

# JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY *of* NEW JERSEY

Archival documents from 1751 to the present ☆ Memories from our past create visions for our future

Volume 22, Number 1

SPRING 2012

## Klinghoffer To Speak At Gala

*Lori Klinghoffer*, president of United Jewish Communities of MetroWest, will be the keynote speaker at JHS's Lasting Impressions Award gala on May 24, 2012, when the Society honors Jackie Levine, Cynthia Plishtin and Rita Waldor, *3 Women of Valor*.



Lori is past UJA Campaign Chair, Women's Department President, and Women's Campaign Chair. Lori continues to serve on the General Campaign Cabinet, Women's Campaign Cabinet and the Women's Philanthropy Board.

She is immediate past president of the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) National Women's Philanthropy Board having completed her term as chair in June, 2009. She has been a member of the board since June, 2001. She also serves as a vice chair for JFNA and is a member of the Executive Committee and Board of Trustees.

Lori has been a member of the Jewish Agency for Israel Board of Governors and is Deputy co-chair of the Unity of the Jewish People Committee. ♦♦

## SAVE THE DATE

for the "Three Women of Valor"  
Lasting Impressions Awards Gala  
at Crystal Plaza  
May 24, 2012

## Society To Honor Jackie Levine, Cynthia Plishtin and Rita Waldor At 2012 Lasting Impressions Gala

Three dedicated women who have served as leaders of the MetroWest community and beyond for a combined total of over 100 years will be honored by the Jewish Historical Society of New Jersey on May 24, 2012 by receiving its Lasting Impressions Award at a gala being held, once again, at the Crystal Plaza in Livingston. They are Jackie Levine, Cynthia Plishtin and Rita Waldor. The event will be titled *Three Women of Valor*, and is being chaired by Carol Marcus, JHS Vice President.

"These three women epitomize the attributes of today's Jewish women leaders," says Marcus, "and thinking of their universal qualities", she continued, "led us to the title of the event from the lyrics of the song *Eshet Chayil, A Woman of Valor*, accredited to King Solomon. This song is sung on the Sabbath to honor the woman of the house emulating what values are considered essential for a Jewish woman."

Carol concluded, "I have worked closely with all three honorees and am delighted to be serving as chair for this year's Lasting Impressions gala. Rita, Cynthia and Jackie set the tone of love and personal growth for all those around them to emulate. I am honored to know them."

and around the world, Jackie has combined her beliefs and activities to benefit the disadvantaged with her concern for the many needs of specific Jewish organizations.

From volunteering to help the American Jewish Congress in its fight to oppose Sen. Joseph McCarthy; to participating in the famous civil rights march with Dr. Martin Luther King from Selma to Montgomery; to protesting against the restrictive Soviet Jewry emigration policies, Jackie has been a shining example of someone who has taken a stand with grace and courage. In the 1970's she served as the first national President of the American Jewish Congress Women's Division.

### Over 30 years on MetroWest Board

Jackie began assuming prominent leadership roles in the MetroWest community in the early 1960's and in 1965 she became Women's Division campaign chair. For over 30 years she has served on the executive committee of MetroWest's Board of Directors as well as on numerous other committees

**Jacqueline (Jackie) Levine** is someone who is an outstanding example of female activist leadership in American Jewish Life. In her six decades of dedicated service to the Jewish community here in MetroWest



Continued on page 2

## **GALA ... continued from page 1**

within UJC of MetroWest and the Jewish world. She was the first woman to serve as the National Chair of the American Jewish Congress's Governing Council. Her lifelong legacy is her outstanding work in the fields of civil rights, protection of the First Amendment, Soviet Jewry and support for the State of Israel. She is a founding member of MAZON and the Jewish Fund for Justice. She has served on the national boards of HIAS, the JDC and NWP. She is a lifetime member of both NWP and the Women's Philanthropy Board of UJC of MetroWest NJ.

### **Featured on PBS documentary**

In 2008, Jackie was featured in the PBS documentary "The Jewish Americans," where she discussed both her activities in civil rights and her involvement with the Soviet Jewry freedom movements and its reverberation upon Soviet Jews, Israelis and the entire U.S. Jewish community.

Jackie and her husband Howard (of 62 years) have three children and six grandchildren.

**Cynthia Plishtin**, one of the most accomplished women in our MetroWest community, has served professionally as a Securities Arbitrator for the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) as well as the



New York Stock Exchange, NASDAQ, and American Arbitration Association, in all areas covered by arbitration, including margin calls, commodities, corporate bonds, real estate investment trusts, trading disputes and mark-ups. She is also an arbitrator for the New Jersey Superior Court (Civil Division) and the Division of Consumer Affairs.

Since 2005, she has served as Mediator for the NJ Office of Attorney General and the Division of Consumer Affairs aiding adversaries in achieving a mutual settlement in employment discrimination, wrongful termination, partnership disputes, breach of contract and real estate agreements.

Beginning in 1962, her volunteer work for MetroWest Federation included serving as President of the Women's Department, chairperson of the Demographic Survey Committee, Committee on Reli-

gious Tourism, and the Committee on Outreach to Intermarried Families.

### **Chaired UJA local and regional**

For United Jewish Appeal she has served as chairperson for the Women's Division Fund Raising Campaign; President of MetroWest Women's Division; Regional UJA chairperson for five states and Washington, DC; on the national board of Women's Division Executive Committee; and the National Women's Division Community Consultation Program.

Cynthia and her mother, Ida Harkavy, were the first mother and daughter both to have served as Women's Division UJA Chair in MetroWest and to have served on the National Women's Division UJA Board -- of course, at very different times.

### **Young Leadership award recipient**

Cynthia was the recipient of the Julius and Bessie Cohn Young Leadership Award.

She and her husband, Dr. Murray Plishtin, live in East Hanover and are members of Congregation Oheb Shalom. They have two children, Amy and Bernie, and two grandchildren, Hannah and Sam.

**Rita Waldor** has been a leader in the MetroWest NJ Jewish Community for many years. She is an inveterate fundraiser for MetroWest making the art of fundraising synonymous with her name. Rita is also an invaluable mentor,



sharing her talents with future women leaders as well as with those in current leadership positions. Together with her late husband, Jerry, they established the Waldor Memorial Library, a Jewish reference and resource center in Whippany NJ in memory of Jerry's parents and brother. In addition, Rita was instrumental in the establishment of the Jerry Waldor Institute in 2006, an endowment for leadership development programs in MetroWest in memory of her late husband.

### **Served on 12 different boards**

Rita has served on numerous UJC committees and boards, being a long-time member of MetroWest Board of Trustees and Women's Department Board and the UJC Major Gifts Cabinet. She has also been on the Board of the JCC. As a matter of fact, in the 14 years since 1998, Rita

has served on twelve different MetroWest boards and committees, sometimes, as many as eight at a time -- all very effectively! She presently serves as co-chair of United Jewish Communities of MetroWest Achim committee.

### **Founder of Animal Coalition**

Rita is a founding member of the Jersey Animal Coalition, a no-kill rescue shelter. She helped lead its campaign to build a state-of-the-art facility that is home to the Coalition in South Orange.

Through her diligent work with the coalition and through her generous commitment to UJC locally and overseas, Rita's dedication to helping those in need is evident in all she does.

Rita is a devoted mother of 3 sons and six grandchildren. ♦♦

## **Celebrate Jewish Heritage Month With "Jews and Jazz"**

A JHS program titled "Jews and Jazz" will be presented on Wednesday, May 9 at the Alex Aidekman Campus in Whippany in celebration of Jewish Heritage Month.



The David Aaron Trio will entertain while Aaron, well-known orchestra leader and musicologist, will lecture on Jews in music in America. He will talk about Artie Shaw,

Benny Goodman, George Gershwin, Leonard Bernstein, Diana Shore, and Mel Torme, among others. The trio will play music ranging from the early Klezmer era and up to the Big Band era.

Aaron began playing clarinet in the late 1940s and loves swing music from the 1950s. His favorite clarinetists are Artie Shaw and Benny Goodman, both about whom he is considered an expert. His "David Aaron Orchestra" plays locally in many venues. He lectures on the Big Band Era, Music and Events of the 1950s, and music of favorite Broadway shows.

The program will run from 7:30 pm until 9:30 pm. Light refreshments will be served. Admission is free to all.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

By Linda Forgosh



I often attend community events that are sponsored by the UJC's beneficiary agencies or local Jewish organizations. These are opportunities to promote the work of the JHS as the official repository of the history of greater

MetroWest and to ask those in attendance to become members of our society. Recently the JHS was invited to send a representative to the *Borinsky Young Leadership Speed Dating Program*, where agencies have an opportunity to tell their story to new leadership in the community. The event was held at the JCC in West Orange and this time, JHS board member **Roger Manshel**, told our story.

Another event in which we participated was the annual *Mitzvot of MetroWest*, a community-wide invitation given to youngsters who are preparing for their b'nei mitzvot who must complete a community service project as part of their learning experience. This year the JHS offered an opportunity for youngsters to participate in a photo contest. Guidelines for photographs were distributed and winners of the contest will have their photographs featured in exhibition and future publications.

### Iris Teens project

Another opportunity to promote the JHS happens at a gathering of several dozen youngsters who identify themselves as a group known as the *IRIS TEENS*. The family of the late Herb Iris has endowed a program to train teens to think like budding philanthropists. Their job is to sort through requests for money from MetroWest's agencies to determine which agency has a program worthy of financial support. The JHS was a recipient of an *IRIS TEEN* grant in 2011.

### Branching out beyond MetroWest

Putting the JHS name out in the community goes beyond MetroWest's borders. Examples of our effort to network took me to New York City to attend the reception of the opening of an exhibit "Trail of the Magic Bullet" depicting Jews in modern medicine that includes items from the JHS Newark Beth Israel Medical Center collection... had me working with the Jewish Community Center in Scotch Plains whose adult education department borrowed the exhibit "A Glimpse of Jewish Newark." ... and supplied materials for Rutgers University's exhibit about NJ supermarkets opening May 30, 2012. ♦♦

# SYNAGOGUES OF NEW JERSEY: A PROGRESS REPORT

The Society's newest project, *Synagogues of New Jersey*, comprising a traveling exhibition and a coffee-table book that will document the histories of the state's Jewish houses of worship is well on its way to an anticipated completion in 2013. A committee of JHS board members includes Linda Willner, Jean Rich, Bob Singer, Rabbi Shalom Lubin, Roger Manshel and Howard Kiesel as

well as executive director and curator, Linda Forgosh. Mark Gordon serves in an advisory capacity.

Mailings were sent to all synagogues in the state ranging from Sussex County in the north to Cape May County in the south. To date the committee has heard from seventy-plus synagogues who have indicated that they would like to participate in the project.

Synagogue historian, Mark Gordon, prepared a list of the State's oldest synagogues founded in the mid-nineteenth century, synagogues established at the beginning of the twentieth century through the 1940s, and synagogues founded after WWII as well as newer synagogues requesting to be included. Plans include having the exhibit travel to several parts of the state after opening in Whippany.

### Mark Gordon to speak



The first two meetings of a group to be known as the *Synagogue Historians Roundtable* will meet on March 20 and March 28, 2012 at the Alex Aidekman Jewish Community Center in Whippany.

Participants have been asked to bring photographs of their synagogues, exterior and interior shots, and any written material about their congregation's history. At both events, historian Mark Gordon, of Maplewood, will speak about the legacy of NJ's synagogues.

There will be more to come in a future newsletter and coverage in all five editions of the *New Jersey Jewish News*. If you have anything of historical value about your synagogue for *Synagogues of New Jersey*, contact Forgosh at 973-929-2994. ♦♦

## Donations for "Synagogues" Project

We are seeking supporters of *Synagogues of NJ* who might consider helping us fund this traveling exhibition and book. Support for the project is welcome from foundations, matching grants, individual donations, synagogues, or any combination of them. If you or someone you know could be a prospective donor, please contact Linda Forgosh and she and the committee will pursue the recommendation.

## WEEQUAHIC PARK: A LOOK BACK

In 2008 the JHS premiered its popular traveling exhibition, *Weequahic Memoirs: Celebrating Newark's Legendary Neighborhood*, a best seller book titled *Jews of Weequahic* and a slide program and video oral history telling stories of what it was like to grow up in Weequahic during the decades of the 1930s through the 1960s.

### Adelberg Foundation interest

Interest in Weequahic didn't stop there. Instead, our efforts and thorough research were noticed by Peter Harnik, the administrator of the Adelberg Foundation, in Washington, DC, whose mission is to provide grants to organizations to write the history of parks located in cities in America that were located in Jewish neighborhoods. To date the Adelberg Foundation has been responsible for the history of Jews using and enjoying Boston's Franklin

*Continued on page 4*

**Weequahic Park** *continued from page 3*

Park, Baltimore's Druid Hill Park, and Rockefeller Park in Cleveland. Now it is Newark's turn and this time it is Weequahic Park.



The Weequahic Lake Boathouse - circa 1936

**Brooke Tarabour to write**

The JHS has been awarded an \$8,000 unrestricted grant for our assistance in the research of Jewish life as it existed in Weequahic from the 1930s through the 1950s.

The author of the monograph is Brooke Tarabour, a Weequahic High School graduate, and feature writer for *The Star Ledger*. Brooke spent several days at the JHS going through every piece of paper, photograph, scrapbook, newspaper article, and book with Weequahic information. We are awaiting the results of her research which are anticipated to be completed this May.

**Books still available**

A few copies of *Jews of Weequahic* and the video tour of the neighborhood are still available at the JHS office. To purchase a copy contact Linda Forgosh at (973) 929-2994 or e-mail her at [lforgosh@jhsnw.org](mailto:lforgosh@jhsnw.org). ♦♦

**JHS Intergenerational Oral History Program**

For the second executive year, West Orange High School has sent freshman honors history students to Daughters of Israel in West Orange to conduct oral histories with its residents in a program sponsored by the Jewish Historical Society of New Jersey.

At the last field trip which took place on February 3, 2012, participants were asked to share memories of their high school experiences. According to JHSNJ Executive Director, Linda Forgosh who presented a talk accompanied by slides showing high school days at Weequahic in the 1940s and 1950s, "High school students and senior citizen residents found that their memories of high school were remarkably similar. Comparing similar experiences struck the right note. Suddenly the gap between young and old was not so vast."

"The one item that caught everybody's eye was the gym suits worn by a mother and daughter in 1940 and 1960. The famous blue suits that went home once a year at Christmas vacation to be washed got a chuckle," according to Forgosh.

**Exchange students join in**

Two Chinese exchange students who accompanied their hosts tried to engage in some conversation with their host's senior

partners. "They are in the USA for two weeks after some of our students had gone to China to visit their school last May," stated Douglas Drabik, West Orange High School Faculty Member.

The next field trip will focus on the theme of overcoming adversity. JHS past president, Bob Max will share his story of what it was like to be a WWII POW.



Thirty-two West Orange High School freshmen honors students, with their advisor, Douglas Drabik (center with open collar) visited Daughters of Israel to conduct oral history sessions with DOI residents as part of an intergenerational program designed and conducted by JHS.

**Presentation on May 4**

"The culminating program where students present their oral history projects to their senior citizen friends is a perfect way to highlight what students have learned while meeting with and interviewing the senior residents about their life stories. This final event will take place on May 4<sup>th</sup>, during *Jewish American Heritage Month*," noted Mali Schwartz, JHSNJ board member and the creator and coordinator of the intergenerational oral history program. ♦♦



A beneficiary agency of the  
United Jewish Communities of MetroWest  
Recipient of a General Operating Support  
Grant from the New Jersey Historical  
Commission, a division in the  
Department of State



901 Route 10, Whippany, NJ 07981-1156

