

Help & Happenings

2021 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

From the Executive Director



Once again, we are at the end of a year that was not what we expected. We are extremely thankful to our JFS family and friends who have supported our community through the ups and downs of the pandemic, economy, supply chain and more. We are stronger together.

Every day we see the faces and hear the tales of those struggling to succeed in the face of enormous challenges – not enough food to eat, no job, poor health, financial distress, loss of a partner.

We are humbled and inspired by their stories, and we are incredibly grateful for the support of our community. With your help, we are feeding families, engaging isolated seniors, advocating for citizenship, supplying children with backpacks for school, providing holiday gifts for families in need and more. We are stronger together.

Our counseling center continues to strive to meet the growing needs of those struggling with anxiety, depression, conflicts and other issues. Volunteers deliver nearly 1,000 kosher meals each week to homebound seniors. With your support, close to 200 Holocaust survivors receive vital homecare, medical and dental services, transportation and more as they age into their 90s and 100s. We are stronger together.

We are truly stronger together.

Thank you for joining us in supporting our community and from all of us at JFS, we wish you and your loved ones a year filled with good health and happiness.

With gratitude,



Roni Salkin,
Executive Director

I wanted to thank you so much for all your help, it is appreciated, thank you JFS! You have a wonderful crew, wonderful people and your kindness is always there. Your support made my day and put a little smile on my face.
– Ms. A, a single mom recovering from an injury who receives JFS Women's Center and kosher food pantry services

Takin' it to the Streets, JFS Kosher Food Pantry is Going Mobile

In underserved urban areas, the need for nutrition assistance and other social services is significant. Yet with barriers such as unaffordable childcare, inaccessible public transportation, and limited computer access, many Middlesex County residents cannot reach critical programs. This past year, as the Covid pandemic was still taking a dramatic toll on public health and the economy, JFS had to get creative in order to reach people where they were.

When our partners at the Central Jersey Diaper Bank and Elijah's Promise invited JFS to join their monthly one-stop event, JFS set to work, packing and loading hundreds of bags of groceries.

Under the sweltering August sun, New Brunswick residents filled the sidewalks around Anshe Emeth, picking up baby supplies, hot meals, and JFS food pantry bags. Andres R., a JFS volunteer, was there to hand out food and provide Spanish translations.

"It was just a good feeling to be giving out groceries to families who really needed them. You could see parents there with their children, so I was happy to see that the food was reaching them."

Andres knows what it feels like to go home to an empty fridge. Growing up in Mexico during the 90s, he remembers when a huge economic collapse took its toll on his family.



Nearly 100 families brought home shelf stable groceries from the JFS Food Pantry "On The Road" during the first collaboration event.

"We were living a really comfortable middleclass life. But then my mom lost her job. My dad always worked as a dentist, but he wasn't getting any patients."

"My parents had just bought a house a few years prior, and they started missing mortgage payments. A lot of things changed as my parents made budget cuts. My mom wasn't buying as much food, and our meals got sparser. There were definitely no snacks.

"I think that definitely inspired me to volunteer with JFS. I remember being a kid and not understanding why my friends had plenty of food and snacks, but I didn't. When I was handing out groceries with JFS, it made me feel a little better to know that those kids would at least have a couple options that day about what they could eat."

At JFS, we believe that adequate nutrition is foundational for all other success in life. To learn more about our kosher food pantries or to get involved, visit www.jfsmiddlesex.org.



JFS aims to bring our Kosher Food Pantry to community centers where more people in need can access healthy food staples.



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JFS 2021 Grand Opening Celebration

Nestled in the woods, planted right on the border between North and South Brunswick, is the new home of JFS Middlesex. In April 2021, we packed up our old Milltown office and moved our headquarters to Blackhorse Lane. The new location is peaceful and spacious, and just one quick turn off Route 1. The facility has ample parking along with more modern office and meeting spaces.

On October 28, our staff, board members, volunteers, elected officials, and community leaders assembled for a festive celebration that combined our grand opening with the annual meeting and volunteer appreciation. Classical Caterers provided tasty kosher desserts, generously sponsored by Victory Subaru and Investors Bank.

As we reflected on the past year's tests and triumphs, we welcomed in our new board members and celebrated the accomplishments of our dedicated volunteers. This year's recognition shined the spotlight on our many Holocaust survivor services volunteers, who have delivered thousands of kosher meals, made wellness calls, and ensured that our survivors can age in place with comfort and dignity. JFS sends our heartfelt thanks to you!

All settled in our new office space, JFS is ready to help more people than ever through innovative new projects and enhanced services. We need your support! Visit www.jfsmiddlesex.org to follow our progress and to make a donation. Thank you!



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Digital Outreach Grant Awarded to JFS Senior Medicare Patrol

Charles Clarkson used to drive hundreds of miles every month, visiting group homes, religious centers, libraries, and more, giving presentations to hundreds of people. Then, the pandemic hit, and community centers everywhere shut their doors. “No one knew when we’d be back to our in-person presentations,” Charles reflects. “But we realized we had to shift gears in order to reach people. Medicare fraud, waste, and abuse is a big deal, with \$60 billion tax payer dollars wasted every year because of scams.” With a newly awarded federal grant, SMP is now a film studio, creating short informational videos on various topics. With another grant, the SMP is also traveling to low-income senior apartments to teach residents computer skills, an effort to empower people to protect themselves from fraud. JFS Media and Outreach Manager Jen Goodin said, “For our education and advocacy to be effective, it needs to be accessible. Our videos are quick, simple to understand, and easy to share.” Visit the JFS Youtube channel to watch:

<https://bit.ly/336u3Ag>

Phone Reassurance Program, Kosher Meals on Wheels watching over homebound seniors

Evie Hill, a JFS administrative assistant, is used to answering all the phone calls. Now she's the one making them. "On weekends we're calling up seniors around Middlesex County. They're people who are sick and disabled. They're in and out of the hospital a lot. But they don't really have anyone else checking in on them." Through a new grant from the County, JFS provides wellness calls to Meals on Wheels recipients on days when they don't get food deliveries.

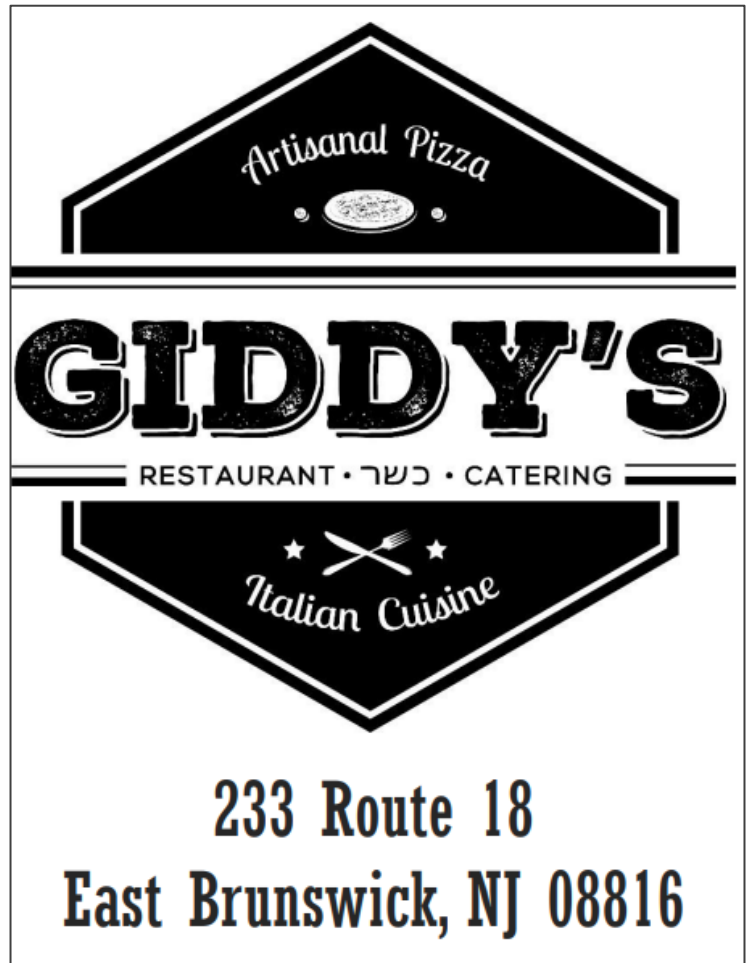
"I call this one lady, Yadira. She's so funny, we're always teasing each other! But some people are cranky, some people you have to call a bunch of times before they answer. We have to make sure they're doing alright." Evie, along with several other staff and volunteers, conduct the phone calls to older and vulnerable adults of all backgrounds.



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Olivia F., who speaks regularly with Evie, is 87 years old and receives Kosher Meals on Wheels from JFS. "I'm just thankful that I have been blessed with a meal, it would be difficult without it," said Olivia.

"I'm thankful that Kosher Meals on Wheels provides for the elderly."

"When we are blessed with longevity, is it because you have earned it throughout your lifetime? Or is it a curse? During that time, your friends have all gone, your family is all gone, so you question yourself. But you are blessed, you are thankful, you're at home, you're not in the hospital. You see people with so much need, but you're blessed with having. I try to avoid the 'doomish' and 'gloomish.' I'm retired and I like that because I was very, very busy in my lifetime, so I'm just relaxing and taking nothing for granted. I thank G-d every day of my life and thank others. JFS has been keeping me company." To learn more, visit: www.jfsmiddlesex.org/senior-services/

Education empowers new Americans

JFS citizenship students were eager to get back to class, as evidenced by this roomful of diligent future Americans. The security camera at the Elizabeth Public Library captured this happy shot of our newly reopened class. The Citizenship Program at JFS now has several Zoom and in-person classes, offering students valuable flexibility.



This October, JFS was awarded another 2-year grant from the US Department of Homeland Security to provide free English and civics classes for permanent residents preparing for their naturalization tests. JFS has been offering classes for more than ten years, so we're excited and proud to be able to continue the tradition.

Carlos (left), a JFS student, passed his test and wrote to Project Citizenship Coordinator, John Tello, "I want to thank you for all your help and time – you are the best! I feel very glad to find people like you in my life. Today I became a US citizen!" To learn more, visit:

www.jfsmiddlesex.org/immigration-and-citizenship/



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Classes are in session at new Blackhorse Lane office

Providing opportunities for adult education is a key part of the JFS mission. Our new office in North Brunswick gives us the space to offer in-person classes. The Career Center and Women's Center have resumed computer classes, which are taught by volunteer instructors. Computer basics, Microsoft Office Suite, QuickBooks, and Internet for job searching are among the mini courses offered.

JFS also provides citizenship classes, which empower immigrants with English skills needed to pass the US naturalization exam. Certified ESL teachers help students learn about American history and government, as well as develop reading and writing skills to become informed future-citizens.

Call JFS to learn about current classes and for enrollment information: 732.777.1940.





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