



# Jewish Family Service of Worcester, Inc.

646 Salisbury Street • Worcester, MA 01609  
508-755-3101 • FAX 508-755-7460  
www.jfsworcester.org



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**JFS Worcester Open House / Building Rededication Tuesday, June 10 from 5 – 6:30 p.m.**



# Jewish Family Service *today*

OF WORCESTER, INC.

SPRING 2003

Volume 4, Number 2

## Join Our Family in Celebration of Our "New" Home on June 10<sup>th</sup>

Shortly after becoming Executive Director in 1999, Stephen Slaten encountered a long-standing impasse about the facility at 646 Salisbury Street that houses Jewish Family Service. Nicknamed "the secret on Salisbury Street," JFS occupies an exceedingly beautiful, tranquil and private setting. Although the Board of Directors had long considered renovations, the building and grounds had become unkempt. Meanwhile, the Agency enjoyed a superlative reputation among area professionals due to our highly skilled and experienced staff. To give life to our Jewish values, "do not put a stumbling block before the blind," it was paramount for the building to become handicapped accessible.

In 2001 the Board undertook the "Our Family Is Growing" capital campaign to refurbish and upgrade the JFS facility, despite uncertain economic times. The campaign has been a two-year venture beginning with the development of architectural and fundraising plans.

The need to work through the construction required us to alternately vacate sections of the building, temporarily relocating staff and programs. It is a testimony to Rick Ringgard and Clay Norling of Builders Systems and to our dedicated staff that during the eight-month construction period between September 2002 and April 2003 service to clients was not disrupted. In fact, our services expanded during construction.

The entire project comes to fruition on Tuesday, June 10 from 5-6:30 p.m., when we open our home to the public for a rededication of our facilities and to honor the many who have contributed time, labor and finances.

### Going Forward

Beyond our physical plant, JFS programs quietly have been undergoing their own renovations, culminating in the Board of Directors' decision to embark on a nine month formal strategic planning

process. Economic conditions require a Board prepared to face difficult decisions such as staying committed to a service by the active pursuit of resources vs. closing a program that is no longer financially sound or needed by the community. With funding from the Greater Worcester Community Foundation Non-Profit Support Center, we have hired consultant Heather Harker of Third Sector New England. Heather will lead us through an internal review of our Agency, an appraisal of changing community needs and resources, and frank discussions of how JFS can best fulfill its mission.

In its 84-year history, JFS has undergone previous transformations. In November 1919, the United Jewish Charities was formed as a merger of several community groups. In 1938, the name United Jewish Charities was changed to Jewish Social Service Agency, which better reflected the changing functions and range of services provided. During the period from 1946-1952, the Agency assumed the task of resettling and rehabilitating displaced Jewish refugees immigrating to Worcester. As needs changed, the Board of Directors redirected their efforts toward the development of quality child and family counseling services. On November 1, 1957, the name of the Agency was changed to Jewish Family Service of Worcester, Inc.

### Programs and Momentum

JFS has provided adoption services since the 1940s as a licensed adoption agency. With a grant from the family of the late Irving W. Jacobson, JFS began an annual professional family therapy education series in 1979 that has attracted major figures in the mental health field to Worcester. In the early 1980s, JFS became the first social service agency in Massachusetts approved to act as corporate guardian for at-risk elders judged by the court no longer competent to make decisions on their own

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## JFS extends a special thank you to those who contributed with their labor and craftsmanship:

- Rick Ringgard and Clay Norling of Builders Systems, Contractor
- Keith Chenot of Chenot Associates, Architect
- Tom Mandella, Michael Anderson and Ken Kowalczyk of Mercier Electric
- Bryan Coombs, Arthur Mansfield and Donna Porter of Business Computing Professionals
- Bernie Edinberg of North Oxford Mills, plus Gordon and Tom for installation
- Melissa Ruttle of Custom Color Consulting
- Bill Anthony of Peak Environmental
- Ken Wage & Joe Carrier of K. Wage Painting
- Dave Tomasino of General Mechanical
- Roger McCarthy of McCarthy's Landscaping and Irrigation
- George Fotiades of Aegis Security
- Sandra and Don Macintyre of Macintyre Consulting Group
- Mike Wronski
- Barry Electric
- Dennis Wilson of Anderson Window
- P.W. Sherman
- Michael Mangini of A.L. Purinton Lock Corp.
- Mike Revelli of Garaventa USA (lift installation)
- Commonwealth Movers
- Gilbert Norbert Paving
- Steve Jankowski of Applied Roofing
- Glen Mair, JFS Board Member and Chair of the Facility Committee
- Kim Shea and Sue Clifford, JFS Staff who provided coordination and design
- To the many other Board, staff and workmen who contributed hours of labor and consultation.

### Letter of Thanks...

Steve:

I have been dealing with a family nightmare. Very long story but I have been dealing with issues regarding my 86 year old mother who has been in the care of one of my brothers who is mentally ill. The situation reached crisis proportions when my brother became suicidal and was hospitalized. I called Elder Services. They recommended I contact Jewish Family Services regarding Guardianship etc. (I called as a "regular person" and never mentioned United Way.) Ellen Gibbs called me yesterday to discuss the situation. She walked me through the process and explained exactly what I needed to do to make the system work.

I made the recommended calls. Last night I slept for the first time in a month! Thank you and Ellen for the excellent service. Quite honestly, I don't know what I would have done without her help.

*Sincerely,  
Dianne Bruce*

United Way of Central Massachusetts  
484 Main Street  
Worcester, MA 01608

### Jody from page 3

Federation, private foundations, and state government experience a struggling economy, JFS will implement a more ambitious and creative marketing campaign. Jody adds, "The more broadly JFS is known as a superb resource for people in need of social services, regardless of their religious, racial or ethnic background, the more successful we as an agency will be."

"Look for JFS to continue to reach out to the community in ways that benefit both our clients and the agency itself," Jody concludes.

### Enhancing an Already Distinguished Board

"Ultimately," Jody observes, "The Board's mission is to support the JFS staff in ways that enable the agency to provide sustained, uncompromising service to clients." To this end, during the coming year or so, the Board will undertake a variety of activities. For example, as Board Vice President and President-Elect this past year, Jody has spearheaded training on the standards for Board roles and responsibilities, and revision of JFS bylaws.

In addition, she has championed the Board's creating a new strategic plan, which will guide the work of the agency in the challenging times ahead. The process will include garnering input on Agency programs, and current community needs. The goal? To analyze and assess the functioning and viability of programs and staff, enable the staff to continue meeting the diverse needs of clients, and anticipate future opportunities and challenges.

"The breadth, depth and variety of our Board members' credentials make for a balanced, credible approach to the issues facing the agency," Jody

notes. "This Board is blessed with distinguished individuals from all walks of life – working and retired individuals in social service, medicine, law, management, marketing, the clergy, and many other professions and avocations. I'm looking forward to serving them for the next two years as their President. I know we face hard work and difficult decisions, but I know these efforts will provide each of us a sense of fulfillment as we rise to the needs of our clients and the community."

### On a Personal Note ...

Jody Schwab Prunier, of Worcester, has served for the past 14 years as an Assistant District Attorney for Worcester County. In this capacity, she has been involved in the prosecution of criminal cases in all Worcester County District and Superior Courts, from pre-trial investigations to appeals and post-trial hearings.

For example, cases under her purview have involved domestic violence, child abuse, sex abuse, juvenile, drugs, weapons, motor vehicles and mental health, including competency, criminal responsibility and commitment hearings. Currently, Jody handles extradition matters.

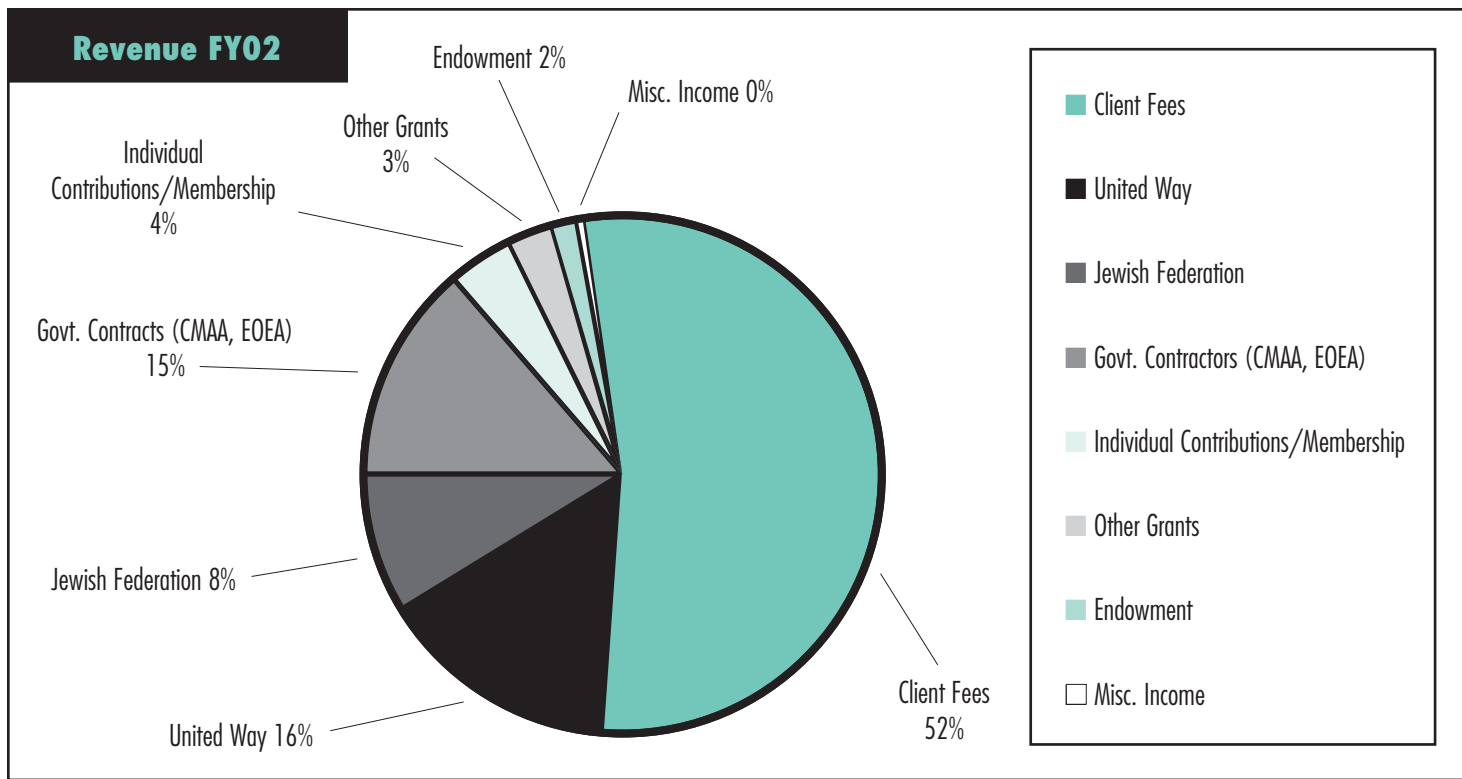
After earning her B.S. at Hobart-William Smith Colleges, in Geneva, NY, Jody completed her Masters Degree in Clinical Social Work at Ohio State University. Later she earned her Juris Doctor at Golden Gate University, in San Francisco. Her career in law has led her from San Francisco, to New York City, to Worcester.

In addition to her JFS Board membership, Jody has served as Clinical Coordinator at the Marshal Hale Memorial Hospital, San Francisco and on the Board of Directors of the National Council on Alcoholism, and she has taught courses in social work at Anna Maria College, Paxton, MA.

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## What We Do: Report on Programs & Services

### Counseling

JFS Therapists saw 808 counseling cases (families or individuals seeking treatment) in FY2002, a 7.3% increase over the previous year. We expect this number to rise to over 900 in FY03. Of these counseling cases, 58% are child and family focused. 729 children participated in therapy or were the focus of treatment in FY02, an 18% increase over FY01.

About 8% of the people seen in counseling were Jewish, and 8% were minorities. According to the 2000 census, Worcester is about 75% Caucasian, and the rest of the Central Massachusetts region is 92% Caucasian.

Based on client survey, 93% report they are better on the problem that brought them to treatment. 95% report their functioning and sense of well-being is improved as a result of treatment. A similar percentage report their children benefited from treatment.

### Children Cope With Divorce

The Children Cope With Divorce Program had 380 adults attending in FY02. These adults had a combined 747 children. 14% of the participants in FY02 were minorities. 95% of participants reported in anonymous surveys that the information they learned will help them better understand their children.

### Mediation

Our mediation team consists of attorneys and

trained social workers. In FY02 there were 14 families participating in mediation, 10 of whom achieved mutually satisfactory agreements. In the first six months of FY03 there have been 19 mediations, 10 of which achieved agreements, and four are still in process. The majority of mediations involve divorce or post-divorce modifications.

### Adoption

The first six months of FY03 we have worked on 8 adoptions (home studies, post-placement supervision and finalization, updated home studies). Janet Eckler was hired as Adoption Coordinator in January 2002.

### Geriatric Care Management

In FY02, 91 cases of elders and their families were seen either for geriatric care management (40), mental health treatment (31), or both (20). Many of the geriatric care management clients are seen at a reduced fee or no fee basis. Ellen Gibs, LICSW has an arrangement with the Eisenberg Assisted Living Center and the Willows to provide counseling to residents and their families. Referrals are made to help the family transition to this stage of life (which many elders experience as their "last stop") or to assess mental health problems such as depression, anxiety or psychosis. The Agency receives about two calls per week for information and referral regarding services in the community for elders. This information is provided at no fee. Based on client survey, the vast

majority of clients report that geriatric care management/counseling has been valuable to the family.

### Guardianship

The Guardianship Program served 138 elders in FY02. We had 26 new referrals the first half of FY03; not all of these will result in our being appointed guardian. As most of our wards have total assets of less than \$1000, we write off 75% of our client fees. Based on assessment of risk, within six months of our being appointed guardian 100% of the wards live in a safe environment, are medically more stable and financially more secure.

### Other services:

- We supply infant formula and baby food to pantries through the Baby Food Club, under the guidance of Phil Feinzeig.
- We provide a social program for about 10 developmentally disabled adults, The Club, run by Alan Harris.
- We provide a Separation/Divorce Group.
- We offer limited financial assistance for eligible Jewish families through the Tzedakah Fund.
- We provide food coupons to area grocery stores for low income families and individuals.
- We run a monthly Transracial/Transcultural Family Group

Our combined programs served over 4000 beneficiaries in FY02, including over 500 that are Jewish. ♫

## Jody Schwab Prunier To Lead JFS Board

### Sustaining a Tradition of Excellence

When Jody Schwab Prunier is approved by the Board of Directors to take the helm as JFS President in June 2003, she will lead a Board and agency strengthened greatly under the direction of outgoing President Stuart Hammer.

Further new and expanded programs, staff additions, and an enhanced image across the Jewish and Central Massachusetts communities have set the stage for JFS to reach new levels of excellence as a leading regional social service agency.

At the same time, however, Jody acknowledges that JFS faces a fresh set of challenges shaped by a climate of economic and geopolitical uncertainty—challenges that will test the creativity and dedication of the JFS Board and professional staff like never before.

"With Stuart at the rudder, the JFS Board clearly has been in capable hands," Jody observes. "I'm honored to follow in his footsteps. My role will be to channel the talent and dedication of the Board to sustain the hard-earned momentum achieved under Stuart's tutelage."

Stuart notes, "I've simply tried to serve as a sort of orchestra conductor for a multitiered Board full of industrious, creative, caring individuals. It truly has been a pleasure to work with Steve [Slaten, JFS Executive Director] and his great staff of professionals, as well as the agency's clients and benefactors, and, of course, my Board colleagues. Moving forward, I can't think of a more capable individual

than Jody to head the Board at this important point in the proud history of JFS Worcester."

### Priority Challenges and Opportunities

As President, Jody says, she will focus the energies of the Board in three areas vital to the agency's success: financial stewardship, community awareness and Board development.

Jody says that a fundamental responsibility of the Board is clearly the prudent oversight of the agency's finances.

"Historically, JFS has achieved a balanced budget," she notes, "but in the current economic environment, every organization, be it a business or a nonprofit agency such as JFS, must go to great lengths to maintain its financial viability. With a membership dedicated to the agency's sustained financial health, including several financial experts, I'm convinced this Board is up to the task."

### Community Awareness: More Important than Ever

"As highly respected as JFS is in the Jewish community in and around Worcester," says Stephen Slaten, Ph.D., JFS Executive Director, "many people are not aware that more than half of our clients are not Jewish." This, Steve adds, attests to the agency's success in enhancing its visibility in both the Jewish and the general communities. Looking ahead, as traditional JFS funding sources, such as the United Way, Jewish

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### Our "New" Home *from the page 1*

behalf. In 1988, the Agency began The Club, a group for developmentally and mentally disabled adults, which continues to run under the guidance of Alan Harris, LICSW.

Since 1995, JFS has offered the Children Cope With Divorce seminar twice a month, after participating in the Probate and Family Court pilot project to provide educational seminars for divorcing parents (now mandated in all counties). JFS also began offering family mediation services with a team of attorneys and social workers; we became an approved Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Program of the Probate and Family Court in 1999, and of the Juvenile Court in 2003. In 1999 we enhanced our Geriatric Care Management service to assess the social service, medical and mental health needs of elders, and assist with arranging resources. Our care managers help individuals to remain as independent as possible, to live in one's home with assistance, or to assess other living arrangements including supportive housing or assisted living facilities.

JFS remains committed to quality services that address a wide range of family and personal concerns across the life cycle. Our clientele includes

all religious, racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Beyond the non-discrimination requirements of United Way, state and federal funding, our values direct us to "love your neighbor as yourself..."

To help those in need requires we make services available at a reduced rate for income eligible clients. The wards in our Guardianship Program vary from those with substantial assets to many who are impoverished, requiring us to write off most of our fees. In Geriatric Care Management, we provide many hours of free telephone consultation and referral to people seeking assistance with elder-care issues. In counseling we remain committed to involving family members and consulting with other care providers despite much of this time being considered "non-reimbursable" by insurance.

In addition to client fees, we benefit from a broad mix of funding, including United Way, Jewish Federation of Central Massachusetts, Central Mass Agency on Aging, Executive Office of Elder Affairs, Greater Worcester Community Foundation, other local foundations, our membership and private donations. We strive to continue to earn the confidence the community has bestowed on us. ♫

## Stuart Hammer: A Legacy of Leadership and Service

During his three-year term as President of the JFS Board of Directors, Stuart Hammer, an attorney with Mountain, Dearborn & Whiting, has played an inspiring role in guiding the agency to new levels of service and aid for families and individuals in need. Here are the highlights of the agency's growth during these years:

The agency's annual budget grew by 25 percent to nearly \$875,000. To better serve a growing variety of client needs, the agency increased the size of its counseling staff, hired an additional case manager for the Guardianship Program, and brought in a new coordinator for the Adoption Program.

New programs include the Transracial/Transcultural Families Program and the Baby Food Club. JFS created a new staff personnel manual, implemented a new staff retirement plan, revised staff benefits plans for short- and long-term disability and life insurance, and strengthened a non-discriminatory policy for clients, staff and volunteers. The Board implemented a plan to add non-Jewish members of the community to its roster. Combining entertainment, community outreach and fund raising, JFS sponsored an evening with the renowned singer Dionne Warwick at Worcester's historic Mechanics Hall.

And last but certainly not least: JFS completed the most ambitious capital campaign in its history, surpassing the initial \$500,000 goal by nearly \$60,000. The capital campaign enabled the first comprehensive renovation of the 60+ year-old JFS facility, including increased office space, a complete facelift inside and out, enhanced exterior lighting, modern restroom facilities, larger waiting room, upgraded information technology, and much more. In keeping with a core Jewish value, from the Bible passage, "...do not put a stumbling block before the blind..." the facility now is in full compliance with the standards established within the Americans with Disabilities Act.

