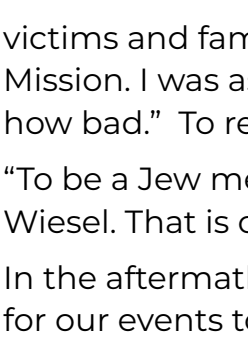


"To be Jewish is to be present whenever our presence is needed by other Jews." ~ Elie Wiesel

President's Message From Elise Udelson



We began our year filled with excitement and anticipation for the many meaningful, educational, cultural and fun events being planned. But, after Hamas perpetrated the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, our world has changed, and so, too, has our focus.

I recently returned from the Greater Miami Jewish Federation Solidarity Mission to Israel to witness the effects of the atrocities and provide comfort to the victims and families. It was very different from my last trip in April on the Israel 75 Miami Mega Mission. I was asked, "Were you prepared?" I answered, "I knew it would be bad. I didn't know how bad." To read my full reflection, [click here](#).

"To be a Jew means to be present whenever our presence is needed by other Jews," said Elie Wiesel. That is our theme this year. So apropos!

In the aftermath of October 7, Women's Philanthropy recognized that it was even more essential for our events to proceed as planned. In the last few months, we have convened several programs (see photos below) so we could:

- come together as a community to find solace during these tragic circumstances
- learn how Federation is responding to support Israel and Jewish people around the world – which is now more important than ever
- stand united and show our solidarity to let the world know we will not be silent

In our community, we have made phone calls, met with donors and held numerous parlor meetings, helping Federation raise nearly \$27 million, part of a national effort spearheaded by the Jewish Federations of North America that has raised more than \$762 million, all of which goes directly to Israel – 100 percent. We supported the efforts to raise awareness of the babies and children taken hostage (Broken Hearts for the Children Kidnapped) under the leadership of **Lourdes Suarez**; marched in Washington, D.C., with 300,000 others from across the country; shopped for Israel at the Yad B'Yad Shuk locally organized by **Shelly Brodie, Elise Schek Bonwitt** and **Linda Schechter**; and so much more. All of that while continuing to run the Annual Campaign and the Israel Emergency Fund.

I am so very proud to be working with all of you, whether you are planning, attending, recruiting or supporting our efforts. As a result, we are able to care for one another, as well as care for our extended Jewish family. We are all *mishpacha*!

Antisemitism has risen to its highest recorded levels around the world. Yet, Jews are coming together as never before. Thank you for all that you have done and all that you will continue to do. We live by the Federation Mission of caring for those in need and strengthening Jewish life.

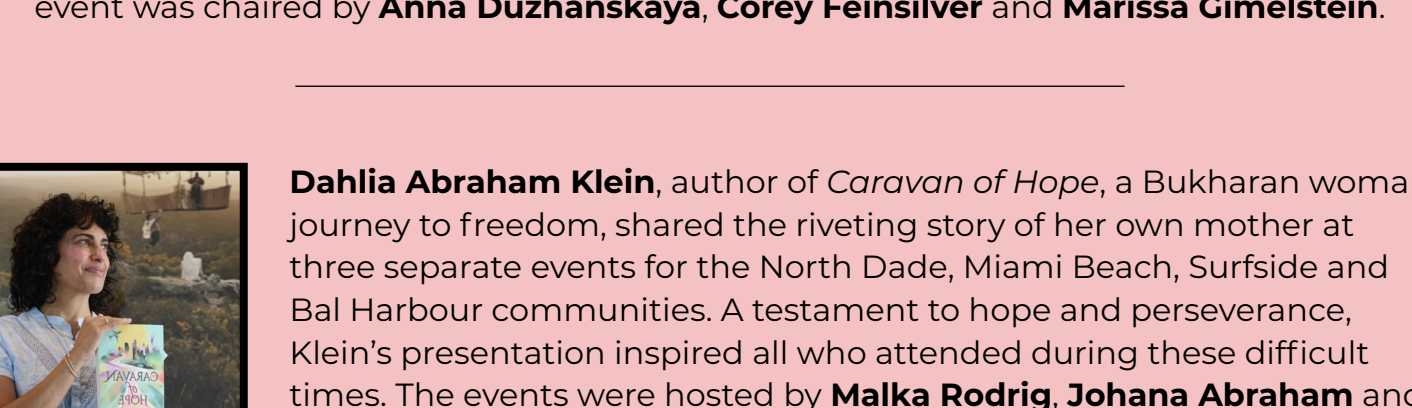
We pray for the safety of our IDF soldiers. We pray for the people of Israel. We pray for the safe and speedy release of our hostages and their healing, both physically and emotionally. We pray for Jews worldwide.

As Jews, our mandate is to be "a light unto the nations." Let's continue to bring the light from the recent *Chanukah* festival into the dark world we are experiencing. This year, especially, we need that extra boost and let's pray it shines on!

Am Yisrael Chai.

Elise

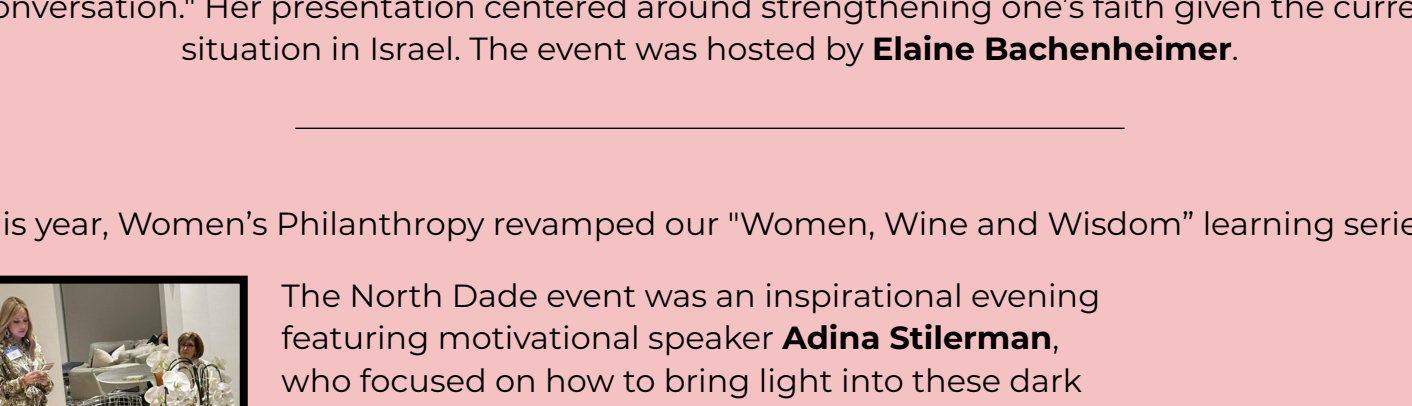
HIGHLIGHTS FROM RECENT WOMEN'S PHILANTHROPY EVENTS



Beautiful flower arrangements were created at the South Dade Kickoff Program for delivery to Holocaust Survivors prior to *Shabbat*. Participants heard about the numerous programs of the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach from its Chair and 3G member, **Jessica Katz**. The event was chaired by **Anna Duzhanskaya, Corey Feinsilver** and **Marissa Gimelstein**.



Dahlia Abraham Klein, author of *Caravan of Hope*, a Bukharan woman's journey to freedom, shared the riveting story of her own mother at three separate events for the North Dade, Miami Beach, Surfside and Bal Harbour communities. A testament to hope and perseverance, Klein's presentation inspired all who attended during these difficult times. The events were hosted by **Malka Rodrig, Johana Abraham** and **Cristina Ben-Shmuel**.

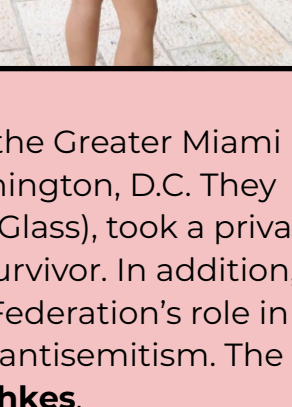


Rabbi Laila Haas of the Center for the Advancement of Jewish Education (CAJE) shared how to extend the messages of the High Holidays throughout the year at "Coffee and Conversation." Her presentation centered around strengthening one's faith given the current situation in Israel. The event was hosted by **Elaine Bachenheimer**.

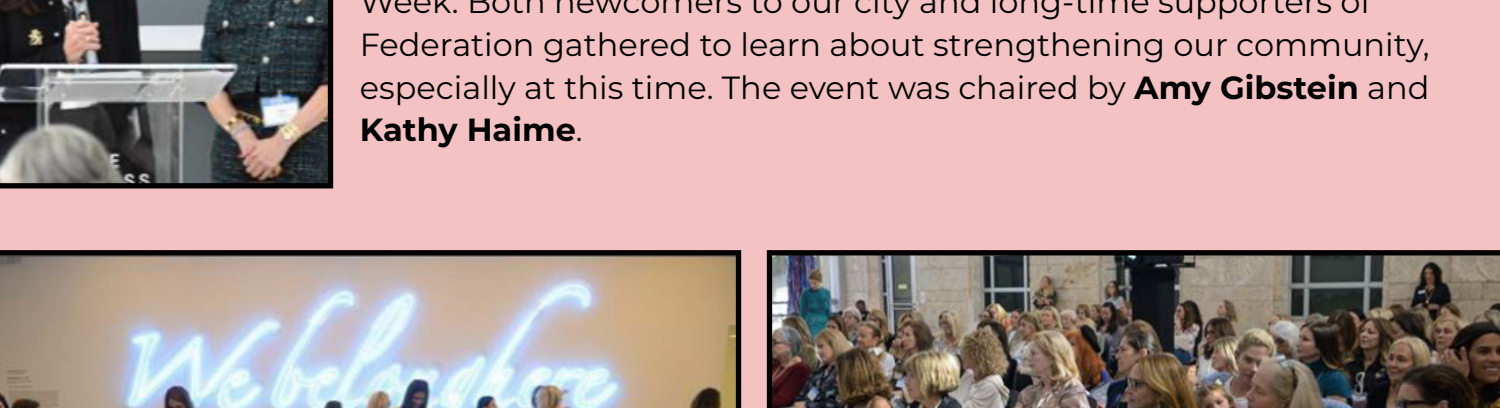
This year, Women's Philanthropy revamped our "Women, Wine and Wisdom" learning series.



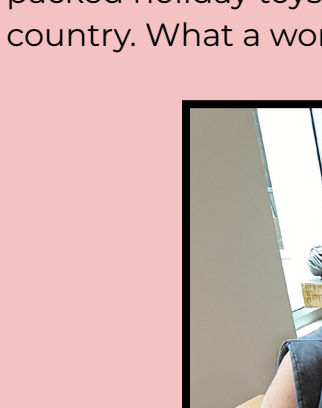
The North Dade event was an inspirational evening featuring motivational speaker **Adina Stilerman**, who focused on how to bring light into these dark times. It was hosted by **Silvia Assor**.



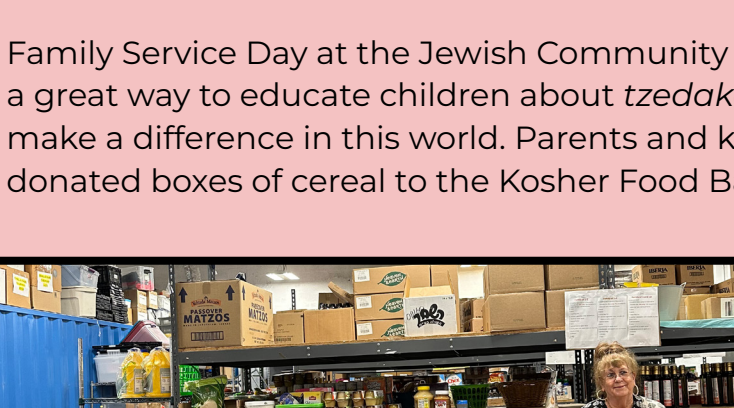
The South Dade event was an uplifting evening of solidarity with words of inspiration from **Rebbetzin Nechama Harlig**, who relayed how important it is to be united as a community to overcome evil. The event was hosted by **Laurel Schwartz**.



A group of women gathered at the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation on the same day as the national rally for Israel in Washington, D.C. They commemorated the 85th anniversary of *Kristallnacht* (The Night of Broken Glass), took a private tour of the Memorial and heard the testimony of **Saul Blau**, a Holocaust Survivor. In addition, **James Somohano**, Federation's Director of Community Security, shared Federation's role in safeguarding our community during the current climate of skyrocketing antisemitism. The program was chaired by **Debbie Abramowitz** and **Jen Chachkes**.

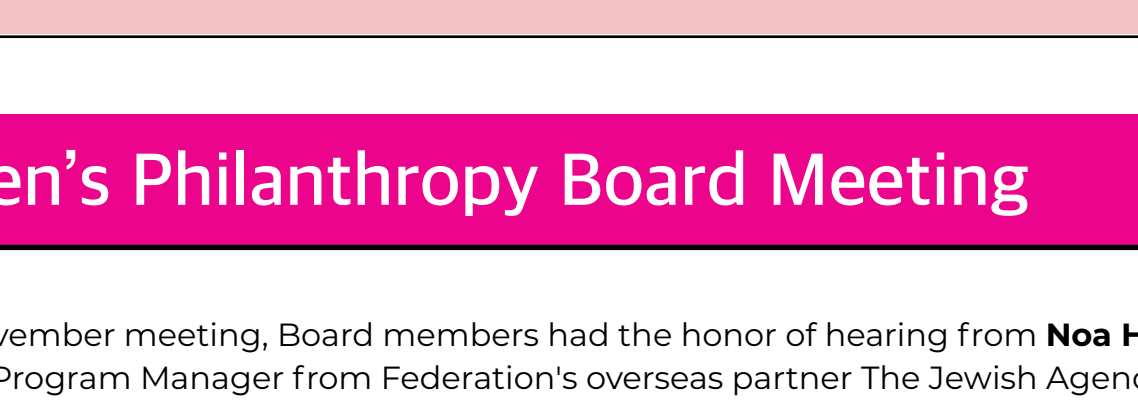


The "Art of Philanthropy" was a great way to enjoy art, philanthropy and solidarity at the Bass Museum. More than 100 women came together to preview the museum's exhibits ahead of Art Miami Week. Both newcomers to our city and long-time supporters of Federation gathered to learn about strengthening our community, especially at this time. The event was chaired by **Amy Gibstein** and **Kathy Haime**.

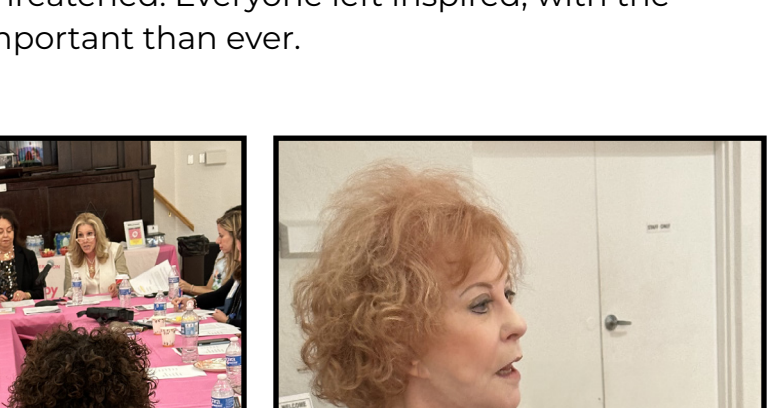
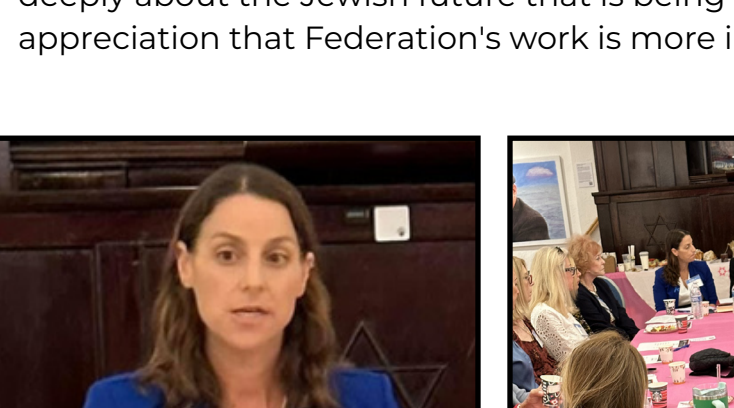


Volunteering Around Town

On *Chanukah*, volunteers came together to spread light during the holiday season. They packed holiday toys for children in need at Lotus House, the largest women's shelter in the country. What a wonderful way to shine!

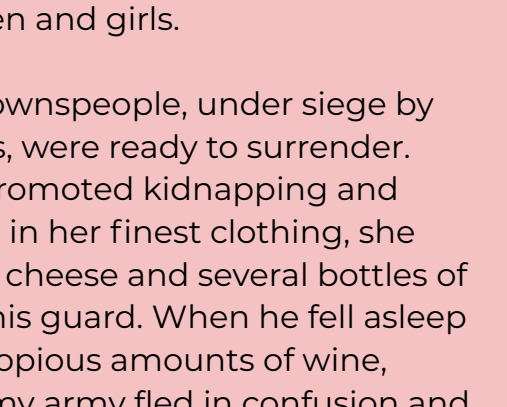
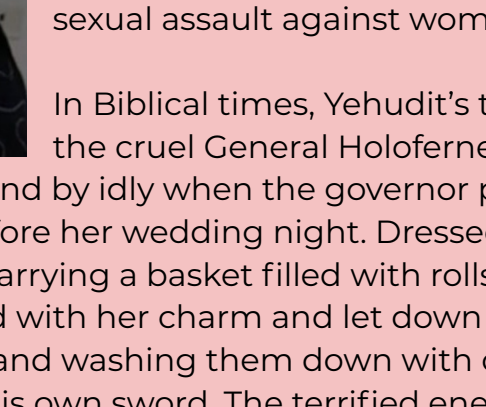
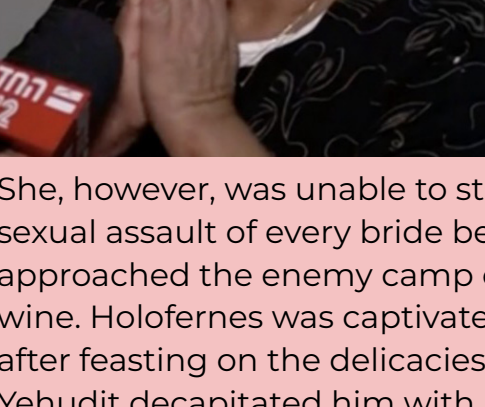


Family Service Day at the Jewish Community Services of South Florida Kosher Food Bank was a great way to educate children about *tzedakah* and help them understand that they can make a difference in this world. Parents and kids packed holiday breakfast bags together and donated boxes of cereal to the Kosher Food Bank. The event was chaired by **Annette Raji**.

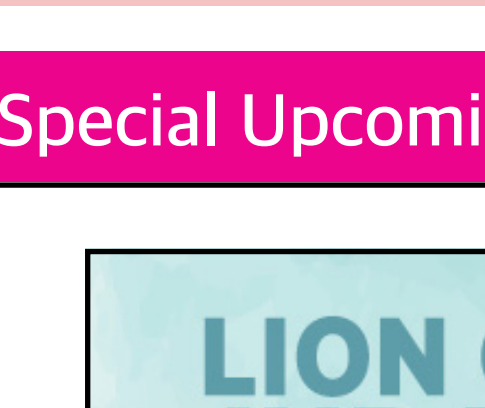


Women's Philanthropy Board Meeting

At our November meeting, Board members had the honor of hearing from **Noa Hadad**, Regional Program Manager from Federation's overseas partner The Jewish Agency for Israel, who shared personal updates of the situation in Israel and how The Jewish Agency is responding. **Maxine Schwartz**, Federation Past Campaign Chair and Women's Philanthropy Past President, provided a campaign training on developing the skills needed to have a meaningful conversation about Jewish responsibility and philanthropy. Our tradition teaches that one who compels others to give shall have a reward greater than that of the giver themselves. They also sent messages of support and solidarity to Israeli Lion of Judah **Varda Ben Baruch**, whose grandson, **Idan Alexander**, a 19-year-old lone soldier, is being held captive by Hamas. The atmosphere was very powerful at this gathering of dynamic activists who care deeply about the Jewish future that is being threatened. Everyone left inspired, with the appreciation that Federation's work is more important than ever.



WOMEN IN HISTORY: YEHUDIT AND RACHEL EDRI - WHAT'S THEIR CONNECTION?



Rachel Edri of Ofakim, Israel, became an Israeli folk hero on October 7, a modern-day Yehudit (one of the heroines of the *Chanukah* story). As grenade-bearing Hamas terrorists held her hostage in her home with her husband, she bravely distracted them with tea, Moroccan cookies and popular songs in Arabic until counterterrorism forces arrived. Her actions deterred those terrorists from continuing the unspeakable atrocities in her desert community that included kidnapping, rape and violent sexual assault against women and girls.

In Biblical times, Yehudit's townspeople, under siege by the cruel General Holofernes, were ready to surrender. She, however, was unable to stand by idly when the governor promoted kidnapping and sexual assault of every bride before her wedding night. With rolls, in her finest clothing, she approached the enemy camp carrying a basket filled with dross, cheese and several bottles of wine. Holofernes was captivated with her charm and let down his guard. When he fell asleep after feasting on the delicacies and washing them down with copious amounts of wine, Yehudit decapitated him with his own sword. The terrified enemy army fled in confusion and terror. Her actions changed the course of Jewish history and protected the women.

Each year as we kindle the lights of the *Chanukah menorah*, we commemorate the power that each of us has to become leaders and heroines like biblical Yehudit and modern-day Rachel. Let's continue to renew or rededicate our own inner spark to bring light to the world now when it is so desperately needed.

Special Upcoming Event

LION OF JUDAH

Event

We are Lions. We are fearless. We stand with Israel.
We are stronger when we come together!

Featuring

MICAELA DIAMOND

Tony- and Grammy-Award-nominated actor best known for her recent starring role as Lucille Frank in the Broadway revival of *Parade*, the critically acclaimed musical about Jewish lynching victim Leo Frank.

[Click here](#) to read more about her.

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

Couvert: \$125 per person

\$5,000 minimum donation to attend

To learn more about Women's Philanthropy or to get involved, email us at wp@jewishmiami.org.