



## Press Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact:** Nina Glaser, Communications Coordinator  
**Phone:** 561-909-7014 (cell)  
**Email:** Nina.Glaser@AlpertJFS.org

### **FERD & GLADYS ALPERT JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE AND MELVIN J. & CLAIRE LEVINE JEWISH RESIDENTIAL & FAMILY SERVICE VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS “WE ARE HERE/ WE’LL BE THERE” THEME**

**WEST PALM BEACH, FL – June 30, 2020** – This year’s annual meeting for Ferd & Gladys Alpert Jewish Family Service (Alpert JFS) and Melvin J. & Claire Levine Jewish Residential & Family Service (Levine JRFS), attended by 160 people, was different from previous years, as it was an entertaining virtual gathering, complete with a musical performance. A full program recapped 2019-2020, and ushered in 2020-2021, with Scott Greenberg, owner of ComForCare Home Care, as Master of Ceremonies.

Greenberg welcomed attendees, discharged the 2019-2020 Board of Directors, and Installed the 2020-2021 Board. Rabbi Moshe Scheiner, of Palm Beach Synagogue, delivered a meaningful *D’var Torah* (a talk relating to the weekly Torah portion); outgoing President Michael A. Lampert, Esq. delivered his farewell address; incoming President Zelda Mason delivered her inaugural address; two clinical professionals who have been with the agency more than 25 years shared reminiscences about its important impact on the community; the graduating teen participants of the Alpert JFS “Relationships & Decisions for Teens” program were recognized; awards were presented to outstanding volunteers; and Marc D. Hopin gave his first message as Alpert JFS and Levine JRFS CEO.

Hopin referenced the tears that have flowed during the pandemic, and how the tears of frustration and sorrow turned to tears of happiness, as clients became aware of how much we care, are able to listen, and give help and hope. Tears of joy that come from deep gratitude are beautiful to behold, should be remembered, and compel us to take action.

A new Agency Video, “We Are Here”, (see it at <https://bit.ly/AJFS2020vid>) made a debut, showing the strength and resilience of Alpert JFS and Levine JRFS during an unprecedented time in world history. Despite a global pandemic, Alpert JFS and Levine JRFS continued to meet the needs of isolated seniors, Holocaust survivors, and clients in the Residential Program. Telephone calls from the most vulnerable community members in the Greater Palm Beaches were answered, best practices were reimagined, and new protocols established to enable the agencies’ professionals to serve successfully from a distance.

Lampert expressed thanks to the professional and volunteer staff of the agencies, as well as board members, leadership of partner agencies, and his family, speaking of the importance of community: “It is not about us, it is about the people we serve; our community,” he said. “We are here, we have always been here, and with everyone’s support, I know that we can meet the challenges of the people and community we serve so that we will always be here.”

Mason, starting her term as President and Board Chair during a challenging time, spoke of the agencies’ committed teams. “During this pandemic, we have seen the agility and dedication of 200 employees of Alpert JFS and Levine JRFS. We can be proud in knowing that they will continue to provide outstanding service, no matter what obstacles they face.” She likened the agencies to family, saying, “We consider the community our extended family. When our agencies serve a client, our care extends to the client’s entire family.”

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"I have been so proud watching this agency work to remove stigma and dispel the myth that issues like mental illness, domestic abuse, or addiction don't happen in Jewish households," said Alpert JFS Clinical Director Dr. Rotenberg. "The people who turn to Jewish Family Service are not just "needy people" but they are people with needs (who) turn to us because they have grown to trust our integrity, and the quality of the services that we provide. Doing everything we can to ensure that the community continues to put their trust in us...trusting us to care, to offer support and guidance and direction to the most vulnerable, to those that are hurting most in our community is something that we can never -- and never do -- take lightly."

Alpert JFS Chief Programs Officer Elyse Jacobson, with Alpert JFS for 26 years, shared the evolution of programs and services during her tenure, saying, "Today, we touch the lives of hundreds of Holocaust survivors...We currently manage the needs of over 50 wards through our Guardianship program who otherwise would have no one...We now have two group homes and a supported independent living apartment program to meet the housing needs of people with disabilities...Today, Alpert JFS is the Palm Beach County Coordinator of Mental Health First Aid. In an effort to destigmatize mental illness, more than 6,000 individuals have been trained to identify and respond to someone exhibiting a mental health issue. We are a different agency today than in 1994, but one thing has remained consistent -- our commitment to the agency mission of *Tikkun Olam* -- healing the world, one person at a time."

Volunteer Awards, established in memory of people who hold a special place in the hearts of Alpert JFS, Levine JRFS, and the Jewish community for their contributions to the agencies, were presented virtually by staff representatives to honorees who gave virtual acceptance speeches. View the awards ceremony at <https://bit.ly/AJFS-2020awards>.

- The **Bernie Silbert Volunteer Award**, given in recognition of professional services contributed to assist Alpert JFS, was bestowed upon **Kevin Shapiro**, of Shapiro/Pertnoy Companies, by Sara Walsh, LCSW, Program Director of Domestic Abuse, and Robert Pease, Director of I.T. & Facilities at the agency. Kevin and his team of contractors and vendors have worked for more than a decade, contributing to the improvement of our community every day on MLK Day of Service, with many of the lucky recipients having included Alpert JFS Group Home residents, and Alpert JFS clients.
- The **Bob Schweitzer Volunteer Award**, that recognizes an individual who shared their professional services with the agency, was given to Palm Beach Dentist **Dr. Mitchell Josephs** by Director of Long Term Care Jennifer Weems-Escobar, for providing free dental work to Alpert JFS Holocaust Survivor Assistance Program clients.
- The **Linda White Volunteer Award**, established in memory of a former volunteer coordinator at the agency, is given to a person who exemplifies the notion of *Tikkun Olam* (Hebrew for "acts of kindness to perfect or repair the world"), was presented to **Arnold Fish** by Mansum Bradshaw, Director of the Levine JRFS Apartment Program, and Ralph Pittman, Activity Center Director.
- The inaugural **Sol Freedman Volunteer Award**, presented to a volunteer who enhances the lives of those he or she touches at the Levine JRFS Activity Center, was bestowed upon Phylis Newman by Carolyn Yasuna, Director of Alpert JFS' Jewish Addiction Outreach & Support program.

New for 2020 was the **Alpert JFS Award of Distinction**, a special merit for an individual or institution that resulted in a positive change for the agency, that was conferred upon **Flagler Bank** by CFO Margie Perez, for their assistance in a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Loan. Bank President Edward C. Sterling accepted on the institution's behalf.

"The mission of our agencies is to strengthen community by helping people during challenging times in their lives. The pandemic is our most challenging time. Our Jewish community has felt the effects," said Hopin. "We helped hundreds of people bridge the gap. We have made rent and mortgage payments, delivered hot meals prepared by The Kind Kitchen of Palm Beach, paid electric bills, provided food from our kosher food pantry and distributed Publix gift cards. We have also been able to provide counseling, psychiatry, and child psychology services. We continue to care for hundreds of seniors, including 50 wards in our Guardianship program, and 34 residents in our Group Homes and Apartment Program.

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We are doing outreach...and holding meetings online, as are all of our support groups...We are Here...and We'll Be There!"

Hopin's comments led to the musical close of the evening, with a performance of 'We'll Be There,' with new, original lyrics written to the tune of The Jackson 5's "I'll Be There" by Alpert JFS staff. See it – and hum along – at <https://bit.ly/AJFS-there>.

The entire meeting can be viewed online at <https://bit.ly/AJFS2020mtg>.

Established in 1974, Ferd & Gladys Alpert Jewish Family Service is a nationally accredited service provider for children, adults, seniors, and Holocaust survivors. The non-profit, non-sectarian organization is a trusted leader, with a team of nearly 200 highly skilled professionals delivering high-quality care to community members. Alpert JFS works to ensure the well-being of children and families, independence of older adults and quality-of-life for individuals with disabilities. For more information, visit [www.AlpertJFS.org](http://www.AlpertJFS.org) or phone 561-684-1991.

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Marc Hopin



Zelda Mason



Michael A. Lampert





Alpert JFS Staff – “We Are Here” agency video



Alpert JFS Staff performing “We’ll Be There”