephen Mansour, students at Beth Shalom are learning how to write computer programs. Their current project is creating a tic-tac-toe game on the computer, which introduces them to fundamental concepts of logic and design. They are learning how

to program in APL, an array-based computer language that helps them understand how data can be structured and manipulated efficiently.

The tic-tac-toe grid can be thought of as a 3 by 3 array of Xs and Os, making it an ideal model for learning array-based programming.

The program must check the user’s inputs and determine whether a winning move has occurred, teaching students how to create conditions, test outcomes and think critically about problem-solving in code.

At Beth Shalom Academy, this type of innovative instruction

reflects a broader commitment to preparing students for a rapidly changing world. Education today must move beyond rote memorization and static lessons, and instead See “Computer” on page 9



The Jewish Federation of NEPA is excited to offer local, community organizations the opportunity to post events to our Community Calendar. Published events will be included in our weekly Ma Nishma NEPA email.

MA NISHMA NEPA

How to Submit a Community Event

Step 1

Visit www.jewishnepa.org

Step 2

Click the button (top right)

Step 3

Register or log-in

Step 4

Include your event details and submit the form. Events will be published once approved.

We reserve the right to edit the content of the event submissions and approve or deny publication of events.

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The 1946 Anglo-American Committee

(Twelfth article of history series)

BY DANIEL CHEJFEC, PH.D.

The emergence of the Cold War and the Jewish refugees lingering in the Displaced Persons Camps across Europe forced the Western allies to revisit the issue of British Palestine and seek ways to address these issues while avoiding a confrontation with the Arab (oil producing) countries.

The result was the establishment of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, assembled on January 4, 1946. The mandate of the committee, as described in the official document, was:

“To examine political, economic and social conditions in Palestine as they bear upon the problem of Jewish immigration and settlement therein and the well-being of the peoples now living therein.

“To examine the position of the Jews in those countries in Europe where they have been the victims of Nazi and Fascist persecution, and the practical measures taken or contemplated to be taken in those countries to enable them to live free from discrimination and oppression and to make estimates of those who wish or will be impelled by their conditions to migrate to Palestine or other countries outside Europe.

“To hear the views of competent witnesses and to consult representative Arabs and Jews on the problems of Palestine as such problems are affected by conditions under paragraphs 1 and 2 above and by other relevant facts and circumstances, and to make recommendations to His Majesty’s Government and the Government of the United States for the interim handling of these problems as well as for their permanent solution.

“To make such other recommendations to His Majesty’s Government and the Government of the

United States as may be necessary to meet the immediate needs arising from conditions subject to examination under paragraph 2 above, by remedial action in the European countries in question or by the provision of facilities for emigration to and settlement in countries outside Europe.”

After months of meetings with Arab and Jewish leaders and visits to DP camps in Europe, the committee presented its conclusions and recommendations. Their first conclusion regarding the European situation was that no substantial support existed from countries outside Europe to resettle the Jewish survivors, other than Palestine. This prompted them to recommend immediately granting 100,000 immigrant visas to Palestine for Holocaust survivors.

They also concluded that under existing conditions, neither under a Jewish state nor an Arab state would the rights of the minority be respected. They recommended the writing of a constitution guaranteeing self-rule for both communities under very similar conditions as first recommended by the Woodhead Commission. They also recommended that the territory be administrated under a mandate of the United Nations during an interim period and recognize the rights of Jews to immigrate even beyond the initial 100,000 visas. They warned, however, that the levels of immigration had to be limited by the need “not to upset the balance” in Arab-Jewish relations. This again supports the Woodhead Commission report. They did, however, recommend that the land purchase provisions of the 1939 White Book be rescinded, considered discriminatory against Jews.

Jews saw these conclusions as a

serious blow to their hopes for an independent state, while the Arabs opposed the conclusions as favoring the Jews. The Arabs demanded an immediate stop to Jewish immigration.

Several months after these conclusions and recommendations were presented, the recommended 100,000 visas had not materialized and Holocaust survivors continued to live in DP camps. In October 1946, President Truman demanded that Britain issue the visas. The British, however, dealing with unrest in India and anxious to maintain their economic ties with the oil rich Arab countries, felt their empire was beginning to crumble, and that made them less than enthusiastic about granting the visas.

The Krakow pogrom of 8/11/1945 and the Kielce pogrom of 7/4/1946

signaled to Holocaust survivors that returning to their countries of origin was unsafe to say the least.

Britain made two half-hearted attempts to implement some of the recommendations of the Committee as interpreted through the lens of their own interests. These included a Swiss-like confederation with Arab and Jewish cantons, and dividing the land into two separate autonomous areas under a unified government. Both ideas strike as hopelessly naïve and ignoring the realities on the ground.

The British impossibility to find a position balancing the interests of Jews and Arabs while preserving British interest, led eventually to Great Britain appealing in early 1947 to the newly formed United Nations to take over.

Are you on the Jewish Federation’s email list?

We send updated announcements and special event details weekly to those who wish to receive them.

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Hundreds gather for JCC’s Superhero Chanukah Celebration

The Jewish Community Center welcomed a large turnout for its Chanukah celebration on Sunday, December 14, from 1-3:30 pm, at

the Steven Bruce Arenberg Memorial Superhero Chanukah Festival. Attendees enjoyed a wide variety of delicious, symbolic foods cooked in oil, including a latke bar with an assortment of sauces and toppings, falafel, doughnuts and popcorn. Additional foods and treats included Israeli salad and an ice cream sundae. See “JCC” on page 12



Scranton Hebrew Day School Hanukkah festivities





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UNIV. OF SCRANTON EXERCISE SCIENCE & SPORT DEPT.

Beth Shalom Academy lights “Up the Community” with Hanukkah Carnival

Beth Shalom Academy was filled with light, laughter and community spirit today as the school hosted a vibrant Hanukkah Carnival open to families and neighbors from across the area. The festive event was proudly planned and run by BSA’s high school



girls, who transformed the campus into a joyful celebration of creativity, teamwork and Jewish pride. The carnival featured more than a dozen lively booths packed with games and activities, three bounce house, and a delicious menu that included a favorite highlight – Hanukkah donut decorating, where children eagerly decorated their own sufganiyot with colorful toppings. Tables were filled with tons of prizes, and smiles could be seen throughout the building as families enjoyed the fun together.

The highlight of the day was

the much-anticipated Menorah Contest, which showcased one of BSA’s most original and innovative learning environments: the MakerSpace. Under the direction of Mr. John Sakson, director of secular studies, students in grades one through eight worked in class teams to design and build their own menorahs using imaginative materials and bold ideas. More than an art project, the menorah challenge was an exercise in collaboration and unity. Students learned how to listen to one another, share creative visions, problem-solve



as a group, and take pride in a shared outcome. The finished menorahs reflected remarkable originality and demonstrated how creativity flourishes when students work together. See “Carnival” on page 9

Bais Yaakov of Scranton – “The small school with a big heart”

Bais Yaakov began the new school year with a back-to-school program and a getting to know you trip to the Steam town train museum. Bais Yaakov prides itself on being able to meet the individual

needs of all its students, with a diverse curriculum including both academic, as well as subjects such as home economics, art and sewing. The Bais Yaakov prides itself on its highly qualified staff both in

the Judaic and secular studies. Bais Yaakov features specialty teachers on Zoom, such as renowned educator and speaker Mrs. Yael Kaisman from Lakewood, NJ, and Rabbi Yitzchak Feigenbaum from Israel. Rosh Chodesh brings with it speakers, trips and activities, both inside and outside of the school. On Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan (the new month), students enjoyed a field trip to

Lakeland Orchards where they picked apples and enjoyed other activities. **MISHMERES PROGRAM KICKOFF** Students participate in this program, which focuses on proper speech and sensitivity to others. Videos and exciting speakers and newsletters are part of this program created by the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation. *Yimei Iyun* (Days See “Heart” on page 11

Scranton Hebrew Day School held Hanukkah lunch



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THE MAGIC OF CUBA

Let us know if you'd like to join the Jewish Federation of NEPA on a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Cuba! This unforgettable journey will only happen if we have at least 20 participants, so your response matters. Please share your interest today to help us gauge participation and bring this incredible experience to life.

- Open to Everyone – bring friends & family
- 5-day trip in the Fall of 2026
- Transportation Included
- Mostly City Walking – light activity

INTERESTED?

dassy.ganz@jewishnepa.org

570-961-2300 x2

FALL 2026

• *Regular Schedule of Services* •

ABINGTON TORAH CENTER

Rabbi Dovid Saks
President: Richard Rutta
Jewish Heritage Connection
601 Jefferson Ave., Scranton, PA 18510
570-346-1321 • website: www.jewishheritageconnection.org
Sunday morning minyan 8:15 am at Elan Gardens,
465 Vernard Rd., Clarks Summit, PA

BETH SHALOM CONGREGATION

Rabbi Alex Hecht
President: Asher Grossman
1025 Vine St., Scranton, PA 18510 (corner of Vine & Clay Ave.)
570-346-0502 • fax: 570-346-8800
Weekday - *Shacharit*: Sun. 8am; Mon., Thurs. & Rosh Chodesh 6:30 am; Tue., Wed. & Fri. 6:45 am; Sat. & holidays 8:45 am.
Mincha during the week is approx. 10 minutes before sunset, following by *Maariv*.

CHABAD OF THE ABINGTONS/ JEWISH DISCOVERY CENTER

Rabbi Benny Rapoport
216 Miller, Rd., Clarks Summit, PA 18411
570-587-3300 • JewishNEPA.com/minyan
Weekly service for Shabbat and all Jewish holidays
Kabbalat Shabbat at sundown (summer at 7 pm)
Saturday mornings: 9:30 am, *Kiddush* 11:30 am
Call for more information.

CHABAD LUBAVITCH OF THE POCONOS

Rabbi Mendel Bendet
570-420-8655 • website: www.chabadpoconos.com
Please contact us for schedules and locations.

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
Rabbi Elliott Kleinman
President: Liza Roos Lucy
Contact person: Cheryl Badner, Congregation Administrator
615 Court St., Honesdale, PA 18431
570-253-2222 • fax: 570-226-1105

CONGREGATION B'NAI HARIM

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
Rabbi Alan Berlin
President: Lisa Spector
P.O. Box 757, Sullivan Rd., Pocono Pines, PA 18350 (located at Rt. 940 and Pocono Crest Road at Sullivan Trail)
570-646-0100 • website: www.bnaiharimpococonos.org
Shabbat morning services 10 am-noon; every other Saturday.

JEWISH FELLOWSHIP OF HEMLOCK FARMS

Rav Shoshana Mitrani Knapp, ravshoshi@gmail.com
President: Jean Seltzer
1516 Hemlock Farms, Lords Valley, PA 18428 (located at 540 Forest Dr., Hemlock Farms, Lords Valley, PA 18428)
570-775-7497 • e-mail: jfhf1516@gmail.com
Friday evening Shabbat service 7:30 pm
Saturday morning Shabbat service 10 am

MACHZIKEH HADAS SYNAGOGUE

Rabbi Mordechai Fine
President: Meshulem Epstein
600 Monroe Ave., Scranton, PA 18510
570-342-6271

OHEV ZEDEK CONGREGATION

Rabbi Mordechai Fine
1432 Mulberry St., Scranton, PA 18510

TEMPLE HESED

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
Rabbi Daniel J. Swartz
President: Jennifer Novak
1 Knox St., Scranton, PA 18505 (Off Lake Scranton Rd.)
570-344-7201 • website: www.TempleHesed.org
E-mail: templehesed@comcast.net
First Friday Shabbat 6pm, other Fridays 7 pm; Chanting Circle Saturdays at 11:30 am

TEMPLE ISRAEL OF THE POCONOS

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Rabbi Daniel M. Zucker • President: Debbie Smith
711 Wallace St., Stroudsburg, PA 18360
(one block off Rt. 191 (5th Street) at Avenue A)
570-421-8781 • website: www.templepoconos.org
E-mail: tipoc@ptd.net
Friday evening Shabbat 6 pm; Saturday morning Shabbat 10:30 am

TEMPLE ISRAEL OF SCRANTON

Affiliation: United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Rabbi Miriam Spitzer
Cantor: Vladimir Aronzon
President: David Hollander, Hollanderx@aol.com
918 East Gibson St., Scranton, PA 18510 (located at the corner of Gibson & Monroe Sts.)
570-342-0350 • e-mail: office@templeisraelscranton.org
Mon. & Thurs. 7:15 am; Tues., Wed. & Fri. 7:25 am; Rosh Chodesh & *Chagim* weekdays, 7 am; Shabbat morning service 9:30 am

Bais Yaakov held Hanukkah Carnival



Bais Yaakov of Scranton: A joyful beginning

Bais Yaakov of Scranton has once again proven that its size is no limitation to the depth of its impact. With a vibrant start to the new school year, the school continues to embody its guiding principle: “The small school with a big heart.”

A JOYFUL BEGINNING

The year opened with a lively back-to-school program, followed by a “getting to know you” trip to the Steamtown Train Museum. These activities set the tone for a year of learning, friendship and growth.

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

Bais Yaakov takes pride in meeting the individual needs of each student through a diverse curriculum that blends rich religious studies with rigorous academics, while also offering enriching subjects such as home economics,

art and sewing. The school’s highly qualified staff in both Judaic and secular studies ensure that students receive a well-rounded education rooted in tradition, values and excellence.

Specialty teachers join via Zoom, bringing world-class instruction directly into the classroom. Among them are renowned educator Mrs. Yael Kaisman of Lakewood, NJ, and Rabbi Yitzchak Feigenbaum from Israel, whose expertise and inspiration elevate the learning experience.

ROSH CHODESH CELEBRATIONS

Each new month is marked with meaningful programming. On Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, students enjoyed a memorable trip to Lakeland Orchards, where they picked apples and participated in seasonal activities, blending joy with tradition.

See “Bais” on page 11

The Reporter

Published by the Jewish Federation of Northeastern Pennsylvania



Friends of *The Reporter* make big news!

The Federation is asking members of its communities to support its “*Friends of The Reporter*” Campaign which seeks to raise \$5,000 to assist in funding the newspaper.

The newspaper is delivered monthly to each and every identifiable Jewish home in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

The Reporter is the primary intercommunal newspaper of the Jewish communities of Lackawanna, Monroe, Pike and Wayne counties. Supplementing synagogue newsletters, bulletins and e-mails, *The Reporter* is issued to hundreds of Jewish households throughout our region. Over the past several years, the publishing cost of the newspaper has increased dramatically although the newspaper continues to be provided at no charge to members of our Jewish communities in northeastern Pennsylvania. The Federation has assumed the financial responsibility of funding the newspaper at a cost of \$23,990 per year and asks only that its readers assist it in raising \$5,000 as part of its “*Friends of The Reporter*” Campaign to offset a small share of these expenses.

Your gift to fund our regional Jewish newspaper matters a great deal to our readers and we would be very grateful for your financial support.

As always, your comments, opinions & suggestions are always welcome.

With best wishes,
Daniel Cheffec, Executive Director
Jewish Federation of NE Pennsylvania
601 Jefferson Avenue
Scranton, PA 18510

I will support continuation of our expanded Federation Reporter by contributing:

.....\$36\$54\$100 other amt. \$ _____

Name(s) (as you wish to appear on our list of “Friends”) _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Check here if you prefer your name not to be published

Please write and send tax deductible checks to:
Jewish Federation of Northeastern Pennsylvania
601 Jefferson Ave. Scranton, PA 18510



Carnival Continued from page 7

Aspecial thank you goes to Mrs. Shiela Cutler, who generously came in to help judge the me-

norah contest, lending her time and thoughtful eye to celebrate each team’s creativity and effort.

The Hanukkah Carnival was not only a celebration of the holiday, but also a reflection of Beth Shalom Academy’s mission: fostering leadership, creativity, and community through meaningful, hands-on experiences. Visitors are always welcome to visit BSA and the MakerSpace to see firsthand the creativity and collaboration taking place each day. As the menorahs were admired, donuts enjoyed and prizes awarded, one thing was clear: the true light of the day came from the students who planned, created and celebrated together.

For more information or to book a tour, visit www.bethshalomacademy.com.

Computer. Continued from page 4

embrace hands-on, inquiry-based learning that mirrors real-life problem solving. By integrating technology and programming into the curriculum, Beth Shalom Academy ensures that its students are not only consumers of technology, but thoughtful creators who understand how systems work and how ideas are transformed into functioning tools.

This experiential approach empowers students with confidence and curiosity. When learners physically build programs, test their ideas, encounter challenges and debug their own work, they gain a deeper and more lasting understanding of how technology operates. More importantly, they develop perseverance, analytical thinking, and adaptability – skills that

are essential for success in future careers that may not yet even exist. Beth Shalom Academy continues to lead by example, demonstrating that innovation in education is not about replacing tradition, but about enhancing it to equip students for tomorrow’s world.

For more information about Beth Shalom Academy, visit www.bethshalomacademy.com.

BSA. Continued from page 4

launched a swift and seamless transition to virtual learning. What could have been a lost day became a powerful reminder that education does not need to pause for weather – and in fact, it can flourish in new and unexpected ways.



Students enjoyed the gifts of winter while remaining fully engaged in their studies. Mrs. Sarah Smith, BSA’s primary Hebrew reading and writing specialist for first and second grade boys and second and third grade girls, was thrilled with the results. “They did such a great job – so much better than I expected,” she shared, marveling at how attentive and successful her students were on Zoom.

Mr. John Sakson, director of general studies in the Elementary Department, was equally impressed. He noted the enthusiasm and curiosity his students brought to their earth science lessons – even on a day better known for building snowmen than studying the planet. The excitement to learn did not fade with the weather; it grew.

Dr. Ruth Leiter-Itzkowitz, principal of Beth Shalom Academy, emphasized that distance learning, when used thoughtfully, offers unique and powerful benefits. Drawing from her experience teaching during COVID, she often reminds faculty that virtual education can level the playing field. Students who may be quiet in the classroom find confidence behind the screen, while more vocal students learn to listen. Every child is seen, heard and supported.

This reflects the core philosophy of Beth Shalom Academy: individualized attention to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of every student. Whether in person or online, our mission remains the same: to nurture the whole child and inspire a lifelong love of learning.

At BSA, learning is not limited by geography, weather or time. It is a mindset, a culture and a promise to our families that no matter what, their children’s education will continue to grow – just as they do.

For more information about Beth Shalom Academy, visit www.bethshalomacademy.com.

GIFTING STOCK FORM

Gifting stock to a charitable 501©(3) organization is a great way to make a donation.

By gifting stock in which you have a large capital gain, you not only receive the benefit of making a sizable donation, but you also save the capital gains tax.


Example:
Gift: \$2,000
(Stock: ABC @ \$20 per share - Gift: 100 shares)

If you were to sell “Stock ABC” that you originally purchased at \$10.00 a share, you would have a \$1,000 capital gain and you would be required to pay at least \$150.00 in federal taxes, etc.

But by gifting the stock, you save the entire \$150.00 and you’ve found a way to help the Federation accomplish its mission:

“... to rescue the imperiled, care for the vulnerable, support Israel and world Jewry and perpetuate Jewish life in Northeastern Pennsylvania.”

Your gift will not only assist our local and regional organizations and agencies, but you will have the satisfaction of helping those in need.

 You will be able to look back and say: “I’m just doing what my People have always done for each other.”

For further information on gifting stocks in payment of your pledge to our Annual UJA Campaign, please contact the Federation at 570-961-2300 (ext. 3) for details.



Jewish Family Service
OF NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

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➡ Check out the Federation’s new, updated website at www.jewishnepa.org or find it on Facebook

“A Journey from Darkness to Light”: Former Gaza hostage Judith Raanan shares story of faith at Hanukkah event

CLARKS SUMMIT, PA – Amid the flickering lights of the Hanukkah menorah, the Jewish Discovery Center (JDC) hosted a profound evening of testimony and hope on December 16, as former Gaza hostage Judith Raanan shared her harrowing, yet inspiring, story of survival and faith.

The event, titled “A Journey from Darkness to Light,” brought the NEPA community face-to-face with one of the first individuals released following the October 7, 2023, attacks in Israel. Raanan and her teenage daughter, Natalie, were taken from Kibbutz Nahal Oz and held in Gaza for two weeks before their release.

A “HUG” FOR A GRIEVING GLOBAL COMMUNITY

The evening felt especially timely for many attendees who arrived carrying the weight of a fresh global tragedy. Just days prior, a devastating



attack at a Hanukkah celebration near Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia, resulted in the loss of many lives—including two beloved Chabad rabbis, Rabbi Eli Schlanger and Rabbi Yaakov Levitan.

For those in the room, Raanan’s presence served as a vital source of comfort during a week of mourning. One participant, reflecting on the heartbreak in Sydney and the ongoing tensions abroad, summed up the atmosphere of the evening:



“The hug that we all needed – that was tonight.” **THE CALL TO ILLUMINATE THE WORLD**

Rabbi Benny Rapoport, director of the JDC, framed the evening not just as a reflection on trauma, but as a call to action rooted in Jewish tradition.

“Nearly 4,000 years ago Abraham and Sara, the first Jews, stood up to shine the light of goodness and holiness to the world around them,” Rabbi Rapoport told the audience. “They said to all people: ‘God has a plan and a purpose for each of us... we are His ambassadors.’ Each and every one of us. Jew or non-Jew. Young or old. Rich or poor. We can illuminate the world with our words and actions.”

He emphasized that the Hanukkah menorah serves as a physical symbol of this spiritual duty, particularly when faced with evil. “When you light a candle, darkness goes away. When you do good, evil melts away,” he said. “When you speak out and promote goodness and kindness, love and unity, the dark clouds of ignorance dissipate. When you stand up and proudly perform mitzvot, the world begins to heal.”

FAITH IN THE FACE OF TERROR

During her address, Judith Raanan recounted the terrifying moments her room was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade and the instincts she See “Faith” on page 11





Quick Reference Guide to Planned Giving

Use this planned giving quick reference guide to help determine the best strategy for achieving your philanthropic and financial goals.

For more information or to discuss these planned giving options, please contact Daniel Chejfec, Executive Director, Jewish Federation of NEPA, 570-961-2300 (x1) or daniel.chejfec@jewishnepa.org.

If Your Goal is to:	Then You Can:	Your Benefits May Include:
Make a quick & easy gift	Simply write a check now	An income tax deduction and immediate charitable impact
Avoid tax on capital gains	Contribute long-term appreciated stock or other securities	A charitable deduction plus no capital gains tax
Defer a gift until after your lifetime	Put a bequest in your will (gifts of cash, specific property, or a share or the residue of your estate)	Exemption from federal estate tax on donations
Receive guaranteed fixed income that is partially tax-free	Create a charitable gift annuity	Current & future savings on income taxes, plus fixed, stable payments
Avoid capital gains tax on the sale of a home or other real estate	Donate the real estate or sell it to a charity at a bargain price	An income tax reduction plus reduction or elimination of capital gains tax
Avoid the two-fold taxation on IRA or other employee benefit plans	Name a charity as the beneficiary of the remainder of the retirement assets after your lifetime	Tax relief to your family on inherited assets
Give your personal residence or farm, but retain life use	Create a charitable gift of future interest, called a retained life estate	Tax advantages plus use of the property
Make a large gift with little cost to you	Contribute a life insurance policy you no longer need or purchase a new one & designate a charity as the owner	Current & possible future income tax deductions
Receive secure, fixed income for life while avoiding market risks	Purchase a charitable gift annuity or create a charitable remainder annuity trust	Tax advantages & possible increased rate of return
Give income from an asset for a period of years but retain the asset for yourself or your heirs	Create a charitable lead trust	Federal estate tax savings on asset & income tax deductions for deductions for donated income
Create a hedge against inflation over the long term	Create a charitable remainder unitrust	Variable payments for life plus tax advantages
Make a revocable gift during your lifetime	Name a charity as the beneficiary of assets in a living trust	Full control of the trust terms during your lifetime



Continued from page 8

➡ Check out the Federation's new, updated website at www.jewishnepa.org or find it on Facebook

bar with plenty of toppings.

Entertainment was highlighted by a live performance from Superman Rob the Juggler, along with dancing led by EJ the DJ. Families also enjoyed a full slate of Chanukah and superhero-themed activities, including games, inflatables, Chanukah arts and crafts, Chanukah music and puzzles, fun with dreidels, a photo booth, menorah candle making, balloon art, face painting and doughnut (sufganiyot) decorating. Special appearances by Batman and Wonder Woman added to the excitement and created a fun, immersive superhero atmosphere.



Guests also had the opportunity to use an olive press to make their own olive oil and to shop in the gift store for last-minute Chanukah gifts, decorations and menorahs.

The JCC extends its sincere thanks to its dedicated staff and more than 30 volunteers

Fishbein.....Continued from page 1

Gutman volunteered to prepare the room for the event and, indeed, the room was welcoming.

Starting with a lesson on kosher cuisine in various countries that Susie has visited and conducted culinary tours, Susie led off with a delicious white bean humus served in a martini glass with a steeped tomato topping and vegetable cigar garnish. Susie taught the A-B-Cs of homemade humus; she brought the ingredients and equipment with her. Susie also



had prepared perfect sized samples for each person to taste to rave reviews. There was an audible gasp upon seeing the

exquisite presentation of this humble dish.

The main course was an homage to the dates grown in Israel with silan glazed salmon over a date and chickpea salad. The salmon portions were perfectly cooked and the portion for each audience member was very generous.

Finally, in honor of Chanukah and the tradition of fried foods, Susie prepared fresh beignets that were deep fried in front of the audience by Shanie Davidson-Dunn who assisted Susie throughout. Each participant received a hot beignet in a small bakery bag with confectioner's sugar for them to shake and dust the pastry.

Susie's many cookbooks were for sale with some of the proceeds benefitting the Federation and one was even raffled off. Congratulations Mrs. Chaya Zamir of Scranton who won the chance to choose a cookbook as a gift from the Federation.

Susie e-mailed the actual recipes to all who participated. And someone mentioned trying to get together again for a tasting of recipes people tried in the Susie Fishbein cookbooks they purchased.

The Jewish Federation was happy to usher in Chanukah with this wonderful program and thanks everyone who participated and enjoyed.



The world is an unstable place.

We bring security.

Throughout Europe, violent attacks target Jewish people and Jewish institutions. Security is posted at synagogues. At Jewish day schools, five-year-olds file past armed guards to get to the playground. Jewish students arriving at college encounter toxic anti-Israel slogans.

Your UJA gift will help restore a sense of security. With your help, we can share expertise and funding to keep children safe at schools, and stand up against hatred so that Jews everywhere can walk without fear - into a synagogue or simply down the street.

That's why there's UJA and the Federation.

And that's why we need you.

The mission of the Jewish Federation of Northeastern Pennsylvania is to rescue the imperiled, care for the vulnerable, support Israel and world Jewry, and revitalize and perpetuate Jewish life in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

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_____ I'm enclosing a gift of \$ _____ I'll pledge \$ _____ *

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2025-26 UJA Campaign

Jewish Federation of Northeastern Pennsylvania

601 Jefferson Avenue, Scranton, PA 18510

Telephone: 570-961-2300 (ext. 3)

Payment options

_____ Please bill me at the above address.

_____ Enclosed is my check payable to "UJA/Jewish Federation of Northeastern Pennsylvania".

_____ On-line banking (designate your payments through your bank auto-draft account to "UJA/Jewish Federation of Northeastern Pennsylvania").

_____ My company (_____) has a matching gift program.

I'll obtain the form and forward it.

Authorized signature

Date

DAVID HOLLANDER AND ALEX ITZKOWITZ, CO-CHAIRS OF OUR 2025-26 UJA CAMPAIGN.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.