

2022 Online Journal  
*Points of Light – Celebrating 18 Years*



*Online Journal Sponsored by*  
**Dr. Victor and Kim Avis**  
*2022 L'Chaim Exceptional Leadership  
Award Recipients*

Since 2004, the Chai Society has worked to strengthen the ties between the College and the Jewish community and to support co-curricular activities. We are proud to share that Jewish life on Wagner's campus is thriving. We have an active Chai Society Steering Committee; a growing Hillel with remarkable youth leadership; the Wagner College Holocaust Center is awakening youth to the ramifications of prejudice, anti-Semitism, and racism; program offerings in the community are expanding, and scholarships have been awarded to students in need. The Mitzvah Awards recognize individuals who have enhanced and promoted Jewish life on campus and within the broader community. All proceeds raised through this virtual event will be used to advance the mission of the Chai Society, and serve as a true mitzvah opportunity. Your support is an act of Tikkun Olam (repairing the world.) Thank you!

## 2022 Mitzvah Award Honorees

Dr. Victor and Kim Avis - *L'Chaim Exceptional Leadership Award*

Richmond County District Attorney Michael McMahon - *Allan Weissglass Civic Leadership Award*

Shirley Gottesman - *Courage Award*

Margot Capell - *Courage Award*

Hannah Steiner - *Courage Award*

Gregg Breinberg, M'98 P.S. 22 Chorus - *Spirit of Change Award*

Elisabeth Pollicove '22 - *Next Generation Award*



# Dr. Victor and Kim Avis

## *L'Chaim Exceptional Leadership Award*

This special award is being presented to Kim and Victor Avis who served as Co-Chairs of the Wagner College Chai Society for 14 years. Under their dedicated leadership, Jewish life on Wagner's campus is thriving. Wagner has an active and growing Hillel with remarkable youth leadership; the Wagner College Holocaust Center is awakening youth to the ramifications of prejudice, antisemitism, and racism; program offerings in the community are expanding; scholarships are being awarded to students in need, and the Heroines of the Holocaust symposium is shaping up to be an international success. These achievements would not be possible without the Avis' commitment to the Chai Society and the greater Staten Island community.

*Kim and Victor Avis were married in 1990 with a ten-year plan to move from Staten Island and to settle in North Carolina. Upon starting their family in 1992, and raising their three daughters on Staten Island, the vision changed. Kim and Victor fell in love with many people and causes on our Island and together they decided that this would be their home and their community. Sharing a very close and loving relationship with their parents, Nancy and Ron Avis, who modeled community involvement, leadership, and philanthropy, Kim and Victor soon chose to become involved with our Staten Island community and make their mark.*

*While in their early marital years, Victor was preoccupied with learning and practicing his profession of dentistry, and some last vestiges of competitive golf, Kim was the first to become active in the Staten Island community. She joined the JCC's woman's division, rose to become the president of this group and soon joined the JCC board. Kim has remained a member of the JCC board for 25 years. When their three girls were in elementary school, Kim often volunteered as the quintessential class mom who would serve as the liaison between the teachers and class parents. Victor meanwhile began a 10 year stretch as his girls' basketball coach...at times coaching three teams for the JCC intramural league and girl's travel CYO basketball. As a new JCC flagship building was being envisioned, Kim and Victor were selected to chair the Future Leaders Group for the JCC...an initiative to help identify and develop future leaders for the Staten Island JCC. Following Kim's leadership example, Victor joined the JCC board of directors as well. He also joined the board of Temple Israel and chaired the committee for membership for both the JCC, and Temple Israel.*

*In 2004, Kim and Victor joined their dad and Wagner provost, Devorah Lieberman, and other community leaders to create the Chai Society at Wagner College. The Chai Society initially was envisioned as a group that would help to build ties between the Staten Island Jewish community and Wagner College. Its humble early vision was to improve Jewish life for Wagner students, attract more Jewish applicants to Wagner, provide scholarships, and develop a new source of charitable giving. Elaine and Dennis Bloomfield succeeded Ron as the Chai Society's next leaders. Then in 2009, Kim and Victor became the new chairpersons and served as such for the next 13 years.*

*During this time the Chai Society mission and vision has evolved and become increasingly transformative. With the Chai board, and full support from Wagner's presidents, provosts, administrators, and professors the work of Chai has supported the development of a campus Hillel, Jewish speaker series, and events, the creation of scholarships, and the development of the Wagner College Holocaust Center. Celebrating the Chai Society's 18th anniversary, Kim and Victor are proud of the new Holocaust Center exhibit space in the Wagner College Student Union that celebrates women heroines of the Holocaust and Staten Island survivors. This is a new milestone but behind it are years of developing a strong Wagner College-Jewish community bond, building relationships with Staten Island Holocaust survivors, and programs with survivors, Wagner students, and Staten Island middle schools. During the last decade, Kim and Victor were also chairpersons of the JCC's public phase of their capital campaign; Victor was board chair at Staten Island Academy for three years and served on their board for 12 years.*

*In 2021, Kim and Victor and their oldest daughter, Sydney, have founded the Airway Revolution Foundation. This Foundation has forged a partnership with Columbia University to transform the future education of dentists and physicians with respect to airway disorders; create prevention and treatment programs for underserved persons and build the first collaborative Center for the diagnosis and treatment of airway disorders. An important feature of the Airway Revolution Foundation, Airway: the Battle to Breathe is a documentary series that will be released in 2024. This series will create global awareness and education about the airway disorder epidemic and its impact on our foremost chronic health issues. Through all their community work and involvement, the most rewarding aspect for Kim and Victor is to see how their three daughters are developing to become their own impactful leaders. Kim and Victor are honored to receive the Wagner College Chai Legacy Award and thank the members of the Chai Board over the 18-year history and Wagner College for their support.*



# Richmond County District Attorney Michael McMahon



## *Allan Weissglass Civic Leadership Award*

Recognizes an individual committed to *Tikkun Olam*, “repairing the world,” through their persistent efforts to make our community stronger and more just. This award is given in memory of business and community leader Allan Weissglass.

*District Attorney Michael E. McMahon took office in 2016, working to build a modern prosecutor's office focused on precision prosecution, neighborhood-centered crime prevention, and bridge-building between law enforcement and the community. Utilizing his broad and deep experience in law and public service, DA McMahon has addressed the issues most affecting Staten Islanders: From the opioid epidemic to traditional street crime and gun violence; from domestic violence to economic crime; from crimes against our children to assaults on women and seniors, and creating a new unit to protect animals, DA McMahon continues to work with partners across law enforcement and the community to drive down crime numbers and keep Staten Islanders safer.*





# Shirley Gottesman

## *Courage Award*



Celebrates an inspirational individual who personifies strength and resilience in overcoming adversity and prejudice and is a role model to others.



*Growing up in Záluz, Czechoslovakia, Shirley Gottesman (b.May 6, 1927) lived on a farm and enjoyed Purim and other holidays with her grandparents Malka and Zalman Berger, her parents Laizer and Blima and siblings. During the war, she moved to nearby Munkacs to train to be a seamstress like her mother. In April 1944, Shirley's entire family was forced to move to the ghetto. Worse, they were then packed into a cattle car for three days to Auschwitz. Just 17 years old, Shirley was assigned to Kanada, an area near crematoria IV where clothing was sorted that belonged to those Jews who were killed. When she found her mother's shoe among the belongings of those Jews sent to the gas chambers, she knew the Nazis had murdered her. She sometimes found extra bread or sardines. Shirley was an eyewitness to the October 1944 uprising in Auschwitz.*

*Shirley married and came to the U.S. in 1949. Lester born in 1952. Lori born in 1957.*

*Her experiences have been published as Red Polka-Dotted Dress: A Memoir of Kanada II.*



# Margot Capell

## *Courage Award*

Celebrates an inspirational individual who personifies strength and resilience in overcoming adversity and prejudice and is a role model to others.



*In 1934, 14-year-old Margot Wolf (b. October 10, 1920) was denied the honor to be the valedictorian of her grade school in Rülzheim, Germany under the Nazi Regime. Despite laws that barred Jews from the movie theaters, one neighbor allowed Margot to sneak in to see films starring her favorite actress Shirley Temple. Margot became an eyewitness to Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, barely fleeing the local synagogue in time. Fearing for her safety, Margot's mother sent her at age 18 to England. She spent a year there before coming to the United States as a refugee. Margot's brother Paul built a new life in Sweden, but her parents were killed. As a refugee, she began a new life and married Eric Capell, a World War II U.S. veteran whose family had fled Germany too. In October 2021, Margot turned 101 years old.*



# Hannah Steiner

## *Courage Award*



Celebrates an inspirational individual who personifies strength and resilience in overcoming adversity and prejudice and is a role model to others.

*Hannah (born 11/29/1925) grew up in the city of Oradea, Romania, where she helped her mother Helen with sewing and played the violin. In 1941, after the Hungarian police took away Helen's license, they moved to Budapest, Hungary. There, Hannah fell in love at 15-years old with Abraham Steiner, whom she met at a dance. Abraham was taken to a labor camp when the Germans invaded Hungary in 1944. Hannah credits her mother's love for her survival after their deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau. To distract from acute hunger, "we were cooking...verbally. We cooked! We said: my mother did this and you did this." Tragically, they were transferred to Bergen-Belsen, where Helen died of typhus in Hannah's arms after liberation. Weighing 62 pounds, Hannah was taken to Sweden to recuperate.*

*She was reunited in Israel with Abraham after seven years of separation. They got married August 22, 1950 and remained together for 60 years. Her first son Michael was born in Israel in 1951. Four years later, Jake was born 1955. After living in Israel (Holon), they sought better employment opportunities. They moved to San Paulo to be with her brother Julius Abraham, who was also an Auschwitz survivor and had moved to Brazil. After a few years, they moved to Brooklyn where their daughter Helene was born in 1963. Hannah continued to work as a seamstress and Abraham worked as a jeweler. They were among the early members of Young Israel of Canarsie. In 2000, they moved to Staten Island where she participated in Cafe Europa at the Alan and Joan Bernikow Staten Island Jewish Community Center.*

*Initially hesitant to share her story, Hannah took tremendous pride in speaking with the Wagner College Holocaust Center to students in public schools. She later spoke at several yeshivas as well. She developed meaningful relationships with Wagner College students who heard her tragic story. She received many meaningful notes from students of all ages. Her life was reenacted on the stage in the production of Rise Up: Young Holocaust Heroes (St. George Theater, 2019) and featured in the NY-Emmy winning series Where Life Leads You. Hannah has seven grandchildren (Adam, Craig, Eric, Daniella, Rebecca, Natani and Mark) and nine great-grandchildren.*



# Gregg Breinberg, M'98

## P.S. 22 Chorus

### *Spirit of Change Award*



Honors a leader with visionary and innovative approaches to transforming the lives of others in the most profound ways and motivating and mobilizing others for a common purpose.

*The PS22 Chorus of Staten Island, directed by Gregg Breinberg, is the Webby Award-winning internet choral sensation ft. 65 public school fifth graders. PS22 Chorus was formed in the year 2000 - an ever-changing group of 5th graders from a public elementary school in Staten Island, New York. PS22 is NOT a school for the arts, and the chorus is not a magnet program. PS22 Chorus simply features ordinary children achieving extraordinary accomplishments. Indeed, the PS22 Chorus videos have garnered hundreds of millions of views across YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. The group has been featured on Nightline, Oprah, The View, Sesame Street, The Today Show, and perhaps most notably the 2011 Academy Awards! The kids have sung with Katy Perry, Carrie Underwood, Leslie Odom Jr., Tori Amos, and a host of other phenomenal artists. The mission of the multicultural group is to model harmony, both musically and otherwise, and to serve as a reminder that through hard work, anything is possible!*





Elisabeth Pollicove '22

*Next Generation Award*



Recognizes a student, devoted to Jewish life and to Holocaust education, who performs mitzvot, “good deeds,” and stands up for others.

*Elisabeth Pollicove is a psychology and biology student whose passion for learning has no limits. As a member Wagner College's graduating 2022 class, her past four years have been filled with lessons of academics, friendship, and leadership. Her love of Judaism has led her to Wagner's Hillel and Chai Society. She is currently planning on attending an accelerated nursing program post-graduation, and will miss Wagner greatly.*

Congratulations to all of the 2022 Community Mitzvah Award honorees. Wagner College is proud to recognize your efforts to promote Jewish life on campus and beyond. We are grateful to the Steering Committee for their ongoing leadership and support, which is a true act of Tikkun Olam (repairing the world). Today, we celebrate the 2022 Community Mitzvah Award honorees:

**Victor and Kim Avis**

**Richmond County District Attorney Michael McMahon**

**Shirley Gottesman**

**Margot Capell**

**Hannah Steiner**

**Gregg Breinberg, M'98 P.S. 22 Chorus**

**Elisabeth Pollicove '22**

Congratulations once again!

*Angelo and Mary Araimo*

**Congratulations to all of our 2022 Chai Society Mitzvah Award Honorees. On behalf of the Chai Society Steering Committee, we are proud to support your leadership and service throughout the community and beyond. This recognition tonight serves as a true mitzvah opportunity.**



*Fern and David Zagor*

May the One who blessed our ancestors whose actions sustained the Jewish people, bless those who have given so much of their time and treasure to help strengthen the bonds between Wagner College and the Jewish community on Staten Island. As those who have dedicated themselves to this sacred purpose have inspired us, so may they be nourished by the ongoing mission of the Chai society to provide education to successive generations on the ramifications of prejudice, anti-Semitism, and racism in order to promote openness to all. We offer thanks for the dedication and giving spirit that animates our honorees and those who have given so generously in their honor. May the Holy One of Blessing continue to grant success to their endeavors and take them from strength to strength. For their dedication to our community, may God lift their hearts and grant them wholeness, fulfillment, and peace.

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם עוֹטֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתַפְאָרָה:**

**Blessed are You, Creator of all, Who brings splendor into our midst.**

*Rabbi Michael Howald*

Congrats to the other honorees...we are humbled to be recognized alongside such incredible individuals.



We are proud and grateful to be a part of the Chai Society and its impactful work.

Victor and Kim Avis



Congratulations Vic and Kim. I am very  
proud of you and all your great work in the  
community.

I love you!

*Dad*





**Mom and Dad,  
We are so proud of all  
you do for our Staten  
Island community.**

**We are the luckiest  
three in the world to  
have you both as  
parents, role models  
and friends. We love  
you both! Mazel Tov!**



**The Chai Society congratulates**

**Elisabeth Pollicove'22**



**The "Next Generation Award" recognizes your devotion to Jewish life, Israel and Holocaust education.**

**Your commitment to studying in and sharing your love of Israel is particularly noteworthy. You are exemplary in the performance of who mitzvot, “good deeds”, and standing up for others.**  
*Mazel Tov!*



## Congratulations to the honorees

Dr. Victor and Kim Avis

Richmond County District Attorney Michael McMahon

Shirley Gottesman

Margot Capell

Hannah Steiner

Gregg Breinberg , M'98 P.S. 22 Chorus

Elisabeth Pollicove

With much admiration,

Dr. Richard Guarasci , President Emeritus (H'19)

&

Dr. Carin Guarasci (H'19)



# Wagner College Hillel proudly congratulates *Elisabeth Pollicove '22*



Wagner College Hillel strives to inspire Jewish students on campus to embrace their Jewish identity, culture, and religion and to promote education about Israel while sharing their traditions with other students who have different beliefs and backgrounds. Thanks to the Chai Society for all your support and enthusiasm for Jewish life on campus.

A very special thanks to Steering Committee member, Damian Slattery for sponsoring Wagner College Hillel's tribute.

**We are grateful to today's honorees for all  
the important work you do in our community!**

**Mazel tov!**



Joan & Alan Bernikow  
Jewish Community Center  
of Staten Island

***Susan Sappin***  
***President, Board of Directors***

***Orit Lender***  
***Chief Executive Officer***

Mazel Tov

Kim and Victor Avis

Two Very Special People

*Arlene and David Sorkin*

# Mazel Tov to Victor, Kim and the Chai Society



*With respect and appreciation,  
Roger Auerbach, Devorah Lieberman, Allie and Emery*



# Richmond University Medical Center

355 Bard Avenue Staten Island, NY 10310

844-934-CARE

[RUMCSI.org](http://RUMCSI.org)

***Congratulations to all of this year's  
honorees!***



## ***New Emergency Department opening this summer:***

- 35,000 sq. ft., more than double the size of our existing ED
- Expanded trauma care and triage units
- Specialty areas for pediatrics and urgent care
- New Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) suites
- Larger ambulance bays and patient drop-off area

*Congratulations to Victor & Kim Avis  
on receiving the  
Chai Mitzvah L'Chaim Special Leadership Award!*

*Thank you for your longstanding leadership & generosity to the  
Chai Society & to the Wagner College Holocaust Center  
and most importantly thank you for your friendship!*

*Congratulations to the 2022 Chai Mitzvah Honorees!*

*Robert & Nancy Tricorico*



**Congratulations to Victor & Kim!**  
*And to all Mitzvah Award honorees*

**Kim and Victor embody the mission of the Chai Society in word and deed.**

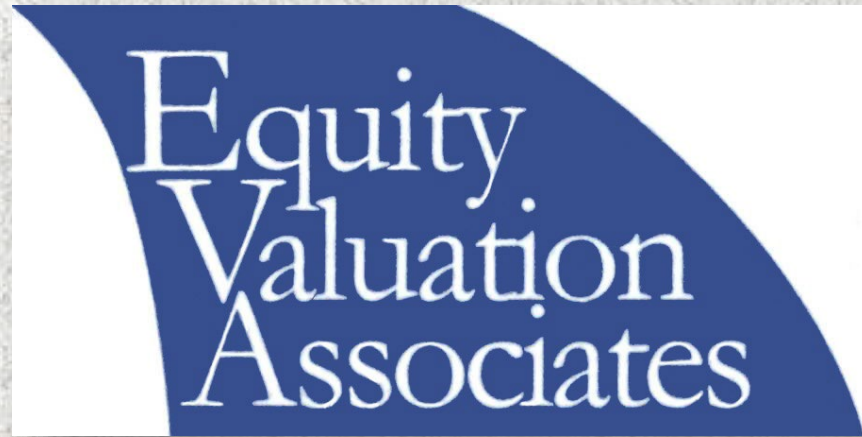
**With boundless enthusiasm. A rigorous intellect. A relentless passion. They don't push us to do better, they pull us in a better direction. They lift us. One by one. Until we are, as one, all better for it.**

**Bless them.**  
*Damian Slattery*

IN RECOGNITION OF THE HONOREES  
WHO HAVE HELPED MAKE  
THE CHAI SOCIETY AN INTEGRAL  
PART OF OUR COMMUNITY

*SUSAN AND JACK BENDER*

**Congratulations Dr. Victor and Kim Avis, DA Michael McMahon and Points of Light Recipients. Your dedication promoting Jewish life and culture in our community and beyond are exemplary. You are role models and heroes to our community.**



My sincere congratulations to the recipients of the 2022 Community Mitzvah Awards!

Dr. Victor & Kim Avis

Michael McMahon

Shirley Gottesman

Margot Capell

Hannah Steiner

Gregg Breinberg

Elisabeth Pollicove

Thank you for being such an inspiration to us all.

Kol ha'ka'vod,

Marc D. Lebovitz



# Richmond University Medical Center

*The trustees, administration, physicians, nurses and staff  
congratulate all of this year's Wagner College Chai Society  
Community Mitzvah honorees.*

*Mazel Tov!*



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We want to thank Victor and Kim Avis for their constant support, friendship, leadership and their inspiration. We are thrilled to be able to celebrate all of your contributions and want you to know that we appreciate you so much!

We would also like to congratulate all of tonight's Honorees.

*Mazel Tov!*  
*Ruta Shah-Gordon*  
*David Gordon*



# Congratulations to all the 2022 Chai Society Mitzvah Honorees

Notable Accolades go out to our Staten Island Academy family

**Kim and Victor Avis**



Thank you for being selfless and humble servants to all



715 Todt Hill Road, Staten Island, NY 10304

<https://www.statenislandacademy.org/>

Congratulations to our most deserving honorees  
the exemplary achievements of the Wagner  
College Chai Society

*Elaine and Dennis Bloomfield*

I am in awe of my brother, Victor & his  
beautiful bride, Kim for continuing in the  
footsteps of our parents, Nancy & Ron... it  
was their foresight to start the Chai Society at  
Wagner!

I am so proud of you two & I am so thrilled  
you keep their vision alive!

*Mazel tov, your sis, Cathy*

**During these trying times, we must all  
share our positive energy to support our  
neighbors, friends, families and strangers  
who are treated unjustly.**

**Charles C. DeStefano, Esq.**

**2020 Recipient of the  
Monroe J. Klein  
'66 Humanitarian Award**





We express our gratitude and appreciation to:

**DR. VICTOR AND KIM AVIS**

for your vision, passion and friendship which has led to  
the flourishing of the Wagner College Chai Society and  
Wagner College Holocaust Center

and to **ALL THE HONOREES.**

We are very proud of our granddaughter Sophia for leading her first  
Holocaust Education program at her school P.S.30  
and for her time spent with Holocaust survivors  
including Shirley Gottesman, Margot Capell, Hannah Steiner and Arthur Spielman.



*"How wonderful is it that nobody need wait a single moment  
to improve the world!"—Anne Frank (1929-45)*

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## **From a former honoree:**

Congratulations to all 8 of you! All at different points in your life, have different career and life paths, And though doing it in various ways you have one thing in common: Making Staten Island and the world a better place and for that you are very deserving of this recognition!

Margot, Hannah, and Shirley: Who displayed such courage during their youth and now inspire and motivate the next generation by continuing to share your personal stories with them.

Gregg, who changes the world for the next generation by the gift of music and performance.

District Attorney McMahon, who displays such leadership trying to keep the community safe.

Elisabeth, who is another incredible honoree for the student award.

And Victor and Kim, who worked tirelessly for so long to make this all possible! Your leadership and devotion has been truly exceptional!

As a former honoree, I couldn't be more honored to be in your company as you join the ranks of Chai Society Honorees. Thank you for all you do everyday!

*- Jennifer Weile '16, MSSED '18, Chai Society 2016 Honoree*

# Friends of the Wagner College Chai Society

*Congratulations to the 2022 Community Mitzvah Award Honorees!*

Sydney, Samantha, and Morgan Avis

Linda Brill

Julio Vincent Gambuto

David Sorkin

# WAGNER COLLEGE

There's still time to support the 2022 Chai Society Virtual Community Mitzvah Awards! Please visit [wagner.edu/give](https://wagner.edu/give) to make your gift to the Chai Society today, if you have not done so already. Thank you for your support of this most important cause.

