

## The Siblink | April 2018

[From the Desk Of...](#)

[Sibling Outing](#)

[Save the Date](#)

[Sibling Scribblings](#)

[JFGH Resources](#)

[Follow Us](#)

### From the Desk Of...

Beth K. Shapiro, LCSW-C, JFGH Director of Social Work

Earlier this month at Passover Seders, Jewish people around the world sung a song called "Dayenu." This song recounts all of the individual acts of loving-kindness that G-d did for the Israelites such as splitting the Sea of Reeds; allowing us to cross on dry land through it; allowing us to escape the wrath of the Egyptians; providing us manna in the desert, bringing us to Mt. Sinai; giving us the Torah; bringing us to the Promised Land; and building the Temple in Jerusalem. Each one of these acts was so miraculous that the least of them is worthy of eternal praise and gratitude. *We feel the same about our Program Managers (PMs) at the Jewish Foundation for Group Homes.*

*It is enough that a PM understands the needs of the individuals they support; yet they also... visit their assigned JFGH homes frequently and assist with direct care when needed.*

*It is enough that a PM assists in the implementation and monitoring of compliance with Judaic programming in the homes they oversee; yet they also... supervise adherence and maintenance of the home's kosher kitchens and support participation in Jewish holiday celebrations.*

*It is enough that a PM connects with individual's family members/guardian, advocates, and medical personnel; yet they also... are well-informed and work cooperatively as part of the team.*

*It is enough that a PM develops and facilitates activities to meet individual's social, emotional, physical and personal needs; they also... regularly collaborate with colleagues and community professionals in the best interest of each individual.*

*It is enough that a PM must adhere to State regulations and JFGH policies; yet they also... maintain required documentation as they report to the Director of Group Homes (in MD) or the Residential Director (in Northern VA).*

*It is enough that a PM handles crisis intervention and emergencies; yet they*

also... make timely and thoughtful decisions in sometimes difficult situations.

We appreciate each and every one of our Program Managers!

Sincerely,

Beth



## Sibling Outing

In March, we welcomed more than 50 JFGH siblings and their families to enjoy a morning of brunch and mini golf. Smiles and laughter were seen and heard around the Shaare Torah grounds, as balls were puttied and memories were made. Some attendees even scored a hole in one! Catch more photos from the event [here](#), and don't miss our summer [Brunch and Boat Ride July 15th!](#)



Save the Date



**You are invited to attend**

**JFGH'S 16TH ANNUAL  
BRUCE K. SMITH SIBLING NETWORK  
BRUNCH AND BOAT RIDE**

**JULY 15TH FOR BRUNCH (10AM) AND  
A BOAT RIDE (11AM) AT NICK'S RIVERSIDE GRILL  
(3050 K ST NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20007).**

REGISTER AT:  
[WWW.JFGH.ORG/EVENTS/BKSBRUNCHBOAT/](http://WWW.JFGH.ORG/EVENTS/BKSBRUNCHBOAT/)

*This event is generously underwritten by JFGH sibling Nick Cibel.*

JEWISH FOUNDATION  
FOR GROUP HOMES  
Independence starts here.

## Sibling Scribblings

### Ari, My Lion, by Aviva S.

Lions are the only social member of the cat (Felidae) family, as they live in large groups called "prides," consisting of about 15 lions. A single male, or sometimes a small group of 2-3 males, will join a pride for an indefinite period. Lions within a pride are often affectionate and, when resting, seem to enjoy good fellowship with lots of touching, head rubbing, licking and purring.

My brother Ari (which is Hebrew for Lion) did not receive his name by coincidence. He not only is extremely passionate about animals (especially big cats), but he is one of the most social people I know! He is a very rare extroverted social butterfly among the autism community.



Siblings Ari S. and Aviva S.

In March of 1989, my 7 years younger brother Ari Ben, was born into the world a very healthy- by all physiological standards- baby boy. While my parents were of course elated and celebrating another offspring in the family, I was quite the opposite. I had been the only

child for so many years, that now sharing my parents attention, the quiet house, the dog and my life with this new crying, smelly and totally dependent being was quite difficult for me to adjust to.

Ari seemed to follow normal child development stages until we noticed several strange behaviors when he was three. Ari was first diagnosed as having ADHD and learning disabilities after preliminary evaluations, but later at age seven, he had several psychotic episodes and violent behaviors which caused the doctors to reevaluate his situation. Their diagnosis was now early on-set schizophrenia as well as the autism spectrum.

When I was 14, our mother had taken a job as the head night shift psychiatric nurse at a nearby residential in-patient psychiatric facility and had put me in charge of being my brother's babysitter, cook, life coach and basically second mother. I did not enjoy the role much at the time. For two years I would be Ari's main caregiver every day after school until our father would return home late in the evenings.



Siblings Ari S. and Aviva S.

Later in life I would come to realize this time was pivotal to our relationship as not just siblings, but as friends. It was these years that Ari depended on me, and I would push him to do things he was uncomfortable with to help him gain more independence and confidence. He was used to everyone else including our parents, teachers and medical professionals treating him like he was only capable of certain simple and lower level tasks and needed to be given total support and supervision with every single task. I knew he was also taking advantage of the situation and that he was perfectly capable of doing most of these things on his own. So I would test him and say I was not going to help him. He would need to figure out on his own how to do these things, such as cooking in the microwave, using the remote control, learning to use the shower handles to start the water, using soap and shampoo to bathe himself, brushing his teeth, as well as dressing and undressing and getting ready for bed- and he did.

Ari has grown up to love learning and is very passionate about animals, dinosaurs, movies and music as well as people. He is one of the most social people I know, calling all of his family and close friends daily to check in. Ari now lives with JFGH in a supported independent living shared apartment and works full time.



Sblings Aviva S. and Ari S.

Today, we are much closer than most siblings I know. Ari not only calls me daily to check-in, but we see each other at least once a week for an activity and to catch up. We do everything together from hiking; going to comic conventions dressed in full attire; attending parties; swimming; visiting to zoos, nature preserves and aquariums; seeing movies; and of course dining at his favorite restaurants.

I did not know it when I was a kid, but he is truly one of the best things about my life and I am so happy he is not "typical." I am certain we will always be close, and we will always be much more than siblings.

*If you would like to submit a Sibling Scribbling, please email [bshapiro@jfg.org](mailto:bshapiro@jfg.org).*

## JFGH Resources

### Meet David Altschuler, JFGH Jewish Living Coordinator

David was born and raised in Montgomery County, MD and he and his brother Sheldon attended the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School. After graduating with a B.A. in Jewish Studies from the University of Maryland, David met his wife, Meredith. They are the proud parents of Chana, Yoshi, Yardena and Jacob. David understands both the complexity and beauty that surrounds supporting a loved one with a disability, as one of his children has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.



David began his tenure at JFGH in mid-February by attending a multi-day new employee orientation quickly followed by the tumult of Passover preparations for the group homes. He helped your siblings prepare their kitchens for the holiday and coordinated with five synagogues and 11 homes so 75 residents could attend Seders. David's goal is to provide a plethora of opportunities to celebrate Judaism throughout the year. In the coming months he will be connecting with JFGH's Jewish Living Committee to ensure that he is aware of the concerns and desires of families, board members and residents regarding Jewish living at JFGH. David can be reached at [daltschuler@jfg.org](mailto:daltschuler@jfg.org) or 240.283.6038.

## Follow Us

Are you following us on social media? You should! Like us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) for instant updates. Don't forget to check out our videos on [YouTube](#), too.



We also have a special, sibling-only [Facebook group](#)!



**THE SIBLINK:** *A JFGH publication of the Bruce K. Smith Sibling Network*

P: 240.283.6000 | F: 301.576.4574

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

