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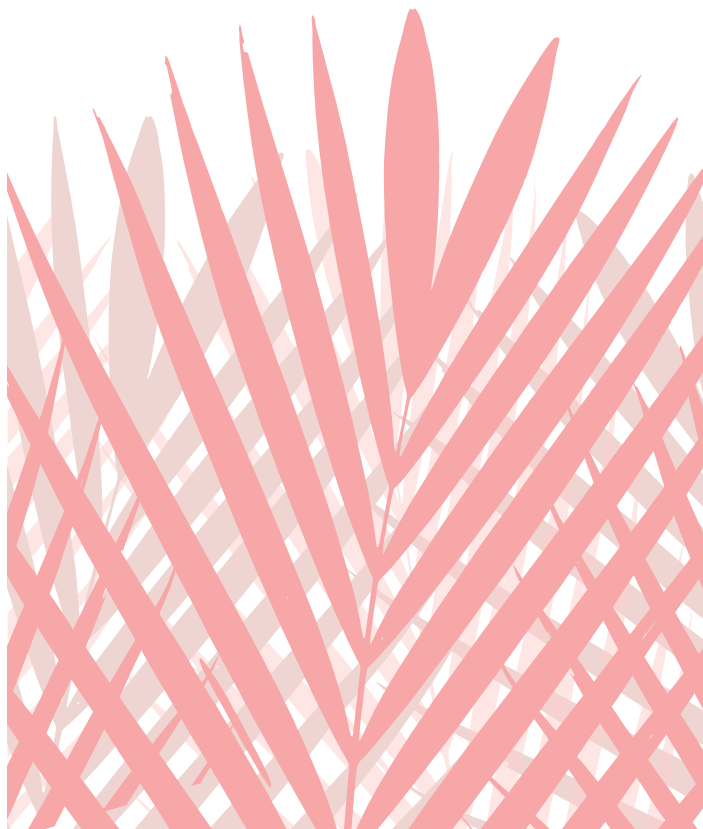
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SNOWBIRDS FLOCK TO FLORIDA — AND BEYOND

SELAH MAYA ZIGHELBOIM | JE STAFF



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FROM NOVEMBER UNTIL March or April — whenever Passover falls — you can find Daniel Blumberg and his wife Barbara taking courses at Florida Atlantic University's lifelong learning institute, attending tribute band concerts and going to independent movie theaters.

They do all this and more in Delray Beach, Fla., where they have spent their winters for the past five years. Like many retirees who live in the Philadelphia area, they head to warmer weather during the winter months in a longstanding tradition. Many of their friends do the same, and other friends live in that area permanently. For them, southeast Florida offers opportunities for learning, socialization and a rich Jewish life, including a few good delicatessens.

"[Delray is] heavily Jewish, and it's a comfort zone of being in that area," Blumberg said. "We have friends who live down there all year round, so that's another reason that we picked that particular area."

For decades, Philadelphians have taken flight to the southeastern coast of Florida but, more recently, some have chosen to winter in other places instead, as far west as Arizona or California.

Retirees Barry and Tamie Kaufman are two such snowbirds. They have chosen to winter in Scottsdale, Ariz., a city just east of Phoenix. Tamie Kaufman has family there, so they had been going to and from Arizona for decades. As they approached retirement, the amount of time they spent there increased.

"It's an opportunity to see our family more frequently but also a chance to spend more time in an area we've enjoyed," Barry Kaufman said.

They recently moved to the Philadelphia area, where they also have family, but before that, they lived in Michigan, and many of their friends from the Midwest spend their winters in Arizona as well.

Now, they spend about nine months of the year in Philadelphia and three months in Scottsdale.

Scottsdale has a vibrant Jewish life, Kaufman said. The local

JCC has learning opportunities and exercise classes. There's a Jewish film festival in Phoenix, and the area offers lots of great restaurants. He is involved in a social men's group there, where they play pickleball, golf and racquetball and participate in a book review club and movie review club.

"And the weather's great during wintertime," Kaufman added.

He hasn't met too many others from the Philadelphia area who choose to spend their winters in Scottsdale. Most of the snowbirds they've met there hail from the Midwest, especially from Michigan and the Chicago area, as well as Canada.

"We run into a lot of people who are snowbirding or even who have moved from the Midwest or New York or other parts of the country, Connecticut," Kaufman said. "That whole geographic area [of Scottsdale] is just skyrocketed in the last 20 years in terms

of the construction and the building and the development."

There are several synagogues, including one Friday night Shabbat service specifically for expats of Minnesota, where the Kaufmans once lived.

For years now, some snowbirds have gone on to eventually settle in Florida. Kaufman said he is seeing a similar trend in Arizona.

He's heard of the same thing happening in California, too.

"When we started going [to Scottsdale], it was much smaller than what it is now," Kaufman said. "A lot more people have moved there. It seemed like it was a great place to meet people because there were a lot of people entering that area, and they are looking for social development of relationships also, friendships and people to do things with and get involved in various activities with."

Carol Kershbaum snowbirds in Florida but not in the traditional southeastern part. She chooses instead to go to Tampa on the western coast. Her daughter went to college there, and she never liked cold weather, so she figured it was a place she could run away to in the winter.

She had been to Tampa about 20 years before she started snowbirding, and she hated it then.

"If anyone had said, 'You're going to go to Tampa and love it,' I would have said, 'No way that's going to happen,'" Kershbaum

"WE RUN INTO A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO ARE
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FROM THE MIDWEST OR NEW YORK OR OTHER
PARTS OF THE COUNTRY"

BARRY KAUFMAN



▲ Daniel and Barbara Blumberg snowbird in Delray Beach, Fla.

Photo provided

said. "As it turns out, Tampa was growing and developing at that point in time when I returned in a very different sort of way. They had terrific mayors, et cetera, and a great city council, who were basically no-nonsense people."

Tampa, she said, feels like a real city you might encounter in the North, even as she gets the climate of the South.

Most people who snowbird from Philadelphia go to southeast Florida, and they take their friendships with them. In Tampa, Kershbaum does miss those Philadelphia friendships, which she cultivated for years.

But the west coast of Florida, which

See SNOWBIRDS, page 10

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SNOWBIRDS

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includes another snowbird destination in Sarasota, does have its benefits.

"The west coast is not as congested an area, and there are a lot of synagogues in Sarasota as well, as there are in Tampa," Kershbaum said. "There are also a lot of cultural things for retirees to do there. Tampa is really a functioning city. It's not what you'd call a retirement area. ... It's attracting a lot of younger families and a lot of young professionals because there's a lot of growth there and opportunity."

There are a good number of older adults, but the culture overall is not a transient one, Kershbaum said.

Snowbirding hasn't changed too much over the years, she said. As people head into retirement, one trend she is noticing is that it's becoming more common to spend time traveling, especially for those who haven't had too many opportunities to do so before. Kershbaum has heard more stories of people choosing wintering locations outside of Florida, such as Arizona, California, the Carolinas and Georgia.

No matter where they head though, there's one thing all snowbirds prioritize in their winter nest of choice.

"As we get older, we tend to go down where it's warmer," Blumberg said. •

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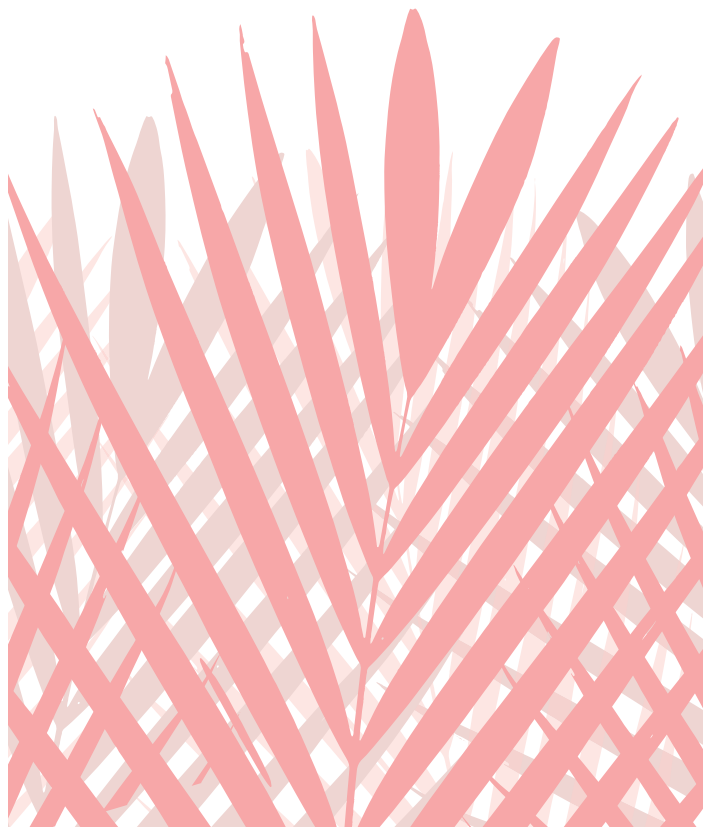
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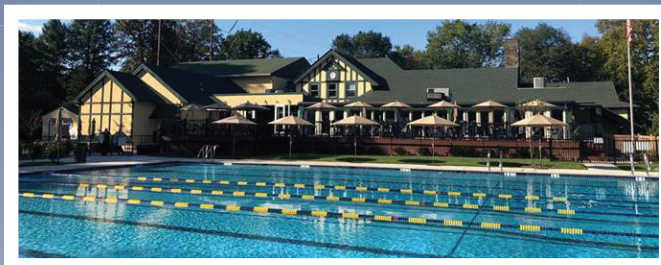
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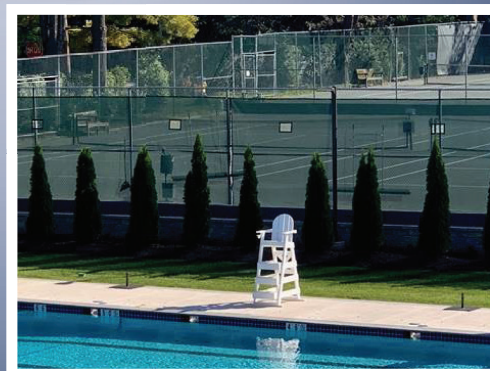
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'Tis the Season: Five Ways to Volunteer

HAYATIKAYHAN/THINKSTOCK

SELAH MAYA ZIGHELBOIM | JE STAFF

There are no clear reasons why we associate the winter holidays with volunteering.

Maybe it's the fact we spend this time of year with loved ones and good food, and this makes us want to do something for those who don't have the same opportunities. Maybe the approach of New Year's and its resolutions prompts increased introspection. Maybe it's the influx of sappy films.

Whatever the reason, you might be looking for some ways to put your time to *tikkun olam*. Here are a few opportunities for volunteering in the Jewish community — this winter and all year round.



Challah for Hunger

You might think Challah for Hunger is a program just for college students — and for good reason, said Challah for Hunger CEO Carly Zimmerman. Challah for Hunger has 10,000 volunteers at 90 colleges around the country, but the organization has a program for nonstudents as well.

Challah for Hunger started its community program in Philadelphia in 2015. Today, the community program has nine chapters through Congregation Adath Jeshurun/Beth Sholom Congrega-

tion, Congregation Beth Or, Jewish Family and Children's Service, Judith Creed Horizons for Achieving Independence, Keshet Israel Congregation, Main Line Reform Temple, Or Hadash, Temple Beth Zion-Beth Israel and Tiferet Bet Israel.

Each of the chapters meets at least four times a year, Zimmerman said. Their volunteers bake challah, then sell it at different area locations. Half of the proceeds go to a local hunger-fighting nonprofit of each chapter's choosing — such as the Jewish Relief Agency or the Mitzvah Food Program — and half goes to Challah for Hunger's campus hunger project.

"[The chapters] bring out volunteers from the communities where they exist," Zimmerman said. "For example, there's a group at BZBI congregation here in Center City, and that group is primarily parents of the preschool kids, but they also open their doors to other volunteers as well."

Head to challahforhunger.org for more information.



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HOSTS for HOSPITALS

Hosts for Hospitals

Philadelphia is home to a great number of renowned medical centers and hospitals, with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Einstein Healthcare Network and more located here. Peo-



▲ Volunteers prepare food boxes at a Jewish Relief Agency event in September.

Photos provided



▲ RSVP volunteers prepare food.

ple come from all over when they're in need of specialized health care, and they often bring their families, sometimes for months at a time. They often have to find housing, which creates a financial burden.

Hosts for Hospitals provides free or deeply discounted lodging and support at volunteer host-homes for these patients and their families.

Hosts for Hospitals is not a Jewish agency, but its founder and executive director Mike Aichenbaum is Jewish. In 1988, Aichenbaum was diagnosed with an advanced case of leukemia. After his first course of chemotherapy failed, he was transferred from a hospital in Michigan, where he lived, to a hospital in Manhattan. His wife, mother and two sons came with him to New York, where he stayed from New Year's to mid-June.

In today's dollars, Aichenbaum said, they spent more than \$40,000 in rent.

After his recovery, he moved to Philadelphia. In 2000, he, along with co-founder Nancy Wimmer, who had a similar experience, established Hosts for Hospitals.

"Crucially, patient-families often arrive in town only to discover there is nowhere for them to stay, certainly not at a place they can afford," Aichenbaum said. "With Hosts for Hospitals, lodging with a caring host-family may be reserved in advance, relieving guests of this worry."

Visit hostsforhospitals.org for details.



Jewish Relief Agency

One Sunday a month, hundreds of volunteers head to the Jewish Relief Agency's (JRA) warehouse at 10980 Dutton Road in Northeast Philadelphia to prepare and deliver food boxes to food-insecure people. JRA's

See VOLUNTEER, page 14

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Volunteer

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next food distribution is Dec. 16.

Regular packing starts at 10 a.m., while produce packing starts at 8:30 a.m. Packing generally goes until 11 a.m. Delivery runs from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

From 8:30 to 9:30 a.m., JRA also has program called "Tiny Tots," where families with kids 6 and younger can help with packing the boxes. This assembly line is slower and less chaotic than when most of the other volunteers show up later that morning.

JRA also has opportunities for volunteers to create and send birthday cards to their recipients, and during the winter, there is a program to send holiday gifts to their recipient families' children.

"A lot of our recipient families are in situations where they are unfortunately not able to provide sometimes these gifts for these kids," said Hannah Weisberg, volunteer engagement program coordinator. "We're trying to find volunteers who would be able to either do some kind of monetary donation or want to purchase an actual gift for some of our recipient kids."

Head to jewishrelief.org for more information.

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RSVP Philadelphia

RSVP Philadelphia at KleinLife is a federal program that provides older adults with volunteer opportunities. These include chances to mentor and tutor children, prepare and package meals



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▲ Children help out at a Jewish Relief Agency event in October.

for homebound seniors and volunteer at organizations such as museums, schools and nonprofits.

RSVP is a secular organization, but many — if not most, RSVP Philadelphia Director John Eskate said — of its volunteers are Jewish.

The program is open to volunteers who aren't older adults, though older adults are the target volunteers. Civic association volunteers who range in age have participated. The Hillel at Temple University cooks for RSVP a few times a year, and synagogue Sunday schools have prepared meals.

"Older adults have health benefits to remaining engaged in their communities and through volunteerism," Eskate said. "It has health impact, mental health and physical health impact. We all deserve these opportunities, and communities deserve the support of their older adult populations because they have just so much expertise and experience. These communities deserve to benefit from that."

Visit kleinlife.org/volunteers/rsvpphiladelphia for details.



Jewish Federation
of Greater Philadelphia

Cemetery Clean-Up

Between the vandalization of Mount Carmel Cemetery in February 2017 to more recent problems at cemeteries brought on by this past summer's rains, cemetery preservation has been in the news quite a few times.

Following the vandalization, the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia set up a program to support volunteer groups' efforts cleaning up the cemetery. These tasks can include righting headstones or clearing overgrowth.

If volunteers get a group together to clean up, Community Engagement Senior Manager Penina Hoffnung, who calls herself "the cemetery lady," can help groups organize and get equipment.

"We're looking to engage people in new kinds of ways," Hoffnung said. "When all of those people, all of that wave of help came in over the cemetery, it occurs to me [that] these cemeteries are a way for people to engage in the Jewish community that we never thought of before."

Head to jewishphilly.org/mtcarmel for more information. •

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Tales of Jews at Christmas

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Christmas is a complicated time for a lot of Jews. Some feel left out as Christmas messages bombard the public consciousness. Yeah, there's Chanukah, but that's just not the same. And who remembers when schools had Christmas pageants — before the P.C. police renamed them holiday pageants — and they'd always throw the Jewish kids a bone by having the chorus sing "Dreidel, Dreidel"?

Others get depressed. There's always a report each December about how depression levels tend to soar around Christmas, so it's reasonable to believe that some of those depressed folks are Jews.

What most of us share, however, are awkward stories about being Jewish during the holiday season. A polling of staff members came up with the following tales. I'll go first.

I grew up in Newtown Square in a then-new neighborhood that had a handful of Jews. Luminaries (candles inside paper bags) lined the street on Christmas Eve. Carolers went door to door. And later in the evening, everyone gathered at a neighbor's house for dessert.

During one of the first years, all the kids were called up to the dessert table, which featured a white birthday cake.

A question was asked: "Does anyone know whose birthday it is?"

Of course, I knew the answer. "My mom!" I blurted out. It was true. She was born on Dec. 24.

"Uh, well, yes, but who else's birthday is it?" whatever adult was in charge stammered. That one proved to be more challenging, so some gentle kid answered.

To this day, I swear everyone then sang "Happy Birthday Jesus and Barbara," but my mom says otherwise.

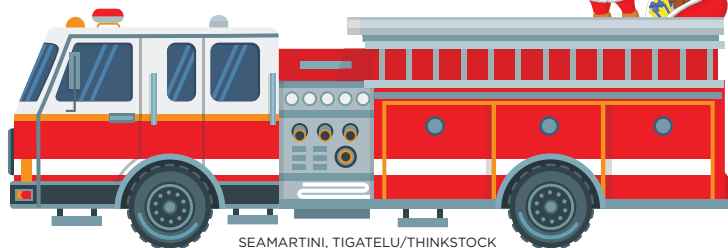
A year or two later in the days before Christmas, someone knocked on the door. It was Santa! He was invited in and sat in our living room. My confused younger brother asked, "What are you doing here, Santa? We're Jewish."

Santa saved face with something along the lines of "Santa visits all the good children."

But the Santa experiences didn't end there.



IZONDA/THINKSTOCK



SEAMARTINI, TIGATELU/THINKSTOCK

Like in many towns, Santa rode the fire truck a few days before Christmas every year, with his firefighter helpers handing out candy canes. For whatever reason, we got outside late one year, and the firefighters had stopped giving out the candy canes.

My father said he would get us candy canes, but an annoying neighbor kid kept saying that he'd come away empty-handed because some kids had already gone back for seconds and the helpers were perturbed. My dad finally had enough and told the kid to shut up — then got us candy canes. Score one for Dad.

Finally, a couple years after that, my dad was driving me, my

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See CHRISTMAS, page 18

Christmas

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brother and his creepy friend when we passed Santa riding a fire truck on a main road in Newtown Square. The creepy kid (who happened to be Jewish), rolled down the window and, for whatever reason, shouted, “You stink, Santa!” Dad immediately yelled at the kid — “Why would you tell Santa he stinks?” — creating a lasting memory my brother and I laugh about to this day.

Staff Writer Selah Maya Zighelboim

About two years before I moved to Philadelphia, I came here for a week during winter break to visit a friend and check out the local sites.

It’s no secret that flying around the holidays is expensive, but in perusing my flight possibilities, I discovered one winter day when flying would be cheaper. (By cheaper, I mean normal.)

That day was Christmas.

I headed to the airport Dec. 25 for what was the best airport and flight experience of my life. The Austin, Texas airport was almost completely empty, and the handful of other flyers and airport employees there seemed to either be Jewish, Muslim or Hindu. The lack of occupants made for a quiet and peaceful wait.

Then came the actual flight.

Almost every seat on the plane was empty, to the point where I cannot fathom how the airline made any money. There was one other man in my row, who when the flight attendant came over to check on us before takeoff, asked, “Excuse me, ma’am, is there any way a Marine flying on Christmas day could get a seat with more leg room?”

Well, it’s hard to say no to a request like that, so I ended up the only one in my row for the duration of the flight.

Unfortunately, the incredible secret of flying on Christmas seems to have gotten out. I’ve flown once on Christmas since and had an entirely different experience, with a cramped and noisy airport and plane.

When I landed in Philadelphia from that incredible flight, I met with my friend and we headed to Chinatown for a proper Jewish Christmas celebration.

Staff Writer Joshua Needelman

I like Christmas.

Really, I do. No, we didn’t celebrate the holiday growing up. We didn’t put up a tree. But it’s impossible to not notice how much better of a mood many people seem to be in around Christmas.

I grew up on Long Island, which has its fair share of Jews. But it also has plenty of non-Jews, and their holiday spirit rubbed off on me. And it still does. December is cold and dark, but when Christmas rolls around, people play cheery music, decorate their houses with extra-



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gant lights and, well, get drunk. What's not to like?

Perhaps I was drunk with naiveté on Dec. 25, 2009. From my experience, the world shuts on down on Christmas Day. We ate in Chinese restaurants because they were all that was open in our suburban town. So, with Dwyane Wade and the Miami Heat set to play my beloved New York Knicks at Madison Square Garden, I convinced two of my friends to tag along with me to New York City.

Remember, this was back in 2009, before social media ruled the world and everyone showed up to events with prepurchased tickets on their smartphones. My plan was solid, I thought. We'd take the Long Island Railroad into Penn Station, buy our tickets at the box office, catch the Knicks game and maybe stop at a Chinese restaurant. What else would be open?

Everything, it turns out. New York City doesn't close on Christmas Day, and MSG was overflowing with Knicks fans. We waded our way to the ticket booth.



STUDIOG/STOCK/THINKSTOCK

No, we were informed, we could not have three tickets. The game was sold out.

Crushed, my pals and I meandered about. How could the game be so crowded? It was Christmas Day, after all.

We wandered back to Times Square, hoping for a miracle. We found one — or, I thought I found one — in the form of an eager man in a green jacket. He had three tickets, he told us, and he was selling them at half-price. Did we have \$120?

We huddled. "Let's do it," I said, perhaps blinded by holiday spirit, perhaps feeling a little too trusting. One of my friends was ambivalent. The other was resolute, insisting that, obviously, these tickets were fake. Why else was he selling them so cheaply?

I demurred and, ultimately, my passion won out. We paid the man, clutched the tickets and triumphantly strode up to security. One quick scan of the barcode revealed the truth: We had been duped. We had bought fake tickets.

Defeated, demoralized and humbled, we trudged away from the Garden, away from Wade, away from what turned into a 93-87 Knicks loss. We found the nearest Chinese place, scarfed down some dumplings and lamented what could have been.

My friends have never forgotten that day. Remember when you made us buy fake tickets? Yes. Yes, of course I do.

The incident comes to mind every year once late-December rolls around. I shake it off, though. Christmas is near, after all, and everyone is seemingly in a better mood. I am, too. Except for one small regret:

I've still never been to a Knicks game. ●

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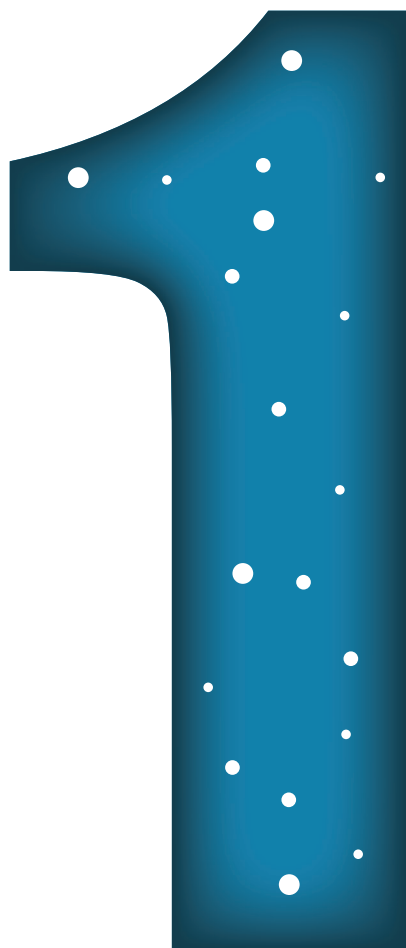


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TOP



GREENSB7/THINKSTOCK

Things To Do in Philadelphia in December

JOSHUA NEEDELMAN | JE STAFF

December is dark. And cold. And nine months away from High Holidays season. But if you look closely there's plenty to celebrate (ahem, Chanukah!) and plenty more to do to keep yourself busy and ward off that early-winter slump.

For one thing, the Festival of Lights kicks off Dec. 2, and there will be lots of ways to celebrate, whether by lighting candles in the comfort of your home or by attending a public ceremony.

Here are 10 things to do — and there are many more possibilities — in Philadelphia in December, ranging from concerts to sports games to Chanukah-themed fun. And remember: Passover is right around the corner!

See ToDo, **page 22**



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Turkey Gravy	\$4.99 16 oz.
Brisket Gravy	\$4.99 16 oz.
Jewish Apple Cake	\$9.99 each

MENU ITEMS ARE AVAILABLE BEGINNING NOVEMBER 27TH THROUGH DECEMBER 10TH

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Southfield Shopping Center
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609-799-3555

Princeton Shopping Center
301 N. Harrison St., Princeton, NJ
609-683-1600

ToDo

Continued from Page 20

1. Chocolate Gelt-Making

Chocolate Chanukah gelt is delicious. You know this. But do you know how to make it?

On Dec. 2, the Jewish Farm School (jewishfarmschool.org) will host a gelt-making workshop starting at noon. Participants will learn how to turn raw, ethically sourced cacao beans into Chanukah gelt. All it takes is an oven, a blender, wind and fingers.

It will also be educational, with the Farm School teaching about the history of Jewish people's relationship to chocolate.

2. Sixers Jewish Heritage Night on Dec. 2

Join Temple Beth Zion-Beth Israel (bzbi.org/event/sixers-jewish-heritage-night/) at 5 p.m. on Dec. 2 for a night celebrating the Philadelphia Jewish community at the Wells Fargo Center, when the 76ers take on the Memphis Grizzlies. Maybe don't boo the Grizzlies as loudly as normal, though; Memphis forward Omri Casspi is a native of Holon, Israel.

Casspi, 30, made his professional debut at age 17 with Maccabi Tel Aviv during the 2005-06 season. He stuck with the team through the 2007-08 campaign, and in 2009 he was selected in the NBA draft by the Sacramento Kings. He runs the Omri Casspi Foundation, which helps sponsor trips for NBA players, WNBA players and celebrities to Israel.

3. Latke Vodka — A Chanukah Celebration

Latkes. Vodka. What else do you need? Congregation Rodeph Shalom (rodephshalom.org) will have both on Dec. 8, during its annual fundraiser for the Philadelphia Museum of Jewish Art. The PMJA has organized solo and group exhibitions since 1975, and this event will help sustain its exhibits.

4. The Met's Grand Opening

Don't call it the Metropolitan Opera House. The historic venue on North Broad Street is now known as the The Met Philadelphia (themetphilly.com), and it reopens Dec. 3 with a bang. Or, more specifically, with Bob Dylan (born and raised Jewish) and His Band. The Met keeps rocking for the rest of December, with performances by Kurt Vile and the Violators and HBO comedian/talk show host John Oliver, among others.

5. Community Chanukah Concert with Rick Recht

Renowned Jewish rock artist Rick Recht is coming to Philadelphia. The man behind the popular album *Tear Down the Walls* will perform at Tiferet Bet Israel (tbibluebell.org) on Dec. 8

at 5:30 p.m. in an event co-presented by the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia and Kehillah of Bux-Mont.

Recht has performed live at Camp Poyntelle, Camp Ramah, Herzl Camp, Cam Barney Medintz, URJ Camp Coleman, as well as myriad synagogues and Jewish rock festivals. He is also the founder and director of Jewish Rock Radio.



JUICYBITS/THINKSTOCK

6. MatzoBall

Looking for a nice Jewish boy? How about a nice Jewish girl? There will be plenty at The MatzoBall (matzoball.org), one of the nation's leading Jewish singles event, on Christmas Eve. This year's event will be held at the Vesper Sporting Club, starting at 10 p.m.

This is the 32nd year of MatzoBall, which is also running parties in Miami; Boston; Delray Beach, Fla.; Los Angeles; Washington, D.C.; New York City; and Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

7. Army-Navy Game

For the 88th year and the third time in four years, Philadelphia will play host to the historic Army-Navy (armynavygame.com) college football game. The teams from the two service institutions will face off at Lincoln Financial Field on Dec. 8 in front of an estimated 50,000 people.

Army has beaten Navy two years in a row, including last year's 14-13 victory. Before that, Navy won the previous 14 meetings between the programs, from 2002-15. Navy leads the all-time series, with 60 wins to Army's 51. There have been seven ties.

8. Rittenhouse Square Candle Lighting

Rittenhouse Square is one of Philadelphia's most aesthetically pleasing parks, and one of its most popular, given its location in Center City. It becomes even more beautiful when lit up at night.

That'll happen once again Dec. 4, when the Center City Kehillah (centercityjews.org) holds a ceremonial candle lighting on the third night of Chanukah. Make sure you're in attendance by 4 p.m.; with daylight saving time, it'll be nearly pitch black by the time of the lighting.

9. Winter at Dilworth Park

Dilworth Park (centercityphila.org/parks/dilworth-park) goes all out for the winter season. From Nov. 9-Feb. 24, 2019, the park transforms into a giant ice skating rink, with miraculous views of City Hall and the rest of the Philly skyline. The park also features the pop-up Wintergarden, which is full of holiday lights and seasonal plants, and the on-site Rothman Orthopaedics Cabin.





10. The National Museum of American Jewish History Presents Being ____ at Christmas

The National Museum of American Jewish History (nmajh.org) is open on Christmas day, for those who are:

“Snowy. Jewish. Happy. Caring. Buddhist. Generous. Family. Creative. Friendly. Sparkly. Fill in your own blank and join us for our annual day of family fun,” the museum website reads.

The day, which is sponsored by the Robert Saligman Jewish Heritage Fund, starts at 10 a.m. with a drop-in art project, face painting and balloon art.

The fun goes until 3 p.m., with events in between like live music from Alex & the Kaleidoscope, Comedy For Kids and films (The Three Stooges, Marx Brothers and more).

There will be special exhibitions throughout the museum and a quiet game room. Food is BYO, but the snack stand will be open with a small assortment of kosher packaged goods. •



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Chanukah Gift Ideas: A SAMPLING

JOSHUA NEEDELMAN | JE STAFF

CHANUKAH COMES EARLY THIS YEAR (Dec. 2), so if you haven't wrapped up — or even started — your holiday shopping yet, you might want to leave those Thanksgiving dishes to soak in the sink and get going.

Of course, that begs the question: What do you get?

Online shopping makes things both easier and more difficult. It's easier in that shopping's at your fingertips and there are so many options. And it's more difficult for the same reason — the multitude of choices can make it hard to decide.

With all that in mind, here are a few gift ideas that might catch your eye and not break the bank. Some have Jewish ties, but others are sure to be popular with Jews and non-Jews alike.





Monopoly: Fortnite Edition

Fortnite has become a cultural sensation since its 2017 release, planting gamers of all ages in front of their collective screens for hours at a time. Even professional athletes have professed their love for Fortnite. This holiday season, you can experience Fortnite away from the screen and in a more traditional gaming format: Monopoly. You can buy Monopoly: Fortnite Edition on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) for \$15.88.



“Love You a Latke” Dishtowels

Latkes might be seasonal, most commonly eaten around Chanukah. But that doesn't mean Chanukah spirit needs to be reserved for December. Treat someone special to these “Love You a Latke” dish towels, and pat yourself on the back for finding a gift bearing a special holiday pun. The two-pack of dish towels can be had for \$24.99 on [nordstrom.com](https://www.nordstrom.com).



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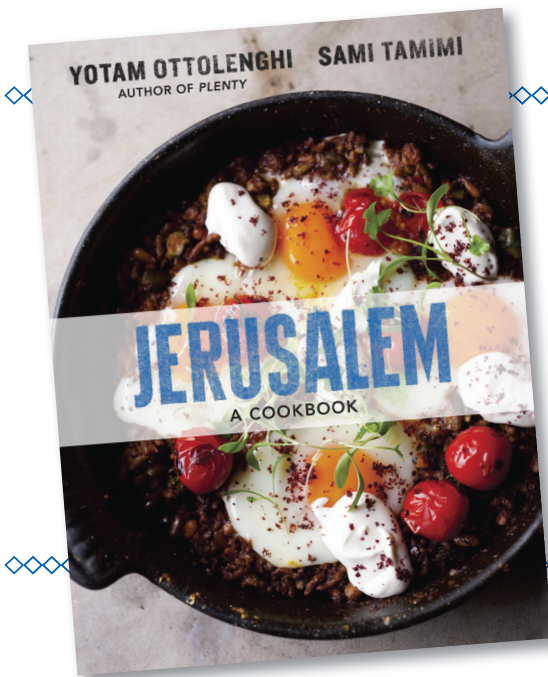


8 Nights of Tea

Looking for a soothing drink to wash down all of your Chanukah gelt and latkes? **DavidsTea.com** has you covered with the 8 Nights of Tea pack, which costs \$20. There's a different flavor for each night, including Blackberry Blizzard, Caribbean Crush, Carrot Cupcake, Cinnamon Rooibos Chai, Just Peachy, Serenity Now, Super Ginger and Turmeric Glow. Each tin of caffeine-free loose leaf tea is kosher.

Echo Dot (3rd Generation)

"Alexa, fast-forward to the summer." OK, the Echo Dot (3rd Generation) won't heed that request. But it can do just about everything else: Stream music (on Spotify, Amazon Music or SiriusXM), read the news, check the weather, set alarms and search the internet. You can also use the Echo to call and text hands-free and "drop in" on Echos in other rooms in the house with announcements. This smaller, more compact version of the Echo can be purchased on **amazon.com** for \$49.99.



Jerusalem: A Cookbook

Infuse your Chanukah celebration with traditional Jerusalem cuisine. Yotam Ottolenghi, *The New York Times* bestselling author of *Plenty*, wrote *Jerusalem: A Cookbook*, which has 120 recipes that capture the essence of Israel's capital. Sprinkled inside this 320-page hardcover are tidbits that explore the history of the city and the people who live there. Jerusalem is influenced by Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities, and the dishes of all three groups are on display in this book, which can be found on **amazon.com** for \$19.79.

Star of David Necklace with Personalized Hebrew Initial and Birth Month Charm

The spirit of the Festival of Lights doesn't have to end when the holiday does. With this 14-karat gold-filled Star of David necklace, you can show off your Jewish pride everywhere. Give it a personal touch with your Hebrew initial and birth month engraved on the pendant. The necklace, created by the Efy Tal Jewelry Co., goes for \$34.00 on **amazon.com**.



What Do You Meme? Party Game

This card game, similar to Cards Against Humanity, requires participants to make the funniest meme combos. What Do You Meme? Party Game is millennial friendly, adopting a part of internet culture into a more traditional format, and is bound to have players laughing hysterically. There are 435 cards (360 caption cards and 75 photo cards) in the pack, which retails for \$29.97 on amazon.com.



S/2 Candle & Match Striker Gift Set

The future of candle lighting has arrived. Once you stow away the menorah for the year, keep the flame burning with the S/2 Candle & Match Striker Gift Set. The birth-scented, handmade soy-wax candle, with hints of white tea, evergreen and cypress oils, can burn for as long as 45 hours. Don't worry: Matches and striker are included. It all comes in a stamped stoneware milk bottle, and onekinglane.com sells it for \$85.



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Dash Compact Air Fryer

Fried food is delicious. But when eaten in excess, it can cause health problems. Enter the Dash Compact Air Fryer, which allows you to fry food without oil. The fryer, which goes for \$39.99 on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), instead uses AirCrisp technology to help reduce added fat by 70-80 percent. Cook everything from chicken wings to French fries, all by setting a timer. The nonstick fryer basket is dishwasher safe, too, so you don't have to worry about cleanup. You'll also get a companion cookbook.



Pure Fitness Total Upper Body Workout Bar

Want to get in shape for the summer but don't have the time to hit the gym? The Pure Fitness Total Upper Body Workout Bar has you covered. Available for \$17.85 on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), the bar is the perfect way to practice pull-ups and chin-ups. You can even put it on the ground and use the bar for a more difficult push-up. The bar features six foam padded grips and eight different grip positions. The heavy-duty steel construction gives the bar a weight capacity of 250 pounds. •



Keeping Your Kids Entertained During Winter Break

HILARY DANAILOVA | JE FEATURE

Like many Jewish families, the Lerner of Blue Bell have a cherished Christmas tradition.

"Every single year, we go see Disney on Ice on Christmas Eve afternoon," said Brandi Lerner, an American Sign Language interpreter and the mother of 6-year-old Ethan and 3-year-old Chloe. What began as an outing with three other Jewish friends from Tiferet Bet Israel — the Lerner's shul — grew to 40 temple families last year.

So this Dec. 24, the group has booked a club box for 100 people at the Wells Fargo Center. After the show, they'll go to a restaurant while their Christian neighbors bake hams or head to midnight mass. "It's become this great tradition," said Lerner.

See KIDS, page 30



JOCHEN SAND/THINKSTOCK

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Kids

Continued from Page 29

Of course, many Jewish families' December ritual is a getaway to Florida, the Caribbean or someplace else with palm trees. But like the Lerner's, many who stay around Philadelphia seek out local diversion over schools' winter (read: Christmas-to-secular-New Year) break. When Chanukah comes early, as it does this year, filling a dozen frigid days with activity can feel all the more challenging.

Parents, don't despair: We live in a golden age for Christmas-week Jewish programming.

"Twenty years ago, nothing was open on Christmas," recalled Stephanie Dworkin, who devises vacation programming as marketing director at the Katz Jewish Community Center in Cherry Hill, N.J. "It was just Chinese food and the movies."

Contrast that with recent Christmas Eves in Cherry Hill, when up to 400 people hit the Katz JCC for a twist on the ritual: Laughter & Lo Mein, an evening of "comedians, Chinese food and cheap drinks," Dworkin said. The following morning, in what has become a Dec. 25 standby for hundreds of youngsters, the JCC hosts its annual "character breakfast," a bagel-and-cereal party themed around cartoons like Dora the Explorer or Paw Patrol.

"It's always a packed house," said JCC Assistant Director Brian Adler. "I've worked it every year for 11 years, and it always, always sells out. Because if you're a family with young Jewish kids, what exactly are you doing on Christmas Day?"

Many find the answer at Philadelphia's National Museum of American Jewish History (NMAJH), where the annual Dec. 25 "Being ___ at Christmas" all-day, all-ages event is a highlight not only for Jews, but also — as the fill-in-the-blank implies — for legions of non-Christmas-celebrators. The all-day program features music, crafts, face painting and story time; Russian speakers can join the museum meetup organized by jkidphilly's Russian group.



▲ Joe Hassman as Santa and from left: Cindy Salzman, Vered Salzman, Rayna Salzman and Dan Salzman volunteering at the Ronald McDonald House in Camden, N.J., on Christmas morning. .

PHOTO PROVIDED

One trend that is gaining popularity is the Christmas Day mitzvah, in which Jews volunteer at a soup kitchen or food pantry on a day when few others are available.

Dan Salzman, a Bala Cynwyd IT professional, takes his two young daughters to hand out Christmas presents for sick children and their families at the Ronald McDonald house in Camden, N.J., which provides lodging during medical treatment. Salzman's extended clan established the Dec. 25 tradition; his cousin, Joseph Hassman, and wife Lillian of Cherry Hill organize the event, playing Santa and Mrs. Claus.

Five-year-old Vered "rings the bell at each door and is like an elf" as she distributes bags full of gifts, said Salzman, whose younger daughter, 2-year-old Rayna, will join this year.



The caroling and pancake breakfast are fun, but Salzman also sees an opportunity to teach valuable Jewish lessons about *tikkun olam* and *tzedakah*. Vered “realizes the gifts are not for her, that this is something that makes these kids really happy,” Salzman noted. “We explain that Santa Claus isn’t in our religion, but it’s a time to celebrate other people’s tradition and enjoy it with them.”

Others who feel that way can join jkidphilly’s annual Mitzvah Morning at the Kaiserman JCC in Wynnewood; this year, as many as 200 kids will make bookmarks to promote literacy. For a growing number of Jews, observed organizer Lori Rubin, Christmas means “coming together as a community to do something,” she said. “It’s about being Jewish and doing Jewish on Christmas Day.”

Geared toward what Rubin calls “the PJ Library demographic” — toddlers through tweens — Mitzvah Morning highlights a different Jewish value each year; kids have arranged flowers for assisted-living residents, and packaged breakfasts for the hungry. A quieter, “sensory-friendly” room ensures that every child can

See KIDS, page 32



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participate, Rubin added.

Most local JCCs remain open during school vacations, providing recreation and much-needed childcare. At the Kaiserman, kindergartners through fifth-graders can enjoy sports, arts, cooking and field trips at a day camp over winter and spring breaks.

The Katz JCC in Cherry Hill has a similar program for elementary- and middle-school children, with daily trips to museums, farms and other attractions. The cabin-fever-addled of any age can buy a guest pass or a single-month membership to use the JCC's indoor pool, basketball gym and children's play space.

Miriam Steinberg-Egeth of Center City sends her children to the vacation camp offered by Makom Community, the Jewish organization that runs the children's afterschool program. Staying indoors, even on the coldest days, is "not an option" for her energetic offspring, said Steinberg-Egeth, who writes the *Jewish Exponent's* advice column, directs the Center City Kehillah and is a part-time doula.

On non-camp days, like many families, Steinberg-Egeth's clan



MONKEYBUSINESSIMAGES/THINKSTOCK

cobbles together an ad-hoc itinerary of Philadelphia's greatest winter hits: public ice rinks, the Franklin Institute, the zoo, holiday lights around town. "Several years in a row, we've gone to the Comcast Christmas show on Christmas Day, and we always run into Jewish friends there," Steinberg-Egeth laughed.

With their varying religious observances, Steinberg-Egeth's extended

family doesn't always gather for Jewish holidays. "But we'll all get together on Christmas Day," said Steinberg-Egeth, who noted wryly that the holiday they don't celebrate is the one they all have off.

The Yuletide timing may feel weird for a Jewish gathering — but having a Christmas tradition is totally a Jewish thing, counsels the advice columnist, who grew up volunteering at a local soup kitchen on Dec. 25. "We get to enjoy being Jewish on Christmas," Steinberg-Egeth explained, "and all the things that go along with that." •

Hilary Danailova is a freelance writer.



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Camp Ramah in the Poconos is an overnight summer camp located in Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains for kids and teens in grades 2-10. Ramah's mission is to create lifelong Jewish connections, one happy camper at a time. Brand new Tikveh (special needs) residential program opened in summer 2016.

RAMAH DAY CAMP

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