

Elissa tells her life story in 20-year chapters. Born in Valdosta, GA, she ended her first chapter memorably when, as a counselor at a Young Judaea summer camp in Western North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains, she met a young cadet on leave from West Point. She and David Kaplan fell in love and married. The next 20 years were the Army years, where they lived in a many places (Stamford is house number fifteen), including Colorado ("home" of her masters in Comparative Literature); North Carolina (when she earned her MA in Reading and Language Arts); Germany (for a 3-year posting); and Washington, DC (for her Masters in Jewish Studies and Curriculum Studies). During this time the Kaplans raised their son and daughter. Next, David completed his Army "professional career" at the Pentagon and continued into a 20-year stint in Washington, D.C. for a think tank and a computer software company. While there, Elissa got a doctorate in Educational Leadership from George Washington University.

David's retirement in 2005 freed them to move to Fairfield County for Elissa's new role running a large Hebrew School in Fairfield County. Over a seventeen-year period, she has served as Director of Education at four synagogues in Maryland and Connecticut. After Hebrew Schools, she got involved in consulting. Dr. Elissa Kaplan is the founder and director of Growing Projects, an educational consulting company, whose vision is "leadership through critical thinking and compassionate choices." About four years ago, Elissa got involved with the programming at the Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County. This involvement led to the presidency position in January 2016. Elissa also got very involved with JHS Oral History projects. There are so many stories - Jewish veterans, Jews who have been elected to public office, personal stories of Stamford and all over Fairfield County, Holocaust survivors, and more! Elissa appreciates how a big picture can be drawn from all these individual stories.

Over the past two years, Elissa has become a facilitator at Lifetime Learner's Institute at Norwalk Community College. She has a lot of fun with topics like *Through the Looking Glass: Examining Our Dreams*, *History of the Mystery*, and *Bad Girls in the Bible*. Elissa also enjoys reading

mysteries, doing crossword puzzles and cooking for friends and family.

Elissa's daughter, Lara, is an art conservator married to an art conservator. Her son, Jeff, is a dancer (married to a dancer, of blessed memory) with an 11-year-old daughter, Arianna. Elissa's daughter-in-law recently passed away from a rare and incurable cancer. Open about her own cancer experience, Elissa decided that way to respond to the “shock and awe” of her cancer was to use it as an opportunity to caution people to listen to their bodies and not to ignore strange symptoms, even if they seem mild. Surviving cancer has been a transformative experience, and has made Elissa especially grateful to be alive. These days, when she is asked, “How are you?”, Elissa's answer is “Never better!”

Elissa looks forward to leading The Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County into its fourth decade with hard work, big ideas, and community building. The Jewish Historical Society is a wonderful community of interesting and intelligent people with wonderful stories to share. We hope that you, too, will join us and “Be part of the Story of Fairfield County.”