



HOW **NATHAN KRASNOVSKY** WENT FROM BEING A RECIPIENT OF THE JCCRP'S KINDNESS TO LEADING THE FAR ROCKAWAY ORGANIZATION

**N**athan Krasnovsky, the executive director of the Jewish Community Council of the Rockaway Peninsula, may just be the most uniquely qualified individual to head up the 41-year-old social services agency. The son of a single Russian immigrant mother, the Far Rockaway father of three is actually one of the JCCRP's success stories.

"My mother was assisted by the JCCRP when she came to America," recalls Krasnovsky. "They helped her get government benefits and got me into Jewish schools and camps. It is interesting how things come full circle."

The 31-year-old Krasnovsky, who grew up in the projects on Beach 32<sup>nd</sup> Street, credits the JCCRP for shining the light of *Yiddishkeit* into his life.

"My mother and I were among a small handful of Jewish families where we lived and we were completely unaffiliated," recalls Krasnovsky. "The JCCRP got her connected with the Hebrew Academy of the Five Towns and Rockaway, and I went there from kindergarten through my senior year."

During his time at HAFTR, Krasnovsky developed an exceptionally warm relationship with four faculty members: Rabbi Lewis Wienerkur, Rabbi Tzvi Bajnon, Mrs. Naomi Levenbrown and Mrs. Audrey Wagner. While he was not privy to the actual arrangements, the group sponsored his post-high school year in Jerusalem's Yeshiva Ner Yaakov. Devoting the next several years of his life to his education, Krasnovsky completed a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science at Queens College and graduated Alpha Sigma Lambda in 2004.

He also spent several years in Yeshiva Sh'or Yoshuv, where he earned both his rabbinical ordination and a Master's in Talmudic Law, in addition to studying at the Mirror Yeshiva in Jerusalem. Krasnovsky enrolled in Fordham Law School's Evening Division in 2009, and he hopes to complete his degree this spring.

Even during his formative years, Krasnovsky felt a burning desire to return to the institutions he attended in his youth in order help others, much as he himself had been aided by other caring individuals. In an effort to pay it forward, Krasnovsky served as a mentor both at HAFTR and at TOVA and worked as a dorm counselor in Ner Yaakov. Krasnovsky landed his first job in social services with the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, where he worked as a case manager in the Family Violence Department before being promoted to a legal liaison. Two years later, Krasnovsky was promoted to director of the Midwood Single Stop office which he described as a "mini JCC in the heart of Flatbush," working there until Hurricane Sandy unleashed her fury on the Rockaway Peninsula.

"The JCCRP was looking for help in Far Rockaway so as a local resident and with my history providing social services, they asked Met Council to loan me to them for two weeks, just to get them through the immediate aftermath of the storm," recalls Krasnovsky, who officially took the helm of the JCCRP at the end of December 2012.

Krasnovsky admitted that he had big shoes to fill, following in the footsteps of previous directors Yitz Klein and Harvey Gordon as well those of Kathy Rosenberg who served as acting director for the agency but relished the opportunity to be involved with

the JCCRP, this time being on the giving end of its services.

Since that time, Krasnovsky has been hard at work furthering the reach of the JCCRP, nearly doubling the operating budget, establishing close relationships with elected officials and community leaders, expanding services and updating the facility. Krasnovsky feels that being the son of a former JCCRP client gives him a unique perspective in understanding how to treat every person with a sense of respect and he sees the agency's goal as making the community a better place to live. The facility provides an extensive array of programs designed to improve residents' lives.

The JCCRP's food pantry, the only kosher food pantry in the Rockaways, helps residents combat rising food costs in an attractive setting that makes visiting the facility a positive experience.

"The first floor of the building has been completely renovated and is now a client choice pantry," explained Krasnovsky. "Instead of people being handed a bag of food items, they can shop for themselves, allowing them to maintain their dignity."

With Hurricane Sandy causing financial hardship for so many area residents, the food pantry has proven to be particularly helpful and now serves almost 2,000 clients monthly. The JCCRP also runs two separate food stamp programs, giving low income families access to resources that help them maintain proper nutrition. A medical insurance enroller helps clients navigate the health care maze by helping them submit both new applications and recertifications for Medicaid, Child Health Plus, and Family Health Plus.

The Disaster Case Management, Recovery Planning and Crisis Intervention teams all proved to be invaluable in the months following Hurricane Sandy, supplying financial assistance, including cash grants and gift cards, providing counseling, offering assistance in FEMA-related matters, dealing with housing emergencies and providing much needed referrals in order to facilitate the rebuilding process. Additionally, Met Council's handyman service, Metopair, was put into service in the area, performing crucial repairs to drywall, insulation, doors and door frames as well as plastering and painting and other minor repairs. The JCCRP also offers legal and financial assistance, career counseling and housing and landlord/tenant mediation.

For Krasnovsky, the opportunity to be at the helm of the JCCRP is the opportunity of a lifetime.

"It feels very rewarding to come full circle, to have the ability to grow the organization and expand its services in order to keep helping people in exactly the way my mother was assisted. In fact, it seems appropriate to recognize our recently retired social services coordinator Shelly Twersky, who was instrumental in aiding Russian immigrants like my mother and provided outstanding service to the community for years."

While it was a devastating superstorm that brought him to the JCCRP, Krasnovsky is quick to point out that along with its unprecedented storm surges, Sandy also brought something else to the Rockaway Peninsula.

"It is unfortunate that we had to go through a hurricane but it was beautiful to see

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everyone coming together to help each other,” explained Krasnovsky.

With Sandy’s one year anniversary drawing near, the JCCRP is hosting a Legislative Breakfast on Sunday, October 27th, in order to pay tribute to the community and government leaders who went all out in the lengthy rebuilding period that followed Hurricane Sandy. The event, which will take place at The White Shul at 9:30 AM, will honor seven unique individuals:

**Honorees Include:**

- Yanky Brach – Community Builder Award – In addition to being one of the biggest supporters of the JCCRP Food Pantry, Yanky Brach donated countless quantities of food to feed hurricane victims in the days following Sandy.
- Peter Brest, Chief Operating Officer, Met Council – Chessed Award – As a direct conduit of the UJA Federation of New York, Brest was instrumental in awarding financial assistance to the area, ensuring that soup kitchens were operational, hiring a private security firm to patrol the area during the weeks’ long power outage and funding close to \$1 million in emergency cash assistance to clients.
- Roberta Leiner, Senior Vice President, Agency Relations, UJA Federation of New York – Hakaras Hatov Award – Having dispensed millions of dollars to the Rockaways since Sandy, the UJA has issued numerous grants in order to hire social workers, fix the *eruv*, and provide tuition assistance to those who were floundering financially as well as educator grants to yeshiva teachers impacted by the storm.
- Assemblyman Phil Goldfeder – State Legislative Leadership Award – An outspoken advocate for the local Jewish community as well as the JCCRP on the state level, Goldfeder’s voice resonates continuously on behalf of his constituents.
- Deputy Inspector Kevin Maloney, Commanding Officer of the 101<sup>st</sup> Precinct – Humanitarian Award – Since taking office, Deputy Inspector Maloney has made significant strides in ensuring the safety of all community members and proving himself to be a valued friend to the Jewish community.
- Pesach Osina, Councilman Aide at New York City Council – Public Service Award – A staunch ally of the Jewish community who has devoted years to local affairs, Osina continually advocates on behalf of our community within the City Council and served as a LIPA liaison during Hurricane Sandy.
- Councilman Donovan Richards – City Legislative Leadership Award – His unprecedented skill at uniting all segments of Rockaway Community as well as his ability to embrace each of his constituents no matter what their affiliations have earned Donovan Richards the respect and affection of everyone in his district.

Also being honored are eleven “Hurricane Heroes”:

- Achiezer, COJO of Flatbush – With both agencies spared the worst of Sandy’s wrath, they stepped up to the plate with unwavering generosity and graciousness, providing both desperately needed funding and invaluable services. Achiezer’s community-wide notifications and email blasts were a lifeline to many in the days and weeks

after Hurricane Sandy, and they were instrumental in coordinating the Sh’or Yeshuv distribution center.

- Hatzolah – As Sandy hammered relentlessly at the Rockaway Peninsula, as well as in the days that followed, emergency situations cropped up at an alarming rate. Yet Hatzolah continued responding to calls with strength and energy that were nothing short of super-human.
- Nivneh – Created by Ettie and Asher Schoor in response to the unprecedented crisis situation, Nivneh stepped in and provided assistance in a myriad of ways: helping people fill out applications for assistance, providing toys for Chanukah and pairing hurricane victims up with partners to help guide them through their most difficult days.
- OHEL – From the very first day, OHEL representatives were on hand at the White Shul command center, providing counseling and guidance to those who were struggling, with staff members still remaining at the JCC to provide on-site counseling.
- RCSP – A fledgling organization just one year ago, the Rockaway Citizens Safety Patrol seemed heaven-sent in the post-Sandy days when chaos seemed poised to overtake the area, giving residents a sense of security that continues today on a daily basis.

- American Red Cross – In addition to sending innumerable boxes of foods to aid in disaster relief, they provided funding and donations with CEO Josh Lockwood giving generously of his time, sharing his expertise and resources.

Sanitation Department – With residents working feverishly around the clock to remove waterlogged drywall, carpeting, furniture and possessions from their homes, the sanitation department toiled tirelessly to keep up with the never-ending mountains of debris, much to the appreciation of the entire community.

- Yeshiva Sh’or Yeshuv – With their unique location allowing them to serve both sides of 878, Sh’or Yeshuv worked closely with Achiezer to become one of the main area relief centers, providing clothing, food, toiletries and even laundry pickups and drop offs.
- The White Shul – With our own facility hit hard by Sandy, the JCCRP moved its offices into the White Shul, creating a temporary command center. Both Rabbi Eytan Feiner and President Chaim Leibtag went the extra mile to serve community members, setting up charging stations for phones and laptops as well as providing hot meals to area residents.
- Young Israel of Wavecrest and Bayswater – Opening themselves up to the entire community and transforming their facility into a disaster relief site, a women’s shelter as well as the command center for the RCSP, the Young Israel of Wavecrest and Bayswater, under the leadership of Rabbi Eliezer Feuer and with the assistance of Brett Gordon, provided food, shelter and essential supplies to local residents.

For more information on the upcoming Legislative Breakfast, to place an ad in the online journal or to make reservations, contact the JCCRP at 718-327-7755 x 6115, by fax at 718-327-4903, by email at [breakfast@jccrp.org](mailto:breakfast@jccrp.org) or visit them online at [www.jccrp.org/breakfast](http://www.jccrp.org/breakfast).

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With Councilman Richards and Senator Addabbo



With Queens Boro President Democratic nominee Melinda Katz



With Bill De Blasio, NYC Democratic mayoral candidate



With Rabbi Eytan Feiner



With Bill Thompson, Chaim Rapfogel, board member, and Assemblyman Phil Goldfeder