

JAFCO Hosts Annual Mother's Day Luncheon at Boca West Country Club

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More than 500 guests gathered to honor inspiring women and support vulnerable children and families in the community

Boca Raton, FL – On Thursday, May 7, 2026, JAFCO hosted its annual Mother's Day Luncheon at Boca West Country Club in Boca Raton. More than 500 guests gathered to celebrate motherhood while raising critical funds for JAFCO's lifesaving programs and services.

The event honored JAFCO's 2026 Women of the Year — Mildred Lidov, Suzanne Block, Heather Barkin, Samantha Saltz and fourth generation Godparent Haeley Yael Saltz — for their support of JAFCO's mission to care for children and families impacted by abuse, neglect, trauma and developmental disabilities. JAFCO Godparents spiritually “adopt” abused and neglected children to ensure they have everything they need.

Attendees enjoyed boutique shopping, raffles, lunch and an emotional program highlighting the impact JAFCO continues to make in the lives of children and families. Stories of healing and love reminded guests that motherhood is not only defined by birth, but by the people who step forward to care for a child when they need it most.

One of the program's most moving moments featured a heartfelt conversation between JAFCO Chief Clinical and Operations Officer Wendy



L - R: Heather Barkin, Suzanne Block, Haeley Saltz, Mildred Lidov, Samantha Saltz



L - R: Suzanne Block, Josh Saltz, Stephanie Block, Samantha Saltz, Haeley Saltz, Yale Saltz



JAFCO alum Justin Leo and JAFCO Chief Clinical Officer Wendy Jenkins



L - R: Tami Isenberg, Susan Lyman, Nancy Marino, Chris Miller, Gayle Lichtman, Jody Sternfield, Debbie Bacharach



The JAFCO newly installed Godparents



Lighting of the Candles of Hope

Jenkins and JAFCO alumnus and board trustee Justin Leo, who shared his personal journey of loss, healing, and finding family through JAFCO.

“Not all mothers are the ones who give us life... some are the ones who step in and help us live it,” said Leo during his remarks. “Today, we honor every woman who chooses to show up for a child... whether they are mothers by birth, by choice, or by heart,” he added.

Jenkins reflected on the many forms motherhood can take, sharing, “Motherhood is not defined by blood, but by the love, compassion and care we give — and the impact we make on a child's life.”

The luncheon concluded with the tradition of lighting JAFCO's Candle of Hope, five candles symbolizing the five children in the United States who die each

day as a result of abuse or neglect. The ceremony served as a powerful reminder of the importance of JAFCO's mission.

During the program, guests viewed moving stories highlighting the children and families positively impacted through JAFCO's comprehensive services, including the JAFCO Children's Village, foster care and adoption programs, the Children's Ability Center and Eagles' Haven Wellness Center.

“Being a mother is not just a title. It's a verb. It's something you do,” said Justin Kohlhagen, PsyD, CEO of JAFCO, during the luncheon. “It's showing up, staying when things are hard and putting a child's needs ahead of your own, over and over again. For nearly 34 years, JAFCO has been committed to helping children find safe, loving, forever homes – children



Helene Weicholz and Ellen Cohen

who have faced challenges no child ever should.”

The JAFCO Children's Village offers emergency shelter and group homes for children who have experienced abuse and neglect, while its foster care, adoption and family preservation programs help create stable, loving homes. JAFCO's Children's Ability Center supports families raising children with developmental disabilities through respite care, enrichment and resources, and Eagles' Haven Wellness Center continues to provide trauma-informed wellness services and mental health support to South Florida communities.

Funds raised from the Mother's Day Luncheon will directly support JAFCO's ongoing programs and services, ensuring vulnerable children and families continue to receive the care and support they need.

ABOUT JAFCO:

JAFCO is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing care, safety, and support to children and families impacted by abuse, neglect, trauma, or developmental disabilities. JAFCO's Jewish Children's Village, Children's Ability Center, and Eagles' Haven Wellness center are available 24/7/365 for families in need in our community. Their mission is to give every child a place to belong.. Learn more at jafco.org.

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Thank you to Boca Raton Bridal for underwriting the JAFCO VIP raffle, and for showcasing your beautiful gowns