



# Free Loan MATTERS

Fall 2011 – Tishrei 5772

A Publication of Toronto Jewish Free Loan Cassa

## TJFLC Loan Committee Volunteers Saw Character, Not Collateral

### Tatiana's Flowers

With a cell phone as a sizing template and a length of thin metal for structure, Alex and Tatiana create award-winning orchid arrangements. Their artistry has helped the couple build their business, Tatiana's Flowers, in the face of incredible personal and financial challenges.

When they met five years ago, Alex and Tatiana hoped to develop a business that would provide a better life for their blended family. They opened a florist shop in Richmond Hill; a place where they could work together, somewhere close to home so their kids could drop by.

Tatiana immersed herself in the world of floral design courses and competitions. When a lower level space became available in a local strip mall in late 2008, Alex saw its potential. "I had no misgivings," said Alex. "The space was available and we could afford it. I convinced Tatiana that it was time to begin her dream."

The essential piece of equipment for any florist is a floral cooler. The shop couldn't manage without one, but its \$10,000 price tag put it out of reach. Tatiana also needed some help with the initial costs of inventory and rent. With her credit cards and overdrafts extended to their limits, she asked her father in Israel to lend her some start-up capital. Thinking that the business couldn't possibly succeed, her *Abba* turned her down.

Tatiana approached TJFLC with a \$15,000 business loan application that included a business plan and the support of local guarantors. TJFLC board members Terry Borer and Stan Rosenfarb interviewed Tatiana and were impressed by her ambition and passion for the industry. Where traditional bankers saw a cash flow challenge, Terry and Stan saw a *chesed*

(the *mitzvah* of loving-kindness) opportunity. They presented the application to the Loan Committee as a case of "character, not collateral" and the application was approved.

Because Tatiana's Flowers is a 24/7 retail job that involves the entire family, the couple has enhanced their working environment. They have brought in two caged parrots and an aquarium of fish to entertain their walk-in clients, and they offer a free rose to each visitor.



Word-of-mouth has helped Tatiana's Flowers expand its profile. The shop won the contract for the 2010 International DanceSport Federation (IDSF) Competition and recently Tatiana's Flowers was featured on the cover of a local Russian magazine.

Tatiana sent copies of the magazine to her family back in Rostov-on-Don. "That was the moment when I was so proud," said Tatiana. "I could show my father that, with the Jewish community helping me and supporting me, I am able to pay my own way."

"Thank you, Free Loan, for believing in my dream and for allowing me to take care of myself and my family."

## President's Comments

A new year is beginning with new opportunities for us to better our world and the world around us.

Likewise, the end of a year allows us a time to reflect upon our past.

At Toronto Jewish Free Loan Cassa, the past year has been filled with optimism, stability of purpose, changes, and improvements to the services we provide.

The new year will be met with an ongoing commitment to our community, and increasingly progressive and innovative methods of assisting those in need – all with the support of our dedicated staff and our vibrant, youthful and imaginative volunteers.

Our incoming executive have pledged themselves to continue the superb work in our community. If you have not personally been involved in our efforts, we welcome your support – both with your time and your financial support. For as little as \$154 (or more if you

are able), you can join as a Free Loan member and see, firsthand, the good work we do, meeting personally with loan applicants.

As this is my last article as President, I wanted to thank you for entrusting me with the position of President over the last two years, and a special thanks to all of our volunteers, my board and our diligent staff for everything that you do.

So for the final time, I remind you that if you don't need us – we need you.

On behalf of my entire family, I wish you a year of Shalom, prosperity, good health and Mazel.



**Rick Goodman**  
**President**

## Executive Director's Comments

Dear Friends,

Having just returned from the 29<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the International Association of Hebrew Free Loans in Montreal with our member Jerry Blitzer, I was astonished to see the effect that our organization has on the lives of individuals in Canada, across North America, and around the world.

I am constantly amazed at the generosity of our community in their ability to help others. Our members, our board, our executive and our staff have devoted countless hours so as to enrich the lives of others with dignity by providing interest free loans.

Having just completed six months as Executive Director, I have enjoyed getting out into the community, to better understand the needs of our clientele, and to spread the word that we are one organization that is willing and able to help.

A special thank you to our Board who devote endless hours of their time and energy to helping others. Also thanks to our many volunteers who attend our twice-monthly loan committee meetings.

And finally, I would be remiss if I didn't thank our office staff, Marlee Petroff and Helen Kastner, who



*L to R. Michael Freedman and Jerry Blitzer at IAHL Conference in Montreal 09/11.*

have worked tirelessly over the last two decades putting G'milath Chasodim (acts of loving kindness) into practice every day.

On behalf of my family, I would like to wish all of you and your families a year filled with love, hope and peace.

**L'Shana Tova Tikatevu**



**A. Michael Freedman**

# Toronto Jewish Free Loan Cassa (G'milath Chasodim) Association

cordially invites you to attend

## **The Annual Meeting**

of its Members

**Thursday, November 17, 2011 7:30 p.m.**

Shaarei Tefillah Synagogue

3600 Bathurst Street (Beside Baycrest) Toronto, ON M6A 2C9

Eighty-seven years have passed since our original incorporation on 29 July 1924

## **Election of Board of Directors and Executive Officers**

R.S.V.P. by Monday, October 31, 2011 - 416-635-1217

### **Guest Speakers**

White Spark – Stephen Arbib

DebtCare Canada – Michael Goldenberg

## Slate of Nominees

### **Immediate Past President**

Rick Goodman

### **Executive**

#### **President**

Miriam Joseph

#### **Senior Vice President**

Terry Borer

#### **Vice President Administration**

Warren Rudick

#### **Vice President Funders' Liaison**

Marc Lipton

#### **Secretary**

Lee Spagat

#### **Treasurer**

Rob Tick

#### **Loan Cassa Chairs**

Barbara Barak

Darrel Yashinsky

### **Board of Directors**

Michael Elkin

Joseph Casse

Steven Friedman

Cathie Smith Friedman

Ed Glina

Neil Goldenberg

Barry Goldlist

Steve Gora

Neil Katz

Harold Klesmer

Joseph Leinwand

Mervyn McCarthy

Michelle Milner

Rammy Rochman

Stan Rosenfarb

Marc Stefaniu

n o m i n e e s



## Free Loan Was The Right Road For Me

# Honey S.

I was born in 1929 during the greatest depression this country has ever known. My father taught me that *tzedakah* was a way of life for those of us who were lucky enough to be able to share. He said, "If someone comes to your door begging, you must never turn him away. Fill his pockets and his stomach, if you can."

I have known great joy in my life but also great hardship as well. I remember days when a nickel was the difference between riding on a bus or walking five miles. I remember having a bag of peanuts for a meal. I still, even now, remember what an empty stomach feels like!

I managed to financially care for myself, my parents and my multi-handicapped son for many years, until a stroke at the age of 73 deprived me of the ability to work. Then one health issue surfaced after another, and still my responsibilities continued. I felt such frustration, isolation and guilt about my dilemma: even praying didn't seem to appease my soul. The ultimate challenge came when the eye surgery I needed was not covered by OHIP. I was at my wit's end, feeling totally lost and alone.

A friend asked me if I had heard of Jewish Free Loan Toronto. She assured me that, if I could find two guarantors to sign for me, I might be able to get a loan that would add some financial stability to my life.

The Free Loan staff person who helped me with the loan process was comfortable to talk to and I was put at ease. Despite my discomfort at having to ask for financial help for the first time in my life, my pride was left intact thanks to the kindness and encouragement of Harold and Daniel, the two volunteers who interviewed me for the loan soon after my initial office visit.

To my great surprise and delight, I learned the money would be forthcoming almost immediately. And recently, after several years of manageable monthly loan payments, I suddenly found that my debt was paid in full. The pride I felt at this accomplishment cannot be described.

To those people who read this testimony who are going through the terrible confusion and distress of financial need, please know that I understand the burden that debt imposes on us. But there is an answer and it is just a phone call away. Free Loan was the right road for me and for many others, and perhaps it can help you as well.

For the donors to Free Loan, thank you for supporting this wonderful organization that has given so many of us a chance to start again, with dignity and acceptance.

My Dad would tell you that sharing your troubles in life helps to lessen the load, and you know? He was so right! Thank you Free Loan for sharing my troubles and in so doing, alleviating them.

## TORONTO JEWISH FREE LOAN CASSA

### Schedule of Upcoming Loan Committee Meetings

- Tuesday October 11, 2011
- Tuesday October 25, 2011
- Tuesday November 15, 2011
- Tuesday November 29, 2011
- Tuesday December 13, 2011

Please contact our offices to confirm meeting dates and times.  
416-635-1217 ext. 5277 or [freeloan@ujafed.org](mailto:freeloan@ujafed.org)



Without you, there would be no way.



**Toronto Jewish Free Loan Cassa**  
340 - 4600 Bathurst Street  
Toronto, ON M2R 3V3  
416.635.1217

Fax: 416.635.8926 email: [freeloan@ujafed.org](mailto:freeloan@ujafed.org)  
website: [www.tjflc.com](http://www.tjflc.com)

# Free Loan In Our Community

- Twenty-four Free Loan clients were invited to the March 27, 2011 Fashion with Conscience Event, an initiative of United Jewish Appeal's Women's Philanthropy in partnership with JVS Toronto. One grateful client contacted us the very next day to say, "Thank you very much for your referral. I greatly appreciate for all the wonderful assistance and clothes that were extended to each and every one of us."
- Thanks to a referral from Free Loan, our borrowers in need of Passover food received baskets of Pesach supplies from our community's National Council of Jewish Women – Toronto Section (NCJW-TS) 2011 Passover Food Drive.
- Terry Borer and Ben Barth, two dedicated Free Loan volunteers, joined 18 other honourees on 04/10/11 at The Projects' Launch Party, Timeraiser and Awards Night, an evening showcasing local Jewish social service agencies and their volunteers.
- Did you know that Rabbi Jarrod Grover of Beth Tikvah Synagogue volunteers his time as Free Loan's Religious and Ethics Counsel? Interested in signing up for Rabbi Grover's Torah On Tour, a weekly email message that helps create a virtual community of modern Torah for the 21st century? Contact Rabbi Grover at (416) 221-3433 or rabbigrover@bethtikvah.on.ca for more information.

## My Goal Is to be Debt-Free and TJFLC is Helping Me on My Way

### Susie

I borrowed money from Toronto Jewish Free Loan Cassa in the past. When I had serious financial challenges and was unable to meet my payment commitments, TJFLC staff renegotiated my loan repayment schedule. I can't explain how grateful I was for this arrangement since, at that time, my husband and I were both unemployed.

I'm working now and my husband will be starting a new job shortly, but our debts keep piling up. After considering various ways to improve our financial circumstances, I decided to take a Real Estate course. I approached your organization, explained my financial needs and completed all the necessary documentation.

My TJFLC loan interview took place last night and I've just been advised that my \$1,800 personal loan application was approved. I am so grateful! While waiting for my guarantors to confirm their commitment to my loan, I am taking this time to contact you. Thank you for your confidence in me. These funds will help me achieve my goals, improve my employment portfolio and hopefully, with time, end my family's financial turmoil.

I appreciate all your help and constant kindness and understanding. My goal is to be debt-free and TJFLC is helping me on my way.

## Thank You Free Loan, For Making All this Possible

### Paul Hertz, MD

Medical school costs have risen astronomically over the past few decades with prices now averaging close to \$15,000 per year across the country. The average debt load for graduating students is well into the six figures and that prospect scared me. OSAP (the Ontario Student Assistance Program) is a fantastic resource but it just wasn't going to be enough.

The \$7,500 (interest free) that I received from TJFLC has been so helpful in reducing my debt load and giving me some

more freedom from the worries of a large debt. Now I am graduating from medical school with less debt that I initially thought was possible. I just wanted to thank those that made this possible and allowed me to focus my energies on the more important things in life, such as my upcoming marriage over the summer!

To know that in this world there are Jews who are only interested in helping other Jews really warms the heart. It encourages me to have the same attitude and I know that when I am more financially secure I will give back and hopefully help the new crop of young students in our community.



# “An Interest-Free Loan? I’m Interested!”



Toronto Jewish Free Loan Cassa offers interest-free loans of up to \$15,000 to needy Jewish applicants who are residents of the Greater Toronto Area and Canadian citizens or Permanent Residents.

Since our inception in 1924, thousands of Jewish clients have received financial assistance from TJFLC. They were people just like you, looking for a little financial help during a temporary time of need in order to live their lives with dignity.

A TJFLC loan can help in so many ways. TJFLC offers personal, educational and business loans to qualified Jewish applicants. All loans require guarantors.



**Toronto  
Jewish  
Free Loan Cassa**

G'milath Chasodim Association



UJA Federation  
OF GREATER TORONTO



United Way  
Toronto



For more information contact:

Toronto Jewish Free Loan Cassa

**416.635.1217 | [freeloan@ujafed.org](mailto:freeloan@ujafed.org)**

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