JOIN ISRAEL INVITES YOU TO CELEBRATE 25 years OF RESCUING ISRAELIS IN CRISIS

THURSDAY
MAY 11, 2017
ABOUT JOIN ISRAEL

JOIN Israel resolves unaddressed problems affecting thousands in Israel through a model of collaboration. JOIN Israel creates social service and educational solutions for children-at-risk, youth-at-risk, families-at-risk, and elderly in crisis by tapping unused resources and enlisting strategic partners.

JOIN Israel (formerly Jewish Opportunities Institute – JOI) was founded in 1992 by Wharton grad Rabbi Stephen Bisk.
Champion of JOIN Israel’s project

LifeLine

Nearly one-third of Israel’s elderly live in severe financial distress. When emergency expenses strike, the usual struggle becomes unbearable. LifeLine leverages the capacity of 5 municipal welfare agencies and their assessments to resolve the absolutely most dire situations and subsidize essentials like medicine, medical transportation, emergency dental work, and other critical needs.
**Rick Smilow** is the President & CEO of the Institute of Culinary Education. Rick acquired the school, originally called Peter Kump’s New York Cooking School, in 1995. Since then, ICE has grown in size and stature, and in fall 2016 was named the #1 Culinary School in America by both The Daily Meal and Edinformatics. Prior to ICE, Rick held marketing and sales positions at Nabisco Brands and United Business Publications, and launched a startup in the pet food business.

Rick is a board member of JOIN Israel, City Harvest, STREETS International, and the International Association of Culinary Professionals, as well as the advisory board of the Yale Sustainable Food Program, and a long-time member of the Young Presidents’ Organization. He is also a board member and partner in Chef Daniel Boulud’s The Dinex Group, which operates 13 restaurants in cities across the globe, including New York, London, and Montreal. In 2012 Rick co-wrote Culinary Careers: How to Get Your Dream Job in Food, published by Clarkson-Potter.

Rick is a graduate of Emory University (BA) and Northwestern University (MBA). He lives in Westport, CT with his wife Debi, who is a partner in a children’s dental and orthodontics practice. They have three college-age children, Charlotte, Anna and Griffin.

Rick has been a supporter of JOIN Israel since 1999 and was introduced to the organization by fellow honoree Neil Wessan. Within JOIN Israel, Rick has been most drawn to **Project Lifeline**, an ongoing initiative to provide special-situation grants ranging from $250 to $1,000 to impoverished elderly in five Israeli cities. Rick notes that had his own Lithuanian great-grandparents gone to Israel instead of America, these individuals could have been his own relatives.
Champion of JOIN Israel’s project

**Buttress Education**

Underfunded schools without basic educational tools can torpedo a child’s advancement, and future. JOIN Israel safeguards the academic opportunity of 6,000 students in 25 schools by closing the most critical shortfalls of underfunded schools with computer centers, science programs, reading libraries and more.
Neil Wessan is Group Head and Managing Director of CIT Capital Markets, where he manages teams of market professionals who structure, price, underwrite and distribute financing packages. Founded in 1908, CIT (NYSE: CIT) is a financial holding company with more than $65 billion in assets. Neil’s areas of expertise include senior bank facilities, private high yield, project finance and mezzanine finance.

Neil previously served as Head of Capital Markets for Gleacher & Company, and Managing Director and Co-Head of Jefferies & Company’s Leveraged Loan Capital Markets and Syndications Group. He has held senior-level positions with various financial institutions over the course of his 30+ year career.

Neil received a BS in Economics from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and an MBA from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. He and his wife Sharon reside in Westport, Connecticut, where they raised their two children, Eric and Lauren.

A long-standing board member of JOIN Israel, Neil has also served on many other boards related to Jewish charities, including the Federation of Jewish Philanthropy of Upper Fairfield County (formerly UJA) and The Conservative Synagogue of Westport.

JOIN Israel’s ability to see results way beyond its scale has been the key attraction for Neil. Over his 25-year involvement, he is proud of the organization’s ability to punch above its weight and provide meaningful help to those in need.
JOIN Israel: The First 25 Years

Phase I (JOI)

Jewish Opportunities Institute (JOI) was founded in 1992 after two years of informal volunteer activity to meet the many pressing needs of the historic mass immigration of Russian Jews to Israel. The government was overwhelmed, and the mayhem was palpable. We began in the Talpiot neighborhood of Jerusalem, a hub of immigration with its two immigrant-absorption centers. Operating directly on the “front lines,” we triaged endless crises, solved individuals’ problems, set up group programs, and involved outside organizations. We expanded to other immigrant-dense Jerusalem neighborhoods, meeting the varied needs from A to Z.

Phase II (JOI)

In the mid-1990s we began a shift to formalize programs for second-stage immigrants. Hooked by the adrenaline rush of solving crises and producing outsized impacts well beyond our means, we rejected the transition to a classic or business-as-usual operation. Instead, we maintained our diversified programming – education, welfare, seniors, summer camps, career training, and (for another half-decade) Jewish identity. We also stuck with our culture of low-overhead, frugal spending, and high ROI focus, and kept our under-the-radar, do-what-needs-to-be-done-right-now attitude.

We were willing to step away where others stepped in. We would spin off programs that could be independent. We looked between the cracks to the pressing niche needs that were being ignored. We spurned waste, ineffective photo-op programs, and aesthetic trimmings. The way-things-are-done would be rigorously challenged. We embraced Pareto’s 80/20 rule – not “get the job done,” but rather, “do just enough to alleviate the
situation.” We embraced tried-and-true replication as a starting point, with innovation added to enhance the project, or just when there was no good available option.

In short – we became an urban M.A.S.H. unit.

**Phase III (JOIN Israel)**

Ten years ago, we began the final transition from an immigrant population-defined mission that embraced efficiency, to JOIN Israel’s present model-defined mission of ultra-efficient philanthropy. The most central component, reflected in the rebranded name, is to resolve new problems specifically by accessing and building on available latent resources of other bodies. JOIN Israel is a facilitator, an augmenter, a catalyst for new activity and a creator of strategic partnerships, matching expertise, experience, resources, clientele, connections, facilities, and infrastructure to synergistically tackle critical needs.

JOIN Israel collaborates with 100 partners from governmental and semi-governmental agencies, nonprofits, grassroots organizations, lay-leaders, and the recipients themselves.

JOIN Israel operates as an investment group – investing our efforts and resources only on the most critical and neglected crises with the highest impact per dollar, implementing least-risk solutions. Admittedly, this makes JOIN Israel harder to grasp. Being client-centered instead of donor-centered makes us a harder sell. Shunning “sexy” programs for disregarded needs reduces the glittery appeal. But there is absolutely no other way to accomplish as much and to resolve as many crises as we do. JOIN Israel boldly and proudly (and, yes, stubbornly) stays true to our lofty idealistic effectiveness and efficiency principles. We are grateful for our generous donors who have adopted our idealism and dedication to rescue Israelis in crisis during our first 25 years. Thank you! May we go from strength to strength!
JOIN Israel has a lot to show for its 25 years!

Absorption assistance to Russian immigrants

Academic camp keeps 7th and 8th-grade students sharp and engaged during the long summer break

After-school educational/enrichment programs

Assisted-living home for elderly immigrants

Big Brother tutorial program for children from poorest families

Career training

Charity soup kitchen serving daily hot meals and weekly food packages for poor families

Communal leadership course

Coping skills course for Russian teens in Israel without families

Crisis hotline for Russian-speakers

Crisis hotline training course

Cyber-programming curriculum added to computer centers

Divorcee support groups

Early-development nursery school

Jewish identity curriculum development

Jewish identity classes for new Russian immigrants

Elderly food assistance program

Emergency war relief during the Lebanon and Gaza Wars
Emotional intelligence enrichment groups for immigrant children
Empowerment course taught in Israeli jails
English ulpan for new-immigrant professionals
Family and marriage counseling
Family e-newsletters follow-up
Financial assistance for individuals and families
Free loan fund for business, housing, and families in crisis
Identity, relationship, and coping workshops for at-risk youth
Institute for Personal Development (IPD) courses in self-development, personal finance management, English, and coping skills
Intensive home-mentoring for dysfunctional families
Israel Literacy Initiative
Jewish community center for Russian immigrants
Jewish Educational Television programming in Russian
Jewish educator course for Russian-speakers
Jewish information Russian hotline
Life coach training
Life Cycles assists with bris, bar mitzvah, wedding, and funeral arrangements
Marriage and family therapist training course
Marriage and parenting workshops and seminars
Marriage enrichment educational videos and TV segments
Marriage workshop presenter training course
Middle School to University sends middle-school students to university courses in biotech, nanotech, robotics, and law
Mortgage consulting service at below-cost prices through Israeli-affiliated nonprofit
Night Owls preventative model for at-risk youth on the streets at night
Oncology support and financial services for Russian-speaking immigrants
Our Own Way innovative model engaging high-end delinquent youth who reject authority and programs
Preparatory courses for university-entrance psychometric exams
Project INCREASE extends senior programming
Project LifeLine critical assistance to most-needy impoverished elderly in 5 cities
Psychological and family counseling
Recreational summer school
Relationship educator training course
Relationship seminars for singles
Relationship workshops in high schools
Retreat for hyper-stressed mothers
Russian Heroes documentary trilogy
Russian-language books adapted, translated, published, printed, and distributed
Russian-language family newsletter

Russians Helping Russians elderly volunteer visits to hospitals and nursing homes

Buttress Education

* Computer centers/labs
* Electronics centers/labs
* English learning centers
* Physics programs
* Science labs
* Sports and music enrichment

Seniors enrichment program

Solutions-Advocacy resolves crushing, complex financial and legal issues

Solutions-Prevention educates the public to avoid scams and risky behaviors

Special education class

Stress management workshop

Summer camps and camp subsidies

Tri-lingual kindergarten (Russian/Hebrew/English)

Tutorial program for high school students falling behind

Wedding fund modestly assists penniless couples lacking family support

Women’s Jewish learning group

Work and Learn residential program for disenfranchised Anglo immigrant teens
JOIN’s Annual Impact

JOIN’s EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

**Buttress Education:**
6000 students in 25 schools raised their educational accomplishment and motivation

**Literacy:**
20 school libraries created
4500 students in reading programs

**Middle School to University:**
250 students academically inspired

SAFETY NET PROGRAMS

**Solutions-Advocacy:**
500 families extricated from acute financial and legal quagmires
30,000 families educated to avoid scams and risky behaviors
**Empowerment and Family**

- **120 families** helped with Marriage and Family Therapy and Counseling:
- **1200 people** assisted with Workshops – Relationships, Parenting, Empowerment, Pre-Marriage
- **350,000 people** gain from our Marriage and Family articles and lectures
- **100 hyper-stressed mothers** heal at our Women’s Retreat
- **350 families** receive emergency financial support
- **130 poor individuals and 100 families** every week eat $275,000 worth of food at our Soup kitchen
- **75 dysfunctional families** and **65 at-risk youth receive** rehabilitative mentoring
- **650 Impoverished youth** have a wholesome, fun and enriching day-camp experience

**LifeLine:**

- **350 elderly** given emergency assistance in **5 cities**

**Loans:**

- **30 families** buoyed with interest-free loans

**At-Risk Youth - Our Own Way:**

- **100 high-end delinquent youth** redirected towards positive endeavors

**Empowerment and Family**
I have always been impressed with Rabbi Steve Bisk’s entrepreneurial spirit and determined effort to find creative solutions for a range of issues among economically disadvantaged segments of Israel’s population. Steve identifies what are essentially “holes in Israel’s social safety net,” and directs creativity, funding and know-how to attempt to solve problems in those targeted communities. He does that by joining together partners and funders to focus on a range of selected projects that help children, families and the elderly.

I have always found it interesting and even poignant how JOIN Israel was founded and is run by a man whose background is not so different from my own. Steve grew up in Scarsdale, went to Penn, and was a member of a Jewish fraternity, ZBT. His father was in business. I was born in Westport, CT, went to Emory, and was in a Jewish fraternity, AEPi. My father was in business. But after college, our paths diverged. Whereas I entered the commercial world, Steve moved to Israel, where he studied and gained credentials as a Rabbi. Soon thereafter, he started JOIN Israel, which was originally known as the “Jewish Opportunities Institute.” The way I see it, for the past 25 years Steve has woken up in the morning and done what he can do to make the world a “better place.” To make a tangible impact on the lives of people in need. How many of us can say the same?

In building JOIN Israel, Steve has remained selfless, flexible, and hyper-focused on getting programs implemented, and not on organizational needs.

Debi and I thank our friends and family who have joined us here tonight, as well as others who could not be here but have donated to the organization. It is an honor to be recognized by JOIN Israel, and we wish Steve and the organization continued health and success in its mission.

Rick Smilow
Congratulations to JOIN Israel for 25 years of making an impact on Israelis in need and making such a positive change in so many lives. Rabbi Stephen Bisk has done a tremendous job finding ways to close the holes in Israel’s safety net and create programs that have grown way beyond our organization and expectations. I get great satisfaction in being a small part in helping Rabbi Bisk in his efforts to help the tens of thousands of lives that JOIN Israel has touched over its first quarter century.

Thank you to the JOIN Israel Board for this honor and congratulations to my JOINt Honoree, Rick Smilow who has been exceedingly generous with both his time and financial support.

I would like to thank my friends and family who have come to share in this celebration of JOIN Israel, as without your continued support many of the most troubled will be left in need. My wife Sharon and I look forward to seeing how the organization continues on its mission to help Israelis in crisis live better lives.

Wishing continued success,
Neil Wessan
From the tens of thousands of JOIN recipients to you and all those who have supported JOIN Israel – thank you!

And as you helped them, you have given to me. You have given me the capability to give to others. You have given me the tools to forge solutions to vexing problems. You have given me the weapons to battle forces that crush and incapacitate ... to right injustices ... to give opportunity ... to offer hope and comfort that they are not alone. You have given me meaning and purpose, satisfaction and contentment – more valuable than gold.

Thank you to Honorees Neil and Rick, and our entire Board. Thank you to our founding Board and successive Board members.

Thank you to Joel and Julie Greenblatt, Dan Nir and Jill Braufman, Fredrick, Daniel and Elihu Rose, and all our donors for your financial support and encouragement.

Thank you to Jeff Goldberg, John Levy, and all of Theta ZBT for your generous support.

Thank you to our NY office hosts: Yisroel Schulman, Jeff Keswin and Jeff Goldberg, and Allan and Regina Bisk.

Thank you to the pro bono professionals and consultants, nonprofits and agencies, volunteers and helpers who have given of their time and expertise.

Thank you to my parents, Allan and Regina Bisk, who helped start, fund and carry JOIN Israel – and me and my family.

Thank you to my wife, Yitti, and our children for always chipping in, adopting JOIN Israel with me, and selflessly allowing me to be less available at home.

Thank you to G-d who has connected you and your generosity to JOIN, who has guided and provided for 25 years of JOIN Israel.

Stephen Bisk
Congratulations to Dinner Honorees

Neil and Rick

Congratulations to JOIN Israel for 25 Years of good investments in the really important stuff.

Julie & Joel Greenblatt
Congratulations

Shmuel

on all you have accomplished.

Your daily commitment to helping others is an inspiration to all of us.

Jill Braufman
& Dan Nir
Neil:

Congrats on being honored by JOIN!

You and JOIN – both quietly “doing good” in the world and making a positive impact on all that you both touch!

Love,

Nicole & Jeff Goldberg
Join Platinum

Congratulations

Steve

on all that you’ve done in your 25 years of service!
You’ve made a huge difference in the communities that you serve.

Nancy & Bruce Newberg
Join Platinum

Congratulations to our good friend Neil Wessan and to JOIN Israel on its 25th Anniversary

Margie & Bryan Weingarten
Congratulations Steve, Rick and Neil!
for your commitment and leadership with respect to JOIN Israel

The Keswin Family
Join Silver

Congratulations to

Neil Wessan
& Dinner Chair

Jeff Goldberg
& JOIN Israel

on its 25th anniversary

Stuart & Randi Epstein
Join Silver

Congratulations Neil
you earn your honors!

David & Lisa Matlin
Dear Neil:

In recognition for all the good you do...

“No person was ever honored for what he received. Honor has been the reward for what he gave.”

– Calvin Coolidge

With much love & admiration,

Evan & Dana Schlessinger
In honor of

Neil and Jeff

for all their philanthropic efforts, and congratulations to JOIN Israel on its 25th anniversary!

Paul & Danielle Taubman
Join Silver

Congratulations

Neil Wessan and Rick Smilow

along with

JOIN Israel

on 25 Amazing Years

Marc & Mindy Utay
Mazel Tov to JOIN Israel on reaching this incredible milestone of 25 years of service! Yasher Koach to the Honorees on this well deserved honor.

Rabbi Stephen Bisk
your tireless work and dedication is a true inspiration.
May Hashem give you and your families the strength to continue your good work for many years to come.

Liba & Avi Benus & Family
Join Bronze

Congratulations to
Neil and Rick
on your hard-earned honor!

Congratulation to JOIN Israel on all you have accomplished in these 25 years!

Much more success going forward!

Elana & Aryeh Bourkoff
Congratulations to

JOIN Israel

on all the important work
that you continually do.

Michael & Patti Dweck
Join Bronze

In honor of

Kevin Fisher
& JOIN Israel
for 25 years of great work.

Michael & Amanda Feinsod
Congratulations to
Neil and Rick
& congratulations to
JOIN Israel
on all your great work.

Nancy and Jon Glaser
Join Bronze

Congratulations to
Rick and Neil
on this well deserved honor.

The Greenblatts
Congratulations to

Neil Wessan

for 25 years as a board member

Harvey L. Goldstein &
Goldberg Weprin Finkel
Goldstein LLP
We salute our good friend

Neil Wessan

for your commitment to JOIN Israel and educational enrichment.

We are inspired by your leadership and generous spirit!

Allison & Bennett Rosenthal
Congratulations to
JOIN Israel
on the big milestone, and to
Neil and Rick!

Ariel & Baruch Glaubach
Congratulations

Neil and Rick

on this well deserved honor.

We appreciate all that you do

on behalf of JOIN Israel.

Wishing you and your families continued

health and success.

Averim & Evelyn Stavsky
Join Benefactor

Congratulations to

Rick Smilow

for his honor at

JOIN Israel

Andrea & Loren Weiss
With Gratitude to

Neil Wessan & Rick Smilow

for their commitment to the continued success

of JOIN Israel.

And in Honor of

Rabbi Shmuel Bisk,

Board Members, Staff & Friends

of JOIN Israel on the Remarkable

Achievement of 25 Years of Dedicated &

Compassionate Service to the vulnerable &

families in need.

Dr. Lauren Bisk
Join Chai

Congratulations to

Rabbi Stephen Bisk

members of the

Board, friends, staff and clients

on your important accomplishments. I wish you many more years of continued success.

Mrs. Regina Bisk
Congratulations to JOIN Israel on your 25th Anniversary! Keep up the great work!

Ed Ilyadzhanov
Join Chai

We are delighted to support
JOIN Israel
and its important mission

Penny & David Klein
Join Chai

In honor of
Rabbi Stephen Bisk
for his creativity & passion as the driving force of JOIN, an organization which helps thousands of at-risk youth & families.

Also in honor of
Rick Smilow & Neil Wessan
for their continuing commitment in helping Rabbi Bisk fulfill his vision.

Yisroel Schulman
Mazal Tov to our dear friends

**Rick Smilow and Neil Wessan**
on this well deserved honor.

**Andrea & Dan Aaron**

Congratulations to

**Neil Wessan**
on a well deserved honor!

**Mike & Nelly Bly-Arougheti**
Congratulations to JOIN Israel, Rabbi Stephen Bisk, and tonight’s honorees, Neil and Rick, as we celebrate 25 years of rescuing Israelis in crisis.

Toni & Michael Asch
Congratulations, Neil
We are happy to JOIN you as you receive this well deserved honor.

Gail & Eric Cohen

Congratulations to well-deserving Honoree,

Neil and JOIN Israel.

David Chazen
To my two ZBT Brothers:

Congratulations, Neil!

Rabbi, thank you for choosing a path of giving!

Daniel Feigen
Congratulations to

Neil Wessan and Rick Smilow,
true Champions of the Join Israel Project

Harvey L. Goldstein & Ellen Schreiber

Congratulations & Best Wishes to Neal & Rick.
You are an inspiration to us all
in your support of JOIN Israel
With much admiration,
Larry Gordon, WRS Health
Congratulations to Neil and Rick, and to JOIN Israel on its 25th Anniversary.

Linda & Michael Gordon

Congratulations to Neil Wessan for the great work you do on behalf of JOIN Israel.

Ellen and David Horing
Congratulations to

Neil Wessan

for 25 years of service on behalf of JOIN Israel

Stephen and Lisa Lebovitz
Congratulations to

Neil and Rick

for their efforts in support of JOIN!

Rob Schuman

In honor of

Jeff Goldberg & Terry Schwartz

and JOIN Israel on its 25th anniversary.

Vicki and Rob Schwartz
Congratulations to Dinner Chair Jeffrey Goldberg and JOIN Israel on all they do for Israel and people in real need!

Susan and Terry Schwartz

Congratulations Neil and JOIN Israel for a big effort and a great cause.

Matthew Siegel
Congratulations to our dearest friend Neil Wessan on this wonderful honor. Your dedication to JOIN Israel is inspiring.

With love,

Stacy & David Techlin

In Honor of Jeff Goldberg

Thank You for all of the work you do on behalf of the ZBT Brotherhood.

James Weiss
Love watching my Scarsdale friend and ZBT Roommate’s good work at JOIN these many years.

Ned Weiser
DINNER HONOREES
Rick Smilow
Neil Wessan

DINNER CHAIR
Jeffrey Goldberg

DINNER COMMITTEE
Stuart Epstein
Michael Feinsod
Richard Greenblatt
Phil Heilberg
Milton Lewin
Alon Rosin
Wendy Sardinsky
Harold Schertz
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Baruch Glaubach

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Rabbi Stephen Bisk
JOIN PROGRAMS
JOIN ISRAEL INVITES YOU TO CELEBRATE

25 years
OF RESCUING ISRAELIS IN CRISIS

THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2017

6:30PM
Cocktail Reception

7:30PM
Dinner & Program

INSTITUTE OF CULINARY EDUCATION
Brookfield Place - 3rd Floor
225 Liberty Street, NYC

Business casual
$250 per person | $500 per couple | $125 per young professional (20's)

Registration: www.joinisrael.org/25gala.aspx