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January 1, 2019 (5779)

Kol Kehilat

THE NEWSLETTER OF KEHILAT CHAVERIM

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Our Own Tree Guy Talks About Tu Bishvat

Tu Bishvat starts at sundown on Jan. 20, 2019. Eric Hammerling, a KC member who is executive director of the Connecticut Forest and Park Association (www.ctwoodlands.org), spoke about the holiday with Dan Haar. Hammerling is also co-chairman of the environment committee for Gov. Ned Lamont's transition.

Q: What is Tu Bishvat and what exactly does it celebrate?

A: On the Roman calendar, Tu Bishvat occurs as the first agricultural holiday that we celebrate. It is the New Year of the trees and often called the Jewish Earth Day. During a typical year, it coincides with the best time to be planting trees. It's also the Israeli version of America's Arbor Day, which is celebrated at the end of April. It's been associated with all of the different kinds of fruits that you find on trees. Those are often eaten and enjoyed during Tu Bishvat. It's also a time to think about the stewardship responsibilities we have over the Earth. And it's really neat to think of how many ways in Jewish liturgy trees come up in terms of something that's really valued.

Q: We don't plant trees in mid- to late January, right?

A: Ideally that is the time that people in the Mediterranean climate would be planting trees, especially fruit trees.



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REMINDER

Please let us know if any of your contact information changes. Periodically, we will send out a membership list, and want to make certain that it is current.

(Continued from page 1)

Q: Are there any customs that we have related to Tu Bishvat?

A: Probably since I was born, my mom would buy a little certificate that says a tree has been planted in my honor in Israel. More recently I've heard about things like combining four different kinds of red and white wine to talk about unification of the Earth and different kinds of foods and fruits of the vine. There are some Tu Bishvat-themed Seders, which is basically like a Seder except you're specifically eating fruits of trees.

Q: Do you lean against a tree during that Seder? How about historical traditions?

A: We have a practice that Tu Bishvat commemorates which is not eating fruit from a tree until it is at least three years old, as just a way of saying this is not a short-term investment, this is a long-term commitment that we have to trees and the environment.

Q: Is it a biblical holiday?

A: I think it came later. I've never considered it to be a heavy religious holiday as much as it is a celebration of the Earth. I've always used it as an extra time to be contemplative about how fortunate we are to have trees.

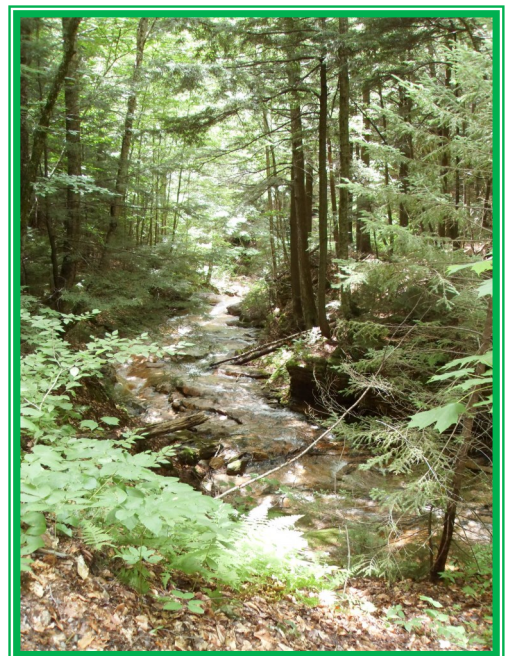
Q: You have impressive tree-dentals. What does the association do?

A: We often say that we're kind of like the Lorax, we speak for the trees. We look at ways that the forests of Connecticut are cared for, sometimes not. Also looking at things like the trees that you have along the streets of Connecticut and how those are taken care of....and trying to cherish the fact that in Connecticut we actually have a superlative nationally, which is, we have more people living in close proximity to trees and forests than any other state in the nation. We are a small state, we are pretty well forested.

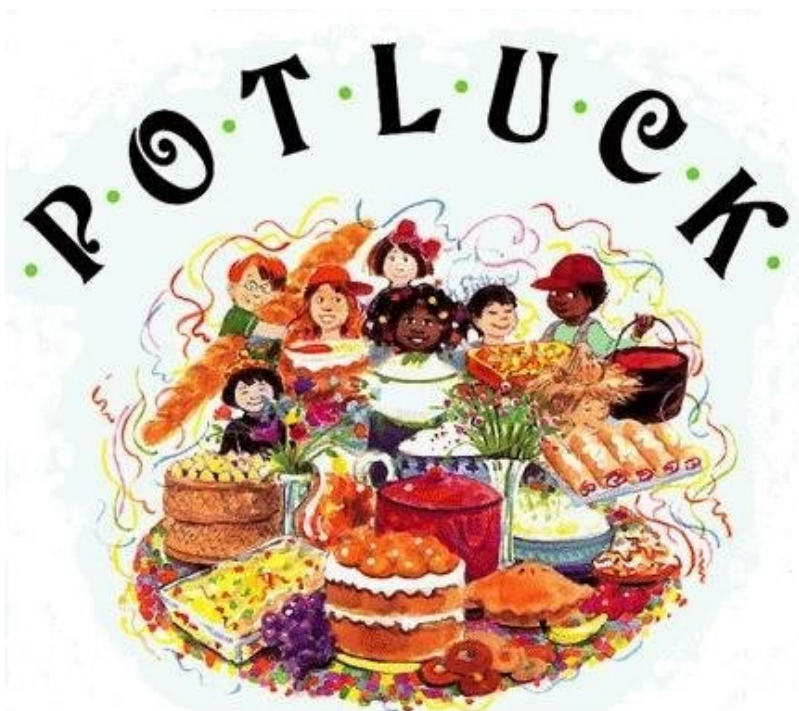
If you want to be entered into a drawing to win a gift certificate, send email to joan@joanwalden.name with "drawing" in subject line by January 30.

Q: Here in Connecticut, for us as Kehilat, what is the state of trees?

A: It is a constant battle. I was appointed to be the chair of the state's vegetation management task force after Tropical Storm Irene and the October Nor'easter. The concern was there was going to be an overreaction to the trees falling across power lines by just cutting down all the trees. To try to find the balance between having communities that are beautiful because of their trees and having communities that have the lights on is the ongoing struggle that we have. There are certainly some trees that are threatened by invasive pests. Ash trees in Connecticut are really having a rough time. Trees are having a tough time and I think climate change is certainly one of the reasons.



Kehilat Chaverim Invitation!
Please Join us for a January
Finger Foods and Desserts Potluck
Shabbat Service



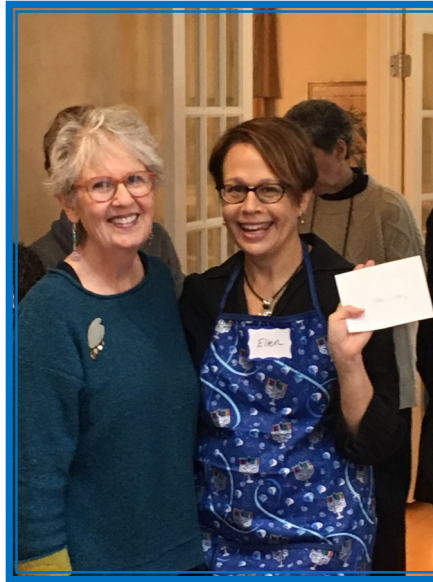
Hosted by Deb and Bob
on **Friday, January 18, 2019 at 7:00 P.M.**

If weather is questionable, check your email for details by 12 noon Friday.
(Snow Date: Friday, January 25 at 7:00 P.M.)

RSVP to Deb by Sunday, January 13 to let her
know if you're bringing a
finger food (please no heating required) or a dessert, at dka@ntplx.net

We look forward to seeing you!

Winner of Reader's Contest Ellen Coffey



Look for another notice in this newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT CONTACT INFORMATION

“Healing wishes are sent to members who are ill or grieving. If we can help by providing food or sustenance, a ride, or a sympathetic ear, please reach out to one of us.”

If you become aware of a member in need please contact one of us. If you are comfortable please ask your friend/member if they mind having a person from membership support reach out. Some people prefer to keep their situation private or only among their inner circle. Thank you for caring.

Debby Szajnberg debbysz@comcast.net

Marcey Munoz marceynews@gmail.com

Joan Walden joan@joanwalden.name

Contact Marcey for General
Membership Information

Membership Support

Persona Non Grata

By Leah Glicken

In light of the recent terrible hate-filled events in the news, I thought it would be uplifting to write something positive. On October 14th, 2018 I attended a wonderful event called “Persona Non Grata” at the University of St. Joseph in West Hartford, Connecticut. Presented by the United States and Japan Society of Connecticut, United Synagogues of Greater Hartford, and the University of St. Joseph, it was an inspirational true story about Chiune Sugihara. Chiune Sugihara was a diplomat from Japan stationed in Lithuania before World War II who saved 6,000 lives by defying the orders of his government not to issue visas to victims of Nazi persecution. As vice consul he offered transit visas to Jewish refugees who left Lithuania via train to Moscow. From there they travelled via the trans-Siberian railroad to Vladivostok, on to Kobe, Japan. From there they went to Shanghai, China and elsewhere. As a consequence of his heroism, there are 40,000 descendants of these refugees. All of this occurred before Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Sugihara was against a war with the United States and warned that Japan would never win against the United States and Great Britain. What motivated him to do what he did? He stated “Do what is right because it is right.”

In this sad time where there has been a massacre of Jews in Pittsburgh and numerous other killings, it is important to know about Sugihara and people like him. I believe it is especially important for children because they need heroes.

There were other heroic diplomats including Hiram Bingham from Connecticut and Mendes in Portugal. On April 9th 1940 Germany occupied Denmark. There a Nazi official warned the Jews of Denmark about an upcoming roundup by the Nazis. As a consequence, no Jewish lives were lost.

In Rhodes there was a Turkish Muslim diplomat named Selahattin Ulkemen who saved lives by issuing visas. In retaliation, the Nazis bombed his house and killed his pregnant wife. There were a number of other diplomats who saved people’s lives. Many lost their careers as a result. They were all heroes and are in an exhibit called “The Visas for Life: The Righteous Diplomats” is available to view online at: <http://www.raoulwallenberg.net/especial/visasforlife/indexen.htm>. (Prepared by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs working with Yad Vashem and the Simon Wiesenthal Center)

Announcement

We have changed the KC Newsletter e-mail address to:

KCNewsletter1978@gmail.com

This e-mail address is only to send information for the newsletter.

Shabbat

November Potluck Shabbat

By Susan Doran

Our second Potluck Shabbat Service was held on Friday, November 16 at the lovely home of Robert and Marcey Munoz. A large group, most of whom are in the photo, feasted on an outstanding array of delicious foods and engaged in lively conversation. Dorrie Hunt did a wonderful job leading the service and Andrea Obston presented the Parsha in her usual interesting and insightful way. Despite the earlier snowfall that day, attendance soared and all who came enjoyed the evening.



Naches

Les Gara

By Charlotte Gara

Les(lie) Gara is the brother of Kehilat member Charlotte Gara who writes; “In this most challenging time, I am honored to have a brother who has done so much to assure that children in need have a chance for a better life. Congratulations Representative Gara for your important work.”

My brother Les(lie) Gara has been the State House Representative (D) for the 23rd District since 2003, in Anchorage, Alaska. He is voluntarily stepping down in January 2019, He went to Harvard Law School and he and his wife Kelly moved to Alaska upon graduation to clerk for the Supreme Court Justice. He has been an Assistant Attorney General (Exxon Valdez litigation), Public Defender, as well as a partner in a Plaintiff Law firm in Anchorage.

Les has done much for Alaska for the past 18 years. He has fought for better senior centers and support for this vulnerable population, has achieved all day kindergarten in Anchorage, and has spearheaded a massive effort to keep Alaskan youth in high school until graduation and increase the number of college bound youth and has provided mentors so that these youths graduate.

In the State Legislature Les is: [Committee on Judiciary](#), Chair, [Finance](#), Vice Chair [Subcommittee on Health and Social Services](#), Chair

His current volunteer work includes:

- Life Member, Alaska Flyfishers Association, 1990-present
- Volunteer, Alaskan Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome AIDS Assistance Association, present
- Volunteer, Amnesty International, present
- Volunteer, Big Brothers Big Sisters, present
- Volunteer, Brother Francis Shelter, present
- Volunteer, Camp Fire, present
- Board Member, Alaska Public Interest Research Group, 1994-2002
- Member, Fish for Cooper Creek Coalition, 1999-2002

He has worked to provide Alaskan foster children with the support and resources they need to lead successful lives. Due to his work, citizens donate computers to foster children and volunteer whatever skills they have (mentoring and homework, dentistry, emotional support) to this very vulnerable population.



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On Tuesday November 13, 2018 Les received the 2018 Excellence Award from the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington D.C. for his work with foster children.

National “Adoption Excellence Award” Highlights a Legislative Career of Service for Foster Youth
Anchorage – [Representative Les Gara](#) (D-Anchorage) was honored today in Washington D.C. by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for a legislative career working on behalf of Alaska’s foster youth. Rep. Gara was nominated for a 2018 Adoption Excellence Award by long-time Alaska foster youth advocate Amanda Metivier, who founded the foster youth advocacy and support organization, [Facing Foster Care in Alaska](#).

“Les Gara’s legislative successes have improved the lives of thousands of foster youth in Alaska. He knows the struggles faced by foster youth because he grew up in foster care. Whether they know it or not, the thousands of foster youth in Alaska, both past and present, owe a debt of gratitude to Les Gara because he always championed their cause,” said Metivier.

In earning the 2018 Adoption Excellence Award, the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services singled out the landmark foster care reform bill that Rep. Gara successfully passed earlier this year. [House Bill 151](#) was signed into law in June by outgoing Alaska Governor Bill Walker.

“Representative Les Gara’s heart is as big as his legacy in the Alaska Legislature, and he’s leaving behind a pretty big legacy. I can’t think of anyone more deserving of this prestigious national award than my friend Les Gara,” said Governor Walker. “Politics and policy are too often dominated by those with power and money that can make their voice heard. However, with Les Gara around the vulnerable and voiceless were never silent and could always be heard.”

Rep. Gara's successful efforts to improve Alaska’s foster care system includes increasing college scholarships and job training, starting volunteer foster youth mentorship and laptop computer donation programs, and passing legislation to extend foster care to age 21, when a youth needs a home.

“Les Gara’s leadership has been irreplaceable in the fight to improve the lives of foster youth and to keep our children safe. He deserves this national award because of his years of work and his passion for helping others. Quiana (thank you) to Representative Gara,” said former Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Commissioner and current Alaska Lieutenant Governor [Valerie Nurr’araaluk Davidson](#).

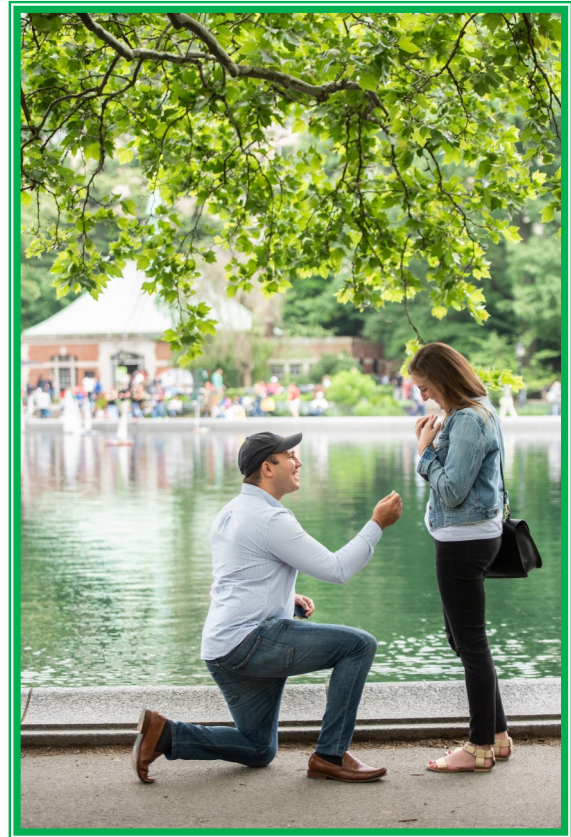
The Adoption Excellence Award program was created by the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services in 1997 to recognize outstanding accomplishments in achieving permanency for America’s children waiting in foster care. The 12 recipients of the Adoption Excellence Awards will be honored Tuesday during a ceremony at the Hubert H. Humphrey Building in Washington D.C. The ceremony, which was held at 10:00 a.m. eastern time was held in conjunction with an event to highlight the federal government’s National Adoption Recruitment Campaign.

“Children deserve to feel safe, supported, and loved. The foster youth I have worked with and met are some of the bravest and most resilient people I’ve known. But we can’t push the envelope with youth, hoping they will be able to succeed with unimaginable levels of trauma and turmoil in their lives. They deserve better, and my colleagues who have helped in passing needed reforms have been great in joining to do what’s right,” said Rep. Gara.

Naches

Shem and Lindsay

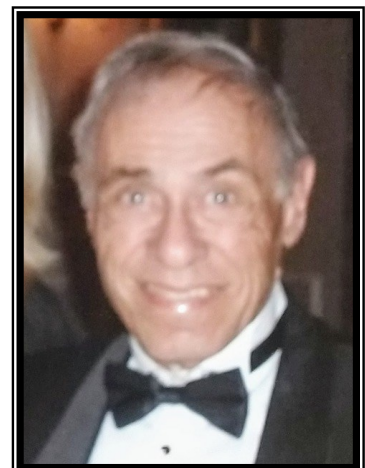
On Monday, May 28th, Faith Messer Fuerst's son, Shem, asked his beloved, Lindsay Klein, to marry him beside the Central Park Conservatory Pond in New York, NY. The moment was captured by Kehilat's own, Shana Sureck, and was followed by a gathering of family and friends. Both originally hailing from the northeast, Shem and Lindsay both moved to the city of angels (Los Angeles) where they met and fell in love. They currently reside together in Santa Monica and are getting married in June, 2019 in Philadelphia, PA, near Lindsay's hometown.



Condolences

Our sincere condolences to member Karen Dworski on the passing of her father William Dworski following several months of struggling with declining health.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the Dworski/Riggs family.



Hanukkah

Hanukkah Brunch Was Dazzling Success

By Joan Walden

There is a method used by filmmakers called Day for Night, wherein night scenes are shot in the daytime. This is accomplished by using filters and other devices to produce a night-time look while saving money and time. To the casual observer, it is nearly impossible to discern.

Thanks to a gray, rainy December Sunday morning, our Hanukkah party took on all the trappings of an evening event minus any downside. And was it ever successful, evidenced by the more than 40 attendees. The high level of joyful conversation and merriment was palpable, and the setting in the lovely home of Rick and Ellen Coffey allowed for adequate room for eating latkes, kugels, and other delicious items; talking while standing, seated at tables or sunk into upholstered furniture; standing for quicker access to refills; lighting the first candle; and singing Hanukkah songs.

In the November newsletter, a notice, which appeared twice, mentioned that if you were reading that sentence and emailed a message to us, your name would be placed in a drawing for a chance to win a \$15 gift certificate to Hartford Baking Company. In all, we received five ballots; Ellen Coffey was the winner! We are hoping for at least twice that number next time.

The information for how to submit your name is elsewhere in this newsletter. Good luck, and may your days and nights be filled with light all year round.



Photos by Liinda Carlson

Hanukkah



Photos by
Joan Walden

Hanukkah



Photos by Dan Harr

Baking Challah with Maggie

On very short notice, Maggie Cohen taught a small group of us how to emulate her challah baking skills. She has offered to do this again in the spring for another group of willing bakers. Let her know if you are interested in (a) hosting, and (b) attending. Despite her best efforts, she needn't worry that anyone in this first group will be replacing her as the group's challah baker extraordinaire.



Photos by Linda Carlson



Social Activities

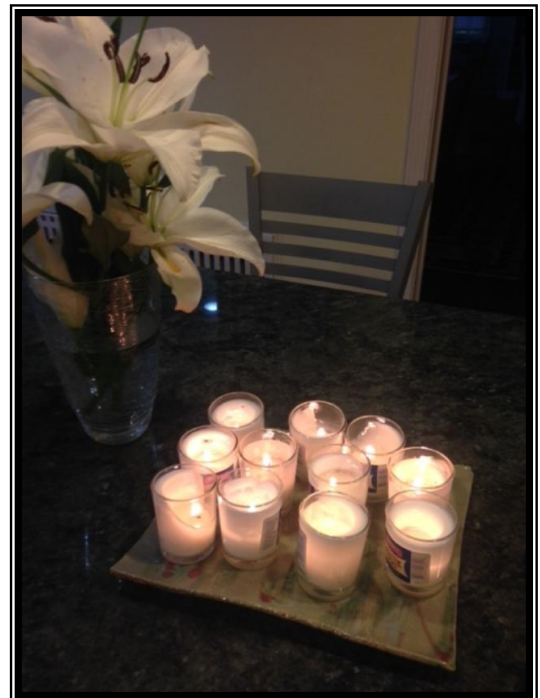
Hands on Hartford Soup Kitchen

On October 29 we served over 88 people at the Hands on Hartford soup kitchen. Thanks to the many KC members who provided lasagna, bread, salad, brownies and apples. Those who helped prepare and serve meals: Rob Bell, Linda Busch (and friends Hailin Lu, Mary and Jojo Painter.) Amy Gallant, Alan, Ethan and Clarissa Basch.

Shiva: A Shared Observance

On November 1, 25 members of the Kehilat Chaverim community gathered at our home for a Shiva and memorial service for the 11 people murdered at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA. Prayers from the KC memorial service and personal readings and reflections helped us to support each other during this very difficult time. The names of the individual victims were read as the 11 yahrzeit candles were lit. This service, in a significant way, connected us to the shared grief of our community, state, and the nation.

Karen and Leo Harrington



Ed Cult

Some Trees Grew In Brooklyn

By Joan Walden

Want to know where long lost family members are buried? Want to find out when and whence your great grandparents entered the U.S.? Want to spend more time at Ancestry.com than on Facebook or Words with Friends? Want to learn a new term, like Endogamy? Then, the presentation by Linda Carlson at the Connecticut Society of Genealogists in mid-November was a great place to begin. Her talk was co-sponsored by the Society and Kehilat Chaverim, and drew two dozen interested people on a chilly Saturday afternoon.

Some of those in attendance clearly knew a lot about the topic and had information to share, while others were brand new and were just beginning their search into family trees (like me). Linda talked about her own interest in the topic, which began when she was a teenager. It has continued more or less unabated ever since. She urged us to share our old family photos with other family members, to interview our elders as well as our cousins of any age, and to talk with anyone and everyone who might hold a key or a crumb to your family history.

Unbeknownst to me, 11 million immigrants entered the U.S. through Castle Garden (New York) between 1820 and 1892. After that, Ellis Island opened, and it was at that site until 1954 that many Jewish refugees entered the U.S. Linda suggested that when we are searching for relatives, we consider what their names might have been before they were Americanized.

*I also had been unfamiliar with the term Endogamy, which refers to the practice of marrying within a specific social or ethnic group.

Passenger ship records beginning in 1820 are a place that might show details including name, age, country of origin, although prior to 1890, few lists showed the town or city of origin. Military records from both World Wars might reveal information on draft registration cards and government records.

Linda's PowerPoint was informative and engaging, and her hand-out was a perfect first step for the uninitiated. Her final piece of advice: There are some things you should do with every record you unearth: 1. Source it; 2. Examine the image, not just the index, and check adjacent pages; 3. List all points of genealogical importance; 4. File your notes so you can find them later.

All in all, beginning a genealogical search seems as though it is a lot like eating potato chips or a favorite dessert: once you start, it may be really, really hard to stop. Just ask Linda.



Member Support

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT BURIALS

By Maggie Cohen

Leo Holtz, a warm, personable, and extremely knowledgeable person is chair of the Hebrew Burial Society. He graciously spoke to about 25 of us at Andrea Levy's home in November. We had a lively discussion about the services he provides, planning for burials while keeping with Jewish tradition. He even planted the seed for Kehilat Chaverim to have further discussions on purchasing burial plots. Mr. Holtz told us that he has an arrangement with Molloy Funeral Home in West Hartford to prepare for his funerals, although he also can arrange for a body to be shipped and buried anywhere. One of the services he can provide is to perform a graveside service. Mary Williams told us that she had a wonderful experience when he did so for her mother on Long Island. You can make plans with him and pay for his services in advance at any time.

We are indeed fortunate to have such a wonderful resource in our community.

We learned that there are some essential pieces of information that will be needed when planning a funeral for our loved ones and when pre-planning our own. It would be wise to speak with a funeral director for more details. In sum, it will make things easier for us, our family and friends to have the following key personal information about us available: demographics, such as full name including a maiden name; social security #; military status; cemetery choices; burial vs. cremation preferences; and contact information of old friends or distant relatives. It is a good idea to gather information for an obituary to include family names, educational history, significant life events, personal accomplishments, volunteer activities, survivors' names and states, and where charitable contributions could be sent.

I think we would agree that the most important take-away from the talk is that a conversation needs to be had with our family and friends. Basic information should be prepared in advance and our intentions should be communicated.

What follows is a true/false quiz to see how knowledgeable you are about traditions for Jewish rituals or burials.

1. Rocks are placed on the grave stone symbolize the Temple.

False. There is one (of many) beliefs that a person remains among the living as long as they are still remembered. Piles of rocks were used before modern caskets and tombstones, which had to be maintained by replacing or restacking them. When you take care of a gravesite, you are remembering that person. Thus, a stone is now placed demonstrating that the person is still remembered and lives on in us.

2. Organ donation is permitted by Jewish Law.

True. It is believed that if you save one life you save the world.

(Continued on page 17)

Member Support

3. You become a mourner immediately after death.

False. Between death and burial the body is in 'Limbo.' You become a mourner after the burial. This is when the first candle is lit. It is lit again on the anniversary date every year after.

4. You should only say the Shema once a death has occurred.

False. It should be the last thing a person hears. You should recite the Shema even when leaving the room of a very sick or dying person in case that person should die in your absence.

5. If you choose a cremation you cannot have a funeral service?

False. You can still have a service in a temple or a funeral home before cremation has occurred.

6. Autopsy is not acceptable in Jewish tradition and therefore should not occur.

False. The "law of the land" supersedes religious tradition, and an autopsy may be required under some circumstances.

7. Jews can be buried directly in the ground or in an unlined casket in the U.S. as in Israel.

False. Again, burials have to follow health and environmental laws and there are many which regulate burial sites and processes.

8. Burials have to occur within hours of a death because Jews don't believe in embalming the body

False. Modern refrigeration is used if the burial needs to be delayed.

Maggie's Challah Legacy





Kehilat Chaverim Calendar

Updated Dec. 31, 2018

Day, Date	Time	Event & Location
2019		
January		
Fri. Jan. 18	6:00—8:00 pm	Shabbat Service—Potluck (see pg. 3)
February		
Fri. Feb. 9	6:00 pm—8:00 pm	Film Series, Quaker Meeting House
March		
Sat. Mar. 9	6:00 pm—8:00 pm	Film Series, Quaker Meeting House
		Purim Shabbat Program
Sun. Mar. 24	3:00—4:00 pm	Creative Seder—Murry Spiegel, Mandell JCC
April		
Fri. Apr. 19		First night of Passover

REMINDER

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For additional dates, see the KC Website at www.kehiltchaverim.org.

Please check the website calendar for conflicts before scheduling events.

***Kehilat Chaverim* Contact List**

2018-2019 Steering Committee Members—

Jewish Calendar-Driven Events

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Thank you to Joan Walden, Eric Hammerling, and Dan Harr for proofreading this newsletter.



Kehilat Chaverim

c/o Linda Carlson

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Manchester CT 06040

Featured this Month:

- Pittsburgh Shiva
- Hanukkah Party
- Some Trees Grew
in Brooklyn