

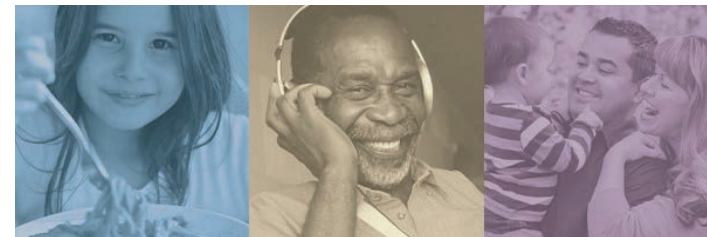
Jewish Family Service of Utah: A Rich History of Changing Lives

By Betsy Lucas

Jewish Family Service (JFS) just might be our community's best-kept secret. Founded in 1872, JFS is a community-based organization whose mission is to strengthen individuals, families, and the community. The organization is rooted in a rich history of Jewish values. However, the majority of its clients are not Jewish. JFS helps individuals of all nationalities, ethnicities, religions, disabilities, genders, or orientations in the two most important aspects of their lives: family and work. Through a unique combination of mental health and workforce development services, they help people and families become stronger.

The local extension of JFS Utah serves greater Summit and Wasatch County individuals, offering various programs and services, including individual and group counseling, depression and suicide prevention, promotion of elderly independence, and case management. Its services are available on a sliding fee scale based on household income. "Meaning we assist all people regardless of ability to pay," Executive Director, Ellen Silver said. "We use a person-centered approach to tailor our services to meet the complex needs of the individuals and families who come through our doors. At JFS, our goal has always been to provide the necessary support and skills to empower a person and families to create a vibrant, connected, and sustainable community."

Whether offering affordable mental health counseling to individuals and families, resources and comfort to older adults and their caregivers, or a safety net for those in financial distress via emergency assistance and food pantry, JFS's highly qualified professional staff strives to provide the best programs and services



for all. "We strengthen individuals and families of all backgrounds through counseling, advocacy, care management, and community education," Ellen said.

JFS offers personalized services that take into account all the issues someone might be facing. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen an unprecedented demand for our services, and we are responding quickly to these urgent and changing needs. JFS has been working tirelessly to prevent homelessness, feed the hungry, and provide therapeutic support to those who are struggling to deal with life's growing challenges. "We didn't think twice about it," Ellen said. "We were front and center with our relief efforts. I couldn't imagine not doing something to help our community during the pandemic or during any other time. No matter how small, we all can do something to help."

To help the entire community, JFS recently received a generous \$40,000 grant from the Park City Community Foundation Women's Giving Fund. The grant will help create a support group and safety net services for people in caregiver roles, including those caring for older adults and people with a disability or dementia. The funds will enable the agency to provide material and emotional support to members of the greater Park City community. "So many times, the needs of the aging population falls through the cracks," Board of Directors President, Darcy Amiel said. "It is critically important to us to see that that doesn't happen. Our work promotes connection and social engagement, improves the ability to manage challenges posed by chronic illness, and increases awareness of and access to resources that support aging in the community and those who are caring for them."

These programs promote physical and mental health, community engagement, access to resources, and neighbor-to-neighbor support among older adults. The number of people living with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders is growing rapidly. JFS

both supports individuals and families who are directly affected by dementia and collaborates with other organizations to reduce stigma and promote dementia-friendly communities. The hope is that the caretaker-support programs can enable family members to find what they need at different stages of the disease.

Health problems, loneliness, or loss can make each day a struggle as one ages. Understanding and communicating can be difficult, but JFS can help both senior adults and their families to find options to address their needs. "Being a caregiver can be stressful. Join a group where you will be understood, learn skills to help you in your role, and address self-care," Darcy said. "Our no-cost caretaker group is designed to provide educational, emotional, and social support to individuals caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia." Caretaker and other support groups are now offered virtually.

If you have other ideas about ways to help or would like more information about these opportunities, please reach out to Nicole Levy, Director of Development, at nicole@jfsutah.org.

Rosine's Story

Late on a Friday afternoon in June, a social worker from the Department of Workforce Services reached out to JFS with a request.

One of her clients, Rosine, was in a crisis situation. Rosine, pregnant with her second child, had recently escaped domestic violence with her 7-year-old daughter.

To make matters worse, she was having complications with her pregnancy and was in the hospital, so she couldn't work. She had come to the Workforce Services office with a note from her

landlord saying she had until Saturday to pay her rent or vacate her apartment. Rosine was terrified; she was 24 hours away from ending up on the street with her daughter.

Rosine's Workforce Services social worker had a good working relationship with JFS and had been referring families to them for years. So when she told them about Rosine's situation, they knew they needed to act quickly.

Under normal circumstances, JFS requires a referral form and documentation to provide emergency assistance, but this request needed to be fulfilled immediately. The last thing anyone wanted was for this pregnant woman and her daughter to be homeless. She was in a safe place; they wanted to keep her there.

A staff person from the Department of Workforce Services agreed to pick up a check and deliver it to her landlord that evening. As a result, JFS successfully prevented Rosine and her daughter from being evicted from their home.

That Friday was a long day. The JFS Safe Net Coordinator and bookkeeper stayed well into the evening getting this done.

This case highlights the importance of Jewish Family Service, how responsive they are, what wonderful partners they have in the community, and the necessity of collaboration in meeting the pressing needs they face daily.



Jewish Family Service
Caring for all Utahns since 1872

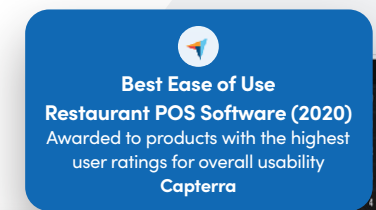


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