

Inspiration Flowed at the 2025 Pesach Tikvah Chanukah Party

If you were lucky enough to be at 365 Willoughby on Wednesday, December 17th, you would have spent your lunchtime in the conference room eating catered food (thank you!) and listening to some very inspiring speeches. The speeches at the annual Chanukah party are not to be missed – last year they were just as great. If you happened to miss them, or you just want to revisit a great moment of staff unity, here's a recap of what our truly wonderful leadership said.

Rabbi Hershkowitz, our esteemed Director of Fundraising who has been with Pesach Tikvah since 1982, opened the event with the first speech, emphasizing that since Yerachmiel Stern, LCSW became Executive Director, Pesach Tikvah has become a place of saying yes. Yes to resources, yes to new initiatives – we're saying yes to all kinds of progress across the organization.

"Pesach Tikvah is a story of hopefully eternal success," said our Executive Director, Yerachmiel Stern, LCSW. Despite recent audits, "The good energy is prevailing. It started to prevail before the audits, and it's prevailing now. Just like Chanukah is a yontif of lights, Pesach Tikvah should be a shining light into the hearts and homes of the clients that we serve. We are here in even more achdus and more wealth, more powerful than we've ever been. Baruch Hashem, we are at the absolute forefront of what we do."

Yerachmiel Stern said, "We're where it's at. Who would have thought five years ago that now we are the epicenter of mental health? We're at the forefront of mental health, and we're at the forefront of quality. We are the only and last people that serve every kind of person from every subsect of chassidim, every denomination, and we serve them cohesively and comprehensively."

He closed by thanking everybody "for all the extra conscientious work and all the extra hours...every-

body took a heavy spillover in work. I want to personally thank everybody for really going above and beyond."

Aharon Fink, LCSW, Director of the 640 Family Center, gave a Chanukah message that what Pesach Tikvah stands for is goodness and light, and whatever challenge we are sent we respond to it in a way of light and wholesome goodness.

Aaron Zev Herbstman, LCSW, Director of the 926 Family Center, said, "Unity is very easy when things are easy. We are in the middle of two audits, and you wouldn't know. When things are arduous and difficult, that's when the unity shines. Right now there is a lot of ripe opportunity for there to be division and fighting because there is a lot of stress, yet here we are with the same unity we had last year."

"Behind that unity is Yerachmiel Stern," he said. "He's the player's coach. A tremendous leader."

Pesach Tikvah long-timer, our Facilities Manager and Crisis Manager Joe Bistricher, finished the speeches by reading a lovely poem that was anonymously written for our Executive Director. He then gave a dvar Torah that emphasized faith in Hashem.

Yerachmiel Stern finished the speeches by thanking Pesach Tikvah original Zalman Kotzen, LCSW, Director of Senior Services and a special thanks to Devorah Kotzen for holding so much together during the audit. Zalman Kotzen shared some inspiring words lauding program managers and leadership for bringing stability and achdus to the organization.

The Chanukah party was full of good energy and unity, and we'd like to thank the organizers for making it happen. A great thanks goes to Shlomi Helwa and Zack Teper, our fearless HR team, for making the party. Thank you to Yerachmiel Stern for perpetuating this Pesach Tikvah tradition. And thank you to all of you for being there.

Amazing CBT Training Was So Helpful to Clinicians

The Training Institute delivered again! Thank you to program director Lea Scharf, LCSW and her team for another awesome training. This month it was Part 2 of the CBT training with Dr. David Miller. Part 2 was a follow up to the CBT training, where everyone got to ask questions and present cases. The clinicians were able to implement the skills they had learned in his first workshop and then come back with questions. It was a packed and truly meaningful training.

Attendees said:

“Excellent presentation and attention to details.”

“Thank you so much! I learned a lot and really enjoyed the training.”

“Dr. Miller was very engaging. presented the information clearly with a lot of real life examples from his practice.”

CFTSS Opened a New Location in Borough Park

Mazal tov to Bruchy Endzweig and her amazing CFTSS team. They successfully opened a new location in Borough Park at 5309 13th Avenue. The new space is very culturally sensitive. People have felt very comfortable coming to the space. Director Bruchy Endzweig said, “We’re going to start with family peer groups, which is a space for parents to just be who they are, to express themselves, to learn, to gain support from one another.”

“It’s a really cool space,” she said. “It’s in an office building. It doesn’t stand out, so that reduces the stigma. Clients are feeling very comfortable. We have yeshiva bochurim coming after school and girls during the day, and then family peers. That is small groups of parents meeting with a certified peer provider who offers them creative ways to express, release, process, and to learn and gain skills through writing, journaling, and art.”

We wish CFTSS much success with their new center. CFTSS is such a great example of the incredible work

that Pesach Tikvah does. CFTSS, you make everyone proud!

State Commissioner of Mental Health Appreciates CORE

The CORE program received this note of appreciation, recognition, and well-wishes from the NY State Commissioner of Mental Health, Dr. Anne Sullivan.

I want to wish you all a joyful holiday season and best wishes for the New Year!

Thank you for your partnership and everything you do all year long to achieve our shared mission of promoting hope, recovery and resilience among New Yorkers living with mental illness. Each day, your work provides essential services that allow individuals and their families to live and thrive in their communities.

I am thankful for each and every one of your staff in whatever role they play in our mental health service community. I would also like to recognize and thank everyone who has lived mental health experience and has chosen to work in this field. We are proud to share some stories of recovery that demonstrate the special empathy, insight, dedication and skill you bring to your work precisely because of your firsthand experience.

This has been another year of significant mental health accomplishments as we continue to implement Governor Hochul’s record investments into transforming our mental health system. We continue to expand access to inpatient treatment at state psychiatric centers and community-based hospitals, while also building out essential outpatient supports, including more Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers, Critical Time Intervention Teams, Assertive Community Treatment teams, and court system navigators, to name a few. New network adequacy standards are now in effect, ensuring New Yorkers with qualifying health insurance plans can get a timely appointment for behavioral health care.

This year, we also continued to fund specialized housing to help New Yorkers living with mental illness to reside safely within their community, including 1,276 new units associated with Governor Hochul’s mental health initiative and thousands of others under development. This year, we also significantly expanded the per-unit funding for the Empire State Support-

ive Housing Initiative, which was welcome news for many of our providers. The 200 conditional awards announced this fall represent the most we've made through this program since it was established in 2016. And our Safe Options Support Teams continue their incredible work helping unsheltered individuals gain permanent housing.

We've continued to grow our Clubhouses and Youth Safe Spaces, expanded peer-led programs such as INSET, focused on youth mental health services — at the same time New York took distracting smart-phones out of the classroom with the new school year, a move that is already showing positive results. And so much more!

None of this would have been possible without the partnership and commitment of all of you, our community providers. We are immensely grateful for your dedication and will continue to support you and your work in any way that we can. As we move into 2026, we will continue growing our workforce recruitment and retention efforts.

While many challenges are ahead, I am confident that when we work together our state will remain a leader in providing services and supports to New Yorkers living with mental illness. Together we can face whatever challenges appear, as we always have!

I hope you have a moment to enjoy the holidays and will start 2026 energized to meet the challenges ahead. And please attend to your own mental health and wellness. Prioritizing self-care makes it possible to provide care for others!

Again, thank you for all you have done this year. Let's look ahead to a healthy, safe, and rewarding New Year together.

Sincerely,

Ann Marie T. Sullivan, MD

Commissioner

New York State Office of Mental Health

Focus On: Yonina Kaminetzky, HR Admin

Each month, we feature an unsung hero of Pesach Tikvah — someone who contributes something indis-

pensable to the organization. This month, we spoke with Yonina Kaminetzky about her work at Pesach Tikvah.

Q: What is your position at Pesach Tikvah?

A: I'm an HR admin.

Q: How long have you been here?

A: Since the beginning of June.

Q: How would you describe what you do at Pesach Tikvah?

A: I deal with onboarding, applications, submitting paid family leave, and other similar tasks.

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

A: It's a warm environment. It's nice to be with everyone. Everyone is so friendly.

Q: How is it working for Zack Teper and Shlomi Helwa?

A: It's great. I love it.

Q: Do you have any goals for this year?

A: Just to learn. I've learned so much and look forward to continuing to learn.

A great thanks goes out to Yonina Kaminetzky 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.

Good News from Pesach Tikvah Programs

December was a great month at Pesach Tikvah. Everyone pitched in and did such good work. Thank you to our whole staff for your contributions to the community!

Clinics:

- **926:** The clinic had a Chanukah party for the clinicians. Everyone received custom gifts. Thank

you to Aaron Zev Herbstman and Yerachmiel Stern.

- **926:** Mazal tov to Chani Weber on the birth of a baby girl!
- **926:** A new group has formed: Growing as a Mother. It will meet Tuesdays from 11 AM – 12 PM. It will be lead by Gitty Kahn, LCSW MSED.
- **926:** Mazal tov to Rivka Kamin on the birth of a baby girl!
- **640:** Weekly staff meetings have been a huge success. The training curriculum is being accepted well. People are really appreciating and learning. There was a recent training on diagnosis that was very informative.
- **5309/4111:** Mazal tov to Tamar Itzkowitz on her marriage!
- **5309/4111:** Mazal tov to Avigail Pollack on her marriage!
- **5309/4111:** Mazal tov to Tuli Feferkorn, Kevin Gershonson, and Yudi Levine on getting their licenses!
- **5309/4111:** Sari Itzkowitz is starting social work school. Hatzlocho!
- **5309/4111:** The staff and clinicians had an amazing time at their Chanukah party and they're so grateful for the gifts Mr. Stern gave, a cozy blanket and Owalas.

Yeshiva Satellite Program:

The Yeshiva Satellite Program had a beautiful Chanukah party. Thank you to Rabbi Grunwald, Avrumi Marmostein, and Yerachmiel Stern.

Senior Services:

- In December, the seniors came to Pesach Tikvah for group therapy with Malky Gestetner, LCSW. She spoke about mindfulness, deep breathing, and how to relax and enjoy grandchildren during Chanukah. There was a nice arts and crafts gathering afterward where they made tea lights from resin.
- Senior Services also hosted a luncheon for Holocaust Survivors. Everyone was gifted a

donut maker. Following the luncheon, the participants baked donuts together with Rochie Weinberger.

Kesher Connection:

Kesher Connection had a beautiful Chanukah party. They did a team building game, had an awards ceremony with Yerachmiel Stern, and experienced appreciation for their growing diverse team with all their unique knowledge and skills.

CORE:

CORE continues to fulfill its mission of providing support and skill-building services to those with mental illness who are on a journey of recovery. To inquire about CORE services/eligibility please email Postreicher@pesachtikvah.org.

COMHAB:

Thank you to Diana Masri for her excellent ongoing work!

Simpatico:

- Mazal tov to Libby Klein on her marriage!
- Mazal tov to Gitty Kaff on the birth of a baby girl!
- Parenting groups and social skills groups for boys and girls are doing well.

CCBHC:

- CCBHC is now offering IPS (Individual Placement and Support) sessions for our clinic clients to support them in finding and maintaining competitive employment in jobs that align with their interests and goals.
- 926 Family Center now has male and female peer supports.

ICF:

The dedicated IFC staff continues to deliver excellent care to its residents.