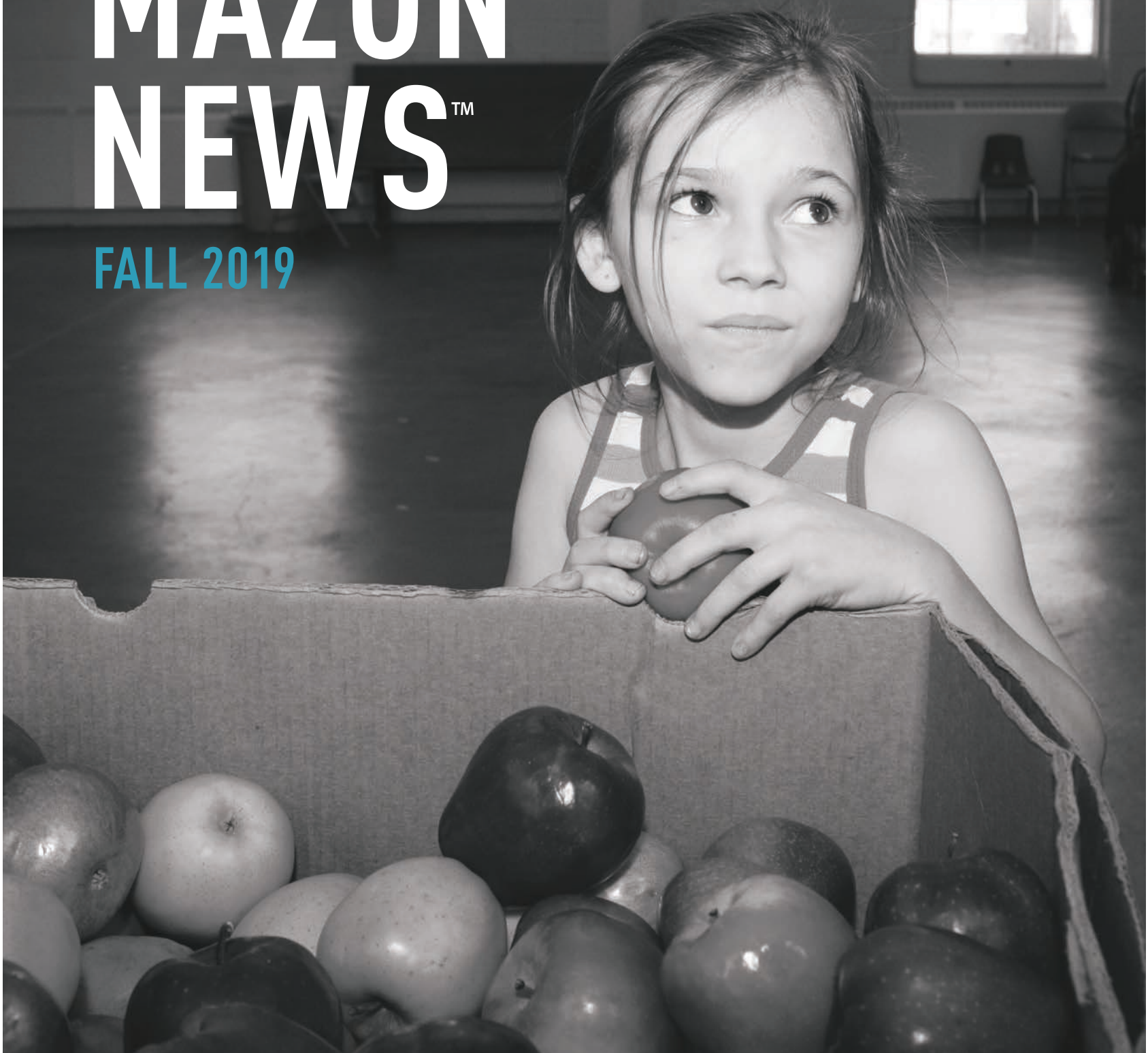


MAZON NEWS™

FALL 2019



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LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

“God is not believed, but behaved.” – Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis (z”l)

Our teacher Rabbi Schulweis (z”l) taught that the most important word in all of Jewish liturgy is *al ken* (in modern Hebrew, *u’lechen*), which means, “and therefore.” When we read the Torah, the Tanach, any Jewish text—all of our laws and our recorded history—we hear the refrain of *u’lechen*, and invite the question: “and therefore, what must we **do**?” Deeds, Schulweis taught, are the true mark of our faith.

That is why we must act, raising our voices and lending our strength to those who are most vulnerable. MAZON begins this work by elevating those who are often unseen and unheard—the people, the families, the communities struggling with hunger in the U.S. and Israel.

That is why we have now made our groundbreaking exhibit *This Is Hunger* available digitally—because too many of us struggle silently, or are stigmatized based on stereotypes. Indeed, too many of us fail to recognize the real-life impact of shamefully politicized policies. When we really listen to the vulnerable Americans among us, we learn not only who they are, but what they—and we—are confronting. *U’lechen*? And therefore, what policies, practices and laws can we effect so that we can make hunger a thing of the past? Then, we act.

- We acted, and now 3 million veterans have been screened for food insecurity; for the first time ever, the VA knows who’s hungry and can create the right pathways to help.
- We acted, and now tens of thousands of seniors in Maryland, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania can apply for SNAP using a simplified application built for *their* needs, accessing support that ensures they don’t have to choose between food and medicine, healthcare, or heating.
- We acted and secured passage of legislation in Minnesota so now hundreds of thousands of students have access to free lunch without shame or stigma—the first such legislation and a model for states across the nation.
- We acted, and now—for the first time—Congress recognized that two-thirds of community college students nationwide are hungry, and that major changes are needed to ensure those students can access SNAP and get the food they need to realize their full potential.
- We acted and established the Emerging Advocacy Fund to support and engage advocates in the poorest states in the U.S. to join us in fighting hunger locally.

We have pursued change in our country’s response to hunger among currently serving military families; among those who live on tribal lands and in rural communities; and among large but overlooked populations like seniors, including aging baby boomers and uniquely vulnerable LGBT seniors.

We are not always successful, and change is slow and often incremental. We gain ground and we lose it. Democracy is difficult and messy. As a Jewish response to hunger, we know that we are not required to finish the work of repairing our world, but neither are we allowed [to](#) leave that work to others.

How can we? When we hear the stories of struggling Americans—we see ourselves. We see our stories. We see our country and its challenges. *U’lechen*, we hear, and we act.

Yes, this is hard work—but we know that together, we can transform *how it is* into **how it should be**.

L’shalom,

Liz Kanter Groskind

Liz Kanter Groskind
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Abby J. Leibman

Abby J. Leibman
PRESIDENT & CEO



Jewish Clergy Justice Mission

MAZON Brings Leading Voices to Capitol Hill

For more than 30 years, MAZON has partnered with leaders in the Jewish community to ensure that the issue of hunger is elevated in synagogues and communities nationwide. Our engagement with Jewish clergy has generated truly meaningful progress in the fight against hunger.

To bring the voices of faith leaders from the Jewish community to the halls of power in Congress, MAZON held our second annual Jewish Clergy Justice Mission (JCJM) in May 2019, during which Jewish leaders from all over the United States, representing multiple denominations, came together to learn and engage in anti-hunger advocacy. The first day of the event featured a keynote address from Congressman Jamie Raskin (MD-08), intensive advocacy training, an interfaith panel discussion, and high-level briefings from experts, including Robert Greenstein, President of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and David Super, Professor of Law at Georgetown University. The next day, MAZON held a Congressional reception featuring remarks from five Members of Congress and from a leading policy expert at the Department of Veterans Affairs, after which JCJM participants held in-person meetings with more than 50 congressional offices. The meetings focused on MAZON's key priority areas, including the issue of hunger among currently-serving members of the military and our nation's veterans, as well as urgently-needed funding for Puerto Rico's Nutrition Assistance Program.

"I am proud that the Jewish community, led by MAZON, is advocating for the needs of our most vulnerable citizens. It was incredibly moving



Congressman **David McKinley**, Rabbi **Victor Urecki**, MAZON Board Member **Shirley Davidoff**, MAZON Director of Public Policy **Liza Lieberman**

learning from MAZON about the struggle with hunger in America, particularly for veterans and currently-serving military families," shared Rabbi Victor Urecki, representing B'nai Jacob Synagogue of Charleston, West Virginia at the JCJM. Rabbi Urecki's meeting with West Virginia Congressman David McKinley proved key to one of our major advocacy victories, as Rep. McKinley cast the favorable deciding vote in the successful passage of disaster aid funding for Puerto Rico.



Congresswoman **Jan Schakowsky**

Speaking at the Jewish Clergy Justice Mission, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (IL-09) said, "I stand with MAZON in their effort to protect SNAP benefits, aid Puerto Rico, and fight hunger wherever it exists in the United States and Israel. MAZON's activism resonates at local, state, and federal levels to impact positive change."

If you would like to be a part of this unique opportunity to make a difference by joining us at the next JCJM, please contact Liz Braun-Lilenfeld, Deputy Director of Community Relations, at lbraun@mazon.org.

Why I Made MAZON Part of My Bar Mitzvah

When 13-year-old Alex Feingold-Black began preparing for his Bar Mitzvah Torah portion, he was struck by how the Torah delineates what we can and cannot eat. Having grown up in a Jewish home with a deep belief in the concept of *Tikkun Olam*—the Jewish directive to ‘repair the world’—Alex found himself wondering what the implications were for those who struggle with hunger, and for whom choices about what to eat were less about doctrine and more about access.

In Alex’s words: “Here we are, talking about choosing specific food that we can eat, while, unfortunately, a lot of people around the world don’t have the luxury of picking and choosing what’s okay to eat, and are struggling just to get one meal on their plate each day.” Alex wanted to do something, so he contacted MAZON to inquire about how he can make a difference on behalf of those who struggle with hunger in honor of his Bar Mitzvah.

Over the next months, Alex worked with MAZON to raise awareness about food insecurity. He presented to his classmates about what hunger looks like for people across the country and shared with them MAZON’s advocacy efforts to fight hunger. Alex and his peers submitted public comments to the U.S. Department of Agriculture urging them to protect the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), a vital safety net for more than 40 million Americans, which is facing significant threats from the current administration.

In the spring of 2019, Alex and his older brother Myles joined MAZON staff and volunteers on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. as part of MAZON’s #FreedomFromHunger campaign. They traversed the halls of Congress to deliver commemorative plates to Congressional offices highlighting the issue of hunger among our nation’s veterans. Alex thanked Members of Congress and their staff for their efforts to protect SNAP for



Alex Feingold-Black (left) and his brother **Myles** participate in MAZON’s #FreedomFromHunger campaign.

veterans and encouraged them to continue to ensure that those who fought for our freedom do not have to struggle to put food on the table.

As it is customary to collect *tzedakah* for a meaningful cause when celebrating a *simcha*, a Jewish life-cycle event, Alex also involved his friends and family to fundraise in support of MAZON for his Bar Mitzvah. Alex describes his experience with MAZON as a direct expression of *Tikkun Olam*, which in turn deepened his Jewish identity.

If you or anyone you know is interested in conducting a Bar/Bat Mitzvah project in conjunction with MAZON, please contact Paul Sherman, Outreach Manager, at psherman@mazon.org.



GIVE A GIFT TODAY

May the sounding of the shofar call you to act on behalf of all those who are hungry in our midst.

Give a gift today by using the attached envelope, visiting mazon.org, or by calling us at (800) 813-0557.

Thank you for your generous support!

Advocacy In Action

At MAZON, we know the term “advocacy” can mean many things to many people; for us, it’s the important work of elevating the experience of often overlooked and underserved communities, and working toward meaningful and lasting change to make life better for those in need. It’s educating and engaging synagogues, communities and policymakers around the country about who struggles with hunger and why. It’s commissioning groundbreaking research and digital storytelling to shed light on the reality of hunger. It’s raising these issues in the media and in the halls of power. Through all of this, we take action to impact the lives of millions of people who struggle with hunger. Here are a few highlights of our current advocacy work:



MILITARY FAMILIES

MAZON continues to lead the national effort to address the hidden problem of hunger among currently serving military families.

- After Congress failed last year to remove a barrier to SNAP benefits for struggling military families, MAZON responded by crafting the Military Family Basic Needs Allowance, a legislative proposal to help military families put food on the table.
- MAZON engaged Congresswoman Susan Davis (CA-53) and Senator Tammy Duckworth (IL) as champions for the Military Family Basic Needs Allowance proposal. We secured the inclusion of this provision in the House National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and are advocating for its inclusion in the final bill.
- MAZON raises public awareness about military hunger—including in an NBC News special report featuring MAZON’s work on this issue, and a recent press conference that generated national media coverage.



VETERANS

MAZON raises awareness about the problem of hunger among veterans and advocates for policy solutions.



- As part of MAZON’s #FreedomFromHunger campaign to highlight the issue of veteran hunger, we delivered symbolic plates to over 150 Members of Congress.
- MAZON submitted public comments to the USDA in response to a proposed rule change on SNAP time limits, highlighting its impact on veterans.
- MAZON organized a letter with the U.S. House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, signed by 60 Members of Congress, calling attention to the harm veterans would face from the proposed SNAP rule.



LUNCH SHAMING

MAZON works to ensure that low-income children have access to school lunch without shame or stigma.

- Since MAZON won the first campaign to ban lunch shaming in Minnesota in 2014, similar legislation has been passed or proposed in more than 15 states.
- In May 2019, MAZON and our partners at Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid secured a first-of-its-kind binding legal opinion from the Minnesota State Attorney General to permanently ban lunch shaming in the state.
- MAZON’s advocacy on this issue has also spurred federal policy change, including several bills introduced in the U.S. House and Senate that would prohibit schools from stigmatizing or shaming children who cannot pay their meal fees.



INDIAN COUNTRY

MAZON continues to deepen its work to improve food security among rural, remote and Tribal Nations.

- As the first non-Native ally member of the Native Farm Bill Coalition, MAZON is gratified to have won provisions to improve the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) in the 2018 Farm Bill. The new provisions will increase tribal self-governance and expand access to traditional and regional foods.
- MAZON presented to the Veterans Committee of the National Congress of American Indians, highlighting the issue of veteran food insecurity and its impact on Native veterans.
- MAZON leadership attended the National Association of FDPIR conference and a USDA tribal consultation on implementation of a FDPIR pilot program critical to alleviating hunger in Indian Country.

Hunger Bites

SMALL PLATES **BIG CHANGE**



On June 5, 2019, MAZON hosted our inaugural **Hunger Bites: Small Plates, Big Change** event to celebrate our successes in the fight to end hunger and engage our community in our commitment

to help the most vulnerable among us. On a beautiful summer evening, over 200 MAZON supporters gathered at Playa Studios in Culver City, where they were treated to deliciously crafted tastes from some of Southern California's most talented award-winning chefs, including CHEFS 4CHANGE's Leonardo Marino and R.L. King, Hugo Bolanos of Wolfgang Puck Fine Dining Group, Anne Conness of Jaffa, Ivan Marquez of Broken Spanish, Vivian Ku of Joy and Pine & Crane, and many more.

Guests were provided a sneak peek of MAZON's newly released digital video experience, *This Is Hunger*, an adaptation of the immersive exhibit that traveled the country in a big-rig truck and is now permanently housed in Encino, California. The impact of this

powerfully emotional depiction of hunger in America was felt around the room. Our special guest emcee Joshua Malina, star of *The West Wing* and *Scandal*, said it best when he told the *Jewish Journal*, "It was fun and we all ate and had a good time, and then the lights go down and you see a movie and it's staggering seeing the personal face of hunger and looking at the numbers. It's astounding that we live in a country where 40 million plus are SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) recipients."

The proceeds raised from **Hunger Bites: Small Plates, Big Change** will allow MAZON to elevate issues faced by vulnerable Americans, move the needle on critical policy change, and solidify relationships with policymakers who share our profound concern about the pervasive yet solvable problem of hunger.



MAZON is immensely grateful for the generosity of the following individuals and organizations who made Hunger Bites possible:

Joshua Malina
CHEFS 4CHANGE Co-Founders
Leonardo Marino, R.L. King, Gennaro Pecchia, Michael Ramsdell

THANK YOU TO OUR CHEFS

Etty Benhamou, Le Mervetty
Hugo Bolanos, Wolfgang Puck Fine Dining Group
Anne Conness, Jaffa
Ray Garcia and Ivan Marquez, Broken Spanish
R.L. King
Vivian Ku, Joy/Pine & Crane
Leonardo Marino
David Padilla, The Butcher's Daughter
Andrew Philips
Andrea Ruth, Salty Baby
Joann Roth Oseary, Someone's in the Kitchen
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EMERGING ADVOCACY FUND

Innovating to Fight Hunger

Since MAZON's founding over 30 years ago, we have worked tirelessly in the fight to end hunger. We recognize that this is not an easy task, and we strengthen our efforts by building a robust and resilient anti-hunger advocacy network across the United States. In 2018, MAZON launched our Emerging Advocacy Fund (EAF) to deepen our investment in anti-hunger advocacy in the most food-insecure states in the country. Designed to empower state-based organizations to advocate on behalf of those who struggle with hunger in their communities, the EAF is now the cornerstone of MAZON's grantmaking program.

MAZON's first cohort of EAF partners represent a vibrant mix of emerging and well-established field leaders engaging in grassroots organizing, public education, legislative action, policy analysis, impact litigation and strategic partnerships. We recently brought the 16 participating organizations together in Washington, D.C. for the first annual convening, where EAF partners shared their successes and strategies to further anti-hunger advocacy efforts in their home states. Participants then joined MAZON staff for in-person meetings with over 30 Members



MAZON Staff and EAF partners with Congresswoman **Marcia Fudge**. Also in attendance, **Daniel Rosove**, MAZON's Grants Program Director.

The EAF convening featured a congressional briefing, "Local Perspectives on Hunger in Rural America," where a panel of EAF participants shared their expertise on the issues that perpetuate hunger in rural America, an often-overlooked crisis.

of Congress and their staff to urge expanded SNAP access for currently serving members of the military, called on Congress to pass federal disaster aid for Puerto Rico, and discussed state-level priorities.

We are proud of the great strides our EAF partners have made in the last year, and also mindful that there is still work to be done—especially in those states where hunger is both prevalent and persistent. With that in mind, we welcomed our second cohort of EAF partners in June 2019, and look forward to great accomplishments ahead.

WE WELCOME NEW STAFF

Julia Natasha Watthey, MBA, *Director of Communications*

Julia specializes in strategic communications and has national and international success managing and leading political campaigns, corporate strategic communications initiatives and direct lobbying efforts for over 500 politicians, public, private, non-profit and faith-based organizations. Also recognized as a brand management leader, Julia was most recently vice president of a Los Angeles-based communications firm, specializing in high-level advocacy initiatives, Silicon Valley Artificial Intelligence disease-prevention technologies PR, and corporate leadership strategies. Julia developed and shepherded a Kaiser Permanente CEO to best-selling author status and has guided CEOs, politicians and C-Suite executives in their public goals and campaigns. She developed her expertise on the campaign trail and has been integrally involved in every presidential campaign since 1988.



THIS IS HUNGER

is a powerful, immersive digital video experience that explores who struggles with hunger in America and why. Available for your classroom, group and individual viewing with accompanying curriculum. Watch at mazon.org/thisishunger.

MAZON

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To Hunger

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Please contact Sarah Pratter at spratner@mazon.org
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WHO IS MAZON?

Inspired by Jewish values and ideals, MAZON is a national advocacy organization working to end hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds in the United States and Israel.

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