



# Kol Kehilat

Inside this issue:

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THE NEWSLETTER OF KEHILAT CHAVERIM



## The spontaneous and grounded Marsha Mason

By Dan Haar

Most of us at Kehilat Chaverim arrived in Greater Hartford in a fairly standard way: through a job, a life partner, a school, a childhood family move or maybe birth. Not Marsha Mason.

Unable to find work in her hometown of Bridgeport despite a bachelors from UConn and a Masters degree from Wesleyan University, both in psychology, she announced herself with a “situation wanted” ad in The Hartford Courant. The situation found her – a start-up child-abuse hotline with a nonprofit group in the mansion of the deceased Beatrice Fox Auerbach.

Mason has been in Hartford or Windsor ever since, living a varied, wondrous life built on family, social services and spontaneous activities befitting her arrival.

That was the early 1970s, when Mason – then Marsha Levinson – was starting what would become a long list of jobs in mental health and social welfare. The hotline work, in a Prospect Avenue house where Auerbach’s personal staff still lived under terms of the will, was, like Mason, quirky and unusual but serious and grounded in community.

“I’m probably the only person in the world that actually started their career with a situation wanted ad,” Mason says. “I always kind of thought out of the box... I love to try everything and go everywhere.”

Lately, four years after her husband, Jim, passed away, that means ballroom dancing, writing poetry, spending time with her two

*(Continued on page 2)*

Profile: Marsha Mason	1-2
In the Community	3
Passover Tasting	3
January Shabbat	4
Cook-In	5-6
Playhouse On Park	7
Purim	8
In Memoriam	9
Should KC join the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA)?	10-11
Membership Support	11
Greenberg Center	12
Calendar	12
Contact List	13

### 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)*

daughters and two granddaughters and adventure travel, especially overseas. On one trip, she toured a floating village in Cambodia, where the houses move according to the flooding schedule. "I had taken really good notes," Marsha said. "I was thinking of it as a real educational opportunity."

And so, again showing her engaged ways, she wrote about that trip and two others for the Journal Inquirer newspaper, without having planned to do so in advance.

Mason, in her career, ran a group home for psychiatric patients, worked in day treatment, had a long stint at Legal Services working with clients and a decade at The United Way of Greater Hartford, researching funding sources and training board members. In retirement, her volunteer work is varied as we'd expect, previously at the New Britain Museum of American Art and now mostly in her adopted hometown of Windsor – on the library association board, at the historical society, Windsor Art Center, the Caring Connection day program for seniors and the local senior center.

In 2012, she and Jim, who by then was suffering from dementia, were named volunteers of the year by the Windsor Chamber of Commerce.

Marsha had met Jim Mason soon after arriving in Hartford, trying something different – "a Unitarian singles party in 1973 that I only went to because it was at a pool and I liked to swim, and I had a friend who wanted to go and she didn't want to go by herself."

They married in 1975. He was 17 years older, which raised some eyebrows in her family until her Uncle Mack "announced that it was okay because I was 30 on the day I was born."

That birth was in Bridgeport, where Mason came by her eclectic personality through genetics. Her father was a jazz

musician and leader of the band Al Levinson and the Levin Sons. He had a liquor store, then raised chickens. "If they had found a chicken farm, my life would have been different," she says of her parents. Her family then had a small business making and selling venetian blinds and slipcovers, often on installment plans. "He ran around collecting his dollar a week," Mason said. "When we were little, we would go on his route with him."

She was the middle of three children, older brother, younger sister. She attended public schools -- "you had to get up and say the Lord's Prayer every day" -- graduated from the then-new Central High School, class of '66,

and entered UConn. Always, she had a job and -- you guessed it -- not always a typical one. At Rein's Deli, for example: "My favorite job, that nobody else liked to do, was kneading the cheesecake....and peeling the tongues."

In those tumultuous years, "I did antiwar stuff, I'd go to the rallies but I didn't have time to get really involved," Mason

said. One year, black women students rushed the sororities to make a point – they would not be accepted. Her sorority, mostly Jewish, the protesting women skipped. It was already integrated.

But her true awakening to the world came in her two years at Wesleyan, Mason said.

Mason came to Kehilat when her daughters were young, through Dave and Laura Pels, when she worked with Dave at Legal Services. "If we didn't like it," she said of our group, "we would go to the Unitarian Meeting House."

Her daughters are both in their early 40s: Jessica, manager of a credit union branch, lives in Windsor and has two

*(Continued on page 3)*



(Continued from page 2)

teenage daughters; and Peri, an evolutionary ecologist, teaches in Queens.

It's remarkable in some ways that Mason has never been outside of Connecticut for more than a month, but then again, that's her groundedness to local community on display. When dating, after Jim's death, she would ask would-be partners about their volunteer work and he who had none, was gone. She met her

partner, David, in a bereavement group – and may bring him to our Purim party. (We vote yes.)

Home or away, Mason shows no sign of slowing, or narrowing. "I have a house full of very strange costumes that I will wear at the drop of a hat," she said. "I'm looking forward to the next 20 years of dancing, spending time in New York, traveling and all kinds of interesting things in life."

## In the Community

### Ikh Zing! The Yiddish Tradition

On Sunday evening, February 23 pianist Pablo Zinger and vocalist Nicole Murad performed a concert of Yiddish music at The Emanuel Synagogue. The event was sponsored by the Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies. Over 150 people were in attendance, among them three KC members, Ruth Goldbaum (center), Harriet Winograd (right), and Joan Walden (left), who all agreed that at that time on most Sundays they were in their pj's. (Photo by Jake Mendelsohn)



Passover Desserts Tasting

Havdallah Service

April 11

7:30 PM

@ the home of Robert and Marcey Munoz

Watch for more information by e-mail

## January Shabbat

### JANUARY 2020 SHABBAT

By Susan Doran

On Friday, January 10 eighteen members and guests ushered in the New Year with a wonderful Potluck Shabbat Service hosted at the Abraham's lovely home. With no snow in the air or on the ground and temperatures hovering in the 40's, we were able to enjoy a convivial evening with no weather worries. The highlight of the evening was having Allan and Maggie join us. And, of course, Maggie brought her delicious homemade challah in the form of 2020!

Editor's note: The service booklets have been given a new and improved remake, and many people remarked on how professional they looked.

Photos by Joan Walden



**Cook-In**

## Annual KC Cook-In

By Linda Busch

The first weekend in February may be known for the Superbowl but its also the Kehilat Chaverim's annual Chili Cook In. Dan Haar, Karen Harrington and Linda Busch each hosted a group of members who made meat chili, salad and chocolate chip cookies for the Hands on Hartford Soup Kitchen located on Church St. in Hartford. The Kehilat Chaverim has been supporting this organization for over 10 years.

Dan was joined by Miriam Levinson and Robin and Barry Kriesberg. Dan, reported that Miriam "developed industrial workflow systems using a series of pulleys, levers, chutes and water-driven center-axle engines to quickly deploy ingredients. Robin, was the knife (which she personally supplied). Barry did not come empty handed. He appeared with a giant industrial steel soup pot and when he arrived "tended to the flames, adding coal as needed. Dan opened cans and served cheese and crackers". Their one reported mishap resulted in 40% burned cookies. Despite the cookies mishap there was plenty of food for all.

Karen was joined in the kitchen by Clair Kaplan, Fran Weiner, Dorrie Hunt, Kim Hunt, Marcey Munoz and Leo Harrington. Karen asked the group to bring their favorite slicing and dicing knives. According to Karen, "although everyone had their own ideas about making chili, for the good of KC, the recipe was dutifully followed. They had a wonderful time.

Linda's kitchen had Amy Gallent, Linda Carlson and Nancy Myerson. Some brought their favorite cutting tools and cutting boards. The group were experienced soup kitchen chefs so we all were able to talk and have a good time while cooking, baking, dicing, stirring and washing.

The group made the Chili using 50 pounds of meat plus vegetables, beans and spices. This plus the trays of salad and cookies made a significant amount of food. The food placed in numerous aluminum trays was brought on Monday morning to the Soup Kitchen where is was served for lunch and other future meals.



# Cook-In



Photos by Barry Kriesberg



## Playhouse

On February 29, following dinner at the Prospect Café, members of Kehilat Chaverim celebrated Leap Year by attending an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* at Playhouse on Park. The play was fun and entertaining.



Photo by Jake Mendelsohn

## Purim Celebration



We've got 20/20 vision and  
**The Future Is Bright!**  
 Join us for a Purim Party Celebrating  
 the Brand New Decade!

**Friday, March 13, 2020, 6:00 pm**

at the home of

Jordi Hertz and Mark Overmyer-Velazquez

Potluck dinner, a brief Shabbat service, and live music by  
 "Blues Without Borders"!

**RSVP by March 6<sup>th</sup> to [festivals@kehilatchaverim.org](mailto:festivals@kehilatchaverim.org)**  
**and let us know whether you will bring a main dish, side dish or salad.**

**BYOB!**

Hamantaschen, desserts, soft drinks & festive party gear will be provided!



Co-Sponsored by the Festivals and Shabbat Committees

**In Memoriam**

Our sincerest condolences to members Andrea Levy and Neal Freuden and family on the passing of Andrea's mother, Marjorie Levy Greenbaum.

**Joanne Zolotor**

Our condolences to the family of longtime former member Joanne Zolotor of Enfield, Connecticut who died peacefully on January 23, 2020 at Baystate Medical Center at the age of 75. She was surrounded by loving family and friends in the final days of her rich life. Joanne was born Joanne Michelle Friedman in Brooklyn, NY on February 6, 1944 to Jean and Jerome Friedman. She graduated from Fort Hamilton High School in 1961 and Queen's College with an associates in Education in 1963. She earned an associate's degree in medical assisting from Springfield Technical Community College in 1981 and worked for 15 years at Medical West in Chicopee and Agawam. Joanne married her high school sweetheart and love of her life, Aaron, in 1963 to whom she was married for nearly 48 wonderful years. Joanne and Aaron lived most of their married lives in Westfield NJ, Longmeadow, MA, and Enfield, CT. Joanne is predeceased by her husband Aaron. If desired, please make donations to Lubavitcher Yeshiva Academy, a school that Joanne appreciated for their kindness to her and her family, or the charity of your choice.

**In Memoriam: John Mascolo**

Friends of Fernridge Park is raising funds to erect a bench in John Mascolo's memory. If you would like to contribute, please contact them directly.

Standard issue bench per Town of WH specs. \$2500 includes bench + installation + plaque + acknowledgement on wall plaque

Please make checks payable to: Friends of Fernridge Park, Inc., P.O. Box 270282, West Hartford, CT 06127-0282

## In the Community

### Should KC join the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA)?

By Sue Garten and Debby Szajnberg

KC members have been involved in social justice initiatives as individuals since KC was founded. Particularly in the past three years, some members have raised the question of whether KC as an organization can or should become involved in non-partisan issue advocacy inspired by Jewish ideals.

A new organization of Hartford-area religious congregations was founded at the end of 2019 to tackle local and state-level social justice issues. Several KC members attended the launch of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA) and approached the Steering Committee to ask whether KC should join. The Steering Committee decided on a multi-step decisional process: invite a speaker from GHIAA to answer members' questions; offer more information to members in the newsletter; make a recommendation; and hold a membership vote at the Annual Meeting on May 3rd.

The KC Education, Culture and Community Committee invited Rabbi Andi Fliegel of Congregation Beth Israel, one of the founding members of this new organization, to explain GHIAA's origin, mission and operation to us. On Jan. 22, 2020, Rabbi Fliegel spoke at an open meeting at Debby Szajnberg's house. Fourteen KC members attended, eight of whom serve on the Steering Committee.

Rabbi Fliegel explained that GHIAA is one part of the Center for Leadership and Justice (CLJ, formerly the Christian Activities Council) umbrella organization, a faith-based organizing network in Connecticut. GHIAA began with exploratory monthly meetings of 40 people over three years, to determine if there was interest in founding a faith-based action coalition in Hartford. Over the first year, they built deep connections and identified leaders in each faith community.

The GHIAA website lists 35 member congregations including Presbyterian, UCC/Hispanic, UCC, 7th Day Adventist, Quaker,

Lutheran, Jewish, and Allied (not faith-based) of which 24 are primarily white and nine are primarily of color. The Jewish congregations are Congregation Beth Israel, B'nai Tikvoh-Shalom/Neshama Center, Beth Shalom B'nai Israel, and Beth El.

Each congregation that is involved in GHIAA forms a trained core team of lay leaders. Core team leaders go through a minimum of 12 hours of leadership training provided by the professional organizers of GHIAA. These leaders, along with the core teams from all of the other participating congregations, make up the strategy and governance teams of GHIAA.

The role of the core team is to engage in individual meetings in each congregation, host house meetings to learn of congregants' social justice concerns, participate with other GHIAA members in determining the organizational priorities, keep their congregation informed of the movement and work of GHIAA, and represent the congregation during key decisions. The core team is the communication link between the member congregations and GHIAA.

The Strategy Team, of which Rabbi Fliegel is a member, acts as an advisory body and does not necessarily include every member organization. There is also a Clergy Team and a Research Team.

GHIAA's current issue slate, which can be found on the website [cljct.org](http://cljct.org), includes the following priorities:

1. Housing - repeal welfare liens
2. Criminal justice – Enact Clean Slate legislation to automatically expunge certain criminal records
3. Inequity in education – Anti-racism commitment and training for all school staff
4. Health care – Enact legislation to allow charity pharmacies to dispense reclaimed medications
5. Gun violence – Join Do Not Stand Idly campaign to put pressure on gun manufacturers to develop smart gun technology.

Rabbi Fliegel emphasized that GHIAA's political action is meant to be issue-based and people-based, reflecting Jewish values as taught in the Torah, as opposed to partisan politics supporting specific candidates.

GHIAA is supported by a combination of member dues (suggested dues 1/60th of the

*(Continued on page 11)*

*(Continued from page 10)*

member's annual budget), CLJ endowment, and grants.

Below is a partial list of some points raised by members in discussions about KC possibly joining GHIAA. They are sorted into "pro" and "con" and are not exhaustive. The Steering Committee encourages all KC members to share their thoughts with us before and during the Annual Meeting.

### PROs

Working with a racially and religiously diverse coalition

Raising public and legislative awareness of selected social justice concerns

Affordable dues

### CONs

Significant demands on KC members' time

Input into, but no control over, GHIAA issue agenda

KC members have been particularly active in immigrant support work. Immigration reform happens only at the federal level, while GHIAA addresses only local and state issues.

Before KC members vote at the Annual Meeting whether to join GHIAA, we should know whether any members are willing to be a GHIAA core team member (see responsibilities described above). Please tell any Steering Committee member before the Annual Meeting if you will commit to being a GHIAA core team member. Thank you, and see you on May 3<sup>rd</sup>!

## 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                      860-463-5425      [support@kehilatchaverim.org](mailto:support@kehilatchaverim.org)

Elaine Grounwater                      860-729-3489      [support@kehilatchaverim.org](mailto:support@kehilatchaverim.org)

Marcey Munoz                      860-951-6877      [marceynews@gmail.com](mailto:marceynews@gmail.com)

Joan Walden                      860-233-2379      [joan@joanwalden.name](mailto:joan@joanwalden.name)

Contact Marcey for General Membership Information



## ***Kehilat Chaverim Calendar***

Updated February 29, 2020

<b>Day, Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Event &amp; Location</b>
<b>2020</b>		
<b>March</b>		
Fri. March 13	6:00 pm	Purim Shabbat @ the home of Jordi Hertz and Mark - Velazquez
<b>April</b>		
Sat. April 11	7:30 pm	Passover Desserts Tasting and Havdallah @ the home of Robert and Marcey Munoz
<b>May</b>		
Sun. May 3	9:30 am	Annual Meeting Mandell JCC

Notice of upcoming Shabbat services will be e-mailed.

#### 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.

For additional dates, see the KC Website at [www.kehilatchaverim.org](http://www.kehilatchaverim.org).

Please check the website calendar for conflicts before scheduling events.

#### **Greenberg Center Programs**

Kehilat Chaverim is co-sponsoring some programs at the Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Hartford. Check out the calendar for Greenberg Center

Programs at: <https://tinyurl.com/yx93uhag>

## ***Kehilat Chaverim Contact List***

### 2019-2020 Steering Committee Members—

#### **Jewish Calendar-Driven Events**

Sabbath	Susan Doran*	susan@doran.us
High Holidays	Sue Garten* Marcie Schwartz*	high.holidays@kehilatchaverim.org high.holidays@kehilatchaverim.org

#### **Life-Long Learning**

Education and Culture & Community Engagement	Karen Harrington* Sue Garten*	karenharrington-13@gmail.com suegarten1@gmail.com
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#### **Community Support**

Community Action	Robin Kriesberg*	social.action@kehilatchaverim.org
Festivals	Ellen Coffey* Harriet Winograd*	festivals@kehilatchaverim.org festivals@kehilatchaverim.org
Membership Support/Life Cycle	Debby Szajnberg* Elaine Groundwater*	support@kehilatchaverim.org support@kehilatchaverim.org
Social Activities	Andrea Levy*	afendive@gmail.com

#### **Administration**

Administration	Marcey Munoz*	info@kehilatchaverim.org
Communication	Joan Walden*	communications@kehilatchaverim.org
Treasurer	Nancy Malley*	mnmalley@yahoo.com
Webmaster	Bob Abraham	babraham@ntplx.net

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



Kehilat Chaverim

c/o Linda Carlson

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Manchester CT 06040

**Featured this Month:**

- [KC Member Profile](#)
- [Purim](#)
- [In Memoriam](#)