

SHARING HOPE IN THE CANCER COMMUNITY



A COMMUNITY FOR
EMPOWERED
LIVING



20
24
IMPACT REPORT

FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

MENTAL HEALTH AND
GENETIC COUNSELING

NON-MEDICAL
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

LIFESAVING CANCER AND
GENETICS EDUCATION



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8,040

quality-of-life kits and care packages distributed

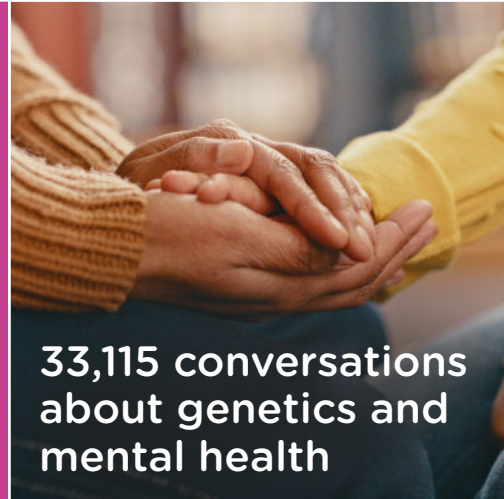


Educational programs on 180 campuses

68,430 participants enrolled in both in-person and virtual programming

\$1,000,000 IN FINANCIAL SUBSIDIES DISTRIBUTED

SHARSHERET BY THE NUMBERS:



33,115 conversations about genetics and mental health



SHAREWORTHY STATS

2,835 sessions with women living with advanced ovarian and metastatic breast cancer

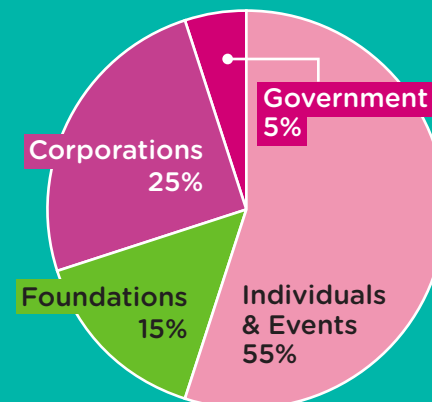
30,834

ENROLLED

in The Ruth and Sidney Vine Peer Support Network

2024 Annual Budget \$9M

Revenue Streams



270,000 women, men, families, and community members served



A message from our **President and CEO** ✓

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with immense gratitude for the unwavering dedication and support from you, our Sharsheret family. These are not easy times; the unexpected challenges we continue to face as individuals, families, and communities have reshaped our lives. Despite these challenges, breast cancer and ovarian cancer continue to affect so many, underscoring the importance of our mission. Our strong commitment to provide continuous support to individuals and families facing cancer knows no bounds, transcending geographical, cultural, and religious backgrounds – even in times of war.

Through this report, you will see firsthand how in a world that feels fragmented, Sharsheret, the chain of support, remains a symbol of unity. You will experience the impact of Sharsheret’s work that embodies the essence of lifesaving – not only in the physical sense, but also in the hope and emotional support we offer to women and men. You will understand that because of the Jewish value of preserving life, we are able to reach and help thousands with countless educational programs and support networks. You will learn that Sharsheret continues to expand across the US and is now on the ground in Israel, staffed by a dynamic team that is sensitive to the needs and circumstances of each family.

With devoted partners like you, we move forward in our mission to improve lives and save lives. Together, we demonstrate the enduring capabilities of our collective resolve. We are where you are.

Thank you for your time, financial contributions, engagement, and passion that inspire us to come together, to unite, to support one another, and to affirm the value of life. *Am Yisrael Chai*. May we share in brighter days ahead and look forward to a healthier future for all.

With heartfelt appreciation,

Jordanna Nadritch, Board President

Elana Silber, CEO

We are wherever you are.





Jewish women should get a breast cancer risk assessment at 25. Here's why.

Dr. Caryn Gamss, a radiologist at Murray Hill Radiology in Manhattan and a member of Sharsheret's Medical Advisory Board, emphasizes the importance of early action.

Her recommendation? All women should undergo a breast cancer risk assessment by age 25. That entails answering a panel of questions that covers one's family and medical history. Among other things, the assessment inquires whether a person had "a biopsy and a high-risk lesion; breast density; if someone has lymphoma and was treated under the age of 25; if someone got upper abdominal radiation before age 25."

"People need to think about it younger instead of waiting and then finding out 'My mother had cancer, my grandmother...' — and they show up at 40 and have cancer, too," Gamss said.



Dr. Caryn Gamss
"Fifty is too late."



Cancer screening, and the knowledge that comes along with it, can be empowering.

Adina Fleischmann,
LSW, OSW-C
Sharsheret Chief Services Officer



For cancer patients, the High Holidays can bring some unique challenges.

At the height of the pandemic in August 2020, Fran Guzy, a retired schoolteacher living in Oradell, New Jersey, was diagnosed with breast cancer.

A month later, she had a lumpectomy to remove her malignant tumor. Then she underwent chemotherapy, followed by radiation treatments. Between her frequent hospital visits and concerns over catching the coronavirus while immunocompromised, Guzy barely got to see her children and grandchildren in Providence, Rhode Island.

By Rosh Hashanah 2021, she finally had finished all her treatments, and she went to Providence for the holidays. Because of COVID, prayer services at Temple Emanu-El of Providence were held outdoors, in a tent. Guzy was ready for that, but she wasn't emotionally prepared for a particularly unique moment during the service.

"The rabbi asked anyone who had faced a really serious obstacle in their lives that year, and were proud of the fact that they were able to get through it, to please come up to the bimah," she recalled. "I went up with 20 other people. I don't know why they were there, but I knew what my reason was. And when I sat down, all of us had tears in our eyes."

For Jewish women struggling with breast or ovarian cancer, the High Holidays — with their focus on matters of life and death and their traditions of family gatherings — can be an emotionally daunting time.

"Words they've chanted for years about who shall live and who shall die suddenly take on a new meaning when women are facing their own mortality," said Shera Dubitsky, a senior adviser to Sharsheret.

"This is obviously a very important time of year in the Jewish calendar, and it's both reassuring and difficult for people facing an illness like breast cancer," said Melissa Rosen, director of training and education at Sharsheret. "It could be as simple as a woman not being able to see family or travel, or that she's immunocompromised and people can't visit her."

For others, attending synagogue services may be too strenuous. "Sitting and standing in shul for so many hours can be difficult," Rosen said. "And for somebody who's physically worn down by treatment, that might be impossible."

With the High Holidays approaching, Guzy said her cancer experience has given her a new perspective.

"I have a new appreciation for life that I don't think I had before," Guzy said. "Every night before I go to bed I write down three things that I love and appreciate. I'm also learning Hebrew online in order to understand all the prayers."



With wigs, eyebrow restoration and nipple tattoos, this project helps cancer patients feel like women again.

After Shelby, a 30-year-old schoolteacher in New York, finished chemotherapy treatment last year for breast cancer, she hardly recognized herself in the mirror.

“I didn’t really have any hair and had very, very little eyebrows,” said Shelby. “My face was puffy from all the steroids.”

Bailey Kramer, 30, a medical assistant in North Branch, Michigan, who went through chemo two years ago, feared that losing her hair would prompt unwanted questions from her three-year-old.

“I didn’t want him to know that anything was going on,” recalled Kramer. “I wanted his life to be as absolutely normal as possible.”

Fortunately, Kramer and Shelby were both able to receive cosmetic aid, thanks to a project called Best Face Forward 2.0, run by Sharsheret. The program offers qualifying women funding for certain non-medical services considered critical to the healing process, but not usually fully covered by health insurance.

The services, meant to help with mental health and negative body image and self-image, include nutrition assistance, hair preservation therapies, human-hair wigs, tattooing for nipples and eyebrows, and integrative holistic and yoga therapies. These services can cost thousands of dollars without Sharsheret’s financial assistance program.

“Cancer is expensive,” said Sharsheret CEO Elana Silber. “By providing financial assistance for non-medical services, we are able to address the growing problem of financial toxicity associated with cancer treatment and improve the quality of life for hundreds of women and their families.”

Since the program started in August 2019, Best Face Forward 2.0 has helped nearly 2,000 women and distributed nearly \$2 million.

Through this program, Shelby was fitted with a human-hair wig that looks just like her long blond locks, tattooing called microblading to replace her eyebrows, and three-dimensional tattooing (micropigmentation of the nipple and areola) for her nipples.

Kramer was able to keep most of her hair using a method called cold-capping or scalp-cooling, in which a specially fitted cap freezes the hair follicles as the patient receives chemo, preserving the strands.

“Women of all ages come from all over the country and their family status runs the gamut,” said Stephanie Siegel, the social worker who administers the program. “I’ve spoken to women from all 50 states — even Alaska and Hawaii.”



7 ways to offer support and Jewish strength to friends or loved ones facing cancer.

Too often, friends and loved ones of cancer patients are at a loss for how to respond when someone close to them is diagnosed with cancer.

Adina Fleischmann, LSW, OSW-C, chief services officer for Sharsheret, has some guidance for what to say, how to reach out, and what kind of help might be appropriate to provide in the face of a friend or family member's cancer diagnosis.

1. ESTABLISH THE “KVETCHING ORDER”

The “Kvetching Order” dictates that those close to someone struggling with a cancer diagnosis offer only support to the cancer patient, and direct any kvetching about their own stress outward. Thus, the person with cancer is at the center of a circle surrounded by a ring of her or his most intimate friends and loved ones. More distant concentric rings include other friends, acquaintances, more distant family, and community members.

Colloquially known as “comfort in, dump out,” the Kvetching Order establishes a flow of support directed toward the person facing cancer.

2. **BE CLEAR AND SPECIFIC WITH OFFERS OF HELP**

3. **CHECK IN OFTEN BUT DON'T EXPECT A RESPONSE**

4. **LEAVE CANCER OUT OF IT SOMETIMES AND JUST BE WITH THEM**



5. **CONTINUE YOUR SUPPORT THROUGHOUT SOMEONE'S CANCER JOURNEY**

6. **MAKE SURE YOU HAVE YOUR OWN SUPPORT SYSTEM**

7. **TALK TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER AND SAFEGUARD YOUR OWN HEALTH**



For one Jewish family, education about family cancer history pays dividends.

“Back then, it was called ‘the big C.’ Nobody talked about it,” Sue Gorlin recalled in an interview. “My mother and her sister both had ovarian cancer, but they were never going to tell me. That’s how secretive it was.”

Only by chance in the mid-1990s did Sue learn the truth, when a cousin revealed the story and urged her to get tested for the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genetic mutations. Those mutations render carriers far more susceptible to breast and ovarian cancer than otherwise, and approximately one of every 40 Jewish women of Ashkenazi descent is a carrier — compared to about 1 in 400 women in the general U.S. population.

Sue got tested and learned she was not a carrier of a BRCA mutation. Nonetheless, she decided to get an annual pelvic sonogram and ultrasound, just to be on the safe side.

That decision would end up saving her life. About 10 years later, a sonogram revealed a malignant growth on one of her ovaries that had not yet spread. She had surgery to remove it, then underwent five months of chemotherapy.

Today, Sue, now 79, lives in Israel with her husband, Jacques.

“If it hadn’t been for Sue knowing her family history, who knows if she’d be around today?” said Sue’s husband, Jacques. “When she discovered her ovarian cancer in 2009, there were no clinical trials, and we didn’t know about the services of Sharsheret.”

Knowledge of her family history also made all the difference for Sue’s daughter, Michal Gorlin Becker.

“Because of my family history, I was considered high-risk and already had genetic counseling years before,” said Michal, 49, a mother of four, living in Jerusalem. “I knew that my mother had ovarian cancer, and that my great-aunt had died of it. So, in 2016, I had my ovaries taken out.”

She continued to monitor her health. In April 2020, after Michal’s doctor at Jerusalem’s Shaare Zedek Medical Center had her undergo a biopsy, Michal received some bad news: She had breast cancer. The news arrived on the morning of her 46th birthday, just as she was preparing for her daughter’s Bat Mitzvah.

“I was expecting it, but not necessarily on that day,” Michal said.

Fortunately, her cancer was at an early stage and had not yet metastasized. Michal started chemotherapy the day after the Bat Mitzvah. She had eight rounds of chemo every two weeks; the course of treatment took four months.

Michal attributes her success fighting the cancer in part to her physical fitness at the time of her diagnosis. She had run back-to-back marathons in January and February 2020 and felt she was in the best shape of her life.

“I was strong and positive,” Michal said. “This is why I was able to get through it.” Still a runner, Michal ran the TCS New York City Marathon last year with Team Sharsheret.



Children of cancer patients find support through young-adult buddy system.

Before her sophomore year of high school, Sylvie Slotkin learned her mother, Lisa, had breast cancer.

While her mother was able to speak with women who underwent chemotherapy and mastectomies to learn more about her condition and what to expect, Sylvie did not know any peers whose mothers had breast cancer and might have been able to offer reassurance.

“If I had someone validate how I was feeling, I would have been much better off,” Sylvie said.

After her mother was treated and her cancer went into remission, Sylvie, now 18, decided she wanted to help ensure that other Jewish young adults in her situation had more support. She’s currently helping Sharsheret build up its network of adults ages 18 to 25 with experiences similar to hers, so they can support peers with a parent undergoing cancer care.

YAD: The Young ADult Caring Corner at Sharsheret helps young adults understand their loved ones’ cancer diagnoses, manages a website about cancer for young adults, and provides peer support through a buddy system that pairs mentors whose loved ones have also had a breast cancer or ovarian cancer diagnosis with other young adults in similar situations.

Maya Charak’s mother, Meredith, learned in the summer of 2023 that she had the BRCA genetic mutation. Two weeks later, Meredith Charak was diagnosed with breast cancer.

These days, Maya and a friend, Sophie Warsetsky, whose mother is also a breast cancer survivor, are training to become YAD mentors. “I wanted to be able to help support other students who may be going through something similar, and just let them know that they are not alone — because it can feel really isolating,” Warsetsky said.

The two students also helped organize Sharsheret Pink Day, an annual global awareness and unity movement where thousands of people share information about Sharsheret’s vital programs and services. The goal is to raise awareness about breast cancer and cancer genetics, and to generate lifesaving conversations.

The Chabad on Campus Washington University in St. Louis’s program was among more than 200 Pink Day initiatives nationally at colleges, Jewish day schools, organizational partners, and businesses in February.

Slotkin says she is glad she has a way to channel something positive out of her mother’s cancer diagnosis. **“If I can make something beautiful out of something that’s not beautiful, I want to do that.”**

“There is comfort to anyone at any age in knowing that someone has experienced and persevered through the hurdles they are now facing.”

Joy Goldsmith

Joy and her husband, Michael, established YAD: The Young ADult Caring Corner at Sharsheret.



Hereditary cancer isn't just a women's issue. Jewish men need to take precautions, too.



“We like to educate men on how to check their chests once a month and have a clinician do a breast checkup on them once a year.”

Dr. Robert Sidlow, Director, Male BRCA Genetic Risk Program at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Sharsheret Medical Advisory Board



Bill Harris, a veteran Los Angeles photojournalist, didn't think much of it when one morning in 2012 he woke up and found a tiny blood spot on the T-shirt he'd slept in. The next morning, he found blood in the same place on his chest — and went straight to his computer.

“Online, I could find only three things that would cause a man's nipple to discharge blood: being an avid runner, which I wasn't; having a subtropical fungus, which I didn't; and breast cancer,” he said. “That was a pretty big shock.”

Harris, then just a few weeks shy of his 61st birthday, immediately called his doctor, who ordered a mammogram and ultrasound. They confirmed a cancerous growth in his right breast.

Ten days later, a biopsy came back positive. The next month, Harris got a right mastectomy, followed by the removal of his left breast half a year later.

“I walked into a women's imaging center and had to get into a pink paper robe. All the women in the waiting room were staring at me.”

Like many other Ashkenazi men, Harris had never considered that he might have been born with a harmful mutation of the BRCA gene, which elevates the risk not only of breast cancer, but also of melanoma and prostate, ovarian and pancreatic cancer.

Elana Silber, CEO of Sharsheret, says it's crucial that men with a family history of cancer undergo genetic counseling and screening for BRCA and other hereditary cancer mutations.

“This is not only a women's issue,” Silber said. “Family history is so important. When a man shares his family history with his doctor, he may not realize that he should mention that his mother had breast cancer or that his sister had ovarian cancer, **as these are not generally 'men's diseases.'** They are not aware that these cancers could mean that they, themselves, are at increased risk for cancer and that they can pass on these mutations to the next generation — their daughters and their sons.”

“I'm still working through the aftereffects of the chemo. I have to eat smaller quantities than before and take enzymes to supplement my digestive processes,” Harris said.

Meanwhile, his 37-year-old son discovered that he, too, carries the BRCA2 mutation, and he had a double prophylactic mastectomy and reconstruction at age 30 — just to be on the safe side.

“If there's any history of breast, ovarian or prostate cancer in your family, get tested genetically so that you're informed,” Harris advised. **“Diagnoses happen way too late for men, and the danger is too big.”**



1 in 40 Ashkenazi Jews carries a BRCA mutation, compared to 1 in 400 in the general population.



Scan to read the full stories.

Article content in the Impact Report was sourced from the Jewish Telegraphic Agency through a sponsorship with Sharsheret.

How Sharsheret supports the community



Ruth and Sidney Vine Peer Support Network

Connects women newly diagnosed or at high risk of developing breast cancer or ovarian cancer with others who share similar diagnoses and experiences.



Genetic Counselor Consultations

If you have a strong family history of cancer, have considered genetic counseling for yourself or your children, or have opted for genetic testing, we can help.



Mental Health Counseling

To ensure no one is alone while going through their own cancer journey or a loved one's, we provide mental health counseling, resources, and support.



Margot Rosenberg Pulitzer and Sheri Rosenberg Kanter Embrace® Program

Programs for women living with advanced ovarian cancer or metastatic breast cancer.



Bella Chachky Diamond and Sylvia Diamond Geller Best Face Forward® Program

The Best Face Forward kit includes makeup products for all skin tones, makeup application instructions, and tips for those facing hair loss and changes in skin tone.



Financial Subsidies

Best Face Forward 2.0 provides services, emergency relief funds, and subsidies for non-medical services that are critical to a woman's quality of life and body image, including wigs, cold caps, and tattooing. So far, it has distributed \$2 million to low-income cancer patients.



Support for Parents of Young Children

Guides children through cancer or prophylactic surgery journeys with the Sharsheret Busy Box of resources, games, and activities.



Survivorship Resources and Programming

Whether you were diagnosed 10 weeks ago, 10 months ago, or 10 years ago, we offer support to help you navigate your entire survivorship journey.



Spungen Foundation Family Focus® Caregiver Support

Let our Spungen Foundation Family Focus program help you support your loved one. Speak with one of our skilled social workers about the support options available.



Men's Educational Resources

Men need to know that breast cancer is not limited to only women. Stay informed about hereditary cancer risk for men and support opportunities.



Educational Webinars and Workshops

Local outreach events and national webinars address the latest in medical research and issues relevant to Jewish women and families facing cancer.



Florence and Joseph Appleman Educational Booklet Series

Sharsheret's library of resources for women, men, and families at all stages — those facing breast cancer or ovarian cancer, in survivorship, or at high risk.

How the community can support, too:



As they reach this important milestone, B'nai Mitzvah work individually with Sharsheret to develop a tikkun olam project that meets their interests and needs.



The Thanksgiving bake sale supports the Stephanie Sussman and Ann Nadrich Memorial Jewel and Sharsheret's Ovarian Cancer Program. Sign up to bring a sale to your city or purchase baked goods this November from sales across the country.



A worldwide initiative spearheaded by students, communities, and organizations to unite and raise awareness of breast and ovarian cancer through educational and fundraising events.



Sharsheret in the Kitchen provides opportunities for those living with, or at high risk for, breast and ovarian cancer to make healthier diet choices. Webinars offer nutritious, kosher meal options and cooking demonstrations with social media influencers.



Dedicated by Sherry and Neil Cohen, the Beatrice Milberg Campus Program educates college students and young adults nationwide about genetics and the impact of breast cancer and ovarian cancer on the Jewish community.



Educates students, men, and women about the increased risk of hereditary breast cancer and ovarian cancer, measures to protect their health, and the impact on the Jewish community.



Participate in coveted races across the country or join Team Sharsheret's athletic initiatives.



We're pleased to provide ongoing training opportunities for doctors, nurses, social workers, genetic counselors, patient navigators, and more.



Empowers professional young adults to raise awareness about breast cancer and ovarian cancer, become involved, and stay proactive about their health to save lives.



Join our virtual symposiums, attend or host in-person education and awareness-raising programs, learn about the latest breast and ovarian cancer screening guidelines, and access the most up-to-date data and materials in our digital resource packet.

Our mission

Sharsheret, a national non-profit organization, improves the lives of Jewish women and families living with or at increased genetic risk for breast or ovarian cancer through personalized support and saves lives through educational outreach.

While our expertise is in young women and Jewish families as related to breast cancer and ovarian cancer, Sharsheret programs serve all women and men.



Jewel Spotlight

When giving gives back: Debbi Spungen's story

Though Debbi Spungen has overcome cancer twice in her lifetime, her story is hardly a story of cancer. Instead, it's one of support: how a family's generosity to Sharsheret came back to sustain them in a time of need and how future generations will benefit from that family's advocacy, diligence, and spirit.

To better understand Debbi's story, it's important to look back a generation. Florence Spungen, Debbi's mother, was diagnosed with and passed away from ovarian cancer, prompting Debbi and her siblings, Carol, Glenn, and Danny, to get tested for the BRCA genetic mutation. Of the four siblings, three tested positive. Their mother's diagnosis also inspired the inception of the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation, an organization that has partnered with Sharsheret since 2017 to establish the Spungen Foundation Family Focus® program to expand Sharsheret's caregiver support and mental health services.

While Debbi always admired Sharsheret's work through this partnership, it was her own breast cancer diagnosis last year that flipped her from the supporter to the supported.

"I always knew it was a wonderful organization, but being part of the other side really made me feel so much stronger about Sharsheret," she remarks. "Sharsheret was the only organizational support I got. I didn't go elsewhere because Sharsheret engulfed everything I needed."

With a more positive health outlook today, Debbi maintains an empowered and passionate attitude. But the story continues, as the BRCA mutation has also passed on to the next generation of the Spungen's family. While these individuals will surely have their own stories and experiences to share, it's never been clearer that they're not alone. Debbi's own trailblazing, the work of all four siblings through the Foundation, and the myriad services from Sharsheret's partnership are poised to support the Spungens and our greater community for generations to come.



The Spungen Foundation Family Focus® Program was established in 2017 with a Rochelle's Dream Jewel gift. Their five-year commitment of \$25,000 annually has helped grow our caregiver support and mental health services.

"Sharsheret has been a lifesaver."



Jewel Circle

Rochelle's Dream



Rochelle Shoretz A'H,
Sharsheret Founder

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To access our services in Israel and for more information contact Sharsheret Israel Program Coordinators Pnina Mor at pmor@sharsheret.org or Liora Tannenbaum at ltannenbaum@sharsheret.org.



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