



In this undated photo, mothers wait for a doctor to see their babies at the Better Baby Clinic at the Irene Kaufmann Settlement in The Hill District. Today, the Jewish Federation of Great Pittsburgh carries on the work of helping mothers, babies, and others in need through the social service agencies it supports.

Courtesy of the Jewish Archives at the Senator John Heinz History Center

Century of Service

JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER PITTSBURGH BEGINS A MILESTONE YEAR.

BY **DEBORAH WEISBERG**

When Bella Heppenheimer came to Pittsburgh in 1938 to flee Nazi persecution, she was among thousands of German refugees eager to make a fresh start. She was also intent on bringing her parents to America and credits the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies—precursor to the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh—as instrumental in saving their lives.

“I was a dressmaker, and the head of Federation was one of my customers,” recalls Heppenheimer, now 99 and living in a local retirement home. “She told me how, if I went to the American consulate and signed an affidavit, I might be able to bring my mother and father here.”

Heppenheimer followed that advice to help her family become one of the last in Germany to escape Hitler’s horrors and begin a new life in Pittsburgh.

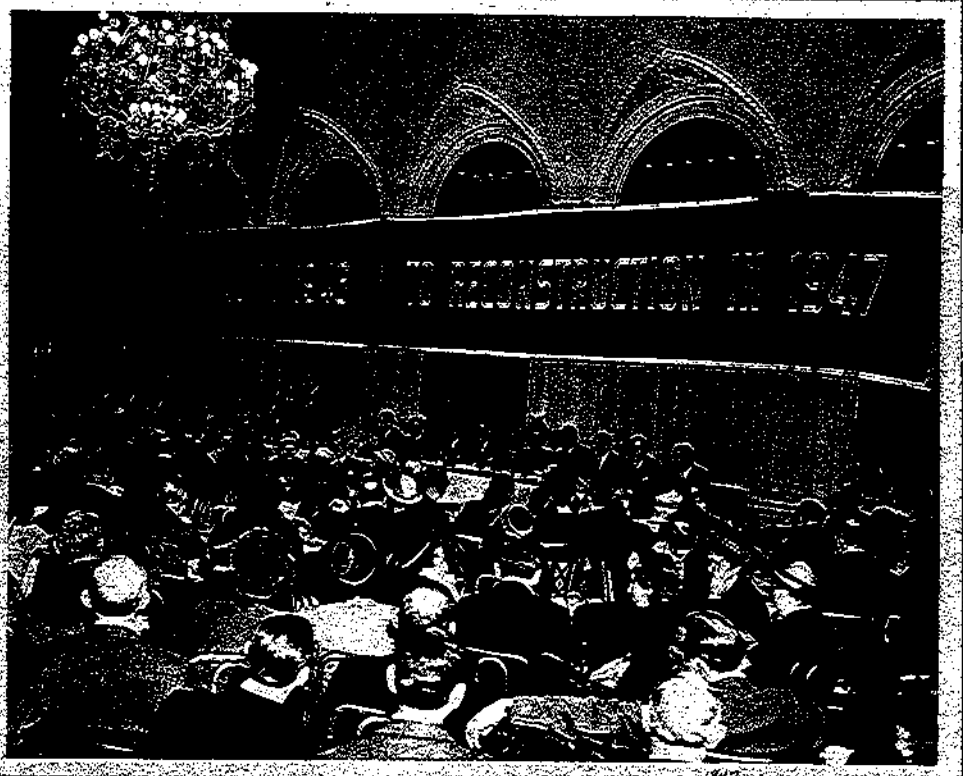
“There were a lot of people who had problems, who really needed Federation, and Federation was there to provide for them,” she says.

Celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2012, the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh is still helping new immigrants, while providing those more deeply rooted in the community with an array of services, including food, housing, job placement, mental health counseling, recreational and cultural amenities, and education. Through its foundation, the organization raises and distributes charitable funds to Jews and non-Jews alike both locally and overseas as part of a nationwide network of 150 sister agencies.



Among the recipients of Federation funding is the Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh, which operates numerous programs, including cultural activities.

Courtesy of the Raah Jewish Archives at the Senator John Heinz History Center



In the years following the end of World War II, the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of Pittsburgh (a precursor to today's Federation) and the United Jewish Fund raised money to respond to the needs of Jewish survivors. This 1947 fundraising event took place at the Hotel Schenley, now the William Pitt Student Union on the University of Pittsburgh campus.

It began in 1912, when Pittsburgh Jewish leaders organized the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies to assist Jews in the community, many of whom lived in the Hill District and East End. Over the years, Federation went through mergers and name changes as it evolved to meet critical needs, such as the rescue of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, and the resettlement of Soviet Jewry.

Today, some 42,000 Jews live in the Pittsburgh area. That number has remained stable, but represents a changing demographic, explains Federation president and CEO Jeff Finkelstein. Pittsburgh's Jewish population was once among the oldest in the nation, but more young families are settling here across Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform denominations.



Offering services to the elderly is one of the missions of Jewish Family & Children's Service, another organization that receives funding from the Federation.


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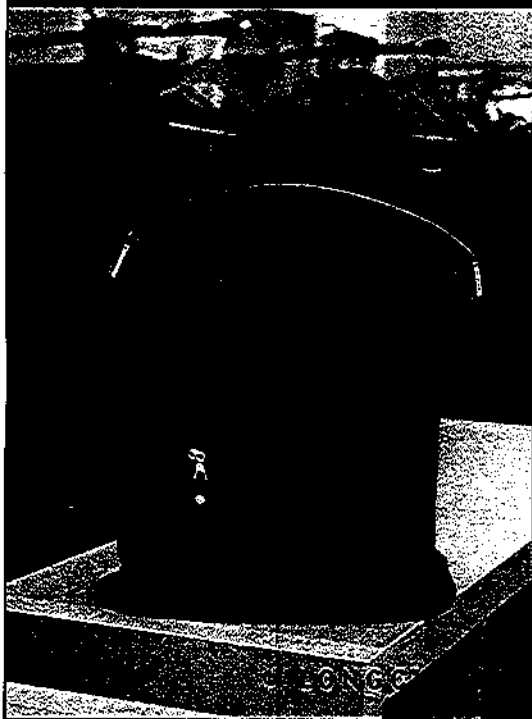
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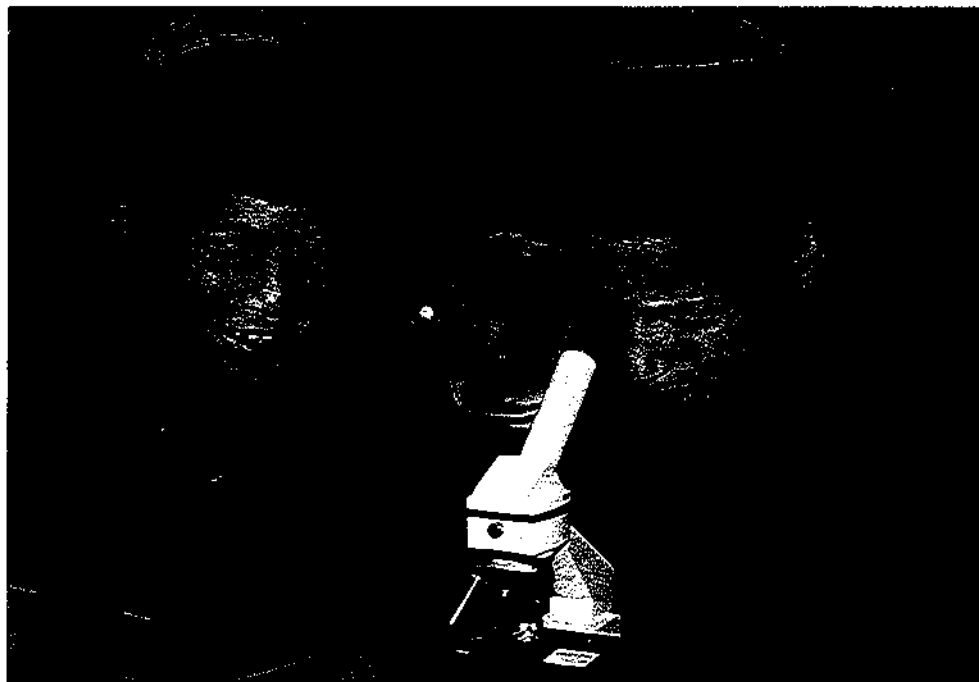
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A Century of Service



Increased support for Jewish schools, camps, and youth programs is a major component of the Federation's Centennial Fund. These students attend Community Day School in Squirrel Hill.

"Federation remains the neutral ground where they all come together regardless of their religious beliefs and cultural practices," Finkelstein says. "We call it Jewish 'peoplehood'."

It's a model that's working; at a time of pronounced need, Federation raised record-setting funds this year for 10 agencies that collectively serve about 46,000 people. The annual campaign generated \$12.7 million, and the foundation has accrued assets of \$150 million.

To honor a century of such accomplishments, there will be a Centennial Gala in October for major donors, a community-wide event planned for spring, and other special programs year-long. And while Federation reflects on its first 100 years of service, the organization is focused on new goals with the launch of the Centennial Fund for a Jewish Future, established last year to help Jews reaffirm their cultural and religious identity.

The fund has already raised more than \$14 million, and it is the best way to ensure that *tikkun olam*—Hebrew for "repairing the world"—remains an active tenet of the Jewish faith, says Louis Plung, a Squirrel Hill resident who takes the reins as Federation chair this month.

"We view the Centennial Fund as a trust that will support the next generation's leaders," says Plung, managing partner of Louis Plung & Company, a Downtown accounting firm. "They, in turn, will promote the continued vitality of both the Jewish community and the larger community that we are part of."

Reaching out to young families is pivotal to this mission, according to outgoing chair and Squirrel Hill resident Billy Rudolph, a principal in McKnight Realty Partners.

"We have a major problem with assimilation today, when a great many Jews are marrying out of their faith or don't have an interest in raising kids with a strong Jewish identity," Rudolph explains. "One of the major motivations behind the Centennial Fund is to change that trend by stepping up support of Jewish day school education, Jewish summer camps, and trips to Israel for people of all ages."

Rudolph admits there are challenges in making Community Day School, Hillel Academy of Pittsburgh, and Yeshiva Schools of Pittsburgh more competitive with secular institutions, both public and private. "We have to make them more financially attractive, which is one aspect of our Centennial Fund," says Rudolph, noting that some new enrollees are being offered a year of free tuition. "Another important piece is that Pittsburgh's three day schools have come together, and they're working on marketing the importance of a day school education."

Federation is also investing more in Jewish camping at the overnight Emma Kaufmann Camp in Morgantown, West Virginia, and at day camps closer to home.

"Jewish camp immerses children in a fun and engaging community of peers and role models," says Cindy Shapira, co-chair of the Centennial Fund along with her husband, David, who is chair-


man, CEO, and president of Giant Eagle. "That intensive experience has the unique power to shape and reinforce values and ideas, and consequently, make an incredible impact on children's sense of identity."

So do trips to Israel. Ben Katz, 17, of Squirrel Hill, recently took part in a three-week adventure in the Holy Land with other Emma Kaufmann counselors-in-training. "It strengthened my homeland connection," Katz says. "And I still feel close to the other kids on the trip."



Alicia Harris, 21, of Point Breeze, and a rising senior at University of Pittsburgh, says her trip to Israel through Birthright Israel—funded in part by Federation—also has fostered lasting friendships. "There were 40 of us from Pitt and [Carnegie Mellon University], and we've remained a cohesive group since we came back—we hang out, we do Shabbat dinners together," she says. "Keeping the connection is important. You can't maintain your identity alone."

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A Century of Service

Harris is vice president of the board of the Edward and Rose Berman Hillel Jewish University Center, an educational, cultural, and social center for Jewish students and young adults in Pittsburgh and one of the 10 direct service agencies supported by the Federation. Some others include the Agency for Jewish Learning, the Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh, Jewish Residential Services, and the Jewish Association on Aging.

Also funded in part by Federation is Jewish Family & Children's Service of Pittsburgh, which operates the Squirrel Hill Community Food Pantry and provides essential support ranging from counseling for at-risk families to vocational training, regardless of religious affiliation.

Tom Rayburg credits the agency's Career Development Center with helping him find work after losing his job six months earlier. "I'm up there in terms of age and knew it wasn't going to be easy," says the Lower Burrell man, who had worked as a commercial loan officer for 28 years. "The center showed me exactly what I needed to do to get a job, from how to write a résumé to how to write a cover letter to how to network effectively. I'm so grateful."

A local couple in financial straits also calls Jewish Family & Children's Service a lifesaver. A donation from the agency's SOS fund helped them avoid foreclosure when their nine-year-old was being treated for a serious medical condition. Established by attorney Edgar Snyder and his wife, Sandy—who are co-chairs of the year-long centennial celebration with the Shapiras—SOS provides one-time, emergency assistance to families in need.

"I was in nursing school and my husband had to miss a lot of work because our son required so much care," says Valerie, who asked that her last name not be used. "They gave us money for five car payments and grocery gift cards. Without them, we'd still be struggling."

Valerie was willing to share her experience for two reasons: "I want people to know that this fund is available," she says. "And I want people to know how much it means to keep supporting the agency's work."

Visit www.jewishfederationpittsburgh.org for more information.