

Our towns

‘Caring community’ tempers big storm’s impact

SUSAN BLOOM
Special to NJ Jewish News

Hurricane Sandy’s wrath may have temporarily complicated life for residents of the Princeton Mercer Bucks community, but it did nothing to impair services to members of many area organizations and congregations.

Power outages forced the Jewish Federation of Princeton Mercer Bucks to cancel its 2013 Campaign Kick-off Dinner scheduled for Nov. 4, but executive director Andrew Frank and the federation’s employees did their jobs using remote access, working with the organization’s partner agencies to help ensure the delivery of food and supplies and other assistance to those in need.

“We were without power the entire week of the storm,” Frank said. “We’re currently re-grouping and determining new plans going forward, which will be announced soon.”

During the power outage, Frank said, it was evident “we have a very giving and caring community, and when things get tough,



Rabbi Shlomo Landau of Torah Links in East Brunswick giving his weekly *daf yomi* class by candlelight – ironically, the topic was “Shabbat candles” – at the Young Israel of East Brunswick.

the power of community is even tougher.”

Beth El Synagogue in East Windsor lost power for a full week. While nighttime services during the week were canceled because there was no electricity, synagogue leaders tapped other power sources for other events. “We utilized natural lighting for morning

services and a bat mitzva, and used lanterns, flashlights, and glow sticks wherever else possible,” said Rabbi Jay Kornsgold.

The First Presbyterian Church of Dutch Neck in Princeton Junction opened its doors so that nearby Congregation Beth Chaim, in the throes of a power loss, could conduct a b’nei mitzva service for congregants Sam Cohen and Rachel Martin.

Elsewhere, community leaders had nothing but praise for the Jewish Family & Children’s Service of Greater Mercer County, which was on the job even before the storm hit. Staffers called area seniors on Friday “making sure they had enough food, checking to see that they had flashlights and batteries,” said JF&CS executive director Linda Meisel, and reminding them to charge their cell phones. JF&CS also delivered bags of food to some of the most vulnerable seniors.

When the storm knocked out their power — and phone service with it — at the height of the storm, said Meisel, “we had all the calls remotely transferred as e-mails to personal cell phones,” and staff members responded to

all calls.

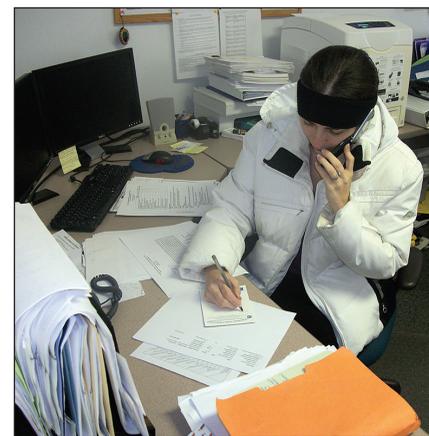
By using the available technology, she said, “We were able to reach our seniors or their emergency contacts to make sure they were all OK.”

Though they remained without power through Nov. 7, the JF&CS food pantry was opened on Nov. 2 and has been providing food daily.

The organization’s roughly 25 staffers, though many of them had no power at home, continued to serve clients by phone and door-to-door, contacting seniors, Holocaust survivors, and families in need.

JF&CS staff members also made and delivered emergency packages, making sure, said Meisel, that “all our Kosher Meals-on-Wheels and Kosher Cafe patrons had food.”

Last year, the agency completed training for continuity after a disaster and developed a plan for catastrophic events like the superstorm. “When Sandy hit, we just followed the plan to make sure cli-



Sara Hunter, an administrative assistant at Jewish Family & Children’s Service of Greater Mercer County, works in the dark with no power, making cell phone calls to assist clients affected by superstorm Sandy.

ents were okay,” Meisel said.

Rabbi Adam Feldman of The Jewish Center in Princeton and Cantor Art Katlin of Adath Israel Congregation in Lawrenceville reported power outages of one to three days at their buildings. Both

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Rescheduled Super Sunday aims to help neediest

ELAINE DURBACH
NJIN Staff Writer

Even before the storms hit this month, the local Jewish community was facing urgent appeals for help.

Those pleas for assistance “were already phenomenal,” said Andy Frank, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Princeton Mercer Bucks.

He cited among other things the growing cohort of those without jobs or under-employed, the increasing number of people turning to the Kosher Food Pantry for help, and families seeking camp scholarships.

Greenwood House nursing home, one of the federation’s partner agencies, has faced a sharp drop in Medicaid reimbursement.

Because of the bad weather, the largest fund-raiser dinner of the year had to be canceled, making the issue even more urgent.

In response, the federation will hold its annual Super Sunday phonathon on Dec. 2, one week earlier than originally planned, at Rider University in Lawrenceville. At least 80 volunteers will work the phones, raising money and awareness for the umbrella philanthropy’s annual campaign.

“We needed to act as expeditiously as possible,” Frank said. By moving the event, its fund-raising potential will kick in as early as possible, and, unlike the original date of Dec. 9, “it won’t conflict with Hanukka or cut into holiday season family time.”

Super Sunday will run from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. In prior years,

the event included an array of activities, including lectures and entertainment. This time, while still celebrating the community and offering a time and place to come together, the focus is sharp and clear — on raising funds to service those in need.

All ages are welcome. Young children will be able to help as runners carrying pledge forms from callers to those doing the tallying, and supporting the grownups in various ways.

“It’s a time of the year when people are attuned to charity,” Frank said, “and we’re hoping that people will respond as generously as they possibly can.”

Last year’s Super Sunday brought in \$175,000. This year

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Jewish Federation of Princeton Mercer Bucks leaders gather at Super Sunday 2011 to celebrate the phonathon’s success.

Photo by Barry Korbman