Year in Review
2019-2020
2019-2020
BY THE NUMBERS

2,645
Women served by the
Linda & Rudy Slucker
NCJW/Essex Center for Women

801
Children Served by the
2019 Back 2 School Store

112
Community Partner Agencies
and Organizations

1,129
Volunteers

$250,000
Value of
Volunteer Hours
Dear All,

Two years ago, at installation, I was given a gavel that my great-grandfather had used during his presidency at his temple in Cleveland, Ohio. It sits now on my desk at home. When I glance at it, I often think how fast the two years have come and gone. Two years filled with unpredictable and unbelievable events.

In these past two years we mourned the loss of our beloved Executive Director, Cathy Silverman, who helped shape NCJW/Essex into the powerhouse organization it is today. We hired a new Executive Director, Caitlin Higgins-Joy, who has brought a new perspective and has lifted us to a whole new level of professionalism. We saw the birth of a Strategic Plan and the beginning of a Pandemic.

I have been honored to lead this organization through some of our darkest moments, and it has been my privilege to see us rise above our losses, our tragedies, and our sorrow. We push through this moment and embrace our new normal of social distancing, wearing masks and Zoom meetings. NCJW/Essex has worked hard to stay connected to our volunteers. We continue to stay current and relevant.

As I pass the baton to Penina Barr, I know she is ready and is going to be an amazing leader as she takes us through the next two years. I want to thank each of you -- our members, volunteers, sponsors, and donors. It is because of your support that we are able to continue the important work we do.

I feel content and I feel grateful for having had the opportunity to lead the NCJW/Essex Section. I am satisfied that I am stepping down leaving our organization ready to move forward, poised for a very bright future.

Warmly,

Lesley Greenstein
President, July 2018 – June 2020
Dear Friends:

What a first year it has been! I joined NCJW/Essex in June 2019 and had the honor of immersing myself in our amazing history while beginning to partner with the dedicated and capable NCJW/Essex board and staff to map our future.

My primary partner in this action was President Lesley Greenstein, and I feel incredibly lucky to have had her support! Her organizational insight, leadership, and perspective helped guide me through every single day. Thank you, Lesley!

Part of what makes NCJW/Essex so special are the incredible volunteers who donate their time, talents, and treasure to make a difference right here in Essex County. Their contributions resulted in significant accomplishments for 2019-2020, and I’m excited to share just a few of these successes:

• The Section Board approved a comprehensive three-year strategic plan. With input from Board, staff, volunteers, members, and an array of community stakeholders, the plan reflects our intention to provide a wide range of services to the community members who need them most.

• A comprehensive technology upgrade to enhance our efficiency and improve services for volunteers, clients and staff.

• When the pandemic arrived, NCJW/Essex nimbly and capably reinvented our services from in-person to virtual. We chose to view this challenge as an opportunity to improve our services and develop strategies to serve an even greater number of people on our community, when they needed it most.

• An extraordinary challenge gift from an anonymous donor allowed us to leverage $50,000 into $110,000+ during the first months of the pandemic!

I am so proud to be a member and leader of NCJW/Essex. I look forward to an amazing 2020-2021!

Sincerely,

Caitlin Higgins Joy
Executive Director
The Linda & Rudy Slucker NCJW/Essex Center for Women (CFW) provides a holistic approach to the delivery of career and other support services to all interested Essex County women. Our goal is to empower them with the skills and resources they need for success in the future.

The pandemic and recession have made life more difficult for all of us – especially those women who were already struggling financially. As Jerome Powell, Chair of the Fed, commented on 60 Minutes early in the pandemic:

“The people who’re getting hurt the worst... It’s women, to an extraordinary extent...Of the people who were working in February...making less than $40,000/year, almost 40% have lost their jobs ...There’s a real risk that if people are out of work for long periods of time...they lose contact with the workforce. Longer and deeper recessions tend to leave behind damage to people’s careers.”

In response, after a successful fall season encompassing a wide range of on-site programs and continued partnership with community agencies, we reinvented the Center for Women to surmount the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. Zoom, Facebook Live, and the phone are now our milieus.

The transition has succeeded beyond our expectations. In 2019-20, CFW fielded almost 2,650 in-person and online visits — vs. 1,100 in-person visits in 2018-19. Our trial Facebook event attracted 300 women, six times more than similar in-person events!

Clients’ appreciation — and their gratitude about being part of CFW — have been overwhelming. Many have commented that they look forward to the day when they can “pay it forward.”
Some additional highlights:

In January and February 2020, we held three recruiting events for the U.S. Census. Ten Center for Women clients ultimately were hired. Client feedback included the following: “As a direct result of the Center for Women, I now have a job as a Census taker!”

The Legal Assistance for Women (LAW) program provides women who have legal issues with a one-time, individual consultation with an attorney. Even during the pandemic, LAW has thrived. Working collaboratively, volunteers and staff have grown the number of volunteers and have created new avenues for clients to provide feedback on the services they receive. One client commented: “The attorney you referred me to was absolutely amazing – very informative. He spoke with me for over an hour and also said if I have any more questions, I should feel free to call him. Thank you. Once again, I truly, truly appreciate your help.

Empower Hours are weekly air and share meetings – previously in person, currently online – where clients share successes and challenges in their job searches and have an opportunity to network with each other. One participant’s comment echoes the way many people feel during the pandemic: “It feels like normal to see everyone!”

Job Clubs take place one to three times a month. These were previously held in person and are currently online. Clubs feature guest speakers on job searching, resume writing, networking, coping with stress, financial fitness, and other topics that are relevant to clients.

Food insecurity: In the past, we have operated a small food pantry that has provided clients in emergency situations with pantry staples. After the office closed, we continued to respond to clients’ food insecurity needs. First we created a no-touch system for clients to pick up bags of our remaining groceries at the office. Later we began supplying clients in need with grocery store and Amazon gift cards purchased with grant funding and special donations by members and friends.

RISE (Reaching Into Self-Empowerment) is a workshop series that helps women strengthen their self-esteem. Workshops include: Transforming Fears, Positive Self Affirmations, and You First. The Rise curriculum was fully revised for the 2019-2020 program year, with the goal of strengthening participant outcomes, and successfully launched at NCJW/Essex and at Dress for Success in Madison. 72 women participated. RISE was cancelled during the pandemic while volunteers and staff adapted the revised program to a Zoom environment. It will re-launch in October.
The 11th NCJW/Essex Back 2 School Store (B2SS) took place on July 28, 2019. At this one-day “store” set up just for them, more than 800 children from Essex County “shopped” for new clothes, coats, sneakers, books, school supplies, and personal care items to prepare the first day of school. All items were free of charge, thanks to donor support.

NCJW/Essex worked with more than 30 social service agencies and community organizations to qualify and register children. Six hundred trained community volunteers served as personal shoppers, helping each child select the items they liked best.

B2SS seeks to help ease the challenges of poverty for elementary school children. The children emerge ready to succeed in school, without worries about not being able to afford the needed items.

A volunteer committee of 30 worked year-round to organize and purchase merchandise, negotiate/manage storage and event space, recruit volunteer personal shoppers, and liaise with community and public health organizations who were present to meet and talk with parents in the Gaelen Family Resource Center, where parents can browse while their children are shopping.

Each year, the number of children served grows — from 200 in 2009-2010, our first year, to over 800 in 2019-2020. We are dedicated to serving as many children as possible going forward.

In March, the onset of the pandemic challenged us to devise a new approach to the 2020 B2SS, one that would serve as a beacon of light in an unsettled time: the *Mobile* B2SS, which will take place in the late summer and fall.

**Would you like the Back 2 School Store to bear your name, or that of someone special to you?** Contact Caitlin Higgins Joy at (973) 449-0058 to learn about naming gift opportunities.
MAKING OUR VOICES HEARD: ADVOCACY

Elisa Madorsky, 2019-2020 Vice President
Stephanie Abrahams, Director

In 2019-2020, the Advocacy program kicked into high gear, with important activity in a number of areas.

Defending women’s right to choose: This year’s Roe v. Wade commemorative Lunch and Learn attracted a sold-out crowd of 220, the largest attendance ever. Speaker Katie Watson, acclaimed author of Scarlet A: The Ethics, Law and Politics of Ordinary Abortion, discussed Roe 2.0: The New Era of Reproductive Rights.

Immigration: Beyond the Border: Immigration in America Today, a second Lunch and Learn, attracted 130 attendees. Speakers Greisa Martinez Rosas, United We Dream Deputy Executive Director; Farrin Anello, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Senior Attorney; and Rosa Huitzitzilin, Make the Road New Jersey Community Organizer; Yalidy Matos, Rutgers University Assistant Professor, moderator provided first-hand perspectives on the current status of immigration law in the United States. Attendees signed letters in support of expanding the driver’s license program in NJ to include undocumented immigrants. A month later, the bill was signed into law. Went to “Beyond the Border” immigration lunch and learn, and as a non-member, I couldn’t have felt more welcomed. What a lovely, passionate, kind group of women! – Facebook comment

Menstrual equity: NCJW/Essex is committed to ensuring that all people in NJ who menstruate do not have to choose between purchasing menstrual products and eating or paying rent. In March, we convened a roundtable of 15 organizations throughout the state that distribute menstrual products to those who cannot afford them (including 28 Days, the Community Food Bank, and Girls Helping Girls) and advocate for menstrual equity (including Planned Parenthood, Stanton Strong, and the Anti-Poverty Network). The attendees discussed strategies to end period poverty in NJ and ultimately formed a coalition which rapidly merged into the existing statewide organization Thrive NJ.
The Source of Our Impact: Membership & Volunteers

Anita S. Cohen, 2019-2020 Vice President, Volunteer Outreach
Marjorie Zucker, 2019-2020 Vice President, Membership
Ellen Staple, Manager, Membership & Resource Development

At NCJW/Essex, ordinary people make a real and lasting difference in other people’s lives – simply by taking action. Those actions are all the more extraordinary because they represent not just one person’s effort, but also the exponential impact of a group of individuals acting together with a common purpose.

As a volunteer-driven organization, NCJW/Essex benefits from the energy and expertise of hundreds of volunteers each year. Their commitments range from intensive, such as serving as Board members and committee chairs, to occasional, such as providing one-hour LAW consultations.

Volunteers provide thousands of hours of their time, saving NCJW/Essex hundreds of thousands of dollars.

In 2019-2020, over 200 volunteers made possible five Mitzvahs in a Minute – community benefit activities that last a few hours. A sixth Mitzvah in a Minute was cancelled due to the pandemic.

Fill the Freezer: On November 3 and 4, twenty-five volunteers created home-cooked meals, with recipes for all items, for the families of 10 Center for Women clients. One recipient wrote, “Thank you for cooking my family a delicious and healthy home-cooked meal! Your time and generosity have allowed us to feel that we have some normalcy in our lives.”

Menstrual Supplies: On November 14 at Temple Ner Tamid in Bloomfield, volunteers donated menstrual products and assembled them into 300 packets. Many volunteers were new to the NCJW/Essex family. The NCJW/Essex Kids Emergency Closet and the Human Needs Food Pantry in Montclair then distributed the packets to those in need.

Holiday Shop and Wrap: On December 11, volunteers purchased and/or wrapped 365 holiday gifts for children and teens. These were distributed to NCJW/Essex partner agencies and Center for Women clients in financial need.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service: On January 20, families volunteered to create Winter Warm-up packages for 150 clients of the Center for Women Livingston Neighbors Helping Neighbors. Ingredients and recipes for chili and soup, an ice scraper, a scarf, gloves, and personal care items filled each package. A volunteer parent wrote, “Thank you so much for a program that has taught my children the meaning of caring for others who are less fortunate.”

Pediatric Care Packages: Originally, volunteers had planned to create, in the early spring, 150 care packages of toys and personal care supplies for children being cared for at Children’s Hospital at Newark Beth Israel Hospital. We had to abandon this plan due to the pandemic. Instead, the hospital’s Child Life Staff picked up all of the items, along with NCJW/Essex tote bags, and created the packages at the hospital. One of the Child Life Managers wrote, “Thank you so much to NCJW/Essex for the time and generosity that you have given our pediatric patients. We have begun to distribute the Care Packages to the children. The bags have brought such happiness to them.”

NCJW/Essex is passionate about actively offering members opportunities to further engage with the Section. On March 5, we held A Closer Look, a special workshop for seven such women. Marjorie Zucker and Deborah Legow Schatz led the proceedings, with visits from Board and staff members. Feedback was highly positive. A second planned session was canceled due to the pandemic.
2019-2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lesley Greenstein .......................... President
Penina Barr ................................. Executive Vice President
Jennie Goldsmith Rothman ........ Vice President, Administration
Elisa Madorsky ............................. Vice President, Advocacy
Andrea Mintz ............................... Vice President, Linda & Rudy Slucker NCJW/Essex Center for Women
Debra Goldsmith ............................ Vice President, Communications
Robin Kollin ................................. Vice President, Fund Development
Marjorie Zucker ......................... Vice President, Membership
Susie Botwinick ......................... Vice President, Programming
Anita S. Cohen ............................. Vice President, Volunteer Outreach
Rita Isaacs ................................. Treasurer
Paula Green ................................. Assistant Treasurer
Laurie Schuftan ......................... Recording Secretary
Stacey Laken ............................... Corresponding Secretary
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Janet Berger .......................... Lori Gelman .......................... Phoebe Pollinger
Linda Berman .......................... Sara Goetz .......................... Lisa Santola
Lila Bernstein .......................... Shari Harrison ......................... Deborah Legow Schatz
Jordyn Blackburn .................... Linda Jacobs .......................... Lauren Scher
Michelle Bobrow ...................... Jill Sorkin Johnson .................. Deborah Schultz
Debra Caplan .......................... Laurie Kahn .......................... Robin Schutz
Cindy Charney ......................... Ellen M. Klein ......................... Robin Singer
Nancy Cohen .......................... Leslie Laventhal ......................... Sharon Spindel
Teddi Dolph .......................... Dale Lazarovitch .................. Joy Stone
Hélène Dreskin .......................... Isabel Margolin .................. Judy Wais Tabak
Nancy Eskow .......................... Susan Miller .......................... Sheri Trugman
Sharon Falkin ......................... Barbara Murray ......................... Beverly Trust
                                          Robin Naphtali ......................... Myrna Wertheimer
2019-2020 FINANCIAL REVIEW

As the charts below indicate, NCJW/Essex receives generous support from a variety of sources and spends most of the budget on program services to benefit the community. In 2019-2020, income was higher than expenses; the surplus will be re-invested in programs.
HOW TO SUPPORT
NCJW/ESSEX

NCJW/Essex is a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to improving the lives of all women, children, and families in Essex County. We rely on support from members and the wider community to keep our programs and services vital and relevant.

To make a gift, please visit ncjwessex.org/donate.

To join the Chai Circle with a gift totaling $5,000 or more, please contact Caitlin Higgins Joy, Executive Director, at (973) 488-0049 or chigginsjoy@ncjwessex.org.

All gifts and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.