

JCOGS Bulletin

JEWISH COMMUNITY OF GREATER STOWE

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Where We've Been...

A History of JCOGS

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Collaborative artwork by our Olam Chesed students.

A knock at the door

One day in 1993, there was a knock on Deborah Flateman's door. She and her family had recently moved to Vermont and were living in a house off Maple Run Lane, up near Sterling Valley. Flateman opened the door, and in walked her new neighbor, Susan Federspiel, who welcomed her to town.

Flateman isn't Jewish, but her husband was, and their social circle in Rhode Island had been largely Jewish. Flateman recalls that first neighborly visit: "She came in and we started talking about how we're missing something here. She said, 'I can tell you that there's a small group of families in the area

who get together periodically to do Shabbat dinners. It's an informal kind of group."

Legend has it that it all began with a potluck at Betty Polow's house in Morrisville in 1987, although there is some debate whether it was a Passover Seder or a Rosh Hashanah dinner. Polow thinks it was probably Rosh Hashanah. "I thought, 'Let's see if we can get a few people to come,'" Polow says. "I had a little article in the local paper and a couple people showed up. They all came to the potluck and that's how we got started."

It was haphazard for the first several years, with an event here or there. A Sukkot gath-

ering in Federspiel's backyard, a Tashlich service in the spot that would eventually become the Quiet Path. But Flateman and Federspiel wanted something more consistent, and along with newcomer Toni Barr, they decided to organize a meeting.

Area Jews weren't easy to find. After all, it hadn't been that long since Stowe was a restricted town with signs indicating that Jews and dogs were not allowed in the hotels. "Jews were not welcome in many instances," Gretchen Besser explains. "My uncle used to come here to ski, before there was a lift. Climb the mountain; one run a day. And there was no place he could stay except some farm house."

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