

MAY
2025אייר
תשפ"ה

We'd like to wish a **שנת הצלחה** to all our staff with May 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.

Senior Services Has Huge Month

March 2025 was a huge month for Senior Services. They had three events and mishloach manos delivery to Holocaust survivors. A great thanks is owed to Shoshie Soibelman, Sarah Blima Gestetner, Rochie Weinberger, and Pessy Grunwald.

On March 5th, Senior Services held a big luncheon for senior women and Holocaust survivors. Therapist Malka Gestetner led Mental Health Bingo, a clever game of her own design which she used to introduce mental health topics. For example, self-care was one of the bingo squares. When she called out that bingo square, she explained what self-care is. The ladies had an amazing time and learned so much, and everyone received a beautiful table-top matzah box.

March 18th, Senior Services held a senior event here in the conference room. 20 seniors came for a Chinese buffet and group therapy. Therapist Malka Gestetner discussed pre-Pesach anxiety. The ladies really enjoyed it. They engaged, they had questions, and they shared their own experiences. The therapist shared techniques for staying calm and validating emotions, bringing examples from her own lived experience. She was very engaging and authentic. The participants took home helpful booklets full of tips for reducing anxiety. Following group therapy, there was a paint class with Rochie Weinberger.

For Purim, Senior Services distributed mishloach manos to all the 90 Holocaust survivors in their network. Thank you to Senior Services for bringing so much uplifting energy and mental health education to the community!

Pesach Tikvah's Training Institute Hosts ACT Training

On March 18, 19 & 20, Pesach Tikvah's Training Institute held an in-depth training on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. The trainer was Dr. DJ Moran, PhD. The training was extremely dynamic and thorough. Dr. Moran highlighted the importance of cognitive flexibility, mindfulness, and accepting one's thoughts and feelings and taking constructive action toward one's values.

One attendee said, "I learned a great deal from this training and hope to apply these skills with some clients."

"This was my first training on ACT so I gained both knowledge and practical skills that I feel confident using," said another therapist.

"It gave me a new approach on how to deal with thoughts and feelings that clients get stuck on," said one therapist.

A therapist reflected, "This was an extremely helpful training. I think I will use ACT in conjunction with all other therapeutic modalities that I use."

"[This was] one of my favorite trainings," said a therapist. "The presenter was excellent, and I learned how to actually implement skills."

A great thanks goes out to the Training Institute Director Lea Scharf and her assistant Gitty Applebaum for this fabulous training!

Pesach Tikvah Innovates at Menahelim Summit

Seventy menahelim and school therapists from throughout the five Boroughs attended Pesach Tikvah's recent Menahelim Summit. The event, which took place in Brooklyn on Thursday, March 20, 2025, honored distinguished menahelim for their role in children's mental health.

The Menahelim Summit was the first ever gathering of menahelim by a mental health organization that provides services in schools. Menahelim and principals from throughout the city – Litvish, Chassidishe, Borough Park, Flatbush, Williamsburg, Crown Heights, Queens, and Staten Island – came together for the sake of our youth.

The event was emceed by the ever engaging Aharon Fink, LCSW, Director of Pesach Tikvah's 640 Family Center in Williamsburg. Pesach Tikvah's dais was graced with some of its most legendary therapists, supervisors, and ambassadors: Dr. Eliot Kirschenbaum, senior therapist and supervisor, and one of the founding fathers of Pesach Tikvah 40+ years ago; Shlomo Berkowitz, long standing therapist and mentor to program directors and clinicians for 20+ years, was an ambassador to the menahelim and principals; noted therapist, supervisor, and therapy and supervision group leader Berish Weinberger, LCSW, was on the dais and took part in ingratiating principals from all over; Avrumi Mermelstein, LCSW, Lead Clinical Supervisor Yeshiva Satellite Program; Aaron Zev Herbstman, LCSW, clinical supervisor for the Yeshiva Satellite Program as well as clinic director for the 926 Family Center; and Dr. Heschel Fried, PhD, a respected psychologist and senior mentor to menahelim.

The event was spearheaded and hosted by the legendary Rabbi Avrum Grunwald, Director of the Yeshiva Satellite Program. He put much effort into creating awareness with all the menahelim and principals. An immense amount of effort was put into assuring that the evening ran comfortably and seamlessly, as Rabbi Grunwald welcomed the principals from all circles of the community.

Aharon Fink, LCSW, opened the evening by discussing that the menahelim never give up on a child. He discussed the connection between chinuch and therapy, that therapy creates a kli within a child that makes it possible for the child to learn Torah. He emphasized that menahelim and therapists are partners in chinuch.

Aaron Zev Herbstman, LCSW, followed with an opening discussion of Pesach Tikvah's perspective and ideology. He discussed the term "chacham lev" and how it applied to both Betzalel building the Mishkan, to therapists, and to the menahelim at the event. He also told the story that once a distinguished community member told him that the community wanted excellent service for an affordable price. That became Pesach Tikvah's mission statement, which Pesach Tikvah has been fulfilling for 40+ years.

The first guest speaker was the legendary mashpia Rabbi Avram Malach Shlita. Rabbi Malach honored the menahelim and principals by discussing the great reverence he has for them. He paid tribute to the difficult 24-hour-a-day work they endure. He shared that a great menahel's attitude emanates from him out to the whole school, creating a positive environment.

Renowned psychologist Dr. Norman Blumenthal, PhD followed Rabbi Malach. He discussed early risk factors evident in the classroom. It was an excellent overview of the mental health challenges that children present within the school setting, including depression and anxiety.

Reb Heshy Zabel, LCSW, accomplished professor, supervisor, and private practitioner closed the evening's program. By accentuating Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, he discussed the needs of children in the school setting, underscoring the menahel's unique and valuable role in understanding the children and their underlying circumstances. He also spoke of the importance of seeing the full family picture when engaging with a struggling child.

The attendees of the Menahelim Summit left the event having been honored for their tireless work and inspired to support the mental health of their students. A great thanks is due to all who attended this one-of-a-kind event. The event was meticulously produced and coordinated by Director of Pesach Tikvah's Training Institute and veteran clinical supervisor Lea Scharf, LCSW. If your school is interested in bringing Pesach Tikvah's mental health services to its students, please contact Pesach Tikvah's Yeshiva Satellite Program at 718-875-6900.



Focus On: Shauli Wagschal, MHC-LP, CASAC-T

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 Shauli Wagschal, MHC-LP, CASAC-T about his work.

Q: What is your position at Pesach Tikvah?

A: I am a therapist at the 5309 Family Center and Pesach Tikvah's Hearts and Minds addiction counseling program.

Q: How long have you been at Pesach Tikvah?

A: I've been at Pesach Tikvah for two years.

Q: What do you do as a therapist?

A: Primarily I do one-on-one sessions with clients. I treat males from the age of 10, adolescents, men into their 40's, and even older adults. My oldest client is over 70. In the Hearts and Minds addiction counseling program, I have clients struggling with substance use. When I'm working with kids, that includes meeting the parents. Parents are a big part of the therapy process of a child. Modalities that I use are CBT and DBT, teaching skills and implementing skills. With others it might be more existential

work, helping them find themselves, find meaning in life, and helping them through the struggles they are going through at that point in life.

Q: Which trainings have you attended through Pesach Tikvah's Training Institute?

A: The trainings at Pesach Tikvah are phenomenal. I attended the ACT training a year and a half ago, and I use ACT all the time. It blends really well with CBT and DBT. It was with the same trainer who did the recent ACT training. The trainer was absolutely phenomenal in the way he explains everything. Pesach Tikvah really brings in great, great trainers. I also did the Eating Disorders training in January. It was really, really great. It gave a new perspective. Eating disorders is more of a specialty, but it does show up so it's really important to have that knowledge. You have to be informed, know what to look out for, know what to do, and know whether you can handle it or should refer out.

I also attended the Menahelim Summit. In addition to Pesach Tikvah, I also work in a yeshiva. I know how important it is to be able to collaborate with the school. I have met with the yeshivas about a number of clients – it is so important to be able to collaborate and work together

with the school. The Menahelim Summit really brought out the importance of collaborating with the school.

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

A: It's a great, warm environment, a very supportive environment. Communication is really phenomenal between the staff. Many times I have collaborated with the psychiatrists, case managers, and other personnel. I'm really enjoying it. I also appreciate how the clinic directors and clinical supervisors support the therapists.

Q: What do you look forward to in the future?

A: I'm looking forward to the company growing and reaching and helping more and more people.

A great thanks goes out to Shauli Wagschal for his dedication to Pesach Tikvah, and the vital work he 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.



Good News from Pesach Tikvah Programs

Spring has sprung! New York City is blooming, and here at Pesach Tikvah our innovative work for the community continues with ever-present flair. Every single staff member deserves recognition for incredible contributions.

Clinics:

- 926: **מזל טוב טוב** to Naomi Glogauer on her engagement!
- 926: **מזל טוב טוב** to Shana Zelcer on passing her LMSW exam!
- 926: **מזל טוב טוב** to Chana Faygen on passing her LMSW exam!
- 5309: A men's Mindfulness Group led by Solomon Weinreb has begun. It is accepting members. If you would like to refer a client to the group, contact Pessy Neuwirth at 347-525-2647 or pneuwirth@pesachtikvah.org.
- 5309: The clinic is continuing to expand group supervision.
- 5309: Thank you to Devorah Kotzen for coming down to talk about high-risk clients.

School Satellite Program:

- **מזל טוב טוב** to Malky Berkowitz (nee Ganz) on her wedding!
- Welcome to the new therapist Binyamin Baum.

Senior Services: In addition to their amazing month of March, Senior Services has continued their home visits to Holocaust survivors.

Kesher Connection: Holidays, especially Pesach, are usually very stressful and triggering to vulnerable people. Our devoted care managers arranged free food, cooked meals, and valuable coupons for our members to ensure that each client enjoyed a simchas yom tov.

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

ICF:

- A new individual has moved in.
- The ICF staff just celebrated Director Chanie Shindler's 25 years working at the ICF. This is a major milestone, and we appreciate her dedicated leadership!
- An individual celebrated her 86th birthday.

CORE: In the month of April, Pesach Tikvah's CORE program was invited to attend a fair organized by South Beach Psychiatric on Staten Island. CORE continues to network with social service agencies and other community partners in building referral streams, with the ultimate goal of introducing HARP-eligible members to CORE services in order to enhance their life skills and promote their mental health recovery.

CFTSS/Simpatico:

- CFTSS is putting a lot of effort into expanding their groups and individual services in Bronx and Staten Island.
- **מזל טוב טוב** to Naomi on her wedding!

Human Resources:

- **מזל טוב טוב** to Shlomi Helwa on the birth of twin granddaughters!

Data Analysts:

- **מזל טוב טוב** to Akiva Skaist on the birth of a baby girl!
- **מזל טוב טוב** to Alex Gursky on his wedding!