

EMERGING LEADER



W. MARC BERNSAU | BUSINESS JOURNAL

New CEO of JF&CS aims to reach more people 'in a more profound way'

Service, with results

By Keith Regan | Special to the Journal

Rimma Zelfand knows firsthand how agencies such as those supported by Jewish Family & Children's Service can help those most in need. As a refugee coming to the United States in her early 20s, she benefited directly from the generosity of the Jewish community in New York City.

As the new CEO of Jewish Family & Children's Service — a role she took over in October from the retiring Sy Friedland, who led the \$28 million, Waltham-based agency for 17 years — Zelfand also knows donors and supporters are increasingly looking for proof that agencies such as hers are effectively and efficiently completing their mission.

"Our goal is to reach more people in a more profound way," said Zelfand. "I like to think of us as a well-run business that uses its resources judiciously and prudently that just happens to be in the business of improving people's lives."

Government cutbacks and economic hardship are only increasing the demand on the agency's services, which run from prenatal intervention to care for the elderly, she added. JF&CS is carrying out on a 10-year strategic plan that focuses on creating more robust models of care, with an emphasis on measurement of outcomes — an area where it hopes to set an example that social-service agencies can follow.

"Our responsibility is to make sure that every dollar is spent in a proper way," she said. "Our donors and funders, if they're not requiring it to be measured now, they will start to in the future. They look at the money they are donating to us as an investment, and 'measurable results' are two words you are going to hear more and more in philanthropy."

What are your top three goals for the year?

The first is to make sure we stay on the same course that my predecessor (Friedland) put us on. That will be important for me because Sy had a great passion for helping vulnerable people live with dignity and put great

value on empathy, innovation and respect, and it's important to me to preserve that legacy. We also need to make sure the agency is positioned to meet any changes that come our way. And our overarching goal is always to reach more people in a more profound way.

What is your favorite restaurant?

I don't really have one, because I like to go to different places all the time. One thing that's guaranteed is that every year during Restaurant Week I'll be booked every night at a different place.

What's on your iPod?

I'm addicted to e-books and have many of those on my iPod. I'm also an opera fan and have several on there that I listen to. But for my workouts, I have about 45 minutes of cheesy '80s music.

Do you have a motto you follow in business or in life?

I guess I have a few. I'm an eternal optimist, so I always believe that things will work out. I also believe there are things that are not in our control and on the other hand some things that are, and that we have the power to take responsibility for those things that are in our control.

For more with Rimma Zelfand
visit bostonbusinessjournal.com

LESSONS LEARNED

What is your biggest obstacle to growth?

GUIDA PONTE, Culinary Guild of New England



The "Catch 22" of having top chefs, restaurateurs, farmers, wine and kitchen retailers engaging Culinary Guild members at our events and on our website requires that they participate. But they have to know of us to understand our value to their business.

JULIA TANEN, KCSA Boston



Staying aligned with reachable, realistic goals, and then accurately assessing how much of a "fight" it will take to get there

MARIE PEELER, Peeler Associates



Our success comes from being highly responsive to client needs. Our challenge is anticipating and investing in the right resources "just in time" so that we can be agile and adaptable enough to meet those needs. We always want to be ready to serve and yet be prudent in the investments that we make.