Anne Skorecki Levy -
2023 Hannah G. Solomon Award Recipient

The purpose of life is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

By Susan Hess

The Greater New Orleans Section of the National Council of Jewish Women is proud to announce that Anne Skorecki Levy has been selected to receive the 2023 Hannah G. Solomon Award. She will be recognized at the annual Hannah G. Solomon luncheon at the Pavilion of the Two Sisters in City Park, New Orleans. The event will be held Monday, October 16, 2023, starting with a reception at 11:30 followed by a seated lunch at noon.

The Hannah G. Solomon Award is given annually to a community leader who exemplifies the qualities of Hannah G. Solomon, founder of the National Council of Jewish Women. Recipients are known for their interest, activity, and stand on issues with which NCJW is in sympathy. They have brought about important community programs and services through their leadership in a volunteer capacity, and each has been a catalyst for social change. This award has been given annually since 1966. The 10 most recent HGS recipients are Judy Barrasso, Ina Weber Davis, Madeleine Landrieu, Susan Hess, Kim Sport, Dr. Juan Gershanik and Ana Gershanik, Julie Schwam Harris, Dr. Scott Cowan and Marjorie Cowan, Ruth Kullman, and Mary Keller Zervigon.

Anne Skorecki Levy

When told that she was to receive this recognition, Anne was completely shocked and thrilled. She said she really had no words to express how unexpected it was and how honored she is to have been selected by such a respected organization.

Born in Lodz, Poland in 1935, Anne was a child of six when she and her family were persecuted as Jews and sent to the Warsaw Ghetto by the Nazis during World War II. They escaped the ghetto and hid with a Catholic family until the end of the war. In 1949, at the age of 14, Anne and her family arrived in New Orleans and were met at the boat through the “Port and Dock” program operated by volunteers from NCJW. Anne was always grateful to those women who treated them with such kindness and welcome.

Through persistence and resilience, Anne learned the culture and language of her new country. She married Stan Levy and together they raised three daughters. She and her sister, Lila, are the last of the “New Americans” in our community.

In time Anne realized that she had a mission. As she said, “We lost one million and a half children, and to then get to live, I felt like I owed something. I felt it was my legacy to speak out about what I had seen and endured.”

Speaking out became her lifelong commitment. She had a calling to do this work. It was not always easy, but she continually rose to the challenge. Working with the Anti-Defamation League and the Southern Institute for Education and Research she went to schools to talk to children and conducted workshops for teachers. She worked in our community, regionally, and nationally to reach the places where the message was most needed: spaces where Jews were not always welcome. For years, she participated in the JCC Holocaust Memorial program. Now in her 80s, Anne continues to raise awareness of the danger and consequences of hate.

Even in her new country Anne could not escape true evil. When David Duke, a neo-Nazi and grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, ran for senator and then governor of Louisiana in the 1990s, Anne was driven to unmask him. She tenaciously mobilized the whole community against his candidacies and was instrumental in his defeat.

Dr. Lawrence Powell, a Tulane professor who wrote a book about Anne called Troubled Memory: Anne Levy, The Holocaust and David Duke’s Louisiana, called her “a moral compass” and said, “she is an example of how an ordinary person can draw from their life experiences to accomplish extraordinary things.”

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Presidential MESSAGE

In this, my first bulletin letter as president, let me share my vision for NCJW, which begins with why I said yes to Ina Davis and Susan Hess when they asked me to consider succeeding the other Gail as president. Put simply, I believe NCJW can help heal a broken world, which hearkens to the original meaning of tikkun olam. This may sound grandiose, and maybe it takes chutzpah to think we can indeed do that. But I said yes to Ina and Susan because our section is uniquely positioned to play its part in that healing.

In a blue dot in a very red state, NCJW here has a strong brand identity as the place for progressive Jewish women in the New Orleans area, who want to work alongside likeminded women to make positive change. We have a large membership of strong, activist women and many new members, thanks to the hard work of VP Karen Sher and the Membership Committee. Many joined NCJW because they are looking for ways to heal a broken world for their families and communities.

The only silver lining of our current political climate is that it has provided the spark to fuel our members’ passion to make positive change.

My overarching goal as president is to provide the structure and opportunities for our members to make their voices heard and continue the NCJW legacy, which we are all so proud of. And to do so in a way that preserves the best of the past while responding to the challenges and needs of the 21st century. Let’s together shake things up a bit!

We set the tone for change by starting off the program year differently. Rather than having a traditional board training in August, two dynamo staffers from National NCJW—Shira Zemel, Abortion Access Campaign Co-Director, and Alannah Boyle, Manager of State Policy Advocates—came here to lead a hands-on advocacy workshop. It gave members the tools to translate their passion for change into effective action by giving them insights into the nuts and bolts of organizing and lobbying. Thanks to Sara Lewis, VP of Advocacy, for shepherding this program.

Next month, there will be a consequential state election, and just a year later the national elections. Getting out the vote will be a major focus and one that I hope all 800+ members play some role in.

Of course, we will not be ignoring our board members, who are the backbone of NCJW. I am committed to streamlining our meetings and providing training and education at each one, so that board members will see their participation as not only benefiting the organization but also themselves.

And of course, NCJW will continue to provide interesting, fun, and enlightening programs throughout the year; under the leadership of VP Carol Newman. Guided by the steady hand of VP Robin Giarrusso, we will be supporting a wide variety of local community organizations working toward the well-being of women and children and human rights. The all-important area of development will be under the direction of Jody Braunig, who is also serving as executive vice president. Susan Greenberg will be overseeing the administration of the section. Gail Pesses will chair our very effective leadership development program, NCJW Way, which will have a new cohort: this January. And Jess Bach, Amanda Halstead, and Tana Velen are planning social and educational events for our younger members.

Join us as we do our part to heal a broken world.

Kol tewé, Gail Naron Chalew

May their memory be a blessing

Julanne Isaacs, 1924-2023, our past president and Hannah Solomon Award recipient and our Honorary Vice President, shared with us her sharp intellect and directed it toward the serious study of public affairs, social action, and the advocacy of women’s reproductive choice. Even so, this awareness of public crisis and challenges never overshadowed her humor and her love of children. Her intellectual curiosity never diminished.

Julanne supported NCJW through both her service and her leadership, believing that NCJW helped her acquire skills that she applied to her professional career as a social worker, teacher at Tulane School of Social Work and Executive Director of New Orleans Jewish Family Service. She had the knack of bringing her unflagging commitment back to her belief in the power of NCJW’s advocacy. Concerned as she was with social action, her vigorous intellect grasped the seriousness of issues without losing her sense of humor and her delight in the company of likeminded women. We loved her and admired her. z”l

Susan Kierr

Our beloved past president, Barbara Marvin Bresler died on June 28, 2023 after a months-long illness.

For many years, Barbara’s life revolved around her involvement in NCJW. Barbara held numerous offices in our organization before becoming a vice president and then executive vice president in 1982. In 1984 she became President of NCJW-GNO. For the next 2 years, Barbara’s leadership, savvy, charm, and keen intellect propelled our section forward. She was a whiz at getting people to help her, making it almost impossible to tell her “No.” She was an inspiring leader, helping to develop the future leadership of the Section. Even after her presidency was over, Barbara continued to remain involved, co-chairing our annual fund raiser, Angel Ball, and more recently chairing Fox 8 Defenders, our community service in partnership with Fox 8 channel. Her positive outlook and her warmth inspired everyone who knew her. She will be greatly missed.

Gail Pesses
Gail Pesses retirers after two years of service

Gail Chalew was unanimously elected President of the Section at the annual Closing Luncheon and Installation Ceremony held on June 11, 2023 at The Windsor Court. President Chalew will serve a two-year term.

Chalew is an editor specializing in academic books and articles, as well as a committed volunteer working toward the betterment of the New Orleans Jewish community. A former editor of the New Orleans Jewish News, she also wrote extensively on the New Orleans Jewish community’s experiences during and after Hurricane Katrina for the national press.

Becoming involved in NCJW made perfect sense to Chalew because of its commitment to the well-being of women and children and its stance on human rights. Chalew has co-chaired NCJW Way, been recording secretary, and served as vice president of programming.

The founding chair of LimmudFest New Orleans, Chalew has guided its growth through its first seven conferences. In addition to its large biennial festival attracting hundreds of participants, Limmud also has sponsored engaging learning opportunities throughout the year.

Outgoing President Gail Fenton Pesses expressed gratitude to her Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and the NCJW Past Presidents.

“"I am so grateful to my outstanding Executive Committee for the inspiring leadership and support you offered and to my Board of Directors for your hard work, your feedback and for caring so much,” Pesses said. “To the Past Presidents who offered me advice and guidance throughout my presidency, thank you.”

Other featured speakers were Nominating Chair Ina Davis and Installing Officer and NCJW GNO Vice President Hon. Judge Robin Giarrusso. The Invocation was performed by Dani Levine, Director of Social Impact, Hillel International and Gail’s husband Stuart, and daughters Naomi, and Hannah Chalew led the Hamotzi.

Members were asked to bring new early childhood or elementary school books to support our Community Services Book Drive. 70+ books were collected!

For the gorgeous flowers, exquisite food, many thanks go to the Committee who pulled the event together: Hospitality Chair Sue Singer, Madalyn Schenk, Robin Giarrusso, Dana Shepard, Kathy Shepard, Carol Newman, Jody Braunig, Barbara Kaplinsky, Gail Pesses and Ina Davis, chair.

The event was dedicated to the memory of Julanne Isaacson.
Anne has received many recognitions for her work over the years. She has been a frequent guest speaker at the National World War II Museum and will have her photo and story mounted on the wall when their new building, the Liberators’ Pavilion, opens this fall.

At the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience, both Anne and her sister Lila were invited this summer to copy Hebrew letters in the new Torah being written by a scribe.

Most recently, Anne and Dr. Powell, her biographer, were the keynote speakers at the American Jewish Press Association conference held at the Higgins hotel in New Orleans in July.

The Hannah G. Solomon committee, chaired by past president Susan Hess, is comprised of the following dedicated volunteers: Gail Chalew, section president; Susan Constant Greenberg, vice president of administration; Sara Lewis, immediate past HGS chair; Jody Braunig, Ina Davis, Ana Gershanik, Dana Shepard, Kathy Shepard, Sue Singer, Tana Velen, and Liz Yager.

Please join us on Monday, October 16th, in saluting Anne Skorecki Levy, the last, with her sister Lila, of the Holocaust survivors in New Orleans. This is the most prestigious award given by NCJW annually. We could not have chosen a more deserving recipient!

For more information, please visit our website, www.ncjwneworleans.org, or call our office at 504-861-7788. Tickets cost $70 and may be purchased online. Donations in honor of Anne are also being accepted online.
Training Grounds provides learning experience workshops for parents, professional development training for early childhood educators, and a We PLAY Center where parents and children (3 and under) can grow and learn together by enjoying age appropriate toys and activities while developing social-emotional skills in a safe play space.

NCJW is pleased to announce that Melanie Richardson, the co-founder and executive director of Training Grounds has been selected to be a W. K. Kellogg Foundation Community Leadership Network fellow. Melanie will be part of a dynamic and diverse group of leaders who are dedicated to working with their communities to build brighter futures for children and families. Mazel tov Melanie! We are so proud of you!

Contact Robin Giarrusso, rmgjarrusso@gmail.com or 504-400-7011 to get involved.

Hello NCJW! As the new liaison for our program in support of Ronald McDonald House of South Louisiana, I invite you to join me in volunteering with an amazing organization. Volunteers are needed to welcome guests at the reception area, to assist with mailings and to provide tours of the house. RMCH provides free accommodations so families may stay close to critically ill children undergoing extended hospital stays. Their objective is to enable families to practice family centered care by providing them with all the comforts of home. It can be very costly for families to be away from home; Ronald McDonald Charities looks to ease that burden.

Formerly, the home was located on Canal Street, but recently relocated to Children’s Hospital’s main campus. Please reach out to me to find out more and to learn of ways you may get involved! Sara Kottle: sara.kottle@gmail.com or phone: 413-896-5755.

On March 15, 2023, the New Orleans Family Justice Center proudly hosted the ribbon cutting of “Mary Claire’s Place”, aptly named to honor Mary Claire Landry, the founding executive director of NOFJC. This multi-unit residence provides a safe comfortable and “homy” place for survivors and family members impacted by domestic violence and includes a kitchen and common area for communal dining, a large yard and an indoor children’s play space.

NCJW is a proud supporter of this amazing organization, which has grown tremendously since inception, and is challenged by the ever-rising increase of domestic violence locally and nationally. Susan Hess, Ina Davis and Susie and Jack Jernigan attended, and later Ina and Susie were given the tour by Mary Claire, including the new children’s room. Our members, led by Ina and Vivian Cahn, provided furniture, books, toys and cheer to that room in the first tiny space inhabited by NOFJC. It is time to do it again! Soon we will put out the call for collections; we hope you will join in this effort!

Susie Jernigan

A special Queer Eye screening of the episode “Ms. Mary Quite Contrary”, was held the evening of May 15th at Zony Mash. A discussion and Q&A followed, led by Sara Lewis with Maryam Henderson-Uloho, star of the episode and founder of SisterHearts Thrift & Decarceration Program. Maryam discussed her Decarceration Guide and took questions from the audience regarding her experience. Call or text Lilli Geltman (610) 999-9204 to donate.
On the October 14, 2023 ballot:
4. Do you support an amendment to deny a property tax exemption to a nonprofit corporation or association that owns residential property in such a state of disrepair that it endangers public health or safety?

NCJW Special Report:
When voters across Louisiana head to the polls this fall, they’ll find an issue on the ballot that’s a direct result of a FOX 8 Defenders series of reports.

In 2022, Meg Gatto and the NCJW FOX 8 Defenders first started reporting on Global Ministries Foundation, a religious non-profit based in Tennessee that owns apartment complexes across the New Orleans metro area. We found tenants living in deplorable conditions. Those conditions shocked local lawmakers who, upon seeing our stories, jumped into action.

As the City of New Orleans tried to beef up code enforcement actions at The Willows, a property owned by GMF in New Orleans East, State Rep. Jason Hughes drafted legislation to remove GMF’s tax exempt status. The bill, drafted by Rep. Hughes, targets any non-profit in Louisiana that owns residential housing and poses a health or safety risk to the public. The measure passed the state legislature in the Spring of 2023 and becomes a constitutional amendment for voters to decide on in the fall.

Louisiana law may change thanks to Meg Gatto and NCJW’s FOX 8 Defenders. Without their stories, none of these actions would have taken place. Now, lawmakers feel they’re one step closer to being able to hold slumlord non-profit owners accountable and force them to pay property taxes if they’re not taking care of their properties.

Meg Gatto is an Edward R. Murrow award winning reporter and anchor, who works with NCJW’s FOX 8 Defenders, to report on the community’s most pressing consumer related complaints.

Supporting Scholarship

The Irma M. Isaacson Memorial Scholarship Fund enables the National Council of Jewish Women, Greater New Orleans Section, to provide needed financial assistance to Jewish students in Greater New Orleans, pursuing academic or vocational goals.

Madalyn Schenk- In honor of Gail Chalew
Ann Thompson- In memory of Norma Freiberg
Tricia Kirschman – In honor of Gail Chalew
Dana Shepard- In memory of: Julanne Isaacson Barbara Bresler
Harry Blumenthal- In memory of Hannah Blumenthal Stich
Richard and Ina Davis- a donation
John and Amy Gainsburgh Haspel- A donation
The Bissinger-Timm Family- In memory of Julanne Isaacson
Nancy and Steve Timm- In memory of Julanne Isaacson

You may ask...

NCJW CARES has been in existence for many years, what is it? NCJW CARES is a way to donate in celebration of friends or loved ones special occasions - such as birthdays, milestones or honors, or to memorialize someone who has passed away. Your donation, big or small, supports our local service projects. NCJW is a 501(c) 3 organization; donations are tax deductible. A donation card may be found in the Membership Directory blue pages. You may mail to our office or send directly to chair Sheryl Title, 515 Hillary Street, New Orleans, LA 70118. Thanks for asking!

NCJW Cares
In memory of Barbara Bresler, a wonderful NCJW past president
✦ By Ina Davis
✦ By Cynthia Farber
✦ By Shellye Farber, Kathy and Scott Farber, Stacey and Roy Wronker
✦ By Amy Gainsburgh Haspel and John Haspel
✦ By Robin Giarrusso
✦ By Susan and Lou Good
✦ By Barbara Greenberg
✦ By Ronald Hand
✦ By Barbara Herman
✦ By Joseph and Christine Montz
✦ By Susan and Lee Scharff
✦ By Sheryl and Peter Title

In honor of Gail Chalew as incoming President of NCJW GNO Section
✦ By Theodore Naron
✦ By Tricia Kirschman

In honor of Gail Pesses, outgoing President of NCJW GNO Section
✦ By Tricia Kirschman
✦ By Diana and Chip Mann
✦ By Sheryl Title
✦ By the 2023 Board members

In honor of Susan Tramontana
✦ By Betsy Kaston

In appreciation of all NCJW volunteers, past and present
✦ By Amy Gainsburgh Haspel
✦ By Allison Maney

In memory of Dotty Jacobs
✦ By Barbara Greenberg
✦ By Gail Pesses’ 2023 Board

NOTE: These donations were received as of August 21, 2023

Walter and Cathy Isaacson- In memory of Julanne Isaacson
The Sara B. Stone Educational Enrichment Fund enables the National Council of Jewish Women, Greater New Orleans Section, to provide needed financial assistance to Jewish students in the Greater New Orleans area pursuing academic or vocational goals.

June Leopold- In honor of Elaine Haas’ Birthday
Madalyn Schenk- In honor of Steve and Nancy Timm
In honor of Judy Barrasso
Nancy and Steve Timm- In honor of Judy Barrasso
Betty Moore- In memory of Barbara Bresler
The Clara and Roy Schwarz Book Fund provides each Irma M. Isaacson Memorial Scholarship recipients with additional funds for the purchase of books.
John and Amy Gainsburgh Haspel- A donation
To donate contact Nancy Timm, 5708 Garfield St., NOLA 70115, or email her at nancybtimm@gmail.com.
More on NCJW Legacy Giving

Articles and suggestions for NCJW Legacy donations through wills, assigning insurance policies, or distributing funds from IRA's, among other types of bequests, have been appearing under this special logo for a year.

Many members have asked for information specific to their situations, and quite a few have indicated that they have made arrangements for NCJW to receive future bequests.

Many thanks to our members who have made their intentions known at this time: Barbara Greenberg, Susan Hess, Barbara Kaplinsky, Susan Kierr, Patricia Kirschman, Rick Kirschman, Pam Lyles, Carole Neff, Gail Pesses, Loel Samuel and Dana Shepard. In addition, we have already received bequests from Joan Berenson, Margot Garon, Byrde Haspel, Martha and Meyer Israel, Phyllis Nitzkin and Margery Stich. (If you have made a bequest but are not listed here, please let us know.)

NCJW would be happy to help answer your questions. Please contact either Co-Chairs Carole Neff at (504) 439-0052 or Susan Hess at (504) 615-5294.

A bequest in your will to your favorite non-profits – no matter the amount – will have a continuing impact on the lives of people. NCJW GrNo is at the top of my list of organizations who will benefit upon my demise. I believe that my legacy gift, joined with those of others, will help keep the progressive mission of our section alive and well for generations to come.

“Barbara Kaplinsky”

Welcome to our newest members! (May 15 – August 20, 2023)

Bloch, Aaron (Ms Azucena “Suzy” Rivera)
212 Alonzo St
New Orleans, LA 70115
C: 631-332-0391
aaron.bloch@gmail.com

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Dixon, Elexa (Ms) (Mr Benjamin Levine)
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Be in the know – Send your email address to ncjwgno@gmail.com today!
NCJW GNO Featured in HNOC Exhibit

“... Early NCJW members, such as Ida Weiss Friend, were active in the suffrage movement. By the mid-20th century, council women including Gladys Cahn, Mathilde Dreyfous, Helen Mervis, and Edith Stern advocated for civil rights. Today, the NCJW continues to advance women’s rights, social justice, and access to the ballot...”

Everyone enjoyed our visit to the Historic New Orleans Collection to see “Yet She is Advancing: New Orleans Women and the Right to Vote, 1878-1970.” Informed by HNOC curator Dr. Libby Neidenbach, we explored the decades-long story of the struggle of New Orleans women to secure the right to vote. Among historic section artifacts was this photo of member, June Cahn, holding a pro-desegregation sign at the Louisiana State Capitol, 1960. We are very proud of NCJW GNO’s history of progressive action, highlighted in the exhibit, which you may view virtually: https://www.hnoc.org/virtual/yet-she-advancing. The exhibit is open through Nov. 5.

Knowledge is Power Series #3: GIVE A SPIT!

Join us for “Give a Spit About Our Health” - Sunday, Oct. 22, 2-4pm, Uptown JCC. NCJW will host JScreen, a Jewish genetic testing organization. During the informational session, a representative will teach us about each test.

We are working to raise funds for both the Repro Test ($149.99) and Cancer Screener ($199.99) with hopes that participants will be able to receive a significant discount on the price of the tests.

Be The Match will also be present. They will take cheek samples from those who are willing to join the national bone marrow donor registry.

There will be informational tables from Sharsheret, an organization we worked with in a previous Knowledge is Power event, as well as The Bresties, and Krewe De Pink - all organizations that support women in Cancer, both mind and body, through specific experiences with diagnosis, treatments, recovery and everything thereafter.

This event is for all people of all ages - spread the word! We hope to see you there! Questions? Contact: Lilli Geltman 610-999-9204 or Nancy Pesses 504-259-9123