

**"Your Federation Dollars at Work"**

## Jewish Family Services: Tzedakah in Action

By Aree Skolnik

Established in 1980, Jewish Family Services (JFS) has been an integral part of the community for 25 years. The mission of Jewish Family Services of Greater Charlotte is to deliver appropriate, professional and confidential counseling and social service assistance based on the identified needs in the Jewish community. When appropriate, Jewish Family Services also works collaboratively to meet the needs of people in the broader Charlotte area.

In 2005, the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte allocated \$185,000 to JFS, plus additional funds for the Charlotte Jewish Community Tzedakah Fund, a program to help those who require emergency financial assistance.

The professional staff of JFS successfully meets the needs of Jewish families and individuals in the community through older adult services, vocational services, tzedakah, counseling, and community outreach. The agency's dedicated staff consists of some of the best-trained and most compassionate individuals in their fields. Highly trained, fully accredited professionals with years of experience, they have made a difference in the lives of many. The agency also depends on more than 200 volunteers to serve our ever-growing population.

In 2005, JFS impacted the lives of more than 2,000 individuals and families in our Jewish



The JFS Food Pantry is ready for clients to come anytime.

Community. "The needs are greater and it's more important than ever that we are here for assistance," JFS Executive Director Penny Wagner-Schuster said. "Many of the members of the community have turned to us for the first time, realizing help and resources are right in front of them."

The people who depend on JFS come from all walks of life and represent all age groups and income levels. "Contrary to the belief that JFS only serves the fringes of society, we have an amazingly diverse client base," Wagner-Schuster said. "We're guiding our friends and neighbors ... people just like you and me."

JFS's service areas include the following areas.

### Older Adults

The agency is proud of its commitment to seniors in our community as demonstrated by programming and outreach efforts. More than 1,000 older adults attended agency-sponsored programs this year. JFS staff visits assisted living facilities and nursing homes around Charlotte on a regular basis. They also offer home visits for clients who cannot come to the office. Older adults are provided with Jewish programs, counseling, social support, and future needs assessment with family involvement. JFS is concerned with the whole situation of each individual.

### Vocational

Unemployment and financial difficulties seem to be a major rea-



The Red Hat Yentas are among the older adults served by JFS.

son JFS is called. Although this is one of the oldest components to the agency's list of services, in January of this year, JFS expanded and formalized its Vocational Program to assist those unemployed or seeking a career change. A part-time Vocational Counselor was hired to assist with job place-



Mitzvah baskets make nice decorations or centerpieces for your next event.

ment and career assessments. JFS anticipated that they would help ten individuals during the first year. JFS saw that many people during the first three months of the program's existence.

### Counseling

JFS employs master level licensed clinicians with vast experience. They provide professional counseling and group support to children, individuals, couples, and families. JFS clinicians provided more than 1,000 counseling sessions and handled 350 information requests this year.

### Tzedakah

JFS provides emergency financial assistance and food to those in need. Through the community's Tzedakah Loan Fund, JFS assesses individual and families facing financial crises. In 2005, the agency's food pantry was accessed more than 100 times each month and JFS Mitzvah Maker Volunteers prepared almost 200 home-cooked meals, logged over 1,000 volunteer hours and provided 350 rides to the doctor, grocery store and other appointments.

### Community Outreach

JFS offers workshops and seminars on a variety of issues of importance to community members. In November, JFS will start a six-week workshop for adolescents whose parents are divorcing and another six-week workshop on transition and loss. JFS also collaborated with the Levine JCC to offer Red Cross Babysitting Certification.

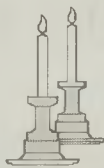
JFS works with Charlotte organizations and responds to the wider community's needs, as well. Since Hurricane Katrina, JFS has worked closely with many members of the temples to assist the survivors of the hurricane through food and housing support.

There will always be difficult times for individuals and families in the Jewish community. All ages and all economic situations come to JFS to benefit from agency programs and services. JFS is here for the entire Jewish community of Charlotte.

Penny Wagner-Schuster concludes, "It's clear that we're an essential resource for the Jewish families in the region. The generous allocation from the Federation and the participation of everyone who donates to the Federation Annual Campaign so unselfishly ensures that we'll keep our doors open and our services in operation. This is Tzedakah at the highest level, and we're so grateful for the opportunity to continue our efforts." ☆

### SHABBAT CANDLE LIGHTING FOR NOVEMBER 2005

- Friday, November 4, 5:08 PM
- Friday, November 11, 5:03 PM
- Friday, November 18, 4:58 PM
- Friday, November 26, 4:55 PM



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