

## Jewish Family Service celebrates 90 years

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In this photo from 2012, Ron Berris, of Franklin, and Elan Pszenica, of West Bloomfield, have a friendly arm wrestling match. The mentorship pair had been together for three years. Jewish Family Service celebrates 90 years of outreach this year.

File photo by Donna Agusti

WEST BLOOMFIELD — A long-standing institution in West Bloomfield and metro Detroit, Jewish Family Service of Metro Detroit, is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year.

JFS had its beginnings over 100 years ago, when it was part of a synagogue, and it later became United Jewish Charities. From that charity, the Jewish Social Service Bureau was established in 1928 and later became known as Jewish Family Service.

“At the time, they faced a lot of anti-Semitism and couldn’t access the services and resources they needed,” said Shari-Beth Goldman, chief program officer for JFS. “The community had to come together to support one another.”

Goldman said that JFS was established in the city of Detroit, but it has moved over time to follow the Jewish community, and it finally established itself in West Bloomfield and Oak Park.

Now the nonprofit offers health and social services to Jewish and non-Jewish people all over metro Detroit, helping over 12,000 people each year.

Every year, JFS holds an annual event for its anniversary to raise money and educate the community about what the group does.

“It’s to celebrate the 90 years of Jewish Family Service’s service to the community, how it’s evolved and continues to evolve,” said Perry Ohren, CEO of JFS. “We’ve helped a lot of people with individual assistance and community assistance. We want to celebrate our longevity and look forward to what we’re doing next.”

The anniversary celebration will feature Jeannette Walls, the author of “The Glass Castle,” a memoir about Walls’ dysfunctional parents, who constantly moved the family around the country whenever they ran out of money.

Walls and her three siblings had to learn how to take care of themselves because their mother was an eccentric artist and their father was an alcoholic, she said.

“(Walls’ book) can be quite an illustration of the work JFS does,” said Ohren. “JFS does a lot of things for a lot of people ... neglect, abuse, poverty, hunger, social problems and challenges — JFS helps people to navigate those things.”

Ohren emphasized the fact that JFS is open to all people, regardless of faith.

Though JFS offers many services, there is a large focus on helping older adults in the community to stay active and social.

The anniversary event will be held May 30 at Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Southfield. Tickets for the 90th anniversary event, including Walls’ lecture, cost \$36 each or \$50 for two. Students can get tickets for \$10. Tickets are available at the JFS website, [www.jfs.org](http://www.jfs.org).