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Stronger Spaces, Stronger Support: A New Chapter at 1 Open Door



As doors reopen and spaces are renewed, it becomes clear that small changes can make a powerful difference in how people feel when they walk in to our offices seeking support. Jewish Family and Child Service (JF&CS) is proud to welcome clients back to a newly renovated *1 Open Door* at the Vaughan Jewish Community Centre (VJCC), a space thoughtfully designed with care, dignity, and connection at its heart.

The re-opening of JF&CS at 1 Open Door marks an important step in expanding services in Vaughan and York Region, bringing programs and support closer to the communities we serve. Operating as a shared space with Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) and Jewish Immigrant Aid Services (JIAS), the Vaughan branch reflects a collaborative model that maximizes resources while keeping client-centred care front and centre.

For clients, the impact is immediate. The refreshed space offers a safe, comfortable, and welcoming environment where Family Violence, Child Welfare, and York Region Housing staff can meet with individuals and families in need. It also supports on-site programming, helping ensure that care feels accessible and integrated.

The space has been designed through a trauma-informed lens to support both clients and staff. 1 Open Door includes 6 clinical and visitor meeting rooms, allowing teams to collaborate effectively while maintaining privacy and professionalism for sensitive conversations. The branch also features a board room, conference room, 12 JF&CS staff workstations, and 3 manager offices.

This transformation was made possible thanks to a Capital Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The grant supported the purchase of new furniture and equipment, significantly enhancing our clinical therapy rooms. These improvements increase comfort, safety, and a sense of connection for individuals and families accessing services.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Ontario Trillium Foundation and our community partners for helping make this re-opening possible. Together, we are opening doors, both literally and figuratively, and strengthening the support available to our community in York Region.

Become a Monthly Mitzvah Maker!

Monthly Mitzvah Makers is JF&CS's monthly giving program, providing steady, year-round support to individuals and families in our community.

Thank you to our newest Monthly Mitzvah makers, Dan and Caren Leinwand!

[Click here](#) to learn more or to join.

Thank You to Our Food Pantry Sponsors

January: Lindsay and Michael Detsky, in honour of their son Lucas' Bar Mitzvah

February: Mark Shiner and Family

Did You Know?

JF&CS partners with select Jewish day and overnight camps across Southern Ontario to help make summer camp accessible.

Our Jewish Camp Subsidies Program supports low-income

An Inspiring Evening of Conversation, Connection, and Community Impact



Earlier this month, community members gathered for an inspiring evening of conversation and connection at *Hands In: Levelling the Playing Field in Sports*. Together, we explored the powerful role sports play in building confidence, fostering belonging, and creating opportunity for children and teens, as well as the barriers many families face when costs put participation out of reach.

The evening was moderated by **Lani Levy**, entrepreneur and the host of the 'Getting Chai' Podcast and featured an exceptional panel representing professional sports,

community leadership, and frontline social work.

The Panellists:

- **Dan Shulman** – Play-by-Play Announcer and Sports Broadcaster, Toronto Blue Jays
- **Ryan Mittleman** – VP, Pro Personnel, Toronto Blue Jays
- **Amy Laski** – Founder and Executive Director, Tween Girls' Hockey League
- **Sabrina Propper** – SupportAbility Coordinator, JF&CS

Each panellist brought their own unique insight and authenticity to the discussion, sharing personal stories and professional experiences to create a rich and meaningful dialogue. Through thoughtful conversation, they underscored how extracurricular activities shape a young person's future. Participation builds resilience, friendships, leadership skills, and a lasting sense of belonging that extends far beyond the rink, field, or court. The audience was highly engaged, contributing to a dynamic and robust Q&A session.

Proceeds raised from the evening's silent auction and registration directly benefit the *Levelling the Playing Field Fund*. For many families, registration fees, equipment, and transportation costs present significant barriers to participation. The Levelling the Playing Field Fund supports children and teens in the care of JF&CS, as well as families living in poverty, by providing access to extracurricular lessons, programs, and activities that allow them to grow and thrive.

This event marked the second installment in the JF&CS Community Conversations Series, sponsored by Saand Inc. The series brings the community together to hear from insightful and innovative speakers on relevant topics, fostering meaningful learning, dialogue and engagement.

To contribute to *Levelling the Playing Field*, [click here](#).

Hélène Comay Nursery School Supports the JDD

A recent gift to JF&CS is rooted in legacy, a deep care for children, and an enduring commitment to community.

We are profoundly grateful to have received a generous donation in support of The Jerome D. Diamond Adolescent Centre (JDD) from the former Hélène Comay Nursery School. When the nursery school closed its doors, its Board took thoughtful steps to ensure that its remaining charitable resources would continue to serve the community in meaningful way.

This gift was made possible through the leadership and care of Abbie Moscovich Blais, a former Board member of the Hélène Comay Nursery School. In May 2025, Abbie reached out to explore how the school's remaining funds could continue to serve the community. With a

families so their children can experience the joy, connection, and belonging of camp.

Leave a Legacy

[Click here](#) to learn about planned giving through the Gordon S. Wolfe Legacy Society at JF&CS.

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shared commitment to inclusion and dignity, she helped direct this gift to JF&CS, ensuring that the school's legacy would live on through the JDD, a tribute to Hélène Conway's lifelong dedication to community service.

The Hélène Comay Nursery School holds a special place in Toronto's Jewish community. For decades, it nurtured generations of children, first within the downtown JCC and later as an independent school. Its founder, Hélène Comay, devoted more than 70 years to early childhood education.

Born in Paris in 1926, Hélène arrived in the United States in 1940 as a Jewish refugee fleeing occupied France, and later made her home in Canada. She worked well into her 90s, touching countless lives with her warmth, resilience,

and unwavering belief in the potential of every child. Hélène passed away peacefully in 2025, in her 99th year.

Through this generous donation, the spirit of Hélène Comay's life's work, grounded in care, inclusion, and opportunity, will continue. Support for the JDD's educational program will help ensure that youth ages 11-17, facing mental health barriers in mainstream schools, are welcomed, empowered, and supported in a setting designed to help them thrive.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Hélène Comay Nursery School for transforming a closing chapter into a lasting act of generosity. Their gift is a powerful reminder that even as institutions evolve, their values can continue to make a meaningful and lasting difference.

Learn more about the JDD by [clicking here](#).

Commemorating International Holocaust Remembrance Day at JF&CS



January 27, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, marks International Holocaust Remembrance Day. It is a solemn time to remember the six million Jews who were murdered and to honour the Survivors whose resilience transformed unimaginable loss into lives of rebuilding and courage. This day is not only about reflection; it is a call to action, a reminder to each generation of its duty and responsibility to confront hatred, antisemitism, and indifference with moral clarity and resolve.

As antisemitism rises at an alarming pace around the world, remembrance carries renewed urgency. Honouring those who were lost and listening to the voices of Survivors compels us to safeguard truth, stand firmly against hate,

and strengthen the Jewish community for generations to come.

This year, JF&CS marked the day through meaningful opportunities for learning and reflection. Staff visited the Toronto Holocaust Museum, creating space to pause, remember, and deepen their understanding of this defining chapter in Jewish history.

The day before, students from the Jerome D. Diamond Adolescent Centre (JDD) also toured the museum. For many, it was a powerful and personal introduction to the history of the Holocaust and the enduring consequences of hatred left unchecked.

Later that day, the agency was honoured to welcome 97-year-old Holocaust survivor, Howard Chandler, to speak with staff. His testimony was both moving and urgent. Not only did he share his story of survival, but he also acknowledged that JF&CS helped settle him in Canada

after the war. Hearing a Survivor share his lived experience is a powerful reminder that history lives in the memories and voices of those still among us. His message underscored that remembrance is not passive; it calls each of us to act.

As an agency rooted in Jewish values, remembrance informs our work every day. The lessons of the Holocaust, about human dignity, the consequences of silence, and the importance of community, shape how JF&CS serves individuals and families facing vulnerability. We honour the past not only through reflection, but through action: by building safe and compassionate communities, responding to need with dignity and care, and standing firmly against hatred wherever it appears.

JF&CS is deeply grateful to its donors and community partners who make this work possible. Find a list of our Survivor support services by [clicking here](#).

Turning Personal History into Lasting Community Impact



When life brings change and moments of loss, many families are left to navigate difficult transitions with little time to prepare. A recent investment in professional development at Jewish Family and Child Service reminds us that while grief is hard, finding support shouldn't be.

The Freda Manson Bacher Fund was established to honour a woman whose life was deeply intertwined with

JF&CS and its mission. Freda began her journey with the agency as a social worker and later continued her commitment as a Board member and passionate advocate for JF&CS. Her legacy is one of compassion, resilience, and deep care for children and families.

Freda's life was marked by profound personal loss. In the early 1950s, she stepped into the role of surrogate mother for her sister's three children after her sister's death. Then, just a few years later, she and her two teenage children suffered the loss of their husband and father when he passed away. While Freda and her family provided love and support, specialized grief services for children did not exist.

Today, thankfully, they do. In a tribute that feels both meaningful and deeply aligned with her life's story, the Freda Manson Bacher Fund has sponsored the advanced training of two JF&CS social workers in the Children's Grief and Bereavement Certificate Program. This training strengthens the agency's ability to support children and youth navigating loss. This is something that Freda herself would have valued, especially had she lived to see the positive impact of specialized grief support for her own great-grandchildren after their father passed away suddenly decades later.

JF&CS is grateful to the family and supporters behind the Freda Manson Bacher Fund for transforming personal history into lasting impact. Through this generosity, children and youth facing grief today are met with understanding, expertise, and hope. Freda's legacy of care will continue to support future generations whenever and wherever it is needed.

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