

CENTER FOR SMALL TOWN JEWISH LIFE



Dear Center for Small Town Jewish Life Community,

The spring newsletter is brimming with stories of Jewish life here in Maine. As you read through it, we hope you will take pride in the part you've played to make our spring programs so meaningful and rich. Whether you attended Community Conversations and are working with us to imagine a more inclusive Waterville, or sat with students to learn words of Torah at Beit Midrash, or supported our programming with a generous financial contribution—every person in our CSTJL community is vital to this work. *Todah*—thank you!

Even as we reflect on and learn from this past season, we are busily preparing for the Maine Conference for Jewish Life, June 21-23 in Waterville. If you still need to register for the conference, [please click here](#). We can't wait to see you there and to celebrate our community together.

L'hitraot, see you soon,

The Center Staff



CENTER FOR SMALL TOWN JEWISH LIFE

Cultivating Jewish Community
in Rural Maine and Beyond



Our Bodies and Our Faith

As I walked into our synagogue board meeting in May, I found an American flag planted on our lawn. It was not placed there by a congregant. Now, maybe this flag just happened to find its way to our *shul*, or maybe our neighbors were trying to communicate something to us. I don't know what the intent was, but for me the flag's presence sparked many thoughts, questions, and a shadow of concern. After the shootings in Pittsburgh and San Diego, and the mosque fire in New Haven, small gestures carry a big impact. What was the flag meant to convey, if anything? Something about whether or not our 117-year-old congregation belongs in Waterville? About the role of Jews in America? I cannot say.

I wish I could have had a conversation with the person who planted that flag, to understand their views, their intent. I would tell them the stories of our congregation's veterans, and the American flag that has always stood next to our *bimah*. I would talk with them about the independent, Jewish-family-owned department stores that made Waterville great in the 1960s, and our community's commitment to supporting Waterville's social service organizations. We belong here. We are rooted here. We have been here for over a century and are not going anywhere. We will continue to make central Maine vibrant with our traditions, commitments, and values.

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Colby

The Center for Small Town Jewish Life

Colby College

4270 Mayflower Hill

Waterville, ME 04901

207-859-4271

jewishlife@colby.edu

<http://www.colby.edu/jewishlife/>

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Center for Small Town Jewish Life | 4270 Mayflower Hill, Waterville, ME 04901

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