

# Community Celebrates Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

To honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County and its Jewish Volunteer Center, in partnership with Palm Beach Atlantic University, spearheaded a meaningful and powerful day of service filled with solidarity and volunteerism to unite the community on MLK Day. Now in its sixth year, the program gathered nearly 500 community members of all faiths, races, and ages to volunteer in small groups as well as virtual and contactless opportunities at 25 locations across Palm Beach County.



Volunteers packaged more than 1,200 meals for local food banks, assembled 300 toiletry kits for homeless shelters, gleaned more than 6,300 pounds of vegetables for food insecure families, cared for animals, helped revitalize, paint and refresh four community projects, dropped off donations, and much more. All in-person opportunities followed COVID-19 safety standards, including social distancing, mask wearing, and a mandatory wellness check.

“While this annual event looked a little different than previous years, it served as a deep and inspiring reminder of how we can make our community so much stronger and more vibrant when we unite, support one another, and lead with kindness,” shared Michael



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## JCCS Provides Career Services for Women

The Jewish Community Career Services (JCCS) program at Ferd & Gladys Alpert Jewish Family Service (Alpert JFS) comes at a most opportune time, as the pandemic has left many in the Greater Palm Beaches unemployed. Whitney Cherner, LCSW, MSW, who leads the initiative, is helping experienced job seekers find their next jobs.

At the heart of JCCS is EmpowerU, to assist those in career transition, providing free employment-related workshops. Resume writing and cover letter development, interviewing skills, and one-to-one coaching can help job seekers find their path and, in the process, find themselves. BecomeU was designed to help women discover who they are and who they want to be. A recently launched quarterly program will include topics like Ready, Set, Reinvent, and Hello Work-Life Harmony.

“Job seekers need to know who they are and what they have to offer. We work with our candidates by taking a three-pronged approach to job search strategy. This includes looking for opportunities aligned with the candidate’s work history, a pivot plan, and a side hustle,” said Cherner.

The JCCS is funded by a grant from Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County’s J-Help Coronavirus Emergency Response Fund, co-chaired by Sandy Baklor and Carole Solomon. BecomeU is funded by Federation’s Women’s Philanthropy division.

“Women’s Philanthropy is delighted to help make BecomeU a reality in our community through Lions’ Leap, a special fundraising initiative,” said Ronda Starr, Women’s Philanthropy Campaign Chair. “Lions of Judah are dedicated to helping women provide for themselves and their families in these challenging times.”

## Beth Am Feeds Community During Pandemic

For nearly 15 years, Temple Beth Am has participated in the tikun olam activity of serving a hot meal to guests at St. George’s Soup Kitchen in Riviera Beach once a month. But when coronavirus hit and St. George closed to volunteers, TBA had to rethink its strategy for getting food to hungry people.

Since April 2020, temple members, joined by other Jupiter residents, have provided dinner bags for 120 people on a weekly basis. To date, they have prepared and donated over 9,600 sandwiches and 4,800 bags of chips, boxes of juice, pieces of fresh fruit, and homemade cookies. Beth Am has committed to continuing this project until St. George can return to pre-pandemic operations.

St. George’s Center is a refuge in Riviera Beach that provides food and a resting spot for our homeless and less fortunate neighbors.



Volunteers add toiletries and snacks to the bags Temple Beth Am provides.



Mark Harding unloads bagged meals to donate.



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Hoffman, Jewish Federation President and CEO. “This is why we created this day of service to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, and we are hopeful that these efforts leave a lasting impact on our community.”

The day of service concluded with a virtual program to commemorate Dr. King’s vision of diversity, with nearly 200 in attendance. Dr. Terriel Byrd, Palm Beach Atlantic University professor, minister, and author, notably of *By This Shall We Be Known: Interpreting the Voice and Message of Dr. King, Jr.* shared insights from Dr. King’s “From Chaos to Community, Where do we go from Here?”, and two outstanding community leaders were presented with the Jewish Volunteer Center’s Tikkun Olam Award (Hebrew phrase that means “repair the world”) for their volunteer efforts to create a kinder, more inclusive world: Chani Ezagui and Christine Sylvain.

As director of The Kind Kitchen, Ezagui prepares hundreds of Shabbat meals each week, plus holiday meals, and works with volunteers to deliver them to homebound community members. Ezagui is also a friendly voice to many, making weekly calls and personal meal drop offs to serve as the primary source of socialization for dozens each week.




Sylvain, an educator who recognized early in her career the inequities for low-income students, has made it her mission to level the playing field. She founded Path to College, a local nonprofit to help low-income, high-achieving students gain admission to top-tier universities, debt free.

The sixth annual MLK Day of Service was presented in partnership by Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County’s Jewish Volunteer Center, Jewish Community Relations Council, and One World: Davis Family Tolerance Project, with Palm Beach Atlantic University.



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