

# PRESS RELEASE

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## ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS CELEBRATE JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH



Pictured are (from left to right, front row) District 5 Freeholder Carlos Pomares, Freeholder At-Large Patricia Sebold, Linda Scherzer, and Rabbi Marc Katz. (From left to right, back row) District 1 Freeholder Robert Mercado, Freeholder President At-Large Brendan Gill, Freeholder Vice President District 2 Wayne Richardson, and Freeholder At-Large Rufus Johnson. PHOTO BY KYALO MULUMBA

(Newark, NJ) – On May 15, 2019, the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders held their annual Jewish Heritage Month Celebration at the Hall of Records in Newark, New Jersey. During the event, the Freeholders recognized the notable contributions of Jewish residents in the county. This year’s honorees were **Linda Scherzer**, of the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest New Jersey, and **Rabbi Marc Katz** of Temple Ner Tamid in Bloomfield.

Freeholder President Brendan Gill began the program with remarks that emphasized the importance of celebrating Jewish Heritage from a cultural, social, and educational standpoint. Freeholder At-Large Patricia Sebold expressed how proud she was, as a Jewish American, to be the catalyst for the Board’s celebration. She spoke to the diversity of faiths and ethnicities in the county, and invoked Essex County’s often used tag line, “Our Diversity is Our Strength”.



Linda Scherzer and Freeholder Patricia Sebold

**Linda Scherzer** is the Director of the Community Relations Committee for the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest New Jersey. As director, she mobilizes the Jewish community on national, state, and local issues, and helps advance the interests and agenda of the Jewish people. She also reaches out across religious and ethnic lines, building relationships with Christian and Muslim groups, to advance issues of common concern.

For the last 17 years, she has led efforts to educate, engage, and challenge Jewish high school students to lead the pro-Israel community as they enter college. Her efforts have helped strengthen students' knowledge and confidence to stand up for Israel amidst growing anti-Semitism on campuses across the country.

Prior to her work in the Jewish community, she was a CNN correspondent in Israel and spent eight years covering the Arab-Israeli conflict. Among the stories she covered were the Intifada, Gulf War and Mideast Peace Process.

During her acceptance remarks, she stated how moved she was by the honor, and the sense of joy felt by her and her family. At the same time, she conveyed to all in attendance, "During great times of joy, we must always remember the pain of others." She touched on the tragedies of the mass shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, and the attacks on mosques and schools all over the country. With great resolve, she affirmed, "These attacks compel us to re-double our efforts to stand up, to reach out, to re-assert the principles of tolerance and love for others that make us who we are."

**Rabbi Marc Katz** is the Rabbi at Temple Ner Tamid in Bloomfield, New Jersey. Before entering rabbinical school, he worked as a Legislative Assistant for the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. In this role, he lobbied for environmental protection and health care reform.

Since becoming Rabbi at Temple Ner Tamid, he has been involved in a host of projects and initiatives. In addition to leading services, providing pastoral care, teaching, and leading life cycle moments for congregants, he helped launch the congregation's Leadership Series. This includes a monthly learning series on Israel, as well as inviting elected officials to the temple to discuss social justice issues. Additionally, he has launched a campaign to assist undocumented immigrants in obtaining drivers' licenses.



Rabbi Marc Katz and Freeholder President Brendan Gill

He is the author of the book "The Heart of Loneliness: How Jewish Wisdom Can Help You Cope and Find Comfort", which was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award. He has written for numerous publications including; Tablet Magazine, the

CCAR Journal, and is a contributing writer for The Sacred Encounter: Jewish Perspectives on Sexuality.

Rabbi Katz thanked the Board for being honored, and expressed his interest to work with them on bringing awareness to issues such as criminal justice reform, access to healthcare, and ensuring clean water for all of Essex County. He asserted that service of others is an intrinsic part of the Jewish faith. If we fail to help those around us, Rabbi Katz stated, “We are not living out the mandate of our tradition to not stand idly by while our neighbor suffers.”

Rabbi Katz lives with his wife Ayelet and son Lev in Montclair. He can often be found running or bike riding, and is always excited to talk about the latest books you may have read.

Deputy County Administrator Jay Coltre offered greetings on behalf of County Executive Joe DiVincenzo, and the audience was graced with a performance of “The Star Spangled Banner”, as well a rendition of the National Anthem of Israel, “Hatikvah”, by Cantor Meredith Greenberg of Temple Ner Tamid. Rabbi Faith Joy Dantowitz of Temple B’nai Abraham in Livingston, New Jersey delivered the opening and closing prayers of the ceremony.

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