



Family Matters

A Newsletter for JFS Supporters - Winter 2017



Holiday generosity lasts all year long at JFS

Each year during November and December, the JFS conference room becomes a makeshift toy and gift shop. The room overflows with new clothing, winter coats, boots, shoes, books, games, toys, bicycles, school supplies, and Chanukah wrapping paper/decorations for the annual Chanukah Gift Program. Now in its 25th year, the outreach program helps local Jewish families in financial need with gifts and gift cards for their children and teens, as well as gift cards for food and holiday decorations for those without children.

Many of the families seeking help are active members of our community who attend schools and synagogues with us. Although gifts are collected for Chanukah, many of the gifts are used all year by these families.

Maryann Kettle, JFS special needs case manager, said, "We request gifts that are needed by our families like school supplies, clothing, shoes, and winter coats. We ask for fun items like toys, games, and books, so children and teens can have things for recreation. We also ask for gift cards for pre-teens and teens so the families can shop for themselves and pick out exactly what they want. We're able to give out so many gifts because of the generosity of so many donors."

This year, a total of 123 different families, consisting of 268 people, benefited at Chanukah due to the kindness of local donors. Specific "wish list" gifts and gift cards were provided to 41 local Jewish families, consisting of 73 different children and teens.

Throughout 2018, these same families will continue to benefit from the donations given at Chanukah as JFS provides gift cards toward medication, food, gas, clothing, and school supplies.

Continued on page 2...

Ensuring programs for future generations

Dianne Epplein and her husband, John Patton, recently made the commitment to be Life and Legacy donors through the Harold Grinspoon Foundation's Life and Legacy program which promotes after-lifetime giving.

While Dianne served on the JFS board for 12 years, the program for those with developmental disabilities,



specifically the Chaverim Social Group, captured her heart. Her professional commitment to serving people with disabilities is what attracted both her and John to the JFS program. "I feel strongly about services for people who are developmentally disabled," says Dianne, a pediatric physical therapist.

Dianne and John also endowed a fund so children could go to Yachad, the Camp JCC program for children with special needs. "We feel that every child with a disability should have the opportunity to go to camp and be included, even if they can't afford to," says Dianne. "It's a real growth experience for everyone, as the other children get to interact with the kids with disabilities."

Continued on page 2...



Greetings from Betty Ann Levin

JFS Executive Director

A picture truly is worth a thousand words. We recently received a sweet picture of a young girl decorating her home with the decorations her mother had received through our annual Chanukah Gift Program (see *front of this newsletter*). It really tells the story of many of our clients in need. It's a story of gratitude.

Because of your generosity, we receive many letters and images throughout the year from our clients expressing gratitude. Because of your generosity, we were able to help so many families have a brighter holiday this year. Your generosity, like our clients' gratitude, is not limited to just Chanukah. Because of you, throughout the year, we've been able to provide food for the hungry, financial assistance for those in dire need, subsidized home health and counseling for those needing it most, and much more. Please allow us to express OUR gratitude.

As we close out this year and look forward to 2018, on behalf of our Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers, THANK YOU for all you do to help those in need in our community. We wish you and your families a healthy and happy 2018!



Hebrew Academy of Tidewater (HAT) Student Government students helped unload cart-fuls of donations from the students and families

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Annually, one of the largest groups of donors are the students, parents, staff, and teachers from Strelitz Early Childhood Education Center and Hebrew Academy of Tidewater. JFS received several hundred gifts of toys and clothing from them this year. JFS also received donations from individuals, businesses, and many

of the area religious schools and synagogues. A heartfelt thank you! •

Donors from throughout the Peninsula came together to support JFS's annual Chanukah Gift drive for Peninsula Jewish children in need. New this year, they created their own large wooden menorah for the UJC-VP Lobby and gift tags with wish list items were placed on it. The response was overwhelmingly successful, with over 100 Peninsula area donors. •



...Legacy, continued from page 1

Dianne and John, who live in Norfolk, would like to see these programs and services continue in our community, and that's why they chose to make their gift to JFS and to their synagogue, Congregation Beth El. "We liked the opportunity to make a gift that benefits two organizations that are very important to us," said Dianne. •

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JFS sees record day in Food Pantry

You ladies don't know what a blessing this is," said the woman as she was leaving the JFS Community Food Pantry carrying a frozen turkey and a bag full of items to make Thanksgiving dinner complete for her family.

Preparations for the Food Pantry's "Great Turkey Give-away" began well before Thanksgiving with shopping for frozen turkeys. Beforehand, Matthew Helman and Drew Goodove, both age 12, helped food pantry coordinator Jody Laibstain stuff 29 bags and boxes full of potatoes, onions, green beans, corn, stuffing mix, gravy, mac and cheese, cranberries, and cornbread mix.

A line formed before the Food Pantry doors opened the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. Within an hour, all 29 turkeys and bags had been given away, and more people were still lined up at the door. Staff members and volunteers worked to assemble more bags using items already in the pantry. After the last person was helped, 48 people had been through, which is quadruple what the Food Pantry typically sees on any given day.

You never know when you'll need help...

"I had no idea I'd be in this situation," said one woman. "But being on disability, my money keeps getting cut." Another woman mentioned that she took in a family from Hurricane Irma – two adults and three children. Her budget was stretched thin. JFS was there to help.

Jody Laibstain sees and hears about these types of situations week after week. What was surprising was the

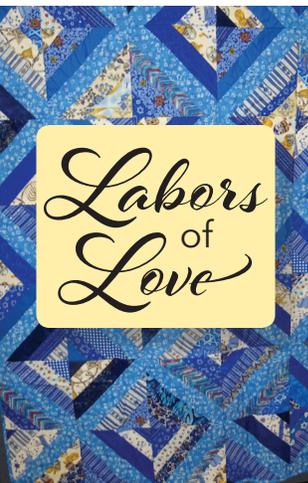
number of people who came to the Food Pantry for the first time that day.

The shelves at the Food Pantry were getting bare after two hours, but fortunately JFS is able to restock at the Food Bank of Southeastern Virginia as an agency partner. Additionally, JFS relies on monetary donations to purchase items unavailable at the Food Bank. For this reason, JFS designated its Giving Tuesday campaign to the Food Pantry and was able to raise \$2,200, which will help stock the pantry for several months.

The Monday after Thanksgiving, the food pantry freezer broke and needed to be replaced. Fortunately, most of the frozen food had been given away before Thanksgiving so very little food was lost.

"We've been fortunate," says Laibstain, "to have so many great volunteers to help us with our Food Pantry. From school-age children who sponsor food drives for their birthday parties and help stock the pantry, to adults who come in and volunteer week in and week out, we appreciate everyone." JFS has one volunteer who clips, saves and buys coupons to donate to JFS so we can shop for items we can't get elsewhere.

This year, JFS installed a food donation box in the Cardo of the Sandler Family Campus and has seen steady donations of non-perishable food items. "We appreciate everyone's help during the 'season of giving,'" says Laibstain, "and look forward to seeing more donations during the cold winter months when donations typically decrease." •



Labors
of
Love

The JFS Knitting for Others group recently gathered to package all the blankets, scarves, hats and gloves they made over the past year. These items were given to JFS guardianship clients and some nursing home residents for the holiday season.

Fifteen quilters from Ohel Sholom Temple lovingly made 15 quilts this year for JFS clients. One of the quilts was given to a JFS client who is a military veteran during a Veterans Day service. The remaining quilts were given to JFS private duty home care and older adult services clients. •



JFS Knitting for Others group packaging their knitted items for JFS clients



Presenting a quilt to a U.S. veteran



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of the Tidewater Jewish Community*

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**Your year-end
gift makes a
difference.**

With your help, we can offer a helping hand to individuals and families in our community in times of need. *Together we can make a difference!*

There is still time to make your 2017 tax deductible donation to JFS. *Please give today!*

***Wishing you and your loved ones a
very happy and healthy 2018!***

DECEMBER

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