

In My View

The Global Planning Table

By Arlene D. Schiff



Imagine a world where the greatest Jewish challenges and most exciting opportunities to strengthen and build our people are discussed, studied, and understood.

Imagine too, that we take the next step and determine a course of action based on our collective ability to have the biggest impact where it is needed most.

This is the vision at the heart of The Jewish Federations of North America's Global Planning Table.

The Federation system is defined by our ability to take collective action to address Jewish priorities. Working together, we have had a profound impact on world Jewry. We can take great pride in the role we have played in building the State of Israel, rescuing Jews from around the world, helping Jews in need, rebuilding Jewish communities, strengthening Jewish identity, and much more.

Yet despite all of our efforts, today, there are still Jews in need around the world. There is still a need to strengthen the Jewish identity of the next generation and there are enormous challenges in building and strengthening Jewish communities worldwide.

At the same time, we are in the midst of a period of tremendous Jewish innovation.

So now seemed to be the appropriate time for the Federation system to develop and implement a bold plan that will enhance our ability to meet the global Jewish challenges of today and tomorrow. And that plan is called the "Global Planning Table" (GPT).

The mission of the GPT is to inspire the Jewish Federation's collective global work and drive innovative solutions to important issues within the global Jewish community.

In the first phase of this new process, the GPT Committee established four Working Groups to research and discuss what are currently deemed to be the most pressing issues:

- Caring for the Most Vulnerable
- Strengthening Jewish Identity and Global Peoplehood
- Supporting Israel's Civil Society
- Developing Leadership and Community

"The Caring for the Most Vulnerable" working group's premise is that Federations need to focus on ensuring every Jew has their basic needs fulfilled regardless of where they live in the world.

The group is in the process of defining "basic needs," and discussing the tradeoffs between providing services and building self-sufficiency. Additionally they are discussing the diverse situations in different geographies, including the unique situation in Israel. They continue to focus on how different strategies such as direct service, capacity building, and bringing new and creative ideas related to ongoing processes and problems might be important in different areas of the world and for different populations.

The "Strengthening Jewish Identity and Global Peoplehood" working group is discussing the concept of the Jewish journeys of living, learning, and belonging.

Traveling with Jewish Taste®

Southeastern Connecticut:

History and Culture

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



Recently, Joel and I visited our new "machatunim" ("in-laws") in Southeastern Connecticut. Despite living less than ninety minutes away, I had never explored the area. I now learn that I have been missing something special.

New London and Waterford sit at the mouth of the Thames River just before the river empties into Long Island Sound. In the early nineteenth century, New London was the second busiest whaling port in the world after New Bedford, and the wealth accumulated from whaling is apparent in the city's architecture.

While the city has unfortunately lost much of its shipping and manufacturing industries, the area's maritime history is still evident everywhere you look. New London

boasts a total of eleven national register historic districts, among them Whale Oil Row.

The four identical Greek Revival buildings are beautiful reminders of New London's long-ago prosperity with tall Ionic columns and fine classical details. Built between 1835 and 1845 they were nicknamed for the men who purchased them with money made from association with the whaling industry.

The Historic Waterfront District chronicles the commercial development of the city in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Among the highlights there are Union Station, the Custom House, and the Georgian New London County Courthouse.

New London is also home to the United States Coast Guard Academy, and the harbor is home port to the Guard's cutter "Chinook" and the tall ship "Eagle," currently participating in the War of 1812 Bicentennial Commemoration, and Operation Sail 2012.

For a window into the maritime history of the area, a visit to Mystic Seaport is a must, and it is a mere fifteen minute drive to Stonington. This living history museum consists of a village, ships, and seventeen acres of exhibits depicting coastal life in New England in the 19th century.

While we have just married into the area, Jewish presence in New London dates to 1685, when a Dutch Jew brought the brigantine "Prosperous" to the port of New London.

Connecticut's Christian charter restricted Jewish and Catholic settlement, so Jews couldn't establish a recognized community in the state until 1843. The first Jews to make their home in New London were from Germany, and others followed.

The German Jewish community did not grow, but in 1885, the first of a wave of refugees from Eastern Europe and Russia began to arrive. These Orthodox Jews formed the Sick Benefit Society of Ahavath Chesed in 1892 and purchased land for a Jewish cemetery.

In 1894 the first kosher meat market

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According to their written report: "There was a strong sense that today's Jews need to define their own Jewish journeys in ways that link them to a shared Jewish story."

It was decided that in order to help strengthen Jewish identity around the world, there needs to be the right resources to ignite interest and provide access to modern, meaningful Jewish experiences. Jewish identity amongst Israelis was deemed to be a priority if being a global Jewish community is of importance.

The "Supporting Israel's Civic Society" group is working to define the term "civil society" and is focusing on issues of religious pluralism, racial and gender equality, treatment of minorities, social-economic gaps, and the relationship between haredim and the rest of Israeli society. The group is continuing to discuss whether Diaspora Jews have a role to play in strengthening Israel's civil society, and if so, what that role might be.

The "Developing Leadership and Community" working group is discussing the nature of vibrant and engaged Jewish communities that are built around learning, rituals, connections to Israel, and mutual responsibility. Their focus is on the human resources that are the foundation of strong communities, from visionary leaders to effective volunteers and professionals; as well as methods for attracting, developing and engaging those with diverse talents.

These four working groups will continue to meet throughout the summer and will make recommendations to the GPT Committee in the fall. Those recommendations will be synthesized into a single draft for feedback from local Federation communities.

The ultimate goal of the GPT process will be the development of a clear set of goals and focused strategies for addressing the highest priorities of the Jewish people.

For decades the Federation system has set and met goals that have made a real difference in the lives of the worldwide Jewish community. The GPT provides us with a new methodology for tapping into our collective will and bringing life and meaning to our deeply shared commitment to mutual responsibility and action.

I believe the results of the GPT process will once again allow the Federations of North America to be at the forefront of leading impactful change. I look forward to sharing the progress of this new initiative with you in future columns.

Special Note: The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires annual campaign kicked off on June 3 with a very successful "Super Sunday" which was followed by successful subsequent phone-a-thons, private solicitations, and our Major Donor Breakfast. As of the printing of this issue of the *Berkshire Jewish Voice* we are approximately halfway to our goal of \$725,000.

If you have already made your 2012 contribution, thank you. If you have yet to be reached by one of our solicitors, please don't wait. Feel free to send in your contribution, call the office to make a donation via credit card, or visit our website and click on the donation button.

While we have been able to maintain the majority of our programs and services during the last three economically challenging years, there are still unmet needs that we have the capacity to meet provided we having the funding to do so.

Please invest in our local and worldwide Jewish community by making your donation now.

Every contribution makes a difference. Thank you!

Arlene D. Schiff is Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. She may be reached at (413) 442-4360, ext. 12 or arlene.schiff@jewishberkshires.org

Join the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for a special evening featuring

The Zamir Chorale of Boston

Joshua Jacobson, Artistic Director



Noted by American Record Guide as "America's foremost Jewish choral ensemble"

Sunday, August 19 at The Colonial Theatre

111 South Street, Pittsfield

6 p.m. reception – 7:30 p.m. concert

To benefit the Older Adult Kosher Hot Meal Program

and a pre-concert reception honoring Arlene D. Schiff's 10th year as Executive Director

Tickets:

Tickets for the reception and concert are \$50

Tickets for the concert only are \$35.

Underwriting opportunities available.

Tickets may be purchased at The Colonial Theatre Box Office, 111 South Street, Pittsfield. Tickets picked up at the box office do not incur a handling fee. Tickets may also be purchased by calling (413) 997-4444 or online at www.BerkshireTheatreGroup.org. Please note Berkshire Theatre Group charges a \$5 handling fee per order for tickets purchased over the phone or online. For information, call (413) 442-4360, ext. 12.

The COLONIAL
Guest Presentation

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opened, and it remained in the hands of the Stoltz family until 1995. In a real-life reflection of an old joke, Ukrainian Jews organized their own congregation in 1895, but rejoined the Lithuanian-dominated Ahavath Chesed in 1905. Then, in 1911, many of the Ukrainians reestablished their congregation, the Ohave Sholom Sick Benefit Society, and, in 1919, built their own building.

New London, with its beautiful beach and refreshing sea air, became a vacation destination for Jews from Hartford and Springfield, and in 1925 a third Orthodox synagogue, Temple Israel, opened to cater to summer residents.

Conservative services began in 1924 at Congregation Beth El, and the congregation ultimately erected a building close to the beach, where younger Jewish families were settling.

In the late 1890s, German philanthropist Baron Maurice de Hirsch aimed to ease the plight of oppressed Jews from Eastern Europe through agriculture. With his financial backing—a \$900 loan to build a small wooden synagogue and a \$3,200 mortgage for the construction of a cooperative creamery for the production of butter, milk, and cream—about fifty families established a farming community in nearby Chesterfield.

The New England Hebrew Farmers of the Emanuel Society (NEHFES) worked in the cooperative creamery until the late 1920s, when the community disbanded. The creamery has been preserved as the state's twenty-fourth archaeological site, and NEHFES is now a non-profit organization made up of the community's descendants whose mission is to preserve its history.

Jerry Fischer, Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Eastern Connecticut is currently finishing up work on a documentary about the Jewish farmers of this area.

At the same time, Theodor Herzl's writings were becoming widely known, and interest in Zionism developed in the area. In 1899 a chapter of Chovevei Zion was established in New London, and in 1913 local jeweler and realtor Morris Mallove established a chapter of B'nai Zion. Mallove helped raise funds to purchase land in the Jezreel Valley of Palestine, near Afula. One hundred years later, the Afula-Gilboa area happens to be Connecticut's "Partnership 2000" community, as it is for

the Berkshires.

The area also offers some excellent cultural attractions. Saturday evening found us at the Eugene O'Neill Theater in Waterford. Named for America's only Nobel Prize-winning playwright, the 'O'Neill' is home to prominent theater arts programs, including the National Playwrights Conference, National Music Theater Conference, National Puppetry Conference, and the National Critics Institute.

Work first performed at the 'O'Neill' has gone on to Broadway, film, and television—and



Waterford's Eugene O'Neill Theater stage launched the career of Golden Globe winning actress Jennifer Garner

the theater has launched many well-known performers, including actor Michael Douglas and actress Jennifer Garner. Among plays developed at the O'Neill are Wendy Wasserstein's "Uncommon Women and Others," August Wilson's "Ma Rainey's Black," and "Avenue Q" by Robert Lopez.

The O'Neill focuses on plays

in development, so actors work with minimal props and no sets or costumes. We saw a reading of a new musical called "A Good Man." Frankly hesitant to sit through a two-and-a-half-hour reading, I was so exhilarated by the music and the singing

the time flew. The barn theater is so small that from my seat I could watch playwright Philip Goodman making notes on the script and mouthing the lyrics along with the actors.

O'Neill's childhood summer home, the Monte Cristo Cottage, is located in New London. A National Historic Landmark, the cottage is furnished to appear as it might have for the setting of the play "Long Day's Journey Into Night." The house also features exhibits about O'Neill's life and works, as well as artifacts and memorabilia that show how life in New London influenced him. My "machatanista" tells me that she grew up listening to the same foghorn that inspired O'Neill.

The major recreational attraction in the area is Ocean Beach, rated by *National Geographic* magazine a "best beach," with its sugar sand and wide, well-maintained boardwalk that offers amusement rides, minia-



A rare photo of New London Zionist leader Morris Mallove



Whale Oil Row



No longer extant, the cooperative creamery of The New England Hebrew Farmers of the Emanuel Society

Whipped Sweet Potatoes With Nutmeg and Lemon

Connecticut is known as the "Nutmeg State." Two stories explain the nickname, the first says that because its early inhabitants had the reputation of being so shrewd; they sold wooden nutmegs to unsuspecting buyers; but Elizabeth Abbe records a more sympathetic story in *Connecticut Magazine*. "Unknowing buyers may have failed to grate nutmegs, thinking they had to be cracked like a walnut. Nutmegs are wood, and bounce when struck. If southern customers did not grate them, they may very well have accused the Yankees of selling useless 'wooden' nutmegs, unaware that they wear down to a pungent powder to season pies and breads." This dish is great for a big family dinner.



Ingredients:

- 5 pounds yams, peeled and cut into two-inch cubes
- 8 tablespoons of butter at room temperature (use coconut oil for pareve)
- 3 tablespoons unsulfured molasses
- 2 teaspoons grated lemon rind

- 1-1/2 teaspoons ground nutmeg, fresh if possible
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Minced fresh parsley
- Grated lemon peel
- Ground nutmeg

Directions:

- Cook sweet potatoes in large pot of boiling salted water until tender, about fifteen minutes.
- Drain well.
- Transfer to large bowl and puree in mixer or food processor in batches.
- Return to pot.
- Mix in butter, molasses, grated lemon peel, and nutmeg.
- Season with salt and pepper.
- Transfer potatoes to serving bowl.
- Garnish with parsley, lemon, and nutmeg.

Serves 12

ture golf, and water park. Due to the proximity of the river to the Long Island Sound, swimming in the water is a pleasant, semi-salty affair.

Now that we have "discovered" southeastern Connecticut, we will be back.

Carol Goodman Kaufman is a psychologist and author with a passion for travel and food. She recently launched the blog "Food for Thought," on her website at carolgoodmankaufman.com. She invites visits and comments.



German philanthropist, Baron Maurice backed Jewish farming community

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'Monte Cristo Cottage,' playwright Eugene O'Neill's childhood summer home



Ocean Beach, National Geographic's 'best'



The U.S. Coast Guard's 'Eagle'