



Perry Ohren
and Arno
Michaelis



Steve Ingber,
Melissa Lax
and Larry Lax

Jewish Family Service Spotlight Event

Hundreds of community members attended Jewish Family Service's Spotlight Event on May 6 and were riveted by the storytelling of speaker Arno Michaelis, a former neo-Nazi who drew from his lived experience to share his message of the transformative power of compassion and understanding.

Arno talked about how, after dropping out of high school, his mother's friend Jack gave him a job printing T-shirts. Jack had lost family in the Holocaust, and when Arno's mom realized how her son was presenting himself at work — in a jacket covered with swastikas — she called Jack and said that it's OK if he wants to fire Arno. "Ah, he's a good kid," Jack said. "He's just going through a phase."

Not only did Jack let Arno keep his job, but he also gave Arno's friends jobs, too. Arno was very much aware that he and his skinhead buddies had a means to



Shelly Rubenfire, Mara Moss, Katie Small, Fran Hack

support themselves, thanks to a Jewish man. Only later in his life would he reconcile this dichotomy.

The forgiveness he was shown by Jack and others in his life, in addition to single parenthood, helped Arno embrace diversity and practice gratitude for all life. Today

he is a speaker, filmmaker and author of *My Life After Hate*. Arno also works as an interventionist at Parents 4 Peace, helping to lead people away from all violent extremist ideologies.

Prior to Arno's presentation, JFS staff shared personal experiences

working with community members. These stories of impact gave the audience a deepened understanding of the agency's mission and its impact on the community. Guests were moved by the impassioned words of resource center coordinator Boris Milter, clinical social worker Cici Syms, family support services supervisor Alanna Cohen, intensive case management social worker Sarah Graves, bilingual geriatric care manager Alla Woodington, and Evie Breuer, social worker on our Mind University Team.

Thanks to the generosity of the community, JFS raised nearly \$400,000 that will go toward supporting the community's greatest needs and allow us to provide vital services to the most vulnerable. **JN**

It's not too late to support the efforts of Jewish Family Service. If you'd like to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those most in need, visit jfsdetroit.org/donate.