

JFSMatters

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SPECIAL INSERT

Tributes



JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE

COUNSELING, ADDICTION AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Alternatives to the Trauma Narrative

Counseling & Addiction Services (CAS) have undergone a reshaping during the last year. Director of Project DVORA Domestic Violence Services Liz Coleclough assumed leadership of CAS so the agency could unite its services and provide more cohesive, aligned care to vulnerable people.

In the past, JFS offered a traditional therapy model in which a client would work with a counselor individually over the course of months or even years. Counselors had varying philosophies and styles of practice. It was different from a private practice, primarily, because it served vulnerable people for free or on a sliding scale.

“We now provide holistic care through a trauma-informed lens,” said Coleclough. “In our work with clients across the interconnected areas of counseling, addiction and domestic violence, we explore key points on a personal healing curve: trauma, trauma recovery and resilience building.”

Coleclough is clear in stating that mental illness, without trauma or complicated by it, is still a core consideration in the agency’s care. But she also notes that survivors of trauma are often stigmatized and given diagnoses that don’t consider the full effect of their life experiences.

“We see survivors of different traumas — domestic violence, the Holocaust, extreme poverty or abuse. We proactively acknowledge that these experiences shape people,” said Coleclough. “With that as our starting point, we can help clients work toward the understanding that there is no pathology in having a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.”

JFS now offers one-on-one counseling for up to six months, but it also uses skills-based groups to help clients on the journey from trauma recovery into resilience building. Individual and group counseling focus on reframing experience so clients have a new lens through which to understand their responses and behaviors. From there, counselors use evidence-based practices that promote mindfulness and support the development of coping skills.

“Survivors of all kinds can be caught in a cycle of shame, secrecy and isolation. They often have no social supports, and therefore, no alternative to the refrain: there’s something wrong with me,” said Coleclough. “Trauma lives in the body and can often play out in uncontrollable ways. So, survivors may be trapped in their bodies and trapped in the negative narrative of their minds. In our work, we can help them find an alternative narrative for the mind and a useful tool-kit for the body.”



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EXECUTIVE NOTE

Celebrate the Home Runs

BY RABBI WILL BERKOVITZ, CEO



Will Berkovitz

“The home run today doesn’t win the ballgame tomorrow,” my dad would say when he felt I needed perspective or a dose of humility. I believe in that saying — to some degree. But I also believe that celebration, tempered with humility, is just as necessary.

This year has been rough. Our clients continue to share feelings of increased anxiety, depression and stress brought on by this era of polarization in our society. We monitor the prevalence of hate speech with increased vigilance. Executive orders, budget proposals and health insurance changes weigh on our clients. We continue to advocate, reassure and support the vulnerable in our community, always encouraging them to believe in their enduring human potential. Still, there are home runs on this year’s scoreboard. We must take notice of them. We must celebrate.

This issue features some of the successes that inspire me. Development Chair JoAnn Forman has spent countless volunteer hours leading our fundraising efforts. At the Community of Caring Luncheon and throughout this fundraising year, our donors once again stepped up to the plate and knocked it out of the park. Time and again, the generosity of our JFS family increases in proportion to the need.

“We are strengthened when we help one more person get a chance to stand up and take a swing at rising to their potential.”

Rents continue to rise and the inventory of affordable housing continues to shrink, but our determined staff walk with each client who is struggling. So, we celebrate some of the homecomings for those who have achieved safe, stable, sustainable housing.

Our Counseling & Addiction team is finding new ways to respond to the increased demand for services. Their creative approach to group work helps clients build skills and community at the same time.

I see so much to celebrate in Mike’s story. The determination to re-establish his engineering career after fleeing Iraq. Our staff’s innovative response to problems faced by resettlement clients who are professionals. The city of Kent’s proactive and inclusive approach to its changing demographics. A successful relationship between Kent and JFS that benefits the people of the city and the region.

When concluding each book of the Torah, we chant “Hazak Hazak V’nithazek! Be strong! Be strong! And may we be strengthened!” We celebrate the accomplishment; we look forward to the work ahead. So, for all the work we have done together and all we will continue to do together — Hazak!

It is true that the home run today doesn’t win the ballgame tomorrow. But it is also true that together we are strengthened when we help one more person get a chance to stand up and take a swing at rising to their potential.

EMPLOYMENT

A Refugee Returns to His Professional Path



Meqdam 'Mike' Almaroof

A poster of blue skies above Kent lay across Meqdam "Mike" Almaroof's desk on his first day of work with the city. He can recall the exact date — Aug. 15, 2016 — from memory and still has the poster that welcomed him to the team and exclaimed, "We're happy you are here!"

Almaroof was happy to be there, too. So much so, he kept the welcome poster as a reminder and keepsake. "It meant a lot...it means a lot to me," he said.

"When you get to America, it's really hard to get a job that uses your past experience."

— Meqdam 'Mike' Almaroof

The job was one giant step on the long, difficult path to establish his professional career in America after resettling in Washington state in 2015, with the help of Jewish Family Service.

Almaroof had been an engineer in his home country of Iraq. After earning his bachelor's degree from Baghdad's University of Technology,

"We know that any time you get differences in a room, that teaches people to see things in a different way."

— Johnetta Rowsey, recruiter with the city of Kent

he had a successful 10-year career that included constructing bases with the U.S. military from 2003 until 2010. When the U.S. began to draw down its forces, Almaroof became a target, and like many others who had worked with the U.S., his life was now at risk.

Almaroof had professional skills compatible with the American market, but resuming his career where it left off was not going to be easy. In addition to licensing and certification barriers, he had minimal English language skills, no job contacts and gaps in understanding cultural and professional norms.

"It's never been easy," Almaroof said. "When you get to America, it's really hard to get a job that uses your past experience."

FINDING A FIRST JOB

Like all refugees, Almaroof needed to start working immediately so he could pay for rent and other necessities. He was grateful to have the income his Tukwila security guard job paid, but Almaroof didn't want to give up on using his professional skills. So he began pounding the pavement — literally. He walked the streets of Seattle, handing out his resume from Iraq to any contracting or engineering companies he could find.

Almaroof was a prime candidate for Tatweer, the JFS mentorship program for refugees with specialized skills and experience. In addition

to general coaching, Tatweer matches clients with mentors who are established professionals in their desired fields.

JFS helped Almaroof update his resume to meet American job market standards. Style changes were made, like removing the headshot customary on resumes in Iraq. Adding project details to conform to American engineering norms was another adjustment. Perhaps most importantly, Almaroof learned to apply for jobs online, something he did not know to do when he was searching on his own.

JFS and the Tatweer engineering mentor helped Almaroof understand general employment practices and coached him on how to communicate with recruiters. This was critical once JFS connected Almaroof with Johnetta Rowsey, a recruiter with the city of Kent.

Kent had long been a valued partner in JFS resettlement work and the city council had recently announced its vision for a culturally vibrant city government that embraced inclusion and diversity among its staff. The goal was to have a representative government that looked like the populations it served.

Rowsey encouraged JFS to submit clients' resumes, including Almaroof's, so qualified candidates could be considered by city departments. Rowsey and her colleagues were impressed with the

(Continued on page 5)

STABILITY

Housing Success Stories

As the Puget Sound region struggles to come to grips with a lack of low-income and affordable units, it's important to take a moment for the successes. We asked our front line staff to share some of their happy outcomes with us. We also asked them to tell us what — beyond more low-income and affordable units — would help vulnerable individuals and families achieve housing stability.



“Stop penalizing applicants who may have Section 8 vouchers or challenging rental histories.”

Shira Stern

Case Manager, Emergency Services

I worked with a family of three who had been in stable housing for several years. But in late 2016, they lost their apartment after the father suffered a workplace injury. The mother is disabled, and the father was now temporarily disabled. With no one able to work, the family was forced to get by on just the mom's fixed income. Mom, dad and their young child spent the winter living out of their truck. They were referred to JFS through the 2-1-1 crisis line in the spring. The father recovered and was able to go back to work. JFS, in partnership with Homeless-to-Renter (H2R), helped the family with move-in costs and the support they needed to get into a new, affordable apartment.

Sonja Adams

Case Manager, Supportive Living Services

I helped a very low-income, transgender person with disabilities who was experiencing homelessness move into permanent housing. She had applied to several subsidized housing waitlists. When she came to me, we added to that list and provided emotional support through the waiting process. When an affordable unit finally became available, JFS helped with her move-in costs.

Kris Morse

Client Services Manager, Supportive Living Services

An elderly client living in a market-rate apartment found that, on his fixed income, he couldn't pay his rising rent. He was

quickly draining his savings as he tried to keep up. While he was on low-income housing waiting lists, our intern helped him sign up for SNAP, also known as food stamps. Additionally, the intern helped him lower his utility and phone bills. When the man finally got the call that he could move into affordable housing, our team helped him pack and move into his new place. Once settled, he had continued support from a case manager, the intern and a volunteer friendly visitor. This gentleman was so happy to be living within his means. And we were so happy to get his call saying, “You guys at JFS are lifesavers!”

Cordelia Revells

Resettlement Programs Manager, Refugee & Immigrant Services

JFS works closely with numerous community-based organizations that represent the diverse populations who resettle in our region. Through the Congolese Integration Network, we met an 80-year-old woman who was on the verge of eviction. When her roommate moved out suddenly, she had no way to make rent on her fixed income. We met with the landlord and their attorney, and they agreed to halt the eviction process. In partnership with Solid Ground, JFS accessed Consolidated Homeless Grant rental assistance funds and that covered all past due payments and got our client current on rent. Throughout the process, JFS worked with our contacts in the Congolese community to find the woman a new roommate so she would have sustainable rent payments going forward.

“Provide incentives to rent to low-income individuals and families.”

“More robust enforcement of equal housing opportunity policies.”

“Incentivize private market landlords to stabilize rents.”

“Recognize that newly arrived refugees are extremely committed to achieving self-sufficiency, stability and credibility in the U.S. And they’re backed by agencies, like JFS, that provide a safety net if unanticipated circumstances arise.”



A REFUGEE RETURNS TO HIS PROFESSIONAL PATH *(Continued from page 3)*

applicants. “It was just like a gold mine was sent to us,” Rowsey said.

That gold mine became the payoff for Almaroof when he was offered an engineering job with the city of Kent.

GETTING TO WORK

Almaroof’s first major project was surveying about 100 sidewalk ramps and drawing retrofit designs to make them ADA accessible for people with wheelchairs, visual impairments or other disabilities. In April, he presented his design plans to the city’s Public Works Committee. The plans have since been approved and construction is set to begin.

According to Almaroof’s supervisor, Joseph Araucto, the city had not previously undertaken a sidewalk and street accessibility project with

the depth of detail and surveying Almaroof provided. His work created a guide and procedure that will be used in future projects, including the one he is leading to evaluate 1,200 more curbs.

In addition to his hard skills, Almaroof has been an exemplary employee. He is easy to collaborate with and is motivated, often showing up to work before his boss, Araucto added with a laugh. Almaroof was “exactly what we were looking for,” Araucto said.

PERSISTING ON THE PATH

“I don’t give up easily,” Almaroof repeated just as often as he noted, “It’s never been easy.”

The persistence he showed in his search is just as evident now that he

has his first American engineering job. Almaroof continues to work on everything from the basics of professional communication to the software experience that can advance his career.

While Almaroof’s engineering degree from Iraq won’t allow him to begin exams for a Washington state license right away, he plans to work under a professional engineer with the city of Kent for a year until he is eligible to take the first exam in the licensing process. He will need an additional five years of professional experience before he can take the final exam for his state license.

“It was a big step for me when I got this job. I tried so hard,” Almaroof said. “This job put me on a path...the right path.”

2017 COMMUNITY OF CARING LUNCHEON

In a time when we can too often feel divided from each other, it was so inspiring to have 1,155 members of our community join together on April 3 to support JFS and the vital services we provide to vulnerable individuals and families in the Puget Sound region. We thank our sponsors and donors who gave an extraordinarily generous total of **\$1,560,000!**

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Alvin Katsman, M.D.

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JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE

THANK YOU!

EVENTS

For complete details about these and other upcoming events, visit jfsseattle.org/calendar.

Kosher Food Bank

First Wednesday of the month

An opportunity for families who keep a kosher kitchen to take home healthy food.

Contact emagasis@jfsseattle.org or (206) 461-3240.

Gleaning

Second and fourth Sundays of the month

Collect produce from the Capitol Hill Farmers Market for the Polack Food Bank and its clients.

Contact volunteer@jfsseattle.org or (206) 861-3155.

Did you know JFS has award-winning home care services?

jfsseattle.org/home-care-solutions/

Navigating Turbulent Times Counseling Group

Begins in August

This group will meet once a week for seven weeks. We will focus on individual mindfulness, being mentally present to identify historical trauma and parenting during these times.

RSVP to counseling@jfsseattle.org or (206) 461-3240.

Sha'arei Tikvah Summer Shabbat

Friday, July 21

Enjoy a Shabbat service and a free, delicious meal with friends and family! This community-wide celebration is for people of all ages and abilities.

RSVP to familylife@jfsseattle.org or (206) 861-8784.

Rosh Hashanah Basket Making & Delivery

Sunday, September 17

Volunteer to fill and deliver holiday baskets to seniors and people with disabilities. Shifts also available at Chanukah, Purim and Passover.

RSVP to volunteer@jfsseattle.org or (206) 861-3155.

Sha'arei Tikvah Rosh Hashanah Celebration

Thursday, September 21

Join us in prayer and celebration and to hear the shofar during this community-wide gathering for people of all ages and abilities.

RSVP familylife@jfsseattle.org or (206) 861-8784.



**HEALTHY
FOOD
FOR ALL**

JFS Community-Wide Food Drive

Sept. 20 – Oct. 1, 2017

WHAT TO BUY

Canned Goods • Grains & Pastas
Proteins (Tuna & Peanut Butter) • Toiletries

PLEASE REMEMBER!

No Glass Containers • No Opened Packages
No Expired Food

Food Sort • Sunday, October 1

Join us for this excellent hands-on volunteer opportunity for individuals, groups and families.

Contact volunteer@jfsseattle.org.

#WeAreResolved #JFSsort



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Remember to recycle this newsletter.

SAVE THE DATE

Community of Caring Luncheon

MONDAY, APRIL 23, 2018

Sheraton Seattle Hotel

Chairs: Bobbi Chamberlin and JoAnn Forman

For information about sponsorship opportunities or becoming a Table Captain, please contact: Leslie Sugiura at events@jfsseattle.org or (206) 861-3151.

MISSION

JFS helps vulnerable individuals and families in the Puget Sound region achieve well-being, health and stability.

APPROACH

Jewish history and values guide our work; therefore, we provide effective services to people of all backgrounds and also have a responsibility to meet the particular needs of Jewish individuals and families in the region.

Michele Rosen, Board President
Rabbi Will Berkovitz, Chief Executive Officer
Deborah Frockt, Editor & Writer
Rachel Seymour, Writer

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