



National Council of Jewish Women Greater New Orleans Section

Bulletin

www.NCJWneworleans.org

September/October 2021



Incoming and Outgoing NCJW Presidents and Presidential Awardees – Incoming President Gail Fenton Pesses, Presidential Awardees Dana Shepard and Kathy Shepard and Outgoing President Susan Hess

Gail Pesses Elected President of National Council of Jewish Women, GNO *Susan Hess retires after two years of service*

NCJW, GNO held its Closing Event and Installation Reception on May 23rd. The event featured remarks from Incoming President Gail Fenton Pesses, a *Report on the Year* from outgoing President Susan Hess and a special ceremony presenting Dana Shepard and Kathy Shepard with the President's Award. This unique award is given to individuals that have gone above the call of duty and who are invaluable assets to the Section.

According to Hess, this year has not been a normal year, yet NCJW has such strong forward momentum that it has soldiered on no matter what bumps in the road have been encountered.

"We have a very cohesive Section, which is growing. We have a strong cadre of capable and willing volunteer leaders who are eager to do our work, be it public

service, advocacy, fund raising, staging educational events and a whole lot more," Hess said. "We are the perfect example of what a successful women's volunteer organization should be."

In accepting the position of NCJW President, Gail Pesses said "Although I have been involved with many non-profit organizations, including secular, professional and Jewish, NCJW is the one I return to repeatedly. Throughout our long history, both the national NCJW and the Greater New Orleans Section continue to remain vibrant and relevant by redefining the issues we advocate for and the programs we offer to our membership. I hope to continue doing this."

She also noted that during her first year as President, NCJW-GNO will be celebrating its 125th Anniversary.

(continued on page 3)

NCJW Board Members pay tribute to Susan Hess at Surprise Farewell Brunch!



Susan's Shocked Expression

Susan Hess, who provided outstanding leadership as the President of NCJW, GNO 2019/21, was stunned when she entered the home of Ina Davis on Sunday, July 18 to discover more than thirty-five board members there to honor and thank her at this Surprise Farewell Brunch.



Susan Hess greeting by host and close friend Ina Davis

(More photos on Page 5)

Presidential MESSAGE



By Gail Pesses

Happy New Year! I don't know about you, but I am happy to be moving on to 5782 with hope for less stressful days to come.

As if a new, more noxious variant of Covid was not enough of a challenge, sending so many of us back into our carefully constructed "safe" spaces and habits, Hurricane Ida came along, with damaging winds, the stench of rotting food filling every neighborhood and for some, the despair of having to start over. Blue roofs have once again sprung up like wild mushrooms. And gorgeous trees, like the one in my backyard, succumbed to the ferocious winds. Add to that the inevitable PTSD from Katrina (Did Ida HAVE TO land on the exact same date as Katrina?) and the misery index has reached new heights.

Is there a way to focus on making this year a blessing when faced with these and other frightening realities? I believe there is.

I have been thinking a lot about gratefulness

these past few weeks. It started while my daughter was recently in Israel, on the last Birthright trip before Israel imposed strict quarantine rules for visitors. I had given her three prayers for her to tuck into the crevices of the Western Wall when she got there. I recalled my own trip to Israel, about

10 years ago, a few years after I experienced a series of traumatic events in rapid succession. It was a tough time for me as I struggled to create a new path for me. When I stood in front of the Wall and softly sang the Shehecheyanu, I thanked G-D for all those things that had happened to me. My gratitude was sincere. For had I not gone thru those experiences, as unpleasant as they were, I would not have made those changes that ultimately led to that moment.

We all have much to be grateful for as we start the year 5782. Families have become closer as they joined together to protect each other. Medical research and technology produced, in record time, effective vaccines to protect us from the worst of Covid. Our levees held strong (for those living inside the improved system). And once again, we have witnessed the coming together

of neighbors and community to help each other as well as those hit hardest in other areas.

I am grateful, as your new president, to be able to follow a line of successful, forward-thinking leaders of NCJW, especially our newest past president, Susan Hess. Susan's hard work, determination and leadership in the face of Covid has been an inspiration to all of us. I am also grateful for the women who have stepped up to assume Board positions, chairmanships and volunteer roles in our community. And I am grateful for the women who are already planning for the year ahead - stimulating

programs, study groups, volunteering in our community, advocating on critical issues and celebrating our upcoming 125th Anniversary in person.

Please join us in making this year a meaningful one for you and for NCJW by getting involved. See something you are interested in but don't know who to call? Contact me, GPesses@aol.com or at (504) 220-3455 and I will put you in touch with just the right person. I will be grateful that you did.

How can we focus on making this year a blessing when faced with these lingering and scary issues and feelings?

Gail Pesses

Personal Giving 2020-21

Thank you so much to everyone who has supported this year's Personal Giving campaign!

This year, we raised over \$28,000 from more than one hundred generous members. The following list represents donors from July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021.

\$1,000+

Anonymous Donor
Diane and Alan Franco
Barbara Herman
Susan O. Hess
Susan Kierr
Tricia Kirschman
Betty and Ira Kohn Foundation
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Edie and Paul Rosenblum
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Sue Singer
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Nancy Hudson Kaplan
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Kathryn Shepard
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Paula Samuels
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The 2020-21 Personal Giving Campaign ran from July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021. If you would like to join the 2021-22 campaign, or if you have questions about your gift, please contact Jenny Nathan Simoneaux at jenny.nathan@gmail.com.

"In anticipation of this anniversary, I would like to increase our volunteer, "boots on the ground" opportunities. We learn so much more about the needs of our community and make such a significant difference when we show up in person,"



Closing Event Planning Committee and Program Speakers – (Front row) Susan Hess, Sarah Covert and Dana Shepard (Middle row) Kathy Shepard, Nancy Pesses, Susan Kierr and Rabbi David Gerber (Back row) Judge Robin Giarrusso, Barbara Kaplinsky and Sue Singer



President and Vice Presidents – (Front row) Al Page, Barbara Greenberg, Robin Giarrusso, and Carol Newman (Back row) Gail Chalew, Gail Fenton Pesses (President), Karen Sher and Dana Keren



Newly Elected Board Members – Vivian Cahn, Lilli Geltman, Carole Neff, Ronda Kottle, Benay Bernstein and Sara Lewis

Pesses said. "Another of my goals for our section is to introduce programs and services that will appeal to and meet the needs of our younger and working members, such as a parenting study group and volunteer opportunities that are one day only while still providing thought-provoking and informative programs for all ages."

Sarah Covert, Event Chair, welcomed the one hundred members attending both live and on Zoom. Rabbi David Gerber provided the opening prayer. Susan Kierr, Nominating Committee Chair presented the Report and Kathy Shepard formally installed NCJW Officers.

Newly installed NCJW Vice Presidents are Barbara Greenberg, Gail Chalew, Dana Keren, Carol Newman, and Al Page. Officers installed are Alanna Rosenberg, Financial Secretary; Patty Barnett, Corresponding Secretary; Jody Braunig, Recording Secretary; Kathy Shepard, Treasurer; Tricia Kirschman, Assistant Treasurer and Susan Hess, Ex-Officio Past President.

Elected Board Members serving a two-year term are Vivian Cahn, Fran Dinehart, Lisa Heller, Tiffany Cotlar, Lilli Geltman, and Ronda Kottle. Serving a one-year term are Susie Jernigan, Sara Lewis and Carole Neff. Ina Davis, Alysse Fuchs and Jenny Nathan Simoneaux have completed their terms as elected board members and were thanked for their outstanding service.

The 2021-2022 Nominating Committee was also elected. They are Chair Loel Weil Samuel, Ex Officio Chair Susan Kierr, Ex Officio Past President Susan Hess and members Maddie Fireman, Dana Keren, Jody Braunig, Kathy Shepard, Rollie Rabin, Julie Finger, Laurie Diamond and Susan Fielkow.

Continuing in Office are Vice-Presidents Robin Giarrusso and Karen Sher, Ex-Officio Past President Barbara Kaplinsky, Honorary Vice Presidents Julanne Isaacson, Celia Katz and Florence Schornstein and Elected Board Members Benay Bernstein and Tana Velen.

Susan Kierr served as the 2020-21 Chair of the Nominating Committee. The Ex-Officio Chair was Dana Shepard and Ex-Officio Past President was Barbara Kaplinsky. Committee Members were Barri Bronston, Loel Samuel, Jenny Nathan Simoneaux, Sue Singer, Cathy Bart, Michelle Erenberg, Carole Neff and Cathy Glaser.



2020-2021 Nominating Committee – Loel Samuel, Carole Neff, Dana Shepard, Chair Susan Kierr, Sue Singer and Barbara Kaplinsky



2021-2022 Elected Nominating Committee – Susan Hess, Rollie Rabin, Loel Samuel, Laurie Diamond, Susan Kierr, Kathy Shepard and Dana Keren

Officers

President: Gail Fenton Pesses

Vice Presidents:

Gail Chalew
Robin Giarrusso
Barbara Greenberg
Dana Keren
Carol Newman
Al Page
Karen Sher

Financial Secretary: Alanna Rosenberg
Corresponding Secretary: Patty Barnett
Recording Secretary: Jody Braunig
Treasurer: Kathy Shepard
Asst. Treasurer: Tricia Kirschman

Ex-Officio Past Presidents:

Susan Hess
Barbara Kaplinsky

Honorary Vice Presidents:

Julanne Isaacson, Celia Katz, Florence Schornstein

Elected Board Members:

Benay Bernstein
Vivian Cahn
Tiffany Cotlar
Fran Dinehart
Lilli Geltman
Susie Jernigan
Lisa Heller
Ronda Kottle
Sara Lewis
Carole Neff
Tana Velen

TOGETHER NEW ORLEANS

NCJW GNO joins 500 leaders at Together New Orleans Citywide Assembly

More than five hundred delegates from faith and community institutions across New Orleans came together for a *Citywide Assembly of Congregations and Citizen Organizations* on Tuesday, July 13, 6:30 pm at the Dillard University Lawless Memorial Chapel.

The assembly was organized by Together New Orleans (TNO) which is a broad-based coalition of congregations and community-based organizations with the ability to address community problems large and small.

NCJW, GNO was one of only three Jewish organizations, along with Jewish Federation and Touro Synagogue, to take part on the 34-member Host

Committee. President Gail Pesses represented NCJW in this assembly which was designed to set New Orleans on a path to do more than simply "get back to normal." Arnie Fielkow and Rabbi Katie Bauman rounded out the list of participating Jewish leaders.

More than twelve NCJW and *Engaging New Voices and Voter* delegates joined with hundreds of other faith and community institutions across the city to lay a foundation for a new source of community power in New Orleans.

Judge Miriam Waltzer, Sylvia Finger and Barbara Kaplinsky all had speaking roles at the Assembly.



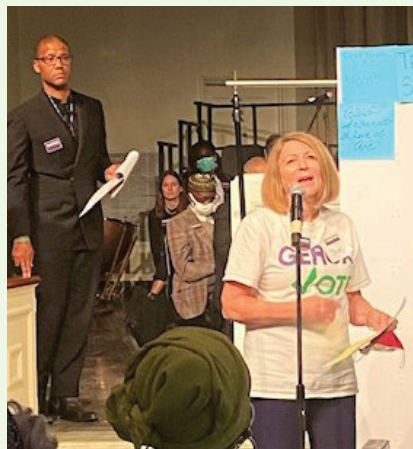
NCJW, GNO delegates were Barbara Kaplinsky, Gail Pesses, Nancy Pesses, Susan Hess and Carole Neff, not pictured Sylvia Finger and Lilli Geltman.



Barbara Kaplinsky announced NCJW's support of TNO (\$1,500) because "they help us safeguard individual rights and freedoms". This Community Needs Allocation will help start up the Super Block Captains Program in the Fall.



After Judge Miriam Waltzer shared "My Passion for Voting" to the full citywide assembly, she received a standing ovation.



Sylvia Finger endorses the partnership between TNO and ENVV at citywide assembly.

My Passion for voting

by Miriam Waltzer

I never missed a vote since I arrived as a German immigrant, along with my husband, to the USA in 1958. New Orleans was totally segregated which was a horror to me coming from a country where six million of my people were put to death because of their religion.

Husband Bruce Waltzer did civil rights work exclusively from 1961 to 1967. Many lawyers, including Bruce, as well as students and ordinary people went to Mississippi and other Southern states to fight for the right for ALL to vote. We lived through the murders of Goodman, Chaney, Schwerner and many others.

On a personal level our world changed on October 5, 1963. I had just become a citizen in September, and we finally had a baby we hoped to adopt. I was home with the baby when about fifteen state troopers surrounded our house, shoved a warrant under my nose and started to search my home. Many items were taken, and I was not allowed to call my husband whom they wanted to arrest for sedition - the overthrow of the State of La. and the USA, in that order. When he finally came home, he was taken to jail together with one other lawyer and a man who was in charge of the Southern Conference Education Fund. The intent was to stop all voting efforts and integration activities and to isolate and destroy us. The only community that supported us was the black community and a sprinkling of the Jewish community. Crosses were burned, and "friends" vanished. Our fear of losing the baby was paramount. My husband could have gotten a sentence of 25 years at hard labor. We were deemed to be unsuitable parents. It took two years to get adoption papers for our son and just as long to win our case in the United State Supreme Court.

We are standing on the shoulders of the freedom riders, the courageous lawyers and all who sacrificed so much to get the right to vote. If for nothing else, for their sake, we owe it to them to register and educate folks, advocate and VOTE.

"The intent was to stop all voting efforts and integration activities and to isolate and destroy us."

Miriam Waltzer

Board Members Pay Tribute to Former NCJW President Susan Hess



Party Organizers Ina Davis and Vivian Cahn



Susan Hess was presented with a beautiful alligator hat, designed by Vivian Cahn and hat maker Janet Noble, for her two years of outstanding service as the President of NCJW, GNO.



Front row (l to r) June Leopold and Sue Singer; back row (l to r) Current NCJW President Gail Pesses, Susan Hess and Ina Davis



Dana Shepard, Carole Neff, Tricia Kirschman, Ina Davis, Susan Davis, Benay Bernstein and Barbara Kaplinsky



Bill Hess with NCJW Honorary Vice President Julianne Isaacson



Lis Kahn, Sheryl Title, Karen Sher, Sara Lewis, Barbara Greenberg and Loel Samuel

NCJW's Engaging New Voices and Voters Update

More than 3 years ago, Barbara Kaplinsky, Miriam Waltzer and Sylvia Finger, along with League of Women Voter's Rosalind Blanco Cook, and Jessie Neiblas, formed the Voting Rights arm of the NCJW. They named it *Engaging New Voices and Voters* (ENNV). Co-led by NCJW and the League of Women Voters, the Coalition has eighteen members including the Lower 9th Voters group, the Power Coalition, Metairie Indivisibles and the Urban League.

Sylvia Finger and Stacey LaFleur will co-lead the ENNV activities. Stacey is replacing long time ENNV co-chair Jill Israel who will continue the Technology and Advocacy efforts for ENNV.

Together, ENNV has registered 9,000 new voters since 2018 and staffed more than two hundred voter registration events. It

has focused on registering new citizens following Immigration and Naturalization Ceremonies, low voting propensity neighborhoods, and high schools and colleges including the entire Tulane football team!

It is embarking on two new projects.

- Working with many churches in New Orleans to register their congregants, co-led by Candes Carter and Barbara Kaplinsky
- Working with Together New Orleans on a precinct organizing project called "Neighbors Organizing Neighbors." The plan is to recruit and train five hundred Block Captains and 30 Super Block Captains who would engage before every election. Barbara Kaplinsky and Sylvia Finger will take the lead in

recruiting Super Block Captains.

While ENNV has been working extensively on voter registration, voter education and voter advocacy, this project focuses its efforts on the most important component, increasing its ability to get out the vote. Currently, limited in-person registration events are posted on the ENNV sign-up calendar:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a0c49afad2da5fd0-september>.

All NCJW members are invited to participate. For advocacy work that can be done remotely, please check out the ENNV website <https://envvnola.weebly.com/>.

Contact Sylvia Finger to purchase GeauxVote t-shirts for \$10.

Pay It Forward

By Jody Portnoff Braunig



An NCJW Scholarship in 2002 helped set me on a course for success. Because of the financial assistance the scholarship provided, I was able to attend

Graduate School and obtain an MSW from Tulane University School of Social Work and spearhead my professional career. Ever since, I have felt gratitude and a special connection to NCJW spanning 20 years. NCJW's mission of supporting Jewish women and the greater New Orleans community has resonated with me and is aligned with my values and belief system.

As a current board member and officer, my involvement with NCJW has evolved

"NCJW's mission of supporting Jewish women and the greater New Orleans community has resonated with me and is aligned with my values and belief system."

Jody Braunig

over two decades. For many of those years I have thought about the time in my life when I can finally pay it forward and donate money back to the Scholarship Programs. Grants are allocated to recipients without any demands to pay back the amount. I would like to donate to the Scholarship Program so that other

students in our Jewish community can realize their academic aspirations in the future. Please join me if you are also interested in investing in the future of our Jewish community.

Donations can be made to: Nancy B. Timm, 5708 Garfield Street, New Orleans, Louisiana, 70115.

The Mystique of Mah Jongg

By Karen Sher,
NCJW Membership Vice Chair



Some people's eyes light up when they explain why they like bridge, whereas others wax poetic about their fondness of crossword puzzles, canasta, gin rummy, and Scrabble. *But there is something special about mah jongg!* Many of us are bonkers and "in seventh heaven" about mah jongg!

To answer the question why people are so smitten with the game of mah jongg, the Membership Committee recruited Renee Zack to lead a Zoom program entitled "The Mystique of Mah Jongg" held Wednesday, April 28, 2021, at 7:00 PM.

Renee Zack, an NCJW member, a beloved and well-respected Mah Jongg teacher at the Uptown JCC, spoke enthusiastically about the joys of the tile game that is played by four players. Participants were treated to Renee's lecture on the history of the popular game, and all were amused by the whimsical demonstration of the Charleston, an essential part of every mah jongg game.

Touching clips from the movies, *Joy Luck Club* and *Crazy Rich Asians*, featuring women playing mah jongg were shown. Guest speakers, Dr. Bobby Applebaum, Amanda Herman, and Beth Frank emoted on their infatuation with the addicting game.

Due to the popularity of this Zoom, the Membership Committee is considering an encore program on this same topic in the not-too-distant future when we will be able to meet in person again.

Welcome to our Newest Members!

April 15 – August 15, 2021

Caroline W Brickman
Susan Constant
Kassie Cosgrove
Kimberly Crawford
Jules Griff
Mollie Herman
Mimi Jalenak
Roberta Katz
Ann Zivitz Kientz

Renee' Kutcher
Sara Mayeux
Nancy Hannah Pesses
Lynn Plotkin
Hillary Rossman
Monika Flurer Singletary
Rachel Violet Soso
Heide Winston

Supporting our Engaging New Voices and Voters (ENVV) Coalition Partner - - the Lower 9th Voters Coalition - - at the Freedom Riders Get Out the Vote Rally



Back Row: L9 student volunteers. Front Row, l to r: LouAnn White (L9 vice-president), Ruth Bilbe, Judge Miriam Waltzer, Shawon Bernard (L9 president), Barbara Kaplinsky, Sylvia Finger and Principal Goodwin.

NCJW Cares

Sheryl Title, *Chairwoman*

In honor of Gail Pesses upon becoming the new president of NCJW GNO Section. Donations made by:

- ◆ Patty Barnett
- ◆ Dianna Fine
- ◆ Cathy and Irwin Fingerman and Family
- ◆ Barbara Greenberg
- ◆ Susan Hess
- ◆ Barbara Kaplinsky
- ◆ Eddy Rosen
- ◆ Loel and Larry Samuel
- ◆ Dana and Louis Shepard
- ◆ Sue Singer
- ◆ Betty and Ed Smith
- ◆ Sheryl Title
- ◆ Janet and Mark Zimmerman

In honor of Susan Hess as outgoing president of NCJW GNO Section for a job well done. Donations made by:

- ◆ Patty Barnett
- ◆ Barbara Greenberg
- ◆ Barbara Kaplinsky
- ◆ Gail Pesses
- ◆ Loel and Larry Samuel
- ◆ Dana and Louis Shepard
- ◆ Sue Singer
- ◆ Sheryl Title
- ◆ Miriam Waltzer
- ◆ Rita Warren
- ◆ Janet and Mark Zimmerman

In honor of Dana Shepard and Kathy Shepard upon receiving the President's Award. Donations made by:

- ◆ Patty Barnett
- ◆ Diane and Alan Franco
- ◆ Judith Gainsburgh
- ◆ Barbara Greenberg
- ◆ Lisa Herman
- ◆ Barbara Kaplinsky
- ◆ Gail Pesses
- ◆ Loel and Larry Samuel
- ◆ Sue Singer
- ◆ Betty and Ed Smith
- ◆ Miriam Waltzer

In memory of Sandy Streiffer Schwarcz

- ◆ Judith Gainsburgh
- ◆ Dana and Louis Shepard

In honor of Sarah Covert for the excellent job she did for the new board installation

- ◆ Gail Pesses

In memory of Alan Davis

- ◆ Patty Barnett

NOTE: These donations were received by NCJW, GNO as of August 15.

Scholarship Dollars

The Irma M. Isaacson Memorial Scholarship Fund

- ◆ Harry Blumenthal
in memory of Margery Blumenthal Stich
- ◆ Ina Davis
General donation
- ◆ Nancy B. Timm
in honor of Ann Thompson's 65th Birthday
- ◆ The Bissinger-Timm Family
in memory of Roger and Allan Bissinger

Birthday Dollars

- ◆ Diane Africk, in honor of Celia Katz
- ◆ Mary Lynn Allmont
- ◆ Bonnie Aronson
- ◆ Sue Frank
- ◆ Norma Freiberg
- ◆ Susan Good
- ◆ Diana Gorlin, in honor of Lee Miller Blotner
- ◆ Harriet Handelman, celebrating her 98th birthday
- ◆ Jan Katz
- ◆ Betty Kohn
- ◆ Carol Schudmak
- ◆ Dottie Weisler, in honor of Dana Shepard & Kathy Shepard receiving NCJW, GNO Section, President's Award

Thank You to GIVENOLA DAY 2021 Donors

Justine Aguiar
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Patricia L. Barnett
Jody Braunig
Gail Chalew

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Rebecca Title
Marjorie and Roy Weiner
Joy Willig
Dr. Lawrence and Joan Zaslow
Gary Zoller

Life (Membership) is a Many Splendid Thing!

A new dues category is born: Local Life Membership. NCJW, GNO now offers the option to become a life member for the cost of \$360. Life Membership is only applicable to the Greater New Orleans Section and is non-transferable. Effective July 1, 2021, a member may choose to become a Life Member. There are two ways to pay: 1) By check to financial secretary: Alanna Rosenberg, 3124 Ursuline Ave, New Orleans, LA 70119; or 2) By credit card on our website, www.ncjwneworleans.org, click on the JOIN button.



National Council of Jewish Women
Greater New Orleans Section

6221 S. Claiborne Ave., Suite 208
New Orleans, LA 70125
(504) 861-7788

Have You Changed Your Address?

If so, please contact the office

Phone (504) 861-7788

Fax (504) 861-0044

Email ncjwgno@gmail.com

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125th Gala Committee Planning Launch

The Co-Chairs of the NCJW 125th Gala, Loel Samuel and Jody Portnoff Braunig, convened their committee for the kickoff meeting of this historical fundraising event.



NCJW 125

SAVE THE DATE!!

NCJW GREATER NEW ORLEANS SECTION
CELEBRATES OUR 125th ANNIVERSARY

SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 2022
HIGGINS HOTEL



Pictured top row (l to r) Lisa Heller, Jody Braunig, Barbara Kaplinsky, Loel Samuel and Dana Shepard; second row (l to r) Susan Hess, Hillary Rossman, Barbara Greenberg, Carol Osborne and Gail Pesses; third row (l to r) Sherri Tarr, Sue Singer, Gale Pick, Miriam Waltzer, Elissa Bluth; bottom row (l to r) Tricia Kirschman, Bonnie Aronson, Karen Sher and Kathy Shepard.