

2024-2025

Year in Review

NCJ  ESSEX
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN ESSEX COUNTY SECTION 2024-2025

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Message from the President & Executive Director

To all the friends of NCJW/Essex,

It is always a challenge to summarize a year in just a few words. Thinking about how to describe our 2024 – 2025 fiscal year made us reflect, made us smile and made us realize how special the past 12 months have been.

Together we experienced the mitzvahs of our community service projects, including Mitzvahs-in-a-Minute and the Back 2 School Store; the excitement of new programs like Wise Women Wednesdays and Drag Queen Bingo; the joy of recognizing phenomenal women at our Installation and Gala events; the satisfaction of watching our Center for Women clients succeed in their efforts to find meaningful employment; and the focus and passion of our members as they took action on critical issues.



Caitlin Higgings Joy and Andrea Rakitta Mintz

Through it all, we relied on our Jewish values and remained steadfast in NCJW/Essex's mission to improve the lives of women, children and families and to safeguard individual rights and freedoms. We started and ended every day in search of Tikkun Olam and the desire to leave the world a better place than we found it. As you'll see on the following pages, we came together in community, and had some fun, too.

At its core, NCJW/Essex is a member-driven organization, buoyed by women whose energy and commitment is so necessary and so valued. Whether you have given an hour or two, or many, many more, thank you for helping us make a real difference. And to our partners, large and small, near and far, we are so fortunate to be doing this work with you.

None of this is possible without the generosity of our donors and your trust that our resources will be used wisely. In a time when the people and causes we care about face increasing challenges, we are grateful each time you choose to invest in NCJW/Essex and embrace the work we do and the impact we make together.

With appreciation,

Andrea Rakitta Mintz
President
NCJW | Essex

Caitlin Higgings Joy
Executive Director
NCJW | Essex

Fast Facts

*Hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours
devoted to NCJW/Essex annually*



2900+ members and volunteers
100+ partners, **10** staff,
getting things done.

1000+ children

from 40+ agencies empowered
by the ***Back 2 School Store***



3600+ postcards

written encouraging
voters to ***get out and vote!***



1000+ items hand-knit

by **Knitting Circle**
donated to local charities

8 schools

in low-income areas host
Kids Essentials Closets



400+ gifts

collected, wrapped
and delivered
to children
at holiday time



**130,000+ individual
menstrual products**

distributed through
the **Period.Project**



200+ individual clients

participate in **Center for Women**
job readiness programs

Connect

“Come for the mission and stay for the women.”

An oft-repeated refrain that proves true year after year.

We connected with each other at annual programs like Opening Event and brand-new events like Drag Queen Bingo. We played pickleball, talked books with several authors for Books & Bites, and painted Miriam’s Cups for Passover. Wise Women Wednesdays, our new speaker series, enjoyed a great debut season featuring three timely topics and a lot of shared learning and laughter. And, we gathered for Installation to close one year, welcome the next and celebrate remarkable award winners.





Volunteer

A full slate of Mitzvahs-in-a-Minute supported everything from survivors of human trafficking at Covenant House to the students of Hillel of Greater MetroWest to visitors to the Red Hawk Food Pantry at Montclair State to kids at the FOCUS Hispanic Center in Newark. Volunteers came together to pack, assemble and hear from these community organizations. A renewed focus on the renamed Kids Essentials Closet (KEC) ensuring students in these schools had access to necessary items – in emergencies and every day – made the world a little brighter. Among those items, hand-knit creations done with care and conversation by our Knitting Circle.





Advocate

NCJW/Essex takes action!

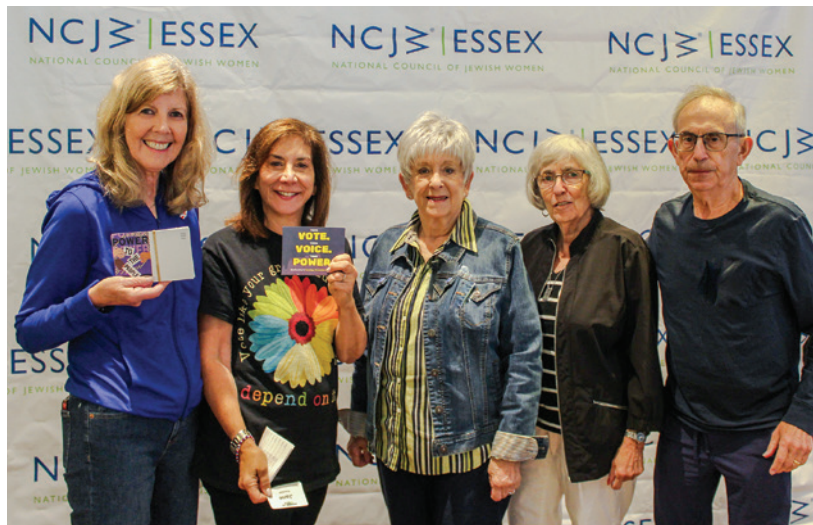
Our Power Up the Vote event kicked off our get out the vote efforts in advance of the 2024 election cycle. We had great speakers, dozens of partners and 200 people writing postcards and letters to voters. The effort continued under the Sukkah, with Sukkot the Vote, and wrapped up with a post-election conversation about how to use the power you have to make change.

We continue to advance the idea and reality of reproductive freedom. We are working with schools around the state who are now required to provide free menstrual products for students in grades 6-12 thanks to legislation we helped pass in 2023. The Period.Project re-established a partnership with CASA to provide menstrual products to people aging out of the foster care system.

We met with elected officials to discuss policies and our issues. We found strength in coalitions, as working with partners across the state delivered results on gun violence prevention and anti-human trafficking. Conversations with Israeli-based groups focused on helping survivors of sexual assault and trauma kept those who suffered before and after October 7 front of mind.

Taking action following our Lunch and Learn on teens, social media and artificial intelligence contributed to the passage of the Take It Down Act, protecting online privacy.





Back 2 School Store



The Back 2 School Store encompasses everything NCJW/Essex stands for: active volunteers who get things done, giving back to the most vulnerable in our community and pulling off a massive project flawlessly. After a year of planning, hundreds of volunteers came together on a Sunday in July to create a transformational experience for nearly 1,000 children. Children receive a new outfit, a warm winter coat, a week's worth of underwear and socks, grade appropriate books, personal care items and a backpack stuffed with school supplies, along with the message that someone cares and is rooting for them to succeed as they head back to school. Volunteers leave with a smile on their face and the knowledge of a job well done.





Center for Women

The Linda & Rudy Slucker NCJW/Essex Center for Women offers a wide range of practical and emotional support for women seeking employment for the first time or returning to the workforce. The CFW team guides women through job readiness programs by caring for the whole person, focusing on financial independence, self-esteem and how to navigate an ever-changing job market.

The CFW worked with more than 200 individuals over the course of the year, in one-on-one counseling and group empowerment sessions. We provide resources for education and certification classes, access to experts in tenants' rights and family law questions, and grocery gift cards to address food insecurity and let our clients shop for their families with dignity. We held two RISE (Reaching Into Self Empowerment) workshops for clients and went on the road for the first time, with a session offered at a partner site.

At holiday time, we created a special Pop Up Shop where CFW clients could choose donated jewelry, scarves and other items all for free and were gifted the makings for a traditional Thanksgiving dinner, accompanied by special messages and gratitude jars from our members.



Caring Committed Connected

Those three words capture the wonderful people who support and invest in NCJW/Essex and allow us to do the work we do.

Led by our Chai Circle members, whose generosity sustains us, and matched by everyone who purchased a Tribute, or an ad for an ad journal, or joined Generations Society, or donated to our annual campaign, we are grateful for your support, always.

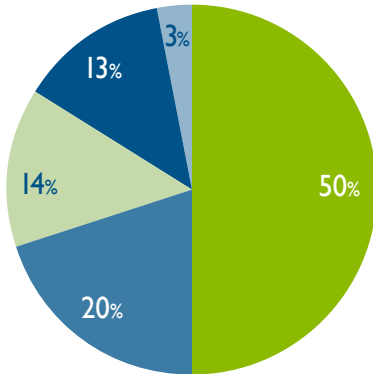
We also had a lot of fun while raising essential funds. Our October Gala, honoring Phoebe Pollinger and Myrna Wertheimer, two amazing trailblazers and leaders, set the tone as we painted a bright future together. Annual spring events including the always popular Card Party, a fabulous day of golf at Mountain Ridge Country Club and the return of the House Tour (this one like never before) at one of the most well-known homes in Livingston brought the year to a close with a memorable event.

Thank You!





NCJW/Essex *Funding Sources* FY2023-2024



Individual Donors (including Chai).....	50%
Grants.....	20%
Investment Assets	14%
Events.....	13%
Earned Revenue.....	3%

TOTAL FY23-24 Income 100%



The Last Word

Thank you! We are grateful to be a part of the NCJW family and to serve our clients through your generosity to the community.

- Dorine Francis - Franciscan Charities

NCJW/Essex's dedication to advocating for others aligns with my values and vision for a better, more equitable future. For more than 50 years, NCJW has been a vehicle through which I could turn my beliefs into action and engage my passion to make a difference. Giving to others has always enriched my life. The satisfaction that I derive from knowing my efforts just might help another human being live better is all the compensation I need.

- Nancy Eskow, NCJW/Essex Section Board Member

Your dignity is preserved, you never feel less than, and it's a safe place to be yourself. I encourage women who might be afraid to take that next step to know that there is no need to feel scared or intimidated about joining this program. We are in this together.

- Ann Marie S., CFW Client

Mission Statement

We are a grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms.

Invest in NCJW/Essex
Donate Today

