

MARCH
2025



אדר
תשפ"ה



Upcoming Trainings

MARCH 4

Theraplay with Rochel
Sandhaus, LCSW

MARCH 18, 19 & 20

ACT with Dr. DJ Moran, PhD

MAY 6

Loss & Grief with Dr. Abby
Nathanson, DSW



We'd like to wish a שנת הצלחה to all our staff with March birthdays. We are so grateful to have you as a member of our staff. You should be blessed with everything you need materially and spiritually.

Pesach Tikvah Launches New Program: Starlit

Starlit is a new program designed for girls with an Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosis. This Sunday respite program offers hands-on activities that provide a fun and creative way for girls to develop essential life skills. Through engaging projects, interactive games, and positive social interactions, Starlit fosters growth, confidence, and meaningful connections.

Respite programs provide an opportunity for parents to have a break while their children are learning new skills, including social skills and motor skills, in a safe and structured environment. Starlit is led by Bassy Kahan, who has extensive experience working in the OPWDD sector.

For referrals or more information, please contact Starlit at 718-875-6900 ext. 1102 or email info@ptstarlit.org.

Successful Sandtray Therapy Training

On January 22 and 23, the Pesach Tikvah Training Institute conducted a training in Sandtray Therapy. In Sandtray Therapy, children express their understanding of themselves and their world through figurines and miniatures in a small sandbox. It can be used to help children communicate, giving the therapist insight that she can use to guide the parent.

This two-day training was experiential. Each clinician received her own sandbox to practice on during the training and to take back to her office to use with clients. The clinicians learned how to use sand as a medium for treating children, as well as teens and adults.

The training was taught by Dr. Jodi Mullen, Ph.D. Dr. Mullen is an international speaker, author, SUNY professor, credentialed play therapist, and play therapy supervisor. Dr. Mullen provides training, consultation, and supervision to

professional helpers all over the world. She has authored books on play therapy, counseling children and adolescents, grief counseling, and parenting. Dr. Mullen was the 2008 recipient of the Key Award for Professional Training & Education through the Association for Play Therapy.

Dr. Mullen spoke about the different components of a sandtray, such as the preferred size of the box, the blue inner lining, the sand, and the miniatures. Dr. Mullen discussed many items and their significance when placed in a sandbox. She suggested conducting sandtray sessions with open curiosity and never pointing to a specific object in a sandbox. She advised being mindful that however the therapist is interpreting the scene, it may be different from the what the client intended, advising therapists to always be curious and avoid jumping to conclusions. She also spoke about how different traumas and past experiences might show up in a sandtray.

Therapists said:

"For me, this was the strongest training experience so far provided ... this is due to both the modality and the presenter. She was excellent at teaching the concepts of this model and was very engaging. I would definitely seek further extensive training to master this particular modality and its connection to attachment therapy."

"It was an incredible training and I am so grateful that I got to be part of this incredible opportunity."

"I loved the entire training! I'm so interested in how Sand Tray can be used with so many different modalities."

"One thing that made an impact on me is the importance of noting what is behind the meaning of the words [that the client shares] ... Looking for signs of what is going on or being said as opposed to what is directly shared. I also learned how impactful a sand tray can be as it allows clients to open up and share things they wouldn't normally share."

Focus On:
Lea Scharf, LCSW, Training Institute Director
and Clinical Supervisor

Q&A



Each month, we feature an *unsung hero of Pesach Tikvah* — someone who contributes something indispensable to the organization. This month, we spoke with Lea Scharf, LCSW about her work.

Q: What is your position at Pesach Tikvah?

A: Training Institute Director, and Clinical Supervisor for the School Satellite Program and the Borough Park clinics. I also see clients as a therapist and organize special events.

Q: How long have you been at Pesach Tikvah?

A: Close to a decade.

Q: What do you do as Training Institute Director and Clinical Supervisor?

A: As the Director of the Institute, I create a training schedule each summer for the upcoming year. This includes taking surveys from our staff to see what their interests are; speaking to clinic directors to see what skills therapists need to develop; and surveying the type of issues that are coming through the clinics.

I research and find the best presenters on the wanted modality or topic. I meet and interview the potential presenters and then hire the best! Lots of hard work and consideration goes into creating our training schedule/curriculum for the year!

As a Clinical Supervisor, I meet with supervises and serve as a support to them in managing their caseloads. If it's for the school program, I speak with principals and serve as a support to them and consult as needed.

Q: Do you have any interesting projects you

are currently working on?

A: Yes! We are working on creating a Virtual Library for the Training Institute! Therapists will be able to access recordings of old trainings in a very simple and efficient way ... all online! More details will be announced once it's up and running.

We're working on a Menaholim summit coming up in March, and a Principals event coming up after Purim IYH.

Q: What do you like about working at Pesach Tikvah?

A: I absolutely love working at Pesach Tikvah and feel so blessed to be part of this family!

The people I have the honor of working with make my experience at Pesach Tikvah so much more exciting and fulfilling: Yerachmiel Stern, all fellow directors, the administrative staff, my fellow clinicians, my supervises, my clients, and of course, my right-hand person Gitty Appelbaum!

I view my role as Director of Training as an opportunity to spread knowledge and expertise to a large number of people who can then help so many more people! The effect is so large and so rewarding!

Q: What are your goals for the future at Pesach Tikvah?

A: We all share one mission: to help anyone who walks through our doors and give them hope! So my goal remains: Keep trying to fill any need that arises and make it happen!

A great thanks goes out to Lea Scharf for her dedication to Pesach Tikvah, and the vital work she does. Would you like to suggest an unsung hero of Pesach Tikvah for next month's newsletter? Email ckurtz@pesachtikvah.org to make a suggestion.



Pesach Tikvah Honors Therapists with Yossi Green Kumzitz

Famed composer Yossi Green graced us on Thursday, February 20th for a legendary evening in which he performed for our cohort of male clinicians. It was an evening produced seamlessly and masterfully by Lea Scharf and Gitty Appelbaum.

Throughout the evening, Yossi Green told the stories behind his storied songs. He talked about his collaborations with legends of the Jewish music world, including Mordechai Ben David, Avram Fried, and The School of Jewish Song. He told uplifting stories including that of being asked by Rabbi Shmuel Birnbaum to sing the song "Amnam" during his son's treatments.

The highlight of the evening was a newly composed song on shalom bayis called "To Hear Your Voice" that Yossi Green sung in English. It was not just a song about shalom bayis – it was an allegory for Am Yisroel's relationship with Hashem. It was a truly beautiful song that everyone loved. The evening culminated with a book signing by Yossi Green – each clinician was gifted a two-volume songbook.

The musical event was accompanied by a fleishig buffet catered by Essen Deli. A great thanks goes out to Lea Scharf, Gitty Appelbaum, and Yerachmiel Stern for organizing this phenomenal event.

Senior Services Hosts Best Luncheon Yet

On January 29th, Senior Services hosted their most successful luncheon ever for Holocaust survivors and their daughters. Over 60 people attended the event at Le Chateau. The event was part group therapy and part emotionally and intellectually enriching social time. Susan Weinberger, LCSW spoke about family relationships between seniors and their younger counterparts. A professional singing group with a guitar performed nostalgic Yiddish songs that the attendees remembered from the past. Sara Blima Gestetner told a special Yiddish story. The attendees had a beautiful lunch and enjoyed each other's company. Each senior left with a pleasant gift – a hot water pot and lovely mug, and a booklet of inspirational stories and quotes. The ladies loved it!

Senior Services has received excellent feedback on the luncheon. The ladies' daughters told the Senior Services team that these events are excellent for their mothers. One daughter shared that while her mother generally prefers not to go out, the one event she looks forward to going out to is Senior Services luncheons for Holocaust survivors. A great thanks goes out to Shoshie Soibelman, Sara Blima Gestetner, and Rochie Weinberger for organizing this event.

The Keshet Nafshi Mental Health Symposium

On Wednesday, February 26th, Keshet Nafshi held a Mental Health Symposium for mental health professionals and mechanchim. Pesach Tikvah was the Gold Sponsor of the event. We had a table at the entrance, and Aharon Fink, 640 Family Center Director, spoke as part of a panel of behavioral health leaders including Rabbi Gedalia Miller (founder of Keshet Nafshi), Yankel Stauber, LCSW (founder of Neshumah), and Jonathan Froelich (COO of Achieve Behavioral Health).

Keshet Nafshi is an organization that helps parents of at-risk teens – teens who are having issues with Yiddishkeit. They run very helpful Shabbatons for these parents. The Mental Health Symposium was a lead-in to a Shabbaton.

When Aharon Fink gave his speech, he spoke about the history of Pesach Tikvah and our unique role in compassionately counseling people through Yiddishe tzuras. His speech was very well received. He made Pesach Tikvah proud. When he mentioned Yerachmiel Stern in his speech, the crowd applauded. It was quite an honor for Pesach Tikvah.

The highlight of the day was a training for clinicians by Rabbi Shimon Russel, LCSW. He taught about the stages of at-risk teens. Following his training, Rabbi Uri Deutsch, Rov of Forest Park, gave an inspirational divrei chizuk on the subject. In the evening, there was a Halacha symposium and a Q&A with Rabbi Shimon Russel.

Pesach Tikvah played a pivotal role in this extremely helpful mental health symposium. Thank you to Yerachmiel Stern, Aharon Fink, and the clinicians and directors who attended and made Pesach Tikvah's role in the event possible.



Good News from Pesach Tikvah Programs

Though temperatures in New York City were frigid, Pesach Tikvah is — as always — a warm and happening place. All our departments have been continuing their excellent work. Our whole staff deserves recognition.

Clinics:

- 640 Family Center: Mazal tov to therapists Racheli Schorr, Yitzchok Lipshitz, and Deborah Jacobs for becoming LMSWs. Mazal tov to Debbi Rosen on graduating and becoming MSW.
- 926 Family Center: Mazal tov to the recent graduates.
- 926 Family Center: Mazal tov to Chanah Faygen on passing her LMSW exam.
- 5309 Family Center: Mazal tov to Layala Borenstein on her wedding!
- 5309 Family Center: Mazal tov to Shterna Levyhaim on the birth of a baby!

5309 Family Center: They had their first meeting specifically for intake therapists to support them in developing a deeper understanding of how to conduct an intake.

School Satellite Program:

- The Yeshiva Satellite Program is planning a large event for Menahalim in March. We wish them much success.

Senior Services:

- In addition to the best survivor luncheon ever, Senior Services hosted a mental health education and group therapy event for seniors on Wednesday, February 19th. 22 seniors gathered at the Hobby House for a catered lunch, group therapy and mental health education, and hands-on art making. The therapist at the event spoke about DBT techniques for handling fear. She also spoke with each of the women individually. The ladies very much enjoyed the afternoon and expressed the desire to attend again.

Kesher Connection:

- Care Manager Rikal Mangel helped a Kesher Connection member who struggles with mental illness to transition her current residence into an OMH funded supportive housing unit. She will now have 80% of her rent paid for by OMH;

she will receive some free furnishings at home; she will have a housing case worker visit her home to make sure she has her needs met. A huge thanks goes out to Rikal for her incredible work!

COMHAB:

- COMHAB is experiencing continued success. Thank you to Diana Masri for her ongoing efforts.

ICF:

- Thank you to Izzy Tropper, Chanie Shindler, Diana Masri, and Joe Bistricher for their excellent ongoing work at the ICF.

CORE:

- On Tuesday, February 19th, Pesach Tikvah's CORE program hosted Anthony Ramirez, Downstate Regional Director of the CORE Peer Navigator Project and his team — Latanya McKenney, Carolina Munoz, & Lynn Citrin, at 365 Willoughby Avenue. The meeting centered around creating opportunities for collaboration, enhancing linkage to peer specialists, and expanding referral streams and connections.

CFTSS/Simpatico:

- CFTSS has officially opened a flagship location in Monsey. We wish them a huge mazal tov and extend great appreciation to CFTSS directors Bruchy Endzweig and Gitty Kahan, as well as their incredible staff.
- Mazal tov to Naomi Zareb on her engagement!

Data Analytics:

- Welcome new team member Akiva Skaist.
- Data Analytics is proud to announce the public release of CCBHC Measurements, and open-source Python library developed by Pesach Tikvah to simplify the process of calculating CCBHC measurements with minimal required data.