

A PUBLICATION OF THE NCJW–GREATER LONG BEACH AND WEST ORANGE COUNTY Section

► A Message From Our President

by Dr. Lisa Raufman, President



Our Section has maintained much continuity between our 2024 and 2025 Board members. Starting in 2026-2027, we will be conducting business a bit differently. Here are some of our continuing and new directions:

1. We started in 2022 to raise funds for our special projects such as Abortion Comfort Kits and HugPacks by working with Long Beach Gives and receiving grants from Shir Chadash. Now, we have a strong mailing list and are relying on loyal donors to fund these programs. If we decide to use Long Beach Gives in the future, we will need some of you who are social media users and financial/ accounting-oriented to join us in such an endeavor. Please contact me at president@ncjwlongbeach.org if you are interested in helping us!

2. Throughout this last year, we have written in Pillars about “integrating with National” to become more aligned with national legislative initiatives affecting women, children, and families. We signed an agreement with National to be one of 8 Sections that will integrate first and most likely be role models. That is the way we have chosen to move forward. We had hoped to be able to share with you exactly what our newer model will look like by January 1st, but as some say “Life is what happens when you’re busy making other plans.” Luckily, a brilliant group of our past presidents and current board committed to monthly meetings since July 2024 under the “Project Management” leadership of Dawn Haldane.

3. We created a 3-year monthly plan related to integrating and maintaining local programs. At the same time, we expected the best, planned for the worst, and still believe that we are prepared for any surprises. The biggest surprise was that the National CEO and champion of the integration process, Sheila Katz, left our organization in November for an executive position with Jewish Federations of America.

4. Additionally, our board spent many months discussing how to influence National to support our beloved Community Services programs, which except for Abortion Comfort Kits do not have obvious “advocacy components”, as National wants. We decided to continue fully supporting Comfort Kits, HugPacks, the Early Learning & Kindergarten Festivals, and Scholarships, and we convinced National to support this decision. We will maintain our local activities with our key amazing leaders of Comfort Kits (Michelle Gordon and Teri Hershberg), HugPacks (Sara Silva and Linda Fox), K-Fests (Lisa Robinson), and Scholarships (Maria Osorio).

5. The positive outcome is that we created a budget to continue all programs for the next 6 months as well as when we integrate! We will maintain our website, eblasts, and programs throughout Spring. At the same time, we will work with National to transition to using their website and communication tools but that will not be until after Spring 2026.

6. Our last big news is that we decided to be proactive and for the first time in our recent history, we gave grants to organizations we have partnered with in the past. In the past, we have co-sponsored programs with Jewish Long Beach (JLB), American Association of University Women (AAUW), Planned Parenthood, Christian Outreach in Action (COA), EntreNous, Long Beach City College (LBCC) and others and we know now we will be able to continue to do so. You can read more about these grants on page 2.

We will continue serving our community with an Interim Board that includes almost all of our previous Board members. May we continue to gather like-minded people together for years to come! We are always looking for volunteers to help us with our technical needs, database management and to help us adapt to AI! If you want to be of help: call or write to me at president@ncjwlongbeach.org.

► A Message From Our President...Grants to Organizations

by Dr. Lisa Raufman, President

During our High Holiday season, we chose to share some of our funds with nonprofits that share our values! Here are the non-profit organizations who share our Mission to whom we gave grants.

American Association of University Women (AAUW)—for programs related to economic justice for women and girls.

Anti-Defamation League (ADL)— Addressing Orange County/Long Beach area antisemitism issues.

Black Women for Wellness—wellness education and outreach.

Christian Outreach in Action (COA)—nondenominational programs to help the homeless.

Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE)—for the local L.B. clergy and residents working on collaboration with leader Rev Mary Duong.

Connecting a Caring Community—supporting “Dec My Dorm program” to outfit foster youth entering college with dorm room essentials.

EntreNous Community Empowerment—for their expanding teen tech training programs.

For the Child—expanding Teen Services for abused & neglected teens & Children’s Services.

Jewish Long Beach (JLB)—to support the Alpert Jewish Community Center, the Jewish Connections Network, and additional discretionary purposes.

Jewish Family & Children’s Services (JFCS)—for working with WomenShelter on issues such as domestic violence and additional services for people in need.

Long Beach League of Women Voters (LWV)—for use in supporting equal rights, the Constitution, and protecting the vote.

Long Beach City College (LBCC)—for Students Emergency & Basic Needs Fund.

Planned Parenthood of Orange and San Bernardino Counties (PPOSBC)—for reproductive health programs.

We were delighted to hear back how much these like-minded organizations appreciate our shared missions. Here are a few examples of how our grants are supporting excellent projects:

- JLB’s grant is supporting leadership training funds, children’s books from the PJ Library, more kids attending Jewish summer camp, more funding for the JLB Advocacy Committee to work on antisemitism issues.
- AAUW is funding 2 middle school girls to attend a weeklong Summer Tech Camp at Whittier College.
- For The Child is using the extra funds for their newly opened Teen Support Center and for serving abused children.
- COA will use these funds for purchasing food for the needy and diapers for babies.



► WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

by Laurie Arroyo, VP Membership

Our HugPack program and Abortion Comfort Kit packing are becoming very popular among our new members and the additional active volunteerism is both encouraged and welcomed. Please read our emails and check our [website](#) to find other opportunities to participate with us.



PLEASE WELCOME OUR NEWEST MEMBERS!

Terri Chapman

Harriet Reed

Wendy Golden

Jenna Sagan

Sarah Himmelstein

Marca Weinburg

Nancy Levy

▶ A Poem: Still We Continue to Rise

by Dr. Lisa Raufman, President

In '46 a promise grew — to heal, to help, to follow through.

From WWII refugees who found new light, to children guided toward what's right.

Through every decade, hearts stayed strong: a friendly visit, a lifted song, a voter helped, a senior fed, a frightened family safely led; and side by side in collaboration, we helped shape the path to JFCS's creation.

We fought for safety, love, and peace, for violence in homes to cease.

We welcomed Afghan newcomers with grace and helped each child and adult find their place.

*From HugPacks filled with school supplies, to care that helps young spirits rise,
each foster child is gently shown they matter, and they're not alone.*

*From postcards sent to Get Out the Vote, to fighting hard for equal pay and equal rights we wrote,
to Comfort Kits for those in need of reproductive healthcare, and grateful notes for all who serve them there.*

This Council's work, decade by decade, is justice lived and courage made.

A legacy that still extends, built by many hearts and hands.

And still today our voices rise — for equity in every line of law and life that shapes our days.

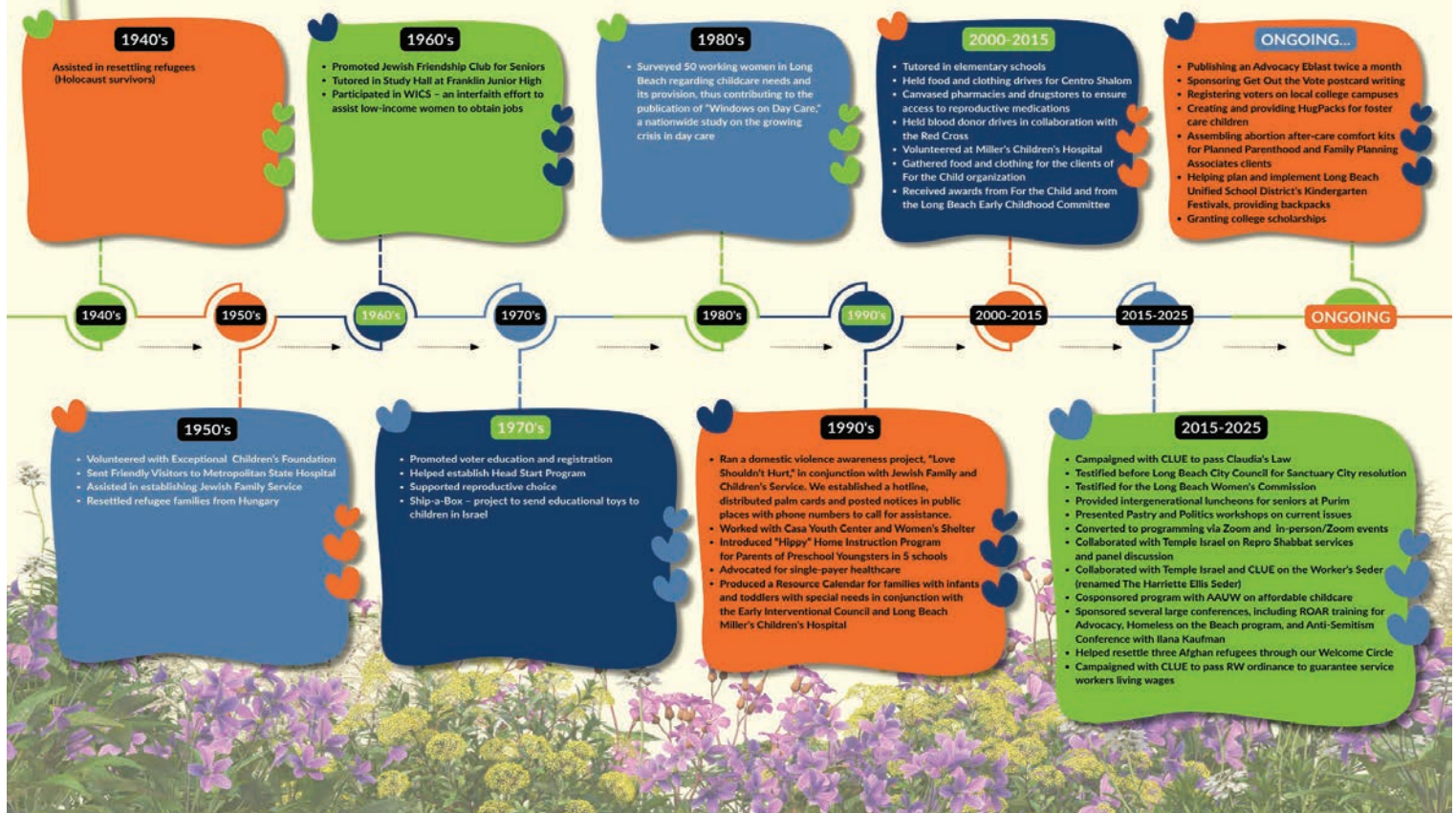
NCJW continues to lead the way.

As ever,
Lisa

(Click to enlarge for easier reading)

NCJW – Greater Long Beach Timeline

Founding Date: January 7, 1946



OUR LOCAL ADVOCACY EFFORTS 2025 by Chana Ham-Rosebrock, VP Advocacy

This has been a busy and productive Advocacy year with many members involved. We won't review the activities reported in other articles in this Pillars. Thanks to all of you volunteers who stepped up!

We co-sponsored several programs: "Flowers Aren't Enough," a play about domestic violence; Repro Shabbat at Temple Israel with a panel including Episcopalian, Methodist and Jewish clergy; a program with AAUW on Human Trafficking with author Jewell Baraka and LBPD Sergeant Castillo; and the Harriette Ellis Memorial Worker's Seder with Temple Israel and CLUE, highlighting workers' and immigration rights. NCJW volunteers included Nancy Levy, Cynthia Gordon, Kate Sachnoff, Andrea Friedenthal, and Myron Wollin.

Our members Roberta Friedman, Lisa Raufman, Natalie Swit, Gail Levy, Sherri Sobel and Cynthia Gordon met with local City Council members Megan Kerr and Darryl Supernaw. We discussed action items related to childcare, affordable housing, immigration, reproductive rights, human trafficking, and the LB Women's Commission.

We sponsored six members to attend Lobby Day in Sacramento: Chana Ham-Rosebrock, Nancy Levy, Lauren Korduner, Kate Sachnoff, Sherri Sobel and Marca Weinberg. They met with several lawmakers or their staff – Senators Tony Strickland, Bob Archuleta, and Lena Gonzalez, and Assembly members Josh Lowenthal and Jose Solaches – to discuss our hopes for AB54 (Safe Abortion), AB381 (Human Trafficking) and SB48 (the Safe Act) legislation.



Roberta Friedman, Cynthia Gordon, Chana Ham-Rosebrock, Lisa Raufman, Joanne Levy, and Myron Wollin attended interesting sessions at this year's Washington Institute and met with several of our representatives or their staff: Adam Schiff, Nanette Barragan, Robert Garcia, Derek Tran, and Dave Min. Senator Cory Booker and Minority Senate Leader Chuck Schumer gave exciting speeches. Thanks also to Laurie Pearlman, Harriet Reed, Sadie Sacks, Kate Sachnoff, Anna Salusky, Lisa Raufman, Deb Lelechuk, Shelley Carl and Susan Slesinger, who met locally with their Congress members or staff for National NCJW's Jewish Day of Action.

Sherri Sobel hosted an in-depth training on becoming or continuing as an Education Rights holder. She also helped us get a grant from Ner Tamid Palos Verdes Temple Teen Philanthropy group for showings of a powerful documentary *Pre-Conceived*.

Members Chana Ham-Rosebrock, Roberta Friedman, and Lisa Raufman staffed an NCJW table at the 3rd Annual Long Beach Women's Fair, while Chana, Lisa and Sue Berges staffed our table at the LB Commission on Innovation and Technology's Wonder Women's Conference. Chana spoke at and represented us, along with Natalie Swit, at CLUE's and Josh Lowenthal's Revolutionary Non-Violence Activism Training.

Throughout the year we have had monthly Zoom meetings on Reproductive Rights. Also the Advocacy Committee meets on Zoom the 4th Tuesday of the month at 5 pm. Tell us you'd like to **join us** by emailing us at advocacy@ncjwlongbeach.org!

Thanks to Congregation Ner Tamid's Teen Philanthropy Program for its two generous grants supporting our Reproductive Justice work and our Comfort Kits project!



► **MEMBERSHIP CELEBRATION LUNCHEON—Sunday, June 22**
Our NCJW Past, Present, and Future
by Laurie Arroyo, VP Membership



On a beautiful and warm June 22nd, 84 members and friends of NCJW-Greater Long Beach and West Orange County took the opportunity to celebrate the past and the future at the Old Ranch Country Club in Seal Beach.

We began on the terrace of the Country Club with a hosted wine bar, hors d'oeuvres and music by the Jazz Angels trio, taking the opportunity to talk with friends, long time and newly met. Moving inside we sat for lunch followed by our program, beginning with Judy Leff sharing a presentation of NCJW's history and some of our signature projects. She was

followed by our Keynote Speaker, Ellen Buchman, National NCJW Chief Engagement Officer, who had come to share information about NCJW's new governing format.



As many of you know, last year NCJW embarked upon a new governance model. In the old model leadership was divided into "Sections." For example, our Section was Greater Long Beach and West Orange County, with its own 501c(3) status, including a board of directors and fiduciary responsibilities. In the past, NCJW Sections were joined together by the common mission of serving women, children and families. All Sections have been independently unique while incorporating the values of National NCJW.

Under the new model, which is still being discussed, rather than a Board with fiduciary responsibility, we will have a local Leadership Council which will serve as liaisons with National. National NCJW will take over responsibility for our governance, communications, and fiduciary functions and provide training to the local Council on how to organize people, communicate effectively, raise funds and connect locals with National legislative initiatives to empower National change while we continue many of our local initiatives.

We invite you to either get involved or stay involved with us by attending educational and social events, joining program committees, lobbying with other members and much more. If you have not previously joined, you can [join here](#).



▶ A SPECIAL ADVOCACY MEETING/TRAINING WITH LAILA HIRSCHFELD, NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF ENGAGEMENT *by Lisa Raufman, President*

June 23rd was a special advocacy meeting/training with Laila Hirschfeld, National Director of Engagement. Attendees included a dynamic group of members from various professional backgrounds. These attendees bring a wealth of experience and an array of perspectives, making the gathering an ideal opportunity for collaboration and networking:



Lisa Raufman	Michelle Gordon	Chana Ham-Rosebrock	Kate Sachnoff
Susan Berges	Lauren Friedman	Terri Hershberg	Natalie Swit
Sharon Brannon	Roberta Friedman	Barbara Millman	Linda Waltzman
Cynthia Gordon	Sue Goodman	Cookie Sieger	Deb Lelchuk
Andrea Kaiser	Joanne Levy	Gayle Ehrenberg	Dale Strok
Deb Kaplan-Wyckoff			

All those attending learned about how National NCJW defines “advocacy” and we had a lively discussion about how to include advocacy in all community and direct services activities that we have in our local Section. More than half of the people attending had not attended an advocacy meeting. In fact, the actual model is our Abortion Comfort Kit Program where we write letters to recipients, send postcards for “get out the vote”, have a speaker from Planned Parenthood or elsewhere, and pack up to 400 comfort kits for women coming into California for an abortion from out of state to help these women feel cared for and supported.



▶ GOTV

By Deb Lelchuk, Chair of GOTV



Our Section was very involved in Get Out the Vote activities this year: first, for the Virginia primary and most recently for the Virginia general election. The total postcards for the primary last spring included 180 postcards completed by six writers. For the general election, nearly 40 members and supporters wrote more than 1,100 postcards for Reclaim Our Vote.

In addition to holding postcard writing gatherings at one member’s home and at the JCC, new for this election, the advocacy team partnered with the Comfort Kits and HugPack packers.

2026 is going to be a big year for postcard and letter writing. If you are interested in joining the postcard writing, reach out to the advocacy team at advocacy@ncjwlongbeach.org. Additionally, you can sign up for letter writing at [Vote Forward](#).

▶ MEET THE TRANSITION TEAM!

by Lisa Raufman, President

These seven members have long and deep histories serving on the NCJW-GLB & WOC Board AND must be applauded for serving as “The Transition Team” that created a plan of action to “integrate with National”. Here are highlights of their service for our Section. Their full bios can be viewed on the [website](#). This is their last year on the Board (except for Lisa)! We thank them for their service and their forever mentorship!



Linda Fox: Past President and overseer of Community Service projects, Linda has served in numerous roles over 16 years, including Co-VP of Membership, VP of Programs, President, Executive VP, and State Policy Advocate. She has represented NCJW at various national and state events and was honored with the Hannah G. Solomon Award in 2017. Linda recalls significant moments, such as the recognition on stage of all NCJW CA Sections as National’s 2016 Champions for Social Change and meeting John Lewis, whose call to “Make Good Trouble” inspired the group. She was also a recipient of the Woman of Vision Award.

Judy Leff: Recording Secretary and the longest-serving continuous Board member, Judy joined in 1995. She led the Sunday Branch, launched the HugPack Project, and has held multiple Board positions, including President and Treasurer. Judy has represented the Section at numerous conventions and was also a recipient of the Hannah G. Solomon Award in 2016. She cherishes the collaborative spirit of and hopes for the Section’s future.

Dawn Haldane: Treasurer since 2019 (and previously), Dawn is known for her behind-the-scenes work in financial transparency, communications, and event planning. She plays a key leadership role in the Section’s transition to integrating with National and was honored with the Hannah G. Solomon Award in 2023.

Joanne Levy: Co-Treasurer since 2019, Joanne has also served as Recording Secretary, Executive VP, and Investment Committee Chair. She is noted for her advocacy, fundraising, participation in national events, attention to detail and being a liaison with JFCS.

María Osorio: Past President, Maria joined the Board in 2020 after completing Jewish Long Beach (JLB) leadership training. She has served as Recording Secretary and President, participated in advocacy events, and modernized the Scholarship Application process.

Lisa Raufman: President, on the Board since 2017. As co-VP Advocacy and also Programs, she lobbied City Council; coordinated programs on Meeting the Homeless Needs, on Immigrants’ Rights, and Childcare for Women (an NCJW/AAUW joint program); and testified at City Council on the need for a L.B. Commission on Women & Girls. In 2024, she was on the NCJW, Inc “Section Working Group” working on National Integration. Lastly, she was honored to be our Section’s “Woman of Vision” at a JLB event!

Dale Strok: VP Communications, On the Board since 2018 as VP of Communications, Dale has contributed technical expertise, managed communications, and supported fundraising efforts. Dale is recognized for keeping the organization connected, especially during challenging times, and was honored to be our Section’s Woman of Vision at a JLB event. In addition, Dale received the Hannah G. Solomon Award in 2022.

Closing Reflection: As we integrate, the state and national issues and the collective strength of advocates across the country working together are what make NCJW so valuable.

Our collective Jewish value-based dedication has fostered synergy between local and national efforts: strengthening coalitions, and advancing important legislative advocacy. We don’t stand for the status quo! We are that small group of women (primarily) who do their research and speak up!

► CELEBRATING HANUKKAH!

by Natalie Swit and Sharon Brannon, Co-VPs for Programs

On Sunday, December 14, 2025, over 50 people joined together to celebrate NCJW and Hanukkah at the lovely home of Judy Leff. We noshed on traditional Hanukkah foods (can you say latkes and multiple renditions of kugel?), enjoyed conversations with old friends, and made new acquaintances. We applauded and recognized long-serving Board members who have contributed above and beyond to the success of our Section.

And what would Hanukkah be without providing toys and gift cards for our partner agency, For the Child? We appreciate everyone who joined in this effort to support this important community resource which for over 50 years has provided education and counseling for child victims of abuse, neglect, and family violence and the families who care for them – fulfilling the Pillars of NCJW: supporting women, children, and families. NCJW is grateful to Judy for opening her lovely home and hosting our annual Hanukkah gathering for the last few years and for everyone who attended. We look forward to seeing you next year.



► CONGRATULATIONS JUDY LEFF!

Long-time NCJW board member, Judy Leff, has been chosen as the “Volunteer of the Year” by Jewish Family and Children’s Services of Long Beach and Orange County. Judy served on the board of JFCS for many years, including as secretary. She continues to chair the registration and check-in for the annual fundraiser, Move for Mental Health, previously known as Race with a View and Athlete’s Fete. Judy also serves on the Chesed Committee, where she organizes the Adopt-A-Family project each holiday season, providing gifts for many needy families in our community. Judy has always volunteered her time and energy with enthusiasm and a smile on her face. The board of JFCS and the many individuals who benefit from its services are so appreciative of her efforts. Judy will be recognized at the JFCS annual meeting on January 29th at 6:30pm at the Alpert Jewish Community Center.



 **CONGRATULATIONS TO THE RECIPIENTS
OF THE LINDA CALDERÓN SCHOLARSHIPS FOR 2025!**
by María Osorio, Past President and Chair of the Scholarship Committee

This year, there were more applicants than ever before in the past 25 years—even more than last year! Each student received high academic scores and exemplary involvement in Jewish life, learning, and leadership. Our future is in good hands with these young people and their various pursuits of *Tikkun Olam* and professional development. We only wish that there was more money to fund the additional applicants.



The **graduate** student scholarship recipients include:

Taryn Williams, \$3,000.00 – Pursuing a Ph.D. in Organization and Management. University of California, Irvine

Carol Beckerman, \$1,000.00 – Pursuing a Ph.D. in Transformative Studies. California Institute of Integral Studies

Melanie Edwards, \$1,000.00 – Pursuing a Master of Social Work. California State University, Long Beach

The **undergraduate** student scholarship recipients include:

Sophia Kaplan, \$3,000.00 – Pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies. California State University, Long Beach

Samuel Cullen, \$1,000.00 – Pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Biology: Option in Molecular Cell Biology and Physiology. California State University, Long Beach

Simone Parvizi, \$1,000.00 – Pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Cognitive Science. University of California, Los Angeles

The **high school** senior scholarship recipients include:

Evie Hoddevik, \$3,000.00 – Pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Viticulture and Enology. California Polytechnic, San Luis Obispo

Aravah Marcus, \$1,000.00 – Pursuing two Bachelor of Arts in History and Jewish Studies (either Jewish Ethics or Jewish Thought). Barnard College of Columbia University and List College, The Jewish Theological Seminary

Sydney Rofo, \$1,000.00 – Pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Pre-Medicine/Health Sciences. Southern Methodist University

These students demonstrated grade point averages ranging from 3.66 to 4.45. They included graduating high school seniors from Los Alamitos and Wilson High Schools, current undergraduate students at CSULB and UCLA, and graduate students at the California Institute of Integral Studies, CSULB, Barnard College of Columbia University, List College of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Southern Methodist University, and UCI. We wish each of these students and all the other applicants a bright future and much success!

Deborah Lewis, María E. Osorio, Dr. Lisa Raufman, and Dr. Cookie Shapiro Sieger are members of the NCJW Scholarship Committee.



**Want to donate hassle-free?
Scan the QR and donate now!**

▶ ABORTION COMFORT CARE KITS PROJECT 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

by Teri Hershberg, Co-Chair Abortion Comfort Kits

Michelle Gordon and Andrea Friedenthal have led the success of the Abortion Comfort Care Kits for another year. Many thanks to these wonderful women for their organization skills and hard work that they devote to this project.

Andrea will be moving out of California. Our loss is Oregon's gain. We are grateful for her hard work over the years with NCJW. Teri Hershberg will be serving as co-chair in 2026.

The volunteers working with this Project have completed 4 packing events in 2025. We pack and deliver 400 kits per event which total 1600 kits for the year. The recipients of these kits receive abortion services from Planned Parenthood of Orange and San Bernadino Counties and Family Planning Associates (FPA) Women's Health of Long Beach.



These kits contain personal items, hygiene products and treats for the women that have come to one of the Abortion Clinics we serve. The kits include water, hand lotion, candy, tea bags, tissues, and much more. Our wonderful volunteers hand-write notes to each patient to include in each bag. We offer comfort, support and friendship to these women who are facing a difficult choice. We also collect and deliver donations of new toys for children that may have to accompany their mothers to the clinic appointments.



We average about \$3,000 for each packing event for items in each bag and supplies for the event set up. In 2025 we spent \$12,000. These funds are provided by NCJW and generous private donations. At each event the organizing committee presents informational speakers who update us on Abortion Access and the latest news from Federal and State Governments regarding Reproductive Freedom and Justice. We have also heard from volunteers who have shared their personal stories about their decision to have a termination procedure. These are heartfelt and emotional presentations called Courageous Conversations.

Our project is so grateful to the women and men who volunteer at each packing event. It is truly fun, organized chaos! We average between 30 and 70 volunteers who assemble kits and write personal cards for each bag. We have an amazing Dream Team of 18 regular volunteers who come early to set up the assembly lines, clean up at the conclusion of the event and deliver them to the clinics the following day.

Join us! We offer snacks and refreshments and lots of opportunities to meet new people, network, exchange news and have a good time "chatting" while we work!

We look forward to seeing returning and new volunteers in 2026. Our tentative schedule is March 10, June 23, September 15, and December 1, 2026.



SUCH A MEMORABLE TIME AT THE EARLY LEARNING AND KINDERGARTEN FESTIVAL AT ALVARADO ELEMENTARY *by Lisa Robinson, Early Learning & Kindergarten Festival Chair*

In 2025, NCJW volunteered at the two in-person Long Beach Early Childhood Education Committee (LBECE) and Long Beach Unified School District's Early Learning & Kindergarten Festivals (ELK). The Festivals are for families with children ages birth to 5 years old. This year, families of incoming 2024-2025 Kindergarten and Transitional Kindergarten (TK) students learned about Long Beach Unified School District's (LBUSD) enrollment and school readiness while offering workshops on topics important for parents to help their child learn. Our organization provided volunteers and funds from NCJW's Denise Berro Kindergarten Festivals Fund toward the backpacks that families with entering TK and Kindergarten children for the fall receive after attending 2 workshops.



Before the festivals, some volunteers helped fill the backpacks with school supplies and/or loaded the pallets containing supplies. Other volunteers strung yarn on the passports children received. The first festival was at Barton Elementary in January. Unfortunately, the Palisades and Eaton fires created smoke warnings which kept our attendance low for Barton. The Alvarado Elementary festival in March was better attended. On the day of the event, volunteers helped set up chairs and registration tables and helped families register. A visit from the Long Beach Police officers and the members of the Long Beach Fire Department were a big hit for many of the children.

In 2026 we'll have 3 opportunities to volunteer. The first festival will be on January 24, 2026 at Burcham Elementary with the second festival on March 07, 2026 at Dooley Elementary Festival. The last event will be on April 25, 2026 where we will participate in the Celebration of the Young Child & ELK Fest Collaboration at the Billy Jean King Library and Lincoln Park for the first time. We'll need at least 10 volunteers for the first 2 festivals to work at the registration tables, be at the door of the workshops, and welcome attendees. Additionally, we have the opportunity to do registration at the Celebration of the Young Child. In 2026 we will be passing out a bookmark at the festivals that gives information about NCJW and encourages reading. The motivation behind this is to inform families about our organization and how NCJW cares for and impacts the community.

Hope you'll join us for the 2026 festivals. Sign up [here](https://www.ncjwlongbeach.org/communityservice) if you are interested in volunteering or email us at communityservice@ncjwlongbeach.org.





PLANNED PARENTHOOD PACKED IMPACT LUNCHEON

by Cynthia Gordon, Co-Chair, Abortion Justice & Reproductive Rights Working Group

On November 6, a number of NCJW members attended a luncheon at the City National Grove of Anaheim, hosted by Planned Parenthood of Orange and San Bernardino Counties, one of our major partners in our reproductive rights activities. Representatives of our Abortion Justice & Reproductive Rights working group as well as regular volunteers at our Abortion Comfort Kit packing events filled two tables at the luncheon.

The keynote speaker was Samantha Bee, who is a Canadian-American comedian, writer, producer, political commentator, actress, and television host. She had her own weekly late-night comedy series, *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, which ran for seven seasons starting in 2016. Samantha also shared that she is a board member for Planned Parenthood of Southern New England (PPSNE). She discussed the current challenges that PP faces.

Among the speakers was our very own Sherri Sobel! She was invited to speak before the group and tell her personal abortion story, which she did with confidence and a touch of humor. In addition, the luncheon, which offered us some delicious food, was an opportunity for Planned Parenthood to introduce their new CEO, Krista Hollinger, who we've known for years in her former position as COO. In fact, Krista has spoken at more than one of our membership educational programs. Overall, it was a lovely afternoon spent among like-minded people who strongly support a woman's right to choose and to receive all necessary reproductive healthcare.

Our Abortion Justice & Reproductive Rights working group continues to work to educate our local community about the misleading practices and dangers of "Crisis Pregnancy Centers" (CPCs), through the showing of the film *Preconceived*. Several future showings are under discussion. We're also continuing to work toward achieving the passage of a local ordinance in Long Beach that would prohibit misleading advertising by these CPCs, or fake clinics. Lastly, we've begun making plans for our annual Repro Shabbat program in 2026. Watch your NCJW e-blasts for details. If you'd like to join our working group, email us at advocacy@ncjwlongbeach.org!



HUGPACKS

by Linda C. Fox, Co-Chair HugPacks

With Thanksgiving just behind us at this writing, it feels right to reflect on those who make HugPacks happen. Each and every time we gather, we make visible NCJW-Greater Long Beach & West Orange County's ongoing commitment to the foster youth just entering or within the foster care system in our region.

We could not carry out this long-running project (since 2002!) without our volunteers. We have been consistently blessed with many volunteers who want to "do good" for this vulnerable population of children served by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The age ranges of our recipients have recently expanded to include infants to 5 years of age, as well as our customary school-age children in grades ranging from kindergarten through high school.

October 9 of this year was our first HugPacks event which drew in 30 volunteers, our largest number ever. These volunteers helped pack activity kits requested by and for client families enrolled in South County, Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services. DCFS indicated to us that these kits will help contribute to the bonding between the foster youth and their families, a very worthy (and needed) goal.

Our DCFS liaison, Sherrie Evans, presented statistics that offered important perspectives. In 2024, 3,374 families faced abuse and neglect investigation by the South County Regional staff. Sadly, the compiled statistics of 1575 open cases in 2024 showed that the most numerous cases were in the zero to 5 years of age group, while children 6 to 12 years of age formed the second largest group. These two age groups make up 65% of the caseload at the South County Regional Office.

We are happy to have tailored this packing to meet DCFS clients' needs. A shout-out to the Children's Dental Health Clinic which graciously donates dental supplies time and again for inclusion in the HugPacks.

Yet, there is absolutely no doubt that the continuing success of the project is currently due to the amazing Sara Millman Silva, Co-chair of NCJW's HugPacks and Co-founder and Co-Executive Director of EntreNous Community Empowerment/Compton YouthBuild. Silva and her excellent executive assistant, Ayesha Birks, rose superbly to the challenge of creating and curating the activity boxes filled with age-appropriate games, books, coloring books, puzzles, playing cards, and more for the younger foster children. The HugPacks project simply could not happen without the EntreNous/ YouthBuild team, who head the acquisitions of items and the organization, in addition to setting up for each packing. They deserve a deep sincere thank you from NCJW – Greater Long Beach & West Orange County for their dedication to this project.

HugPacking events for 2026 will be April 16 and June 4. Hoping to see you then, and in the meantime, we wish you a happy, healthy, and peaceful New Year!



Activity Boxes for The Younger Children



THANKS TO THE ROTARY CLUB!

Long Beach Rotary Literacy Committee has once again supported our HugPacks project this year granting us \$2,500 as per our request to their 2026 Read by 9 program. With this money and Rotary's help, NCJW is able to buy books for ages zero to 12 direct from Scholastic. Their grants range from \$1,000 to \$3,000, and over the past 6 years we have steadily requested from \$1,000 through \$2,500 depending on the numbers of foster system children and the ever-increasing book prices. We are very grateful for Rotary's continued support!





National Council of Jewish Women

GREATER LONG BEACH &
WEST ORANGE COUNTY

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