



JEWISH CHAPLAINCY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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GREATER MIAMI JEWISH FEDERATION

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Jacob Solomon  
President and Chief Executive Officer

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Executive Vice President Emeritus

*The vision of the Jewish Chaplaincy Program is to create a more giving and compassionate community. If you are interested in supporting this work, please contact Rabbi Fred Klein at the Greater Miami Jewish Federation. Naming opportunities are available.*



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*The Mission of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation is to mobilize human and financial resources to care for those in need, strengthen Jewish life and advance the unity, values and shared purpose of the Jewish people in Miami, in Israel and around the world.*

# A Meaningful Volunteer Experience

## THE *Refuat Ha-Nefesh* FELLOWS



Jewish theology teaches us the importance of *v'halachta be'drachav* (to walk in the ways of God). This translates into imitating God's acts of kindness. By visiting those in need, we are the agents of God's compassion; these are the guiding principles of the **Refuat Ha-Nefesh Fellows** (Spiritual Care Fellows).

*"This program is remarkable and life-changing and offers Jews from all walks of life an opportunity to make a difference."*

Through classes, group processing, and intensive on-site visits to hospitals, long-term care facilities and individuals in their homes, **volunteers will learn to provide compassionate and spiritual support.** They will learn the Jewish philosophy of visiting the ill (*Bikkur Cholim*); the skills of spiritual and emotional guidance; issues and concerns facing the elderly; Jewish perspectives on death; Jewish healing rituals; how to comfort mourners; how to handle dementia and depression in seniors; and Jewish medical ethics, among other practical skills.

*"You go out and visit someone and find a new part of yourself..."*

The faculty includes experts from the fields of chaplaincy, rabbinics and social work. This intensive volunteer opportunity is open to people of all backgrounds and denominations. Participants are expected to commit to a minimum of three hours per week visiting, depending upon their flexibility and other responsibilities. Classes are held every other week (holidays and vacations excluded). Upon completion of the program, all volunteers will receive a certification from the Jewish Chaplaincy Program.

All volunteers must apply and interview for the *Refuat Ha-Nefesh* Fellows Program. Programs begin following the High Holy Days.

Please contact us at [chaplaincy@gmjf.org](mailto:chaplaincy@gmjf.org), or call Program Director Rabbi Fred Klein at 786.866.8620 or 305.562.1235.



*"And you shall walk in the ways of God"  
(Deut. 28:9)  
How does one walk before God? Just as God is called merciful, so you shall be merciful. Just as God is called compassionate, so you shall be compassionate. Just as God is called holy, so you shall be holy.*

*- Sifrei, Parshat Ekev*

# THE JEWISH CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM OF THE GREATER MIAMI JEWISH FEDERATION

## Our Mission

Living in a *kehilah kedosha* (sacred community) means feeling that someone will be there to offer solace and support during times of physical, emotional and spiritual crisis.

Whether this type of comfort means a friendly smile, a caring word or a simple touch, these nurturing gestures foster a sense of community bound by *gemilut chasadim* (loving kindness). When we do this work in a Jewish context and utilize the spiritual resources of our past, we can connect people to a larger community that transcends a specific time and place.



The Jewish Chaplaincy Program of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation works toward these principles with hospitals, health care facilities, agencies, synagogues and other community organizations to help ensure that every Jewish person in Miami feels a sense of *mishpacha* (family).

## Who We Are

The Jewish Chaplaincy Program provides spiritual and pastoral care, as well as religious services in local hospitals, nursing homes and long-term care facilities. Our trained chaplains visit thousands of ill and elderly Jews each year to provide consolation and guidance in times of crisis. With the assistance of local rabbis, the program provides prayer cards, books of reflection and other materials to support and inspire those in need.

*While we cannot always stop the suffering, we can help each person face their challenges with care, concern and love.*

The program collaborates with local Jewish agencies to organize annual conferences and seminars for health care professionals, clergy, social workers and concerned individuals to address important trends in aging. Past topics have included: compassion fatigue and caregiving; psychological help to deal with the financial crisis; aging and spirituality with meaning; and dealing with end-of-life issues. Finally, the Jewish Chaplaincy Program is dedicated to fostering a *kehilah kedosha* (sacred community) and collaborates with Federation's Jewish Volunteer Center, local synagogues and community agencies to create opportunities for volunteers to engage in this sacred work. Holiday celebrations with the elderly and outreach programs help to bridge generations, which benefits recipients and volunteers alike.

In addition, there is a population of volunteers who are looking for ways to involve themselves in intensive and fulfilling work. The *Refuat Ha-Nefesh* Fellows Program (see reverse) trains volunteers in spiritual care.

Our program is guided by an advisory committee that consists of lay leaders, volunteers and clergy from all philosophies and backgrounds. They all share one purpose — to reach out and support other Jews in times of need. Spiritual guidance is also provided by the many rabbis through the Rabbinical Association of Greater Miami.

## The Power of a Visit

Miriam was an 85-year-old woman who spent most of her life in New York, but moved to South Florida in her later years. Her husband had passed away, and for years Miriam had suffered with cancer. With few friends left, she spent most of her days in her condo seeing no one except for a hired caregiver. When her death was imminent, her son came down from New York. Although Miriam belonged to a synagogue when she was younger, she no longer had the physical strength to attend worship services, and had no clergy. Her son called the Greater Miami Jewish Federation, and a rabbi came to her



home to visit. As the rabbi entered the room, he noticed pictures of Jerusalem on the wall, awards honoring her for her contributions to Israel, along with the *mezuzah* on the door. He entered her room, and found her on oxygen and in pain. Barely conscious, she simply whispered, "I want to go home. It is time." She could not engage in conversation, so the rabbi simply took her hand and began to sing. As he said the *She'ma* with her, he saw her body relax and her breathing stabilize. With her son at her side, the rabbi began to pray with them, asking that each forgive the other. She fell into a deep sleep, and after 30 minutes, the visit ended. She died the next morning.

The son returned to New York to sit *shiva*, where he was unexpectedly visited by an acquaintance of the rabbi. The son told her how meaningful that visit was and how it helped create closure for both of them.