Volunteers uncover the lost souls of the Holocaust at Polish Jewish cemetery

BIALYSTOK, AN INDUSTRIAL CITY of 300,000 in northeastern Poland close to Belarus, is best known internationally as the birthplace for two things: the Esperanto language, and the tasty bialy – often compared to an onion-stuffed bagel without a hole.

Before World War II, the city was also a hotbed of Jewish culture. In the 1930s, 50 percent of the city’s population was Jewish. Today that figure is zero percent. The dilapidated Bagnowka Cemetery is the last reminder that a Jewish community ever existed here.

Since 2016, Massachusetts couple Amy and Josh Degen have come to Bagnowka every August, recruiting volunteers to join them to repair, clean, and paint headstones and clear the cemetery of overgrown vegetation. Founders of the grassroots Bialystok Cemetery Restoration Fund (BCRF), the Degens – owners of a Groton-based landscaping service – have helped to rapidly accelerate the repair of toppled Matzevot (gravestones) using

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6
Protesters in Greater Boston see threat to Israeli democracy in judicial divide

By GAVI KLEIN
JOURNAL STAFF

On a Monday afternoon in late July, Sophie Shnaper arrived in Newton Centre to do what she’s been doing for nearly seven months: Organizing protests in Boston to defend democracy in Israel. Boston for Democracy in Israel, the group formed largely on social media by Shnaper and eight others, exists as a parallel protest movement to the mass demonstrations that have taken place in Israel for the last seven months. Nonviolent protests in Israel have been the widespread public response to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s proposed judicial overhaul, which opponents, like Shnaper, say could be the end of democracy there.

The nine founding volunteers of the Boston protest group range in age, career, citizenship, and background, but are united under the conviction that Israel must remain a democratic state. At the weekly or biweekly demonstrations they’ve been organizing since the end of January—which usually draw 150 to 500 protestors—speakers from a variety of backgrounds address the crowd. They include Israeli and Jewish-American experts in law, history, economics, political science, and social activism, as well as rabbis and other leaders in the Jewish community.

Late last month, hours before Boston for Democracy in Israel rallied in Newton Centre, the Knesset—in a 64-0 vote by Netanya- hu’s far-right allies, with opposition leaving the floor in protest—passed a controversial amendment removing one of the only checks on the government’s power: stripping the Supreme Court of the ability to block government decisions. The law is part of Netanyahu’s judicial overhaul plan that aims to strip power from the courts, which generally act as a protector of civil rights and rule of law in Israel.

The new law has raised concerns of a constitutional crisis in the country should the Supreme Court itself attempt to strike it down this coming fall. Shula Gilad, who currently lives in Brookline, grew up in Israel and is a former cancer researcher. She has lived in the United States for the last 13 years, and asserts the issue is not just an internal Israeli matter.

“Boston for Democracy in Israel protesters at Newton Centre.

The new law has raised concerns of a constitutional crisis in the country should the Supreme Court itself attempt to strike it down this coming fall. Shula Gilad, who currently lives in Brookline, grew up in Israel and is a former cancer researcher. She has lived in the United States for the last 13 years, and asserts the issue is not just an internal Israeli matter.

“This old doctrine of ‘We support democracy in Israel, no matter what’… it is not only legitimate to oppose this government agenda, but it is our duty,” she said. “Netanyahu has told foreign media that the change would strengthen democracy. But, according to Israeli polls, at least half of the country believes the opposite. And many Israelis believe that the proposal is being pushed through to protect Netanyahu, who is facing a series of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust charges in court.

This has galvanized Shnaper and other Boston-area Israelis who oppose Netanyahu’s coalition—which is the most right-wing in the country’s history—and also includes ultra-religious MPs who have demanded more funding for West Bank settlements and yeshivas. Shnaper believes that Netanyahu is changing the balance of secular-religious life in Israel, and threatening the coexistence the country’s large blend of residents has led for 75 years.

“We are on the path of the estab- lishment of a Jewish fundamental- istic state, where only the Orthodox version of Judaism is the one that will prevail,” Shnaper said. “There is a removal of all democratic norms, freedoms … We clearly state that this government is illegitimate and it has to fall. There is no compromise that we can accept with this government.”

Shula Gilad is another Boston-ar ea Israeli and member of the protest group. She is a senior fellow at the Law School, and views the new legis- lation as “the opening of a floodgate.”
This law is not a simple adjustment,” she said. “It’s a Basic Law, similar to a constitutional system. It’s very critical… it’s a law that enables a lot of other laws to be passed. They chose this particular law because it enables them such complete power… after that it’s like a tsunami that you can’t stop in so many ways.”

“It is the worst disappointment,” said Elie Mazor of Peabody, who grew up in Jerusalem and has lived on the North Shore for much of the last 60 years. “The talk of a lot of people is about leaving Israel, but really no one really wants to leave, ” Mazor said. “No, not at all… after that it’s like a tsunami that everyone is about leaving Israel, but I think what’s happening will pass. There’s no reason for me to give up. I’ll really consider if and when to come back. The people who support the reform are truly baffled why this vote or this law that was passed was such a big deal to the left,” she said. “And I think it’s not that it’s this law, it’s everything that it represents… It was always obvious to me that I would move back to Israel when I was done with my studies, and I never doubted that. This is the first time that now I have to think about it… if in three or half a four years when I’m ready to come back after my degree, and Israel no longer looks the same, then yeah, I’ll really consider if and when to come back."
I’m a rabbi who survived the Pittsburgh synagogue attack. Killing the shooter won’t bring my slain congregants back

By RABBI JONATHAN PECK

CHAIRMAN, FORWARD.COM

I’m a rabbi who witnessed the 2018 mass shooting at Tree of Life Congregation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, that took the lives of 11 Jews. I have reached out to other rabbis and recruited them to study Jewish texts together on a weekly basis. I’ve tried to embrace levity, too. Following the lead of Norman Cousins—a journalist who purportedly healed himself from a serious connective tissue disease with laughter—I made my personal list of 30 movies that make me laugh out loud with each subsequent viewing. I created a lecture series for our synagogue celebrating local Jewish celebrities like Barney Dreyfuss, who invented the World Series. I’ve found joy in the many landmarks that keep Pittsburgh weird, from the Church Brewery to Bicycle Heaven to the weird, from the Church Brewery to Bicycle Heaven. I've tried to embrace levity, too. Following the lead of Norman Cousins—a journalist who purportedly healed himself from a serious connective tissue disease with laughter—I made my personal list of 30 movies that make me laugh out loud with each subsequent viewing. I created a lecture series for our synagogue celebrating local Jewish celebrities like Barney Dreyfuss, who invented the World Series. I've found joy in the many landmarks that keep Pittsburgh weird, from the Church Brewery to Bicycle Heaven to the weird, from the Church Brewery to Bicycle Heaven. I've tried to embrace levity, too. Following the lead of Norman Cousins—a journalist who purportedly healed himself from a serious connective tissue disease with laughter—I made my personal list of 30 movies that make me laugh out loud with each subsequent viewing. I created a lecture series for our synagogue celebrating local Jewish celebrities like Barney Dreyfuss, who invented the World Series. I've found joy in the many landmarks that keep Pittsburgh weird, from the Church Brewery to Bicycle Heaven to the weird, from the Church Brewery to Bicycle Heaven.
Netanyahu is threatening the once undying support of American Jews for Israel

By DAVID M. SHRIBMAN

JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

There are two vital questions that dare not speak their name: Is Israel in 2023 at a politically fateful, or even morally fatal, turning point? Or is this moment in Israeli history the equivalent of the revolutionary year of 1848 in Europe, when, as the English historian A.J.P. Taylor put it in an entirely different context, "German history reached its turning-point and failed to turn?"

"These are not crazy questions to ask," said David Medincoff, associate professor of Middle Eastern Studies and Public Policy at UMass Amherst.

The story of Israel depends on the answer. The relationship between American Jews and the Jewish state depends on it. The security of Israel depends on it.

The indications are ominous. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition seeks not to reform the court but to neuter its governing regime isn't. This doesn't please anyone, not even those who regarded the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement as outré warriors.

"People have felt a strong affinity for Israel," said Medincoff. "But Israel's politics is increasingly influenced by rightwing ultra-nationalist sentiments and people. That's not the most popular in the United States, but it's there. And that's not just the question the existence of Israel, and the questions that dare not speak their names – not just the ones at the beginning of this essay, but more fundamental questions, the kind that are sometimes, and too casually, described as "existential" – are being asked everywhere.

For these questions call into question the existence of Israel, and the existence of the ties American Jews have, or had, with Israel: the ties that bind, and that are unbound now.

Jews are a questioning people, but the tragedy is that these questions – once off the table, once all but forbidden among American Jews, once beyond conceivable – are being raised at all. They are being raised because Israel has fallen from its pedestal, from its special place in American life, above all from its special place in the lives of American Jews.

"The evidence of disaffection is everywhere," On Tisha B'Av last month, Andrew Rehfeld, the president of Hebrew Union College, noted how appropriate the reading from the Book of Lamentations was: "I am distressed, my inwards are rolled, my heart churns within me. For surely I have rebelled."

Then he added: "As our hearts churn watching Israel's government weaken its Supreme Court's ability to check its democratic excesses, to invoke Abraham Heschel's powerful image, we stand in solidarity with all those on the ground praying with their feet." It is not unimportant that Rehfeld is a political scientist.

Then consider the reaction in the New York Times, not to be dismissed with a smirk for its political profile. Thomas L. Friedman, reflecting Joe Biden's disaffection with Netanyahu, wrote a piece bearing the title "Joe Biden May Be the Last Pro-Israel Democratic President." Nicholas Kristof wrote a Times column addressing the notion that the U.S. might cease, or curtail, its economic support of Israel. "This is not about whacking Israel," he wrote. "But does it really make sense for the United States to provide the enormous sum of $3.8 billion annually to another wealthy country?"

Do you suppose the three sentences quoted in the paragraph above would have been written – would even have been contemplated – had Mr. Netanyahu not pursued this path? To ask the question is to answer it.

So, the tragedy of this episode is that the questions that dared not speak their names – not just the ones at the beginning of this essay, but more fundamental questions, the kind that are sometimes, and too casually, described as "existential" – are being asked everywhere. For these questions call into question the existence of Israel, and the existence of the ties American Jews have, or had, with Israel: the ties that bind, and that are unbound now.
Volunteers uncover the lost souls of the Holocaust

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

mechanized equipment. Previously, volunteers had laboriously moved them by hand.

Last summer, after a two-year hiatus due to the global COVID pandemic, the BCRF volunteers unexpectedly addressed a grisly post-war crime that had been ignored for more than six decades. A giant mound of earth, used by local children as a playground and sledding hill, was believed to contain discarded Jewish tombstones and human remains. Despite persistent requests from the neighborhood to investigate, local officials refused to look into the matter for years. On the Jewish side, strong taboos against disturbing the dead prompted Polish rabbis not to press for excavation, either.

Under the Communist regime, the Białystok city government leveled the downtown Rabbinic Cemetery (1811-1900) to make room for Central Park and a new Communist Party headquarters. City trucks hauled the desecrated gravestones to the Bagnówka Cemetery and buried them outside the current fence on reserve cemetery land later reclaimed for a housing subdivision.

With the ashes of the Chief Rabbi of Poland and city officials giving the green light for the Bagnówka mound's excavation last year, the volunteers first delicately explored the site with a hand shovel. The mound was approximately 300 feet long by 150 feet wide with 15 feet high.

"Within 15 minutes, we found three stones very near the surface that were dated 1812, 1831, and 1851," said Josh Degen. "The Bagnowka Cemetery didn't open until 1891. The only thing left there were broken stones could have come from was the Rabbinic Cemetery. I'm horri- fied by the disrespect for the dead. These people who lived their whole lives in the city were put in a truck, taken to the outskirts of a subdivision miles away, and buried to hide their existence."

Subsequent digging with an excavator found 123 boulder-style Matzevot, one huge granite slab, and a significant amount of human remains, which were later wrapped in tallit and given a Jewish burial ceremony by the Chief Rabbi of Poland.

"When you take a stone away from a burial site, you no longer know that was there," said Amy Degen. "You don't even know it's even a cemetery anymore. So they completely wiped out all memory of the Jewish people in the city. It really blows my mind how someone would even consider taking a stone."  

Dr. Heidi Szpek documents recently recovered Jewish tombstones in Białystok, Poland.  

This year, the Degens will bring an excavator to a similar mound located across the street from the city's Opera House. The Białystok Cemetery Restoration Fund is working closely with an architect from the Białystok University of Technology on a memorial design incorporating the recovered stones. The memorial will be located in Central Park, on the grounds of the former Rabbinic Cemetery.

"When you take a stone away from a burial site, you no longer know that was there," said Amy Degen. "You don't even know it's even a cemetery anymore. So they completely wiped out all memory of the Jewish people in the city. It really blows my mind how someone would even consider taking a stone."

Mending memory: Beginning the healing process

Central Washington University Professor Heidi Szpek, an expert in biblical Hebrew, has been translating and documenting Bagnówka Matzevot since 2004, and has been volunteering for the Białystok Cemetery Restoration Fund since 2016.

"Especially important to me is the idea of mending memory, not just in general society, but of indi- vidual people. No one should have their name erased from history," she says. "So one major goal is to bring back these names because those stones may be the only record of their existence, given the devasta- tion and destruction of all other records."

"Our other goal is to acknowl- edge what happened in the past, while recognizing that the people who live in Białystok today did not do this. So what we do is to help especially the young people learn about the atrocities of the past, but remembering that we can move forward," Szpek added. "If you’re not aware of the sins of the past, how can you go forward in a hopefully more enlightened frame of mind? I think the city government’s cooperation in this effort is amazing. It’s also a healing process for them, too."

For the first time this summer — volunteering usually is scheduled for mid-August to coincide with the anniversary of the 1943 Bialystok Ghetto Uprising — the BCRF board members will be mentoring two history students from Suffolk Uni- versity. The university is launching a four-credit internship this year in Jewish Culture, Language and Global Culture department.

Suffolk is not the first educational institution to send students to help restore neglected Eastern European Jewish cemeteries. Every summer, Dartmouth College Hillel sponsors “Project Preservation,” which takes a group of students from a mix of ethnic and religious backgrounds to Holocaust sites.

In recent years, the Dartmouth students have worked at cemeteries in Poland, Belarus, Greece, Korea, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Russia.

Barbara Abrams, the chair of the Suffolk University History, Lan- guage and Global Culture depart- ment, was inspired to launch the internship program after a chance encounter with the Degens at a bar mitzvah. She also cites a recent genealogy-themed trip to Lithuania with her husband, Rabbi David Kudan of Temple Ahavat Achim in Gloucester, as driving interest in a Holocaust studies program.

"One of the concentrations of Suffolk’s public history program is actually the study of monuments," Abrams said. "Genealogists, of course, are monuments and the act of restoring them is something you just can’t experience through a textbook or digital media.

The first two inaugural Suffolk interns this summer were American History graduate Eliza- beth Gilna and junior History and Global Cultural Studies major Neka Vladimirov.

"I want to volunteer at Białystok because it will give me the oppor- tunity to help prevent the collective memory of the Jewish community’s existence from being lost," Vladimirov said. "Furthermore, on a more personal note, my father was only able to immigrate to Amer- ica because of the Soviet Union’s expansive attitude towards Jewish people. I want to learn more about Ashkenazi culture and be in touch with my roots by experiencing it firsthand."

Białystok genealogy: Reuniting ancestors with descendents

According to Amy Degen, Bagnówka Cemetery can expect up to 60 volunteers coming from the United States, Israel, and Europe this summer. An avid genealogy enthusiast with family roots in Białystok, Degens feels great joy in “reuniting” families through the repair and discovery of previously vanished landmarks.

A sizeable contingent of this year’s volunteer crew will be from the same family: 15 members of the Pearlson family (two from the U.S. and 13 from Israel) will be making the trek to their ancestral home.

“In 2019, my sister Devorah and I restored the headstones of my grandmother Pearl Perej, and great grandmother Chana Perej. The clos- est thing to a miracle happened just as we finished our work,” recalled David Pearlson of West Stockbridge.

“I said to my sister that it was too bad we didn't have a minyan pres- ent to say Kaddish for honor not just our grandmothers, but for all those in the cemetery. And then, out of nowhere, like the Red Sea parting, a van of yeshiva students pulls up and unloads.

I remember they were looking for their Rebbe's grave,” he added. “We said Kaddish for all the forgotten souls, something (Jenster gans) I suspect hasn't happened in nearly 75 years.”

The Białystok Cemetery Restoration Fund operates without any major insti- tutional support and depends fully on private donations to rent in construc- tion equipment and buy supplies. To make a donation, please visit www.bialystokcemeteryrestoration.org.
Interim rabbi ready to guide Marblehead’s Temple Emanu-El into future

By GAVI KLEIN

correspondent

MARBLEHEAD – Rabbi Darryl Crystal may hold a record for serving the most congregations in the United States in the last two decades. During that time, he developed a niche as an interim rabbi – leading congregations for one or two years at a time in Madison, Wis., Chester, Conn., Shikor, Ill., Newburgh, N.Y., Hyde Park, Ill., Baltimore, Md., Cherry Hill, N.J., Savannah, Ga., San Antonio, Texas, Durham, N.C., Westwood, Mass., Omaha, Neb., Los Angeles, Fairfax Station, Va., Pittsburgh, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Lexington, Mass.

On July 1, Crystal landed at his 183rd interim post, at Temple Emanu-El in Marblehead. The Reform synagogue said goodbye to beloved Rabbi David Meyer after 31 years of service. As Temple Emanu-El’s Executive Director Jaime Meyers described it, “It’s not a matter of going into a hole, but of dealing with the transition.”

“I did this for a while and I really got to be of help to congregations,” Crystal said.

At Temple Emanu-El, getting used to a new presence is the key to a future harmony with a new rabbi, said Jaime Meyers. “(Rabbi Meyer) is such a beloved figure for our community, it will take us some time to move past it. Having someone that’s able to help us with the change, to have this one year as a palate cleanser, will allow us to be more successful in the future when our new, permanent senior rabbi will start in the fall.”

Crystal is looking forward to his year with Emanu-El. “They’re a very warm, welcoming group of folks,” he said of the congregation, staff and leadership. “I couldn’t be happier.”

Rabbi Darryl Crystal

By GAVI KLEIN
correspondent

MARBLEHEAD – Rabbi Darryl Crystal may hold a record for serving the most congregations in the United States in the last two decades. During that time, he developed a niche as an interim rabbi – leading congregations for one or two years at a time in Madison, Wis., Chester, Conn., Shikor, Ill., Newburgh, N.Y., Hyde Park, Ill., Baltimore, Md., Cherry Hill, N.J., Savannah, Ga., San Antonio, Texas, Durham, N.C., Westwood, Mass., Omaha, Neb., Los Angeles, Fairfax Station, Va., Pittsburgh, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Lexington, Mass.

On July 1, Crystal landed at his 183rd interim post, at Temple Emanu-El in Marblehead. The Reform synagogue said goodbye to beloved Rabbi David Meyer after 31 years of service. As Temple Emanu-El’s Executive Director Jaime Meyers described it, “It’s not a matter of going into a hole, but of dealing with the transition.”

“I did this for a while and I really got to be of help to congregations,” Crystal said.

At Temple Emanu-El, getting used to a new presence is the key to a future harmony with a new rabbi, said Jaime Meyers. “(Rabbi Meyer) is such a beloved figure for our community, it will take us some time to move past it. Having someone that’s able to help us with the change, to have this one year as a palate cleanser, will allow us to be more successful in the future when our new, permanent senior rabbi will start in the fall.”

Crystal is looking forward to his year with Emanu-El. “They’re a very warm, welcoming group of folks,” he said of the congregation, staff and leadership. “I couldn’t be happier.”

Rabbi Darryl Crystal

By GAVI KLEIN
correspondent

MARBLEHEAD – Rabbi Darryl Crystal may hold a record for serving the most congregations in the United States in the last two decades. During that time, he developed a niche as an interim rabbi – leading congregations for one or two years at a time in Madison, Wis., Chester, Conn., Shikor, Ill., Newburgh, N.Y., Hyde Park, Ill., Baltimore, Md., Cherry Hill, N.J., Savannah, Ga., San Antonio, Texas, Durham, N.C., Westwood, Mass., Omaha, Neb., Los Angeles, Fairfax Station, Va., Pittsburgh, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Lexington, Mass.

On July 1, Crystal landed at his 183rd interim post, at Temple Emanu-El in Marblehead. The Reform synagogue said goodbye to beloved Rabbi David Meyer after 31 years of service. As Temple Emanu-El’s Executive Director Jaime Meyers described it, “It’s not a matter of going into a hole, but of dealing with the transition.”

“I did this for a while and I really got to be of help to congregations,” Crystal said.

At Temple Emanu-El, getting used to a new presence is the key to a future harmony with a new rabbi, said Jaime Meyers. “(Rabbi Meyer) is such a beloved figure for our community, it will take us some time to move past it. Having someone that’s able to help us with the change, to have this one year as a palate cleanser, will allow us to be more successful in the future when our new, permanent senior rabbi will start in the fall.”

Crystal is looking forward to his year with Emanu-El. “They’re a very warm, welcoming group of folks,” he said of the congregation, staff and leadership. “I couldn’t be happier.”

Rabbi Darryl Crystal
SAT., AUG 12TH & SUN., AUG 13TH
TriCityTaxFree.10.5x11.AUG2022.indd   1

MANY APPLIANCES ARE IN STOCK! NEW INVENTORY IS ARRIVING!
ON ALL SCRATCH AND DENTS, ONE-OF-A-KINDS, CLOSEOUTS,
if purchased on Saturday, August 12, 2023
2 DAYS ONLY!
FLOOR MODELS AND OVERSTOCK APPLIANCES.

CALL OR TEXT AT EITHER OF OUR LOCATIONS!!!
PHONE NUMBERS:
Ipswich, MA: 978-744-6100
Salem, MA: 978-412-0033

SHOP ONLINE:  www.tri-city-sales.com

WEEKEND
95 Turnpike Rd./Rte. 1
Ipswich, MA
978-412-0033
www.tri-city-sales.com

SAT., AUG 12TH & SUN., AUG 13TH
MANY APPLIANCES ARE IN STOCK! NEW INVENTORY IS ARRIVING!

SAVE THE SALES TAX
Limited Time Offer! 6.25% DISCOUNT ON YOUR PURCHASE!

Save On Major Appliances
Gas Grills and More!

VISIT OUR SHOWROOMS IN IPSWICH AND SALEM!

TRI-CITY SALES
95 Turnpike Rd./Rte. 1
Ipswich, MA
978-412-0033

As part of Boston's history

TRI-CITY SALES
184 Years

E.B. HORN
Jewelers Since 1839

www.tri-city-sales.com

Any Jewelry $2,500 or less is TAX FREE
if purchased on Saturday, August 12, 2023

JArts presents ‘Be the Change: Art as Activism and Empowerment’

I N THE WAKE of the death of George Floyd, 2½ years of the COVID pandemic, the immigration crisis, the rise in anti-semitism, the war in Ukraine, and so many more hate-spurred global issues, the Jewish Arts Collaborative (JArts), based in Boston, last year wrenched with what a nonprofit can use art to inspire real action.

The moment came through a conversation between Israeli-American, Boston-based visual artist Caron Tabb and activist, politician, and former American Jewish World Service President/CEO Ruth Messinger, in which the theme of “artivism” – the intersection of art and activism – became the driving force behind the Be the Change public art movement.

Following three successful shows in Boston, Cincinnati, and Los Angeles – amplifying 18 diverse artistic voices and the issues their work represents – Be the Change is once again mounting a public art exhibit in Boston that began on August 2 and lasts into late October. An expanded cohort of seven prominent artists will focus on voter rights, the housing crises, reproductive rights, academic censorship, refugees and asylum seekers, mental health stigma in communities of color, and more. Six of the installations are located on spaces near the intersection of Kilmarnock and Van Ness streets in the Fenway neighborhood and one in front of the offices of Samuel & Associates, Be the Change’s collaborating partner.

The artists participating in this year’s installation are: Ciceley Carew, Julia Cseko, Ruth Kathryn Henry, Caron Tabb, Chanel Thervil, Wen-Hao Tien, and Dana Wouffe.

Reimagining the traditional tur- dulet box, Be the Change was con- ceived and organized by artist Caron Tabb in partnership with JArts. Just as the Hebrew root of the word tza- kah is tzdo, meaning justice, Be the Change aims to connect viewers to issues of injustice and empower them to become agents of change, all while shining light on local artists.

“When conceiving of this project, I wanted to harness the power of art, the artist, and partner nonprofits collaboratively to offer tangible ways for viewers to move from bystanders to change-makers,” Tabb said. “I believe that each one of us has something to give back to the communities we belong to. Be The Change offers this opportunity.”

Laura Mandel, JArts executive director, said, “Issues of injustice in our world are huge and overwhelming. We hope that by making space to address these issues through the art, we will help us all feel better equipped to become activists and agents of change. By rooting the pieces in pol- icy change, we are showing that art is more than just beautiful – it’s an important vehicle to help deliver important and complicated messag- es.”

Ruth Messinger added, “Artists are often powerful voices for justice, using their creative power to draw our attention to issues that we would too easily try to slip under the rug. Be the Change finds and celebrates these artists and brings their work to wide public attention, also giving the artists the chance to explain what they see and to use not only their art but their voices in the service of radical social change, in the service of pursuing justice.”

Be the Change Global Ambassa- dor Co-Chair Rabbi Menachem Cred- idor said,”Art shows us what could be, offering a world discerned by sensi- tive hearts and recreated by passion- ate, skilled hands... Be the Change manifests hope itself by reclaiming public space as a vital, shared space for global healing.”

JArts
Ruth Kathryn Henry’s installation, “Free To Learn,” urges viewers to create schools “built on love, joy, justice, and antiracism.”

ARTS
JEWISH JOURNAL.ORG
AUGUST 10, 2023

PART OF BOSTON'S HERITAGE FOR 184 YEARS

WASHINGTON CTY/SHANNON MERRICK
www.tri-city-sales.com
Robert Kraft speaks with rapper Meek Mill on NAACP panel about antisemitism and racism

By JACOB GURVIS

New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft participated in a panel conversation on fighting antisemitism and racism on Sunday during the annual NAACP convention in Boston.

Titled “Hate Has No Home: Racism, Anti-Semitism and Building Bridges to Fight All Hate,” the conversation was moderated by Fox Sports host Joy Taylor and featured NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson, historian Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Kraft and the rapper and activist Meek Mill.

Mill and Kraft have been friends since Kraft helped advocate for the rapper’s release from prison in 2018. They co-founded the nonprofit REFORM Alliance in January 2019 to advocate for criminal justice reform, alongside rapper Jay-Z and Fanatics CEO Michael Rubin, who is also Jewish.

Mill spoke about how meaningful it was when Kraft visited him in prison and compared the experience to his trip to Poland with Kraft for the March of the Living earlier this year. He said they each gained an understanding for the other’s community and their hardships.

“It was probably two years ago when Robert said, ‘I’m going to get you to come to Poland with me,’ ” Mill said during the conversation. “And I didn’t know the effects of how many friends I had that were Jewish, that had family members that were connected to what happened in Poland in Auschwitz.”

Earlier this year, Kraft launched a $25 million social media campaign called #StandUpToJewishHate through his Foundation to Combat Antisemitism, which aired ads during NFL games last year. He spoke on Sunday about the meaning of “tikkun olam,” or repairing the world, and the important partnership between the Black and Jewish communities.

“People are trying to put boulders between the Black community and the Jewish community,” Kraft said. “And we’ve always been uniquely tied together. And I want us to continue that, and any way we can build those ties, I want to be part of that.”

Kraft said he hopes his #StandUpToJewishHate campaign – with its signature blue pin, which each panelist wore on stage – would serve as “a symbol of unity and solidarity.”

Gates, who teaches at Harvard University and hosts the PBS series “Finding Your Roots,” said that anti-Black racism and antisemitism are often tied together by white supremacy.

“I tell my students at Harvard that under the floorboards of Western culture run two streams: one is anti-Black racism and one is antisemitism,” Gates said. “And any time a demagogue wants to stir up people they just lift up the floorboards and dipper out all that hatred against our people and against our Jewish brothers and sisters.”

Gates also noted the famous friendship between activist Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. He added that he is working on a PBS series on Black-Jewish relations – which he said Kraft was the first to financially support.

Get local Jewish and interfaith news

Sign up for your FREE subscription to the Jewish Journal.
Email your address to: editor@jewishjournal.org

Sign up to receive e-newsletters from the Jewish Journal.
Email your address to: newsletter@jewishjournal.org
Is Barbie Jewish?
The complex Jewish history of the doll, explained

Long before the craze over the newly-released “Barbie” movie, most people could conjure an image of the doll: She was the beauty standard and the popular girl, a perky, white, ever-smiling brand of Americans.

She was also the child of a hard-nosed Jewish businesswoman, Ruth Handler, whose family fled impoverishment and antisemitism in Poland. And some see the original Barbie as Jewish like Handler, a complex symbol of assimilation in the mid-20th-century United States.

The doll’s latest revival comes in Greta Gerwig’s hotly-anticipated “Barbie” movie, written by Gerwig and Noah Baumbach and featuring a star-studded cast, including Margot Robbie as Barbie, Ryan Gosling as Ken and Will Ferrell as a fictional CEO of Mattel. The film collected over $155 million domestically in just its opening weekend, and has since netted over $1 billion.

But this in-crowd doll was born from an outsider. Here’s its Jewish history.

The origin story

Ruth Handler was born in 1916 in Denver, Colorado, to Jacob and Ida Moskowitz (later changed to Mosko), the youngest of 10 children.

It was in Denver, when Ruth was 16 years old, that she met and fell in love with Izzy Handler.

At age 19, Ruth decided to drop out of the University of Denver and move to Los Angeles, where she found a job as a secretary at Paramount Studios. Izzy soon followed her, and upon her request, changed his name to the more Americanized ‘Elliot.’

The couple never renounced their Judaism. On the contrary, they

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

By SHIRA LI BARTOV

JEFF CHRISTENSEN/GETTY IMAGES

Ruth Handler holds a Barbie that was created for the doll’s 40th anniversary in 1999.
Digging into a simple act of kindness

**BUBBE TALK**

By CAROLYN EGGERT

**JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT**

**SOMETIMES I HAVE BRILLIANT ideas. I get excited about them and often can’t wait to share them with my clients.**

A few years ago, my client Roz asked me to plant marigolds on a small patch of land next to the entrance of her townhouse. It was a tiny space filled with old rocky soil. She was in her late 80s and her vision was compromised. She navigated without a cane because she could still see – just not that well.

I stopped at Home Depot to see if they had any small raised flowerbeds. My great idea was to plant the flowers at a higher level so that she could see them up close.

I found a raised bed on sale. I bought marigolds and some other annuals (in my mind, she needed a variety of flowers – not just marigolds). I showed up at her place and couldn’t wait to open my trunk to present what I had gathered.

Looking back, she wasn’t as excited as I was about the container and the other flowers. We planted everything and as I admired the garden, she said, “What about putting marigolds over there?!” Over there meant where she originally wanted to plant them.

I overstepped. I was so wrapped up in trying to be brilliant, it didn’t occur to me to just do what she had asked. It was a simple mistake: (The story of my life.)

**Why did I make such a big meigliah about Roz’s marigolds?**

request and I had to make it more complicated. (The story of my life.)

Roz was clear about what she wanted. I planted yellow and orange marigolds in the ground and she loved them.

I also bought a hanging geranium (there was a place to hang it – even though she didn’t ask for that, either). One day while I watered it, I noticed a nest filled with eggs in the container. We watched those eggs when the tiny hungry chicks and checked on them daily until they flew away.

The next year, I bought annuals for the raised bed (for me), marigolds (for Roz), and a geranium for both of us. A few weeks into the summer there was another nest for us to coo over.

Why did I make such a big meigliah about Roz’s marigolds?

Did I do it for Roz or was it for me? Sometimes I have to remove myself from what I perceive to be a bigger need or want. I’ve realized that every interaction doesn’t have to be a grand gesture. Maybe some do but most don’t. What’s most important in all of my relationships is understanding and kindness: Gemilut Chassidim.

Carolyn Schultz Eggert writes from Newton. She has been working to improve the lives of older people for 10 years through her business, Family Friends Boston. Previously she was a reporter for People magazine. Questions? Please email her at Carolyn@eggert@yahoo.com.

Carolyn Eggert

Goddard House offers residents enriching everyday experiences aimed at promoting independence, inspiring curiosity and encouraging connection with others.

- Spacious studio, one & two bedroom apartments
- Concierge-style services & wellness offerings
- EnrichedLIFE experiences & adventures
- Olmsted Memory Support programs backed by research and designed to treat the symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease
- Award-winning brain healthy cuisine
- Expansive dining, fitness, technology & outdoor amenities
- Oncare rehabilitation services
- SAGECare Accreditation for LGBTQ Cultural Competency
- Unique short-term and trial stay option with "no minimum stay" requirement!

Stay as long or as short as you need.

**Personalized Healthcare for Older Adults**

Element Care PACE is coordinated care for quality of life. This unique care model provides complete medical, social and home care services to adults 55+ across the North Shore and Merrimack Valley.

Call today to see how we could help you stay independent, in your community.

Medical  Dental  Vision  and more!

ElementCare.org  1-877-803-5564 (TTY 711)

Element Care PACE
Richard William Golick, 88, of Marblehead, formerly of Beverly

Richard William Golick, 88, of Marblehead, passed away peacefully on July 31, 2023. Richard is survived by Deanna, his beloved wife of 56 years; his brother David and sister-in-law Lorna; his father, Jeff and daughter-in-law Kate Stein; his brother-in-law and sister-in-law Jay and Carol; his daughter Susan and son-in-law Gary; his son Evan and Susan; and Evan May.

Richard was born on August 12, 1934, in Boston, to Jack and Freda (Salzman) Golick. He lived with his parents and grandparents in Dorchester until 1939. His family moved to Beverly in 1939, and Richard graduated from Beverly High School in 1952. He then went on to Tufts University, graduating with a B.A. in Economics in 1956.

Shortly after graduating, Richard entered the U.S. Army and was stationed at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Upon discharge, he entered an executive training program back in Massachusetts, at Faneuil, Boston, with a career in retail. Most of Richard's working life was spent owning and managing Jack's, a women's clothing store in Salem, Mass.

Richard married the love of his life, Deanna Shapiro, in October 1966, in Swampscott. Shortly after, they moved to Marblehead, where they raised their two children. He was a dedicated gentleman, and enjoyed playing tennis, and skiing the New England Mountains with friends and family.

Richard retired at age 64, became bored, and went to work part-time for a CPA firm in its suburbs, until finally retiring at age 75. In recent years, he enjoyed especially visits from his kids, their families, and his three beloved grandchildren.

A private graveside ceremony was held on August 3. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in Richard's memory to the charity of your choice. Arrangements were handled by Stanetsky-Hymanson Memorial Chapel, Salem.

Is Barbie Jewish?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

eventually helped found Temple Sinai in Los Angeles and became longtime contributors to the United Jewish Appeal. But Ruth was pragmatic, and she would not forget how police officers had stopped her car to correct her antimisspelled name.

Against the pleadings of her family, who knew Elliott was poor, Ruth married him in 1938. They were complementary business partners: Elliott was a quiet creative innovator, while Ruth shrewdly shifted away from ordering in a restaurant, while Ruth was vivacious and unafraid, a risk-taker who said her first sale felt like “taking a drug,” according to Gerber.

During World War II, together with their friend Harold “Matt” Matson, the Handlers pivoted to making wooden picture frames and dollhouse furniture. They found success and named their company Mattel, a combination of Matt and Elliot’s names. In 1946, Matson sold his share and Ruth Handler became the first president of Mattel. The company soon branched into toys, but since the design department was entirely male, its early toys targeted little boys. Today, 10 generations later, Mattel sells 350,000 Barbies in its first year.

Ruth kept pushing until the first Swank Barbie, decked in a black-and-white swallowtail swimsuit and heels, debuted at New York’s Toy Fair in 1959.

Sure enough, plenty of mothers and dads bought the doll too slim for them, but their daughters loved it, and Mattel sold 100,000 Barbies in its first year.

Is Barbie feminist? Sexist? Assimilationist? Jewish?

Bache’s taut-thin figure sparked backlash from feminists in the 1970s, but years before the feminist discussion, the question of how American Jews could or could not relate to Barbie said a lot about their place in the United States at the time. Handler created Barbie in 1959, when many Jews were walking with the conciliatory approach of assimilation. Although they continued to face discrimination in the postwar period, they also had newfound security – a life they had never identified with, according to Emily Tamkin, the author of “Bad Jews: A History of American Jewish Politics and Identities.”

Suddenly, like so many others, they were moving to suburban, white-picket fence America – Barbie territory. Barbie would paradoxically become core to the American ideal that Jews were seen to assimilate into, said Tamkin.

“The thinking goes, if you’re safe and secure and in suburbia, is that really an authentic Jewish life?” Tamkin told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. “And while they have been this communal and individual struggle, Ruth Handler really enhances the America that they have this ambivalence about.”

Tiffany Shlain, who wrote the 2005 short documentary “The Tribe” about the history of Jews and Barbie, is herself a blond, blue-eyed Jewish woman (who wrote the film “Whoa”). She was often told that she didn’t “look Jewish.”

“Right now, we’re in a real renaissance of seeing all the different ways Jews look, and there’s no ‘look,’ there’s no one ideology,” Shlain said.
"Love In An Elevator" runs through Aug. 13 at the Boston Center for the Arts.

By JULIE BECKER

JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

COULD A RABBI be the chaplain of a hospital elevator as well as the hospital itself? This seems to be the possibility of an entertaining and thoughtful comedy not surprisingly entitled "Love In An Elevator." Hyman Popper, the knitted kipper sporting rabbi of Temple Beth El in an unnamed Midwestern city, effectively presides in the present day setting of Richard Rivosa's world premiere play, Declaring that it "looks like we have a full house," Popper proceeds to invite the diverse passengers to reflect on their experiences with love and relationships while they wait for the stuck hospital service elevator to be repaired.

While the stuck elevator scenario may sound familiar, the revelations that follow at the Boston Center for the Arts Plaza Black Box Theatre from a strong cast prove very pleasantly under the sharp direction of Tim Lawson.

During the 90-minute no-intermission play, the 10 passengers - what some theatergoers may think of as an eccumenical take-off on a minyan - engage in a combination of discussion and debate about their respective experiences and feelings about love. Rivosa challenges the cross-section of human beings with very different religions, beliefs, and occupations to engage in an open-minded dialogue even as they struggle to understand each other and themselves.

The colorful rabbi - who speaks both Hebrew and Yiddish and notes that a "shabbos Goy" may be seen as a cross-section of human beings as an ecumenical take-off on a sitcom sequence.

True lives devotes a wimmen-Ameri- can couple - a construction worker and his pregnant fiancée - looking to marry before the child arrives. Though the rabbi unexpectedly afflicts as the nurse prepares to deliver the child, Rivosa does keep the situation from becoming a sitcom sequence. While an intermission could have preceded the strongest revelations of the ascending and its talented ensemble fully rings to the likes of Wittgenstein, but could do with stronger projection. Vidalis Agarrwala has the right poise of an Indian lawyer, and Floris Liu possesses good feeling as the flute-playing musician. Carol Drews makes the most of her initial subdued passenger's eventual reflection.

Rivosa goes to M. Berry's nuanced lighting and Grace Kroeger's sound design for the temperamental elevator. Characterizing the elevator odyssey, the rabbi concludes that "God has been busy this evening." Audience members - no matter what their affiliation - should find this well-crafted production both enjoyable and enlightening.

"Love In An Elevator" runs through Aug. 13 at the Boston Center for the Arts Plaza Black Box, Boston. For tickets, visit www.bostonarts.org.
20 years of Chabad of Peabody: so many dreams achieved

By RABBI NECHEMIA SCHUSTERSMAN

Seems like yesterday and a lifetime ago that we moved our family (then just two children, a 2-year-old and a newborn) from sunny Los Angeles to Peabody. It was mid-August and on the auspicious day of the 20th of Av – the day of the passing of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, the father of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, how do you summarize 20 years of work and dedication to a community?

In these short 20 years we have witnessed so much: five more born in our family, dozens of bar and bat mitzvahs, births, baby namings, Torah classes attended by many hundreds, Shabbat and holiday guests in the thousands, as well as, sadly, the passing of so many beloved in our little slice of community.

We have watched organizations nearly disappear, and be reborn, in vibrant institutions. We’ve seen colleagues – rabbis and presidents – come and go, agreements made, alliances forged, disappointments and disagreements, the entire physical and emotional gamut. But what is it that encapsulates the entirety of these 20 years?

If I had to choose a couple words, it would be toil and commitment.

The Chabad operating model doesn’t work like other Jewish community systems. We aren’t invited to toon and we can’t be fired. (When my elderly grandmother – now of blessed memory – was frustrated with how my father was handling certain matters in relation to her care, she said to him that he was fired. His reply, while coy, was also spot on: “You didn’t hire me, so you can’t fire me.”)

We get by only by the good graces and beneficence of those within our community and still, we have a strict code of Hilkha that is our guide. Our two-word mission statement from the Rebbe is Ahavat Israel – love your fellow Jews. Our mandate has been to toil endlessly with commitment to that goal.

To that end, even on vacations, struggling community members can expect a get-well phone call and trips cut short or altered due to a community crisis or someone’s passing.

The greatest moments are when a community member can celebrate someone in our family’s personal victory, or just be happy at the child having a great camp experience. It is watching the love that is put out, reciprocated in kind.

The sad moments are watching beloved community members aging and passing on, or the inevitable ruptures that will happen with two decades of ministering to a community.

One lowlight was having pen- nies thrown in a colleague while walking down a Peabody street on Shabbos. The flipside was watching over 300 community members gather on the City Hall lawn to show their support.

A highlight was when a former Hebrew School student called me in the middle of the night from college with a very significant ethical dilemma: to rat on his friends who were drinking and save himself from punishment and suspension, or not tell on them and sell out his morals.

So many dreams achieved and so many hopes not yet realized. Hearts and hopes raised to the skies, so many hopes not yet realized. The sad moments are watching beloved community members aging and passing on, or the inevitable ruptures that will happen with two decades of ministering to a community.

As we mark 20 years of Chabad of Peabody, we pledge to make the next 20 even greater than our first. We give gratitude to the Almighty for the blessings He has bestowed upon us and our community members who have and continue to step upon us and our community members who have and continue to step forward to seeing you all at something great that will be happening at Chabad. Thank you for your partnership and your love.

Rabbi Nechemia Schusterman leads Chabad of Peabody.

Nechemia and Raizel Schusterman.
SHABBAT CANDLE LIGHTING
August 11, 7:33 p.m.
August 18, 7:25 p.m.
SUBMIT YOUR EVENTS
calendar@jewishjournal.org
CALENDAR
ONGOING
JSA: Jewish Support Anonymous, 12-step weekly support group for men and women. Meetings held every Tuesday at 7 p.m. This peer support group has served and continues to support fellow Jews in their quest for sobriety using the tools of the 12 Steps. For more information contact Rabbi@ jewishpeabody.com. To be added to our anonymous email list simply go to www.jewishpeabody.com/JSA.

Israel Dance Group At Temple Ner Tamid in Peabody: Tuesday night at 9 p.m. Donation. For more information, email algnessman@aol.com. Temple Ner Tamid, 368 Lowell St., Peabody.

Israel Folk Dancing at the JCCNS: Sundays 7:30 a.m. and Thursdays 7:30 – 9:30 p.m. Dance classes (6-8 p.m.) are beginner dance lessons for June and July only. Email RSVP or questions tonis.israel.folksdance@gmail.com or visit www.jccns.org for more information. Temple Ner Tamid, 4 Community Road, Marblehead.

Bar Mitzvah
Shmooze and Play, an interactive musical playgroup. Which will be a drop-in group and walk-ins are welcome; registration is appreciated. Register at lappinfoundation.org. For more information email lynn@lappinfoundation.org. Temple B’Nai Abraham, 200 E. Lothrop St., Beverly.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 22
Sunset and S’mores, 6 – 7:30 p.m. Presented by Congregation Shirat Hayam. Community is invited to Devereux Beach in Marblehead. RSVP bit.ly/sunsetandsmores2023.

Meet and Greet at Congregation Ahavat Olam, 6 – 8 p.m. Rabbi Ilana and the entire Congregation Ahavat Olam Board invite the community to learn more about Congregation Ahavat Olam. We will share our plans for what promises to be an exciting and inspiring 23/24 season. For members and prospective members go to our website, www.ahavatołam4all.org to register. Location will be provided upon registration. For information, call 781-926-6454.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 7
TNT Community BBQ and Religious School Open House, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. Temple Ner Tamid invites the community for BBQ and meet TNT mishpacha. Listen to some music from temple DJ, learn about Religious School. Kosher hamburgers, hot dogs, sides, snacks will be served at no cost. RSVP to the Temple office by August 23rd at templerastamidnorthshore@gmail.com. Temple Ner Tamid, 368 Lowell St., Peabody.

MONDAY, AUGUST 28
Quieting The Silence, 7 p.m. Presented by Chabad of Peabody. So many of us are struggling to find freedom from our own inner demons; mental health challenges, addictions, or other challenges in life that are painful. Community is invited to join in breaking the stigma of these challenges in an evening of fresh and candid conversation. This event is open to all and registration is appreciated, but not mandatory. For more information and to register, visit www.jewishpeabody.com/quietingthesilence. 682 Lowell St., Peabody.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6
The Taste of Jewish Culture, 7 p.m. Join the Walnut Street Synagogue of Chelsea for an online presentation, “Not Just Apples and Honey” Hashanah Foods and Their Many Meanings.” The speaker will be Joel Halber, a Jewish Food researcher and tour guide based in Jerusalem. No charge, advance registration required at walnutstreetsynagogue.org/the-taste-of-jewish-culture.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9
Temple Emmanuel Open House, 7-30 p.m. Temple Emmanuel of Wakefield invites community to celebrate Shabbat and Holidays together. The evening will begin at 7 p.m. with a community social with Hardalah, followed by a Selichot program and service. For more information, go to www.wakefieldtemple.org or call 781-245-1086. Temple Emmanuel, 120 Chestnut St, Wakefield.

Thank you for donating to the Jewish Journal during July, 2023
Rosalyn and Barry Abrams
Judy and David Cohen
Patty and Howard Cohen
Karen and Donald Feldman
Robert E. Gladstone
Saul Gurman
Cynthia and Eric Kaplan
Lorraine Krugman
Harvey Kupelnick in memory of Elise Fisher
Malamut
Tamara Miklyayeva congratulates all the Honorable Members, who make this world the best place for you and for other people
Julia and Lenny Rubin Charitable Fund
Penny and Phillip Schuler
Ron Shraier
Judith Small
Rhonda and Stuart Spitzer
Alan Winer
Harriet Wollman in memory of Samuel Scheinhorn
Shmooze and Play, an interactive musical playgroup. Which will be a drop-in group and walk-ins are welcome; registration is appreciated. Register at lappinfoundation.org. For more information email lynn@lappinfoundation.org. Temple B’Nai Abraham, 200 E. Lothrop St., Beverly.

And thank you to all our anonymous donors! ☺️
Cohen Florence Levine Estates residents and staff trip to Revere Beach

On a perfect summer day in July, Cohen Florence Levine Estates residents and staff embarked upon a trip to Revere Beach. Residents, aged 67 to 104, enjoyed feeling the sand beneath their feet and the ocean water on their faces. Many of the residents are originally from Revere and Chelsea and have fond memories of spending time at Revere Beach.

The trip occurred after residents mentioned how much they missed swimming in the ocean. “Some of the residents were talking at dinner one evening about how much they loved Revere Beach and we decided, then and there, to schedule a trip in the summer,” said Kristen Donnelly, executive director of Cohen Florence Levine Estates. “Planning the myriad of details was a huge undertaking, but seeing the huge smiles on the residents’ faces and hearing their laughter throughout the day made it all worthwhile.”

The Revere Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) provided beach accessible wheelchairs as well as a floating wheelchair, which enabled residents to actually “swim” in the ocean. Remarkably, the water was the warmest of the season at a balmy 65 degrees. “The DCR, in particular Charlie Collins, has been instrumental in the planning of this trip,” said Jimmy Honohan, recreational director at Chelsea Jewish Lifecare, the organization that operates the assisted living. In addition to the wheelchairs, the DCR also provided parking for the van, ramps for beach access and a sidewalk for the wheelchairs. “Charlie has been incredible to our organization,” said Honohan. “I can’t thank him enough.”

“Charlie has been incredible to our organization,” said Honohan. “I can’t thank him enough.”

Virginia Fiske, who is 104, at Revere Beach. 
Virginia Fiske, who is 104, at Revere Beach. 

Among the interventions carried out was the construction of ramps for beach access and a walkway for the wheelchairs. The DCR, in particular Charlie Collins, has been instrumental in the planning of this trip, said Jimmy Honohan, recreational director at Chelsea Jewish Lifecare, the organization that operates the assisted living. In addition to the wheelchairs, the DCR also provided parking for the van, ramps for beach access and a sidewalk for the wheelchairs. "Charlie has been incredible to our organization," said Honohan. "I can’t thank him enough."

Resident Rita Singer, who was the first woman city councilor in Revere, was thrilled to be back on her old stomping ground. "I grew up in Chelsea and have wondrous memories of summers on this beach," recalled Rita. "It’s really special for me to be here today." Rita was one of the first residents to go into the water, got wet from head to toe, and "loved every minute of it!"

Donnelly noted that engaging the residents in activities of their choice is a priority: “We have a strong connection between our staff and our residents,” said Donnelly. “For us, there is nothing better than making their dreams come true.”

In addition to water activities, Kristen Donnelly, Jimmy Honohan, Shellie Honohan and Cathy Messina oversaw beach games, sing-alongs, dancing and pizza from Bianco’s, sponsored by longtime volunteer Judy Weiss of Judy’s Jewels. The smiles on everyone’s faces were a good indication that the outing was a success. Virginia Fiske, 104, summed up the trip: “It is the best day ever!” exclaimed Virginia. “I am having a ball!”

Virginia Fiske, who is 104, at Revere Beach.