

HONORING JOANIE

JWI proudly announces the Joan Margolius Cherner Mother's Day Fund

Joanie Margolius Cherner was a hard-working mom who raised two sons; a devoted aunt and a loving grandmother to five. Fun-loving and beautiful, she made friends easily and kept them for a lifetime because of her thoughtfulness, warmth, and magnetic personality.

When she died of cancer this past June at age 74, her family felt the loss deeply and decided they wanted to do something to remember her and continue her legacy of caring. They have created the Joan Margolius Cherner Mother's Day Fund to support and enhance JWI's Mother's Day Flower Project.

"Joanie loved Mother's Day," explains her brother, Phil Margolius. "JWI's Flower Project fits her perfectly. The thought that this makes other people happy, she would love that. It just seemed to fit her."

Each Mother's Day, as JWI supporters make donations in honor of the special women in their lives, JWI uses the proceeds to send flowers and financial literacy materials to 200 domestic violence shelters nationwide. This spring, the Mother's Day Flower Project will celebrate its 20th anniversary.

"You know how most people say, after a tragedy, that they'll be there for you? And they say it to be kind and with the best of intentions, but nothing comes of it. Well, Joanie never said it. She just showed up." That's how

Jennifer Margolius Fisher describes her beloved Aunt Joanie.

After Fisher's mother died, Aunt Joanie stepped in to fill the void, becoming surrogate mom to Fisher and grand-

mother to her children. "I don't think I'm the only person she mothered,"

Fisher adds. "And I don't think that I'm the only one she protected. She was the person to show up with flowers or send cards or become the fabric in someone's life. And that's what JWI's Flower Project does: It puts the fabric of people's lives back together."

"It seems like a simple gesture, but it has a powerful impact," explains JWI CEO Lori Weinstein. "For survivors living in a shelter, Mother's Day is often very difficult. So many of these



Above: Joanie and the Margolius family, (left) and at her grandson's bar mitzvah (right)
Below: Joanie with her brothers, Alan (left) and Philip (right)
Opposite page: Joanie with her husband, Jerry Cherner



women have either never received flowers or only have been given flowers as an apology for an act of violence. Our flowers let them know that we're thinking of them and rooting for them to succeed in rebuilding safe homes for themselves and their children."

The flowers are accompanied by financial literacy resources developed by JWI staff in response to requests from the shelters. Almost all victims of domestic violence have also been subjected to financial abuse. The Flower Project's financial literacy component helps survivors learn the



basics to guide them toward economic independence and security.

"Yet as incredible as the project is," continues Weinstein, "there is still so much that we would like to do to strengthen both the celebration and the resources that we create. We are enormously grateful to the Margolius family for establishing the Joan Margolius Cherner Mother's Day Fund. As the Flower Project enters its third decade, it will enable us to do so much more for these at-risk mothers and their children."

In addition to increasing the number of shelters that receive JWI's flowers,

plans for expansion include creating more resources for children to participate in Mother's Day celebrations; arranging opportunities for JWI volunteers to host Mother's Day events at the shelters; and developing additional resources to build economic literacy and skills for women at this important juncture in their lives.

Both Phil Margolius and Joanie's younger brother Alan remember their vibrant and beautiful sister as always surrounded by friends. A cheerleader, she was active in Iota Gamma Phi and Alpha Beta Gamma – Jewish high school sororities. Joanie joined the AEPi sorority while a student at the University of Maryland, and that was where she met her first husband, Stanley, who was in the fraternity SAM. Together they had two sons and five grandchildren.

"The house was always filled with her friends," they both recall. "With other people, friends come and go. But not Joanie. She added friends along the way, but never lost one."

"She collected friends," echoes Francine Levinson, a childhood friend who later became family when Joanie married Jerry Cherner. "She was just a good person. And everyone was her friend. But she cared about her family the most. If her brothers or children or grandchildren did something, it

was the best. There was nothing they could do that was wrong."

"It's a cliché to say someone was a giver, but she was," recalls her oldest son, Billy Karlin, noting that while in hospice, his mother worried more about how he was feeling than her own situation. At the same time Joan was raising him and his brother Michael, Karlin remembers that his mother worked hard in order to give her children a comfortable life. She loved working and made lifelong friends through work relationships.

Her love for her grandchildren was legendary in the family. Toward the end of his mother's life, Karlin remembers asking his son, now 23, if he had spoken to his grandmother. His son replied, "I talk to her every day." That's the kind of relationship they had.

Karlin believes his mother would have been thrilled that her family was keeping her memory alive through JWI's Mother's Day Flower Project. "I think that for most women, when they get something like roses, they are happy. It puts a smile on their face and makes them feel loved," he says. "That was what my mom did. She would smile and be with you and make you feel happy. Now, this is like her coming in to be with women who need a smile."

JOAN MARGOLIUS CHERNER
Mother's Day Fund

*Supporting women and their children
in domestic violence shelters,
on Mother's Day and every day.*

DONATE AT **JWI.ORG/JOANIE-FUND**