

The Charlotte JEWISH news

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Celebrate Women's Philanthropy with Founder of JewBelong, Archie Gottesman

March 31, 7 PM, Sam Lerner Center

You might say that philanthropy will be in the air as the Federation's Women's Philanthropy group warmly welcomes community members to its "Spring Philanthropy Night: Celebrating the Power of Women," Tuesday, March 31, 7 PM, Sam Lerner Center for Cultural Arts. The program will feature Archie Gottesman, Founder of JewBelong, a website making Judaism relevant in the 21st century. Ms. Gottesman will highlight the importance of celebrating the joy of being Jewish, especially with all the challenges facing America's Jewish community. Through her website, JewBelong, Ms. Gottesman explains strategies to engage with Judaism, starting at whatever comfort level available. Ms. Gottesman stresses a non-judgmental approach to loving and

learning about Judaism in all its multifaceted iterations.

The Spring Philanthropy's theme of celebrating the power of women underscores a fundamental principle that women's philanthropy is a force for change and good in the community. Through special programs and services, women's philanthropy helps create a meaningful Jewish life and provides opportunities for leadership and learning for women from all parts of the Greater Charlotte region.

Women's Philanthropy has had a busy year full of events focusing on different ideas such as: Education, Donor Appreciation, Impact, and finally Campaign. Our Annual Campaign is one fundraising component of our work and we are glad to end our season of events with this fun

way to celebrate the power of women's giving and celebrate the impact we make on our community.

Spring Philanthropy Night will be an important part of the Women's Philanthropy groups 2020 fundraising campaign, with Jill Halverstam and Lisa Strause Levinson serving as program co-chairs. A minimum gift of \$180 or more to the Jewish Federation's Annual Campaign is required to attend the event. Tickets are \$36 before March 24 and \$40 at the door. Visit www.jewishcharlotte.org to purchase your ticket today.

A special shout out to our event hosting committee: Jessica Abrams, Cary Bernstein, Eliza Carney, Rochelle Carney, Amy Fine, Jennifer Golynsky, Eden Gobuty, Rachel Helton, Gale Osborne, Karen Ransenberg, Heath-



Archie Gottesman

er Rousso, Roberta Rodgers, Sarah Rose, Karen Spiegler, and Diana Warth.

Light refreshments and wine will be served. ♫

To learn more about women's philanthropy, contact Ilana Toch, Development Associate, at 704-944-6784 or ilana.toch@jewishcharlotte.org.

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On the Same Page: Chapter II: The Girl From Berlin by Ronald Balson

Thursday, April 2 at 7 PM in the Sam Lerner Center for Cultural Arts

The Center for Jewish Education (CJE) is proud to present the second chapter of our annual community wide read initiative: On the Same Page. Chapter II of our community read invites

everyone to read *The Girl From Berlin* written by bestselling author Ron Balson.

A powerful historical novel, *The Girl From Berlin* is also has a riveting mystery of mur-

der, deception, and greed, with chapters alternating between the 1930s/1940s Nazi Germany and 2017 Tuscany. Balson masterfully intertwines the music, the rise of the Nazi party to power during its early years, its effect on Jewish lives, and modern day Italy. It is a story of courage, survival, and hope.

Balson is a Chicago trial attorney, educator, and writer whose previous books include *The Trust*, *Karolina's Twins*, *Saving Sophie*, and the international bestseller *Once We Were Brothers*. In anticipation of Balson's visit, CJE Program Director, Debby Block spoke with the author.

Debby Block: As a professional trial lawyer, what inspired you to write a book?

Ron Balson: I have been involved with professional writing all my life but I always wanted to write fiction. Opportunity knocked several years ago when my law practice necessitated a trip to Poland to do research for a

case. Traveling around that country, encountering the remnants and scars of World War II, I was inspired to write a book about an ordinary family in wartime Poland. I believe that sometimes to begin writing fiction, you need something to grab you and wrap its arms around you.

DB: What were the challenges of moving from writing legal briefs and appeals to writing fiction?

RB: Recently, I was on the panel for the American Academy of Appellate Lawyers and Judges. Interestingly, the panel's topic was "Storytelling in Brief Writing." The panel drew many parallels between appellate briefs and fiction including: transmitting ideas, motives, and emotions with which everyone can identify, as well as eliminating extraneous information.

DB: How tough was it to get your first book published? Can you tell me about that?

RB: After being inspired in

Poland, I dove right into writing my first book, without finding a literary agent or publisher. When *Once We Were Brothers* was completed, I couldn't get a publisher interested, so I self-published the book. After a few months, I had sold 125,000 books and then St. Martin's re-published the book. I have been with St. Martin's Publishing Press ever since.

DB: Your novels document and educate about history. Have you always been interested in history?

RB: Yes, I majored in History in University. My next book called *Eli's Promise* is also historical fiction and is due to be available in September 2020.

DB: Do you need to travel a lot to do background research on your books?

RB: Yes, I always travel to the places I write about. For *The Girl from Berlin*, I went to Berlin, Rome, and Bologna.

DB: Congratulations on winning Jewish Book Council's Best Book Club Book last year. With your immense success as an author, do you still practice law?

RB: Yes, I do still practice law in Chicago.

(Continued on page 4)

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