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## Home

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IN 1939, 9.5 MILLION JEWS LIVED IN EUROPE.

Today, fewer than 1.4 million Jews call Europe home.

Jewish Preservation Initiative (JPI) exists to honor, celebrate, and preserve the rich Jewish history of Europe's past.

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## What We Do

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Throughout Central Europe, and in particular, the Czech Republic, there has been renewed interest in preservation of Jewish monuments since the end of Communist rule. Synagogues, Jewish quarters, schools, cemeteries and mikvahs have been renovated and preserved. Local residents, with financial aid from the European Union and local Jewish associations, are turning their attention to the restoration of historic buildings and monuments that were once proud witnesses to vibrant Jewish life in their towns.

Despite this renewed interest there are still many projects in need of funding. For example, in towns such as Mikulov, the synagogue has been restored, but other Jewish sites are deteriorating. The cemetery has gravestones that are in various stages of disintegration, and the wall that surrounds it is showing significant decay.

Most Jewish sights are run by non-Jews, who, wishing to celebrate local heritage, use Jewish buildings as museums and venues for Jewish-themed events and festivals. If the Jewish way of life is to be remembered in Central Europe it will be up to the people who live there to take the lead. It is with these individuals and organizations that JPI wishes to partner.

**JPI raises funds to help community organizations in Central Europe to renovate and preserve Jewish monuments and create and present exhibits about Jewish life.**

JPI is a tax-exempt organization based out of Wellesley, Massachusetts.

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## Current Projects

# FUTURE PROJECTS

## MIKULOV, CZECH REPUBLIC

Barbora Leskovjanova: Volunteer Guide, Society of Friends of Jewish Culture, Mikulov, Czech Republic

In collaboration with Society of Friends of Jewish Culture in Mikulov, JPI aims to support the following inaugural projects in Mikulov, Czech Republic.

### 1. RECONSTRUCTION OF GRAVESTONES AT THE MIKULOV JEWISH CEMETERY (**PARTIALLY FUNDED**)

The Jewish cemetery in Mikulov has 4,402 tombstones. Some have disintegrated and are in shards. Others are deteriorating due to weather. Engravings are rapidly disappearing. It is primarily the oldest tombstones, made of sandstone, that weather quickly. Yet these old, dilapidated tombstones can be saved by applying special restoration techniques. There are currently about 1,000 tombstones that need attention. To raise and repair these fallen gravestones requires special equipment.

### 2. RENOVATION OF THE JEWISH EDUCATIONAL TRAIL IN MIKULOV

In 2000 the Society of Friends of Jewish Culture in Mikulov installed signs on major Jewish buildings describing their history and providing background information. Over the years these signs have deteriorated and are now on the verge of being illegible. The Society wants to refurbish the trail and add a brochure that visitors can use on self-guided tours through the Jewish quarter.

### 3. FULL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE WALL AROUND THE JEWISH CEMETERY

The cemetery, which spans about 2 hectares, is bounded by the original wall. Over the centuries this wall has become structurally unsound. In the cracks between stones, trees and shrubs have begun to grow, causing damage. Fixing the wall is challenging. Access is restricted, so heavy construction equipment cannot be used. The goal is to make the new wall look like the original. The Society uses only original materials. Damaged portions are removed and repaired stones are re-incorporated into the wall following the original design. Reconstruction is painstaking and time-intensive, and due to high costs is frequently delayed.

[READ MORE ABOUT OUR PROJECTS IN MIKULOV →](#)

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## Support JPI

**BUILD BRIDGES. HELP LOCAL CITIZENS IN CENTRAL EUROPE SAVE THE JEWISH PAST.**

By making a tax-deductible gift to JPI, you are advancing our work to honor, celebrate, and preserve the rich Jewish history of Europe's past.

All checks can be made out to:

**Jewish Preservation Initiative**

**Attention: Judith A. Jarashow**

60 Walnut Street, Third Floor

Wellesley, Massachusetts 02481

Phone: 781-943-4144

You may also donate via PayPal:



Thank you for your generous contribution to JPI.

[CONTACT JPI →](#)

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*JPI is a tax-exempt organization. Consistent with IRS rules and regulations regarding donations to U.S. charities, JPI cannot accept funds earmarked for distribution to foreign recipients, and will exercise discretion and control over all property contributed to JPI to ensure that it is used solely for purposes described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.*





## JPI Story

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### FOUNDING STORY

In the spring of 2014, JPI Founder & President Judy Jarashow cycled from Prague to Budapest with a group of friends. The group stopped in Mikulov, a lovely preserved town of 8,000 in the Czech Republic near Austria, famous for its vineyards, biking paths and historical monuments. Also located in Mikulov but less well known is a Jewish ghetto, which includes a yeshiva, mikvah, synagogue, Jewish museum and the fourth largest cemetery in the Czech Republic. Their tour guide was a 23-year-old volunteer for the Society of Friends of Jewish Culture in Mikulov (SFJC). At the Jewish museum she explained how over the past 15 years SFJC created a database of the more than 4,400 hundred tombstones in the Mikulov cemetery. A map covers almost an entire museum wall, detailing the location and names of those buried in the cemetery. To create the database each gravestone had to be translated from Hebrew to Czech.

Once there were 360,000 Jews in Czechoslovakia. Today, there are approximately 4,000 Jews in the Czech Republic and 2,300 in Slovakia. In the early 1900s almost half of Mikulov was Jewish. Today, no Jews live there.

Thanks to 15 years of volunteering by members of the SFJC, the Mikulov Jewish quarter has been partially restored. The synagogue has been returned to its former glory and a mikvah has been excavated. In the cemetery members of the SFJC cut down trees, trim the grass and repair fallen tombstones. They also lead tour groups, stage exhibits about Jewish life, and have posted signs for self-guided tours. Their work has borne fruit: groups come to Mikulov specifically to tour the Jewish ghetto.

Unless local citizens—few, if any of whom, are likely to be Jewish—take the initiative, Jewish monuments in Central Europe will fall into disrepair and eventually be lost. Centuries-old cemetery walls and graves will crumble, and buildings will be taken over for other purposes. If Jewish monuments disappear it is likely that Jewish history in the Czech Republic and elsewhere in Central Europe will fade. Jews need non-Jews to preserve Jewish monuments and history.

Groups such as SFJC work on a shoestring budget. They are dependent on government grants and donations.

Working with local groups like the SFJC creates a bridge between Jews and non-Jews. Our mission is to partner with local groups who want to preserve Jewish contributions to Central Europe and ensure that Jewish history there is not forgotten.

- Spring 2015

[MEET THE BOARD →](#)



## Board of Directors

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### Judith Jarashow

(Founder & Board President; Treasurer) Judy began her career as a legal services attorney representing indigent clients in southeastern Ohio and then in Boston. Upon receiving her masters in taxation she began concentrating in estate planning and probate administration. She began her solo practice in 1986. Judith has been named as a "Boston Top Rated Lawyer" in the area of estate planning, and is currently serving as a Hearing Officer for the Massachusetts Board of Bar Overseers on matters pertaining to attorney discipline.

### Mike Gildesgame

(Board Secretary) Mike has 30 years' experience in natural resources project management and program administration. He has led multi-disciplinary professional teams researching and implementing natural resource management policies and programs. Mike currently serves on the Boards of the Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action, Friends of Israel's Environment, and Temple Emunah in Lexington, Massachusetts.

### Judith Somberg

Judy has been a lawyer in private practice in Cambridge and Boston, Massachusetts, for more than 35 years. Her practice currently focuses on wills and estates. She has been a long time leader in the National Lawyers Guild and now works with its International Committee, taking election observation delegations to Latin America.

[CONTACT JPI →](#)



## Contact

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### WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

Please direct all inquiries to JPI President Judy Jarashow:

- [Judy@JewishPreservation.org](mailto:Judy@JewishPreservation.org)
- (781) 943-4144
- 60 Walnut street, Third Floor, Wellesley, MA 02481





## Special Thanks

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In addition to the members of the Board, JPI would like to thank the following organizations and individuals who have provided generous assistance.

- [Goulston & Storrs PC](#) in Boston donated countless hours in advising Judy Jarashow how to establish a tax exempt organization, reviewed all written materials and prepared the legal documentation to incorporate JPI as a Massachusetts non profit organization. In particular, JPI would like to thank Attorney Brad Bedingfield for his patient and sage advice.
- Larry Rosenberg provided invaluable editorial assistance, never balking at the countless drafts and new materials.
- Nathan Randall created JPI's website, did background research, and continues to serve as a communications advisor.
- David Randall serves as a sounding board and brings decades of experience working with corporate and non profit organizations to the table, providing pragmatic and seasoned advise.
- [Steven Chester](#) designed JPI's logo.
- Bank of America, Waban branch, has worked with JPI to establish cost effective banking.

Because so much support has been provided to JPI at free or reduced rates, we can donate almost all of our funds to support JPI's mission, which is to provide financial assistance to civic organizations in Central Europe that work to preserve Jewish monuments and honor Jewish culture.



# JEWISH FESTIVAL, MIKULOV, SEPTEMBER 2015

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November 12, 2015

This festival is organized every year in cooperation with Society of Friends of Jewish Culture in Mikulov, Gallery Efram and Town of Mikulov to honor and celebrate the Jews who formerly lived in Mikulov and Jewish culture that left an indelible imprint on Mikulov history.

2015 Festival Program:

## **Friday, September 25:**

- Theatre performance Blood Hygiene by Líšeň Theatre (in the town cinema)
- Performance about victims of Holocaust
- Discussion with Hana Frejková, a Czech Jewish actress and singer whose parents escaped to the UK during World War II where they joined the anti-fascist resistance.
- Sampling of Jewish cuisine specialties

## **Saturday, September 26:**

- Sampling of Jewish sweets
- Concert in Gallery Efram: Yiddish in Three
- Opening of exhibit in Ceremony Hall at Jewish Cemetery
- Pictures by pupils from Basic School in Mikulov

## **Sunday, September 27:**

- Concert in synagogue: Dominika Weiss Hošková and Jiří Hošek: Jewish music for violoncello
- Guided tour of synagogue
- Guided tour of Jewish cemetery

# 10 STARS

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February 22, 2015

The synagogue in Mikulov is one of ten sites featured in the "10 Stars" museum project across the Czech Republic.

[REVITALISATION OF JEWISH HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN CZECH REPUBLIC →](#)