



## National Council of Jewish Women Greater New Orleans Section

Bulletin

[www.NCJWneworleans.org](http://www.NCJWneworleans.org)

March-April 2011

### OUR ANNUAL FUNDRAISER; A Fabulous Event Honoring Women

By Sue Jernigan

This year, the Greater New Orleans Section of NCJW will host a fundraiser with a twist. We are pleased to announce that on April 26, 2011 at Temple Sinai, 6722 St. Charles Avenue, we will attend "Vashti's Banquet". "Why Vashti?" you may ask. As we know, in the Purim story, Vashti was a villainess, however, if we go a little bit deeper, we can look at Vashti from a different perspective.

In the first chapter of the Book of Esther, Queen Vashti gives a banquet for women in the harem of the Royal Palace. King Ahasueras was also hosting guests in the Palace (all men). As he and the men partying with him got more inebriated, he summoned Vashti to dance naked for them. Vashti refused and she was banished. This was when Esther entered the king's harem and made her mark on the history of the Jewish people.

We celebrate Vashti because she may be the first recorded woman to "just say no!". From today's vantage point, we could only guess that she was so empowered because of the

presence and support of the other women at her banquet. Over the past several decades with originality, resourcefulness and creativity, Jewish women have been seeking new and imaginative ways to create rituals which are personally meaningful. Not all of these rituals are serious or heavy handed. Learning of Vashti and celebrating the dictates of Purim with fun and frivolity, NCJW is creating its own celebratory ritual. Vashti's Banquet recreates the Queen's fabled harem banquet with our own modern interpretation.

We all harbor fantasies about the harem, thanks to The Arabian Nights and the films of Cecile B. DeMille, but there is no written account from the ancient world about life in that segregated world. In our celebration, NCJW members are using their imagination to recapture the atmosphere of joy, triumph and strength that must have surrounded Vashti and her companions. The "women only" guests will be able to taste the sisterhood of ancient Persia with activities known from

literature and history: food, music, belly dancing, beauty secrets, fortune telling and many more! Our banquet is focused on the strength of the community of women and appeals to women of all ages. Rather than regard the harem as a vestige of women's subjugation by men, it should be seen as the quintessential women's space where they lived together, ate together, danced together and mourned together. As women recover voices from the past, they create new forms of celebrating, bonding with each other in the very real present.

We encourage everyone to bring a guest or two or three. We open this celebration to all women in the Greater New Orleans community; invite a friend, invite your sister, invite your daughter, invite your mother, invite your neighbor. One of our goals is for all of us to meet new wonderful women. In each other's company, we gather strength.

In support of The Higher Ground

*(Continued on page 2)*



# President's MESSAGE



## A FAITH IN THE FUTURE. A BELIEF IN ACTION.

Dear Members,

We've had an exciting few months at NCJW. In January we had several programs of interest to the membership. There was the Lunch and Learn at the Kingsley House, the January General Meeting and Sip for Social Change. In February, we looked forward to the Hannah G. Solomon luncheon honoring Joan S. Berenson. In the coming months, we have more programs that promise to be of interest. In March, we will have another Lunch and Learn,

this time at the KIPP School where we can learn about charter schools in New Orleans. We will also participate in the Adloyadah Fair at the Jewish Community Center. In April, we will have our annual fund raiser to raise funds for NCJW programming. There is so much to do and so little time in which to do it. All of us have busy schedules with many things that keep us on the go and our families busy at the same time. But we owe it to ourselves to participate in activities that improve our outlook on the world and provide fun too. New Orleans is a busy place with festivals and fairs every weekend of the year. So is the New Orleans Jewish Community with its own set of programs

and festivals. NCJW is one part of the New Orleans Jewish Community. Its programs are geared towards improving the lives of women, children and families. Can you make room in your busy life for some NCJW programs? I hope you can and have some fun while you are doing it. I'll look forward to seeing you at the next NCJW program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Phyllis".

Phyllis Nitzkin

## FUNDRAISER

initiative, the focus of our national organization, we generate resources and programs to provide women with strength, and the knowledge that they are supported by the community, enabling them to leave an abusive situation knowing that they are not alone. This event supports such programs as our participation in Hagar's House, and the Family Justice Center, as well as our many other programs benefitting women, children and families.

We want to see a lot of new faces! We are excited about creating our harem and having opportunities to celebrate together. This event extends the boundaries of our imaginations.

We encourage all of you to come dressed in harem pants, caftans, jeweled shirts and lots of jewelry. If you have nothing that feels right, then

come anyway and we will drape and bejewel you.

If you would like to participate in the creation of the harem and join the decorating committee, please contact Sarah Hess. She can be reached at (504) 615-8122 or mail to [sarahkhess@gmail.com](mailto:sarahkhess@gmail.com). Oh, and by the way, at 9:30 p.m. we will permit men to join us, for a fee, of course. If they would like to get a glimpse of our harem and enjoy dancing and the wonderful art that we have amassed, they are certainly welcome to do so. They can also bid on any of our wonderful auction items for their queens.

So, please join us at 7:45 p.m. on April 26th and ask the men in your life if they will come catch a glimpse of the harem after 9:30 p.m. The committee can't wait to see you then!

# NCJW®

National Council of Jewish Women  
Greater New Orleans Section

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# Public AFFAIRS

## NCJW Leads Community Celebration of Roe v. Wade

By Michelle Erenberg

On January 22, more than 60 people gathered at the Oak Wine Bar Uptown to commemorate the 38th anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade. NCJW co-sponsored the event along with Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, the Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies, the American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana, and the National Organization of Women of New Orleans. Speakers highlighted

the need for communities to continue to stand for the protection of women's reproductive choices. Each year more and more attempts are made to chip away at reproductive freedoms making this anniversary an opportunity for our community to come together in commitment to protecting choice.

If you would like to be more involved in advocating for women's rights, please contact Michelle Erenberg at (504) 451-8489 or [merenberg21@gmail.com](mailto:merenberg21@gmail.com).



**SIP FOR SOCIAL CHANGE** - In January more than 60 people gathered to commemorate the 38th anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade.



## Members Gather to Learn about Domestic Violence at the January General Meeting

By June Leopold

NCJW held its General Meeting at the beautiful home of Susan and Bill Hess on Tuesday evening, January 11, 2011.

The new NCJW national initiative, Higher Ground, was introduced. It is an effort to confront and curtail domestic violence by providing strong solutions to improve vulnerability and security to women and children throughout the nation. There has always been a critical link between violence and economic insecurity, and this new initiative represents a commitment to help ensure resources for education, advocacy and victim assistance.

Stacie LeBlanc, Executive Director of The Audrey Hepburn CARE (Children of Risk Evaluation) Center of Children's Hospital, discussed

the need for the community to give proper recognition and intervention protection for children who are abused. Ms. LeBlanc informed us of the difficult journey for mistreated children, and with perceptive knowledge, she spoke of the many increasing and necessary needs which only partly include shelter, counseling, judicial resources, and medical treatment.



# Community SERVICE

By Susan Kierr



MIND MATTERS

Of great interest to our Community Service Committee is a program called **Mind Matters**, which is an outgrowth of the ACE program at the Jewish Community Center. NCJW supports ACE and Inge Elsas mentors that program on our behalf. The new program, not yet using volunteers, is for folks who are concerned about their memory and want to work on this topic.

**Mind Matters** offers proactive weekly classes that are based on the brain's plasticity, that is, the brain's ability to grow and form new neural pathways throughout our lives. Subjects include music and the brain, spirituality and the brain, meditation, nutrition and mental aerobics.

## Literacy and Latkes Collected Over 600 Books for HIPPY

By Carol Good

Jewish Family Services had a Hanukkah book drive entitled "Literacy and Latkes" for the second year. Books were collected from Jewish Family Services and the Jewish Day School, as well as from the religious schools at Touro Synagogue, Temple Sinai, Gates of Prayer, Shir Chadash and Beth Israel.

550 books that were age appropriate for three, four and five year olds were donated to the HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) Program. HIPPY is the program that NCJW brought to New Orleans and has supported since 1987.

NCJW also collected over 100 books for the HIPPY youngsters. More than 600 books were distributed to the HIPPY participants and were a welcome holiday gift.

On behalf of NCJW and the HIPPY children, thank you to all the donors for these wonderful new books!

## Art for New Orleans Public Library

By Ina Davis

NCJW has a volunteer program every Tuesday afternoon at 4:30 in the Children's Room at the Public Library. Ordinarily, it is a yoga class lead by Susan Kierr.

Over the holidays, Ina Davis provided four weeks of art lessons. One afternoon was spent creating art in the image of Kandinsky, first looking through books and discussing the artist and his style.



*Besides being adorable, the children were enthusiastic participants.*

# Study Group Explores Early Childhood Learning

By Joel Myers

What programs exist for early childhood learning and why are they important? A Study Group to explore these questions was held on Monday, January 10, 2011, at Kingsley House, an historic facility that was a “settlement house” at the turn of the last century.

Melanie Bronfin, a member of NCJW and of the Kingsley House Board, discussed the availability of early childhood education, quality child care and Head Start programs in New Orleans and the State. She explained that today there is a convergence of evidence from neuroscience, child development and economics establishing the critical importance of early childhood and the high economic return of investing in this period of life. Yet, very little public funding goes into early childhood, and high quality early education/child care options for low income families



are extremely limited. For example, although 36 percent of the children in Orleans Parish live in poverty, there are less than 500 Early Head Start slots (serving children to age three) in our city.

Some good news is that Louisiana now has a quality rating and improvement system for child care (see [www.qrslouisiana.org](http://www.qrslouisiana.org)). Called Quality Start, this is a voluntary program that rates centers that participate from one to five stars. Quality Start provides incentives and assistance for child care centers to improve their quality, and a number of centers that serve low income children in New Orleans have been moving up the stars. Additionally, there are a number of high quality public programs for four-year-olds

that are free for low income children, including the Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development program, the Cecil J. Picard LA4 Early Childhood Program, and the 8(g) block grant program. Local school systems use local and federal funding as well as other sources of revenue to provide pre-k programs in public schools, however, due to the low rate of funding per child for these programs, many schools in New Orleans have chosen to give up their four-year-old classrooms.

As lagniappe, Melanie gave us a tour of the Kingsley House facility. In addition to the historic building, NCJW members got to see the Head Start and Early Head Start programs there that serve 190 children from ages six weeks to five years.

## Dedicated FUNDS

### H.I.P.P.Y. ...

Home Instruction Program for Parents of Preschool Youngsters

### In memory of Susan Forsyth Bauman

- ▶ Edel Gainsburgh

- ▶ Judith Gainsburgh
- ▶ Celia Katz
- ▶ Susan & Lou Good
- ▶ Sara Stone
- ▶ Amy Gainsburgh-Haspel & John Haspel

### Birthday Dollars...

- ▶ Shellye Farber
- ▶ Sue Rae Brown
- ▶ Brigitte Cohn
- ▶ Rita R. Warren



National Council of Jewish Women  
Greater New Orleans Section

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### Have You Changed Your Address?

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## Calendar of EVENTS

- ▶ Mar. 15  
Board Meeting, 7 PM  
Metairie JCC
  - ▶ Mar. 22  
Exec Committee, noon  
Uptown JCC
  - ▶ Mar. 29  
Lunch & Learn  
11:30 AM-1PM  
KIPP School
  - ▶ Apr. 12  
Board Meeting, noon  
Uptown JCC
  - ▶ Apr. 21  
Exec Committee, 7 PM  
Metairie JCC
  - ▶ Apr. 26  
Annual Fundraiser, 7:30 PM  
Vashti's Banquet, Temple Sinai
  - ▶ Apr. 28  
Articles due for May/June bulletin
  - ▶ May 3  
Board Meeting, 7 PM  
Metairie JCC
  - ▶ May 24  
Exec Committee, noon  
Uptown JCC
  - ▶ June 6  
Closing Event
-