

January 2026 | Tevet - Shevat, 5786

A Reason to Rise: Exploring Ikigai

At the start of a new year, it's easy to focus on goals and resolutions. This year, I'm drawn to a different idea: the Japanese concept of what gives our days meaning. In Japan, there is a meaningful principle for this: **ikigai** (ee-key-guy). It means "a reason for being" or "a reason to wake up in the morning." It's about finding that sweet spot where what you love, what you're good at, what the world needs, and what you can be paid for all come together. People often describe it as a path to fulfillment, balance, and purpose.

Ikigai is often illustrated as four overlapping circles that emphasize these ideas:

- **What you love** – the activities that bring you joy, energy, and excitement
- **What you are good at** – your natural strengths, skills, and talents
- **What the world needs** – ways you can contribute or make a positive impact
- **What you can be paid for** – not just money, but also the ways we are rewarded through appreciation, connection, shared joy, or contributing to something larger than ourselves. These kinds of exchanges, where both giver and receiver benefit, create a wonderful win-win feeling.

In many Japanese towns, especially places known for longevity (Blue Zones), people credit their ikigai for keeping them socially connected, mentally sharp, and full of energy well into their later years. It is less about finding a dream job and more about feeling valued, staying engaged, and contributing to the community. This sense of purpose supports lower stress, better health, and a greater sense of satisfaction in life.

Here in our New Orleans JCC community, we see ikigai every day. It is found in our collective curiosity, expressive creativity, inclusive friendships, and the ways we support one another. Ikigai doesn't have to be one grand passion. Often, it's found in small, everyday joys: sharing a meal with each other, practicing a favorite hobby, debating a critical thought or idea, lending a hand to a neighbor, or participating in community life.

As we welcome the 2026 year, we invite you to reflect on the moments that bring purpose to your life. What makes you feel joy? What brings you connection? What small rituals do you look forward to each day? How can you share this with others at the JCC?

Alice



Uptown Ongoing Programs

Chair Exercise no class 1/12 and 1/19

Designed for seniors at all levels and abilities, this stretching and strength training class allows you to exercise from a chair or standing. Wear comfortable clothes and closed toe shoes. Check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.

Mondays, Tuesdays & Thursdays
10:45 - 11:45 am

Free to members | \$2 non-members

Games Day

Join us for mah jongg, Rummikub or bridge. Bring your lunch; dessert and coffee are provided.

Tuesdays, 12 - 3 pm

Free and open to the community

Better Balance

Low impact balance and exercises which can help prevent falls by improving one's ability to control and maintain body position, whether you are moving or still.

Wednesdays | 10:45 - 11:30 am

Free to members | 2 non-members

Dance for Parkinson's

This FUN, free, creative movement class is specially designed for people living with Parkinson's or other movement or neurological challenges. Caregivers and supporting family and friends are welcome.

Wednesdays | 10:30 - 11:45 am

Pre-register onsite during class times, or in advance at <https://bit.ly/dance4park>

Chair Yoga & Meditation

**No class
January**

This class geared towards seniors will take place on chairs and begins with soft stretching and yoga. It will then move to guided meditation. Led by Bambi Maloney in the Mind/Body Studio.

Fridays | 11:00 - 11:45 am

Free to members | \$2 non-members

Morris Bart Sr., Lecture Series**The Ella Project: Providing Artists with Access to Justice**

Monday, January 5 | 12:00 - 2:00 pm

Free for members | \$10 non-members

RSVP by Wednesday, December 31st

The Ella Project recently celebrated its 20th year of working within the New Orleans cultural community to ensure artists have access to justice through pro bono legal, business, and advocacy services. Ashlye Keaton is an attorney, adjunct professor at Tulane Law School, and Co-Founder of The Ella Project. She will present an overview of The Ella Project and discuss its milestones over the years. Ashlye will also provide some interesting anecdotes highlighting her legal services with individual clients, along with the organization's business workshops and advocacy work to promote a thriving creative industry and cultural ecosystem in New Orleans. Join us for a catered kosher lunch before the lecture begins.

Memory Cafe

Tuesday, January 6 | 2:00 - 3:30 pm

Free and open to the community.

RSVP by Monday, January 5

The Memory Cafe is a place for families experiencing memory loss to have fun together, talk with others who understand what you're going through, and try something new! Spend an hour or two in a welcoming, nonjudgmental environment with people who understand dementia. This program is not designed to offer drop-off respite care – but rather to support both the person living with changes in memory, and the people who care about them. Light snacks will be served.

Lunch & Learn with the Rabbi

Thursday, January 8 | 12:00 - 1:30 pm

\$3 members | \$5 non-members

RSVP by Monday, January 5

Join us for our monthly Lunch & Learn as we discuss interesting topics with a local Jewish leader. This month, Rabbi Cohen-Henriquez from Shir Chadash will be joining us after we have a light lunch.

Piatigorsky Foundation Concert and Lunch

Friday, January 9 | 12:00 - 2:00 pm

\$5 members | \$7 non-members

RSVP by Monday, January 5

We are fortunate to have the Piatigorsky Foundation return to New Orleans for a classical music concert at the Uptown JCC. Tenor Kelly Burns will be accompanied by pianist Nicholas Shaneyfelt in a performance that is enchanting and informative, as they intersperse the music with anecdotes and insights into the pieces they perform. Join us for a catered lunch followed by the concert.

Cathy and Morris Bart Jewish Cultural Arts Series: From Baghdad to Brooklyn

Sunday, January 11 | 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Free for members | \$18 non-members

Register at www.nojcc.org/culturalarts

A moving one-woman show by acclaimed actress and singer Michelle Azar. In From Baghdad to Brooklyn, Michelle explores her Jewish, American, and Israeli identities through story, humor, and song. Written and performed by Michelle Azar and directed by Brian Kite, this 60-minute show invites audiences into a journey of heritage and transformation.

Paired with the performance, Natalie Cohen – JCC Director of Jewish Life & Cultural Arts and of Iraqi Jewish heritage – will lead a daytime cooking class (\$10) featuring the classic Iraqi dish Koobeh, which will be served at the event.

Current Events Group

Tuesday, January 13 | 1:00 - 2:00 pm

No charge to members and non-members

RSVP by Monday, January 12

Meet others to discuss current news and events. No particular viewpoint is required, just an interest in what's going on in the world. Bring an open mind. This group will meet on the second Tuesday of each month.

Conversations with Josh Paillet & Film Showing of Chasing the Light: A Life Through Photographs

Thursday, January 15 | 2:00-4:00 pm

Free to members and non-members

RSVP by Monday, January 13

A new documentary, Chasing the Light: A Life Through Photographs, offers an intimate look into the world of celebrated New Orleans photographer and photography dealer Joshua Mann Paillet. Set against iconic New Orleans locations, the film explores his passion, challenges, and lasting impact on photography. Join us for this film showing, followed by conversations with Josh Paillet. Desserts and coffee will be served.

Men's Group

Friday, January 16 | 12:45 - 2:00 pm

No charge to members and non-members

RSVP by Thursday, January 1

The JCC Men's Group is a monthly discussion group for retired gentlemen to create community and conversations. Meeting on the first Friday of each month, this group provides an opportunity for men to come together to connect, reminisce, and explore a range of topics with their peers.

RSVP for programs to Josh at jbrooks@nojcc.org

Tzedek Project: Intergenerational Community Service

Sunday, January 18 | 1:00 - 4:00 pm
Free members and non-members
RSVP by Wednesday, January 14

We are excited to welcome our teens and seniors to participate in this amazing community service project, which we will donate to the NOPD Second District. Together, we will create comfort bears that will be passed out to children when officers are on call.

Book Club: *By Any Other Name* by Jodi Picoult

Tuesday, January 20 | 1:30 - 3:00 PM
Free and open to the community
RSVP by Monday, January 19th

Reviewer: Dr. Molly Abel Travis, Associate Dean, Newcomb-Tulane College | Associate Professor of English

"By Any Other" Name follows the story of Esme and her father, a single dad navigating life after the death of Esme's mother. When Esme starts school, she struggles with fitting in and understanding her identity amid cultural and family complexities. The novel explores themes of belonging, self-discovery, and the bonds between parents and children as Esme and her father learn to face life's challenges together.

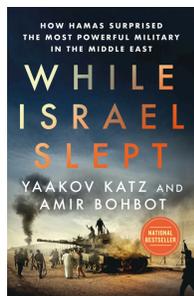
**An evening with Yaakov Katz - Author of *While Israel Slept***

Tuesday, January 20 | 7:00 - 8:30 PM
Free and open to the community
Register at www.nojcc.org/events

Yaakov Katz, former editor-in-chief of the Jerusalem Post, will speak about his powerful new book: *While Israel Slept: How Hamas Surprised the Most Powerful Military in the Middle East*.

This book reveals through a detailed examination of the events leading up to October 7, 2023, the intelligence and strategic failures that enabled this devastating invasion. It takes readers back in time, showing how years of complacency, mistaken intelligence analysis, and a misguided policy of containment enabled Hamas to prepare for an assault that Israel did not believe was possible and that would change the Middle East.

Yaakov Katz is the former editor-in-chief of The Jerusalem Post. He writes for Newsweek and The Jewish Chronicle, hosts the JPPI weekly podcast and has appeared on CNN and BBC. He is the author of *Shadow Strike* and the coauthor with Amir Bohbot of *Weapon Wizards*.

**Play Reading Group**

Wednesday, January 21 | 2:00 - 4:00 pm
No charge members and non-members
RSVP by Tuesday, January 20

Meeting on the third Wednesday of each month, the idea of this group is really very simple; we get together, we sit around a table and we read a play aloud. Everyone has a part or two to read.

Movie Day: *The Penguin Lessons*

This Movie Day program will also run in Metairie on Thursday, Jan. 22nd

Thursday, January 22 | 12:00 - 2:00 pm
No charge members and non-members
RSVP by Monday, January 20

Amid the political turmoil of 1970's Argentina, a downcast English teacher finds a new lease on life when he rescues a stranded penguin.

Harriet Kugler Memorial Mah Jongg Tournament

Sunday, January 25 | 9:30- 3:00 pm
\$60 per person includes registration and entry for a door prize. Receive additional door prize chances with every \$25 donation.

This event is almost sold out. RSVP to jbrooks@nojcc.org to be added to the waitlist.

Harriet Wainer Kugler was a longtime member, friend and employee of the JCC. She was our first Mah Jongg class instructor and initiated our Annual Tournament. Sadly, she was taken from us too soon, but her memory and legacy continue through the annual Harriet W. Kugler Memorial Mah Jongg Tournament, now in its fourteenth year.

Anyone who knows how to play is welcome to register, whether you are just starting out or a seasoned player. Join us for a fun day of Mah Jongg, complete with snacks, coffee, lunch and both cash and door prizes.

Games will be played according to the NMJL rules, and the current year NMJL card. Participants MUST bring their own card. This is a three-round tournament. Participants will rotate tables upon completion of each round.

Tu B'Shevat Seder

Thursday, January 29 | 12:00 - 2:00 pm
\$5 members | \$7 non-members
RSVP by Monday, January 26

Come celebrate the birthday of the trees with your friends at the J. Join us on this fun festival day as we put on a traditional Tu B'Shevat seder where we will eat fruits and grains that remind us of the land of Israel. The seder incorporates the four traditional types of fruit into courses. We will have a delicious and interactive meal to celebrate the holiday.

January 2026

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday |
|---|--|---|--|
| | | | |
| 4 | 5 Knit One, Crochet Too 10:00 - 11:00 am Morris Bart Sr. Lecture 12:00 - 2:00 pm Learn to Play Mah Jongg Begins (Uptown) 6:00 - 8:00 pm <hr/> Chair Exercise 10:45 - 11:45 | 6 Memory Cafe 2:00 - 3:30 pm <hr/> Chair Exercise 10:45 - 11:45 Games Day 12:00 - 3:00 | 7 <hr/> Dance for Parkinson's 10:30 - 11:45 Better Balance 10:45 - 11:30 |
| 11 Cathy and Morris Bart Jewish Cultural Arts Series 5:00 - 7:00 pm | 12 JCC Closed 8:00 am - 1:00 pm for an all-staff annual meeting | 13 Current Events Group 1:00 - 2:00 pm <hr/> Chair Exercise 10:45 - 11:45 Games Day 12:00 - 3:00 | 14 <hr/> Dance for Parkinson's 10:30 - 11:45 Better Balance 10:45 - 11:30 |
| 18 Tzedek Project: Intergenerational Community Service 1:00 - 4:00 pm | 19 No programming on MLK Day Fitness Center open 8:00 am - 6:45 pm | 20 Book Club 1:30 - 3:00 pm An evening with Author Yaakov Katz 7:00 - 8:30 pm <hr/> Chair Exercise 10:45 - 11:45 Games Day 12:00 - 3:00 | 21 Play Reading Group 2:00 - 4:00 pm <hr/> Dance for Parkinson's 10:30 - 11:45 Better Balance 10:45 - 11:30 |
| 25 Harriet Kugler Memorial Mah Jongg Tournament 9:30 am - 3:00 pm | 26 Knit One, Crochet Too 10:00 - 11:00 am <hr/> Chair Exercise 10:45 - 11:45 | 27 <hr/> Chair Exercise 10:45 - 11:45 Games Day 12:00 - 3:00 | 28 <hr/> Dance for Parkinson's 10:30 - 11:45 Better Balance 10:45 - 11:30 |

Tevet - Shevat, 5786

Birthdays

Anne McSweeney
January 12

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

1
**HAPPY
NEW
YEAR**

2

3

JCC CLOSED

Chair Yoga & Meditation | 11 - 12

8

**Lunch & Learn
with the Rabbi**
12:00 - 1:30 pm

9

**Piatigorsky
Foundation Concert
and Lunch**
12:00 - 2:00 pm

10

Chair Exercise | 10:45 - 11:45

Chair Yoga & Meditation | 11 - 12

15

**Conversations &
Film Showing with
Josh Paillet**
2:00 - 4:00 pm

16

Men's Group
12:45 - 2:00 pm

17

Chair Exercise | 10:45 - 11:45

Chair Yoga & Meditation | 11 - 12

22

Movie Day
12:00 - 2:00 pm

23

24

Chair Exercise | 10:45 - 11:45

Chair Yoga & Meditation | 11 - 12

29

Tu B'Shevat Seder
12:00 - 2:00 pm

30

31

Chair Exercise | 10:45 - 11:45

Chair Yoga & Meditation | 11 - 12

Trivia Corner

**Which beer is promoted
as the "King of Beers?"**

- a. Heineken
- b. Miller Lite
- c. Budweiser
- d. Guinness

Trivia Answer

c. Known as "The King of Beers," Budweiser was first introduced by Adolphus Busch in 1876. Budweiser has grown to become one of the highest selling beers in the United States. Budweiser is known for its humorous advertisements, some of which have entered popular culture. Budweiser has produced a number of TV advertisements, such as the Budweiser Frogs, lizards impersonating the Budweiser frogs, a campaign built around the phrase "Whassup?," and a team of Clydesdale horses commonly known as the Budweiser Clydesdales.

J UNIVERSITY

SMART COURSES FOR CURIOUS MINDS



Spring 2026 Courses

World Religions and the Search for Meaning

This course explores major world religions and what they teach about living well, focusing on shared moral questions through texts on compassion, forgiveness, and enlightenment. Taught by Dr. Ari Ofengenden, Tulane University

January 9 - February 27 | Fridays | 2 - 3 pm

The Vaccine Dilemma

Are vaccines a medical miracle or misunderstood? Learn how vaccines work, where common misconceptions come from, and how to evaluate the science for yourself. Taught by Thomas Lonergan, Ph.D., Cellular Biologist.

January 13 - February 3 | Tuesdays | 5:30-6:30 pm

The Modern Mind: From Enlightenment to AI

The modern world has reshaped what it means to be human. This course traces that transformation by discussing modern thinkers like Descartes, Marx, Freud, and then Artificial Intelligence. It's a journey through ideas that still define our identities, freedoms, and anxieties.

March 6 - May 1 | Fridays | 2 - 3 pm

ARTS
at the center



SPRING
2026

Drawing

January 14 - March 4 | Wednesdays 5:30 - 7:30 pm

Acting Workshop: Molly Smith Metzler's *Cry it Out*

Saturday & Sunday January 24-25 | 11 am - 3 pm

Community Choir

February 8 - April 19 | Sundays 3:00 - 4:30 pm

Personal Essay / Memoir Writing

February 25 - April 15 | Wednesdays 1:00 - 2:30 pm

Painting

March 2 - April 20 | Mondays 5:30 - 7:30 pm

Intro to Hip Hop

March 10 - May 5 | Tuesdays 6:00 - 7:15 pm

Improv

March 11 - May 6 | Wednesdays 5:30 - 7:30 pm

Stencil Making & Spray Painting Workshop

Saturday & Sunday | April 18-19 | 1 - 4 pm

Recipe Corner

Red Lentil Soup

This is a lentil soup that defies expectations of what lentil soup can be. Based on a Turkish lentil soup, *mercimek corbasi*, it is light, spicy and a bold red color (no murky brown here): a revelatory dish that takes less than an hour to make. The cooking is painless. Sauté onion and garlic in oil, then stir in tomato paste, cumin and chile powder and cook a few minutes more to intensify flavor. Add broth, water, red lentils (which cook faster than their green or black counterparts) and diced carrot, and simmer for 30 minutes. Purée half the mixture and return it to the pot for a soup that strikes the balance between chunky and pleasingly smooth. A hit of lemon juice adds an up note that offsets the deep cumin and chile flavors.

Ingredients (yields 4 servings)

- 3 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- Salt and black pepper
- Pinch of chili powder or ground cayenne, plus more to taste
- 1 quart chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 cup red lentils
- 1 large carrot, peeled and diced
- Juice of ½ lemon, more to taste
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro



Step 1 In a large pot, heat 3 tablespoons oil over high until hot and shimmering. Add onion and garlic, and sauté until golden, about 4 minutes.

Step 2 Stir in tomato paste, cumin, ¼ teaspoons each salt and black pepper and the chili powder, and sauté for 2 minutes longer.

Step 3 Add broth, 2 cups water, lentils and carrot. Bring to a simmer, then partly cover pot and turn heat to medium-low. Simmer until lentils are soft, about 30 minutes. Taste and add salt if necessary.

Step 4 Using an immersion or regular blender or a food processor, purée half the soup, then add it back to pot. The soup should be somewhat chunky.

Step 5 Reheat soup if necessary, then stir in lemon juice and cilantro. Serve soup drizzled with good olive oil and dusted lightly with chili powder, if desired.

Metairie Active Adult Programming

Goldring-Woldenberg Jewish Community Center | 3747 W. Esplanade Avenue, Metairie

*Programming takes place in the Metairie Member Lounge **Contact lauraq@nojcc.org with any questions**

Games Day

Mondays | 11:45 am - 12:45 pm *
Free and open to the community

Join us for mah jongg, Rummikub or bridge. Bring your lunch; dessert and coffee are provided.

Weekly Wisdom

Tuesdays | 8:15 - 9:15 am *
Free and open to the community

Start your Tuesday with Rabbi David Cohen-Henriquez of Shir Chadash for Weekly Wisdom—a lively, accessible discussion of the weekly Torah portion and its relevance to modern life. No prior knowledge required; all are welcome.

Midweek Mindfulness & Meditation

Thursdays | 8:15 - 9:15 am *
Free and open to the community

Find your midweek calm with our new mindfulness and meditation series led by Sandy Cohen. Pause, breathe, and reconnect through simple practices that reduce stress and bring balance to your day.

Movie Day: The Penguin Lessons

Thursday, January 22 | 12:00 - 2:00 pm *
No charge members and non-members

Amid the political turmoil of 1970's Argentina, a downcast English teacher finds a new lease on life when he rescues a stranded penguin.

Learn to Play Mah Jongg

January 13 - January 22 *
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday | 6 - 8 pm
\$100 members | \$115 non-members

This six-session class is perfect for Mah Jongg beginners or those who need a refresher. Learn the game using the NMJL rules. A Mah Jongg card will be provided as well as sets to play with.

Jewish Studies 101: Introduction to Judaism

Tuesdays | 11:45 - 12:45 pm *
Free and open to the community

Join us for this interfaith study series with St. Clement of Rome Catholic Church. Led by Rabbi Gerber and community leaders, we'll explore familiar biblical texts, core Jewish values, and Torah wisdom. Designed to build bridges, foster understanding, and deepen appreciation for our shared scriptural foundations. No prior knowledge required; all are welcome.

Silver Sneakers Circuit

Mondays | 11:00 - 11:45 am



Seated or standing strength work alternated with low-impact cardio using a chair for support

Silver Sneakers Yoga

Tuesdays & Thursdays | 10:30 - 11:15 am
Tuesdays | 11:30 am - 12:15 pm

Move through seated and standing yoga poses designed to increase flexibility, balance, and range of movement. Finish with restorative breathing exercises and final relaxation to promote reduced stress and mental clarity.

Silver Sneakers Classic

Fridays | 10:15 - 11:00 am

Increase muscle strength and range of movement, and improve activities for daily living. You'll have a chair for seated exercises and standing support.

Sign up at www.nojcc.org/groupexercise or email denise@nojcc.org




www.nojcc.org/culturalarts

The Cathy and Morris Bart
JEWISH CULTURAL ARTS SERIES

SPRING 2026

FROM BAGHDAD TO BROOKLYN

Sunday, January 11 | 5-7 PM | Uptown

A 60-minute show that invites audiences into a journey of heritage and transformation.



NEW ORLEANS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

5342 St. Charles Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70115

Catch a ride with *Catch-a-Cab* Cab fare subsidization



How it works

- Fill out an application
- Receive discounted coupons for use with local taxi companies. Wheelchair accessible vehicles available.
- For \$5, Jewish seniors receive a \$20 book of taxi coupons, with a limit of 7 coupon books per quarter.
- The coupons are only valid for Catch-a-Cab subscribers.

Apply:
(504) 831-8475

<https://jfsneworleans.org/services/catch-a-cab/>

Through the generosity of the Adele Cahn Catch-a-Cab Designated Fund at the Jewish Endowment Foundation, Catch-a-Cab, a Jewish Family Service program, provides transportation to Jewish seniors in the Greater New Orleans area via cab fare subsidization.

Eligibility

- A Jewish individual
- 65 years or older
- Greater New Orleans area resident

