



BACK ON TRACK
PROJECT LIFT

Jewish Family Service of Greater Harrisburg
Back on Track and Project Lift Project Report

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***Overview:** Since 2017, through the generosity of our donors, Jewish Family Service of Greater Harrisburg supported some of the most vulnerable members of our community through our **Back on Track Initiative** and **Project Lift**.*

***Back on Track** offers emergency financial support to individuals and families who run the risk of “falling through the cracks,” due to short term financial problems. These emergency problems can often be eliminated by a “lift” in the form of a minimal one-time offer of financial support.*

***Project Lift** connects individuals and families with JFS services as well as with those provided by other social service organizations. These services can benefit those who may already be in the JFS system as mental health therapy clients but could also benefit from a “lift” of additional social services.*

The Year in Review

In the year 2020, JFS engaged and **assessed 91 clients in case management with Project Lift and the Back on Track programs.**

- Of those 91 clients, 55 were women and 36 were men; 66% were Jewish. Eighteen (18) clients avoided eviction and homelessness due to JFS financial support.
- During the last 4 months of 2020, there was a noticeable increase in activity due to COVID-19 related issues.
- This year, we have seen a **28% increase in clients served**, going from serving 71 clients last year to 91 this year.

Here is a snapshot of the clients JFS supported in 2020 and what was accomplished:

A young Jewish woman, “**Marilyn,**” left an unhappy marriage and moved to a college town where she was to be employed as a part time college instructor. She expected to become employed full time within a few months. Before she could start her new job, COVID-19 struck and college classes were suspended. Marilyn had also been teaching an on-line afterschool program and lost that job as well. She was in arrears with her bills when she called JFS in an anxious state. Her small “nest egg” had dissolved after Marilyn became sick with pneumonia and could not work in her previous position. JFS agreed to pay Marilyn’s phone bill and car payment both which would enable her to continue to look for employment, get to appointments, and to provide transportation for her son. In addition, JFS paid for one month’s electric bill because Marilyn did not qualify for any other assistance in that area.

Marilyn has recently applied to and qualified for a substitute teaching job in the public school system should her college position not reopen. In addition, she is also looking for employment in the evenings if her virtual after school classes cannot resume. Marilyn is hopeful that she will be able to become self-sufficient again. She is very grateful to JFS for helping her get “Back on Track.”

“**Yosef,**” an immigrant from the Middle East, called JFS pleading for help. He, his wife, and two young children had been living in the United States for two years and although he was an electrical engineer by training, he was unable to work in that capacity in the U.S. Yosef was taking evening courses at HACC to receive a degree which he could use in this country. He had been working in a warehouse for minimum hourly wages. When the pandemic hit, Yosef was furloughed. He did not receive unemployment benefits and was rapidly running through his savings. After borrowing money from friends, his resources had dwindled significantly. That was when he called JFS pleading for help. If he did not pay his rent at the end of the month, he and his family would face eviction.

JFS paid for one month’s rent to prevent Yosef and his family from becoming homeless. This afforded him more time to look

THANK YOU!!

Jewish Family Service is indebted to the following donors who have sustained and supported Back on Track and Project Lift in 2020. We are particularly grateful to Ellen Geduldig, whose ongoing support and encouragement has enabled JFS to positively impact the lives of hundreds of community members.

\$15,000

Ellen Geduldig

\$5,000-\$14,999

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Geraldine Babitts

Valerie Gross

Julie Howard

Allyson Katzman

Herbert and Donna Nurick

Kerry and Dorinda Zimmer

for work and pursue his degree. Using his networking skills and pleasant personality, Yosef was able to find a friend of the family who agreed to help him with his rent in the future. Yosef continues to look for work because he desperately wants to stay in this country and raise his children here. He is extremely grateful to JFS for affording him this opportunity and has expressed thanks for the timely help he received and the non-judgmental way in which it was offered.

“Sophia,” a Jewish woman born and raised in Harrisburg lost her job due to the pandemic. She had two teenage sons living with her because she was estranged from an abusive husband. When she called JFS she had enough funds to pay one month’s rent. However, she could not pay her rent for the following month. She also needed help paying for her car insurance. Going forward, Sophia expected to receive help from a family member who had recently been called back to his place of employment. JFS helped Sophia by paying for one month’s rent and covered one month of car insurance. This was enough to help her until her family could offer assistance. Sophia has since received financial aid from her family and thinks it will be adequate to cover her expenses until she receives her unemployment compensation. Sophia is most grateful that she can continue to look for work and go to interviews because her car payment was paid by JFS. She also has the threat of eviction and homelessness removed.

A lovely, articulate, intelligent woman, **“Elizabeth,”** called JFS in a somewhat confused state. She revealed a history with mental illness and was struggling to get by day to day. She came to Harrisburg from the South where she had become estranged from her family. Elizabeth was 75 years of age living on social security disability. Due to physical issues and doctors’ bills, Elizabeth had fallen into financial trouble which exasperated her mental health issues. Although not Jewish, she had been referred to JFS through a Jewish psychiatrist she had seen and spoke to on a regular basis. Elizabeth needed help to pay for her stay in a hotel for a few weeks. She asked JFS for financial assistance. JFS paid her hotel bill for two weeks. In addition, upon learning that Elizabeth had little money to buy food, JFS provided her with food from the JFS food pantry. As Elizabeth had come Harrisburg from the South, most of her clothing was appropriate for warm weather and not for winter. The JFS caseworker secured some winter clothing, including a winter coat, from a very willing JFS donor.

Elizabeth was thrilled and is extremely thankful and amazed to have “found an agency with such kindness and personal attention so far from home.” She continues to live at the hotel and has reconnected with some of her family members. Her profuse thanks and humble demeanor has made her a favorite of staff when she calls to thank JFS for every kindness that was afforded her.

“Alan” was born and raised in Harrisburg. He suffers from bi-polar disorder and substance abuse. He has faced the debilitating effects of alcoholism and has self-medicated with drugs. After being released from a drug rehabilitation facility, Alan had no where to go.

He borrowed money from friends and family to make his car payment. However, once he secured a small apartment in a house out of town, he had no funds to pay for his security deposit. JFS paid for one month’s rent which allowed Alan to take the apartment. His social security check, which he expected to receive by the following month, would enable him to pay rent so that he could stay in the apartment. Alan is also aware that the JFS food from the pantry is open to him when he needs it. The most important thing Alan knows is that he must be mindful of his mental and physical health to stave off addiction. In addition, he knows he can call JFS for therapy and other services when he needs them. He feels that JFS has served him as a “net” when he had nowhere to turn.

Ongoing Challenges:

- Coronavirus affecting the loss of jobs /decreasing work hours;
- Transient clients who move without forwarding addresses;
- Clients who do not provide new phone numbers;
- Individuals with skills limited for working minimum wage jobs;
- People who struggle to break the cycle of generational poverty;
- Clients who have difficulty identifying and articulating their problems;
- Single mothers trying to provide for themselves and their children;
- Clients who do not make enough in wages to accrue savings.

Looking ahead to 2021: With so many stresses facing our local community—rising unemployment, increased food insecurity and the unprecedented anxiety and depression caused by the isolation and uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, JFS is fully prepared to meet the needs of community members in crisis in the coming year. Through the very generous on-going support of our donors including a lead gift by Ellen Geduldig, and matching funds provided from a Human Services Grant of the Jewish Federation of Greater Harrisburg and the Jewish Community Foundation of Central PA, JFS is committed to expanding its funding to assist community members in need in the year ahead. Our focus will be on:

- Increasing funding towards financial assistance
- Increasing the availability of financial case management
- Partnering with other local organizations who can provide additional support services to our clients
- Increasing funding to underwrite mental health counseling for clients without insurance or struggling to pay their deductibles
