

Miracles

Fall 2006

Hope for miracles, but don't rely on one

Yiddish Proverb

**Jewish
Family
Service**



VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

It is hard to believe that it has been twenty years since I joined the staff of Jewish Family Service. Over these years, I have seen the agency adapt and grow and I remain amazed by the many lives that have been changed by our programs. One of the greatest areas of growth has been in the services we offer for children. Our professional staff provides a high level of services including individual therapy, family counseling and group work. We now have four Masters level social workers, a school psychologist, an educational specialist and a Child Psychiatrist all working together to ensure that children and families in our community receive the assistance they need. Our staff is dedicated, well trained, professional and provides high quality service. Insurance reimbursement is accepted in most programs and no one is turned away for inability to pay. In addition to our counseling services, our adoption program has helped over 500 families bring children from around the world into their homes and hearts. We have an active Jewish Big Brother/Big Sister program and are very proud of our latest addition, Friend to Friend, which pairs a teen volunteer with a child with special needs. In addition to these in-house programs, we serve as resource to area nursery schools and Hebrew schools, Hillel and Merkaz.

Barbara Paris



Please take this opportunity to meet our staff, to learn about our services, read about the exciting programs that are in progress and those that are planned in the coming year. At Jewish family Service, family and children are a priority. We hope that you know that you can entrust your family to us in case of need.

Did you know that Jewish Family Service, along with Catholic Family Services and FSW, has a contract to provide Parenting After Divorce classes that are mandated by the State of Connecticut? These classes are six (6) hours in length and cover a variety of issues in an effort to lessen the negative effects of divorce on children. They are facilitated by Harvey and Barbara Paris or Natalie Fried and Kevin Sheehy, all social workers at Jewish Family Service. Some things that children need to help them through divorce:

- ❖ Assurance that divorce was not their fault.
- ❖ Regular and continuing parental contact with BOTH parents.
- ❖ The absence of on-going parental conflict and freedom from hearing parents criticize each other, and hearing about child support and financial issues.
- ❖ Someone to talk to about divorce.
- ❖ Time to accept the changes in the family.
- ❖ The freedom to love both parents and access to parents, grandparents and extended family.
- ❖ Positive role models.

THANK YOU

**We wish to express our gratitude to the JCCS
For their generous hospitality
In hosting so many of our events, meetings, and programs**

ASK OUR ADOPTION SPECIALIST

Q: **We are thinking about adopting a child. How can JFS help?**

A: A good place to start is with an hour-long consultation with one of our adoption specialists. We will help you sort out the many issues, including the differences between domestic and international adoption, how to select an agency, costs, age requirements, time frames etc. Over the past 12 years, we have helped over 500 families successfully adopt. Our input can be invaluable and save a lot of time and mistakes. The fee of \$125 is deducted from the cost of the home study, if you work with JFS.

Q: **Where do most people adopt from?**



A: About half of our clients adopt from the United States and the others adopt internationally. Most who adopt domestically, do so because they are hoping to adopt a newborn. There are several states such as Utah, Texas and Florida that have liberal adoption laws and most of our families work with agencies in these states. The most popular countries for international adoption are Russia, China and Guatemala, although we recently have helped couples adopt from Ethiopia, Nepal, Khazakstan and Columbia. The climate for international adoption is constantly changing which affects the number of children open for adoption, the process and time frames.

Q: **What is a home study?**

A: Every couple or individual that resides in the state of Connecticut needs a Connecticut home study, whether adopting overseas or in the US. This study is a thumbnail sketch (8-12 typed pages) that provides your agency with a great deal of information about your growing-up years, your present situation, education, employment, and housing., Our philosophy is that we are here to help you throughout the adoption process and to be your partner. The study is about presenting you in the best light so that you adoption dreams can be realized. The study involves three visits, two at the JFS office and one at your home. Once the interviews are completed, the home study generally takes another month to complete and to receive all the clearances. It is good for two years. The cost is \$1400.

Q: **What other support services does JFS offer to help us in the process?**

A: JFS has a monthly adoptive parents meeting which looks at ongoing issues of importance to adoptive families. A different topic is presented each month. Speakers include local pediatricians affiliated with Pediatric Healthcare Associates, the Yale International Adoption clinic, and social workers from JFS. There are also panels of adoptees speaking about multiculturalism, talking to kids about adoption or sharing their adoption stories.

JFS also does all the required post placement visits once a family successfully adopts and is available to do terminations and finalizations in the Connecticut Probate Courts when needed. If a family locates a birthmother in Connecticut, JFS can facilitate the entire process from the birth of the child until the adoption is finalized.

Q: **Why choose Jewish Family Service?**

A: Our clients are very satisfied with our service for several reasons: We are fast, efficient, reasonably priced and also very user-friendly and nurturing. It is not a 9-5 job for us. Things happen in the evening and weekends and we make ourselves available by phone or in person when needed. Our best days are when someone calls that they have a referral or, better yet, when they are home with their new child. We truly are a family at JFS and we look forward to welcoming you and your family to our family.

To schedule a consultation or receive our adoption packet, please call Barbara Paris at 366-5438,

**Jewish Family Service will be pleased to offer
a new educational, supportive group for girls ages 11-14**

Early adolescence can be a trying time for children and their families. In today's world it can seem nearly impossible to communicate with your daughter and to teach her the skills she needs to become a healthy, happy young woman! This new group can help your daughter to:

- ✓ Adjust to the physical and emotional changes of adolescence in a safe, peer group setting.
- ✓ Learn valuable skills to keep herself safe and healthy (i.e. Internet safety, drug/alcohol resistance skills).
- ✓ Have fun in a group where she can be herself and discover new personal goals.

The Girl's Group is expected to run in a three week series, Wednesdays at 6:00 PM; reservations will be required. There will be a reasonable fee on a sliding scale. The starting date has not yet been set. Please indicate interest by contacting our intake worker, Irene Ivaska, at 366-5438.

**Friend to Friend Program
A Progress Report by Becky Rosen**



Jewish Family Service is celebrating the first year of its **Friend to Friend** program. The seeds of this unique program were sown when parents and clergy expressed a wish for a Jewish community-based program that would serve children with special needs. The program builds bonds and fosters friendships between children with special needs and their teenage volunteer "friends".

Friend to Friend has made a number of successful matches, including one between David, a seventeen-year old young man with social and emotional needs and Jacob, a high school junior. David looked sad when he said that he did not have friends his own age. He was excited to learn he would meet with Jacob regularly. He hoped that Jacob would become the loyal friend he has always wanted. Nine months later, Jacob sees David every weekend. They go bowling, to the movies or to the mall, and sometimes they just "visit". During the week, they stay in touch by phone or IM'ing. David's mom said that, since Jacob started visiting, David is less anxious about his social isolation. He often talks about Jacob and eagerly looks forward to his phone calls, IM's and visits.

Volunteers and children have participated in many activities including baking cookies, horse-back riding, creating hairdos, sharing photos, ice skating and redecorating a child's bedroom. Melissa, a thirteen-year-old with special needs, excitedly reported, "It was my first time going to a restaurant with a friend". Melissa's mom said that she usually hesitated to take Melissa to a restaurant because of her sometimes disruptive behavior. This time, she sat at a table in a far corner of the restaurant and watched Melissa and her volunteer, Jessica, talk and laugh. She was amazed that Melissa "fit in" and did not act out or behave in any way that would bring unwanted attention. She said, "They looked like any two friends having a fun lunch together. I was thrilled."

If you know a child with special needs who might be interested in participating in this program OR if you have a teenager who would like to volunteer as a friend and mentor, please call Becky Rosen at 366-5438 or e-mail becky@jfsct.org.

CHILD THERAPY at the Jewish Family Service

Q: What does a Jewish Family Service child professional do?

A: Our staff can help children and their families strive for emotional, social and academic success by conducting assessments, providing play therapy and counseling services, creating and implementing behavior plans and consulting with parents and teachers.

Q. When should I consult a Jewish Family Service child professional?

A. Our staff can help with many problems such as divorce, learning disabilities, anxiety, depression, behavioral issues, exposure to a traumatic event, attachment disorders and social skills deficits, as well as many others.

Q. What happens during a typical therapy session?

A. The worker will meet with the parents or guardians first in order to determine the nature of the problem. The Jewish Family Service child professional would ask a series of questions about the child's development, academic progress and overall emotional state. The next step is to meet with the child in a warm, friendly environment with toys and art materials that are age appropriate. By talking and listening or playing, the professional works with the child to acknowledge the issues and to develop the appropriate coping strategies necessary to help them feel better.

JFS Child Therapy Staff

JFS is proud of its comprehensive child therapy staff which includes Kimberly Vargas, clinical social worker, Jennifer Weinstein, school psychologist and Dr. Wendy Levine, child psychiatrist.

Jennifer specializes as a play therapist in working with young children (under the age of 4) and has experience in the area of attachment and working with children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorders (ADHD). She has over 10 years experience as a school psychologist where she worked with preschoolers with developmental and emotional disabilities. Jennifer is also the co-coordinator of the JFS Friend to Friend program (see article). Her role includes assessment, training and supervision.



Jennifer's service is not covered under most insurance policies, so there is a private pay fee of \$125 per session with an additional cost for the initial assessment. A sliding fee is available based upon financial need.

Kimberly is a licensed clinical social worker who has spent the last 5 years working in a local school specializing in individual and family counseling. She has worked with children of all ages and their families but has a particular affinity for and expertise in working with teenagers. She has worked with teens around such issues as parental divorce, substance abuse in the family and loss. Kimberly accepts most types of insurance. Kimberly also specializes in facilitating groups for teens. (See article)



Wendy is primarily used as an agency consultant. Her primary roles include assessment and the prescription and monitoring of medications to agency clients. This is a fee for service program.

To reach the child therapy staff, please call JFS at 366-5438 or e-mail the agency at info@jfsct.org.

Jewish Family Service Presents its Fall/Early Winter Outreach Programs

LA-BREE-OOT Series (“To Your Health” in Hebrew), wellness programs aimed at bringing support, healing and positive energy. One Session each

- ✓ **Erev Shira: An Evening of Song-** Judaism has long recognized that singing can bring on a feeling of wellness and joy. Come join Rabbis Yvonne Youngberg and Dana Bogatz for an Evening of Song. Singing in English, Hebrew and perhaps even Latin. No talent required, only a desire to sing. Bring songs to share if you like. Wednesday, November 8, 2006 at 7:30 P.M. at Temple Beth Sholom 275 Huntington Road, Stratford.
- ✓ **Hannukah Yoga-** Join Barbara Paris, trained Torah Yoga instructor and Rabbinic Student for an evening of “light” yoga in celebration of the miracle of the season and of our bodies and souls. Please wear comfortable clothing and bring a towel or mat. No previous yoga experience is necessary. December 7 at 7 P.M.- Tentatively scheduled for B’nai Torah, 5700 Main Street, Trumbull, Ct. To be confirmed at registration
- ✓ **Mindfulness Meditation-** Learn the practice of mindfulness meditation which allows us to live more fully in the present. Join Nannette Greene, a licensed counselor with much experience in meditation. December 13 at 6:30 P.M.. Scheduled for JCCS, 4200 Park Avenue, Bridgeport, CT. To be confirmed at registration.

DAYTIME SUPPORT GROUP- 3 sessions each

- ✓ **Seniors Living Alone-** Living alone presents many challenges. What to do on weekends, what to cook for dinner and loneliness are just a few of the issues to be looked at. Come share your experiences, solutions and learn new coping skills. Sessions are November 28, December 5, and December 12 at 3:00 at Jewish Family Service. Support group led by Joan Blumenfeld, Geriatric Care Manager
- ✓ **Grandparents raising their grandchildren-** Are you raising your grandchildren and looking to meet others who are in the same situation? Explore new parenting techniques for these changing times. Gather resources and the strength to be effective parent figures. Sessions are December 4, 11 and 18th at 10:00 A.M. at Jewish Family Service. Support group led by Harvey Paris, LCSW
- ✓ **The Girls Group-** a new educational, supportive group for girls ages 11-14 which will teach them the skills they need to become healthy, happy young women. Wednesday afternoons, start date to be determined. Support group will be led by Kimberly Vargas, LCSW. Please call to indicate interest.

EVENING SUPPORT GROUP-3 sessions each

- ✓ **Jewish Divorce Group-** Meet with other Jewish adults who are going through separation and divorce. Gain support in a warm, nurturing atmosphere for getting through this difficult time. Support group co-led by Barbara Paris, LPC and Irene Ivaska, LCSW. Group will meet at participants convenience. Call to register.
- ✓ **Jewish Bereavement Group-** Meet other Jewish adults who have lost their spouses within the last 24 months. Explore issues around grief, loneliness, and moving on alone. Support Group led by Lisa Kraus, JFS Geriatric Care Manager. Group will meet at participants convenience. Call to register.

ONE NIGHTERS-one session

- ✓ **Social skill building for the young child-**Are you concerned about your young child’s social skills? Is your child shy or too aggressive? Does your child have trouble keeping or making friends? This workshop will help you learn how to help your child develop effective social skills in order to create positive peer relationships. Open for parents of pre schoolers and young elementary aged children. December 5 at 7:00 P.M. at Jewish Family Service. Led by Jennifer Weinstein, school psychologist.

GENERAL INFORMATION

All programs are open to the public. Suggested donation of \$10 per session. Scholarships available.

To register, please call Julie at JFS at 366-5438 or e-mail at www.jfsct.org

**Congratulations to the Campbells
Who are part of the Jewish Family Service family.**

Hi Everyone- Just wanted to send you a quick note to let you know that we had a wonderful time in DC at the end of September. It was awesome to be with so many people who have the same passion for helping children. The press conference and award ceremony were so special. The dinner gala (over 800 people) was incredible! Thank you for the congrats and well wishes! Here is the bio printed about us and a photo from the award ceremony.

Byron and Kelly

Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute Angels in Adoption Award

Senator Joseph Lieberman selects Byron and Kelly Campbell

Reason for Selection: Byron and Kelly Campbell, of Trumbull, Connecticut, are the adoptive parents of two sons from Guatemala and a daughter from Connecticut. Six years ago, realizing there was something missing from the adoption experience, Byron and Kelly founded a community centered Adoption Network Group with the support of Black Rock Congregational Church (BRCC) of Fairfield, Connecticut. Through monthly meetings, this group offers waiting parents, adoptive parents or those seeking more information about adoption the opportunity to meet other adoptive families, professionals and adoption experts in order to address adoption related issues. During this time, they have provided counseling, support and advocacy to well over 100 households. This year, Byron and Kelly have extended their passion for children by partnering BRCC's Adoption Network Group with Connecticut's Department of Children and Families (DCF). They hope not only to meet the physical needs of children in DCF care but to bring a greater awareness about the need for foster families and adoption to their community. I am proud to nominate the Campbells as my 2006 Angels in Adoption.

People in the photo are as follows:

Left to Right.

Byron Campbell, Rep. Jim Oberstar (D-MN), Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Kelly Campbell, Sen. Larry Craig (R-ID) Front: Jonathan Campbell holding award





*Please join Jewish Family Service
for a reception honoring*

*Roslyn Fischman of Congregation Agudas Achim
Anne Kirsch of Congregation B'nai Israel
Lisa Rappoport of Rodeph Sholom
Anita Rosnick of B'nai Torah
Carole Rubin of Congregation Beth El
Elaine Schiller of Ahavath Achim*

*We hope you'll join us as we thank these special
women for all of the outstanding work they have
done for our community*

*Saturday, December 2, 2006
Eight O'clock at the
Jewish Home for the Elderly
175 Jefferson Street, Fairfield, Connecticut*

*☼ Dessert ☼ Wine ☼
Entertainment featuring Ted Simons*

*Kashrut Supervision by Rabbi Mosha Epstein and the VKFC
All proceeds to benefit programs for children and seniors*

*"many women have done valiantly
but you excel them all..."
Proverbs 31*

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Family
Service**



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communities, regardless of religion*

Did you know?

- JFS staff is involved with children and teens in the Jewish community as social work consultants to both the JCCS and Rodeph Sholom nursery schools, as teachers at Merkaz, the community Hebrew high school, and as group facilitators at several afternoon Hebrew schools.
- JFS is licensed by the State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families as both an Outpatient Psychiatric Clinic for Children and as a Child Placing Agency
- JFS was recently re-accredited through December 31, 2009 by the Council on Accreditation. Accreditation attests that JFS meets the highest national standards of professional performance.

SAVE THE DATE

*Recognition
Of
Six Notable Women
Saturday
December 2, 2006
8PM to 10PM
Jewish Home
for the Elderly
Fairfield, CT*

Thank You

Jewish Family Service is grateful for the support
of our Friend to Friend program
by
Lee Lester in memory of her son, David
The Greater Bridgeport Area Foundation



**Jewish Family Service is funded by the
Annual Campaign of the UJA/Federation
Of Eastern Fairfield County**