
2018 • 2019

ANNUAL REPORT

JEWISH FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICE
OF GREATER MERCER COUNTY



LET ALL WHO ARE *hungry,* COME AND *eat.*

Though the familiar sentiment is associated with the Jewish Passover experience, it encompasses the efforts of JFCS year-round.

This year, we launched several initiatives centered on food. It should come as no surprise given the importance of food in our Jewish traditions, we pay great attention to the food we consume during holidays, we labor over the symbolic and beloved dishes of our heritage, and, most importantly, we ensure no guest, family, friend or stranger, ever goes hungry. Our expansion of food-related programming follows our agency framework — **adapting Jewish values to meet the needs of the broader community.**

Food connects us all; it nourishes our soul just as much as our bodies.

JFCS is dedicated to expanding our nutritional programs

including our food pantry and services delivering substantial, nutritious food to seniors. Healthy@Home and Kosher Meals on Wheels help nourish seniors and ensure there is a friendly face to check in on them regularly. The simple hello of a JFCS volunteer bringing a hot meal or bag of fresh groceries can make a big difference in their day.

We also launched one of the biggest endeavors in JFCS history — the JFCS Mobile Food Pantry. The Mobile Food Pantry is part of our broader initiative to deliver food directly into the hands of community members with the greatest need and fewest resources to access nutritious options. The JFCS Mobile Food Pantry will bring the resources of the JFCS pantry to locations throughout Mercer County. At each location, JFCS will park the fully-stocked truck and distribute groceries to

those in need. *Read more about the road to launching our Mobile Food Pantry on Page 2-3.*

Our programs move well beyond food as we aim to nourish not only the body, but the soul.

We serve those seeking the understanding of a counselor, comfort of support group, and care during their golden years.

The JFCS counseling department continues to provide thousands of hours of therapeutic care and support to clients in our Princeton office and East Windsor-Hightstown satellite location. Our robust senior services department is there for seniors who wish to age safely in their homes, providing comprehensive support and advocating for clients.

We rely on every dollar donated to sustain our programming. Each donation is a source of **Help, Hope** and **Healing** for an individual in emotional crisis, a family unsure of where their next meal will come from, and a senior seeking comfort and company. Please make your donation today.



Michelle Napell

Michelle Napell
Executive Director



Arlene S. Pedovitch

Arlene S. Pedovitch
Board President

NOURISHING BODY *and* SOUL...



Ava is 6 years old. She attends Better Beginnings Child Development Center, a daycare center in Hightstown, while both her parents work hard to support the family at multiple jobs. With three children to support, money is tight at Ava's house and sometimes her parents are forced to choose between paying the rent and buying groceries. JFCS brought a pop-up food pantry to Better Beginnings and Ava's mom was able to pick out a full bag of groceries for the family.

"Transportation can be a serious concern for many of our parents. Having the convenience of shopping here on site during pick-up time was one less stressor during their day. Seeing the children get so excited over a simple fruit cup — that truly shows the impact of this resource." — Luz Horta, Executive Director, Better Beginnings



Margery is a 68 year old woman who lives alone and does not drive. She receives support through Senior Outreach Service (SOS) which serves older adults struggling in the Medicaid gap with limited income but not low enough to qualify for additional financial help. Margery relies on JFCS to coordinate needed services including home care and meal delivery. She called her care manager at JFCS just before the High Holidays for help getting to services. Her care manager set up transportation for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services being held at Greenwood House and ensured Margery had a place for the holidays.

"It was nice to hear the shofar while surrounded by others during the holiday." — Margery



William is a 72 year old widower who was facing growing physical health challenges which forced him to stop working. He turned to JFCS for counseling support when he recognized his anxiety and isolation increasing on a daily basis. William's counselor validated his feelings concerning his physical and mental health and helped build his confidence communicating with doctors and family members about his condition. By advocating for himself, William secured a more successful treatment for hip pain. To combat his isolation, William's counselor connected him with additional JFCS services including Healthy@Home, Cooking Companions and the Kosher Café. With increased confidence and socialization, William has greatly reduced his anxiety.

"Once I took that step, it all fell into place. My counselor supported my progress at my speed; making those calls to connect with Healthy@Home and Kosher Café was a huge shift for me. I found that prioritizing my mental and physical health is what I needed to move forward in life." — William



"Our goal of providing healthy, nutritious food to vulnerable populations no longer stops at the agency's doors." —Michelle Napell, Executive Director

At our Annual Meeting in June, Executive Director Michelle Napell officially announced the Mobile Food Pantry initiative. Since that moment, this project has been on a roll.

The JFCS Mobile Food Pantry will bring the resources of our pantry on the road to locations throughout Mercer County. At each location, we will park our fully-stocked truck and distribute groceries to those in need. The truck will be a free, choice pantry that aligns with our mission of empowering individuals to make informed choices and care for themselves.

Our agency held six "pop-up" pantries during the later months of 2019 to establish partnership with future sites for our Mobile Food Pantry. Staff and volunteers packed up the resources of our pantry — including coolers full of fresh and frozen goods — and brought them to partner locations for individuals to shop for groceries. **Our pop-up pantries were the first phase of our mobile initiative and allowed us to reach 194 additional families above and beyond our regular pantry clientele.**

Getting the Truck Rolling

*JFCS Mobile Food Pantry
Founding Sponsors*

\$50,000+

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REIMAGINING THE 'Power of the Purse'



JFCS
Women's ALLIANCE

The JFCS Women's Alliance is a group of women committed to addressing hunger in our community. What began as a handful of women asking "How can we do more?" has become the foundation for a sustainable giving group to support JFCS.

This membership-based collaboration benefits JFCS programs focused on addressing hunger year after year. In the inaugural year, 77 women agreed to serve as Founding Members of the Women's Alliance, with many more contributing to the fund, to raise more than \$80,000 to help the Mobile Pantry remained stocked during its first year on the road.

To learn more about joining the Women's Alliance and sustaining membership opportunities, contact Helaine Isaacs at HelaineI@jfcsonline.org / 609.987.8100 ext 104.

WHY ARE WE TAKING OUR PANTRY ON THE ROAD?



TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS

Public transportation options to existing pantries are limited, especially for those located in the suburban regions of Mercer County



ACCESSIBILITY OBSTACLES

A growing number of seniors in NJ are hungry, and limitations in physical mobility often prevent seniors from getting to supermarkets for healthy & fresh food



FINANCIAL LIMITATIONS

33% of individuals who face food insecurity in Mercer County do not qualify for government assistance AND low-cost food options available at convenience stores, most accessible to populations in need, often lack varied, nutrient-rich options

FOUNDING WOMEN'S ALLIANCE MEMBERS

Anonymous (3)	Beth Frieder	Barbara Lawrence	Carol Pollard	Deborah Soffen
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***Mobile Food Pantry and Women's Alliance Founding Members as of November 14, 2019.*



The GRAY AREA of HUNGER

The aging population in NJ is one of the most vulnerable groups facing hunger.

Limited income and decreased mobility compound seniors' ability to access substantial and nutritious food options. Nearly 9 million older adults cannot afford nutritious food, and about 25% either reduce

meal sizes or skip meals, as reported by the National Council on Aging (NCOA, 2016). **Older adults are often forced to make a difficult choice between paying bills and buying food.**

JFCS now reaches more vulnerable seniors with a wide array of nutrition programs.



Kosher Café

Older adults gather four times a week for a hot, nutritious lunch at the Kosher Café. In May, we celebrated the 20th Anniversary of the Kosher Café — two decades of ensuring low-income seniors have a place to enjoy a hot lunch and the comfort of company.

5,227
meals served



Shabbat on Wheels

Since the program launch in May, complete Shabbat meals are delivered to 24 seniors once a month. Recipients are grateful for this service which allows them to enjoy a traditional meal for the first time in years. This experience brings back cherished memories of dinners shared with family and friends throughout their lives.

24 seniors 
receive monthly Shabbat meals



Kosher Meals on Wheels

Weekly deliveries of hot meals, prepared by our partner Greenwood House, to homebound seniors allows our agency to not just feed isolated older adults but regularly check-in on their overall wellbeing.

5,500
hot meals delivered



Healthy@Home

Healthy@Home transforms the lives of seniors with regular deliveries of fresh groceries. For one recipient, our staff's commitment to bringing him the specialty products he is unable to purchase on his own brings great joy. For another, fresh apples were a welcome sight as she is no longer able to carry a bag of them herself home from the store.

15 clients 
receive monthly grocery deliveries



COOKING COMPANIONS

One of our newest efforts to reach isolated seniors is to match older adults with volunteers through Cooking Companions. Together, they share in the preparation and enjoyment of a meal in the senior's home.

“
I'm full of affection and deep appreciation for JFCS and the volunteers. Not only do they deliver food, they bring me the gift of their visits.” —Sally,
72 year-old widow

FEEDING *the* SOUL

Our programs bring fulfillment through a full spectrum of social services.

Healing through Counsel

1 in 5
ADULTS
experience a
mental health
condition.



More than
2,560 hours
of **therapy**
services provided



174 new
client assessments

Whether an individual is facing anxiety, depression, grief, life changes, family challenges, or trauma — our team of professional counselors is there to help. Our services include individual, couple and family counseling provided at our Alexander Road office, while our East Windsor-Hightstown location provides supportive mental health care as well as therapeutic groups for children, teens and young adults.

"I feel like this is a real partnership, my counselor supports and understands me at every step."

**"I DON'T SELL MYSELF SHORT
ANYMORE AND FIND THAT I
DON'T OVERREACT AS OFTEN."**

*"I always feel
centered and
hopeful when
I leave my
therapist."*

STEPPING up to HELP

JFCS maintains a robust volunteer program that is integral to our services. Volunteers deliver food to seniors, visit with isolated seniors, serve food at Kosher Cafés, help facilitate pop-up pantries, and assist at special events.



"My host was so appreciative of my visit and the food we shared. She was glad that I remembered what she liked when preparing the meal. Before starting our meal, we made Motzi (blessing over bread). Over dinner we really clicked and enjoyed each other's company. This was a wonderful program — for both of us!" —Cooking Companions Volunteer

INSPIRING HOPE for the FUTURE

Our teen programs nurture the next generation of leaders and philanthropists.

159 teens participated in **Jewish Community Youth Foundation (JCYF)** and distributed **\$42,521** to local, national and Israeli-based charitable organizations. Each young philanthropist donates \$120 of their own money which gets matched and pooled with money raised at JCYFund-Day phone-a-thon.

JCYF is a project of JFCS, and funded by the Ricky and Andrew J. Shechtel Philanthropic Fund and the Jewish Federation of Princeton Mercer Bucks.



"It's not about speaking, but more about listening."

Gesher LeKeshet trains teens to be peer leaders while instilling Jewish values. Together, the teens strengthen their connections with their heritage, with Judaism, and with other youth.

Gesher LeKeshet is partially funded by the Jewish Federation of Princeton Mercer Bucks.

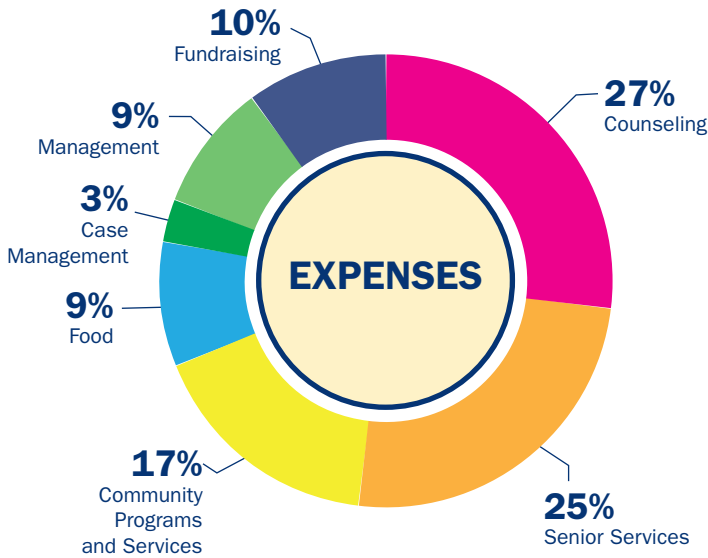
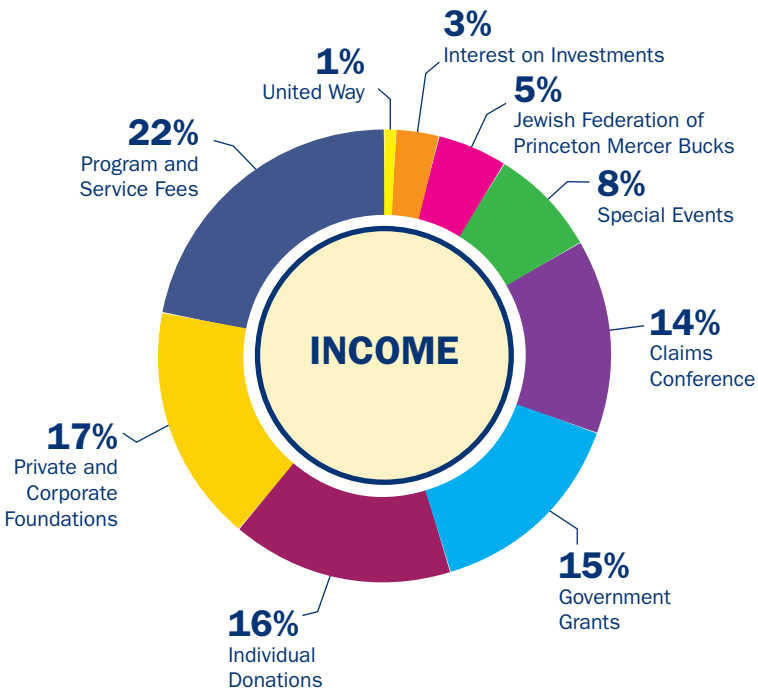


"I have become better able to connect the events that occur in my life with how they might impact me as a Jewish person."

"By visiting the organizations in person, it opened my eyes to the different problems that people are faced with in our broader Jewish community."

—JCYF 10th grade participant

"This experience made me more confident and comfortable speaking about serious topics with others."



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