

McHenry County Jewish Congregation

MCJC CONNECTIONS



January/February 2024

Tevet/Shevat/Adar I

Volume 5784

Rabbi's Column: A Busy Return to the Fold



I had an excellent “first month” at MCJC—first month returning as your Rabbi, that is. Our farewell service for Rabbi Donni was full of spirited singing and words of appreciation, followed by time to sit and talk together over a meal. Our “first” Shabbat morning service included a thoughtful discussion on Joseph and leadership, with the Haftarah chanted beautifully by Jaci Krandel.

Many old and new members celebrated Chanukah together and participated in a serious discussion about the future of MCJC. My takeaway is that each of us appreciates our community, and however we proceed, spending time together in Jewish community is important to every one of us.

Our Jewish community has been enhanced this past year by the presence of three people participating in worship and celebration with us while studying to convert to Judaism. Melissa Ragusin, a resident of McHenry, began studying with me in the fall of 2022 while she was a student at MCC. She is now working on her fine arts degree at the University of Illinois in Chicago, and brings her creativity and deep thinking to our discussions.

Adam and Alexander Moliwell, a married couple who live in Harvard, continued their journey to

Judaism by studying in the Conversion to Judaism Class I started here last winter. They are both teachers in District 46. Adam is a high school librarian and Alex is a music teacher, and both just finished work on their masters degrees. They have already used their skills to enhance our congregation, with Alex participating in the music aspect of our services and Adam repairing many of our prayer books. Stay tuned as Alex puts together an instrumental group to enhance our worship and Adam eyes a position on our Board!

Their trip to the mikvah will take place the first week of January, and you are all invited to participate in welcoming the three to our congregation as members of the Jewish people on Friday night, January 5. At our Kabbalat Shabbat service at 6:30 pm, we will welcome them and hear a few words from each of them. This will be followed by a Shabbat dinner (dairy) to celebrate together. Please RSVP for this meal so that we know how much food to prepare.

I look forward to connecting more with each of you—drop me an email and we’ll meet for coffee (or lunch). Let’s not let the cold weather keep us from getting together.

Kol tuv (all the best),
Rabbi Maralee Gordon

MCJC is a House of Study (For Adults Too)!

Rabbi Maralee Gordon will be sponsoring a series of sessions on Topics in Jewish Life. These freestanding 90-minute sessions will focus on such topics as lifecycle, views of the Afterlife, sacred texts you never heard of, Kashrut and Jewish food, and more. Sunday mornings, beginning February 18th, 11:15am. Contact Rabbi Gordon at rabbi@mcjconline.org Bagels included.



Docent-Led Tour of Holocaust Museum Planned

The MCJC "Let's Get Together" Committee is organizing a private 1.5-hour docent-led walking tour of the Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie on Sunday, April 14, 2024. The tour will begin at 1:00 pm. The group will meet at the museum at 11:30 pm and enjoy lunch together.

The lunch can be either a brown bag lunch or a museum sponsored deli lunch. Deli lunches catered by "Once Upon A Deli" are available for \$12 per person. Four choices: deli mini sandwiches (turkey, corned beef, egg salad), vegetarian mini sandwiches (egg salad, cheese, veggie cream cheese), gluten free deli salads (egg salad, tuna salad, or chicken salad) and a vegan garden salad. All deli lunches include pickle, fresh fruit cup, cole slaw, bottled water, and a chocolate chip cookie.

A rideshare program will be established in conjunction with this program. If you are interested in attending this MCJC "Let's Get Together" Program, please contact Bruce Weiss by email at info@mcjconline.org or by phone at 815-338-2721 as soon as possible.

MCJC Loses Two Old Friends

MCJC recently lost two long-time members and friends with the passing of Herb Franks and Willa Wertheimer. May their memories be for a blessing.



Herbert H. Franks, who passed away on Oct. 31 at the age of 89, was a founding member of MCJC, and one of its biggest supporters. Herb was many things to many people. As it notes on his tombstone, he was a farmer, lawyer, and visionary. He liked to say he was

just a pig farmer from Marengo, but his status and contacts extended far beyond McHenry County to the halls of the U.S. Congress. Many dignitaries attended and spoke at his funeral, including U.S. Senator Dick Durbin who flew in from DC the night before the funeral to eulogize his old friend.

To the members of MCJC, Herb was a congregational patriarch. He could be found “ruling the roost” on the back bench of the sanctuary during the High Holidays surrounded by his family. His d’var Torah on Jonah on Yom Kippur was an annual favorite. Herb was a regular “minyanaire” on Saturday mornings, and he would frequently round up a group of fellow worshipers to join him for lunch after services. Herb did not suffer fools, and his wisdom, which he dispensed liberally, was often spiked with profanity. Forgivably old school, he loved to hug the ladies. He was generous to his congregation and to the Jewish community. He made it a priority to establish a Jewish cemetery in McHenry County and then made it happen. Herb now rests in the cemetery he and his beloved wife, Eileen, established in Woodstock.



Willa Wertheimer died too soon, on Dec. 3 at the age of 59. She was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer, leiomyoma sarcoma, in 2006, but it didn’t keep her from living a full life. She was a well-respected clinical psychologist

who specialized in treating adults and children who experienced trauma. She worked up until her final weeks of life.

Willa had two sons, Maitiu and Liam, and a husband, Ed Groenendal, all of whom adored her, and she adored them in return. Willa was first and foremost a mother, noted Rabbi Gordon in her eulogy at Willa’s funeral, though she had many talents including painting, scrapbooking, cooking, and writing poetry. According to Ed, Willa was in equal measures analytical, creative, and emotionally intelligent; a rare combination. Her sons and family members remarked on her wickedly witty sense of humor that she displayed even in her final days. Many at the funeral remarked on her innate compassion that made her such an effective therapist.

A military honor guard saluted and performed taps for Willa at her funeral, in recognition of the many traumatized local veterans Willa served and saved. Willa’s final resting place is near Herb’s, in the McHenry County Jewish Cemetery.

Yahrzeits

Ronald Ligocki	Tevet 22	January 3	Fannie Greenfield	Shevat 25	February 4
Jacob Greenfield	Shevat 2	January 12	Solomon Goldberg	Shevat 26	February 5
Joe Shartiag	Shevat 5	January 15	Suzanne Greenfield	Shevat 28	February 7
Alice Gimpel	Shevat 6	January 16	Edward Webster	Shevat 28	February 7
Ann Louise Welser	Shevat 6	January 16	Rose Rochell	Shevat 29	February 8
Victoria Green	Shevat 6	January 16	Melissa A. Mayber	Adar 7	February 16
Hava Gelitzky Lichtenholz	Shevat 9	January 19	Sue Roth	Adar 8	February 17
Irving Kessler	Shevat 9	January 19	Boris Grunberg	Adar 10	February 19
Jean Roth	Shevat 11	January 21	Meyer Pickoff	Adar 11	February 20
Roberta Levitt	Shevat 11	January 21	Paul Weisz	Adar 12	February 21
Louis Levy	Shevat 11	January 21	Karen Wolf	Adar 12	February 21
Harry Beekil	Shevat 15	January 25	Maxine Russ	Adar 13	February 22
Arthur Perbohner	Shevat 16	January 26	Henrietta Muir	Adar 17	February 26
Steven Frank	Shevat 22	February 1			

President's Report

by Jonah Markowitz



Over 50 people gathered for MCJC's Chanukah celebration on Dec. 10, representing former, long-term, and new members. The morning featured songs, crafts, cookie decorating, and, of course, steaming hot

potato latkes topped with applesauce and/or sour cream. The latkes were excellent, as prepared by the Maintenance Men (and other volunteers) who operate like a 'well-oiled' machine. Years of fine-tuning the process means that all cooking is done outside in the garage, leaving the air free to breathe within the building.

The morning also included a Town Hall, allowing members the chance to have a frank discussion about the synagogue's current financial shape and its long-term prospects. While I tend to be more optimistic than some about MCJC's future, it is important for us to weigh our options, as we currently are spending more than we are taking in. Some of the options we discussed were potentially merging with another congregation; allowing others to rent/use space in our building; selling our building and borrowing space as needed; and transitioning to a more informal/social havurah organization. We also discussed the future of the Religious School and options to permit our students to interact with others in other congregations.

The board will explore each of these options and share their findings at our next Town Hall on March 24 tied to the Purim celebration. The members will be given the opportunity to comment on future directions via a survey following the next Town Hall. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome.

Other Transitions:

MCJC experienced a changing of its spiritual guard in early December as it bid farewell to **Rabbi Donni Aaron** and welcomed back **Rabbi Maralee Gordon**. In a kiddush in Rabbi's Donni's honor, we thanked her for her service to MCJC. The MCJC Board determined that we lacked the resources to continue her contract through its fiscal year. Fortunately, Rabbi Gordon will be able to provide rabbinical services to us on a part-time basis.

Our sincere thanks and best wishes to **Sunshine Roth** who recently moved with her husband Jay to Virginia to be closer to family. For the last couple of years, Sunshine's sweet voice was the first one people who were seeking information on MCJC heard since she chaired membership. She also served on the MCJC Board and helped around the congregation in many ways. During Covid, she did much to create a sense of community, if only virtually. Sunshine will be very much missed.



Final 2023 MCJC CROP Hunger Walk Team Report

MCJC participated in the 2023 McHenry County Crop Walk alongside seven other McHenry County faith congregations: Algonquin Christ United Methodist Church, Crystal Lake Bethany Lutheran Church of Christ, Cary United Methodist Church, Crystal Lake First Church, Ridgefield Crystal Lake Presbyterian Church, Grayslake Living Waters Assembly of God Church, and Crystal Lake St. Paul's United Church of Christ.

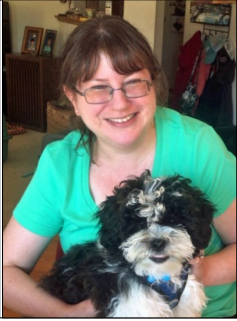
The Walk took place on October 1, and the one mile-walk began at Cary United Methodist Church. The 2023 MCJC CROP Hunger Walk Team members included Davina/Andrew/Sienna Kelly...Scott/Olivia/Layla Schwartz...Jonah/Asher Markowitz...and Bruce Weiss.

The 2023 McHenry County CROP Hunger Walk raised \$18,750, and the MCJC Team raised \$581. Twenty-five percent of the money raised will be split evenly among the following local food pantries: Crystal Lake Food Pantry, Algonquin/Lake In The Hills Interfaith Food Pantry, Grafton Food Pantry, and the Cary Food Pantry. Seventy-five percent of the money raised will be used by CWS CROP to help alleviate hunger in third world countries.

The 2023 MCJC CROP Hunger Walk Team would like to thank the following members and friends of the MCJC community for their monetary donations in support of the Team: Scott Schwartz, Lou Dolmon, Ellen Levy, Lizz & John Dewey, Ilene & Steve Kaye, Davina Kelly, Deb Glaubke & Gale Harris, Rita Janowitz, Rabbi Maralee Gordon, Linda & Jerry Trachsler, Karen Koenig, Judy & Mike Lewis, and Bruce Weiss.

Religious School News

by Davina Kelly



Our students continue to enjoy practicing their Hebrew and learning all about Judaism. Our younger group is learning the stories behind many of our holidays, along with creating holiday art. Also, they listen to stories about how Jewish immigrants made their way to America. Our older group continues to work on learning prayers. All grade levels really enjoyed a morning with Rabbi Donni learning all about "Hatikvah." In December we celebrated Chanukah. We lit the candles, sang, decorated cookies, played dreidel, and made snow globes. Then we had a delicious latke lunch provided by our maintenance men. Fun was had by all.



It was all hands on deck for the slicing, chopping, and blending of the latke batter at the Dec. 10 MCJC Chanukah party.



Steve Boress demonstrates his two-pan frying skills.



Gene Lindow and Jerry Trachsler take turns frying and flipping.



WOODSTOCK DRIVE-THRU FOOD PANTRY

Members of the MCJC community helped out at the October 23 and November 20 Woodstock Drive-Thru Food Pantry food distribution days. Muriel Pick, Linda Trachsler, Rabbi Maralee Gordon, Lizz & John Dewey, and Bruce Weiss helped out on October 23, and Muriel Pick, Lou Dolmon, Linda Trachsler, Paula Eskoz, and Bruce Weiss helped out on November 20. The MCJC mobile food pantry team members worked alongside volunteers from St. Ann's Episcopal Church, Grace Lutheran Church, Resurrection Catholic Church, First Presbyterian Church, and the Woodstock High School Service Club.



On Oct. 23, 227 families received boxes of food, and 273 families received boxes of food on November 20. As of that date, 4,313 families have received food from the Woodstock Drive-Thru Food Pantry during calendar year 2023. The Woodstock Mobile Food Pantry is a

joint venture between the McHenry County Faith Leaders Food Collaborative and the Northern Illinois Food Bank. The pantry is located in the parking lot directly across the street from Woodstock High School at 501 W. South Street in Woodstock. MCJC community members help out at the Woodstock Drive-Thru Food Pantry on the third Monday of each month from 3:00 pm to 5:30 pm. If you would like to become a member of the MCJC mobile food pantry team of volunteers, please contact MCJC social action community service chairperson Bruce Weiss by email at office@mcjconline.org or by phone at 815-338-2721.

Food Pantry Postscript: Special thanks to the following members of the MCJC mobile food pantry volunteer team who braved the cold weather and helped out at the December 18 drive-thru food distribution: Muriel Pick, Linda & Jerry Trachsler, Charles Mages, Linda Hansen, Lizz Dewey, and Bruce Weiss.



Two hundred and fifty-one families received boxes of food on December 18. In addition, the Woodstock Rotary Club distributed children's books in Spanish and English to the families that came to the drive-thru food pantry.

MCJC has been asked to help provide volunteers for the mobile food pantry food distribution day on Monday January 22, 2024. The fellowship that takes place at each mobile food pantry food distribution day always amazes me. As MCJC social action community service chairperson, I am blessed to have the support of the MCJC community for this important community service project.

Wishing all of you a 2024 filled with lots of wonderful experiences and happy surprises.

Warm regards, Bruce Weiss
MCJC Social Action Community Service Chairperson

SAVE THE DATE!

1:30 pm Sunday, February 25, 2024 at MCJC
"Come to the Jewish Cabaret" featuring Jeff Winter & Janis Fine

Jeff Winter and Janis Fine have been entertaining Chicagoland audiences for over 21 years with songs from Broadway, Tin Pan Alley, the Great American Songbook, folk, pop, and ethnic. Of all these musical genres, "Jeff & Janis" are first and foremost known for their Jewish music programs. Their favorite Jewish musical program is their "Come To The Jewish Cabaret" show. Using acoustic instruments and beautiful vocal harmonies, "Jeff & Janis" present a wonderful cabaret style show of Jewish music during which their audiences often sing, tap, and clap along. Rich Kogan, WGN radio personality and Chicago Tribune reporter, called "Jeff & Janis" one of the most delightful and entertaining musical teams he has had the pleasure to watch perform. A dessert social will immediately follow the performance. This is a free admission non-ticketed event. Bring guests.



Habitat for Humanity by Howard Franks

The new construction in McHenry on Hillside Drive is coming along well. The drywall is complete in both houses and siding is well underway. Planned completion for both houses is early spring. Once we complete these two houses, there will be two houses in Harvard that we will be starting. Also, we are doing Critical Home Repairs on veterans houses in the area, most recently in Harvard.

Volunteers continue to be needed. Build dates are available on the website Habitat for Humanity McHenry County. Please join us in helping local residents achieve the goal of home ownership.



Adopt a Highway and Adopt a Trail

Special thanks to MCJC "Adopt-A-Highway" and "Adopt-A-Trail" team members Bruce Weiss and Linda Hansen for picking up litter on November 18 along Ridgefield Road between Country Club Road and U.S. Route 14, and along the U.S. Route 14 Bike Trail between Ridgefield Road and Lucas Road (McHenry County College) as part of the McHenry County Department of Transportation's "Adopt-A-Highway" Program and the McHenry County Conservation District's "Adopt-A-Trail" Program. One five-gallon can of litter was picked along the highway, and six five-gallon cans of litter were picked up along the bike trail. The November 18 litter pick-up was the fourth litter pick-up performed by MCJC "Adopt-A-Highway" and "Adopt-A-Trail" team members during calendar year 2023.



Birthdays



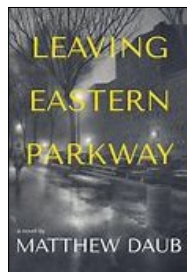
Happy Anniversary!

MCJC Book Club Selects a Top Pick

If you want to request a copy of the next book up for discussion by the MCJC Book Club from your local library, best do it quickly. *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride is topping many ‘best book of the year’ and awards lists which is making it a popular request at libraries, according to MCJC’s book club facilitator, Rachel Kamin, director of Lifelong Learning at North Suburban Synagogue Beth El. The group will discuss the book on Thursday, Feb. 15 at 7 pm on Zoom.

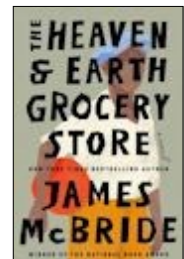
MCJC’s Book Club meets approximately every other month to discuss Jewish-themed literature and is open to all.

The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store is, according to the New York Times, “A murder mystery locked inside a Great American Novel...charming, smart, heart-blistering and heart healing.” According to the book’s description, when a skeleton is unearthed in the small, close-knit community of Chicken Hill, Pennsylvania, in 1972, an unforgettable cast of characters—living on the margins of white, Christian America—closely guard a secret, especially when the truth is revealed about what happened and the part the town’s white establishment played in it.



For its subsequent book gathering, scheduled for Thursday, April 4 at 7 pm, the group will discuss *Leaving Eastern Parkway* by Matthew Daub. The novel tells the story of 15-year-old Zev Altshul, who is suddenly orphaned and desperate to escape Brooklyn’s Hasidic community. He sets course across the U.S., where he finds himself in Urbana, IL, playing handball to support himself. The book features locations familiar to MCJC readers, including Chicago and Urbana/Champaign.

While the February gathering will be exclusively on Zoom, the April gathering may feature an in-person option. Check the MCJC website and the weekly enouncements for more information and the Zoom links.



JANUARY 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 <u>9:45 a.m.</u> Religious School	8	9	10 <i>Ronald Ligocki</i>	11	12 <i>Jacob Greenfield</i>	13 <u>9:30 a.m.</u> Shabbat Morning Service
14	15 <u>3:00 p.m.</u> Woodstock Drive-thru Food Pantry <i>Joe Shariag</i>	16 <i>Alice Gimpel Ann Louise Welsler Victoria Green</i>	17	18	19 <u>6:30 p.m.</u> Erev Shabbat Service <i>Irving Kessler Hava Gelitzky Lichetenholz</i>	20
21 <u>9:45 a.m.</u> Religious School <i>Jean Roth Roberta Levitt Louis Levy</i>	22 <u>3:00 p.m.</u> Woodstock Drive-thru Food Pantry	23	24	25 <i>Harry Beekil</i>	26 <i>Arthur Perbohner</i>	27 <u>9:30 a.m.</u> Shabbat Morning Service
28	29	30	31			

*Names at the bottom of the dates denote Yahrzeits

FEBRUARY 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
4 9:45 a.m. Religious School <i>Fannie Greenfield</i>	5 11:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m. Fundraiser at Georgios <i>Solomon Goldberg</i>	6	7 <i>Suzanne Greenfield</i> <i>Edward Webster</i>	8 1 <i>Steven Frank</i>	2 6:30 p.m. Erev Shabbat Service	3 10 9:30 a.m. Shabbat Morning Service
11	12	13	14	15 7:00 p.m. Book Club (on Zoom)	16 6:30 p.m. Erev Shabbat Service <i>Melissa Mayber</i>	17 <i>Sue Roth</i>
18 9:45 a.m. Religious School 11:15 a.m. Adult Study	19 3:00 p.m. Woodstock Drive-thru Food Pantry <i>Boris Grunberg</i>	20 <i>Meyer Pickoff</i>	21 <i>Paul Weisz</i> <i>Karen Wolf</i>	22 <i>Maxine Russ</i>	23	24 9:30 a.m. Shabbat Morning Service
25 11:15 a.m. Adult Study 1:30 p.m. "Jewish Cabaret"	26 <i>Henrietta Muir</i>	27	28	29		

*Names at the bottom of the dates denote Yahrzeits

Our thanks to everyone who have supported our previous fund-raisers at Portilio’s and Panera Bread. This is an easy way for MCJC to raise funds while the participants enjoy lunch or dinner.
-Gail Franks



Let's raise some
Dough!

MCHENRY COUNTY JEWISH CONGREGATION

DATE:

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5TH

LOCATION:

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11 AM - 9 PM



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Connections...to our heritage, to each other, to the future

McHenry County Jewish Congregation

Visit our website: www.mcjconline.org

MCJC Connections...

...is a bi-monthly publication of the McHenry County Jewish Congregation (MCJC) which was established in February 1979. MCJC is a community synagogue that serves Jews of all backgrounds. MCJC is located at 8617 Ridgefield Road, Crystal Lake, IL 60012; phone 815-455-1810, email: office@mcjconline.org. If you have any story ideas you would like to see mentioned in the newsletter, please phone MCJC or e-mail Judy Lewis at office@mcjconline.org.

All copy must be received by the 1st of the month prior to publication for consideration in the next newsletter.

Thanks to All Those Who Serve MCJC		
Rabbi Maralee Gordon <i>Rabbi</i> Dara Turnball <i>Enouncements/Website</i> <u>Officers</u> Jonah Markowitz <i>President</i> Linda Trachsler <i>Vice-president</i> Iza Celewicz <i>Treasurer</i> Dale Morton <i>Secretary</i>	<u>Members-at-Large</u> Howard Frank Scott Schwartz <u>Committee Chairs</u> Dale Morton <i>Building & Grounds</i> Bruce Weiss <i>Social Action</i>	<u>Subcommittee Chairs</u> Ellen Morton <i>Communications</i> Paula Eskoz <i>Education</i> Iza Celewicz <i>Finance</i> Steve Boress <i>Operations</i>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 5px;"> MCJC Email Addresses: office@mcjconline.org rabbi@mcjconline.org </div>		



Candle Lighting Times		
January	5	4:17 p.m.
January	12	4:24 p.m.
January	19	4:33 p.m.
January	26	4:41 p.m.
February	2	4:50 p.m.
February	9	5:00 p.m.
February	16	5:09 p.m.
February	23	5:17 p.m.