



YEAR IN REVIEW 2020-2021



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The Jewish Community Relations Council of Westchester since 1975

Here when you need us...Yesterday, today, tomorrow.

The Westchester Jewish Council is a dynamic organization serving the community by serving as a community connector and convener in good times and challenging times. By providing volunteer and professional resources, we help foster connections and communication within the Jewish community, to Israel, to our elected officials and to other faith based and ethnic groups.

Here are some of the highlights of the Council's work this past year:

WHAT WE DO:

Combating AntiSemitism and Hate

In June 2021, The Council organized a unity gathering "Westchester Stands United Against Antisemitism and Hate" in response to the nationwide increase in antisemitic attacks. Over 700 community members stood together outside the JCC of Mid-Westchester listening to inspirational speeches from local organizations, houses of worship and elected officials along with the beautiful music from The Westchester Day School choir and Kol Hazzanim/The Cantors of Westchester. We are proud to have organized this gathering in partnership with UJA, AJC-Westchester/Fairfield, ADL, the Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center and the host facility, the JCC of Mid-Westchester.



Community Connection, Connect-ory and Digital Media



Our weekly e-newsletter, Community Connection, is distributed to nearly 8,000 households across Westchester and beyond. Each issue focuses on community events, relevant news stories and links to various resources in the community. The Connect-ory, the Westchester Jewish Council membership directory, is a comprehensive source of contact information for all synagogues and Council member organizations, business supporters and elected officials. The next edition will be published virtually in late 2022. This Connect-ory is also updated on the Council website, www.wjcouncil.org. The Council's website provides a constant source of community news and resources and houses the Jewish community calendar which lists multiple events hosted by our member organizations. In addition, the Council Facebook page, Council Instagram and Council Twitter reach over 1,500 individuals.

COVID Response

As COVID continues to affect our daily lives and with new regulations going into effect more often than not, the Council has continued to be a resource of information for our member organizations and synagogues. We are in constant communication with our local government to receive and distribute information on the latest local COVID updates.



Government Relations

With decades of experience, the Council is a trusted liaison to Westchester's elected and public officials resulting in the County government utilizing the Council's resources to communicate with the Jewish community. The Council hosted several events with elected officials including a briefing with New York State Attorney General Letitia James. We also held our annual Legislative Breakfast with UJA that featured County Executive Hon. George Latimer, Westchester County DA Mimi Rocah and NYS Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins. We celebrated Hanukah by hosting a tribute with UJA to honor and recognize our local elected officials, especially Rep. Eliot Engel and Rep. Nita Lowey for their decades of public service. In May of 2021, the Council sponsored a series of events around the annual Jewish History and Heritage Month celebration including a virtual celebration hosted by the Westchester County Board of Legislators, and a community conversation with Westchester County Executive George Latimer. During summer 2021, William H. Schrag, Council President, and Elliot Forchheimer Council CEO, had the opportunity to speak at legislation signing events at which the Hon. George Latimer signed an amendment to the Human Rights Law concerning Anti-Discriminatory Harassment.

Interfaith and Intergroup Relations

This initiative creates and strengthens understanding, respect and unity among different faith and ethnic communities. To foster this, the Council is involved in various programs including serving as a key partner with AJC Westchester/ Fairfield and others for the annual Westchester Thanksgiving Diversity Breakfast; facilitating the Council's Interfaith/Intergroup roundtable; and continuing to be a supportive organization for our interfaith friends and leaders in the community. The Council's Interfaith and Intergroup Roundtable held a program on Hindu culture and community contribution in the US and opportunities for Hindus and Jews to work together. They also held a panel discussion in May titled, "Ways of Strengthening Interfaith/Intergroup Relations and Outreach During and After Covid".

Roundtables

Roundtables, where lay and professional leaders gather to build bonds and share best practices on a variety of topics and issues, remain a signature Council initiative. This year, the Council organized over 30 Roundtables including security, synagogue lay and professional leadership, clergy, marketing professionals and volunteers, Israel activists, interfaith/intergroup volunteers, Mosaic of Westchester (a group which enriches our Jewish community through LGBTQ inclusion), youth professionals and volunteers and more.

Security

The Council, as the Westchester Jewish community's first responder, facilitates communications and the sharing of best practices of security among member organizations and government offices such as the Westchester Intelligence Center and the Department of Homeland Security. We have an "Emergency Communication System" which allows us to instantly communicate vital information to hundreds of trained Westchester Jewish professionals and volunteer leaders from our member organizations. During the year, Westchester's dedicated security professional, William Hayes from Community Security Initiative (CSI) presented a reopening guide after Covid closures for Westchester faith-based institutions. Bill is a valued resource to our community!

Julian Y. Bernstein Distinguished Service Awards Ceremony (JYBDSA)



This year's ceremony was held virtually on March 16, 2021. Twenty-six extraordinary community volunteers from various Council member organizations were honored. Council board members gave inspiring presentations about each individual.

CONNECTING TO ISRAEL:

Supporting and deepening ties to Israel remains core to the mission of the Council. Whether via workshops, community lectures or roundtables, these events bring together community members who are Israel activists and those who are interested in building relationships, discussing programming and any other matters related to Israel.

Celebrate Israel Parade

Each year the Westchester Jewish Council coordinates with our Westchester schools, synagogues, organizations and the Celebrate Israel Day Parade planners to organize the Westchester cluster to march in the parade in Manhattan. This year, due to the circumstances related to COVID-19, the parade was not held, but plans are already underway to celebrate in person again in May 2022.

Israel Honor Night

Our annual Israel Honor Night took place virtually. We heard from Major Ofir Anidgar who served in a combat engineering unit which searched for terror tunnels and from Shahaf Segal who served in the special anti-terror unit, Sayeret Golani, as a sharpshooter and a medic. The event was co-sponsored by The Jewish Agency for Israel and UJA and coordinated by our community shaliach.



Israel Connection Series

This ongoing series of Israel related monthly Zooms is hosted by Council board member, Danny Schultz and offers presentations and discussions on diverse topics of interest regarding the culture, politics and society of Israel. Past guests have included representatives from AZM, Alma, JNF, Honest Reporting, Shalom Hartman Institute and many others.

Special Programming

We engaged our former Westchester Shlichim (Israel emissaries) by convening an Israeli cooking Zoom session in which former Shlichim shared their favorite Israeli recipes. Also, we co-sponsored a drive-in concert with JCC and JAFI featuring MusicTalks Israel Immersion live drive-in concert in the spring.

Yom Hazikaron/Yom Ha'Atzmaut

We joined together virtually to honor Israeli Soldiers on Yom HaZikaron. For Israel Independence Day (Yom Ha'Atzmaut), we partnered with our member organization FIDF (Friends of the Israel Defense Force) for a worldwide celebration to commemorate Israel Independence Day.

BUILDING COMMUNITY:

Biennial Night of Music and Joy

The biennial Night of Music and Joy took place virtually on Saturday, November 21, 2020 and was attended by over 600 people. Presented by the Westchester Jewish Council and the talented Cantors of Kol Hazzanim – the Cantors of Westchester, the theme of the evening's music was "Together at Home". The night began with a lovely Havdalah service and then transitioned into the concert which showcased a beautiful mix of Broadway tunes, spiritual and traditional music.



Joint Programs with Synagogues and Organizations

We had many opportunities to partake in joint programming with local synagogues and organizations including a discussion about Abraham Accords and "College Campus and Beyond: How Jewish Engagement on Campus Can Lead to Careers with Social Impact" with The Five Synagogues of White Plains Israel Action committee and "Israel's Challenges: Iran/Hezbollah, Hamas/PA, China and US Israel Relations with a New Administration" and Shared Legacies program with Bet Torah's racial justice committee and AJC. We were also honored to hear from Dr. Steven Windmueller, a leading expert on Jewish matters, as he shared important perspectives on Jewish communal life during the pandemic.

Yom Ha'Shoah/Holocaust Remembrance

This countywide remembrance program, presented in partnership with the Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center, was held virtually on April 8, 2021. We could not have our annual rescued Torah procession this year due to the virtual nature of the event.



Westchester Jewish Leadership Reception

We held our Third Annual Jewish Leadership Reception in September 2020. This event provided an opportunity for Council member organization leaders and Elected Officials to mingle with each other. We were honored to have Rabbi Howard Goldsmith, Hon. George Latimer, Westchester County Executive, NY State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Hon. Israel Nitzan, Acting Deputy Consul General of Israel in NY present to the attendees.

HISTORY AND FUNDING

Our History

The Westchester Jewish Council, founded in 1975, has prospered under the visionary leadership of our past Presidents (in order of service): Rabbi Amiel Wohl (z"l), Clarice Pressner (z"l), Hon. Samuel G. Fredman (z"l), Hon. Sam Eisenberg (z"l), Samuel Stein (z"l), Saul Singer (z"l), Donald Landis (z"l), Lester J. Millman, Irwin S. Davison, Debra Abrahams Weiner, Ronald E. Burton, Paul Warhit, Lisa Roberts and currently William H. Schrag.

Funding

Funding for the Westchester Jewish Council comes from a variety of sources. Sixty percent (60%) of our revenue comes from donations from individuals and foundations. Most of these donations are made in support of our sole fundraising event – our Gala - held each winter. Twenty percent (20%) comes from a generous grant from UJA. Fifteen percent (15%) comes from membership dues from our 130 member/partner organizations and five percent (5%) comes from programming. We thank you for your financial support which is so important to our mission. As an IRS-recognized 501c3 organization, all donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Westchester Jewish Council Executive Committee

2021-2022

President - William H. Schrag
Vice President - Betsy Bernstein
Treasurer - Marc H. Klee
Secretary - Elizabeth Lampert
At-Large - Debra Abrahams Weiner
At-Large - Lisa Roberts

Vice President - Jeff Kohn
Vice President - David Eppinger
Associate Treasurer - Arnold Linhardt
Associate Secretary - Steven L. Young
At-Large - Harold Aspis

Westchester Jewish Council Board of Directors

- Harold Aspis
- Melissa Baer
- Betty Berenson
- Samuel E. Berger
- Steven Berkowitz
- Tracey Bilski
- Joyce Claar
- Hon. Jeffrey A. Cohen (Ret.)
- Steve Cony
- Lawrence D. Engle
- Karen Everett
- Allison Fine
- Holly Rosen Fink
- Karen Firestone
- Jonathan Flaxer
- Aaron Fleishaker
- Michelle Gewanter
- Lisa Ginsberg
- Michele Gregson
- Bonnie Hagen
- Jeffrey Kapelus
- Evan Kingsley
- Arlene Kleinberg
- Stuart Kolbert
- Elizabeth Lampert
- Betsy Miller Landis
- Gabriel Lomas
- Marti Michael
- Michael Mittelman
- Jessica Morgenthal
- Mitchell Ostrove
- Sue Pearson
- Keith Reich
- Dan Reingold
- Julie Rockowitz
- Michael Rosenblut
- Karen Rosenfeld
- Martin Rogowsky
- Ellen Salant
- Danny Schultz
- Yael Schulman
- Stu Seltzer
- Lori Sloane
- Jennifer Sokol
- Sheila Spicehandler
- Richard Spitz
- Ann Tourk
- Harold Treiber
- Giselle "Gigi" Weissman
- Bruce Wexler
- Jamie Schaefer-Wilson
- Nancy Zaro
- Harriett "Gigi" Zeller
- Jack Zinn



WESTCHESTER JEWISH COUNCIL

Connect Here®

Academy for Jewish Religion

ACHI - American Communities Helping Israel

AIPAC - American Israel Public Affairs Committee

AJC Westchester/Fairfield

Alma Research and Education Center

American Friends of Israel Sports

Center for the Disabled

American Friends of Magen David Adom

American Friends of Soroka Medical Center

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)

American Zionist Movement (AZM)

Anti-Defamation League (ADL)

Areyvut

BBYO Westchester Region

Bet Am Shalom Synagogue

Bet Torah

Beth El Synagogue Center

Birthright Israel Foundation

The Blue Card

Bronx Jewish Community Council, Inc

Camp Zeke

Chabad Center for Jewish Life of the Rivertowns

Chabad of Bedford

Chabad Lubavitch of Larchmont and Mamaroneck

Chavurat Tikvah

Community Alliance for Jewish-Affiliated
Cemeteries (CAJAC)

CSS - Community Security Service

Community Synagogue of Rye

Congregation Anshe Sholom

Congregation B'nai Yisrael

Congregation Emanu-El of Westchester

Congregation Knesset Tifereth Israel (KTI)

Congregation Kol Ami

Congregation Shir Shalom
of Westchester and Fairfield Counties

Congregation Sons of Israel - Briarcliff

Congregation Sons of Israel - Yonkers

DOROT

Dror Israel

First Hebrew Congregation

Fleetwood Synagogue

Friends of Israel Scouts - Tzofim

Friends of the Israel Defense Forces

Fuel for Truth

Greenburgh Hebrew Center

Hadar

Hadassah - Westchester Region

Hazon

Hebrew Congregation of Somers

Hebrew Free Burial Association

Hebrew Free Loan Society

Hebrew Institute of White Plains

HIAS

Hillel of Westchester

Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center

Israel Bonds (Development Corporation for Israel)

J Street Westchester

JCCA

Jewish Broadcasting Service (JBS)

Jewish Community Center of Harrison

Jewish Community Center of Mid-Westchester

Jewish Community Council of Mt. Vernon

Jewish Deaf (and Hard-of-Hearing) Resource
Center

The Jewish Education Project

Jewish National Fund of
Westchester & Southern CT

Jewish Theological Seminary

Justice Brandeis Westchester Law Society

Keshet

Kol Hazzanim: Westchester Community of Cantors

Kol Rinah, The Jewish Chorale of Westchester

Larchmont Temple

The Leffell School

Lincoln Park Jewish Center

Magen David Sephardic Synagogue

Mishkan Ha'am

MJHS Health System

Mount Kisco Hebrew Congregation

Moving Traditions

New Israel Fund

New Jewish Home - Sarah Neuman

New York Medical College

Northeast Jewish Center

Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies

Pelham Jewish Center

PJ Library

Plaza Jewish Community Chapel

Pleasantville Community Synagogue

RiverSpring Health Featuring the
Hebrew Home at Riverdale

Rosh Pinah Chavurah of the Rivertowns

Sanctuary

Scarsdale Synagogue - Temples - Tremont and
Emanu-El

Shaarei Tikvah

Shalom Hartman Institute of North America

Shames JCC on the Hudson

Sinai Free Synagogue

Sprout Westchester

Stand With Us

Stein Yeshiva of Lincoln Park

Students & Parents Against Campus
Anti-Semitism (SPACA)

Tami d Westchester

Temple Beth Abraham

Temple Beth Am

Temple Beth El - Danbury

Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester

Temple Beth Shalom - Hastings

Temple Beth Shalom - Mahopac

Temple Israel Center of White Plains

Temple Israel of New Rochelle

Temple Israel of Northern Westchester

Temple Shaaray Tefila of Westchester

Temple Sholom

Touro College of Dental Medicine
at NY Medical College

Tzahal Shalom of Northern Westchester

UJA-Federation of NY/Westchester

Union for Reform Judaism

United Hebrew of New Rochelle

United Synagogue of Conservative
Judaism - METNY

Westchester Board of Rabbis

Westchester Community for Humanistic Judaism

Westchester Day School

Westchester Hebrew High School

Westchester Jewish Center

Westchester Jewish Coalition for Immigration

Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS)

Westchester Klezmer Program

Westchester Reform Temple

Westchester/Fairfield Association of Temple
Educators (WATE)

Woodlands Community Temple

The Workers Circle

Young Israel of Harrison

Young Israel of New Rochelle

Young Israel of Scarsdale

Young Israel of White Plains