

SUMMER 2026

VOLUME 4 NO. 1

# NEWSLETTER

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN  
GREATER ROCHESTER SECTION



NCJ  $\geq$ ™

Greater  
Rochester  
Section

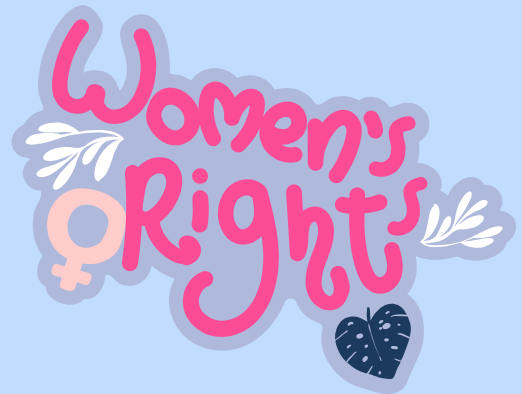
National Council of Jewish Women

Donate to the RCSD Back-to-School Jam  
school supply collection by August 16th!

Mark Your Calendars for our Opening  
Event on October 6<sup>th</sup>!

Additional fall dates and more information about our  
organizational changes are coming soon. Please be  
sure to read the emails and regularly check our website  
at [ncjwgrs.org](http://ncjwgrs.org)!

thank you  
for making a huge  
difference



## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I hope you're all enjoying the warmer weather and slower pace of summer. Although our current event calendar is light, we're very busy working to prepare for our organizational change and for an active, meaningful year.

As the new school year approaches, please consider making a donation for the RCSD Back-to-School Jam school supply collection. See what items are needed [here](#). Donations can be dropped off at 404 Warren Avenue by August 16th.

And mark your calendars! You won't want to miss our Opening Event on October 6<sup>th</sup> in partnership with the Louis S. Wolk JCC of Greater Rochester. We're fortunate to have Daan Braveman, President Emeritus of Nazareth University, as our guest speaker for a conversation on *Separation of Church and State: The Wall Comes Tumbling Down*. The timing is not accidental. The Supreme Court session begins the day before the event, and the midterm election is only a month afterward. Please join us for this FREE event to make sure you're informed and prepared to take action!

By fall we'll be well on our way to becoming an independent 501c3 nonprofit. We expect to have ideas for a new name soon. Our attorney will have the required documents ready to file as soon as a final decision is made. We're doing everything we can to keep you updated and answer your questions throughout this process. You're always welcome to [get in touch](#) - we love hearing from you! Please take a few minutes to [complete our survey](#) too.

Thank you for all you do! Celebrate summer with lots of ice cream and sun!

Dawn Wisset  
President, NCJW Greater Rochester Section



**2026 -2027**  
**OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Congratulations to our 2026-2027 Officers and Board of Directors!**

**Officers:**

|                                 |                         |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>President</b>                | <b>Dawn Wisset</b>      |
| <b>Treasurer</b>                | <b>Debbie Schaal</b>    |
| <b>Recording Secretary</b>      | <b>Jane Amstey</b>      |
| <b>VP, Membership</b>           | <b>Cindy Finestone</b>  |
| <b>VP, Membership</b>           | <b>Rina Schnauffer</b>  |
| <b>Immediate Past President</b> | <b>Ellie Rosenbloom</b> |

**Board of Directors:**

|                               |                        |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Sarah Murphy Abbamonte</b> | <b>Leslie Newman</b>   |
| <b>Donna Cohen</b>            | <b>Emily Rose</b>      |
| <b>Brenda Comisar</b>         | <b>Rina Schnauffer</b> |
| <b>Marilyn Fenster</b>        | <b>Cathy Schneider</b> |
| <b>Cindy Finestone</b>        | <b>Amy Stein</b>       |
| <b>Adrienne Markus</b>        | <b>Wendy Strauss</b>   |
| <b>Sybil Sanchez</b>          | <b>Lisa Waltzer</b>    |

**And many thanks to our Administrator, Rebecca Zaretsky, for all you do!**

**Thank you also to our outgoing Directors:**

**Rikki Brodsky**  
**Cindy Hirschberg**  
**Jennifer Loviglio**  
**Lisa Maas Vangellow**  
**Terri Richardson**

**We're grateful for the time and effort you gave to NCJW GRS as board members! We plan to still see you often!**

**2026 ~ 2027**

Let's  
Grow  
Together



**Renew**  
Your Membership  
for 2026-2027  
or  
Join as a New Member!

NCJW<sup>®</sup>

National Council of Jewish Women  
Greater Rochester Section

**\$54**

(\$36 for members under the age of 30)

Life Members: Please consider making a donation as we do not receive payment from National for your Life Membership.

**membership for 2026-2027 begins July 1st!**  
**use the QR code or go to [ncjwgrs.org](https://ncjwgrs.org)**

Your dues will be valid through June 30, 2027 whether or not our transition to an independent organization is complete by then.

If you prefer to pay your dues with a check, please make the check out to NCJW GRS and mail it to:

NCJW Greater Rochester Section  
PO Box 92444  
Rochester, NY 14692



## RECENT EVENTS

### SUFFS

Thank you to all who attended *Suffs* with us. We're grateful to Donna Cohen and Adrienne Markus for organizing the event! They got great orchestra seats for our group, and gave everyone a little thank you gift for attending. The story was inspiring, and the singing and acting was excellent.



### Hannah G. Solomon and Women of the Year

Thank you to all of you who supported our 2026 Hannah G. Solomon and Women of the Year Event. In honor of our Hannah G. Solomon award recipient, Lindsay Tarnoff, the theme for the brunch was sustainability. Our centerpieces were created with individual potted succulent plants and reused stones on recycled plastic platters. Small boxes, also made from recycled materials, sat around the platters to use for carrying succulents home. Lindsay provided Laughing Gull chocolates flavored with spices reminiscent of Havdalah. We wish one more big congratulations to Lindsay and to our Women of the Year (and event co-chairs), Brenda Comisar and Cindy Finestone!



## National Council of Jewish Women Greater Rochester Section



### BACKPACK AND SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE

NCJW GRS is partnering with RCSD for the 2026 Back-to-School Jam school supply collection and distribution—it is an opportunity to ensure that every child begins the new school year feeling prepared, confident, and excited to learn.

A backpack represents much more than a place to carry school supplies. It symbolizes hope, opportunity, and a fresh start. Every backpack filled with supplies that is given to a student sends a powerful message that our community believes in their success and is investing in their future.

**DONATIONS NEEDED FOR  
PRE-K THRU HIGH SCHOOL  
SEE LIST FOR ITEMS NEEDED**



**DROP OFF**

**404 WARREN AVENUE**

**BY AUGUST 16, 2026**

[ncjwgrs.org](http://ncjwgrs.org)

**NCJW**

National Council of Jewish Women  
Greater Rochester Section

**LIST OF ITEMS NEEDED**





## Changes are coming to NCJW Greater Rochester!

NCJW, Inc. is changing its structure, leaving us without the option to remain a section in the way we've known. Our national organization's focus is shifting toward building a national movement and away from local grassroots efforts. After much consideration, the NCJW GRS Board of Directors has voted to preserve, protect, and strengthen our 130+ year legacy by disaffiliating from NCJW, Inc. and becoming an independent 501c3 organization. While we'll have a new name and branding, we're committed to continuing the same work we've always done to improve life for women, children, and families and protect individual rights and freedoms in the Rochester area, New York State, and nationally. You'll be receiving a call from us soon. Please be sure to also read our emails for updated information as we move through this exciting transition! If you have any questions, please contact our president, Dawn Wisset, at [ncjwgrspresident@gmail.com](mailto:ncjwgrspresident@gmail.com).

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN  
GREATER ROCHESTER SECTION**

**In partnership with the Louis S. Wolk JCC of Greater Rochester**

**OPENING EVENT**

**SEPARATION OF  
CHURCH AND STATE:  
The Wall Comes Tumbling Down**



**Guest Speaker, Daan Braveman  
President Emeritus of Nazareth University**

**7 pm Tuesday, October 6, 2026  
JCC, 1200 Edgewood Avenue in Brighton**

**Join us for an evening of meaningful conversation as the  
Supreme Court begins its session and Midterm Elections draw  
near. Dessert reception to follow.**

**The event is FREE and open to the community.  
Donations are welcome and tax-deductible.  
Registration is required.**

**NCJ** 

National Council of Jewish Women  
Greater Rochester Section

**REGISTER HERE**

★ LOUIS S. WOLK  
**JCC**  
ROCHESTER

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS COMMITTEE

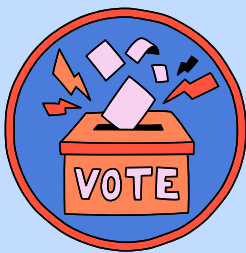
The Community Connections Committee had a busy few months! During the month of May, Assemblywoman Sarah Clark partnered with us to recognize Period Poverty Awareness Week by holding a donation collection at her office. We're grateful for their support and all who donated! Also in May, we participated in Jewish Heritage Day at the Red Wings. The weather was perfect for attending a baseball game with other members of our community.

At the end of June, we held another Learn to Play Mah Jong event. We know a lot of you were patiently waiting for another chance to attend. Thanks to Temple Beth El 20/30s for hosting this event with us. It was great to meet some new friends, learn together, and spend an afternoon playing the game. We're very grateful to Faith Ertischek for teaching us the basics and rules needed to start playing!

Please watch our emails for more Mah Jong opportunities and new Community Connections opportunities. If you'd like to be part of the planning, please let us know. We're always happy to welcome new committee members!

This is a wonderful place for new and longtime members alike to get involved. Bring your ideas, your experience, or simply your curiosity — we'd love to have you join us!

Looking forward to working with you,  
Wendy Strauss and Ellie Rosenbloom  
Community Connections Committee Co-Chairs



## PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Congratulations to Sarah Murphy Abbamonte, our new Public Affairs chair! And of course, many thanks to Lisa Waltzer for "temporarily" stepping in to lead the committee for the past two years.

In the fall we'll be focused on increasing voter participation and keeping elections fair during the midterm elections. We'll also begin work on new programs for the year. We would love to have you join us in planning future advocacy and educational events! If you're interested in becoming a part of our committee, please contact us!

## NCJW GRS MEMBER SURVEY



## AMES AMZALAK ROCHESTER JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

We were excited to continue our tradition of being a community partner for the Ames Amzalak Rochester Jewish Film Festival. This year we partnered with the festival for the film *Halisa*, the story of a nurse in a children's clinic in a multi-ethnic impoverished area of Haifa who longs for her own child. After forming a bond with a struggling young mother, she must make a risky decision that has life-changing consequences. We also highlighted two additional festival events, one featuring Corey Rosen, the son of an NCJW GRS member, and the other about a strong Jewish woman, Henrietta Szold, founder of Hadassah. We love supporting this amazing festival!

JCC AMES AMZALAK  
ROCHESTER  
JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL





*Your phone will be ringing soon!*

We're making phone calls to all of our members to let you know about some changes and give you a chance to ask questions. We can't wait to connect with you!



# WHAT'S NEXT?

*Thank you to all who attended our Member Meetings! If you missed them and want to learn more, please send an email to Dawn Wisset at [ncjwgrspresident@gmail.com](mailto:ncjwgrspresident@gmail.com).*

## Here's what's happening next for NCJW GRS

- 1** We've hired a nonprofit attorney and signed a contract with Causewave Community Partners, who will guide us through our rebranding process.
- 2** Members of our Transition Committee will be meeting with Causewave facilitators soon to begin work on a new name and logo.
- 3** We want to hear from you! Please complete this short survey!

NCJW®

National Council of Jewish Women  
Greater Rochester Section



# Welcome to our Newest Members!

Joyce Graham

Abby Root

We are delighted to extend a warm welcome to all those who have recently joined NCJW GRS. Your decision to become part of our community strengthens our collective voice, deepens our impact, and helps us continue the important work we are so passionate about.

Each new member brings fresh perspectives, energy, and commitment—and we are truly grateful to have you with us. Whether you are here to connect, advocate, volunteer, or learn, there is a place for you in NCJW GRS, and we look forward to getting to know you.



## Thank You to ALL Members!

We appreciate all you do to support NCJW GRS. You are our greatest ambassadors! Your enthusiasm and dedication are what make this organization so special. We encourage you to share your experiences with friends, family, and colleagues, and invite them to learn more about NCJW GRS. Personal connections are one of the most powerful ways to grow our community and expand our reach. Together, we can continue to build a vibrant, engaged membership that supports our mission and drives meaningful change.





National Council of Jewish Women  
Greater Rochester Section



# GET INVOLVED!



Contact us at  
[ncjwgrs@gmail.com](mailto:ncjwgrs@gmail.com)

**JOIN A  
COMMITTEE**

**ATTEND AN  
EVENT**



**PARTICIPATE  
IN ADVOCACY**

**SEND US YOUR  
IDEAS**