

# CONNECTIONS

Five members of a JSS Bereavement Support Group, including Sandy Porter and Robert Zitowsky, continue to get together monthly for dinner.



Sandy Porter, Robert Zitowsky, Joani Tortorice, Bea Levine, and Judy Pierotti

## “You Never Know Where Life is Going to Lead”

Sandy Porter’s tears still flow easily. It has been only a year since Lenard, her husband of 46 years, passed away. His death came unexpectedly and quickly, his illness lasting less than two weeks. “I was in a state of shock and disbelief,” Sandy recalls. A short time later, she learned that JSS was offering a Bereavement Support Group, a series of seven weekly meetings co-facilitated with HospiceCare, Inc. I said, yes, I’d go, because right now, I am looking for any help I can get to help my grieving.”

Robert Zitowsky’s story is somewhat different. His wife Terry was diagnosed with cancer four years earlier at the age of 43. Yet, there were only a couple of months where she appeared to be getting worse, according to Robert. Then suddenly, he found himself alone at home, with only the beloved family dog, Dottie for comfort.

Robert, too, was searching for support when he signed up for the Bereavement Group. Little did he know that he, Sandy and several other members would become friends. “Robert sent me an e-mail on the anniversary of Terry’s passing,” Sandy says. “I told him that I was here if he wanted to come over and share.” “You never know where life is going to lead,” Robert adds. “It’s nice to know other people. We’re almost like a family now – a little family.”

Intense feelings of grief often come in waves and one day can be very different from the next. Sandy will sometimes see a couple holding hands and her sadness will be overwhelming. Yet, other times, such as when she, Robert, Judy Pierotti, Bea Levine and Joani

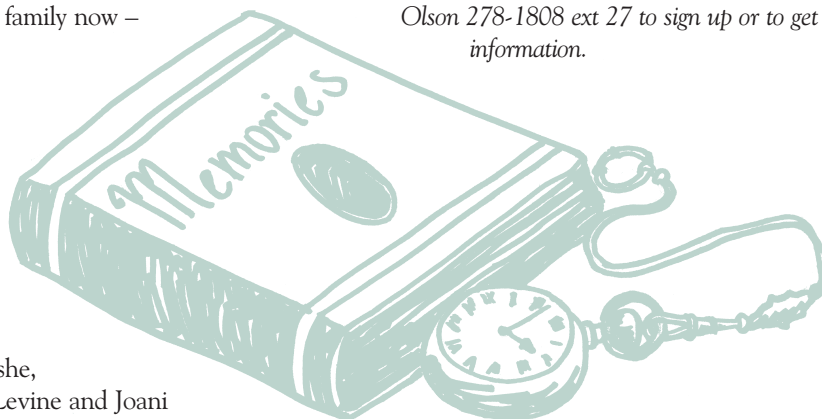
Tortorice, now former group members, get together for dinner, Robert is able to crack jokes and make the others laugh. “We check in with each other and bounce off what’s going on in our lives,” Sandy says of the once-a-month dinner meetings.

Sandy, Robert, Judy, Bea and Joani all say that the JSS Bereavement Support Group gave them a chance to “vent,” cry, talk and share with others who understand. For Judy, it was the loss of her father that brought her to the group; for Bea, who had just moved to Madison, it was the death of Harold, her husband of 58 years. Joani, who had lost her husband of 30 years, says, “The group brought me back to my orthodox family of origin.”

“I think that staying in contact helps keep the memories alive, says Judy. Even more than that, it gives her and the others an opportunity to say anything they need to say and to share it with those who have been in the same place.

“It’s very hard for people who haven’t lost anybody to know how it feels,” Sandy comments. “It’s not that time heals, but that you learn to adjust. I think that’s one of the reasons we decided to continue to get together. We were very open with each other. We really bonded, even though we came from different backgrounds and age groups.”

*JSS will be offering the next Bereavement Support Group beginning October 13th. Call Pamela Phillips Olson 278-1808 ext 27 to sign up or to get more information.*



## inside

Food for Thought 2

Tribute Donors, Friends of JSS, Endowments 3-9

Upcoming Group Programs 10

Russian Corner 11

Volunteer Connection 12

# Food For Thought

## Nourishing the Ones You Love

*Pseudonyms have been used in this article to ensure confidentiality.*

Ella's 86 year-old widowed mother, Lucy, lives alone in her own home, but can no longer drive. Out of town family members visit her several times a year, and neighbors occasionally stop by to run an errand or do a chore.

Ella noticed on her last visit that Lucy had been losing weight. Her dining room table was cluttered with calendars, bottles of pills, and old mail. Lucy said she had eaten tea and toast for breakfast and lunch, and when Ella asked what she would eat for dinner, Lucy replied "Oh, I have some frozen things."

JSS geriatric social worker Nancy Dodge says that Lucy is a classic case of an older adult who may have serious nutrition issues. "It's not uncommon for an elderly person to have a poor appetite or to have problems with food preparation or shopping," she says. "Lots of us don't eat right, but in an older person, poor nutrition can have serious consequences such as dehydration, skin breakdown, electrolyte imbalance and confusion."

Numerous underlying issues can cause changes in eating habits, say Nancy and Pam Robbins, dining services director at Oakwood Village West. "Potential physiological reasons may include intolerance of dairy products, and medications which affect taste or appetite," according to Pam. Older people often say that their taste buds have changed and that food just doesn't taste as good. They may be less hungry due to a decrease in physical activity or they may have dental or swallowing problems that make eating difficult.

Psychological or social factors can also contribute. Changes in eating habits can be associated with depression or dementia, Nancy says. The person may have problems getting out to shop or standing to prepare food. "It's not fun to cook or eat alone," she comments, and if the person's dining table is

now filled with junk mail and newspapers, "it's not pleasant to eat there." Pam notes that "older people who eat alone tend to eat less."

If an elderly person has moved to a nursing home or group setting, the food may be unfamiliar, and may not comply with ethnic or dietary customs such as *kashrut*. And, many nursing home and assisted living residents say that the food becomes monotonous.

*Lots of people don't eat right; but in an older person, poor nutrition can have serious consequences*

When family members notice weight loss or poor appetite, it is a signal that an assessment—both medical and psychosocial—is needed. Once problems are identified, families can find ways to address them, for example, by making shopping and cooking easier.

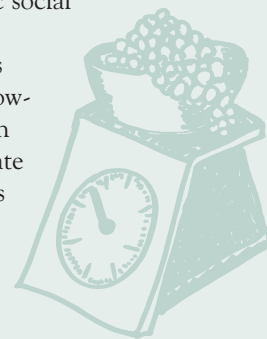
Lucy's family consulted with her physician and with a JSS social worker about their concerns.

The physician prescribed an antidepressant which stimulates the appetite. JSS began providing transportation to Lechayim, the JSS weekly senior luncheon. There Lucy could socialize while eating a nutritious meal. Meals on Wheels were delivered, with a bit of friendly conversation, at lunchtime on the other days. JSS provided a volunteer to pick up fresh groceries weekly and put them in small, easily used containers, and we suggested that Ella make her daily phone call at 5 PM so she could remind Lucy to eat dinner. Lucy cleaned off her table with her volunteer's assistance, and they put out a pretty placemat and favorite dishes nearby to make mealtime more pleasant. With these changes, Lucy was able to gain some weight, eat regular meals, and enjoy a wider variety of foods.

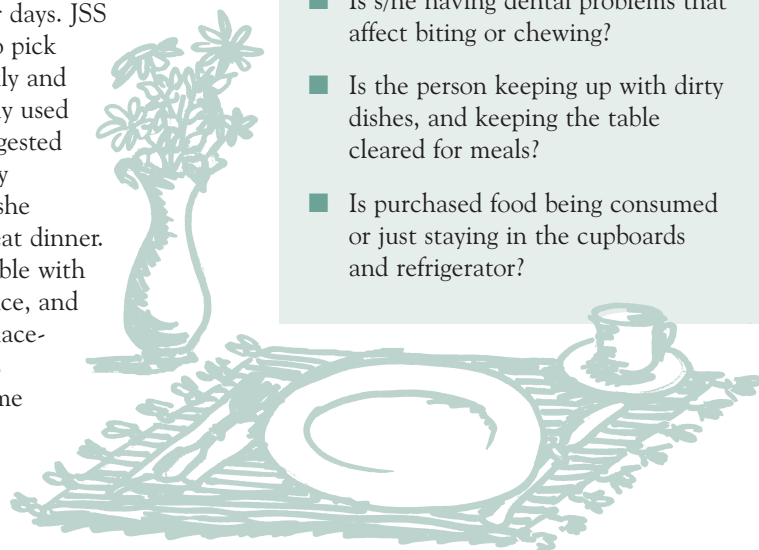
## Concerned about a Senior's Nutrition?

### Questions to Consider

JSS geriatric social worker Nancy Dodge suggests asking the following questions in order to evaluate an older adult's eating habits. If you suspect problems with nutrition, Nancy can help you assess them and suggest solutions. She can be reached at 278-1808 Ext 18.



- Has the older adult lost weight without dieting?
- Does s/he complain that food doesn't taste good any more?
- Does s/he complain that s/he doesn't like to eat alone?
- Is s/he able to get out to shop for food regularly?
- Is the kitchen organized so that the person can reach dishes and food items?
- Are all kitchen appliances working?
- Can the person still cook?
- Is s/he having dental problems that affect biting or chewing?
- Is the person keeping up with dirty dishes, and keeping the table cleared for meals?
- Is purchased food being consumed or just staying in the cupboards and refrigerator?



## JSS Offers A Sincere

# Thank You

for Your Tribute Gifts

*The following contributions were recorded between May 1, 2004 and July 15, 2004*

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*Nancy Dodge*

Glenna and Joseph Shutkin

*Marc Krasnick, get well*

Louise Goldstein and Bruce Thomadsen

*Kal and Bobbie Kunin, marriage of their grandson, Noah, to Stephanie Judge*

Rose and Leonard Steinig

*Noah Kunin-Goldsmith and Stephanie Judge, marriage*

Louise Goldstein and Bruce Thomadsen

*Kimberly Laufman, engagement*

June Klein Family

Lowell and Julia Lakritz

*Ruth and Seymour Levey, birth of 1st great-grandchild*

Rose and Leonard Steinig

*Marcia Lewis, speedy recovery*

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*Joshua Samuel Minkoff, Bar Mitzvah*

Esther and Kenneth Lange

*Nat's Gimmel teachers, Ellen Grossman and Liz Maier*

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*Dorothy Nelson, special birthday*

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*Armand Simon, get well*

Flo Sinaiko

*Doris and Armand Simon, happiness in new AZ home*

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*Jeanne Swack, get well soon*

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*UW Distinguished Alumni Award*

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We appreciate when you honor and remember others with a gift to JSS. Gifts that are unrestricted in nature allow JSS to use them where the greatest needs exist.

Every donation means a great deal to us. We have made every effort to make sure our thank you lists are accurate and complete, but if we have inadvertently neglected to list your name, please let us know. Call Sherry Minkus, 278-1808. Thank you.

# Thank You to Friends of JSS

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Last fiscal year, March 1-February 29, 2003/4, those of you listed on these pages provided 40% of the JSS operating budget. Some of you made an annual gift. Some honored a friend, colleague or loved one with a special donation. Some may have established an endowment which remains in perpetuity, providing JSS with annual interest income. Some remembered us in their wills. And some of you were able to help us in several ways. Regardless, you have all been true Friends, and we are eternally grateful.

Recently, you received a letter and envelope from JSS Board President, Judy Sidran. We hope that you find it in your hearts to respond once again. Your annual gift means that we will continue to be here for the over 800 individuals who seek our help each year, some of whom you've read about in the pages of Connections.

Because funding sources such as government, MJCC, the United Way and private foundations never have enough to provide recipient agencies with all we need, your personal annual gift is that much more important to us. Thank you for being such a good Friend.

As hard as we try, we may have left some names out. Please call us at 278-1808 so we can apologize and be sure to include your name in our next issue.

**Continued on page 5**

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**Continued on page 9**

## *Thank You to Friends of JSS (continued)*

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*These Lasting Tributes Help Support JSS Forever*

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# A Warm Welcome...

to Pamela Phillips Olson,  
JSS Group Work Coordinator/Case Worker

JSS extends a warm welcome to Pamela Phillips Olson, our new Group Work Coordinator/Case Worker. Pam is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She received her BA from Hunter College and her Master's degree from Yeshiva University's Wurzweiler School of Social Work, with a specialization in group work. Pam also earned a certification in Trauma Counseling and Corporate Counseling from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

As a clinical coordinator, Pam served severely emotionally disturbed youth and their families at the Mental Health Center of Dane County. She directed a birth to three project at United Cerebral Palsy, and served families of children with developmental disabilities through UW Waisman Center. As a private practice clinician, Pam has provided support to children, adults and



families. She has also presented workshops for professionals and community members. Pam has a special interest in bereavement counseling, learning and employment issues and post-traumatic stress.

As a Lechayim volunteer, Pam was awarded the Toby Rath New Volunteer Award. Her first volunteer and professional experiences were with the Staten Island Jewish Community Center, where she developed "Stepping Stones," a project for young children and parents. It is thriving today.

"I have a deep commitment to and belief in people's resiliency, especially in the ways individuals overcome adversity," Pam says. "I look forward to assisting individuals, spanning all age groups, and have plans to expand an already vibrant group work program."

## Looking Ahead at JSS Group Programs

We are very pleased to be continuing the tradition of supportive and interesting groups.

### **Bereavement Support Group**

Begins Wednesday, October 13  
6:00 - 7:30 P.M. at Temple Beth El

Drawing on Jewish traditions, this seven week group will offer a warm and comfortable place for those who have lost a loved one. To help you cope during this difficult time, the group will provide interpersonal support and strategies to help you reduce stress and isolation. For more information or to register, call Pamela Phillips Olson at 278-1808 extension #27.

We will also have another **Powerful Tools for Care Giving** course. This program was highly successful last year. It is designed to teach those who take care of others either at home or long distance, skills, strategies and ideas which will ease the stress of care giving. You will be hearing more about this soon.

### **Something Brand New!**

Are you contemplating retirement? Happily retired? Partially retired? Determined never to be retired?

Join us for **It's Hard Work Being Retired!.....** a one night program for women only.

The issues affecting women are distinctly different from those men confront. Negotiating the transition into retirement can sometimes seem daunting. Come to an informative evening and share concerns and ideas with other women.

**Keep this in mind for November!**  
**Date to be announced.**

Other programs can be offered by JSS in conjunction with groups which identify a specific support, educational or social need.

For more information please feel free to contact Pamela Phillips Olson at (608) 278-1808 Extension 27.

## Did you know..?

- JSS prides itself in guaranteeing access to all, regardless of financial means. We ensure that we can serve the "reluctant client" by removing fees as a barrier.
- In 2003, 35% of JSS clients had incomes under \$18,000 per year
- Last year, 13% of working age clients were unemployed
- JSS has controlled administrative and fund raising costs, which are less than 11% of total 2004 budgeted income and expenses.

## Jewish Social Services of Madison

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*Senior Services*

Francie Smith Saposnik, LCSW, Ext. 19  
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Nancy Dodge, LCSW, Ext. 18  
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*Group Programming*

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*Volunteer Services*

Louise Goldstein, APSW, Ext. 26  
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*Vehicle Donations*

Sherry Minkus, Ext. 12  
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Louise Goldstein, Barbara Mulhern,  
Pamela Phillips Olson, Barbara Spierer,  
*Contributing Writers*



# All They Need Is a Chance

**S**vetlana Karluk was a programmer when she left the Former Soviet Union. Like most who emigrate to the US, she found that her limited English, coupled with a very competitive job market made it necessary to start over. This meant accepting an entry level position outside her field. For now, Svetlana can only dream of working in her chosen specialty.

Many refugees make this professional sacrifice for the sake of their children. Concerned parents want to give their offspring opportunities they would never have in their homeland.

When the current wave of refugee resettlement began in the late 1980s, entry level positions were relatively plentiful. Employers welcomed these hard working, reliable and often highly educated individuals. Over the years, some were able to move into positions with more responsibility. Others reinvented themselves and found a niche in the American workforce.

Today, finding an entry level position can be a challenge. It seems that the poor US economy with millions of workers laid off or unable to find appropriate

employment, forced many native born individuals to take those entry level positions. "It's a buyers' market," says JSS Resettlement Coordinator, Janice Beers. "It's become extremely challenging to find jobs for those who recently immigrated to Madison." And job advancement eludes many.

JSS prepares Russian-speaking émigrés by assisting with applications, with interviews, with resume preparation and by providing English tutors. We can also arrange interpreter services during job orientation. However, according to Janice, "Networking seems to be the only way to land a job these days. We need the assistance of the community to help these refugees find work that will insure their financial independence." Historically, JSS has had a perfect record in job placement. If you know of employers who have opportunities, please contact Janice at 278-1808 Ext 17 or [janicejss@mjcc.net](mailto:janicejss@mjcc.net)



**Svetlana Karluk is a valued employee at Sentry Foods.**

# Good Food, Good Company and a Good Time

BY LOUISE GOLDSTEIN  
*Volunteer Coordinator/Senior Adult Program Coordinator*

**A** pleasant feeling of satisfaction drifted over the "day trippers" settling in for a cruise down the Milwaukee River in mid July. Some basked in the sunny afternoon breeze on the forward deck of the Edelweiss 2. Some sat comfortably at tables. Others kicked off their shoes and put up their feet.

This group of active seniors was enjoying the annual trip organized by Jewish Social Services. They traveled to Milwaukee to have lunch at the elegant Pieces of Eight Restaurant on Lake Michigan, with a spectacular view of the new wing of the Milwaukee Art Museum. Lunch was followed by a cruise on the Milwaukee River.

Marina Dobrovinskaya used a day off from work to join the outing. "This was my first experience," enthused Marina. "I liked everything!" I liked the guided tour along the river (narrated by a Milwaukee

Historical Society docent). It was a chance to see the city from a side I'd never seen from the street. JSS did a very, very good thing, and I'm looking forward to the next trip!" Regarding Pieces of Eight, Marina commented, "It was a very fancy restaurant, and well-located, as you could see the Art Museum."

Max and Evie Medow enjoyed last year's trip to Lake Geneva so much they jumped at the chance to join another excursion. Evie said, "It was so enjoyable. The company was good. I wished it was longer." Max opined that, "I don't know how you could have made it any better. The company was great. Even the bus driver was excellent, very congenial. That helps set the mood."

Beverly Bassin joined the trip to, "get away from my usual

surroundings." She was thrilled to once again be on Lake Michigan, which she misses, having lived in Chicago for many years. She loved looking at the countryside and, "ate up the scenery." She says, "All in all, it was a great trip!"

The outing was arranged by Jewish Social Services as part of its summer programming for older adults. It was underwritten in part by the Gwen and Herman Shapiro Endowment Fund.

For information about events and programs for seniors, contact Louise Goldstein at 278-1808 Ext 26 or [louisejss@mjcc.net](mailto:louisejss@mjcc.net).



# The Joy of Giving Back

BY LOUISE GOLDSTEIN

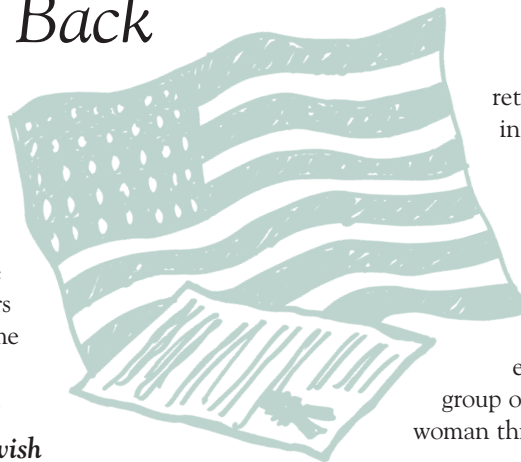
Volunteer Coordinator/Senior Adult Program Coordinator

Betty Bodenheimer is Midwestern born and bred; her husband Max came to Baltimore from Germany as a youth. When the Bodenheimers came "back" to Madison 10 years ago, Max was retired and Betty worked part-time as a receptionist for JSS. After she retired, they segued seamlessly into being volunteers for JSS.

## Tell me how you have volunteered for Jewish Social Services.

Betty: I tutored an elderly Russian lady in English as a Second Language. The proudest day of my life was when she got her citizenship! It was such an achievement; it took several years of us working together. She knew all about U.S. history, the Constitution, even that Washington had wooden teeth. I felt like I had passed the citizenship exam myself! I went with her when she was sworn in here in Madison and her only comment to me was, "I just want to vote." I had taken her with me a few times when I voted so she was familiar with the process.

Max: During the years I had my print and copy business in Baltimore, I always did taxes on the side. So, here I prepare tax



returns for some JSS clients. I also tutored a couple in English as a Second Language.

Betty: I also visit two elderly ladies every week; one of them is the woman I tutored. Her family takes good care of her but she is in need of company. The other woman is in an assisted living facility. We might sit outside on the beautiful grounds or look at the excellent art displays there. I also schedule a group of JSS volunteers who spend time with a disabled woman through the Hand in Hand program.

## Why do you volunteer?

Betty: Most of what I do is for me. I enjoy it; I get such satisfaction. I think the people I volunteer with enjoy it too. I like people and this is very rewarding – it just is.

## Why did you choose to volunteer for Jewish Social Services?

Betty: I like JSS, my friends on the staff are there, and it's like going back to family.

Max: To give something back to the community. I arrived from Germany on the Kindertransport before my parents came. I became a ward of the Jewish Family and Child Service in Baltimore and they took care of me. It's "payback."

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