

NCJW Chicago North Shore History

Hannah G. Solomon organized and led the first Jewish Women's Congress in 1893. It was part of the World Parliament of Religion at the Columbian Exposition. Twenty-nine cities in the United States were represented with ninety-three delegates. It was the first gathering of Jewish women who came together to systematically impact social change. Delegates attended with position papers they had written on how to improve inadequate living conditions in multiple ways. During the conference, the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) was conceived, dedicated to Faith and Humanity through religion, education, and philosophy.

This is a timeline of NCJW's national accomplishments over the last 128 years and those programs brought about by the tireless work of the Chicago and North Shore Sections (merged in 1998), and the Tri-County Section (merged in 2014). This snapshot of our past, reflects our Section's current work and priorities. NCJW was created in order to ensure safer and healthier lives for immigrants and for all of those in need. Its earliest work focused on advocating for child labor laws, fair housing, health and education, and fighting for voting and civil rights.

Our priorities remain the same. Today, we actively address legislative issues, public policy, and federal judiciary cases that focus on women, children and families. This includes fighting for civil and women's rights; reproductive health; human trafficking prevention; voting rights; immigration rights; judicial nominations; gun violence prevention; and LGBTQ rights.

The many programs of the Chicago North Shore Section, in both Advocacy and Community Service, connect social policy with action. Our Section's unique Educational Programs provide the depth of understanding and insight needed to be effective in doing so. The following is an extraordinary documentation of innovative achievement and leadership.

1893-Founding of NCJW. Hannah G. Solomon is the first president.

1894-The Chicago Section established its first outing home at Hinsdale in connection with its sewing school work.

Chicago Section Established **Sunday School for deaf children** at Temple Sholom.

1898-NCJW Pres. Solomon signed a petition to President McKinley asking for peaceful settlement between Spain and the U.S. (Spanish-American War). NCJW

worked hard to alleviate the suffering of soldiers and sailors. The organization raised \$10,000 for the cause and provided food and comfort at train stations.

1902-Formed reading rooms, personal service clubs for doing volunteer charity work, gymnasiums, playgrounds, and book clubs at college settlements and hospitals for tuberculosis.

Expanded settlement houses.

Fought for improved labor conditions and better living conditions for immigrants.

1904-Built and financed a **permanent station for immigrant aid at Ellis Island** to provide support for women, single mothers and children entering the United States. NCJW continued to provide immigrant aid through 1916.

1905-Donated \$7000 for immigrant aid; raised funds to help victims of pogroms in Russia.

1906- Raised funds to help victims of the earthquake in San Francisco.

1909-Invited to the **White House Conference on Child Welfare** which was the beginning of the social legislation process to end child labor, provide health care to those in need, mother's pension, slum clearance, the beginning of food and drug regulation, wage and hour laws for women, and the enactment of anti-lynching laws.

Became the first organization to begin efforts to care for the Jewish blind; to have penny lunch stations in schools; and to advocate for employment bureaus, and medical inspections in schools.

1917-1918 (WWI)- Served in the **Council of National Defenses** and cooperated with the nation's welfare and relief agencies, the Red Cross with the American Jewish Relief Committee for Jewish sufferers of the war, including TB patients

1920s- The Chicago Section met refugees coming from New York to Chicago; placed refugees on farms in Illinois and Indiana; set them up with dishes and bedding; arranged for a special radio broadcast across Illinois for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services.

1923-Sent experts abroad to establish services for Jewish refugees. NCJW also created a committee to contribute to refugee and immigrant aid, help war orphans and disunited families in the United States.

1925- Invited as one of the 8 women's organizations to Mrs. Carrie Chapman-Catt's conference on the peace movement to avoid war.

1930-1940s- All NCJW sections engaged in job placement services, created employment, financial relief and lunches for undernourished children.

1930- Founding of the **Hannah G Solomon Scholarship Fund** for graduate social service training.

1933- Involved in the **National Peace Conference** and legislative work in Washington. Especially active in aiding Jewish refugees from Germany.

1935-Began a new program known as **Contemporary Jewish Affairs**. Many projects came out of this initiative including Neighborhood Houses, extended summer camps, kindergarten schools, infant health clinics, vocational guidance, scholarship awards like the Hannah G Solomon Scholarship Fund, Big Sister activities, opportunity shops, and services to prevent deafness and blindness.

1935-Chicago Section of NCJW established **Council Camp** in Wauconda, IL serving a complex group of mothers and children to meet various needs. All were referred by social agencies.

1938-German-Jewish children were rescued and placed in private American homes through the **German-Jewish Children's Aid**, which NCJW helped form. **Council Camp** of Wauconda, IL provided respite during the summer months to children who were able to leave Germany through Kindertransport. All Illinois sections were involved in this program.

1938- Strongly endorsed a proposed federal anti-lynching law.

1930-40's- Supported Neighborhood Houses, kindergarten schools, baby health clinics, birth control clinics, vocational services, and deaf and blindness prevention centers.

Lobbied against poll taxes and infringement on Civil Liberties. Lobbied for Social Security, better housing, health and education programs, and for fair wages.

1945-Launched **Ship-a-Box** after WWII to send needed supplies abroad to Jewish Children in Europe who survived the Holocaust. Later it went to impoverished communities in North Africa and Iran. Israel was added as a recipient in 1948.

Initiated **NCJW Thrift Shops** to support work in the community and in Washington DC.

Worked with other Jewish agencies on locating Jewish Families scattered during the war.

1946- Provided **overseas scholarships.**

Chicago Section started **Golden Age Clubs** for seniors.

1948-Supported **Israel Educational Programs** in the schools.

1949-Passed a resolution **condemning segregation— five years before *Brown v. Board of Education.***

Opened **Council Camp** up to **Golden Age Campers.**

1950's-Chicago Section continued utilizing **Council Camp** with a focus on **programs for handicapped children and their parents.**

Created volunteer **Programs for deaf and hard of hearing children.**

Began **Toys for Children in Poverty Program** throughout the world.

North Shore Section evaluated the community's needs while serving in the cancer dressing units, making ward visits to Chicago State and Downey Hospitals, and working on the **Ship-a-Box Occupational Therapy Project.**

North Shore Section hosted Oneg Shabbats for Jewish military men and women at the Great Lake Naval Base and Fort Sheridan.

North Shore Section started the first **Head Start** program and the **Highland Park Nursery Project.**

1952- Began "**The Freedom Campaign**" to protect Civil Liberties and "**The Freedom to Road**" project, opposing censorship.

1959-Undertook to build a half-million dollar **campus for Hebrew University High School in Jerusalem.**

1959- Chicago Section started **Thresholds** to provide mental health services to the homeless under the leadership of Pauline Penn and Leona Rosenberg. It was originally staffed by 3 NCJW volunteers, and then became incorporated in 1963 as an independent agency. Today it is a thriving independent program, specializing in the treatment of addiction as part of its mental health program.

1960's- Dedicated to lobbying efforts to pass landmark civil rights legislation throughout the 1960's, earning White House recognition.

Launched a nationwide survey of out-of-school, out-of-work youth and their needs.

Sponsored the publication of "**The Citizen Volunteer**", which presents the role of the volunteer in America from an historical perspective.

Extended services to the aged.

1961- Played an active role in planning the first White House Conference on Aging.

North Shore Section began **Americanization programs** to help refugees and immigrants resettle in their new communities.

1963- NCJW National board members received an invitation from President John F. Kennedy to a White House meeting to further civil rights. That meeting led to the formation of the **Women's Committee on Civil Rights**, a group of prominent women's groups that included NCJW.

Established **Senior Service Corps** to help older people use their talents and lifelong experience to help understaffed health, welfare, educational and civic agencies.

The First **NCJW School for Community Action** was established. This unique education-for-action program taught women about current major issues and how they could take action. Topics included equal opportunities for youth, women on the move and helping other women overcome poverty.

1964- Chicago Section along with the National Council of Catholic Women, the National Council of Negro Women and United Church Women, formed a unique interreligious, interracial organization called **Women in Community Service, Inc.** This organization identified those who would benefit from the Federal Job Corps training program in Joliet and made the appropriate referrals.

North Shore Section started the **Youth Employment Service (YES)** to help 15-18 year olds find part-time jobs.

1968- Began its decades-long commitment to advocate for gun safety.

Started the preschool program, **Head Start**, as a **National Program**. (Program originated by North Shore Section in 1950). It later became a program sponsored by the federal government and is still thriving.

Began **Research Institute for Innovation in Education** (RIFIE) at Hebrew University. One of its best known initiatives is **HIPPY (Home Instruction for Preschool Youngsters)**, which aims to help low-income parents become their preschooler's first teacher at home. This successful program spread throughout Israel and, in the 1980's, internationally. Then First Lady of Arkansas, Hillary Clinton, embraced HIPPY and has championed it ever since. Today, HIPPY USA is independent of NCJW, but remains supported by many sections across the country.

1970's-Undertook an unprecedented research effort, surveying the state of the nation's day care. The results of that ground-breaking effort were published as **"Windows on Day Care"** in 1972 and cited in the speeches and testimony before Congress. The study led sections across the country to open childcare centers, advocate for quality care, and educate parents and community leaders.

1970- North Shore Section began **Council Cues** to entertain older adults. Past President Muriel Haskell was instrumental as the originator of the program and the director. Council Cues was a singing-only group that existed first in the early 70's. **Clowning Around** was formed by younger members of the section that added choreography and character acting. It was performed at pre-schools and various agencies. **Silly Circus and Disney Express** were other variations performed by section members from the 1970's-1990s.

Programs to help Russian Jews integrate into their new communities.

Continued to advocate for the Right to Choose.

Continued to advocate for Civil Rights.

North Shore Section started a separate evening branch for younger working women. In the early 1980s it merged into one.

1971-Chicago Section began **The Response Center** for troubled teens to seek individual and group counseling, and to train students to facilitate peer discussion groups. Medical staff intervened with services for sexually transmitted diseases in-

cluding workshops on AIDS. It is now a program of Jewish Family Children's Service and continues to provide mental health intervention and help.

1973- Became the first Jewish organization to join the board of **Meals on Wheels**. It became one of our national programs and many of our chapters participated, including the North Shore Section.

1974-All sections began to advocate to oppose abortion riders attached to legislation. This was done post the Supreme Court decision of Roe v Wade which invalidated all criminal State laws pertaining to abortion.

1975-Chicago Section began the **Juvenile Court Volunteer Project**. This program had two parts: Section volunteers could assist the Court in fulfilling the legislature's requirement of an annual inspection of every foster home placement made by the Court; they could also work with youngsters placed on a 90 day supervision of the Court.

Chicago Section started **Senior Employment Opportunities (SEO)** to provide job free job counseling and referrals to seniors ages 55 and over.

1977- Became one of the founding organizations that provided volunteers to **CASA's (Court Appointed Special Advocates)**. This is a trained advocate role to represent the interests of foster children during court hearings.

Was actively involved in the ERA movement and had a delegation to the **International Women's Year Convention** in Houston.

1978- Affirmative action came under attack, often distorted as a scheme for "quotas" by its critics. NCJW was the only Jewish organization to support the affirmative action side in the Supreme Court *Bakke* case involving higher education admissions.

1979- Chicago Section started **Job Opportunities for Youth (J.O.Y)** as the only free, non-sectarian part-time job placement center for teens, ages 15-18 (at the time).

1981- Published *Shattered Lives*, a program manual addressing domestic abuse. Sections around the country found innovative ways to take action by starting hotlines, shelters, community awareness programs, and advocating for legislation. The Violence Against Women Act or VAWA, was passed and signed into law in 1994. NCJW played a leading role.

1984-1986-Sylvia Margolies and Ellen Gussin served as Co-Presidents of North Shore Section. Under their leadership, Ruth Rose and Jackie Koop founded **TeleHelp** which served as a non-profit call-in resource for many years. It served the community by providing consolidated, sought after information on social services available.

North Shore Section started **Council Couriers** to drive seniors to medical appointments.

The City of Highland Park partnered with North Shore Section's **Meals on Wheels** program and combined efforts with the Section's program, **Youth Employment Service (Y.E.S.)**, as well. This partnership continued for decades.

Advocated for Civil Rights, Pro-Choice, and other projects.

1985- NCJW's **Mothers in the Workplace** research showed the dire need for a Federal Family Leave policy. Donna Loundy, Past President of North Shore Section, was chair of this study. It gave NCJW a leading role in the decade-long effort to pass the Family and Medical Leave Act.

North Shore Section moved their thrift store from Highwood to Wilmette and renamed it **Encore**. The proceeds received from the Gala Annual Sale fundraiser supported the year's ongoing programming.

1984- North Shore Section worked with the Trinity Episcopal Church in Highland Park to establish **Tri-Con Child Care Center**. This came out of a growing need for subsidized child care developed in the North Shore area.

1985 to 1998- Operated its own internal research institute: the **NCJW Center for the Child**. The Center's efforts: "Mothers in the Workplace," "Parents as School Partners," and the Family Day Care and Work/Family projects were embraced by sections nationwide, as well as by other organizations and institutions.

1989- Launched its **Choice Campaign** to mobilize sections to protect reproductive rights. That same year, hundreds of thousands of pro-choice supporters took to the streets for the March for Women's Equality/Women's Lives in Washington, DC. NCJW's president rallied the marchers with a stirring call to action – a role that NCJW presidents played at subsequent marches in 1992 and 2004.

1990- The Americans with Disabilities Act passed. NCJW was an early advocate of this bill

Began advocating in the fight for the rights of LGBTQ individuals. Supported marriage equality; an end to employment discrimination; and for hate crimes legislation that extended protections to those victimized because of their actual or perceived gender, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation.

SHALVA began as an organization to provide counseling and resources to Jewish women experiencing domestic abuse. North Shore Section supported their work and had a representative on their board for many years; also offered financial support.

North Shore Section co-founded Lake County Child Care Association.

Chicago and Evanston-Niles Sections started **Hello Israel**. They also trained volunteers to go into grade school classrooms and use the developed materials to teach children about Israel.

1991-Chicago Section started **The Cultural Arts for Kids Project** to provide teens living in foster care and/or on juvenile court probation, an opportunity to enjoy cultural enrichment programs.

1993-Published **“Whose Choice Is It?”** to combat Anti-choice lawmakers’ redoubled efforts to create obstacles to abortion access. It is a comprehensive education and action kit on the issue of parental involvement laws. A few years later, NCJW members across the country collected the signatures of 750 rabbis from over 40 states, and successfully urged the Senate to uphold President Clinton’s veto of the so-called “Partial Birth Abortion” bill. This extraordinary effort was cited on the floor of the US Senate.

1996- NCJW’s National project, **Strategies to Prevent Domestic Violence (SToP)**, facilitated education, outreach, advocacy, and community action.

Cindy Wolfson, President of the North Shore Section in 1996 and Nancy Liebman, President of the Chicago Section joined forces and invited eight other organizations that worked with domestic abuse in the state to form **The Silent**

Witness Exhibit of Illinois. It was the third exhibition in the country. This exhibition honored women in Illinois who had been murdered through acts of domestic violence. The powerful memorial consists of life-sized figures of women murdered through acts of domestic violence, as well as figures representing the small but very real numbers of male victims and the children left motherless. The Exhibit is available for use in various venues: indoors at conferences and lectures, schools, malls, hospitals, etc.; outdoors for marches and vigils. Many businesses and public places welcome the Exhibit.

1998- Silent Witness March in Washington was a continuation of the awareness project of **Silent Witness Exhibit**. Silent Witness representatives from every state came to the March to honor victims of domestic violence. Seminars followed the day after the March, providing education on how to help victims of domestic abuse. **Court Watch** was one of the recommendations that came out of this project. Cindy Wolfson worked hard during the last year of her presidency to organize **NCJW Court Watch** in Evanston, IL.

1998- NCJW Chicago and North Shore merged into NCJW CNS

1998-Began the **Women and Gender Studies Program** at Tel Aviv University, the only one in the Middle East. Graduate degrees programs have been added.

1999- Chicago North Shore Section's **Court Watch** program in conjunction with the Evanston/North Shore NOW, was set into motion to observe Domestic Violence court cases at the 2nd Municipal Court of Cook County in Skokie. Court Watch organizes community volunteers to monitor both criminal and civil court proceedings to make sure DV's victims get appropriate, efficient and effective protection and offenders are held accountable. The Court Watch Program adds a layer of accountability to law enforcement and the judiciary, and demonstrates the community's concern about these crimes. Court Watchers are impartial observers who monitor court proceedings, gather and report statistical data. This provides the court with information that is objective and unbiased.

2001- Launched the **BenchMark campaign** to ensure that only those individuals with a proven record of support for fundamental rights, including reproductive rights would be confirmed to the Federal Bench.

Chicago North Shore Section began **Gun Violence Prevention programs** in the Lake County schools. President Rae Luskin worked with U.S. Illinois Representative Jan Schakowsky, who held town halls addressing gun violence and passed out gun safety postcards designed by Rae. Rae received national recognition for this work from NCJW.

Chicago North Shore Section hosted **Women in Books**, a curated art exhibit of Jewish artists and themes. President Rae Luskin found a space in Deerfield, and section volunteers painted the walls. The press attended the opening in which the author, Judith Hoffberg, attended. The leaders of this project also trained section volunteers to be docents. The exhibition lasted for several months. Since then, the section has supported many programs that promote a better understanding of social issues through the arts. Sex trafficking has been a frequent theme, including many dramatic works by Mary Bonnet at Herstory Theater.

2004- Chicago North Shore Section initiated **Luggage for Freedom**. Dana Renay and Past President Rae Luskin brought the idea back from National's convention. It became a program of NCJW Next Generation (a subgroup of NCJW Chicago North Shore). LFF is a thriving program that provides a sense of dignity to women who are staying at and transitioning out of domestic violence and homeless shelters, by giving them a suitcase packed with some personal and household items.

Chicago North Shore began a **project about healthy relationships** with a Northwestern student and one from Deerfield high school. It was later expanded by SHALVA to become **Project Heart**. The program was developed by Caryn Kaplan, Cindy Wolfson, Rae Luskin and Bobby Gordon. They also trained other section volunteers to facilitate the program. Project Heart was instrumental in getting JUF's program, **JCARES**, off the ground. At the time, NCJW had a representative on both boards and were influential with all Jewish community abuse response solutions. It should be noted that Rae Luskin also represented NCJW and worked with **Safe Place** to design a questionnaire on violence for Lake Country high school students to fill out.

2009- Celebrated at the White House as President Obama signed the **Hate Crimes Law**.

2010- Proudly attended the signing of the repeal of the odious “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy after 13 years of working to end the ban on gays and lesbians in the military.

2013- Courts Matter Illinois "officially" got started in 2013 under the leadership of Carole Levine (representing NCJW IL) and Megan O'Malley (representing the Illinois branch of the National Employment Lawyers Association) and a number of other legal and nonprofit groups, including the Shriver Center, Common Cause, Citizen Advocacy Center in Elmhurst, Planned Parenthood and more. Carole and Megan have remained the leaders during these years. NCJW was key in founding Courts Matter IL and other Courts Matter initiatives in other states, as well. Although Courts Matter IL is a multi-organization coalition, NCJW is instrumental in providing support and training, and remains a leading member of the Courts Matter IL Steering Committee.

2014- Tri-County NCJW merged into NCJW Chicago North Shore

Chicago North Shore Section started the **Jewish Community Against Sex Trafficking (JCAST) Chicago** to expand sex trafficking awareness and knowledge. It works to educate Chicago’s Jewish, legal, and secular communities on sex trafficking, thereby strengthening the #MeToo movement and preventing other forms of gender-based violence. It provides awareness programming in synagogues and collaborates to reach interfaith audiences throughout the Chicagoland area.

2017- Donna Fishman and Robbie Schreiber began the Chicago North Shore **Salon program**. It serves as a meeting place to exchange ideas through small group discussions and leads to heightened awareness in many areas.

2019- Beth Najberg and Natalie Cabell started **City Salon (Spotlight)** as an extension of the **Salon program**. It has morphed into an evening with speakers and discussion that focus on advocacy issues. These monthly programs lead directly to action.

2020- Promote the Vote/Protect the Vote began as a National NCJW program. In the midst of the pandemic, Chicago North Shore Section Captains, Jan Schwartz and Melanie Greenberg, spearheaded a coalition to amplify our voice for safe and fair elections. **The Promote the Vote IL Coalition** currently has twenty-five

organizational members. They meet regularly to impact legislation on both State and Federal levels, and to communicate to voters updated voting information.

Chicago North Shore Section started **NCJW Gives Back** as a new Community Service initiative during the COVID-19 pandemic. President Debbie Vietinghoff led the way to provide this as an alternative to many of the ongoing service projects which were altered or on hold due to the pandemic. NCJW Gives Back found another way to respond to growing poverty by collecting and donating items needed by Chicago and Suburban residents facing food insecurity and reduced funds to survive.